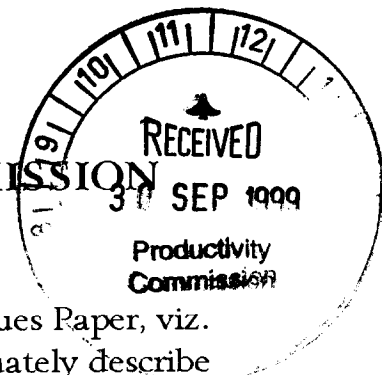


2004



SUBMISSION TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION ON BROADCASTING

I wish to address initially the question posed on page 11 of the Issues Paper, viz. "does this list of objectives of the Broadcasting Services Act adequately describe the social, cultural and economic problems which broadcasting legislation should address?"

In this regard I wish to particularly comment on objective (1) "to promote the availability to audiences throughout Australia of a diverse range of radio and television services offering entertainment, education and information".

I consider there is a great need for an additional objective to be inserted here, viz. "to develop an on-going research program to monitor the effects on children of the visual and auditory stimuli related to television viewing".

As a medical practitioner, I am interested in the development of children both physically, mentally and socially.

Already we have had the comment made by the American Paediatric Association recently that children under two years of age should not watch television at all. (Time Magazine, August 23, 1999).

My concern is that there is not sufficient research being undertaken in this area of child development and that when the objectives of the Broadcasting Services Act were written there was no clear recognition of this research need.

It is not sufficient, I believe, that interested medical researchers should question and investigate the influence of children's television in an ad hoc way. In view of the major impact TV has on the community and especially the impressionable child psyche, research and recommendations to the public as consumers of the media product should be a clear objective of the Productivity Commission and the Broadcasting Services Act.

I would like to make a further comment on the question of International Agreements and their affect on broadcasting to child audiences.

A case could surely be made that the General Agreement on Trade in Services (G.A.T.S) should be invalid, when those services include television programs directed at children that soundly conducted, ethical research could well find has deleterious effects on normal child development.

It is clearly possible that research may find that TV and other media services, made available through digital conversion, have great potential for child education.

Again I believe this facility to conduct such research should be an integral and leading objective of the Broadcasting Services Act.

Finance for such research could be provided by a fee for the use of Digital Spectra allocated by the Federal Government.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Productivity Commission's enquiry into Australian Broadcasting.

Submitted by George Blair-West, 39 Lacey Road, Carseldine, Qld. 4034.