

#SaveKidsTV

INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY UNITE TO RALLY BEHIND KIDS TV

The Australian screen production industry and key community groups have united to save Australian children's content. Commercial television broadcasters have revealed in submissions to a parliamentary inquiry that they want their obligations to screen Australian children's content abolished by the Government.

Representatives from the children's TV industry and audience have rallied together in an awareness campaign. The centrepiece of the campaign is a website and video, which offers a 360-degree view from those who love, make and choose children's TV: children, parents, teachers, producers and actors.



"Australian children deserve content made specially for them. It is so important that the diversity of Australian identity and our children's experience is reflected back to them on screens. For our children to lose our unique identity on screen is to lose part of our culture," said children's TV icon and former Playschool host Benita Collings.



Award winning Australian children's TV producer and creator, Jo Werner commented, "Australia is well known around the world for its incredible kid's TV. Because of this children's television content is one of the most lucrative international exports in the Australian television sector. Here in Australia, shows like *Dance Academy* and *Ready For This* have provided thousands of employment opportunities in the screen industry and most importantly have given Aussie kids the chance to see themselves reflected on their screens."



Children's content producers Patrick Egerton and David Webster from Cheeky Little Media said, "naturally when an Australian kid hears an Australian voice or can see their environment reflected back to them, it means something to them. We need Australian content not to be Australian for the sake of being Australian, but of a very high quality. It needs to be something kids can be proud of, being Australian."



Monique Bennie, a primary school teacher said, "there's an opportunity there for shows to help guide children through social situations or through events in their lives. They might be able to work through those issues and connect with the characters and be able to find ways to solve some of their problems."



Ash Sungaila, mother of baby Illy, said "Australian content helps cultivate a sense of identity of being Australian and what that means."

In late April, Senator Hanson-Young of the Australian Greens announced her intention to introduce measures to strengthen Australian children's content.

The campaign calls on the public to visit the website, write to their local member of parliament and sign the petition – www.savechildrenscontent.org/takeaction

Interview Availability

Benita Collings is available for interview on Wednesday 10 May between 2 and 6 and all day Thursday 11 May.

Additional spokespeople may be made available.

Media enquiries

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Community and Industry support

The campaign has broad industry and community support, including from:

- Australian Children's Television Foundation
- Australian Cinematographers Society
- Australian Council on Children and the Media
- Australian Directors Guild
- Australian Guild of Screen Composers
- Australian Screen Sound Guild
- Australian Teachers of Media
- Australian Writers Guild
- Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, and
- Screen Producers Australia.

Screen Producers Australia has been bringing together industry and community efforts.

Media Assets

- Website: www.savechildrenscontent.org
- Campaign video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MR8cj_lhVss&feature=youtu.be
- Marney Kennedy video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhvqGxISuuk&feature=youtu.be>
- Media asset downloads
 - Pictures: <https://portal.screenproducers.org.au:8443/link/XKm40uSGvAK803zEHasMpl>
 - Campaign video: <https://portal.screenproducers.org.au:8443/link/H1s5OSnzM6cMgxxfYK1OMU>
- Senator Hanson-Young petition: <http://www.sarahhansonyoung.com/kidstv>
- Save Kids TV Campaign Ambassador page: <https://www.savechildrenscontent.org/campaign-ambassadors>



CHILDREN'S CONTENT

Children's programming is the most vulnerable genre of production made for the most impressionable audience members. To ensure there is a diverse range of content available in the market there needs to be support from government agencies and mandated engagement from commercial platforms.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The obligations to broadcast children's content worked well when there was a single linear channel. However, when commercial broadcasters were provided access to more spectrum and multi-channels in 2013, the broadcasters were allowed to acquit their children's content quotas across their channels. Without delay, the broadcasters shifted their children's content to a multi-channel.

As children's content became isolated on a multi-channel, and with

little if any promotion and marketing invested in by the networks, audience and advertising on these programs have declined and commercial broadcasters have begun to question their obligations. However, while the first run numbers may be in decline, children's content has a lengthy currency with strong second and third run audiences.

Commercial broadcasters currently have restrictions around the way they can advertise on children's content and point to SVOD services like Netflix and say that they aren't regulated to provide content, which they say is unfair.

ABC and SBS do not have content quotas and their budgets have been cut by the government and the [ABC is reducing its expenditure on Children's content](#). This means while the ABC does show a lot of children's content now, this is no guarantee that it will show children's content in the future.

Subscription television broadcasters don't have children's content requirements.

It is likely that the Government will review the Standards this year.

WHY HAVE CHILDREN'S CONTENT OBLIGATIONS?

At the time the Broadcasting Services Act was passed in 1992, the Parliament noted it intended commercial television broadcasters to broadcast Australian content which:

- Reflects the multicultural nature of Australia's population,
- Promotes Australians' cultural identity
- Facilitates the development of the local production industry.

The Government also required commercial television broadcasters to broadcast children's content.

A strong regulatory environment for commercial broadcasters is seen as important because of the power of the television medium reaching nearly all Australian households for free and as a quid pro quo for access to the spectrum: a public good. There are also other regulatory protections for these businesses such as no competition from new commercial television licensees¹ and prioritised access to valuable sports rights through the [Government's Anti-Siphoning List](#).

Australians on average watch 21 hours of broadcast TV a week and watch 3.42 hours a week of catch up TV. Foxtel has 27 per cent market share and Netflix has a 28 per cent market share and 2.23 million Australian subscriptions. Across all the content providers, some of this content should be age appropriate and provided specifically for children to help their development, learning and entertainment.

WHAT IS AT RISK?

It is likely that the Government will review the Standards this year.

We hold fears that this Government will tilt the balance too far in favour of the commercial content platforms to the detriment of our children and local production.

If the current obligations are removed they cannot be re-introduced because of Australia's free trade agreement with the United States.

If there is limited involvement in children's content by commercial platforms, it will rob children of the opportunity to be educated and entertained and see children like themselves on these key services. It will diminish the diversity of content available for children and devastate the local production industry for children's content.

HOW CAN THE PROBLEM BE FIXED?

The problem is a tough one to fix so keeping the quotas for commercial broadcasters is preferable to any removal of the quotas without any careful and considered alternative reform.

Fixing the problem could be as easy as keeping the current quotas and requiring greater promotion and marketing and flexibility of children's programming across a range of a content platforms including broadcast. Obligations should also be extended to SVOD services or other digital platforms, as well as the ABC and SBS to invest in local children's content. Other options include a children's television fund, which could be set up to which all the broadcasters might contribute. There might also be an app for children's content.

We need our current regulatory environment evolved to better fit the current media landscape. Current regulations should be extended to new market entrants so that our children have access to a diversity of Australian-made children's content and a vibrant local production industry.

¹ Section 37A Broadcasting Services Act 1992.