

## **“Supporting Australian stories on our screens Options paper”**

Submission – Stephen Breen

Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback to the Options paper

In my forty-four years in education I had the fortunate opportunity to be a teacher and Principal across a number of schools in Western Australia and was President of the Western Australian Primary Principals Association. My career has enabled me to have knowledge of the prerequisites needed for learning before children enter formal schooling. I am also fully aware that a well-structured and high-quality early years and primary years environment is essential for young Australian to enable them to have a successful life into the future.

I believe this high-quality is a partnership between the home, the school and governments. Each group is accountable to ensure the child is exposed to high quality social, emotional and academic examples in the areas of cooperation, relationship development, resilience as well as a positive sense of identity and the understanding of self and culture.

To achieve successful life and learning outcomes, a child needs help with well-structured and consistent parent input and their reinforcement through school programs. It is also critically important for children to be exposed to high quality screen stories and examples as children now spend ever increasing time in front of the screens. In this complex world the research clearly states that unless children are exposed to this high-quality learning in the early years, they can be severely disadvantaged. It cannot be left to chance!

The social, emotional and academic needs of children are ideally suited to the film, TV and digital environment and are best developed through stories that children can relate to their everyday life and culture. These stories cannot be totally imported cheaply from across the world because relevance is a most important determinant for a young child to grasp the significance and importance of the concept. Who knows best about our indigenous and multicultural uniqueness, our history or in fact, our language?

Australia is very fortunate that over a number of decades successive governments have implemented resourcing structures that have ensured children and schools, in this the ever-changing world, always had access to film and television examples. These resources have greatly assisted parents and have complimented school programs to support the government’s curriculum areas and cross curricula priorities. As a teacher and Principal, I have readily used these programs and stories to provide high-quality real-life examples in my teaching. Children are a very discerning audience and will regularly gravitate to the high-quality and personalised programs and it is clear parents and educators are keen to use the resources. As evidence of this fact I also notice on reading the Options paper parents have flocked to the Australian content for their children.

I would acknowledge, as pointed out in the Options paper, that the cost of local children's and Australian adult programming is expensive, however one must weigh up the need for an Australian identity and high-quality programs to provide for the future.

The Options paper was an interesting read. I would like to highlight five areas that really stood out for me as an educator and as an Australian citizen.

1. "The PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) economic study that stated that if quotas were eliminated on commercial television, children's programs would cease to be produced, drama programs would reduce by 90 per cent and documentary programs would be halved." *(This would be a drastic situation and readily rejected by the vast majority of the community)*
2. The quota for Australia commercial licences is 130 hours of preschool (P) programming per year. *(130 hours or 2.5 hours per week is a very minimal requirement that I believe should be increased and fully resourced by the commercial bodies)*
3. The changing viewing options given to parents for their young children due to the policy changes that came into effect in 2001, 2009 and 2013.
4. ABC KIDS is the highest ranked FTA channel during the day for child audiences aged 0 to 4 years. *(This is a testament to the investment by the government in high-quality TV and film)*
5. The comment on page 36, "As the ACCC's DPI final report indicated, continuing to heavily regulate a sector under pressure while allowing a booming sector to remain unregulated, does not represent a level-playing field." *(If one looks at the financial issues I would totally agree however if one also looks at government accountability to the public to ensure an continuation a viable film and television profession as well as stories for our young children to enable the continuation and growth of our Australian identity it takes on a completing new complexity.)*

If Australia is to prioritise the development of our most precious resource, our children, we must invest in them for the long term. This investment comes in the form of personal intervention within the home, at the school level and at the government level. Young children need to be exposed to the stories that ensure they learn and understand the uniqueness of being an Australian.

When looking at the options available I would urge the government to support Australian stories within the content of films and TV presented to our children. To achieve this Australia must have the ability within a viable and effective local profession to develop and present content and issues to the community such as health and wellbeing, relationships, fairness and our unique culture.

I would also urge that the review prioritises the overview of such content through bodies such as the ACTF which has a fantastic record of advocacy and support of high-quality films and TV.

Thank you for your time.

Stephen Breen