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BROADCASTING INQUIRY

Response to Draft Report

14 December 1999

from the NVLAA Inc.

**The National Viewers and Listeners Association of
Australia Inc.**

N V L A A

"Towards a New Century and a Safer Society"

Draft Recommendation 6.2

Datacasting should not be defined "liberally" - the fact that other broadcasters are concerned about its use with moving images waves a flag, especially considering that Rupert Murdoch plans to use it, and plans to wage a campaign in marginal seats about it.

Draft Recommendation 8.1

If foreign investment means the subverting of our own culture to e.g. America - then keep restrictions on foreign ownership.

Draft Recommendation 8.4

Cross media rules are vital for consumers to know one opinion will not rule every type of media.

Draft Recommendation 9.2

Children's quotas should be increased - Cherrie Bottger (Channel 10) says, "They watch a lot more TV than the average adult does." (ABA Update July 1999). There should be another category to divide the 8-13 age-group.

It is desirable for children to have the best programmes available - so agree the rigidity on Australian content is parochial. Jonathan Shiff says "C is no longer fostering excellence in children's programming. ...there is a certain banality... a formulaic approach" Further, "the networks in this country only buy children's programming because it is mandated." Also " ...there is no doubt in my mind that we are losing the child audience... I think one of the reasons they are turning away is there is not a lot they want to watch... if they put an animal or a grandparent of a child in, they think it is a child's programme... C... is riding shotgun on standards - violence, sexism, ageism, racism." (ABA Update July 1999)

Draft Recommendation 10.1

"Freedom of expression" is a very loose term and out of place in a legal document - it should NOT be added to Section 3 of the BSA. It should be pointed out that it disadvantages those who do not want to see licentiousness on their TV set. In fact THEY do NOT then have "freedom of expression." It is irresponsible to say such people can turn off their set - they may be ill or old or lonely or unable to read - unable to engage in hobbies - why shouldn't their needs be catered for?

Draft Recommendation 10.2

We were left out of the 2nd round of comment on the most recent Code of Practice (FACTS) How strange this seems when it took three years to actually come out with a draft copy to comment on. Yet, with the ink of our submission hardly dry, the final code was produced too quickly to imagine our concerns were addressed! Why are these papers produced with insufficient time to comment, and sometimes at the time of year when volunteers are most busy, on holiday etc.etc.

Draft Recommendation 10.3

We have NO confidence in the ABA functioning as a watchdog. It needs more teeth, such as financial penalties These being imposed quickly after a breach.

It is impossible to have fair and impartial news, for every choice of image or statement is mediated by the one who chose it whose viewpoint colours the choice. The requirement needs to be that BOTH sides of a topic are given.

Draft Recommendation 10.4

The OFLC classification process has succeeded in lowering standards – we see Pavlov's theory of conditioned responses at work here. A stimulus at first actuated by a signal develops into a conditioned response without that signal. Gradually programmes have included more and more of the lower sides of man's nature until fewer people are shocked by what once would have been abhorred. However, that has also resulted in fewer people watching TV because there are sufficient numbers still of an independent mind who do NOT wish to have sleazy or violent programmes. Too small samples, and what appears to be manipulation of the first results until the samples changed their minds towards the OFLC classification and voted more in line with their choices.

A greater number of people and in a greater number of areas and with no "coaching" by the OFLC would give one a greater feeling of assurance of so-called "community standards."

If research is honest and above board, why isn't it printed in daily papers, aired on TV etc?

This would certainly be more transparent.

Draft Recommendation 10.5

There should be a chain of licensing requirements to help protect users of the Internet.

Access providers, Host providers and Search Engines should all be licensed.

When someone applies to be indexed on the search engine, the latter indexes both page titles and the hidden tags. More intelligence needs to be put into this indexing. The owner could compile a dictionary of "dubious" words i.e. those used normally but which are subverted for pornographic reasons. When indexing, this dictionary could be checked and classifying could be appropriately dealt with – new words being added as needed. The index available to Internet users would then be available in two forms, the normal and that sought out specifically for other reasons.

Technically it would be feasible to spend merely two months
approximately on development work to build in better filtering of content
indication in the search engine.
Minimum levels of security could be demanded on licencing.
As Interpol takes action through local police forces it would be more
helpful to give them teeth to prosecute cases of breaches themselves.

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