FREE-TO-AIR
A History of Sydney's Commercial Television Programming, 1956-2012

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the work presented in this thesis is my own except where due acknowledgement has been made. This work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. Ethics approval has been obtained: 5201000807 (D).

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Contents

Summary

This thesis presents a history of television programming on Sydney's commercial free-to-air (FTA) Channels 7, 9 and 10, set against Australia's social, political and economic milieu between 1956 and 2012. Beginning in 1956 with the launch of television in Sydney, Australia's largest television market, it maps the evolution of programming genres within the broad fields of information (news, current affairs, religion, sport, and children's programming) and entertainment (light entertainment, drama and reality TV). In doing so, it reveals not a consistent process of development, but rather, one that is predominantly cyclical.

Australia's dual or mixed television system (consisting of private commercial networks and public service broadcasters) has played a fundamental role in shaping the development of programming policy. It has also served to fuel tensions between the desires of commercial broadcasters to run a profitable enterprise and the desire of advocacy groups to keep commercial broadcasters accountable as they operate a significant national resource.

Within this operational context, this thesis takes account of the role and influence of the major interest groups who have had a vested interest in determining what constitutes suitable programming – regulators, advocacy groups and the commercial television industry itself. It also explores how other factors such as changes in media ownership and control of Sydney television licenses, fierce competition between the various commercial stations, the role of scheduling, the rapid pace of technological change within the industry and wider trends in global television have

affected programming in Sydney.

For many years, Sydney television has maintained a strong parochialism, and in several programming instances, such as sport and news and current affairs, it has remained resistant to Australian programmes produced outside of Sydney. The rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne television personalities and programmes, dominant for much of television's history, underscores not only the separate and distinctive television cultures that developed in the 1950s and 1960s, but how each city was initially constructed with its own separate television identity. Given the popularity of imported programmes, most of the locally-produced ones in Sydney have been instrumental in providing the personalities around which station identity could be built. Magazines and metropolitan newspapers also perpetuated an interest in local 'stars' and facilitated a collaborative conversation with viewers, long before the rise of the Internet and social media.

Sydney and, indeed, Australian television are part of an international cultural system. By tracing broad, global trends through the prism of Sydney's commercial television in particular categories, the thesis provides insights into changes in the production and distribution, and to a lesser extent the reception, of Sydney television programming against a wider canvass.

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This thesis would not have been written without the help and encouragement of many individuals and institutions.

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Every television researcher is also conscious of the debt they owe to previous scholars in the field. I recognise that if my account of the development of this medium breaks any new ground, it will only be because I have been able to stand on the shoulders of others. Any new

insights that I have derived only became possible because of the vibrant community of knowledge in which we are all privileged to participate. As John Donne once famously said, ‘No man is an island’.

I wish to extend my thanks to the staff of the National Film and Sound Archive in Sydney and Canberra, the State Libraries of NSW and Victoria, the National Archives of Australia in Melbourne and Canberra, Wesley Mission, Presbyterian Social Services archives, and St Mary's Cathedral archives for their unfailing courtesy, helpfulness and expertise in helping me to locate the critical sources for my research.

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Anyone who has completed a PhD knows what a long, steep, uphill climb it is. I am so grateful to my immediate and wider family and friends who have been my cheerleaders throughout the inevitable periods of self-doubt and writers' block. To my grandparents, Bobbie (now deceased) and Bill, my parents, Peter and Sue, and my siblings and their

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But most of all I want to thank my long-suffering husband, Kip, who is the most unflappable, easy-going and patient person I know. Without Kip's support I could never have undertaken this immense project in the first place. Throughout every twist and turn of the process, Kip has remained upbeat and hopeful, even during the times when I doubted myself. I look forward to beginning a new ‘thesis-free’ chapter of life with Kip once this particular phase of my endeavours has been accomplished.

Abbreviations

AANA	Association of Australian National Advertisers
ABA	Australian Broadcasting Authority (the ABT's successor)
10BA	Tax incentive scheme for film production
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission/Corporation
ABCB	Australian Broadcasting Control Board (the ABT's predecessor)
ABN-2	Call sign for Channel 2 (ABC), Sydney
ABT	Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (the ABCB's successor)
ACA	*A Current Affair*
ACB	Australian Cricket Board
ACC	Australian Council of Churches (also the acronym given to the Australian Christian Channel)
ACCTP	Advisory Committee on Children's Television Programmes
ACMA	Australian Media Communications Authority (the ABA's successor)
ACRTP	Advisory Committee on Religious Television Programmes
ACS	Australian Content Standard
ACTF	Australian Children's Television Foundation
AFCBS	Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations
AFC	Australian Film Commission
AFDC	Australian Film Development Corporation
AFFC	Australian Film Finance Corporation
AFL	Australian Football League
AFR	*Australian Financial Review*
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
AJC	Australian Jockey Club
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANPHA	Australian National Preventative Health Agency

ATN-7	Call sign for Channel Seven, Sydney
ATRP	Seventh Day Adventist Radio and Television Productions
AUSSAT	An Australian government owned company that owned and operated the national satellite system. Optus acquired AUSSAT in 1992
ARL	Australian Rugby League
AWA	Amalgamated Wireless Australasia
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BSA	*Broadcasting Services Act* 1992
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System (US)
CCTA	Catholic Church Television Association
CETS	Church of England Television Society
CMH	Consolidated Media Holdings
CPC	Children's Programme Committee
CTA	Christian Television Association
CTAC	Children's Television Advisory Committee
CTANSW	Christian Television Association of New South Wales
CTAV	Christian Television Association of Victoria
CTS	Children's Television Standard
DTV	Digital Television
EFTF	Experimental Film & Television Fund
FACTS	Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (Commercial Television Australia from late 2002, renamed FreeTV Australia)
FCC	Film Finance Corporation
FISC	Film Industry Standing Committee
FLICs	Film Licensed Investment Company Scheme
FM	Frequency Modulation
FTA	Free-to-Air
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
GTV-9	Call sign for Channel 9, Melbourne
HD-TV	High Definition Television

HSV-7	Call sign for Channel 7, Melbourne
HWT	Herald and Weekly Times
ICC	International Cricket Conference
ICTM	*I Challenge the Minister*
IPTV	Internet Protocol Television
ITV	Independent Television (Britain)
NBC	National Broadcasting Company (US)
NBN	National Broadband Network
NCRTC	National Catholic Radio and Television Centre
newscaf	News and Current Affairs
NIDA	National Institute of Dramatic Art
NRL	National Rugby League
NSWRL	New South Wales Rugby League
OB	Outside Broadcast
PBL	Publishing & Broadcasting Limited
PMG	Postmaster-General (Australian)
PoV	*Point of View*
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SBS-TV	Special Broadcasting Service Television Network
SCG	Sydney Cricket Ground
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist Church
SMH	*Sydney Morning Herald*
SOM	*Bobby Limb's Sound of Music*
TCN-9	Call sign for Channel 9, Sydney
Telegraph	*Daily Telegraph*
TEN-10	Call sign for Channel 10, Sydney
TNC	Transnational Companies
TRA	*Turn 'Round Australia*

UHF	Ultra High Frequency
VCR	Video Cassette Recorder
VHF	Very High Frequency
VFL	Victorian Football League
WSC	World Series Cricket
WWoS	*Wide World of Sports*

Notes: The Australian currency changed from pounds, shillings and pence to dollars in 1966. All references to currency are Australian legal tender, unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

Television broadcasting in Australia officially commenced on 16 September 1956 at TCN-9 in Sydney. This date is popularly referred to as the beginning of Australian television. However it more accurately refers to the beginning of Sydney television broadcasting, when Sydney viewers witnessed their first sample of regular local and imported programming in black and white. From 1956 to 1994, Australian television comprised a dual free-to-air (FTA) system: a national (publicly funded) service and a commercial service. Over time this system expanded across the country to include subscription, community, narrowcast and amateur stations. Australia has three government-funded, public broadcasting services: the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) and, more recently, National Indigenous Television (NITV). Commercial FTA services include three main metropolitan networks: the Seven Network, the Nine Network and Network Ten.

Australian television history is a fragmented field, particularly in relation to FTA commercial television. An enduring conviction since the Royal Commission of Television in 1953, that popular commercial television has the potential to produce a 'debased form of culture', may have partly contributed to the void in this area of Australian media scholarship.[1] In the literature, there is no scholarly history of commercial television programming in Australia or its biggest market, Sydney. This thesis seeks to redress this imbalance in Australian media historiography by tracing the history of FTA commercial television programming in Sydney, from its origins in the 1950s to 2012.

[1] A. Curthoys, 'Television before Television', *Continuum*: *The Australian Journal of Media & Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1991, p. 157.

The history of Sydney television is like a rocky pathway, made up of several uneven layers. Just as builders use sand to fill the gaps in order to create an even and secure pathway, so too does this thesis. It aims to fill gaps, challenge preconceptions, provoke debate and encourage further scholarship. My study therefore draws on work undertaken by other researchers, who have made significant contributions to commercial programming and production both with popular and official historical accounts. In this way, the thesis will be a complementary study, building on this foundation and rectifying neglected areas of Sydney's commercial station histories. It attempts to draw pre-existing historical accounts together, and build on them through new original research.

A great deal can be gleaned by looking at Sydney, which is the media capital of Australia and the main programme producer and distributor. A history of commercial FTA television programming in Sydney[2] is designed to be a central contribution to understandings of how television programming developed in Australia. Although there is still need for a national study of FTA commercial television programming in Australia, this is beyond the scope and word constraints of this thesis.

But what are the fundamentals of television programming? Programming can refer to either an outcome or a process.[3] Programmes are segments of content intended for broadcast. They are the means by which commercial broadcasters attract an audience to watch its advertising content, and are made up of several different genres such as news, drama, sport, and light entertainment. They form the 'building blocks' of television.[4] Programming also includes

[2] Although the boundaries between formerly discrete systems of media delivery have become blurred, this is primarily a history of the traditional television broadcast services in Sydney television as watched by viewers on analogue television sets/channels, and later on digital.
[3] S. T. Eastman & D. A. Ferguson, *Media Programming: Strategies and Practices*, 9th ed., Wadsworth, Boston, MA, 2013, p. 4.
[4] J. Ellis, 'Scheduling: the last creative act in television?', *Media Culture Society*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2000, p. 25.

scheduling, the practice of organising television programmes in a daily, weekly or season-long schedule, what Raymond Williams refers to as a 'planned flow'.[5] Scheduling is the 'architecture' of programming and reveals much about the character and identity of broadcasting institutions and their assumptions about viewers' daily routines.[6]

The primary measure of a programme's success is its ratings performance. Ratings are a method used for measuring the audience and provide the means by which commercial broadcasters generate advertising revenue.[7] Ratings information often forms the reasoning behind programmers' decisions to change the production of certain programmes; tweak scripts, plots, characters and timeslots; or rely heavily on genre repetition.[8] These decisions provide the justification for the scheduling strategies and practices of commercial broadcasters. The principal scheduling strategy is to capture and retain the largest possible audience to maximise profit, as central to commercial media economics is delivering audiences to advertisers. Therefore effective scheduling requires awareness of what the audience wants, deciphering which genres or formats are popular in specific timeslots, and skill in anticipating competitors' programme strategies.[9]

Academics have scarcely studied the practice of scheduling, commonly referred to as the 'black art' of programming.[10] This thesis seeks to address this oversight by illuminating the development of scheduling as practised by Sydney commercial FTA programmers. Initially,

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[5] R. Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, Fontana-Collins, [London], 1974, p. 91.
[6] Ellis, 'Scheduling', p. 25.
[7] For a more comprehensive description of what ratings are and how they work in relation to Australian FTA commercial television, see Appendix 1.
[8] Once a programming genre proves to be popular with audiences, generally competitors follow and produce similar programmes. This explains why there is often a glut of cooking shows or police shows broadcast on television channels competing in the same marketplace. See V. Nightingale, 'Industry Measurement of Audiences', in S. Cunningham & G. Turner (eds), *The Media in Australia: Industries, Texts, Audiences*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, pp. 271-80.
[9] Eastman & Ferguson, *Media Programming*, pp. 8-14.
[10] Ellis, 'Scheduling', pp. 25-26.

scheduling in Sydney was conducted on the basis of trial and error; if a programme rated poorly in a particular timeslot, then it was moved to a different one. Eventually, however, as knowledge of audiences, genres and competitors improved, scheduling became more strategic in its organisation of programming genres and their broadcast.

Rather than offering a detailed textual analysis of specific programming genres, the aim of this thesis is to provide a comprehensive contextual history of particular programmes within their genres, and their development. This includes mapping programming trends together with their underlying influences. Without reference to broader contextual issues within the national and international television sphere, a history of Sydney's commercial television programming is rendered incomplete. These connections will be made when relevant, but cannot be extensively maintained throughout the thesis due to word constraints.

The development of television programming in Sydney is not linear, but rather circular and cyclical. The requirements of television to project a variety of genres, and images from live action to animation, have provided the catalyst for technological innovation; in the same way technological innovation has transformed the delivery and production of programming. However, programming reflects not only television's ability to reinvent itself but also the conservatism of commercial broadcasters, who are more generally averse to risk-taking. What constitutes 'quality' programming and the desire on the part of various groups to achieve such an elusive construct has produced tension and confusion, and a striving for continual programme innovation. As we shall see, there is a long-standing divide between proponents of 'high' culture and 'low' culture.[11] This has further fuelled debates about programming, as advocates from both sides of the debate recognise the role television plays in shaping national

[11] See Curthoys, 'Television before Television', pp. 152-170.

identity and culture for Australians. The thesis explores these debates and their consequences for programming and its impacts.

Australian commercial television programming is not only determined by broadcasters, but also by federal government policy, which is administered by government regulators. These regulators have tended to capitulate to the desires of commercial broadcasters, rather than enforce legislation. This has influenced, to varying degrees, the rapid development of some programming genres, while at the same time thwarted the growth of less attractive or more expensive and time-consuming formats. Commercially successful programmes appear to be the kind that understand the increasingly fragmented media world of the twenty-first century and adapt their format and content to better connect with the audience. The tension between the desires and interests of commercial broadcasters, regulators and the public have, over time, constrained but also enabled commercial television in Sydney to assume its current form. Finally, the rivalry between Sydney television stations and other states, particularly Melbourne, has affected the trajectory of personalities and programmes and their place in Australian televisual memory. The thesis will examine these tensions and rivalries together with their effects on commercial television programming in Sydney.

The key objectives of this thesis, therefore, are to describe and account for the changes in programming trends in commercial FTA television in Sydney between 1956 and 2012. Factors influencing programming that will form part of the discussion include government and regulation, technology, economics, culture, personalities and advertising. This thesis considers the historical trajectory of these myriad elements and how they interconnected at certain points.[12]

[12] A. Moran, *Moran's Guide to Australian TV Series*, Australian Film, Television & Radio School, Sydney, 1993, p. 1.

This requires capturing both the vastness and intimacy of Sydney television culture and its programmes. Representative incidents at a micro level often have significance at a macro level. This history therefore zigzags from large-scale arguments and generalisations about major policy and industry concerns, as well as professional practice and sociocultural issues, to finer narrative accounts of programmes and media personalities. What becomes evident is that, just as society impacts on television programming, so in turn does television programming impact on society. Therefore writing a history of Sydney television requires illuminating the socio-political and economic contexts in which Sydney stations operated. A history of television cannot be separated from these broader contexts. As Asa Briggs remarked, '[T]o write the history of broadcasting in the twentieth century is in a sense to write the history of everything else'.[13]

Historiography

In his essay, 'Television and the future historian', Philip M. Taylor observed, 'Whatever can be said for the future of television, its past has not been served well by historians…'.[14] The field of television history, both on an international and a national scale, has not been well represented in the broader development of television research.[15] Until recently, attempts at a clear delineation of television history as a discrete discipline have been overshadowed by dominant fields such as cultural, communications and media studies, disciplines which have the propensity to remain in the present tense, claiming 'so much for the new without rigorous investigation of the apparently "old"'.[16] Underpinning this discourse has been the widely held perception that television history can only be investigated through the lenses of broadcasting,

[13] Cited in H. Wheatley, 'Introduction: Re-viewing Television Histories', in H. Wheatley (ed.), *Re-viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography*, I.B. Tauris, London, New York, 2007, p. 4.
[14] P. M. Taylor, 'Television and the future historian', in G. Roberts & P.M. Taylor (eds), *The Historian, Television and Television History*, University of Luton Press, Luton, 2001, p. 174.
[15] J. Corner, 'Finding Data, Reading Patterns, Telling Stories: Issues in the Historiography of Television', *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 25, No. 2, March 2003, p. 276.
[16] Wheatley, 'Introduction' in Wheatley (ed.), *Re-viewing Television History*, p. 4.

media, communications and cultural histories.[17] As Helen Wheatley observes, to deal with the medium as having a distinctive history or field of study might appear as 'deeply myopic'.[18] Consequently, aspects of television history make an 'incidental' appearance for other purposes.[19]

Academic interest in media history has played a role in stimulating several broad approaches to television history. John Corner identifies five main emphases in media history that have emerged primarily in the US and UK contexts.[20] At the centre of the field exist a number of large-scale institutional histories. Asa Briggs' *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, a magisterial work primarily devoted to the history of the BBC (commercial television appears as an afterthought not receiving mention until Volume 5), and Eric Barnouw's *A History of Broadcasting in the United States* are pioneering works that have laid the foundation for subsequent international studies of television history.[21] Written in the 1960s before the 'cultural turn'[22] in the humanities, both works foreground the industry, individuals, corporate organisation and management of broadcasting, making little mention of subjects relating to audiences and programmes.

Second, and not unrelated to the institutional mode of television history, is what Corner terms 'television as making'. These micro-histories tend to focus on professional culture, practice

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[17] Ibid., p. 2.
[18] Ibid.
[19] J. Hartley, J. Green & J. Burgess, '"Laughs and Legends", or the Furniture that Glows? Television *As* History', *Australian Cultural History*, No. 26, 2007, pp. 19. For example, L. Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992; L. Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and the Postwar Suburbs*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC and London, 2001; W. Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and its Critics*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1990. Some of these are social or cultural histories which adopt a large-scale approach; television history is not their focus.
[20] Corner, 'Finding Data, Reading Patterns, Telling Stories', p. 275.
[21] A. Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, Rev. ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995; E. Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1966.
[22] L. Jacka, 'Doing the History of Television in Australia: Problems and Challenges', *Continuum: The Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, March 2004, pp. 28-29.

and production, highlighted mainly through biographical writings.[23] The third is the textual and aesthetics approach, which is commonly referred to as cultural studies. This uses histories of television programming to explain issues of what Wheatley describes as 'representation, form and aesthetics within a historical framework'.[24] Fourth, there are histories that focus on 'television as a sociocultural phenomenon',[25] tracing television viewing in relation to changes within the social and political sphere, or 'television's shifting meanings within everyday life'.[26] Pioneers in social and cultural history who have adopted this phenomenological approach are Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff.[27] Finally, there is the study of 'television as technology', an area that remains somewhat neglected.[28] Raymond Williams and Brian Winston, however, have made significant contributions along this line of research.[29]

The interdisciplinary nature of television histories adopted in the international sphere is largely paralleled in Australian television historiography. Several works can be loosely categorised. Approaches of cultural studies to the analysis of television audiences and programmes include contributions by John Tulloch and Graeme Turner, John Hartley, Alan McKee, Kate Bowles and Sue Turnbull, Tom O'Regan, and Stuart Cunningham and Toby

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[23] Corner, 'Finding Data, Reading Patterns, Telling Stories', p. 275.
[24] Wheatley, 'Introduction', in Wheatley (ed.), *Re-viewing Television History*, p. 7. See T. O'Sullivan, 'Television Memories and Cultures of Viewing, 1950-1965', in J. Corner (ed.), *Popular Television in Britain: Studies in Cultural History*, BFI, London, 1991, pp.159-81; L. Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2001; E. Meehan, 'Heads of Household Ladies of the House: Gender, Genre and Broadcast Ratings, 1929-1990', in V. Nightingale & K. Ross (eds), *Critical Readings: Media and Audiences*, Open University Press, Maidenhead, 2003, pp. 196-214; J. Hallam, '*Remembering Butterflies*: the comic art of housework', in J. Bignell & S. Lacey (eds) *Popular Television Drama: Critical Perspectives,* Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2005, pp. 34-50.
[25] Corner, 'Finding Data, Reading Patterns, Telling Stories', p. 275.
[26] Wheatley, 'Introduction', in Wheatley (ed.), *Re-viewing Television History*, p. 7.
[27] P. Scannell & D. Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting: Volume 1 1922-1939, Serving the Nation*, B. Blackwell, Oxford; Cambridge Mass., 1991; P. Scannell, *Radio, Television, and Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach*, Blackwell, Oxford; Cambridge, Mass., 1996.
[28] Corner, 'Finding Data, Reading Patterns, Telling Stories', p. 275.
[29] R. Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, Fontana-Collins, [London], 1974; B. Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet,* Routledge, London, 1998.

Miller.[30] Important studies examining the participatory role of audiences and the way they have been conceptualised also offer greater depth to discussions on television, forming part of the analysis of communications studies.[31]

Furthermore, Elizabeth Jacka and Stuart Cunningham have analysed television as part of communication policy[32] and Albert Moran has produced landmark studies of the Australian television industry, production and programmes.[33] Although such approaches provide a valuable starting point for addressing Australian television history, media scholars have remained focused on more contemporary forms of television analysis.[34]

Even within the field of Australian history, television history is often assigned, quite appropriately, a minor role within the main purpose of a work. Noteworthy examples include:

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[30] J. Tulloch & G. Turner (eds), *Australian Television: Programs, Pleasures and Politics*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989; J. Hartley, *Teleology: Studies in Television*, Routledge, London & New York, 1992; A. McKee, *Australian Television: A Genealogy of Great Moments*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne; Oxford, 2001; K. Bowles & S. Turnbull (eds), *Tomorrow Never Knows: Soap on Australian Television*, Australian Film Institute, Melbourne, 1994; T. O'Regan, *Australian Television Culture*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993; S. Cunningham, T. Miller, & D. Rowe, *Contemporary Australian Television*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1994.

[31] V. Nightingale, 'What's Ethnographic about Ethnographic Audience Research?', *Australian Journal of Communication*, No. 16, 1989, pp. 50-63; A. Ruddock, *Understanding Audiences*, Sage, London, 2001; J. Fiske & J. Hartley, *Reading Television*, 2nd ed., Routledge, London; New York, 2003; B. Griffen-Foley, 'From *Tit-Bits* to *Big Brother*: A Century of Audience Participation in the Media', *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 26, No. 4, July 2004, pp. 533-548; C. L. Davies J. & Sternberg, 'The Spaces and Places of Audience Research in Australian Television', *MIA*, No. 122, February 2007, pp. 28-41. A. Ruddock, *Investigating Audiences*, Sage, London, 2007.

[32] S. Cunningham & E. Jacka, *Australian Television and International Mediascapes*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

[33] Jacka, 'Doing the History of Television in Australia', p. 36; A. Moran, *Images & Industry: Television Drama Production in Australia*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1985; *Inside Australian Media*, University Research Group, Cremorne, NSW, 2000; A. Moran & C. Keating, *Historical Dictionary of Australian Radio and Television*, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Md, 2007; A. Moran with P. Pinne, *Moran's Guide to Australian TV Series*, Australian Film Television & Radio School: Distributed in Australia and New Zealand by Allen & Unwin, North Ryde, NSW, 1993.

[34] Jacka, 'Doing the History of Television in Australia', p. 36. The reports of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB) and its successors provide an annual assessment of the development of Australian television. See Australian Broadcasting Control Board, *Annual Report*s, Commonwealth Government Printing Office, Canberra, 1957-1976; Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, *Annual Reports*, A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1977-1992; Australian Broadcasting Authority, *Annual Reports,* Australian Broadcasting Authority, Sydney, 1993-2005; Australian Communications Media Authority, *ACMA Annual Reports,* Sydney, 2005-2012.

large-scale 'nation-building' histories by Geoffrey Blainey[35] and Manning Clark;[36] media company histories by Gavin Souter[37] and Bridget Griffen-Foley;[38] Philip and Roger Bell's work on Americanisation that discusses and explores the impact of 'Americanisation' on Australian culture, including television;[39] and Derham Grove's *TV Houses: Television's Influence on the Australian Home,* which chronicles the impact of television's arrival on the developments of architecture and domestic life in Melbourne.[40] In all these examples the context is in the foreground rather than television history itself. This secondary treatment of television is not surprising given the highly interdisciplinary nature that has evolved in mapping television history. Helen Wheatley reflects on this development by stating, 'it is not always clear where historical television research begins and ends, as most, if not all, studies of television usually contain some historical contextualisation on a textual, industrial or sociocultural level.'[41]

Consequently for Australian television history, the scholarly landscape is rather patchy, with historians maintaining a somewhat sceptical attitude to the likely value of television as a subject worthy of study. This is surprising given that television and its 'everydayness' pervade every part of our culture and the medium's influence is immeasurable. Despite or

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[35] G. Blainey, *Triumph of the Nomads: A History of Ancient Australia*, Rev. ed., Sun Books, Melbourne, 1983; *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History*, Rev. ed., Macmillan, Sydney, 2001; *A Shorter History of Australia*, completely rev. & updated ed., Vintage, North Sydney, NSW, 2009.
[36] The final work in his six-volume history is C.M.H, Clark, *A History of Australia, Vol VI, "The Old Dead Tree and the Young Dead Tree", 1916-1935 with an epilogue*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic., 1987.
[37] G. Souter, *A Company of Heralds: A Century and a Half of Australian Publishing by John Fairfax Limited and its Predecessors, 1831-1981*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic., 1981.
[38] B. Griffen-Foley, *The House of Packer: The Making of a Media Empire*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999; *Sir Frank Packer: The Young Master*, HarperCollins, Sydney, 2000; *Party Games: Australian Politicians and the Media from War to Dismissal*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2003; *Changing Stations: The Story of Australian Commercial Radio*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009.
[39] Phillip Bell & Roger Bell, *Implicated: The United States in Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993; Philip Bell & Roger Bell (eds), *Americanization and Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1998, cited in Hartley et. al, '"Laughs and Legends"', p. 20.
[40] D. Groves, *TV Houses: Television's Influence on the Australian Home*, Black Jack Press, Carlton North, Vic., 2004.
[41] Wheatley, 'Introduction' in Wheatley (ed.), *Re-viewing Television History*, p. 2.

perhaps because of this, little has been documented.[42] A more likely explanation for historians' neglect of Australian television is the sheer complexity of the medium, not only because, in the words of John Hartley et al., it has no 'singular point of origin, but also because it is not a singular object.'[43] The history of Australian television and, more generally, international television is one of 'multiple starts', comprising the work of many 'individuals, corporate and government', over an extended period of time.[44] Attempting to draw these threads and perspectives together into a definitive work poses an intimidating challenge, not the least because television, as Hartley et al. suggest, is 'too various a phenomenon to be reduced to an invention with properties that can be defined and tested.'[45] Perhaps because of its ephemeral and transient qualities, television is, as Wheatley observes, thought to be 'beyond a historical materiality.'[46]

Furthermore, television archives have proved to be a stumbling block for the historian. Historians are confronted with a dual challenge: sifting through mountains of viewing material, which has to be watched in 'real time', and inadequate archival records. For television broadcasting institutions, preserving audiovisual material is expensive, and is rarely a priority. In some cases, tape and film copies have been thrown away, re-used or taped over for immediate use.[47]

A further problem is that television stations have kept what has been perceived as 'quality' television and generally discarded the opposite. This poses a challenge for historians as what

[42] T. Kaufman, 'The Path to a History of Australian Television', *Metro Magazine*, No. 148, 2006, p. 6.
[43] Hartley et al., '"Laughs and legends"', p. 17.
[44] Kaufman, 'The Path to a History of Australian Television', p. 6.
[45] Hartley et al., '"Laughs and legends"', p. 17.
[46] Wheatley, 'Introduction', in Wheatley (ed.), *Re-viewing Television History*, p. 3.
[47] G. Creeber, 'Introduction', in G. Creeber (ed.), *Fifty Key Television Programmes*, Arnold; New York: Distributed by Oxford University Press, London, 2004. p. xiv.

passes for 'quality' may vary over time.[48] Certain types of programme genres, notably news and current affairs (newscaf), documentaries and high-profile dramas, have tended to be considered more worthy of preservation than light entertainment genres.[49] As Jason Jacobs observes, 'The danger here is that television history gets constructed around what survives for viewing rather than for what was actually shown'.[50] Therefore television historians need to be keenly aware of how television institutions' attitudes to their programmes have shaped the evidence available.

Television history has not only suffered from a lack of attention by historians, but also from the absence of a vital and on-going examination of its crucial philosophical and or methodological moorings. The task of balancing theory with empirical records remains a challenge, but as Corner observes, to 'keep historical inquiry in a strong and visible dialogue with other inquiry in media and cultural studies' will help contribute to a greater historical understanding of the processes involved with doing television history.[51] Key issues concerning the 'how' and 'why' of television history and historiography are addressed in Helen Wheatley's 2007 edited collection, *Re-viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography*.[52] The collection displays newly emerging work in the field particularly within the UK context, addressing questions of methodology, and calling for an interdisciplinary approach to historiography.

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[48] Ibid.
[49] J. Bignell, *An Introduction to Television Studies*, Routledge, London, 2004, p. 38. In Australia, however, the National Film and Sound Archive holds only one news item from 1956, two each from both 1957 and 1958 and six from 1959. See B. Alysen, 'Today's News Tomorrow: Researching Archival Television', *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture & Policy* (*MIA*), No. 99, May 2001, pp. 15-21.
[50] J. Jacobs, 'Television and investigating the past', in G. Creeber (ed.) *Tele-Visions: An Introduction to Studying Television*, pp. 107-115, cited in Wheatley (ed.), *Re-viewing Television History*, p. 11.
[51] Corner, 'Finding Data, Reading Patterns, Telling Stories' p. 279.
[52] H. Wheatley (ed.), *Re-viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2007.

Television histories have often been criticised for predominantly maintaining a nation-centric approach. Jacka notes that on occasion the more 'dominant' US and UK 'television cultures' tend to write their 'national television histories as if they were *the* history, implicitly generalizing patterns that may be true only for one place/nation as if they were universal.'[53] Hartley et al. observe the repetitious nature of such parochialism, suggesting the neglect of international perspectives is due to a convenient form of 'forgetting', so much so that the 'British "forget" the part played by Germany; the Americans "forget" the part played by the British.'[54]

Australian television historiography has also remained largely nation-centric. Moran argues that many Australian histories of television have focused on how Australian television has been instrumental in 'binding the nation together' and creating shared experiences.[55] According to Jacka, the national emphasis appears to be an obvious focus for organising Australian television and broadcasting, highlighting how histories of television among other broadcasting forms of cultural technology have 'played a role in nation building'.[56] Although Australian television's impact can rightly be viewed from a national perspective, more emphasis needs to be given to its place within the international context. In order to appreciate the history of Australian television, one must recognise that we have not only consumed and experienced locally produced programmes, but also overseas imports.[57] Moran identifies the problem, arguing '…whether it be the histories of institutions, production, programming, genres, social impacts, policy, technology or audiences [Australian television history] is presented in terms of an Australian exceptionalism'. Inevitably the conclusion

[53] Jacka, 'Doing the History of Television in Australia', p. 31.
[54] Hartley et al., '"Laughs and legends"', p. 17.
[55] A. Moran, 'The International Face of Australian Television', *MIA*, No. 121, November 2006, p. 174.
[56] Jacka, 'Doing the History of Television in Australia', p. 31.
[57] Wheatley, 'Introduction' in Wheatley (ed.), *Re-viewing Television History*, p. 9.

drawn from such an emphasis is that Australian television is 'distinct' from broadcasting globally.[58]

In recent decades, however, the introspective focus of Australian historiography has shifted to emphasise more strongly the connections between the national sphere and the international. This new approach rightly acknowledges that what is considered 'Australian' is almost inevitably 'international'. Indeed the term 'international' and the idea of a national, domestic sphere should not be viewed in isolation from one another or seen as separate dimensions; rather, Moran argues, there should be emphasis on the 'continuum between the two.'[59] The shifting interconnectedness between Australia and the international television sphere has enabled Australia to participate in a global cultural exchange. This is not surprising given that the scaffolding of Australia's television system was partly borrowed from the US and the UK.[60]

Despite the hindrances associated with chronicling the medium, Australian television history is not entirely neglected. Trade, anecdotal and folklore histories, exhibitions, television specials and academic works are some forms of history that have emerged since 1956.[61] In 1959 Hector Crawford, an Australian radio and television producer, offered the first reflective account of the commercial television industry in Australia.[62] John Veitch Associates and B. O'Brien[63] followed this with a history of commercial television's first eight years in 1964, while Mungo MacCallum produced an edited collection of essays on the state of the industry

[58] Moran, 'The international Face of Australian Television', p. 176.
[59] Ibid., p. 184.
[60] Curthoys, 'Television before Television', p. 156.
[61] Hartley et al., '"Laughs and legends"', pp. 15, 21.
[62] H. Crawford, *Commercial Television Programmes in Australia*, [s.n.], Melbourne, 1959.
[63] John Veitch Associates & B. O'Brien, *Commercial Television in Australia: The First Eight Years*, John Veitch Associates, Melbourne, 1964.

in 1968.[64] Sandra Hall's *Supertoy: 20 Years of Australian Television* was the first defining account of the Australian television industry. Published in 1976, it analyses the inaugural days of Australian television, uncovering network politics, personalities and developmental trends in programming, and evaluates the direction in which Hall thought commercial television was heading.[65] She followed this with a less detailed examination of the industry in the early 1980s.[66] Both works provide a valuable assessment of Australian television history.

Peter Beilby[67] and Brian Davies[68] offered the first popular accounts of Australian television history, followed by Simon Francis et al.,[69] and Mal Walden.[70] Most of these are compilations rather than critical histories, although Beilby's and Davies' works are more detailed than others. Cate Rayson's *Glued to the Telly: A History of Australian Television* is a hybrid work, blurring the lines between a trade and academic history of Australian television.[71]

When Australian television celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2006, the milestone inspired a flurry of histories dedicated to memorialising Australian television and chronicling its fast-paced developments. Nick Place and Michael Roberts,[72] and David Clark and Steve Samuelson[73] offered popular compilation histories. Slightly more contextual accounts include: Peter Cox's broad commemorative survey of Australia's television history, which accompanied an exhibition on behalf of the Powerhouse Museum; Christine Hogan's valuable

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[64] M. MacCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television*, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1968.
[65] S. Hall, *Supertoy: 20 Years of Australian Television*, Sun Books, South Melbourne, Vic., 1976.
[66] S. Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off: Australian Television in the Eighties*, Cassell Australia, North Melbourne, Vic., 1981.
[67] P. Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV: The First 25 Years*, Thomas Nelson Australia, Melbourne, 1981.
[68] B. Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, Cassell Australia, North Ryde, NSW, 1981.
[69] S. Francis, J. Morrell, & H. Everingham, *Forty Years of Television: The Story of ATN7*, Lansdowne, Millers Point, NSW, 1996.
[70] M. Walden, *From the Word Go!!: Forty Years of Ten Melbourne*, Network Ten, Melbourne, c. 2003.
[71] C. Rayson, *Glued to the Telly*, Elgua Media, Red Hill South, 1998 cited in Hartley et al., '"Laughs and legends"', p. 21.
[72] N. Place & M. Roberts (eds), *50 Years of Television in Australia*, Hardie Grant Books, Prahran, Vic., 2006.
[73] D. Clark & S. Samuelson, *50 Years: Celebrating A Half-Century of Australian Television*, Random House Australia, Milsons Point, NSW, 2006.

insights into the experiences of women on television; and Brendan Horgan's popular account told through the eyes of people who worked within the industry.[74]

Several of these works map a single aspect of television history such as policy, programmes, technology, broadcasters, genres and audiences, while others trace historical events in order to 'illustrate contemporary concerns, not to account for the pastness of the past'.[75] In Australia, scholars have generally gravitated towards what Hartley et al. describe as a 'common sense' approach when investigating Australian television history. This approach or taxonomy includes key aspects of Australian television history – industry, programmes, policy and regulation, personalities, technology, audiences – categories that provide a helpful method of structure. In constructing a television history along these lines, it is important to show how all these elements intersect and relate.[76]

More recent analyses of Australian television history offer an overview of Australian television history as a preface to their main study. These involve dividing the history into broad chronological phases of growth, from Australian television's fledgling stages to periods of structural maturity and transformation.[77] Such examples underline the challenge of organising a history of Australian television and the complexity of the medium. Nick Herd, however, took up this challenge, and published in 2012 the first comprehensive history of Australian commercial television, offering a thoroughly researched and balanced account of

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[74] P. Cox, *On the Box: Great Moments in Australian Television 1956-2006,* Powerhouse Publishing, Haymarket, NSW, 2006; C. Hogan, *Look At Me!: Behind The Scenes Fun of Australian TV With The Women Who Made It:50 Years*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2006; B. Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!: 50 Years of Australian Television*, Hachette Livre Australia, Sydney, 2006.
[75] Hartley et al., '"Laughs and legends"', pp. 15, 21.
[76] Ibid., p. 20.
[77] G. Turner & S. Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2000.

the rise of networks, and the economic, political and regulatory developments that have shaped the industry.[78]

There are an extant number of network histories, of varying merit, written on television stations. The more authoritative, institutional variety of television history is Ken Inglis' seminal two-volume work on the ABC. This is an exhaustive institutional history that draws industry, politics and personalities together, highlighting the triumphs, failures and crises of the ABC and evaluating its influence on Australian life. Ien Ang's, Gay Hawkins' and Lamia Dabboussy's cultural history of SBS television explores and examines the struggles of public broadcasters in an increasingly commercialised mediasphere.[79] It also acknowledges and celebrates the diversity of programming on SBS in comparison to the more homogeneous offerings on commercial FTA television.

It is not surprising that more exhaustive accounts of public broadcasting have been in the vanguard of television histories, as public broadcasting institutions offer historians easier access to archives than commercial television stations.[80] For this reason, former employees who have 'inside' knowledge and ready-made connections generally undertake commercial network histories. As a former Nine Network producer, Gerald Stone's histories of the Nine Network[81] provide important insights into Sydney television culture. Both histories chronicle the looming force of Nine's owner, Kerry Packer, the network's golden years of dominance, and the problems that befell it during the mid-2000s. These histories, however, are essentially anecdotal rather than scholarly.

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[78] N. Herd, *Networking: Commercial Television in Australia*, Currency House, Sydney, 2012.
[79] I. Ang, G. Hawkins, & L. Dabboussy, *The SBS Story: The Challenge of Cultural Diversity*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008.
[80] Jacka, 'Doing the History of Television in Australia', p. 37.
[81] G. Stone, *Compulsive Viewing: The Inside Story of Packer's Nine Network*, Penguin Books Australia, Ringwood, Vic., 2001; G. Stone, *Who Killed Channel 9?: The Death of Kerry Packer's Mighty TV Dream Machine*, Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, 2007.

There is a good deal of scholarly work on the pre-history of Australian television – what Ann Curthoys aptly describes as 'television before television'.[82] In her own study, Curthoys explores the political and administrative questions concerning television, and analyses why a dual system of commercial and public broadcasting was applied to Australian television.[83] Cameron Hazlehurst's analysis is a political one, arguing that the system we have is largely a result of R. G. Menzies' influence.[84] Follow-up work on this early period of Australian television history is covered (albeit generally) by most popular histories. However there have also been several works dedicated to examining the gestation period, most of which are primarily devoted to government policy, regulation and broadcast media policy, and the ideological structure of Australia's television industry.[85]

An invaluable, albeit limited, amount of work has been produced in the area of Australian television programmes. *Moran's Guide to Australian Television Series* is a detailed, alphabetical guide to locally produced drama series, children's shows and sitcoms; Cunningham and Miller's *Contemporary Australian Television*, Tulloch and Turner's *Australian Television: Programs, Pleasures and Politics*, and scholarly compilations such as

[82] Curthoys, 'Television before Television', pp. 152-170.
[83] A. Curthoys, 'The Getting of Television: Dilemmas in Ownership, Control and Culture, 1941-56', in A. Curthoys & J. Merritt (eds), *Better Dead than Red: Australia's First Cold War 1945-1959*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1986, pp. 123-154.
[84] C. Hazlehurst, 'The Advent of Commercial Television', *Australian Cultural History*, No. 2, 1982/83, pp. 104-119.
[85] Some notable media histories within this field are: J. James Bailey, *Australian Television: Historical Overview*, Open Program Resources, Australian Film & Television School, North Ryde, NSW, 1979; K. Harrison, Television Licence Renewal Inquiries: A Study of Accountability and Participation, PhD thesis, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1986; M. Kerley, Commercial television in Australia: Government Policy and Regulation, 1953-1963, PhD thesis, Australian National University, Canberra, 1992; N. Dick, The Conception and Development of Commercial Television in Australia, Examining the Roles of Public Inquiries, Political Parties, Legislation, Regulation and the Pressure Groups Involved, MA thesis, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, 1999; N. Herd, Changing Channels: An Historical Political Economy of Commercial Television in Australia 1954-1998, PhD thesis, University of Technology, Sydney, 2008.

Australian Screen Comedy bring together key writings on particular programmes.[86] An inter-disciplinary analysis of Australian television programmes is Kate Darian-Smith and Sue Turnbull's edited collection exploring the connections between memory, history and television.[87] The most recent addition on programming and the development of the television format business is Albert Moran's *TV Format Mogul: Reg Grundy's Transnational Career*, which illustrates how a so-called contemporary phenomenon actually has a long historical trajectory.[88]

Despite such contributions to the field, Alan McKee argues that, for the most part, academic work on Australian television remains largely indifferent to its programmes. Instead, he argues that focus on the 'more rewarding' aspects of television history such as 'industries, institutions, ownership, legislation, technology and production' has captured writers' and historians' interest. McKee also indicates that work done on programmes tends to be structured within a narrow approach. Most writing on television programmes is concerned with 'current phenomena', leaving little consideration for the historical context and accounts of the programmes.[89] McKee's own work, *Australian Television: A Genealogy of Great Moments*, explores the various ways in which Australian programmes have been remembered and archived. *Australian Television* provides a helpful departure point for further research by mapping the cultural history of significant Australian programmes, but intentionally does not

[86] A. Moran with P. Pinne, *Moran's Guide to Australian Television Series*, Australian Film Television & Radio School: Distributed in Australia and New Zealand by Allen & Unwin, North Ryde, NSW, 1993; S. Cunningham, T. Miller & D. Rowe, *Contemporary Australian Television*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1994; J. Tulloch & G. Turner (eds), *Australian Television: Programs, Pleasures and Politics*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989; D. McKie & S. Turnbull, *Australian Screen Comedy*, Continuum, Mt Lawley, WA, 1996; J. Byrell, *Bandstand – And All That!*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, NSW, 1995.
[87] K. Darian-Smith, & S. Turnbull (eds), *Remembering Television: Histories, Technologies, Memories*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2012.
[88] A. Moran, *TV Format Mogul: Reg Grundy's Transnational Career*, Intellect, Bristol, UK, 2013.
[89] A. McKee, 'Must See TV: Mapping an Australian Mediasphere', *Metro Magazine*, No. 121/122, 2000, p. 55.

offer a complete outline of the historical context to their production.[90]

Academics have largely ignored discrete programming genres such as quiz and variety shows. However John Byrell[91] and Moran and Chris Keating[92] have made inroads into this area. The place of the presenter in the history of television is also less well-documented, but Frances Bonner has made headway with this area as well as with popular lifestyle programmes and celebrity culture.[93] Over the last decade, Sue Turnbull[94], Susan Bye[95], and Felicity Collins[96] have filled important gaps in the history of Australian television comedy. Other single-aspect studies include valuable work by Kate Aisbett[97] and Anna Potter[98] on commercial children's television, as well as contributions on the development of sport on public and commercial broadcasting networks in Australia by, for example, David Rowe and Brett Hutchins,[99] John Goldlust[100] and Michael Roberts.[101]

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[90] A. McKee, *Australian Television: A Genealogy of Great Moments*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2001.
[91] J. Byrell, *Bandstand – And All That!*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, NSW, 1995.
[92] A. Moran, & C. Keating, *Wheel of Fortune: Australian TV Game Shows*, Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy, Griffith University, Qld, 2003.
[93] F. Bonner, *Personality Presenters: Television's Intermediaries with Viewers*, Ashgate, Burlington, VT, 2011; G. Turner, F. Bonner, & P. D. Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000.
[94] S. Turnbull, 'A Cunning Array of Stunts: Women, Situation Comedy and Risky Performances on Australian Television', *Continuum: The Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1996, pp. 11-25; S. Turnbull, 'It's like they threw a panther in the air and caught it in embroidery: Australian comedy in translation', *Metro*, No. 159, 2008, pp. 110-115; S. Turnbull, 'Mapping the Vast Australian Suburban Tundra: Australian Comedy from Dame Edna to Kath and Kim', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, March 2008, pp. 15-32.
[95] S. Bye, '"Mothers Like Him": Graham Kennedy and the Great Divide', Australian Media Traditions Conference, 2007, http://www.csu.edu.au/special/amt/publication/bye.pdf, accessed 21 May 2011; S. Bye, 'Sydney Tonight versus In Melbourne Tonight: Television, Taste and Identity', *MIA*, No. 128, August 2008, pp.18-30; S. Bye, 'Character and Comic Innovation in "Australia You're Standing in It"', *MIA*, No. 134, February 2010, pp. 84-95.
[96] F. Collins, S. Turnbull & S. Bye, 'Aunty Jack, Norman Gunston and ABC Television Comedy in the 1970s', *Australian Cultural History*, No. 26, 2007, pp. 131-152.
[97] K. Aisbett, *20 Years of C: Children's Television Programs and Regulation 1979-99*, Australian Broadcasting Authority, Sydney, 2000.
[98] A. Potter, Internationalising Australian Children's Television Drama: The Collision of Australian Cultural Policy and Global Market Imperatives, PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2005; A. Potter, 'A Very Special Audience: How Layering and Drift in Australian Cultural Policy Have Affected the Production of Children's Television Drama for Digital Markets', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 2012, pp. 1-14.
[99] D. Rowe & G. Lawrence (eds), *Sport and Leisure: Trends in Australian Popular Culture*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, 1990; D. Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media: The Unruly Trinity*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1999; D. Rowe, *The Stuff of Dreams, or the Dream Stuffed?: Rugby League, Media Empires, Sex*

Growing debate amongst journalists, commentators and historians about the declining state of Australian television newscaf, the rise of infotainment and the cult of celebrity has stimulated several studies. Scholarly attention surrounds significant changes that have occurred in the last few decades, and questions the future of newscaf, even though such programmes remain a staple component of a network's profile and nightly schedule.[102]

A survey of these works reveals multidisciplinary and multi-methodological approaches, with authors generally using history to highlight the changing nature of Australian television, the industry and current social, political and cultural phenomena, rather than producing full-scale histories of newscaf.[103] Several histories dedicated to newscaf on the ABC have dominated the field, including the work of Bill Peach,[104] Robert Raymond's memoirs[105] and Robert Pullan's history of ABC's ground-breaking newscaf programme, *Four Corners*.[106] There remain no definitive histories of early newscaf programmes on Australian FTA commercial television.[107]

Scandals, and Global Plays, Tom Brock Bequest Committee, Australian Society for Sport History, 2007; B. Hutchins, & D. Rowe, *Sport Beyond Television: The Internet*, *Digital Media and the Rise of Networked Media Sport*, Routledge, New York, 2012.

[100] J. Goldlust, *Playing for Keeps: Sport, the Media and Society*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1987.

[101] M. Roberts (ed.), *The Heart of the Game: 45 Years of Football on Television*, Hardie Grant, Melbourne, 2002.

[102] G. Turner, *Ending the Affair: The Decline of Television Current Affairs in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005, p. ix.

[103] An exception to this is Neville Petersen's work on ABC radio. See *News Not Views: The ABC, the Press and Politics 1932-1947*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1993.

[104] B. Peach, *This Day Tonight: How Australian Current Affairs TV Came of Age*, ABC Enterprises, Sydney, 1992.

[105] R. Raymond, *Out of the Box: An Inside View of the Coming of Current Affairs and Documentaries to Australian Television*, Seaview Press, Henley Beach, South Australia, 1999; *From Bees to Buzz-Bombs: Robert Raymond's Boyhood-to-Blitz Moments*, Rev. ed., Seaview Press, Henley Beach, South Australia, 2000; *Giving Luck A Chance*, Seaview Press, Henley Beach, South Australia, 2000.

[106] R. Pullan, *Four Corners: Twenty-Five Years*, ABC Enterprises, Sydney, 1986. See also R. Tiffen, *News and Power*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, NSW, 1989; C. Masters, *Chris Masters: Inside Story*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1992; C. Masters, *Not for Publication*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2002; K. Inglis, *This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission 1932-1983*, 2nd ed., Black Inc., Melbourne, 2006; K. Inglis, *Whose ABC?: The Australian Broadcasting Corporation 1983-2006*, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2006.

[107] J. Little, *Inside 60 Minutes*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994 provides an account of the Nine Network's current affairs programme, *60 Minutes*, but little written material traces earlier news and current affair programmes on

Histories of religious programming have not fared well in accounts of Australian television. Despite this being one of the few types of programme content mandated by parliamentary legislation, there has been relatively little scholarly attention devoted to it.[108] This neglect may have to do with the broader disregard for religion by mainstream writers of Australian history who have been inclined to represent Australia as a secular nation.[109] Prior to the publication of Hans Mol's work in 1971, no major sociological study of religion in Australia had been undertaken beyond denominational histories.[110]

Since the 1980s, isolated histories of religious television in Australia have been undertaken to redress the neglect of electronic religious media. The Rev. Douglas Tasker's thesis[111] on the place of religion in Australian commercial television from 1956-1978, J.L.F. Buchner's work[112] on religious broadcasting in Australia and Peter Horsfield's studies[113] of religious television in Australia and America have made significant inroads in the field. Much of what has been written has focused on regulatory anomalies, church politics and the tensions between church television agencies and commercial stations. There still remains a significant gap in the area of religious programming and its personalities.

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commercial FTA television. A recent addition to this area of research is T. Fitzsimons, P. Laughren, & D. Williamson, *Australian Documentary: History, Practices and Genres*, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, Vic., 2012. This study offers a strong starting point for further analysis of early current affairs and documentaries on public and commercial FTA broadcasting stations.

[108] P. Horsfield, 'Down the Tube: Religion on Australian Commercial Television', *MIA*, No. 121, 2006, p. 136.

[109] B. Griffen-Foley, 'Radio Ministries: Religion on Australian Commercial Radio from 1920s to the 1960s', *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 32, No. 1, March 2008, p. 31.

[110] B. Wilson, 'The Church in a Secular Society', in D. Harris, D. Hynd & D. Millikan (eds), *The Shape of Belief: Christianity in Australia Today*, Lancer in association with Zadok Centre, Canberra, 1982, p. 2; H. Mol, *Religion in Australia: A Sociological Investigation*, Thomas Nelson Australia, Melbourne, 1971. See also J.D. Bollen et al., 'Australian Religious History, 1960-80', *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 11, No. 1, June 1980, pp. 8-44.

[111] D. H. Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia from 1956 to 1978, PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 1981.

[112] J. L. F. Buchner, Religious Broadcasting in Australia, MA thesis, Macquarie University, Sydney, 1989.

[113] P. Horsfield, *Religious Television: The American Experience*, Longman, New York & London, 1984; P. Horsfield, 'American Religious Programs in Australia', in R. Abelman & S. M. Hoover (eds), *Religious Television: Controversies and Conclusions*, Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, New Jersey, 1990, pp. 313-328; P. Horsfield, 'Down the Tube: Religion on Australian Commercial Television', *MIA*, No. 121, 2006, pp. 136-148.

Methodology and sources

I have faced several challenges in writing this history. Defining television programmes in canonical terms can be one of the field's most problematic aspects, as well as one of its greatest strengths.[114] The process of including and excluding certain programmes for the study of commercial television in Sydney has been a difficult task. The criteria used for choosing certain programmes have largely hinged on the existence and accessibility of material. For the most part, audiovisual records of programming genres from commercial repositories remain largely unattainable. In many cases, compiling a history of these programmes has relied on written documents. Archival material since the 1980s is often inaccessible due to the twenty and thirty year access rules.[115] For this reason, programming during the 1950s and 1960s is generally discussed in greater detail and depth than in later time periods.

Since 1956, imported programmes have constituted a large proportion of Sydney television programming. But this thesis intentionally focuses on locally originated programmes designed and produced in Sydney.[116] Therefore this examination of programming includes a representative sample of Australian programmes that stemmed primarily from Sydney.[117] Identifying the origin of programmes – whether they were produced and televised in Sydney – has not been easy. Many sources fail to clarify terms such as 'Channel 9' or the 'Nine

[114] Creeber, 'Introduction', in Creeber (ed.), *Fifty Key Television Programmes*, p. xiii.
[115] Access to archival material at the National Archives Australia is governed by the Archives Act 1983. See National Archives of Australia, 'Access to records under the Archives Act – Fact Sheet 10', http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs10.aspx, accessed 4 May 2013.
[116] Some programmes have either been produced in-house by commercial FTA television stations or farmed out to independent production houses.
[117] I acknowledge the problems in defining 'Australian' programming, as what is considered Australian is rather subjective and is also a fusion of overseas influences. In this thesis, I define 'Australian' programming to broadly refer to programmes that are made in Australia by Australians, generally include Australian talent and reflect Australian images and culture.

Network' when discussing commercial television stations. Such terms are often used interchangeably to refer to either Sydney and/or Melbourne stations, or to national networks.

I have tried to be as accurate as possible when referring to Sydney television stations and programmes by using Sydney's television call signs. For example, I use 'TCN-9' rather than 'Channel 9' to refer to Sydney's Channel 9 station. When I refer to the 'Nine Network' from the late 1980s onwards, unless otherwise specified, I mean to include Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Adelaide stations as well. Once networking was formalised in the 1980s and programming was increasingly centralised in Sydney, the term 'Nine Network' generally refers to Sydney programming. It is for this reason that I use terms such as the 'Nine Network' or 'Nine' from the 1970-80s onwards, rather than using Sydney stations' specific call signs.

The overwhelming amount of extant material has encouraged an inductive approach in this history of programming. A comprehensive history of Sydney programming, however, inevitably requires that some programmes, regardless of their origin or production, must be included. Therefore a deductive approach has been adopted at times. Some programmes warranted inclusion in this history either because they, like other Sydney-produced programmes, are characteristic of general trends in programming or important cultural markers; they hold a prominent place in Australian televisual memory; they have influenced the development of Sydney programming, the industry or the audience; or they provide an important point for comparison. For example, the Melbourne-produced drama series, *Homicide*, is discussed in greater detail than some Sydney programmes in Chapter 8 because it was key in stimulating independent drama production in Australia and the popularity of the police series. However certain influences have informed my thinking in deciding which

programmes and personalities receive greatest attention, which ones receive only cursory coverage and which ones are omitted altogether. A full discussion of popular memory and its connection with nostalgia and the memorialisation of television history lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

In writing each chapter, I have continually asked myself how a source or a programme fills a gap in 'popular' and 'official' Australian television histories. My writing is partly informed by a 'history from below'[118] approach, one that is concerned with capturing the seemingly unimportant or neglected aspects of the past.[119] Several different approaches and theories that intersect with this guiding principle have therefore informed this history. The ensuing analysis engages, to varying degrees, with cultural and social history, and women's and audience studies, and has appropriated and developed similar questions that arise from these modes of inquiry.

Yet such an approach cannot function without reference to a 'history from above' approach. It is important to take into account aspects of television history (industries, institutions, regulation, technology, production) that form the bulk of 'official'[120] histories. My intention, however, is to identify and understand the inextricable connections between popular, official and academic histories and synthesise these accounts into a comprehensive whole.

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[118] The 'history from below' began as a reaction against 'history from above'. Attempts to define this term and approach were clearly articulated in the 1960s. The term and approach initially became associated with a Marxist perspective of history, but has since broadened to include wide-ranging approaches such as cultural history. The 'history from below' approach is not a separate school of history. It could be argued that labour history belongs to the 'history from below' approach. I use this term mainly to highlight my concern for certain aspects, programmes or personalities of Sydney television that may have hitherto been overlooked. See J. Black & D. M. MacRaild, *Studying History*, 2nd ed., Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2000, pp. 112-13.
[119] Ibid., p. 113.
[120] 'Official' refers to a sponsored, endorsed or authorised account of historical events by its subjects, for example, the ABCB Annual Reports.

When talking about programmes, implicit and explicit statements about 'quality' are made all the time and in various ways - in conversation, in newspapers, in practice and on television.[121] Yet media and cultural scholars have generally been hesitant to make value and aesthetic judgements about 'quality' television.[122] Charlotte Brunsdon highlighted this unease in her seminal 1990 article, 'Problems with Quality', arguing that such avoidance to engage with notions of quality was a failing.[123] Brunsdon uses Pierre Bourdieu's controversial work[124] on the hierarchies or 'topograhies' of taste to explain why 'to have preferences which run against the hierarchy involves people in endless self-justification'.[125] Indeed, it seems any discussion of quality cannot escape value judgements and individual taste, posing significant cultural, political, moral and aesthetic questions for television regulators, practitioners and scholars.

In a postmodern climate of cultural relativism, reaching consensus on issues of quality can seem almost impossible. And many rail against the cultural elitism that divides culture into 'high and 'low'.[126] However, Brunsdon re-engages the debate about aesthetic criteria in television studies by identifying a key problem:

> there are *always issues of power at stake* in notions such as quality and judgement – Quality for whom?, Judgement by whom?, On whose behalf? – and that in certain instances the invocation of subjective factors (personal taste, preference, subjective judgement) as the ground of which judgements of quality cannot be generalised blurs the role of structural and institutional factors in the formation of these judgements [my emphasis].[127]

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[121] C. Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes: Soap Opera to Satellite Dishes*, Routledge, London, 1997, pp. 124-47.
[122] J. Corner, *Studying Media: Problems of Theory and Method*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1998, p. 135.
[123] Brunsdon's article is reprinted in Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes*, pp. 124-47.
[124] P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. R. Nice; Routledge, & Kegan Paul, London, 1984.
[125] Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes*, p. 132.
[126] See J. Docker, *Postmodernism & Popular Culture: A Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994; McKee, *The Public Sphere*.
[127] Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes*, p. 130.

Brunsdon maintains that we cannot defeat the hierarchies of taste and social power if we refuse to make critical judgements. Instead, she argues, we should recognise that 'judgements are being made – so let's talk about them'.[128]

So what are the ways that quality has been invoked in relation to television programming? Brunsdon outlines five main discourses of quality that are often made when making value and aesthetic judgements about television: 'traditional aesthetic discourse', 'professional practice and codes', 'realist paradigms', 'entertainment and leisure codes' and 'moral paradigms'. Of all five, the 'realist' and 'moral' paradigms are most frequently used in discussions of newscaf. Realist paradigms generally include discussions about anything from sport to news bulletins with the chief criteria being 'adequacy, objectivity, immediacy'. Much research in the field of media communications and television studies deals with this paradigm: '"Is the news biased?"' and '"Does it only show us effects not causes?"'. Authentic representation of people, time and place is also a central criterion, not only within the realm of non-fiction, but fiction programmes (eg drama) as well.[129]

Definitions of quality within the 'moral paradigm' are most strongly demonstrated in public service broadcasting charters, with their calls for impartiality in broadcasting. Moral arguments have historically been justified by and used in conjunction with realist arguments, and are often framed within discourses of consumer protection. That television programmes should not offend or be vulgar has been a long-standing requirement of Australian television programme standards.[130] Brunsdon points out that the idea of 'quality' is 'semantically opposed to the common and vulgar'.[131] The most current definitions and ideas of quality, argues Brunsdon, represent 'the historical and cultural privilege with which aesthetic

[128] Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes*, p. 130.
[129] ibid., p. 135.
[130] ibid., p. 136.
[131] ibid., p. 143.

judgement is encrusted'.[132] As Rupert Murdoch once said of quality: '"Much of what passes for quality on British television is no more than a reflection of the values of the narrow elite which controls it and has always thought that its tastes are synonymous with quality."'.[133]

This also resonates in the context of Australian television and notions of quality programming. Traditionally quality programming (both fiction and non-fiction) has been associated with the ABC, in contrast to the more 'vulgar' or tabloid commercial channels. In this sense, ABC newscaf programmes have commonly been used as a barometer for quality and something which commercial newscaf must aspire to. But as Chapter 3 explores, quality newscaf does appear on commercial television.

Although elusive, the idea of quality has traditionally been used synonymously with middle-class, educated taste codes, either by default or intention. Australian commercial television's Programme Standards developed from this ideological position and regulatory policies have tended to support this. In addition to these taste codes, quality programming is often defined in terms of its ability to reach a specific audience demographic. In the case of newscaf or drama, attracting the sophisticated, educated middle-class viewers with a disposable income is an indication of quality. Commercial ratings success is also used as a barometer, particularly within the profit-minded commercial television industry. The presence or absence of local content is considered another indication of quality (irrespective of genre, style or production values). How expensive a programme costs and/or looks as well as technological excellence (production values) also comes into play when making value judgements about programmes. These criteria tend to be more measurable when compared to judgements that claim quality programmes are measured by their impact on or contribution to society, or indeed, their educative function.

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[132] ibid., p. 146.
[133] Rupert Murdoch quoted in Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes*, p. 143.

Although notions of quality are historically and culturally contingent and criteria for evaluating television can shift over time, I use the aforementioned list (the measureable and more elusive criterion) as a broad definition for whenever I use the term 'quality'. When necessary, I will specify whether discussions of quality centred on genre, style and/or content, in addition to other factors. Within the Australian context, debates about quality programming amongst regulators, broadcasting advocacy groups, industry practitioners and viewers have used these broadly defined aesthetic and value judgements as a starting point, if not a barometer, for discussing quality. This makes discussion of the term difficult, because in many instances various groups have collapsed many of these value judgements together and avoided being specific when talking about quality.

However, the most common meaning attached to 'quality' in these debates is a reference to middle-class, educated taste codes. I do not necessarily agree with this hierarchy of 'high' versus 'low' programming. It is important that 'generic diversity of television' be considered when making evaluations about quality, but not, as Brunsdon points out, in ways that make quality 'genre-specific'.[134] My aim is to trace the tensions and difficulties that have arisen when notions of quality programming on Australian commercial television are invoked, rather than making aesthetic judgements on the programmes themselves.

In an effort to trace the origins and background of certain programming genres (news, current affairs, religious television, sport, children's television, light entertainment, drama and reality TV), and explore industry and policy issues concerning commercial television in Sydney, a range of sources has been consulted. Government reports, minutes, correspondence, financial records, manuscripts, periodicals, newspapers and audience surveys have been used to examine major issues relating to commercial television in Sydney. Audiovisual material largely consisting of television programmes, where available, and interviews with media

[134] Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes*, p. 134.

personnel has also been consulted. This thesis relies heavily on Sydney's television and advertising trade magazines for information on local programmes. Such publications have been instructive in understanding what and how programmes in Sydney were scheduled and advertised to audiences. They also offer important insights into the attitudes and preferences of Sydney critics and broadcasters and even viewers. Such publications often provide brilliant 'flashes' of illumination into the past of Sydney television culture, but the challenge in using these sources is determining whether such findings are atypical or reflect popular attitudes and common practice within the broadcast contexts of the time.[135]

Written documents alone cannot illuminate every piece of the historical puzzle. Thus oral history has played a role in this study, albeit a small one. Although the initial intention was to interview many people who have had a connection with Sydney television, a pilot study indicated that a large number of interviews was unnecessary, as several interviewees rightly believed their autobiographies provided sufficient information. Manuscript collections and memoirs have been used to complement these biographical and personal contributions, along with interviews housed in the National Film & Sound Archive (NFSA) and the State Library of NSW. Oral history presents methodological complexities and challenges for the historian, usually relating to bias and memory, which is not pure and unmediated. Its value and its accuracy should not be discounted. The questions that this study has asked or have failed to ask of its sources have also shaped the work.[136] A fruitful future line of research could be an oral history of programming in Sydney FTA commercial television, along on the lines of 'Once Upon A Wireless', one of the largest oral history projects involving the NFSA.[137]

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[135] Black & MacRaild, *Studying History*, pp. 118-19.
[136] P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000; R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd ed., Routledge, Milton Parks, Abingon, Oxon, 2006.
[137] K. Berryman, 'Waves from the Golden Age: The Legacy of the Once Upon a Wireless Oral History Project', http://nfsa.gov.au/research/papers/2012/12/18/once-upon-a-wireless-oral-history-project/, accessed 9 August 2013.

Structure

This thesis is organised into nine chapters. While Chapter 1 provides an overview of key policy and industry developments over six decades, Chapters 2-9 are structured according to programming genres, each adopting a loosely chronological framework. In some instances, a thematic approach is foreground. Various discussions of programming genres flow naturally along thematic lines, while others fit better when arranged in time sequences. Most chapters are separated into three broad time periods: 1950-60s, 1970-80s, and 1990-2000s. This is problematic at times, for programming trends and historical developments do not fit neatly into artificial time blocks. Yet for analysis to be properly developed, chronology must be 'disturbed' to illuminate important comparisons and historical discontinuities.[138]

This thesis is structured around the genres that have come to characterise Australian commercial television in the last thirty years. The naming of these genres is itself somewhat difficult and potentially contentious, as they encompass a great deal of programme variation. The significant degree of overlap between factual, popular factual and entertainment genres underlines how boundaries between genres are blurred. And genres are not fixed, but evolve over time.

The order of Chapters 2-9 reflects, in part, the chronological development of programming genres in Sydney. The order is also presented in a similar way to the television programming schedule on Australian television. News is the entry point of the programming schedule, from breakfast news reports to the nightly news bulletin, which has become a ritual for many viewers. Current affairs is married to news, and this close relationship eventuated as viewers began to appreciate an extended analysis of the day's events. Likewise, religious

[138] A. Curthoys & A. McGrath, *How to Write History that People Want to Read*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009, p. 142.

programming, broadcast in the early mornings, seeks to inform rather than to entertain; hence this chapter follows newscaf and precedes sport as the 'new religion' in Australia. In contrast to religious programming, sport is a lucrative means of attracting audiences and helps to promote station identity. However it shares with newscaf an emphasis on facts, even though it incorporates aspects of entertainment genres such as comedy and drama.

Children's television is similar to sport and religious programming in that all are considered vulnerable to commercial exploitation and therefore are subject to more regulation than other genres. Children's television, however, also shares qualities with light entertainment and drama, borrowing elements of both in order to attract viewers. Light entertainment and drama have likewise been subject to government regulation and reflect the entertainment end of the programming spectrum, while reality TV shows draw on these popular genres as well as factual programming. Reality TV appears last, as it is the most recent trend in national and international programming, and reflects the way television reinvents the 'old' to present something 'new'.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the Sydney commercial television industry from 1956 to 2012. The chapter broadly sketches the origins of the original TCN-9, ATN-7 and TEN-10 consortiums, how licences were issued and the regulatory environment in which they had to function. The role of key industry personalities and the relationship between television companies and the government are outlined. The continuities and changes in the ownership structure of commercial media, the status quo of big business and market stability are also assessed. The chapter identifies key regulatory issues and media policies that underpin Sydney television, outlining the effect of media ownership and Australian content quotas on programming.

Chapters 2 and 3 explore the function of newscaf programming and the tension that results when entertainment values traverse the boundaries of what is expected of information programming. Factors facilitating the blurring of information and entertainment-style variances of newscaf and the challenges that programmers face in presenting complex political issues on a visual medium are examined. Australia's distance and isolation from the rest of the world have shaped Sydney newscaf programming practices and strategies, but also stimulated significant technical innovations in the use of satellite technology and programme sharing. The role of national networking and its impact on competition between commercial stations are explored, particularly the way in which newscaf programming has become the battleground for ratings. In recent decades, television journalism has experienced a shift from conventional news to more consumer-driven journalism and infotainment. Commercial broadcasters have gradually reconceptualised the audience from citizens and members of a national political community to consumers. These changes together with their influences are discussed within the context of debates concerning tabloidisation.

More so than any other non-entertainment genre, religious programming has experienced difficulties in justifying its message, presence and purpose on a medium philosophically at odds with its content. Despite the unique privilege of having its presence guaranteed by legislation since 1948, religion has failed to find a secure and prominent place on Sydney commercial television. Chapter 4 considers how legislative ambiguities, disunity among church production agencies, inadequate funding and the commercial imperatives of broadcasters have forced church production agencies to seek alternative broadcasting platforms.

Although sport now occupies a central place on Sydney's commercial television, it initially played a modest role in the consumption patterns of Sydney viewers. Over time, as live sport proved vital to television economics, sports programming became a staple of television viewing habits, aided by colour television and the progression of several technological innovations. Chapter 5 considers the impact of broader social and economic influences on commercial sports programming, and the mutual transformation commercial television has had on the playing conditions and the financial infrastructures of Australian sporting codes. The distinctive Australian flavour and larrikinism projected through Sydney's sports programmes and personalities, the tendency for broadcasters to favour Anglo-centric masculine sporting codes, and the effect this has on the visibility and development of female and second-tier sports, are also explored.

Chapter 6 traces the development of locally produced children's programmes within the broader context of Australian cultural policy objectives and commercial television industry practices. The overriding philosophy governing the regulation of children's television is that children, like adults, are entitled to viewing choice and diversity, and commercial television licensees have a public responsibility to provide such programmes. Regulators and child advocacy groups have campaigned for quality, culturally and age-specific children's programming, while facing varying degrees of resistance from commercial broadcasters. This conflict, alongside broader global trends in children's programming, the threat of specialised children's subscription television services, and the challenges regulators and broadcasters face as convergence accelerates, is examined.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 bring to life some of the enduring personalities and programmes that have come to characterise Sydney television and Australian television more generally. The

collaborative conversations between television critics and viewers in the early years about local content and presenters underscore the long-standing tradition of a participatory media in Australia and how significant it was in forming television communities. Chapter 7 surveys the wide variation in Sydney's light entertainment programmes and explores the impact of local content regulations, the skill-set of performers and the volume of available local talent on programme development and trends. Light entertainment programmes shaped the identity of Sydney's commercial stations and became the benchmark for measuring the polish of locally produced content against interstate and imported examples. They have also fuelled discussions on national identity and society, while at the same time reflecting commercial television's desire to construct mainstream national images.

Chapter 8 explores the shifting priorities of commercial broadcasters, who for the first ten years were reluctant to produce local drama. Cheap imports with high production values replaced local efforts and dominated Sydney screens. However once Australian drama proved its popularity with audiences, drama quotas were introduced, and broadcasters discovered the convenience of block programming and repeats, locally produced drama (in all its variations) gradually became a valuable asset to commercial networks. Yet Australia's small domestic market and strong competition from imported drama ensure local drama will always remain burdensome for commercial broadcasters who are intent on maximising profit. Drama's cultural importance, the rise of independent programme packagers and the role local product has played in the international marketplace are also explored.

Chapter 9 traces the historical development of key reality TV programmes that have emerged on Sydney's FTA commercial networks. This genre has gained prominence in the last two decades and highlights the value Australian audiences still place on locally produced

programmes. The chapter examines the historical origins of particular reality TV programmes, exploring the basic tenets of the genre, and acknowledging the wider national and international influences on programme production. Drawing on older televisual forms and reinventing popular entertainment and factual programmes, reality TV programmes are designed to appeal to a broad cross-section of viewers with varying tastes. Commercial networks have chosen to adapt, recycle and create new hybrid formats as part of a broad strategy of cultural and financial insurance. In such a competitive environment, there is pressure to create programmes that can move across national borders. The rise in cheap franchised programme formats, the appeal of the 'ordinary' host and contestant, and new patterns of viewing and engaging with television programmes are assessed in light of international programming trends.

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Regulation & Ownership: The Backbone of Television Programming

> [The] conduct of a commercial television service is not to be considered as merely running a business for the sake of profit…Because of the influence they can bring to bear on the community, the business interests of licensees must at all times be subordinated to the overriding principle that possession of a licence…is a public trust for the benefit of all members of our society.[1]

Long before a live face flickered on Australia's first television sets, regulatory decisions were made to determine the best possible television system for the nation. These decisions followed a protracted period of debate, not only underscoring political and stakeholder differences, but also highlighting the anticipation of television's influence on society. Finally the federal Coalition government decided that Australian television would be introduced under a dual system of ownership, modelled on the radio broadcasting system already in place. The dual system comprised a dominant licensed commercial sector of privately-owned commercial stations that carried advertising, and a national sector that was government-owned and funded.[2] Essentially the dual system was a compromise between the British-style national system and the American-style commercial system.[3] By combining both systems, it was believed Australia would have 'the best of both'.[4]

Television and more generally the media, plays a vital role in disseminating information, setting the agenda for public debate and shaping ideas and opinions. Of all media forms, television is generally the most readily accessible and heavily consumed on a daily basis.

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[1] *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 19 April 1956, p. 1536.
[2] Hazlehurst, 'The Advent of Commercial Television', p. 108.
[3] Curthoys, 'Television before Television', p. 155.
[4] Moran & Keating, *Historical Dictionary of Australian Radio and Television*, p. 14.

Broadcasters, especially commercial operators, exercise a cumulative influence on Australian culture, social customs and values through their programmes and advertising. Therefore, television licences are considered to be in the nature of a public trust, warranting a level of government regulation[5] and accountability.[6]

Commercial broadcasting services are subject to the highest level of regulation. Since commercial television stations are businesses designed to maximise profits, they often resist the idea that their licence is in the nature of a public trust, pushing instead for content deregulation. This has a tendency to cause major tension.[7] To maximise profit, also generally entails maximising audience size. Commercial television is consequently driven by its quest for ratings and advertising revenue.[8] The tendency, then, is to provide programming with 'broad appeal' to capture the mass audience.[9] Not only does this have implications for programme diversity, but it also means that certain programming types are likely to be undersupplied. This is due to their excessive costs and production (locally produced drama), or because they are less valuable to advertisers (children's television), or they have limited appeal (religious programming).[10] More stringent regulatory standards have had to be applied, therefore, to Australian content (especially in drama), children's programming, and advertising, to ensure broadcasters' social responsibilities are met in these areas.[11]

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[5] Regulation refers to authoritative direction and rules imposed directly or indirectly by the Federal Government.
[6] D. Butler & S. Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, 4th ed., Thomson Reuters (Professional) Australia, Pyrmont, NSW, 2012, pp. 722-23.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Hazlehurst, 'The Advent of Commercial Television', p. 118.
[9] T. Flew, *Financing, Programming and Diversity in Australian Television*, Communications Law Centre, Occasional Paper No. 8, 1994, p. 36.
[10] Ibid. p. 44; F. Papandrea, 'Improving Regulation of the Domestic Content of Australian Television', *Agenda*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1997, pp. 455-56.
[11] J. Penberthy, 'The Question of Self-Regulation', in B. O'Dwyer (ed.), *Broadcasting in Australia: Today's Issues and the Future*, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra, 1981, p. 67.

This chapter outlines the origins of, and issues associated with, the tension between commercial motives and public interest in regulatory decisions regarding programming on commercial television in Sydney. The actions (and inaction) of the federal government, commercial industry figures, and public interest groups have shaped, to varying degrees, the course and direction of broadcasting regulatory policy. The tension between these groups has manifested itself in discussions over media ownership and concentration, licensing, networking, Australian content and production, government control and the impact of new technologies. These factors, along with economic influences, help to explain both change and continuity in programming trends on Sydney commercial television.

Television's prehistory

Television was slow to be introduced in Australia. Having witnessed developments overseas, Australians had mixed feelings about the manner in which television should be organised, and its anticipated cultural impact. James Walter identifies three main schools of thought. The first had 'severe reservations' about television. Within this group were those who opposed television entirely, either because they saw it as an unaffordable luxury, or believed, in the main, that it would adversely affect the culture. Others worried that television provided commercial interests with great influence to actively manipulate public opinion. For this reason, they tended to support a non-commercial, regulated national television service that was controlled by the state.[12]

The second group largely supported a television system that would culturally enlighten the nation. 'Culturalists' generally believed in television's educative function and the pursuit of 'quality programming' – elements that they assumed commercial television was unlikely to

[12] J. Walter, 'Controlling the Technology of Popular Culture: The Introduction of Television in Australia', in I. Craven with M. Gray & G. Stoneham (eds), *Australian Popular Culture*, Cambridge University Press, published in association with Australian Studies and the British Australian Studies Association, Cambridge, 1994, p. 67.

uphold.[13] The third group comprised those who strongly advocated commercial television and private enterprise. The 'chief virtue', they believed, was that commercial television was democratic; it offered the general public what they wanted at no discernible cost to them.[14] These divergent viewpoints (the first and third being most influential) foreshadowed the struggle that would impact the shape and development of television programming in Australia.[15]

The struggle officially began in federal parliament, where television naysayers and enthusiasts resided on both sides of the house. Initially, Australia's fragile post-war economy and the Cold War provided the naysayers with enough leverage to delay discussion on television.[16] Prime Minister Ben Chifley of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), and Robert Menzies, leader of the conservative Coalition (Liberal and Country Parties), were ambivalent towards television's introduction, but recognised its inevitability. Their preference was for a particular service reflecting the ideological stance of their parties. The ALP increasingly became identified as advocates of a government-owned national system. The Coalition, on the other hand, was opposed to government regulation and supported both commercial and ABC involvement in radio and television broadcasting.[17]

In 1948, the Government decided to create a statutory body to regulate radio (and, in time, television) broadcasting. As a result, the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB) was established as an independent regulatory authority to assist the Post-Master General's Department (PMG) in broadcasting matters. It was envisaged that the ABCB would function

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[13] Ibid, pp. 67-68. See also Herd, *Networking*, p. 29.
[14] H.E. Beaver, president, The Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations, speaking at the Royal Commission on Television, March 1953, quoted in Walter, 'Controlling the Technology of Popular Culture' in Craven et al. (eds), *Australian Popular Culture*, p. 68.
[15] For a more detailed summary of the various cultural groups and their opinions, see Curthoys, 'Television before Television', pp. 152-170.
[16] Ibid., pp. 153-54.
[17] Curthoys, 'The Getting of Television', in Curthoys & Merritt (eds), *Better Dead than Red*, p. 127.

independently, similar to the Federal Communications Commission in the US. But this was not to be, particularly once Arthur Calwell, Minister for Information,[18] intervened so that the he was given the final power to grant and renew licences. The ABCB was therefore made subordinate to 'political direction'.[19]

On 14 June 1949, Chifley announced that the Government had tentatively decided to introduce a national television service in Australia's six capital cities, covering 60% of the population.[20] But before anything could be implemented, an election was held and the Coalition came to power. By June 1950, the Menzies government, favouring a dual system, had reached the following decisions in respect to television. First, television was to be developed gradually throughout Australia and a national public broadcasting service was initially to be established in Sydney. Second, four commercial licences were to be granted: two in Sydney and two in Melbourne, and in any other city where an applicant could justify its capacity to hold a licence.[21] The result was to favour a commercially-operated Australian television system.[22] However the Government decided that the economic situation warranted a review of these decisions, thereby delaying television's introduction.[23]

Royal Commission on Television, 1953

By early 1953, public pressure to speed up the introduction of television culminated in the introduction of the *Television Act 1953* (enabling a dual system) and the appointment of a

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[18] The Minister for Information (hereafter referred to as the Minister) was synonymous with the Postmaster-General until 1975.
[19] Herd, *Networking*, pp. 26-27.
[20] James Bailey, *Australian Television*, pp. 4-5.
[21] Australian Film and Television School, Research & Survey Unit, *Parliamentary Debates on the Legislation of Commonwealth and National Television: A Précis of the Hansard Debates on the Television Act 1953, and the Broadcasting and Television Act 1956*, Australian Film and Television School, North Ryde, NSW, 1983, p. xii.
[22] S. Cunningham, 'History, Contexts, Politics, Policy', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 16.
[23] C. Jones, & D. Bednall, *Television in Australia: Its History Through the Ratings*, Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, [Sydney], 1980, p. 2.

Royal Commission.[24] The Royal Commission on Television was established to oversee the allocation of television licences and to report on matters relating to the kind of regulatory system that would be applied to Australian television. The Commission was also authorised to inquire into programming standards to 'ensure the best use of television broadcasting in the public interest'.[25] More importantly, the Royal Commission allowed critics to feel heard and absolved the Government of responsibility for the outcomes, even though the *Television Act 1953* clearly endorsed commercial television.[26]

The public response to the Royal Commission was substantial, with a large cross-section of the community represented.[27] Submissions were made on behalf of artistic and cultural groups, educationalists, trade unions, women's organisations, churches, applicants for television licences (including radio and newspaper interests, and manufacturers who were keen to invest in the new medium), the ABCB and the ABC.[28] These groups echoed the debates that had already been raised in parliament. Among the most prominent issues canvassed were limits on ownership (as concentration of ownership was not considered to be in the public interest), licensing, the effects of advertising and programming on children, the vulnerability of religious programming, the encouragement of Australian talent, and imported versus local content.[29]

In February 1954, the Royal Commission reported to the Government. Predictably, the report supported the introduction of television under similar conditions to those decided by the Government in 1950: a dual system of ownership, gradual introduction, the ABC managing

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[24] Royal Commission on Television, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television*, L.F. Johnston, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1954, p.12; Bailey, *Australian Television*, p. 6.
[25] Royal Commission on Television, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television*, p. 12.
[26] Curthoys, 'The Getting of Television', in Curthoys & Merritt (eds), *Better Dead than Red*, p. 134.
[27] Royal Commission on Television, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television*, pp. 7, 9-10.
[28] Curthoys, 'Television before Television', pp. 155-56; J. Docker, 'Popular Culture versus the State: An Argument against Australian Content Regulations for Television', *MIA*, No. 59, February 1991, p. 9.
[29] Royal Commission, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television*, pp. 36-43, 55-62, 69-85, 86-100.

the national service, and two commercial television licences in both Sydney and Melbourne.[30] Other recommendations included establishing programme standards; restricting the concentration of ownership of commercial television; and government regulation for the process of issuing and revoking licences.[31]

Ultimately, argues Cameron Hazlehurst, the report of the Royal Commission was 'a compromise'. [32] Commercial interests were guaranteed a place, but were not given self-regulation, which the ABC enjoyed.[33] The ABC was assured a national system, but not a monopoly, and it was unlikely the dual system would be reversed if Labor came back into power. The Commissioners had concerns about programme standards, but the report did not issue restrictions on imported material from overseas or provide regulations ensuring 'quality' programming or Australian content quotas. However, public interest groups 'had won the right to have their views acknowledged' and were encouraged to provide guidance for debates concerning television matters.[34]

The radio regulatory system was effectively extended to television and the Australian *Broadcasting Act 1942* and *Television Act 1953* were consolidated in the *Broadcasting and Television Act* in 1956.[35] The ABCB was given extended power to set and impose television programming standards and to hold public inquiries into applications for commercial broadcasting and television station licences.[36] Yet its powers over the ABC were removed. The Government obtained a set of Programme Standards from the ABCB and empowered the ABCB, under the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942-1956* to enforce them. The

[30] Hazlehurst, 'The Advent of Commercial Television', p. 108.
[31] Royal Commission, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television*, pp. 103-5.
[32] Hazlehurst, 'The Advent of Commercial Television', p. 117; Docker, 'Popular Culture versus the State', p. 10.
[33] Royal Commission, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television,* p. 102.
[34] Docker, 'Popular Culture versus the State', p. 11.
[35] Herd, *Networking*, p. 39.
[36] S. Kippax & J. P. Murray, *Small Screen, Big Business: The Great Australian TV Robbery*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1979, p. 34.

Headmaster of Geelong Grammar and a member of the ABCB (1955-61),[37] Dr James Darling, drafted the Programme Standards, but later confessed, 'we [ABCB] knew in our hearts that it was a fairly futile exercise'. As time would tell, the programme and advertising standards were mostly unenforceable 'about matters of taste and moral guardianship', and still no mention was given to Australian content quotas or limits on broadcast hours.[38] Additionally, the ABCB was never given *statutory* authority to regulate the commercial sector; instead, it was given an *advisory* status. According to Nick Herd, both sides of government supported the PMG having a substantial degree of direction over the ABCB. Broadcasting was an area considered too influential to be left to a board.[39] Mark Armstrong argues that the PMG's ministerial powers:

> …allowed governments to dictate virtually every development in broadcasting and they created a buck passing situation in which the [ABCB] could disclaim responsibility by pointing to the powers of the minister [PMG] whilst the minister [PMG] could claim in turn he was only relying on the expertise of the Board.[40]

Furthermore, commercial owners were also to own their own transmitters, effectively making it pointless for the ABCB to refuse to issue licences. As noted earlier, it was the PMG and Government who held the final power to issue licences even if the ABCB strongly advised them not to.[41] Any influence that the ABCB had to regulate the commercial sector was seriously undermined, as it could not always rely on the Government of the day to support its recommendations. [42]

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[37] 'Geelong's master of inspiration', http://www.worldtransformation.com/darling-obituary/, accessed 2 April 2013.
[38] Hazlehurst, 'The Advent of Commercial Television', p. 118.
[39] Herd, *Networking*, pp. 40-41.
[40] Mark Armstrong cited in ibid., p. 41.
[41] Herd, *Networking*, p. 39.
[42] Kippax & Murray, *Small Screen, Big Business*, pp. 38-39; Curthoys, 'The Getting of Television', in Curthoys & Merritt (eds), *Better Dead than Red*, pp. 141, 146-48; Hazlehurst, 'The Advent of Television', pp. 117-18; E. Jacka & L. Johnson, 'Australia', in A. Smith (ed.), *Television: An International History,* 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 209.

Licence hearings, 1955

To accommodate commercial licensing, Australia was divided up into licence areas. The principle of localism underpinned the allocation of licences. It was expected that television stations were to be controlled by local interests, and the stations were required to serve and reflect local concerns in their programmes, whether they be metropolitan or regional. This was modelled on the newspaper and radio situation existing in the 1950s.[43]

The type of band used and the availability of channels had implications for how many television licences would be allocated in each city. In 1950, the ABCB had already decided that the Ultra High Frequency (UHF) range was unsuitable for the Australian context and instead chose the Very High Frequency (VHF) band. By 1955 the ABCB had formulated the Frequency Assignment Plan, which allowed for four channels in each capital city and two channels in areas with populations exceeding 5000.[44]

In 1955, the ABCB conducted its first public hearings into the granting of commercial television licences for the Sydney and Melbourne markets.[45] Newspaper groups were in the vanguard of applicants as they were keen to claim a stake in a potentially profitable new enterprise.[46] Not only could they foresee television's potential to adversely affect newspaper advertising revenue, but they also sensed that such a medium had the power to influence society irrevocably.[47]

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[43] J. Oswin & Australian Department of Communications, *Localism in Australian Broadcasting: A Review of the Policy*, Department of Communications, A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1984, p. 5; Cunningham, 'History, Contexts, Politics, Policy', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 17.
[44] A. Moran, 'Emergence and Consolidation of Television Networks, 1955-1986', in A. Moran (ed.), *Stay Tuned: An Australian Broadcasting Reader*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, NSW, 1992, pp. 110-11.
[45] James Bailey, *Australian Television*, p. 8.
[46] Kippax & Murray, *Small Screen, Big Business*, p. 25.
[47] P. Barry, *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer Uncut*, Bantam, Sydney, 2007, p. 115.

The Minister issued four 5-year licences to run commercial television stations. These were awarded to two operators in both Sydney and Melbourne (the most populous cities), followed by, Brisbane and Adelaide in 1957. A single licence in Perth was granted in 1958. In Sydney, the successful applicants were consortiums led by press magnates: Television Corporation Ltd (TCN-9) led by Frank Packer and his company, Australian Consolidated Press; and Amalgamated Television Services Pty Ltd (ATN-7), comprising a Fairfax Ltd newspaper and Macquarie radio partnership. The long-standing rivalry between Packer and Fairfax would only continue through their television interests. In Melbourne, licences were awarded both to General Television Corporation Pty Ltd (GTV-9), owned by the David Syme newspaper and radio syndicate, and to Herald-Sun TV Pty Ltd (HSV-7), headed by the Herald & Weekly Times press and radio proprietors.[48] Thus the first commercial television licences were awarded to groups with significant media interests.[49]

Observing the process, Brendan Horgan notes that there was a very distinct pattern in the allocation of licences, namely, 'If you had the financial capacity and the contacts, and owned and operated radio stations and newspapers, selection for a television licence was assured'.[50] Hazlehurst argues that the power and influence that resided with these media companies made it difficult for other applicants to compete:

> What the press and electronic magnates, and the Liberal-Country Party government could count on was that no one, other than themselves, would have the knowledge, the resources, or the commitment to sustain a campaign against them.[51]

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[48] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!,* p. 18. See also R. Watterson, 'Independence and Control: An Analysis of the Law and Policy on Concentration of Ownership and Control of Commercial TV in Australia', in M. Armstrong (ed.), *New Media: Law and Policy*, Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales, Kensington, 1981, p. 111.
[49] Moran, *Images and Industry*, p. 20.
[50] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 18.
[51] Hazlehurst, 'The Advent of Commercial Television', p. 117.

Keith Windschuttle goes further, arguing that 'the history of the relations between television licensee companies and the government is one of thinly disguised collusion'.[52] Hazlehurst's and Windschuttle's assessments provide an insight into the interdependency that often shaped relationships between politicians and media companies. Hazlehurst argues that Menzies was highly aware of the 'power of the press' and its ability to shape public opinion. Being a 'shrewd politician', Menzies understood this power and capitalised on the opportunity to award licences to 'friendly operators'. Politicians already recognised that the press played an integral role in shaping public opinion during elections. For this reason it was vital that a sizeable proportion of television licences be 'entrusted to people who were politically dependable: not because they would behave in [a] blatantly unfair way, but because they could be relied upon to behave in unobtrusively unfair ways'.[53] These close relationships, coupled with self-interest, have been an enduring feature of Australian broadcasting history,[54] raising concerns about whether the press or government can be trusted to maintain public accountability in broadcasting policy.

Sydney and Melbourne television launches

Following the allocation of licences, events moved swiftly at TCN-9. Frank Packer was keen to make Australian television history.[55] After sending executives, technicians and newsmen to the US for training in television, TCN-9 launched on 13 July 1956 with its first test transmissions.[56] It was not until 16 September 1956, however, that TCN-9 began its first regular full service, relaying live programmes from temporary studios at a Surry Hills church

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[52] K. Windschuttle, *The Media: A New Analysis of the Press, Television, Radio and Advertising in Australia*, 3rd ed., Penguin Books, Ringwood, Vic., 1988, p. 101.
[53] Hazlehurst, 'The Advent of Commercial Television', p. 114. Paul Barry explains that for almost forty years Frank Packer used his newspapers and television stations to fight a 'shameless campaign to keep the Labor Party out of office, denigrating and ridiculing its policies and politicians, while financing and encouraging its opponents'. See Barry, *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer Uncut*, pp. 48-50.
[54] See also B. Griffen-Foley, *Party Games: Australian Politicians and the Media from War to Dismissal*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2003.
[55] See 'We are proud pioneers in Australian TV', *Sunday Telegraph*, 16 September 1956, p. 7.
[56] *Daily Telegraph*, 12 July 1956, p. 6; *Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 1956, p. 9.

hall. TCN-9's sister, *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper, enthusiastically reported that viewers crowded into private homes; others congregated in large numbers in showrooms or stood outside shop windows to witness the telecast.[57] On 27 October, the *Daily Telegraph* announced that TCN-9 had officially commenced its programming service.[58]

Following TCN-9's trailblazing efforts, ABN-2, Sydney's ABC station, launched on 5 November from its studios on Gore Hill.[59] Sydney's second commercial station, ATN-7, began regular transmission on 2 December.[60] ATN-7's newspaper affiliate, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (*SMH*), boasted of excited crowds on the station's opening night, although ATN-7 struggled to compare with the novelty of TCN-9's opening.[61] In Melbourne, the commercial station, HSV-7 was the first to launch, followed closely by its national (ABC) station, ABV-2. GTV-9 had presented a special broadcasting service for the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games, but began regular transmission after its official launch in January 1957.[62] By 1957 then, six stations were operating in Sydney and Melbourne. The first two years of transmission were difficult, but at the end of 1957/58, three out of the four stations in Sydney and Melbourne were operating at an, albeit small, profit.[63] ATN-7 achieved its first annual profit in 1958/9, although it would not always be able to report a steady upward trend in earnings.[64] Unlike TCN-9, which was, 'built on American product', ATN-7 spent more

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[57] 'It's here at last! 100,000 CROWD SETS FOR AUST. TELEVISION DEBUT', *Daily Telegraph*, 17 September 1956, p. 1; 'Viewers swarmed to vantage points for TCN's first telecast', *B & T*, 8 September 1966, p. 26. There are three dates given for the beginning of Sydney television: 13 July 1956 (opening date of TCN-9), 16 September 1956 (beginning of regular test transmissions) and 27 October 1956 (the official commencement of TCN-9). Consolidated Press' major newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph*, celebrated these three beginnings, all of which could equally claim the beginning of Sydney television programming. However, I have chosen 16 September 1956 as the beginning of Sydney programming because TCN-9 was broadcasting regular programmes at this stage.
[58] *Daily Telegraph*, 27 October 1956, p. 1.
[59] Inglis, *This is the ABC*, pp. 193, 198-202.
[60] 'An old home became Channel 7', *TV Times*, 9 July 1959, pp. 48-49.
[61] *SMH*, 3 December 1956, pp. 1, 5.
[62] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, pp. 23, 26.
[63] J. Given, *Turning Off the Television*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2003, p. 53.
[64] Souter, *A Company of Heralds*, p. 510. See also John Fairfax Limited, *Annual Report and Notice of Meeting*, John Fairfax Limited, [Sydney], 1959, p. 8.

capital on producing local showcase productions which were far more expensive than imported programmes.[65] It was therefore important for the Sydney and Melbourne stations to form loose alliances to pool their resources and share the cost of programming, both in local production and in the purchase of imported product.[66] This formed the basis of networking relationships between the stations.

Networking and ownership

The practice of networking was already entrenched in radio. The ABCB also recognised that networks allowed economies of scale to operate, permitting programmes to be produced that were too costly for a single organisation to undertake. For these reasons it was difficult for the ABCB to reverse the practice. Furthermore, the ABCB was aware that the resources available to broadcasters were unevenly distributed; nor were the areas they supplied equal. The production of television programmes, given the greater expense involved and the scattered distribution of Australia's population strengthened the argument for some kind of networking. Herd argues that it was not, however, the high cost factor that led the federal government to decide on the framework of the commercial television system. Rather, the motivating factor for the development of networks was the 'ambition of the original companies to increase their influence as television expanded across the nation.'[67]

Awarding two licences in each of the four major capital cities facilitated the development of these loose networking arrangements.[68] Between 1957 and 1987, this 'weak' form of

[65] G. Shirley, 'Ken G. Hall and Australia's Fledgling TV', in D. Watson, D. Corrigan & Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney, NSW), *TV Times: 35 Years of Watching Television in Australia*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1991, p. 40.
[66] Moran & Keating, *Historical Dictionary of Australian Radio and Television*, p. 272.
[67] Herd, *Networking*, pp. 54-5.
[68] Moran, *Moran's Guide to Australian TV*, p. 10.

networking occurred between commercial television stations in different capital cities.[69] Network stations, according to the size of their market, would pay a flat percentage fee for the cost of a programme. A station within the network was then given the freedom to develop its own schedule and choose when and how, or whether or not, it would broadcast the programme (Australian or imported).[70] Sydney and Melbourne formed the chief axis of these networking arrangements. For commercial networks, they were also where the production of Australian content, particularly drama, was concentrated.[71] However, localism was maintained to some degree in each capital city station in the production of newscaf and sports programming.[72]

Since newspaper companies held a substantial share in early television licences, the first network relationships were built on long-term affiliations between various capital city newspapers. Frank Packer's Consolidated Press in Sydney had connections with Melbourne's Herald & Weekly Times. This arrangement was extended so that Packer's Sydney station, TCN-9, had links with HSV-7 Melbourne between 1956 and 1960. To protect its interests, ATN-7 Sydney formed an affiliation with GTV-9 Melbourne in 1957 and later with QTQ-9 in Brisbane and NWS-9 in Adelaide.[73] But Packer was determined to establish a unified television network, to avoid the frustrations entailed with loose alliances.[74] After having unsuccessfully applied for the commercial licences in Brisbane and in country areas of NSW, in 1960 Packer saw an opportunity to buy GTV-9, Melbourne's top-rating station. The purchase was instigated by the forced sale of Sir Arthur Warner's majority shareholding in Electronic Industries Ltd (GTV-9's parent company) after British interests had bought a

[69] Moran & Keating, *Historical Dictionary of Australian Radio and Television*, p. 273. Although networking became stronger over time, it was still not 'official' until the late 1980s when programming became far more centralised in Sydney and Melbourne.
[70] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 85.
[71] Moran, *Images and Industry*, p. 21.
[72] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 86.
[73] Moran, *Images and Industry*, p. 20.
[74] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 99.

controlling interest in the company. This effectively put Electronic Industries in breach of the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942*, which restricted foreign ownership to 20% of any one station.[75] The Government decided foreign ownership should be limited, as it believed that 'foreign persons who are un-Australian in sympathy and outlook could impose their views and perspectives on the Australian community'.[76] Packer's purchase brought Sydney's Channel 9 into partnership with Melbourne's Channel 9, effectively forming Australia's first television network: the Nine Network.[77]

Even though, as Herd remarks, 'Networks were acknowledged in the regulatory discourse as something to be barely tolerated, or controlled indirectly through ownership rules',[78] Packer's manoeuvre was still in keeping with the ownership provisions of the *Broadcasting & Television Act 1942*. This was despite the Act's prohibition against a person or company owning directly or indirectly more than two licences in Australia as a whole, and more than one in a single metropolitan market. The Act also limited common ownership to two stations.[79] These provisions were designed to prevent a concentration of ownership. Yet because the Act specified the number of stations that could be owned, rather than the total share of the Australian television market, it facilitated the unequal distribution of economic and decision-making influence among licence owners.[80] Moreover the Minister was incapable of preventing changes to ownership through shareholding deals. Thus between 1960 and

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[75] Souter, *A Company of Heralds*, p. 511; Hall, *Supertoy*, p. 26; Kerley, Commercial Television in Australia, pp. 43, 50.
[76] Butler & Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, p. 868.
[77] Moran, 'Emergence and Consolidation of Television Networks, 1955-1986', in Moran (ed.), *Stay Tuned*, p. 113.
[78] Herd, *Networking*, p. 55.
[79] Kerley, Commercial Television in Australia, pp. 43, 50.
[80] B. Bonney & H. Wilson, 'Networking and Control in Australian Commercial Television', *Media Papers*, No. 20, NSW Institute of Technology, Sydney, 1984, pp. 2-3; A. Brown, *Commercial Media in Australia: Economics, Ownership, Technology and Regulation*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland, p. 123.

1965, several shareholding transactions took place which led to further concentration of television ownership and control.[81]

For Packer, owning licences in the two most desirable markets put Consolidated Press in a vastly more powerful and profitable situation than licensees in other markets.[82] The 1960 purchase caused a programme restructure so that Channel 9 stations in Brisbane and Adelaide were now affiliated with Packer's Nine Network rather than ATN-7. This forced Sydney station ATN-7 to form a partnership with HSV-7 in Melbourne, aligning stations by number and bringing the Seven Network into being. Yet this was a looser network than Nine's, as Sydney and Melbourne Channel 7 stations had different owners: Fairfax and the Herald & Weekly Times respectively.[83] Seven Network affiliates included ADS-7 (Adelaide) and BTQ-7 (Brisbane).[84]

The Nine Network was further consolidated in 1962 after a coaxial cable was set up to support television link-ups between Sydney and Melbourne.[85] Prior to this, commercial stations had developed distinct and separate television cultures with local programmes and personalities. Once advances in technology overcame distance between cities, greater programme sharing ensued. However longstanding cultural rivalry between Sydney and

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[81] Watterson, 'Independence and Control', pp. 124-25.
[82] Bonney & Wilson, 'Networking and Control in Australian Commercial Television', p. 3.
[83] C. Collie, *The Business of TV Production*, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2007, p. 42. The Macquarie Broadcasting Network found itself to be in breach of the legislation, which restricted foreign ownership of any licensee or company to a total of 20%, with a limit of 15 % for any single interest. Since Macquarie Broadcasting Network had significant British interests in the company, it was required to reduce its share in ATN-7 thereby enabling Fairfax to take much greater control of the station. See B. Bonney & H. Wilson, *Australia's Commercial Media*, Macmillan, South Melbourne, Vic., 1983, p. 71.
[84] Souter, *A Company of Heralds*, pp. 511-12.
[85] Moran, *Moran's Guide to Australian TV*, p. 10.

Melbourne ensured that programme sharing and scheduling of locally produced programmes involved a generous measure of competition.[86]

By 1963, there were calls for a third commercial television licence in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide and a second licence in Perth. Several reasons were given. Advertisers wanted more competition and other commercial interests were keen to have a share in the lucrative television market.[87] By this stage, station profits had grown almost sixteen-fold, from £1.2 million in 1956/7 to £18.8 million in 1962/3.[88] For the Menzies government expanding commercial television could also be justified because there were concerns about media monopolies in metropolitan cities, and their impact on localism. The government believed it was important to introduce new players into commercial television, other than newspaper interests. The Coalition was also worried that if Labor won the next election it would allocate the third licence to the trade union movement.[89] Interestingly, none of the new licensees was a newspaper interest group. The successful applicants were United Telecasters in Sydney (headed by Amalgamated Wireless Australasia, a prominent wireless manufacturer) and Austarama Pty Ltd in Melbourne (headed by Ansett airline). The new stations eventually formed the 0-Network.[90]

Throughout the 1960s, the Coalition government continued its policy of limiting the possibility of any one organisation obtaining control of a significant number of stations. However the ownership and control provisions of the *Broadcasting & Television Act* were

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[86] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 74. There has been long-standing cultural rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne, both of which are the largest and wealthiest cities in Australia. See J. Docker, *Australian Cultural Elites: Intellectual Traditions in Sydney and Melbourne*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1974.
[87] James Bailey, *Australian Television*, p. 10. See also John Fairfax Limited, *Annual Report and Notice of Meeting*, 1960, p. 8; Television Corporation Limited, *Annual Report and Balance Sheets*, The Company, Sydney, 1960-63.
[88] Given, *Turning Off the Television*, p. 55.
[89] James Bailey, *Australian Television*, p. 11; N. Herd, '"The Weaker Sisters": The First Decade of ATV-O Melbourne and TEN-10 Sydney, 1964-1975', *MIA*, No. 121, November 2006, pp. 120-21.
[90] Herd, '"The Weaker Sisters"', p. 122.

amended in 1965 as particular companies were still, to some extent, frustrating the Act's objectives.[91] As Sandra Hall observed, the 1960s were a decade where 'corporate cunning' outwitted 'legislatory skill'.[92] The new provisions prohibited a person or company from having a *prescribed interest* in more than two television stations and more than one television station in any single television market in Australia. A person or company described as having 'a prescribed interest' was defined as: holding a licence; having a 5% voting, loan or shareholding interest in the licensee company; or being in a position to operate and manage programming interests.[93] These stringent new provisions made it almost impossible for anyone to gain control of more than two licences in one television market after 1965.[94]

Between 1965 and 1979, there were important legislative developments that led to the establishment of a new regulator and a licensing system that allowed greater public participation.[95] During this period, a 'broadcasting public' (participatory citizens) emerged, one that identified public interests beyond market imperatives.[96] Under the Labor Whitlam government (1972-75), this group became increasingly dissatisfied with the government's progress in achieving media reform.[97] By the time the Coalition government led by Malcolm Fraser came to power in 1975, public activism had reached new heights. Calls were made for a new independently constituted regulator, which was thought would reduce political interference in broadcasting policy. In 1976, the Green Report[98] was conducted to review all

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[91] Oswin & Australian Department of Communications, *Localism in Australian Broadcasting*, p. 75.
[92] Hall, *Supertoy*, p. 24.
[93] Y. Allen & S. Spencer, *The Broadcasting Chronology 1809-1980*, A Research & Survey Unit Publication, Australian Film & Television School, North Ryde, Sydney, 1983, p. 119; Watterson, 'Independence and Control', in Armstrong (ed.), *New Media*, p. 131.
[94] Watterson, 'Independence and Control', in Armstrong (ed.), *New Media*, p. 132.
[95] Ibid., pp. 132-33.
[96] J. Hawke, 'Privatising the Public Interest: The Public and the Broadcasting Services Act 1992', in J. Craik, J. James Bailey, & A. Moran (eds), *Public Voices, Private Interests: Australia's Media Policy*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1995, p. 38.
[97] Herd, *Networking*, pp. 136-37.
[98] The Green Report (named after F. J. Green) was based on over 600 submissions and provided a sound critique of all the deficiencies in Australian broadcasting at the time. See Inquiry into the Australian Broadcasting System & F. J. Green, *A Report on the Structure of the Australian Broadcasting System with Particular Regard*

aspects of Australian broadcasting. It reinforced the necessity of an active public participation in the licensing process, as well as in the formulation of broadcasting policy, echoing the intentions of the 1953 Royal Commission on Television.[99]

In 1977, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT) replaced the ABCB. In 1978, the ABT became an independent body, given licensing authority to administer changes in ownership and control of licences.[100] This meant that licence renewals were now conducted in public before the ABT. In practice, however, explains Bonney and Wilson, 'members of the public…found it difficult to gain recognition by the Tribunal as an "interested party" permitted to testify at Tribunal hearings'.[101] For the most part, the Tribunal renewed licences in favour of the commercial owners. For instance, during the 1982 Sydney licence renewal hearings, all three stations were found in breach of the regulations, but unsurprisingly their licences were all renewed.[102] By 1988, public involvement in licence hearings was almost non-existent.[103]

Cross-media ownership laws and 'official' networking

The intervention by the state to limit concentration of television ownership has been relatively ineffective. Prior to 1981, the ABT was given wide discretionary power to limit further concentration. With one exception, the ABT's powers were not used against the major media companies, and seldom used against smaller companies.[104] In 1979, Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd first bought 48% of shares in United Telecasters (TEN-10 Sydney) later increasing this to 100% share interest. Later in 1979 News Ltd bought a controlling interest in Melbourne's

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to the Control, Planning, Licensing, Regulation, Funding and Administration of the System, A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1976.

[99] Herd, *Networking*, pp. 138-39.

[100] Watterson, 'Independence and Control', in Armstrong, (ed.), *New Media*, p. 134.

[101] B. Bonney & H. Wilson, *Australia's Commercial Media*, Macmillan, South Melbourne, Vic., 1983, p. 76

[102] ibid.

[103] Herd, *Networking*, p. 150.

[104] Bonney & Wilson, *Australia's Commercial Media*, p. 76.

ATV-0 and the network was renamed Network Ten.[105] Yet the ABT refused to allow News Ltd to assume control of ATV-0, not only because News Ltd had extensive print interests, but also because the ABT was concerned about the extensive influence News Ltd would have over commercial television stations as a result of its common ownership of Network Ten.[106]

Licensees recognised the economic and political power that could be gained from common ownership.[107] The Sydney and Melbourne markets were strategically positioned as programme suppliers and attracted a higher proportion of advertising revenue than other markets. Indeed, the successful launch of colour television in 1975 made owning a television station even more lucrative.[108] However the nature of the existing networking arrangements and the dependence of smaller stations in the network for the supply of the majority of their programmes ensured they had little independence in providing programming for their local viewers. The ABT declared that News Ltd's common ownership of television in Sydney and Melbourne was 'not in the public interest', although it never defined what the public interest was.[109] This decision was considered a triumph for public interest groups and highlighted that television stations could be controlled just as effectively through programming as they could through shareholdings.[110]

Nevertheless, the ABT's decision was overturned in 1981 after News Ltd appealed to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The Appeals Tribunal affirmed, among other things, that 'ownership of the Sydney and Melbourne stations could serve the "public interest" by

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[105] Ibid., pp. 75-76; Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 99.
[106] Watterson, 'Independence and Control', in Armstrong (ed.), *New Media*, p. 142.
[107] B. Bonney, 'Commercial Television: Regulation, Technology and Market Forces', in T. Wheelwright & K. Buckley (eds.), *Communications and the Media in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1987, p. 46.
[108] Herd, *Networking*, 153.
[109] Bonney & Wilson, *Australia's Commercial Media*, p. 77.
[110] Watterson, 'Independence and Control', in Armstrong (ed.), *New Media*, p. 143.

facilitating better programming'.[111] Coinciding with this decision, the Hawke Labor government amended (that is, diluted) foreign ownership restrictions. The ABT was no longer given power to approve share transactions in companies holding licences or to deny a television licence for the sake of public interest.[112] This amendment enabled Rupert Murdoch to retain ownership of an Australian television station despite forfeiting his Australian citizenship and residency.[113] Although public interest groups in Australia made temporary gains during this period, the economic and political influence of media companies proved too powerful.[114]

In 1985 a domestic satellite (AUSSAT) was launched. Prior to this, Kerry Packer[115] had been instrumental in the development of Australia's domestic satellite system, after he convinced the Fraser Coalition government (1975-83) to finance it with federal revenue in 1977. Packer admired US television networking, where stations not only supplied network-affiliated programmes to regional partners but also national advertising. At this time, Australia did not have an expansive terrestrial telecommunications system like the US that was capable of transporting television signals from Sydney and Melbourne to regional stations scattered throughout Australia. An Australian domestic satellite system would enable metropolitan network stations to expand and strengthen their relationship with regional stations.[116] Before the 1980s, regional viewers could only enjoy the ABC and their local commercial stations. Keen to garner the support of these viewers, the Hawke Labor Government initiated

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[111] Bonney & Wilson, *Australia's Commercial Media*, p. 79.
[112] P. Chadwick, 'Controlling the News', *The Multinational Monitor*, Vol. 8, No.10, 1987, http://multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1987/10/chadwick.html, accessed 3 August 2012.
[113] J. Schultz, *Reviving the Fourth Estate: Democracy, Accountability and the Media*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p. 83.
[114] Bonney & Wilson, *Australia's Commercial Media*, p. 82.
[115] Kerry Packer, the younger son of Frank Packer, took over the control of the Nine Network following the death of Sir Frank Packer in 1974. See Griffen-Foley, *Sir Frank Packer*, pp. 324-25.
[115] S. Cunningham, 'Television', in S. Cunningham & G. Turner, *The Media in Australia: Industries*, *Texts, Audiences*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, p. 31
[116] A. Brown, 'The Restructure of Australian Commercial Television', *Journal of Media Economics*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1989, pp. 44.

'Regional Equalisation' which involved a process of aggregation. This refers to the uniting of regional television stations with their capital city neighbouring channels. Aggregation was implemented gradually beginning with the more populous eastern states. The first region to be connected was southern NSW and the ACT, with Sydney. Here, Prime was aligned Seven, Capital with Ten and WIN with Nine.[117]

Prior to 1987, the Australian media was heading towards greater ownership concentration. There were four major media organisations: Australian Consolidated Press Ltd, the Herald & Weekly Times Ltd, John Fairfax Ltd and News Ltd. Between them they held control of all the capital city newspapers in Australia, close to all national magazines, eight of the fifteen metropolitan commercial television stations, and had considerable radio interests.[118] This was all about to change.

In 1987, the Hawke Labor government (1983-91) introduced new cross-ownership laws that forbade a media company from owning a television station, newspaper or commercial radio licence in the same market. The Treasurer, Paul Keating, famously declared that owners could either become 'princes of prints' or 'queens of the screen', but not both.[119] An organisation was now permitted to own 'as many television stations as it liked', provided that it did not exceed 75% of the national television market. This was changed to 60% to allow passage of the Bill through the Senate.[120] Cross-media ownership was almost eradicated, but the concentration of ownership within both television and newspapers increased dramatically.

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[117] Prime included NSW regional areas centred on Orange, Dubbo and Wagga Wagga. Capital was centred on Canberra and WIN on Wollongong and the Illawarra. See 'Aggregation', http://televisionau.com/feature-articles/aggregation, accessed 7 September 2013.
[118] Windschuttle, *The Media*, p. 84.
[119] Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, *Broadcasting in Australia 1989: The Second Annual Review of the Industry*, Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, Sydney, July 1990, p. 94.
[120] Windschuttle, *The Media*, p. 84; Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 86; Parliament of Australia, 'Media Ownership Regulation in Australia', http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/archive/mediaregulation, accessed 13 September 2013.

The new laws facilitated the creation of national television networks, bringing the three networks within reach of 90% of the population and reducing the autonomy and identity of local stations.[121] This benefited the interests of Kerry Packer and Rupert Murdoch, who were 'mates' of the Government, facts acknowledged by Hawke and Keating.[122] Thus the 1980s signalled a new government approach to networking, reversing its 'professed policy' of discouraging commercial broadcasting networks to one of support for the arrangement.[123] The new ownership laws together with the satellite and aggregation brought about official national networking.[124]

The change in regulation and ownership precipitated the most profound media shake-up in Australia's television history. Less than a year after Keating's declaration, the ownership of Australia's major commercial television broadcasters had changed hands completely.[125] Perth businessman, Alan Bond, purchased the Sydney and Melbourne Nine Network stations from Packer to add to Bond Media's Brisbane and Perth stations. Frank Lowy's Westfield subsidiary, Northern Star, acquired the Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide stations to form the Ten Network, and Christopher Skase's Qintex acquired Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane stations to form the Seven Network.[126]

The media shake-up attracted buyers who thought the media ownership offered lucrative returns, but they had little if any broadcasting experience and were unable to manage

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[121] Windschuttle, *The Media*, p. 85.
[122] Paul Chadwick cited in N. Herd, 'Trade Liberalisation and Australia's Television Cultural Policy: Power and Interest in National Television Policy', *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2007, p. 49.
[123] Brown, *Commercial Media in Australia*, p. 123.
[124] Herd, *Networking*, p. 194.
[125] J. Given, 'Commercial TV: Bucks, Blokes, Bureaucrats and the Bird', in Craik et al. (eds), *Public Voices, Private Interests*, p. 23
[126] Cunningham, 'Television', in Cunningham & Turner, *The Media in Australia*, 1993, p. 31

competition and costs.[127] Expenditure on local and overseas programmes escalated in 1988-89, local by nearly a third and overseas doubled.[128] Each of the new owners had also used debt rather than equity to finance their take-overs. Therefore they were unable to recoup any losses in the media marketplace. The Alan Bond Inquiry, initiated by the ABT and held in 1989, illustrated the greed and recklessness of commercial television owners during this time. The Inquiry determined that Bond was not a 'fit and proper person' to own a broadcasting licence, particularly after he was found to have provided misleading information during ABT licence renewal hearings. However by the time the High Court upheld the ABT's decision, Bond was no longer in control of the Nine Network.[129]

At the beginning of the 1990s, all three commercial networks were experiencing severe financial difficulties. With a recession as well, the FTA commercial television industry found itself in its deepest slump since television began.[130] Networks had been exposed to high interest rates in 1988 and suffered a downturn in advertising revenue in 1990-91.[131] Ten found itself in such a dire state that there was talk of the network merging with either Seven or Nine.[132] In 1989, both Qintex (Seven Network) and Northern Star (Ten Network) had been placed in receivership. Bond's Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane licences were sold back to Kerry Packer in 1990 for $565m less than he had received for the Sydney and Melbourne stations in 1987.[133] Despite efforts to increase media diversity, the new ownership laws could

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[127] O'Regan, *Australian Television Culture*, p. 47.
[128] Ibid., pp. 47-48.
[129] ABT, *Broadcasting in Australia*, 3rd ed., Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, Sydney, July 1991, pp. 145-46. See also ABT, *The Bond Inquiry: A Report by the ABT on an Inquiry into Matters Relating to Television and Radio Licences Associated with Mr Alan Bond*, Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, North Sydney, NSW, 1990.
[130] T. Flew & S. Harrington, 'Television', in G. Turner & S. Cunningham, *The Media & Communications in Australia*, 3rd ed., Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2010, pp. 155-72.
[131] O'Regan, *Australian Television Culture*, pp. 47-48.
[132] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 99.
[133] Herd, *Networking*, p. 205.

not prevent 'the wiser hands' from reclaiming the networks and restoring some semblance of, in Jock Given's words, 'financial sense and corporate credibility to commercial television'.[134] In contrast to the lavish spending of the 1980s, the 1990s featured an entirely different philosophy of cost-cutting. In addition, the *Broadcasting and Services Act 1992* (*BSA*), which replaced the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942*, came into operation in 1993 with a 'lighter touch' in regulation.[135] A new regulator, the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA), took over the functions of the ABT. The ABA encouraged industry self-regulation, further liberalisation of networking limits (allowing 75% reach over the population) and far less public participation in regulatory procedures.[136] Economic viability of media companies and technological innovation became the chief priorities.[137] The *BSA* also legislated for the expansion of the television system (community TV in 1994 and pay TV in 1995).[138]

As the television networks came under new ownership structures and slowly began to stabilise, the Nine Network emerged as a dominant force in the ratings.[139] In 1991, CanWest Global Communications, a Canadian media company, organised a syndicate of Australian investors, which paid $90 million in cash to Westpac bank to take over Ten's $150 million loan. Although CanWest financed most of the takeover, the syndicate was structured so that CanWest held no more than 15% to comply with the foreign ownership laws.[140] Following the bankruptcy of Qintex, Seven Network Ltd was sold in 1995 to a consortium involving Kerry

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[134] Given, 'Commercial TV', in Craik et al. (eds), *Public Voices, Private Interests*, p. 26.
[135] R. Tiffen, 'Media ownership changes 1987 and 2006: From Alan Bond to CVC', *MIA,* No. 122, February 2007, p. 13.
[136] S. Cunningham, 'Television', in S. Cunningham & G. Turner (eds), *The Media in Australia: Industries, Texts, Audiences*, 2nd ed., Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1997, p. 105.
[137] Moran, *Inside the Australian Media*, p. 83.
[138] Cunningham, 'Television', in Cunningham & Turner (eds), *The Media in Australia*, 2nd ed., p. 105.
[139] Ibid., p. 104.
[140] Herd, *Networking*, pp. 202-3.

Stokes, a Perth businessman, who became chairman of Seven.[141] In 1998, Stokes obtained a controlling interest in the organisation.[142]

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s there was a growing acknowledgement that new communication technologies had the potential to encourage greater media diversity in terms of content and media players. As a result, John Howard's Coalition government (1996-2007) faced pressure to remove cross-media ownership laws. However there was general resistance to removing these laws unless the government was willing to relax foreign ownership limitations. The small size of the Australian media market was thought to encourage greater concentration unless new entrants were permitted.[143] Consequently in 1999, the Government sought the assistance of the Productivity Commission, which conducted the largest review of broadcasting in two decades. The Commission advised 'on practical courses of action to improve competition, efficiency and the interests of consumers'.[144] For example, the Commission supported the proposal that in the future media acquisitions and mergers be subject to a 'public interest test' conducted by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission instead of by a 'broadcast-specific regulator'.[145] In 2000, the Commission discounted the impact of foreign ownership on the broadcasting landscape[146], and recommended that all 'restrictions on foreign investment, ownership and control in the BSA should be repealed'.[147] The Commission argued that relaxing the rules would expand

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[141] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 94; 'ATN7 Sydney' – Australian Television Archive, http://austv.hostforweb.com/cgibin/cgi2/index.rb?page=ATN7%20Sydney&section=Television%20History%20Reference/TV%20Stations/Seven%20Network&mode=0, accessed 23 May 2010.
[142] Herd, *Networking*, p. 207.
[143] M. Pusey & M. McCutheon, 'From the media moguls to the money men?: Media concentration in Australia', *MIA*, No. 140, 2011, p. 24. .
[144] Productivity Commission (2000) cited in Herd, *Networking*, pp. 298-99.
[145] Herd, *Networking*, p. 299.
[146] Butler & Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, p. 868.
[147] Productivity Commission, *Annual Report 1999-2000*, AusInfo, Canberra, 2000, p. 137.

the pool of potential media owners, allow greater access to capital and protect against further media concentration.[148]

The *Broadcasting Services Amendment (Media Ownership) Act 2006* loosened cross-media ownership laws and removed foreign ownership limits.[149] The Howard government maintained that a repeal of the laws was necessary in light of the worldwide trend towards globalisation. Since media companies would inevitably become more globally orientated, Australia's foreign ownership and control laws would restrict Australian media companies from building international partnerships.[150]

The new laws allowed companies to own two out of the three regulated platforms – commercial television, radio, and newspapers – in any market. Debate about the 2006 changes in media ownership laws centred on the necessity for these reforms and their likely impact. Two main views emerged.[151] The first view, espoused by the Government, deemed the changes necessary to accommodate the arrival of new technologies and the importance of accommodating new players to increase diversity of content and views. It was also believed that a certain level of concentration was needed in Australia to ensure economies of scale.[152] The second main view, held largely by academics and public interest groups, predicted that the changes would more likely entrench the incumbent media companies and protect them against future competition. Consolidation of media companies, they argued, was less likely to promote diversity of content and viewpoints, particularly within newcsaf.[153]

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[148] Productivity Commission, *Broadcasting*, Report No. 11, AusInfo, Canberra, 2000, p. 340.
[149] Pusey & McCutheon, 'From the media moguls to the money men?', p. 24.
[150] Butler & Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, p. 869.
[151] Pusey & McCutheon, 'From the media moguls to the money men?', p. 26.
[152] Butler & Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, p. 906.
[153] Pusey & McCutheon, 'From the media moguls to the money men?', p. 26.

To understand the actual effects of the ownership changes of 2006, it is necessary to rewind to 2005, when after a long bout of ill-health, Kerry Packer died, marking the end of Nine's glory days.[154] His media assets, including the Nine Network, were passed to his son, James, who had been running Consolidated Press Holdings since 1998.[155] On the same day the new ownership laws were passed, Packer sold 50% of PBL[156] to CVC Asia Pacific, one of the largest private equity firms in the world.[157] PBL Media emerged as a result of this joint venture.[158] Rodney Tiffen defines private equity firms as those having 'any type of equity investment in an asset in which the equity is not freely tradeable on a public stock market'. They generally take over under-performing companies, and are primarily judged on the return they provide for their investors.[159]

In November 2006, Kerry Stokes (Seven Network) entered into a joint venture with Kohlberg Kravis Roberts (KKR), an American private equity firm. This joint venture became known as Seven Media Group. In 2007, CVC acquired a further 25% of PBL Media and James Packer resigned from the board. Since 2007, the *Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Act 1975* and Australia's Foreign Investment Policy have been the only rules regulating foreign ownership. This adjustment enabled a subsidiary of CanWest, Can West Media Works Ireland Holdings, to acquire 56.7% of Ten Network Holdings Ltd. Finally, the old patterns of Australian commercial television ownership collapsed, an outcome of deregulation.[160]

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[154] Stone, *Who Killed Channel 9?*, pp. 8-9.
[155] Herd, *Networking*, p. 296.
[156] In 1994 Packer combined his magazine publishing and television business into Publishing and Broadcasting Ltd (PBL). See Herd, *Networking*, p. 205.
[157] Stone, *Who Killed Channel 9?*, p. 278.
[158] Herd, *Networking*, p. 296.
[159] Tiffen, 'Media ownership changes in 1987 and 2006', pp. 14-15.
[160] Herd, *Networking*, pp. 296-97.

Thus, by the end of 2007, the commercial FTA television networks had undergone major refinancing by foreign-owned private equity firms.[161] This was in contrast to the 1980s where television owners had to be Australian citizens and regarded as 'fit and proper' persons. Private equity firms owe their first obligation to their shareholders rather than to the public and are driven by profit and share prices rather than by social obligation.[162] Once again, market forces were prioritised over the public interest and broadcasters ignored their licensed obligation to provide programmes for the benefit of all Australians.

In 2007, the Packer-controlled PBL changed its name to Consolidated Media Holdings (CMH) and by December 2008 CMH's shareholding in PBL Media had been reduced to 1%. Stokes' Seven Network bought a 'strategic' 5% stake in CMH, but the ownership limits prevent the Seven Network from controlling Nine Network stations in markets where it manages television stations.[163] Following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), CanWest was forced to relinquish its investment in the Ten Network to a group of Australian institutional investors in 2009.[164] By 2010, FTA television was experiencing a recovery despite an advertising downturn, helped in part by the success of FTA's digital channels. For James Packer, it may have appeared the opportune time to buy back into television as he bought 18% of the Ten Network.[165] In the same year, Lachlan Murdoch, Rupert Murdoch's eldest son, and Australian mining heiress, Gina Rinehart, also acquired stakes in Ten.[166] In 2011, Seven Media Group merged with West Australian Newspapers Holdings Ltd to form Seven

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[161] Ibid., p. 297. Looking for a way to get back into television, John Fairfax Holdings in 2005 showed interest in buying the Ten Network from CanWest. However CanWest refused. See 'Network Ten' – Australian Television Archive, http://austv.hostforweb.com/cgi-bin/cgi2/index.rb?page=Network%20Ten&section=Television%20History%20Reference/TV%20Stations/Network%20Ten&mode=0, accessed 11 December 2011.
[162] Tiffen, 'Media ownership changes 1987 and 2006', p. 15.
[163] Flew & Harrington, 'Television', in Cunningham & Turner (eds), *The Media & Communications in Australia*, p. 43.
[164] Herd, *Networking*, p. 298.
[165] 'Ten shares soar as Packer buys stake', ABC News, 20 October 2010, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-10-20/ten-shares-soar-as-packer-buys-stake/2305084, accessed 7 January 2011.
[166] R. Kelly, 'Lachlan buys half of James Packer's Ten stake for $128m', *The Australian*, 24 November 2010.

West Media.[167] Currently the Nine Network is owned by Nine Entertainment Co. (formerly PBL Media),[168] the Seven Network by Seven West Media and the Ten Network by Ten Network Holdings Ltd.

The 2006 cross-media ownership laws enabled media owners to reposition themselves once again across several media platforms. Nevertheless, by 2010, ownership of commercial radio and television, and of newspapers, became more concentrated, with less media companies owning mass media holdings. The entrance of new media players into the market has not necessarily increased the diversity of viewpoints. Larger media companies still dominate the online space, while alternative online sources struggle to gain the following that traditional media enjoys.[169] Although there is diversification in the way Australians access media, the same content is often re-packaged across multiple media platforms.

Australian television content as cultural policy

As a public policy issue, Australian content has had more 'ink spilled over it'[170] than any other debate about Australian broadcasting, rivalled only by the media monopoly question.[171] Underpinning debates about Australian content are contentious assumptions and implications concerning our culture, our economics, our survival as a nation-state, and what we define as 'Australian'. The purpose of Australian content regulations is to encourage broadcasting services to develop and reflect 'a sense of national identity, character and cultural

[167] S. Smith, 'WAN to buy Seven's Media assets for $4.1 b', *The West Australian*, 21 February 2011.
[168] In December 2010, PBL Media was re-branded Nine Entertainment Co. as an umbrella name for Nine Television, Nine Digital and Nine Newspapers. See D. Gyngell, 'Nine entertainment Co.', press release, 2 December 2010, http://www.nineentertainment.com.au/announcements/press-release-nine-entertainment-co.htm, accessed 27 May 2013.
[169] Pusey & McCutheon, 'From the media moguls to the money men?', pp. 29-30.
[170] Jacka & Johnson, 'Australia', in Smith (ed.), *Television*, p. 213.
[171] T. O'Regan, 'Film and its nearest neighbour: The Australian film and television interface', http://wwwmcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/film/AFTV.html, accessed 5 October 2010.

diversity'.[172] As Tony Morphett remarks, 'If we don't tell our own stories and sing our own songs, or dream our own dreams, we might as well pack up and go to California'.[173] A major problem, however, is that television broadcasting policy and regulators have struggled to adequately define 'Australian content', even though discussion of it (for example, in relation to Australian music on commercial radio)[174] has usually assumed that it was self-evident.[175]

The importance of having Australian culture reflected on television was recognised during the Royal Commission on Television in 1953. The Commission's report concluded that Australians should play 'a real and steadily increasing part in Australian television' and that the stations had an obligation to use the best of Australian talent. However no mandatory content quota was established, as it was believed to be impractical and would result in the deterioration of programme standards.[176] Instead, the government through a provision in Section 114 of the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942* required that a commercial station was to use 'as far as possible' the services of Australians in the production and presentation of programmes.[177] Australian content therefore broadly referred to programmes that provided Australian employment, making it easy for licensees to avoid complying with the intention of the provision to reflect Australian culture. The result was that commercial broadcasters supported the less expensive genres, as they employed fewer people. Locally produced drama – requiring the greatest resources and financial commitment – naturally became the first casualty, as we shall see in Chapter 8.

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[172] Butler & Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, p. 805.
[173] T. Morphett cited in *The Price of Being Australian Conference*, September 1987, in Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, *Oz Content: An Inquiry into Australian Content on Commercial Television*, Vol. 1, Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, North Sydney, NSW, 1991, p. 5.
[174] Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, p. 523.
[175] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 116.
[176] Report of the Royal Commission, *Report on the Royal Commission on Television*, p. 81.
[177] ABCB, *Tenth Annual Report*, Commonwealth Government Printing Office, Canberra, 1958, p. 37.

As the Menzies government was not prepared to accept a quota system, in 1956, Parliament moved for a provision to be made in the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942* that Australian programmes, other than news and sport, should occupy no less than 55% of stations' overall transmission time.[178] Previously the Government had compelled the ABC and commercial licensees to spend no more than £60,000 per annum on imported programmes; this was imposed 'for the purposes of overseas exchange'. The Government chose to overturn this in 1957 and relax restrictions on overseas buying in 'light of the improvement in the overseas balance of payments.'[179] This created alarm among those who did not want to see an influx of imported programmes.

The ABCB was also reluctant at this time to introduce additional regulations for the fledgling stations. In its 1958 and 1959 annual reports to justify this, the ABCB highlighted the 'special [financial] problems' of commercial stations, conceding that it was unreasonable to expect stations to carry the expense of live productions without greater advertising support. Attracting advertisers was difficult to achieve given the small number who owned television sets at this time. The scarcity of local talent and the 'disappointing results' of local productions were also used as justifications.[180] For the most part, light entertainment programmes, cookery demonstrations, sport, newscaf and 'talks' made up the bulk of 'Australian content' and 'local production' on commercial stations between 1956 and 1959.[181] Imported westerns and domestic comedies from the US fed Australians' appetites for entertainment, while local drama productions languished.

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[178] ABCB, *Ninth Annual Report*, 1957, p. 48.
[179] Ibid., p. 49.
[180] ABCB, *Tenth Annual Report,* 1958, p. 37, ABCB, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 1959, p. 41.
[181] Crawford, *Commercial Television Programmes in Australia*, p. 13.

In response to persistent public pressure, however, the ABCB began to normalise the idea of cultural nationalism in broadcasting policy by introducing a general content quota in 1960, to ensure broadcasters screened less overseas programmes.[182] When the ABCB spoke of 'Australian content' from the 1960s onwards, the term referred to programmes that were 'Australian in origin': that is, if it was written, produced and acted by Australians. At least 40% of commercial stations' programming output had to consist of Australian material, with 4 hours per 28 days broadcast during primetime (7.30–9.30 p.m.).[183]

It is questionable how effective regulations have been in stimulating local content. In 1960, the ABCB reported that stations were able to meet the new content quota by simply rearranging their programme schedules.[184] In other words, the quota institutionalised what stations were already doing.[185] Consequently in 1963, the Senate Select Committee on the Encouragement of Australian Productions conducted the first major review of Australian television. The Vincent Committee, as it was known, was particularly critical of the inadequate levels of Australian-produced programmes, especially drama, and the consistently high levels of imported content. The Committee also criticised the ABCB for not effectively ensuring station compliance with the spirit of the content regulations.[186] The Committee felt that more attention should be paid to the drama quota. This was because of all television genres, drama had the greatest emotional, sociological and psychological impact on audiences. Not only was it the most popular form of entertainment, but it also had the most significant influence upon moral standards and attitudes within the community.[187]

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[182] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, pp. 114-15. By this stage, the Australian commercial television licensees had its own lobby, the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) established in 1960. FACTS represented the commercial television licensees.
[183] ABCB, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 1960, p. 38.
[184] Ibid.
[185] See ABCB, *Twenty-third Annual Report*, 1971.
[186] Kippax & Murray, *Small Screen, Big Business*, pp. 34-35.
[187] Docker, 'Popular Culture versus the State', p. 13.

The Vincent Report made several recommendations designed to stimulate local production, including government-funding initiatives and drama quotas. While the Menzies government chose not to act on these recommendations, some of the Report's broad tenets provided a blueprint for future regulation.[188] Eventually persistent public pressure led to the introduction of a drama quota in 1967.[189] The quota required stations to televise 30 minutes of locally produced drama a week and televise at least two hours of Australian drama a month in primetime.[190] The commercial disincentives to produce drama, and the desire to safeguard national culture, were the justifications used for introducing these changes.[191]

No longer was 'Australian content' synonymous with Australian employment; this meaning was displaced following the introduction in 1973 of a 'points system' by the Whitlam Labor government.[192] The new system, permitting every commercial station to score one point for Australian content for every hour on air, sought to encourage 'quality programming' by allocating points to programmes on a sliding scale.[193] Points were awarded on the basis of a programme's 'perceived cultural value'.[194] Prior to 1973, commercial stations were meeting the percentage requirement of the content quota (45% of programming in 1971) by screening relatively cheap quiz and variety shows. The points system was introduced as an attempt to overcome this practice and to encourage expensive, labour-intensive drama productions.[195] The aim of Australian content now was not merely to provide jobs within the industry, but also to satisfy cultural concerns.[196] Yet the practical effect of the points system was to

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[188] O'Regan, 'Film and its nearest neighbour', http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/film/AFTV.html, accessed 5 October 2010; Docker, 'Popular Culture versus the State', p. 14.
[189] ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 3, p. 61.
[190] Moran, *Images & Industry*, p. 32.
[191] ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 1, p. 28.
[192] James Bailey, *Australian Television*, p. 20.
[193] Bonney, 'Commercial Television', in Wheelwright & Buckley (eds.), *Communications and the Media in Australia*, p. 47.
[194] Herd, *Networking*, p. 135.
[195] Kippax & Murray, *Small Screen, Big Business*, p. 37.
[196] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, pp. 114-15.

discriminate in favour of certain types of content and programming genres, with primetime drama accruing the largest number of points.[197] There was a degree of cultural elitism and a belief that certain television genres were or could be more distinctively Australian in character and content than others.[198] Naturally this generated hostility as it undermined the value of genres such as variety, quiz and game shows and performers who worked in these areas.[199]

On the other hand, as Nick Herd argues, commercial broadcasters accepted the new system in all its complexity with little protest, suggesting it did not make any new demands on them.[200] Furthermore, as Albert Moran points out, the ABCB was, like many of its regulatory successors, composed of several former employees of the commercial television industry.[201] The relationship between the ABCB and the industry, therefore, was rather accommodating. In addition, a careful reading of the ABCB reports reveals that it was far more likely to negotiate regulations with commercial stations than to strictly enforce them.[202]

The extent to which quotas became a significant stimulus to the development of an Australian production industry is difficult to measure. Rather, Moran argues, it was a combination of factors that was responsible, some of which included the entrance of a third commercial station in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide and audience demand for home-grown programming.[203] The debates about standards, the quality of local production, and the roles of regulators and licensees continued throughout the 1970s. These debates encouraged further regulation and public interest groups to become even more vocal. In 1970, the drama quota

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[197] Herd, *Networking*, p. 135.
[198] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, pp. 114-15.
[199] G. Blundell, *King: The Life and Comedy of Graham Kennedy*, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 2003, pp. 292-93.
[200] Herd, *Networking*, p. 136.
[201] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 118.
[202] See ABCB, *Tenth*, *Twelfth*, *Twenty-third Annual Reports*, 1958, 1960,1971 in particular.
[203] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 119.

was increased to 6 hours of first release drama per 28 days from 6-10 p.m., and in 1976 it rose again, to 9 hours per 28 days.[204] In addition, media unions and individuals within the film and television industry were inspired to establish the 'TV- Make It Australian Campaign' in 1971.[205] This campaign was the result of a 'cultural war' between the commercial television industry and creative workers.[206]

In 1977, the ABT launched a public inquiry into the self-regulation of commercial radio and television, offering the public an opportunity to voice their concerns.[207] Of particular interest were newscaf, children's television and religious programming. The Self-regulation Inquiry was one of the most comprehensive discussions on Australian content undertaken by broadcasting regulators. According to the ABT, it was of 'paramount importance' that television be used to show 'Australia to Australians, to reinforce Australian values and to reflect Australian attitudes and lifestyles'.[208] Moreover, Australian television was to have a 'distinctively Australian look'. Yet for commercial television programming to reflect the Australian way of life or culture, the ABT assumed that some places, activities and traditions were more Australian than others. Of course, for programmes to project a distinctive 'Australian look' would entail using different places, depending on whether one believed the outback or the city encapsulated this look. Unfortunately, at no point during this discussion was the term 'Australian content' explicitly defined. Discussion of the term assumed Australians had no difficulty in agreeing or identifying what is was.[209]

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[204] ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 3, p. 61.
[205] James Bailey, *Australian Television*, p. 18.
[206] Herd, *Networking*, p. 110.
[207] ABT, *Self-regulation for Broadcasters: A Report on the Public Inquiry into the Concept of Self-regulation for Australian Broadcasters*, A.G.P.S., Canberra, July 1977.
[208] Ibid., p. 33.
[209] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, pp. 114-15.

As a result of the Inquiry, the ABT suggested a limited system of self-regulation, believing that commercial broadcasters were not 'yet willing to put the public interest above their self-interest at all times'.[210] Australian content, children's programming and advertising were still to be regulated by the ABT as they were considered most vulnerable to the economic imperatives of broadcasters. A triumph for public interest groups, particularly child advocacy groups, was the ABT's ruling in favour of more stringent regulations for children's programming, as we shall see in Chapter 6. In other areas, the industry was given responsibility to devise its own voluntary code and standards, and was held accountable for its adherence to these codes during public licence hearings.[211]

According to the United Telecasters 1978 annual report for TEN-10, it was the 'increased viewer acceptance of locally produced' programmes and competition between other stations, rather than the quality-based quota system, that became the incentives for commercial stations to increase the number and range of Australian programmes broadcast. The increasing popularity of Australian programmes in the 1970s, the report explains, was a result of stations making a concerted effort to improve programme quality, ensure better production facilities and invest in experimentation. Producing quality local product was considered the key to ensuring wider viewer acceptance of such programmes.[212] According to the report, the fact that the stations financed, produced and telecast Australian drama in considerable excess of the quota, and at great cost, suggested the most important motivating factor was audience preference rather than quota, particularly as time went on.[213]

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[210] ABT, *Self-regulation for Broadcasters,* p. 10.
[211] Ibid., pp. 137-40.
[212] United Telecasters Sydney Limited, *Annual Report and Notice of Annual General Meeting*, United Telecasters Sydney Limited, 1978, p. 7.
[213] United Telecasters Sydney Limited, *Annual Report and Notice of Annual General Meeting*, United Telecasters Sydney Limited, 1977.

Additionally, the introduction of new technologies and services created new programming possibilities and stimulated competition. The introduction of colour television reinvigorated commercial television programming, attracting new audiences and precipitating a dramatic rise in station profits.[214] It also led to a growth in television advertising, which between 1975 and 1981 was substantially more than the growth in Australia's Gross Domestic Product.[215] By 1979, 82% of the population in Sydney and 75% in Melbourne owned colour television sets; by 1984 this proportion had increased to 96% of the population of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth. The remarkable speed and acquisition of television sets explains the impact colour television had on programming in general and the fortunes of broadcasting empires specifically.[216]

Australian Content Standard

Following another ABT inquiry that ran from 1984 to 1989, the ABT introduced a new Australian Content Standard (ACS) from 1990. The ABT aimed to encourage programmes that were identifiably Australian, recognise the 'diversity of cultural backgrounds' in the community, and be produced by and developed for Australians.[217] Locally produced drama and children's programming have occupied a central place in Australian content debates since 1960. Drama has been privileged in being singled out for Australian content quotas for ideological and economic reasons. It is a genre believed to be the most effective in reflecting Australian images and culture, but it is also the most labour-intensive, securing the greatest proportion of Australian employment.[218] In contrast to the US and UK, Australia's cultural market is not large enough to sustain local product as the main source of programming or

[214] Windschuttle, *The Media*, pp. 56-57.
[215] Advertising revenue increased from $154 million in 1974 to $678 million in 1981. See Herd, *Networking*, p. 217.
[216] Anon., *Australian Television: A Ratings History 1956-1998,* ACNielsen Australia, 1999, pp. 30-33, 39.
[217] ABT, *Broadcasting in Australia 1989,* p. 14.
[218] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 117.

fully recover the costs of television production. Domestic drama costs significantly more than imported product, which is why government support mechanisms for drama are considered necessary.[219] In order to encourage 'quality programming' in drama, the new rules gave 'higher quality factor' points to programmes in a format involving generally higher production expenses. This proved ineffective, however, as networks could package low cost productions in a format that still achieved the high quality factor points.[220]

Quotas for children's drama were also introduced in 1990.[221] The desire to protect children's interests and ensure they have quality locally produced, age-specific programming and the costs that these entail for commercial broadcasters justified the need to protect children's programming through additional sub-quotas.[222] Without such regulations it is questionable whether Australian drama and children's television programming would figure prominently in television schedules.[223]

Broadcasters were thus able to circumvent the spirit of the ACS, but they still objected to the tightening of the ABT's regulations over time. The most common arguments against content regulations have stemmed from new developments in the global television marketplace. The growing globalisation of programme production, distribution and finance has meant that the strength of Australia's cultural industries is dependent on how much they participate in the global marketplace.[224] Broadcasters see Australian content regulations, among other forms of regulation, as obstructions in this process.[225]

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[219] Papandrea, 'Improving Regulation of the Domestic Content of Australian Television', p. 457.
[220] Bureau of Transport & Communications Economics, *Australian Commercial Television 1986-1995: Structure and Performance*, A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1996, p. 132.
[221] ABT, *Broadcasting in Australia 1989,* p. 14.
[222] Papandrea, 'Improving Regulation of the Domestic Content of Australian Television', p. 457.
[223] Ibid., p. 463.
[224] Butler & Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, p. 805.
[225] J. Sinclair, 'Television and Australian Content: Culture and Protections', *MIA*, No. 63, February 1992, p. 26.

Conversely, those who advocate regulation of Australian content, such as public interest groups, view it as an important mechanism to deal with market failure and ensure that content standards are achieved. Stuart Cunningham and Liz Jacka argue that regulatory measures have reflected demand for local content and have acted as a safety net and device against the erosion of existing levels in times of economic downturn.[226] Although regulatory measures have not been completely successful, they have promoted station accountability and helped to stimulate general confidence in local production. It is also thought that cultural policy objectives cannot be achieved without some kind of economic stimulus. During the 1980s, government-funding initiatives appeared to have encouraged further production of high-cost local drama in the form of mini-series, feature films, telemovies, series and serials.[227]

Revisions to the ACS were made throughout the 1990s. One of the distinguishing features of this decade was the general desire for less detailed regulation of television services. However a continuation of mandatory programme standards was still considered necessary to maintain Australian content levels.[228] In 2005, the ABA and Australian Communications Authority merged into the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). This body is responsible for the regulation of broadcasting, the Internet, radiocommunications and telecommunications.[229] At this time, the ACS was revised yet again. The relevant legislation, which is still in force, consists of the *Australian Broadcasting Services (Australian Content)*

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[226] S. Cunningham & E. Jacka, *Australian Television and International Mediascapes*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 58.
[227] S. Cunningham, *Framing Culture: Criticism and Policy in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, NSW, 1992, p. 29.
[228] Given, 'Commercial TV', in Craik et al. (eds), *Public Voices, Private Interests*, p. 29; History of Children's Television Standards (CTS), http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/1001/pc=PC_91816, accessed 19 September 2011.
[229] ACMA, 'Introduction to the ACMA', http://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/About/The-ACMA-story/Communicating/introduction-to-the-acma, accessed 3 May 2013.

Act 2005, the Children's Television Standards 2009 and the Television Program Standard for Australian Content in Advertising (TPS 23).[230]

The ACS requires all commercial FTA television licensees to broadcast an annual minimum transmission quota of 55% Australian programming between 6 a.m. and midnight. Australian content requirements also include specific annual transmission sub-quotas for first-run Australian (adult) drama, documentary and children's programmes, which are explored in further detail in Chapters 6 and 8. Australian programmes are now defined by 'creative control and the origin of key creative personnel'. Australian official co-productions and New Zealand programmes (as part of the Australia New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement of 1988) are recognised as 'Australian' equally with Australian programmes.[231]

Although the federal government has maintained a public commitment to cultural nationalism, many believe the US-Australian Free Trade Agreement undermines this commitment. This is because the Australian government is prevented from increasing the local content requirements beyond existing levels. Moreover, if for some reason the Australian content quota were to be reduced it could never be raised again to current levels. In addition, if any future content regulations are introduced, for instance, for multi-channeling, content levels cannot be increased above the level at which quotas began.[232] These stipulations reflect the purposes of the US-Australian Free Trade Agreement, which are to

[230] Screen Australia, 'Convergence 2011: Australian Content State of Play, Informing Debate', August 2011, p. 74, https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/getmedia/8a8f4316-109a-4bf0-b4da-4d218552b540/Rpt_Convergence2011.pdf, accessed 16 December 2012.
[231] Ibid.
[232] R. Parker & O. Parenta, 'Explaining contradictions in film and television industry policy: Ideas and incremental policy change through layering and drift', *Media Culture & Society*, Vol. 30, No. 5, 2008, pp. 116-17.

remove barriers to trade between the two nations and strengthen the integration of their economies.[233]

Many also question the strength of the federal government's commitment to the goal of cultural nationalism with its decision to introduce tax concessions for foreign production in Australia. This arguably emphasises instead goals of internationalism for the purpose of developing Australia's cultural industries.[234] These two policy goals of cultural nationalism and internationalism are difficult to reconcile, as we shall see in Chapters 6 and 8.

In recent years, commercial broadcasters have continued to favour some programming genres over others in their attempts to meet Australian Content Standards. Between 2000 and 2009 the top three categories of programming expenditure on Australian content were sport, light entertainment (including variety) and newscaf. The lowest expenditure was on drama, children's programming and documentaries. Because of the tendency of broadcasters to privilege cheaper programming genres, sub-quotas are considered necessary. Between 2008 and 2010, all commercial networks exceeded the triennial requirement of 860 points for broadcasting first-release Australian drama; in 2012 they met the sub-quotas for adult and children's programmes. Yet given that the content standard only applies to networks' main channels, and not to their digital multi-channels (which broadcast significantly less levels of Australian content), content quotas are still considered necessary protective mechanisms for maintaining minimum levels of 'Australian' programming.[235]

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[233] Butler & Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, p. 812; Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement', http://www.dfat.gov.au/fta/ausfta/, accessed 22 April 2013.
[234] Parker & Parenta, 'Explaining contradictions in film and television industry policy', p. 619.
[235] Screen Australia, 'Convergence 2011: Australian Content State of Play, Informing Debate', August 2011, p. 45, https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/getmedia/8a8f4316-109a-4bf0-b4da-4d218552b540/Rpt_Convergence2011.pdf, accessed 16 December 2012.

New technologies, new environments

For the most part, FTA commercial television networks have embraced technological change and innovation in broadcasting services. As we shall see in Chapters 2 and 4, in particular, new camera technology, outside broadcasts (OB), aerial compact mobile OB units, colour television and developments in satellite transmission facilitated profitable and innovative programming developments and networking arrangements. Such innovations have also enabled television to extend its economic, political and social influence.

But not all innovations have given commercial broadcasters cause to celebrate. The arrival in the early 1980s of the domestic video cassette recorder (VCR) effectively offered viewers another channel in addition to FTA channels. The VCR changed the relationship between viewers and broadcasters, providing viewers with more control over programming schedules.[236] The remote control only consolidated this, effectively undermining the notion of audience loyalty to a single channel or programme. From 1980, it allowed viewers to flip channels and avoid commercials, thus jeopardising the impact and value of television advertising.[237]

The opening up of UHF transmission in the 1980s allowed more services to be licensed.[238] In 1980, a second public broadcasting service was introduced, the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), with a mandate to provide more diversity via ethnic programming.[239] By 1995, the dual system begun in 1956 was no longer in place following the enactment of legislation allowing community television[240] and pay TV, thus threatening the audience share of FTA commercial television networks.[241] The entrance of the DVD player into the Australian

[236] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 80.
[237] B. Alysen, *The Electronic Reporter: Broadcast Journalism in Australia*, 2nd ed., UNSW Press, Sydney, 2006, p. 5.
[238] Butler & Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, p. 722.
[239] See I. Ang, G. Hawkins & L. Dabboussy, *The SBS Story: The Challenge of Cultural Diversity*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008.
[240] Sydney's FTA not for profit community television station, TVS, was launched in 2006. See 'About TVS', http://www.tvs.org.au/info, accessed 12 August 2013.
[241] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 82.

market in 1997 not only provided viewers with more access to content than was available on FTA television, but also 'a better quality viewing experience'.[242]

Over the past five years, the Australian media landscape has undergone significant changes with the introduction of digital multi-channels and the launch of catch-up television services by the FTA broadcasters. The arrival of digital television and radio transmission and broadband Internet, which is able to distribute television and radio content via computer screens, illustrates just how numerous broadcasting services and their modes of delivery are becoming.[243] The rapid uptake of smartphones, tablets and the growing popularity of interactive entertainment has also challenged commercial FTA broadcasters to embrace technological convergence[244] in order to stay competitive.[245]

Even though commercial FTA television like radio remains influential, uptake of subscription television has fragmented audiences, and the additional FTA digital channels have the potential to reduce the influence of each main commercial channel.[246] In Australia's mainland capital cities, there are now 22 channels: thirteen commercial channels, five ABC channels, and four SBS channels. The increase of narrowcasting[247] and the fragmentation of audiences have meant advertisers are tempted to look to other forms of media when seeking ways to have 'mass' impact on viewers.[248] If these trends continue, the regulatory requirements that

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[242] Herd, *Networking*, pp. 305-06.
[243] Butler & Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, p. 722.
[244] Technological convergence refers to the process by which discrete forms of technology over time change resulting in their performing similar tasks. For example, telephones can be used as computers and videos and television programmes can now be accessed on computers.
[245] Flew & Harrington, 'Television', in Cunningham & Turner (eds), *The Media & Communications in Australia*, p. 170
[246] Butler & Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, p. 723.
[247] 'Narrowcasting' is a technical term that refers to the dissemination of information (generally by radio and television) to a narrow audience as opposed to a mass or general audience. Niche or target marketing are terms that share the same meaning. See Butler & Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, p. 732.
[248] Flew & Harrington, 'Television', in. Cunningham & Turner (eds), *The Media & Communications in Australia*, p. 170. Fragmentation (in relation to television) refers to the increasing number of audience subdivisions as a result of the increase in the number of media outlets people can choose from.

are imposed on commercial broadcasters will become 'increasingly disproportionate to their degree of influence and therefore harder to justify'.[249]

The impact of the emergence of new technologies on the regulatory framework for commercial FTA television is uncertain. Can existing policy frameworks still apply now that technology is converging and audiences are ever more fragmenting? The need to increasingly adapt and keep up with changing technology and modes of delivery is of major concern to government regulators. This issue will become particularly significant if with globalisation the media marketplace eventually exceeds the jurisdiction of the Australian government and as communication services become increasingly global.[250]

To address this situation, in 2011 the Gillard Labor government commissioned a review of Australia's media and communications regulations, known as the Convergence Review. A final report was issued in 2012 and among several recommendations, the review concluded that media ownership and control laws remain vital, Australian content standards are important to reflect community standards, and the production and distribution of local content quotas in drama, children's programming and documentaries must continue.[251] Long-standing tensions remain within Australian broadcasting between the cultural aspects of broadcasting and the commercial interests of the industry.[252] One might argue that, if the changes promised in the 2012 Convergence Review report are enacted, then commercial FTA television networks would continue to be held accountable for being in possession of an influential broadcasting service. For regulators and FTA commercial television networks, the challenge

[249] Butler & Rodrick, *Australian Media Law*, pp. 723-24.
[250] Craik et. al. (eds), *Public Voices, Private Interests*, p. xvi; Papandrea, 'Improving Regulation of the Domestic Content of Australian Television', p. 463.
[251] Australian Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, *Convergence Review Final Report*, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Canberra, 2012, p. viii.
[252] B. Goldsmith, Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy & Australian Broadcasting Authority, *The Future for Local Content?: Options for Emerging Technologies*, Australian Broadcasting Authority, 2001, p. 2.

remains to combine the benefits of a convergent media environment with a commitment to social and cultural objectives.[253] To help meet this challenge, both regulators and broadcasters might also benefit from broad perspectives provided by a historical approach to programming in Sydney, Australia's largest television market.

[253] Papandrea, 'Improving Regulation of the Domestic Content of Australian Television', p. 463.

2

News: The Glue that Traps and Holds the Audience

At 7 p.m. on 17 September 1956, 29-year-old producer, Michael Ramsden, introduced the first Sydney television news bulletin.[1] The newsreader was Chuck Faulkner, whose 'toothy grin' lit up Sydney television receivers and set many housewives a' swooning.[2] The next morning, the TCN-9-affiliated tabloid, the *Daily Telegraph*, proudly reported that Sydney viewers described the news telecast as 'something we can't afford to miss each night',[3] although the other three Sydney dailies did not mention it.[4] What had apparently impressed TCN-9 viewers was the visual combination of overseas and local news coverage, followed by a local and interstate weather report.

According to the *Telegraph*, Faulkner delivered news highlights including 'dramatic pictures' of the war in Cyprus, films of the Air Force Week display at Richmond and updates on the Sydney Rugby Union Grand Final and the Olympic Swimming trials.[5] The segment also included the end of Sydney's postal strike and an interview in New York with Hollywood actress, Grace Kelly, and her husband, Prince Rainier of Monaco.[6] Faulkner concluded the weather report by pointing out the high and low pressure systems on a blackboard map of Australia. Before long, the weather report was given 'considerable prominence' as a special

[1] 'Behind the TV Screen', *Daily Telegraph*, 18 September 1956, p. 9.
[2] *TV Week*, Jan-March 1959, pp. 8-9; 'Critic slates Sydney TV', *TV Week*, 14-20 March 1959, pp. 20-23.
[3] 'TV viewers hail news telecasts', *Daily Telegraph*, 18 September 1956, p. 9.
[4] S. Bye, 'TV Memories, The Daily Telegraph and TCN: "First in Australia"', *MIA*, No. 121, November 2006, p. 161.
[5] 'Religious Talk and News on TCN Channel 9', *Daily Telegraph*, 18 September 1956, p. 1.
[6] Ibid; 'TV viewers hail news telecasts', *Daily Telegraph*, 18 September 1956, p. 9.

feature of the news bulletin.[7] Having sampled two nights of TCN-9 news bulletins, the *Telegraph* reported that viewers wanted longer news programmes each night as they were the most interesting programmes so far telecast.[8]

The appetite for television news was confirmed when ATN-7 and ABN-2 began transmission. Since then, news has been central to Australian television, boosted by further developments in technology and news-gathering techniques.[9] Studies have consistently shown that Australians prefer television as the most trustworthy news medium, with a powerfully visual dimension that sets it apart from print and radio.[10]

News has become an important commodity for commercial television stations, which devote considerable expenditure to news-gathering. In 2001, former news director and executive producer at Nine, Gerald Stone, explained why news is the mainstay of the programming schedule:

> These days news is regarded by all networks as the most crucial single area of programming – the glue that traps and holds the audience to the rest of the nightly schedule. Stations are prepared to spend small fortunes promoting their newsreader as the first point of contact with the community: the one face people can trust, the one voice that promises reassurance and empathy in an uncertain world.[11]

Television news is important, suggests Stone, because it is the one programming genre that establishes viewer loyalty. For many, although perhaps not younger viewers,[12] watching the news is a nightly 'ritual'. These older viewers believe that the rest of the nation, or at least a

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[7] ABCB, *Ninth Annual Report*, 1957, p. 45.
[8] 'Viewers want more TV news', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 September 1956, p. 5.
[9] Cunningham et al., *Contemporary Australian Television*, p. vii.
[10] H. Mayer, 'Voters' Media Preferences', *MIA*, No. 8, May 1978, pp. 16-27; Australian Broadcasting Tribunal Research, 'Radio and TV News: Sydney Survey 1979', *MIA*, No. 13, August 1979; J. Henningham, *Looking at Television News*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1988, pp. 1-3; N. Economou & S. J. Tanner, *Media, Politics and Power in Australia*, Pearson Education Australia, Frenchs Forest, NSW, 2008, pp. 119-21.
[11] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 283.
[12] S. Young, 'The Decline of Traditional News and Current Affairs Audiences in Australia', *MIA*, No. 131, May 2009, pp. 147-159.

significant demographic is watching at the same time and sharing with them in a commonality of ideas, information and opinions.[13]

Television news also plays a definitive role in the formation of a station's identity. Often stations will adapt their marketing strategies to identify themselves as being in tune with the majority of Australians:

> Television news has become the central local commitment of television networks. As the only programme which clearly derives from the viewing region, if only because of the identity of the presenters, the news serves as a reminder that the international and the national intersect with the local, and indicates the station's sense of affiliation with its community.[14]

In the last three decades, the principles and practices of news production on television have been subject to several critical analyses in Australia and overseas.[15] A plethora of definitions, theories and explanations has been used to decipher what constitutes 'news', a concept journalists and academics alike find elusive.[16] Studies have also centred on what constitutes 'news values' or 'news sense'[17] because what is deemed newsworthy will differ according to news organisations.[18] According to Neil Postman and Steve Powers, news is not 'out there'

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[13] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 290.
[14] Cunningham et al., *Contemporary Australian Television*, pp. 39-40.
[15] G. Phillips & S. Tapsall, 'Australian Television News Trends: First Results From a Longitudinal Study', *Australian Journalism Monographs*, Vol. 9, No. 9, August 2007, pp. 4-5.
[16] Windschuttle, *The Media*, p. 261. See also I. Baker, 'The Gatekeeper Chain: A Two-Step Analysis of How Journalists Acquire and Apply Organizational News Priorities', in P. Edgar (ed.), *The News in Focus: The Journalism of Exception*, Macmillan, South Melbourne, Vic., 1980, pp. 136-158.
[17] See Glasgow University Media Group, *Bad News*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1976; G. Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*, The Free Press, New York, 1978; H. J. Gans, *Deciding What's News*, North Western University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1979; Glasgow University Media Group, *More Bad News*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1980; S. Hall, C. Critchener, T. Jefferson, J. Clarke, & B. Roberts, 'The Social Production of News', in S. Cohen and J. Young (eds), *The Manufacture of News: Deviance, Social Problems and the Mass Media*, 2nd ed., Constable, London, 1981, pp. 33-63; J. Galtung & M. Ruge, 'Structuring and Selecting the News', in S. Cohen and J. Young (eds), *The Manufacture of News: Deviance, Social Problems and the Mass Media*, 2nd ed., Constable, London, 1981, pp. 52-64; S. Hall, 'The Determination of News Photographs', in S. Cohen and J. Young (eds), *The Manufacture of News: Deviance, Social Problems and the Mass Media*, 2nd ed., Constable, London, 1981, pp. 226-43; S. Allan, *News Culture*, Oxford University Press, Maidenhead, 2004; J. Venables, *Making Headlines*, Elm, Huntingdon, 2005; P. Brighton & D. Foy, *News Values*, Sage Publications, London, 2007.
[18] Tiffen, *News and Power*, p. 67.

waiting to be retrieved and gathered for the evening news bulletins. Rather, 'news is more often *made* than gathered'. It is made on the basis of what journalists and viewers think is important and interesting.[19] Television news is selected and organised into a narrative dictated by particular news values. Inevitably this means some stories will dominate while others, regardless of their importance, will be bypassed altogether. Because regular viewers place significance on the credibility of television news, stations carefully manage the selection of content and presentation of news bulletins.[20]

It is widely acknowledged that journalism is important to society. Hartley observes that 'journalism is the most important textual system in the world', with both 'real and imagined power to affect other systems, actions and events'.[21] Yet contemporary debates about journalism have mostly centred around loosely defined terms such as 'soft' and 'hard', 'tabloid' and 'quality' and the merits or demerits of these approaches to news. Underpinning these debates is the competing (and sometimes conflicting) forces within journalism: the priority of profit and service to the public.[22]

In his discussion of commercialised culture in the public sphere, McKee refers to these opposing positions as the 'modern' and 'postmodern'.[23] In the context of television journalism, the modern position generally maintains that one of the key principles of journalism is its provision as a service to properly inform citizens on matters of the public interest. Fundamental to democracy, argues Graeme Turner, is 'is an independent, reliable and ethical means of interrogating the news of the day, while providing informed and expert

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[19] N. Postman & S. Powers, *How to Watch TV News*, Rev. ed., Penguin Books, New York, 2008, p. 13.
[20] Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, *Television and the Public: The News, Sydney 1978*, Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, Sydney, 1979, p. 7.
[21] J. Hartley, *Popular Reality: Journalism, Modernity, Popular Culture*, Arnold, London, 1996, p. 32.
[22] S. Harrington, 'Popular News in the 21st Century: Time for a New Critical Approach?', *Journalism,* Vol. 9, No. 3, 2008, pp. 266-67.
[23] There is great variation amongst these positions, particularly within the modern position: see McKee, *The Public Sphere*, p. 68. I therefore use these terms loosely as a way to make a general demarcation between the lament and celebration of popular news and its impact on the public sphere.

comment'. This is the foundational core of newscaf.[24] An extension of this idea (which is not necessarily what Turner advocates) is that a citizen can only function in the public sphere and be properly informed by consuming 'quality' and 'hard' political news.[25] This 'hard' news has long been associated with the formally educated classes, rather than with popular working-class culture.[26] It has also commonly been used as the 'normative standard for quality journalism' that society ought to engage with.[27] This view often laments the intrusion of more popular or 'tabloid'[28] forms of newscaf, which have traditionally been associated with the 'masses' or the working class.[29] Essentially, according to the modern position, 'tabloid' or commercialised journalism provides information that consumers want, rather than what they need. It is trashy, devoid of serious politics, sensationalized, 'dumbed down', focuses on personalities rather than issues and does not promote thought.[30]

In binary opposition is the postmodern position, which advocates the value of popular news because it represents a democratisation of the public sphere.[31] The production and consumption of popular news have created what Catharine Lumby describes as a 'more egalitarian public sphere in the commercial, social and cultural sense'.[32] Indeed, she goes on, the tabloid media raise issues which the 'highbrow end of the media spectrum neglects' or fails to cover in a way that is 'meaningful' and accessible to a popular audience. Lumby suggests that 'banal stories about celebrities and ordinary people' and their experiences often 'intersect with deeper social and political issues' framing these issues in an accessible way for people to 'digest'.[33] As McKee examines in his book, *The Public Sphere*, the infiltration of

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[24] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, p. 156.
[25] Harrington, 'Popular News in the 21st Century', p. 268.
[26] McKee, *The Public Sphere*, p. 83.
[27] Harrington, 'Popular News in the 21st Century', p. 268.
[28] This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.
[29] McKee, *The Public Sphere*, p. 74.
[30] Ibid., p. 66.
[31] Hartley, *Popular Reality*, pp. 156-57.
[32] C. Lumby, *Gotcha: Life in a Tabloid World*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, p. 38.
[33] Lumby, *Gotcha*, p. 17.

tabloid news and so-called 'trivial' domestic or feminised discourses into the postmodern public sphere has promoted greater social and cultural inclusion.[34] Moreover, terms such as 'quality' and 'tabloid', argues Lumby, are 'based more in prejudice than contemporary reality' and an objective 'abstract system of rights and ethics' is 'always determined by the interests of the people who set them up'.[35]

Lumby and others rightly argue that tabloidisation is not necessarily bad in and of itself. In fact, it has important cultural and social value and programmes should not be dismissed simply because they are popular or commercial. Yet as Stephen Harrington points out, this admission does not diminish the fact that 'commercial pressures in an ever-fragmenting television market have not caused quantifiable decreases in, for instance, editorial independence, funding for investigative reportage, and attention towards stories which may sit on the wrong side of the maximum audience at minimal cost model'.[36]

Although popular news has forced scholars and practitioners to rethink the way journalism is practiced in the 21st century, the fact that 'hard' news on Australian has largely been displaced by 'soft' infotainment (rather than acting in a complementary way) is worthy of attention.[37] While my sympathies lie more with the modern rather than the postmodern position, I agree with Harrington when he suggests that a middle ground needs to be reached between these two opposing viewpoints when making sense of these changes in communication. Perhaps John Fiske aptly sums this up best when he observed: 'We should not criticize [popular news] for "pandering" to entertainment, but rather should evaluate how entertaining it is and what

[34] McKee, *The Public Sphere*, p. 68.
[35] Lumby, *Gotcha*, p. 16.
[36] Harrington, 'Popular News in the 21st Century', p. 275.
[37] Ibid., p. 272.

information it makes entertaining.'[38] In other words, it is important to be critical of what news becomes popular.[39]

Within the context of these broader issues and debates, this chapter traces the historical evolution of Sydney's commercial television news, presenting an outline of news programming trends over the course of television's fifty-plus years in Australia. Commercial television news has always struggled to maintain the traditional boundaries that separated its function from other entertainment-based programming. In recent years, television news is increasingly treated as a commodity used to gather an audience which can then be 'sold' to advertisers.[40] Consequently, audience ratings become the criteria by which editorial decisions are made.[41] In response to such pressures, Australian commercial television news programming has undergone significant shifts in both form and content. This pressure has only intensified since the 1980s, in light of commercial and economic pressures, technological developments, channel proliferation, 24-hour news stations, convergent media, and growing competition for audience share.[42] However, although there has been a discernible shift in journalistic practice, the historical development of Sydney television news – from its early experimental days to the sophisticated news service that it is today – reveals a great deal of continuity.

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[38] J. Fiske, *Reading the Popular*, Hyman, Boston, 1989, p. 193, cited in Harrington, 'Popular News in the 21st Century', p. 278.
[39] Harrington, 'Popular News in the 21st Century', p. 280.
[40] Schultz, *Reviving the Fourth Estate*, p. 4; Postman & Powers, *How to Watch TV News*, p. 155.
[41] B. A. Musa, 'News as Infotainment: Industry and Audience Trends', in B. A. Musa & C. J. Price (eds), *Emerging Issues in Contemporary Journalism: Infotainment, Internet, Libel, Censorship, Etcetera*, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York, 2006, p. 139.
[42] J. Lewis, 'Studying Television News' in G. Creeber (ed.), *The Television Genre Book*, BFI, London, 2001, p. 115.

Establishing the News: The 1950s and 1960s

From newspapers to television

From the very beginning, the significant concentration of cross-media ownership in Australia influenced the way television news programming was shaped. As TCN-9 and ATN-7 were in the hands of newspaper companies, it was not in the interests of the proprietors to have the stations compete with their sister publications. Instead newspapers, television and radio were to complement one another to deliver more extensive news coverage to audiences.[43] According to Stone, Frank Packer was known to treat his television service as a cross-promotional tool for his 'print interests'.[44] And in turn the *Telegraph* was used to promote the launching of TCN-9 and subsequent station developments. Fairfax also used ATN-7 for cross-promotion. To counteract circulation losses in the early 1960s, television and radio were considered 'the most important weapons' in a circulation war between Packer's *Telegraph* and the Fairfax group's *Daily Mirror*.[45]

The type of people Packer hired to oversee the television news services on TCN-9 demonstrates the importance he placed on the experience of his employees. On 16 September 1956, the *Telegraph* ran an article assuring readers that staff with a strong newspaper background would oversee television news.[46] With Packer at the helm as chairman and John Theodore as TCN-9's managing director, the *Telegraph* wrote: 'TCN has been assured of the

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[43] 'The story behind your TV service', *Sunday Telegraph*, 23 September 1956, p. 7.; 'Are news media compatible?', *B & T*, 18 July 1968, pp. 13-14.
[44] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 284. However, Ann Curthoys and Kathryn Evans caution against referring to the tabloids of the 1950s as 'mere mouthpieces of their owners'. Rather they suggest tabloids are better understood as the 'combined product of owners, editors, journalists and especially readers'. See A. Curthoys & K. Evans, 'Tabloid culture in the 1950s', in D. Headon, J. Hooton & D. Horne (eds), *The Abundant Culture*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1994, cited in S. Bye, 'Reading television in the fifties', *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, March 2008, pp. 78-79.
[45] 'Air media battle for readers', *B & T*, 16 November 1961, p.1.
[46] '"We are proud pioneers in Australian TV"', *Sunday Telegraph*, 16 September 1956, p. 7.

vast news-gathering and news dissemination resources of a highly successful newspaper organisation.'[47]

Not surprisingly, senior appointments were given to newsmen from Packer's Consolidated Press – Alex Baz, Mike Ramsden, Bruce Gyngell and David McNicoll – all of whom had gone to the US for training in television.[48] ATN-7's news services were also largely dependent on newspapers, with the *Sydney Morning Herald* (*SMH*) and the *Sun* providing the bulk of content relayed hourly via teleprinter.[49] Invariably this influenced the diversity of viewpoints televised during news bulletins. Alan Glover, a senior journalist recruited from the Fairfax newspaper group, was appointed to ATN-7 as Director of News and Special Events.[50] The *SMH* reported:

> ATN is generally staffed by men who, though young in years, are, in many instances, comparative veterans of television and kindred activities. In fact, all of ATN's executives, production, and technical staff have studied TV overseas for various periods.[51]

However the *Telegraph* was aware of TCN-9's limitations, asking viewers to be 'tolerant and patient'. It conceded: 'Our staff has a newspaper background, and knows more about producing newspapers than television.'[52] The *SMH* offered no apologies on behalf of ATN-7, instead boasting of its 'fully equipped' news services that incorporated the latest modern technical advances in production and transmission. It assured readers that ATN-7's television news staff would 'specially edit the news to conform with television practices'.[53] In reality it would be some time before these specialist techniques were employed. The mechanics of television news were alien to journalists from newspaper and radio backgrounds. Early news

[47] 'The story behind your TV service', *Sunday Telegraph*, 23 September 1956, p. 7.
[48] Hall, *Supertoy*, pp. 28-29.
[49] 'Many sources for news services', *SMH*, 25 February 1957, p. 20; 'Speedy cover of big news', *SMH*, 2 December 1956, p. 78.
[50] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 162. See 'NEWS', *SMH*, 15 October 1956, p. 21.
[51] 'High Standards Assured', *SMH*, 15 October 1956, p. 16.
[52] '"We are proud pioneers in Australian TV"', *Sunday Telegraph*, 16 September 1956, p. 7.
[53] 'Fully Equipped Service For News', *SMH*, 3 December 1956, p. 23.

bulletins were invariably poor duplicates of newspapers, illustrated with film in the same way that newspapers used pictures.[54] This was a carry-over from early radio news broadcasts, which were almost entirely dependent on newspapers.[55]

The first sign of television's influence in setting the news agenda was evident in the first local political story put to air on TCN-9. It soon became clear that often the most valued political story for television news was one that involved personality, drama and conflict.[56] Prime Minister Robert Menzies was the first Australian politician to appear on Australian television. TCN-9 televised his arrival at Mascot airport on 18 September 1956 from Egypt, followed by a press conference about the Suez Canal dispute.[57] The story anticipated elements which were to become central to the way television news stories were conceived: personality in the form of Menzies and drama provided by protestors' staging a demonstration at the airport. This apparently made for 'excellent' and 'absorbing' television.[58] The following day the *Telegraph* reported that 'police clearing demonstrators from the airport' was given prominence by TCN-9's coverage of Menzies' arrival.[59] The same event received slight coverage from the *SMH*, consisting of a few brief paragraphs at the end of the print report, highlighting the different emphases pursued by print and television reports.[60]

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[54] 'Audio informs as video sets the mood', *B & T*, 22 February 1962, p. 10.
[55] Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, p. 10.
[56] M. Steketee, 'The Press Gallery at Work', in J. Disney & J. R. Nethercote (eds), *The House on Capital Hill: Parliament, Politics and Power in the National Capital*, The Federation Press, Sydney, 1996, p. 201.
[57] 'P.M. on TV Channel 9', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 September 1956, p. 1.
[58] 'Viewers want more TV news', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 September 1956, p. 5.
[59] 'P.M. on TV Channel 9', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 September 1956, p. 1.
[60] 'Not contemplating force – Menzies on Suez Canal', *SMH*, 19 September 1956, p. 1. Furthermore, TCN-9's coverage of Menzies' arrival and the print news reporting on the same event the following day illustrated the degree to which this continuity between television and print news coverage enhanced the prominence of their news reports. See 'P.M. on TV Channel 9', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 September 1956, p. 1.

News-gathering, politics and technology

Australian television news programming was not always considered the 'showpiece of the industry' that it is today.[61] In the beginning, news production entailed live transmission from a custom-made studio. There was no method of recording news, apart from primitive kinescope recordings made by pointing a cine camera at a picture-tube in a monitor. Television programmers had limited choice in what they could do: either film live transmission or film with a standard motion-picture camera, using telecine equipment to transmit the footage.[62] The standard 16 mm Bell & Howell silent camera and Arriflex battery-driven camera were used originally.[63]

While Packer was known for his tight control of costs, Fairfax earned a reputation for pouring money into outfitting ATN-7 studios.[64] Even before ATN-7's first transmission, the *SMH* informed readers of ATN-7's 'elaborate' news service with its own mobile transmitter and 'flying squad of newsreel cameramen equipped with the latest movie and sound and film cameras'.[65] In 1958 it was 'the only TV station in Sydney with its own film processing laboratories actually at the studios'.[66] This aided its 'speedy' news coverage. The immediacy of its news services was suggested by *SMH'*s promotional language: film would be 'rushed' to Sydney, the news would be 'flashed' by teleprinter, and camera crews would be 'continuously shooting film of outstanding events'.[67]

Despite the promotional claims made by TCN-9 and ATN-7, news-gathering was a slow process. The technology was cumbersome and overseas coverage took days to reach the

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[61] Henningham, *Looking at Television News*, p. 13.
[62] G. Millerson, *The Technique of Television Production*, 12th ed., Focal Press, Oxford, 1990, p. 325.
[63] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, pp. 214-15.
[64] Griffen-Foley, *Sir Frank Packer*, p. 209; Hall, *Supertoy*, p. 24; Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 15.
[65] 'Fully Equipped Service for News', *SMH*, 3 December 1956, p. 23.
[66] 'Speed-Up In News Service', *SMH*, 20 October 1958, p. 21.
[67] 'Fully Equipped Service for News', *SMH*, 3 December 1956, p. 23.

newsrooms. Camera mobility was limited, live crosses were unreliable and most news stories were unable to be shot past 3 p.m., due to the time it took to edit and process film for the evening bulletin.[68] Intensifying these technological limitations were the news studios themselves. TCN-9 news was initially presented from a tiny theatrette. In a *TV Week* interview, Chuck Faulkner revealed some of the trials of news reading in 1959:

> When we closed the doors [of the theatrette] the room was airtight and the only ventilation came from two giant 'blowers', one right over the top of my desk. This blower made such a noise that a minute before we went on I had to climb on the desk and shove rags up into it. After five minutes of no air under the lights…perspiration poured down my face…I could hardly get enough breath to speak and could only just read the items.[69]

Even when TCN-9 transferred to purpose-built studios in Willoughby, Faulkner had to brave the winter chill as he read the evening bulletins 'through chattering teeth' as there was no central heating. His attempt at keeping warm ended badly when the radiator he put under his desk set fire to his trouser leg half-way through a bulletin![70]

The earliest television news bulletins were modelled on radio broadcasting, due partly to technological limitations. For a quarter of an hour, viewers watched a solitary male newsreader read the news from a sheaf of typescript, accompanied by the bare essentials: microphone, ticking clock and telephone.[71] Nevertheless, presentation became more sophisticated as new techniques emerged. One of the problems faced by early news bulletins was the sudden and startling change of picture when a story was presented on screen, ultimately affecting viewer concentration. To counteract this, a rear-projection screen was positioned behind the newsreader creating a clearer and smoother connection between the story and pictures. To alleviate monotony, two newsreaders were introduced to read alternate

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[68] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!,* pp. 214-16.
[69] P. Howard, 'Who would be a TV newscaster?', *TV Week*, 3-9 October 1959, p. 51.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Cunningham et al., *Contemporary Australian Television*, p. 42.

stories.[72] The autocue was also developed so that newsreaders could look directly at the camera throughout the broadcast.[73]

Given technological limitations and restricted access to overseas material in the early years of transmission, Sydney's commercial stations exceeded expectations. The 1957 ABCB report commented:

> It was thought likely that, at least in the early stages, news would be limited to periodical newsreel programmes and a brief summary of the headlines, but all four commercial television stations have organised quite extensive news coverage which is supplemented by pictures from local and world sources.[74]

In 1957, news and weather reports made up 6% of the viewing composition of programmes on all Sydney stations. However by 1959 it had fallen to 2.8%, only rising to 3.7% in 1960.[75] The high cost of television operations at that time was responsible for this decline.[76] Fortunately it was only temporary, as in 1962 transmission time devoted to news coverage on all Sydney stations rose to 5.3%.[77]

The invention of video systems transformed television production and contributed to the polish and maturity of Australian television. In 1958, ATN-7 imported the first Ampex videotape recorder, which became a rapidly growing feature of Australian television. Unlike news film, videotape required no processing, affording 'an instant playback facility' that allowed more footage to be shot.[78] For the first time, news directors were able to make

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[72] 'Audio informs as video sets the mood', *B & T*, 22 February 1962, p. 10.
[73] Autocues or teleprompters first started in the US in 1955. According to Horgan, one of the first primitive autocues was made at GTV-9 'out of teleprinter continuous paper on a wire frame and mounted under the lens turret, with the roll of paper manually pulled through its cycle…'. See Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 217.
[74] ABCB, *Ninth Annual Report,* 1957, p. 45.
[75] ABCB, *Ninth, Eleventh & Twelfth Annual Reports*, 1957, 1959, 1960.
[76] Hall, *Supertoy*, pp. 24-25.
[77] ABCB, *Fourteenth Annual Report*, 1962, p. 76.
[78] A. Crisell, *A Study of Modern Television: Thinking Inside the Box*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire and New York, 2006, p. 54.

corrections to faulty passages in the film and record video with sound on magnetic tape.[79] Videotape also enabled stations to pre-record large-scale productions and helped facilitate network programme exchanges on an interstate basis.[80]

During the 1960s, television stations found new ways to exploit claims of immediacy. In 1962, the expansion of traffic, aerial and on-the-spot action reporting as well as the use of three-camera Outside Broadcast (OB) vans, put audiences into immediate contact with local events. TCN-9 and ATN-7 promoted their city-based news services in part because they lacked the manpower and resources to gather news from across Australia.[81] Distance from the rest of the world and main suppliers of overseas coverage created additional costs. Freight on news film was expensive, and the Federal government was slow to follow overseas precedents and waive customs duty on imported film.[82] The emphasis on state-based and local reporting was also a response to competition from the ABC, which held the advantage in national coverage with a network of state newsrooms and regional offices.[83]

One of the most significant developments in news services occurred when TCN-9 leased the exclusive rights to television transmission via the Sydney-Melbourne co-axial cable in 1962. The new technology transformed the speed of news, superseding the relay of interstate news film by plane and facilitating live reports from Canberra.[84] The cable offered significantly improved access to news film and enabled GTV-9 and TCN-9 to extend their news bulletins from 15 to 30 minutes.[85]

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[79] Millerson, *The Technique of Television Production*, p. 325.
[80] ABCB, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 1960, p. 33.
[81] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p.164; 'A nightly TV newscast with 1 1/4m audience', *B & T*, 21 July 1966, p. 40.
[82] 'TV's 3.3 mil. news audience total', *B & T*, 21 July 1966, p. 21.
[83] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p.164.
[84] 'Soon in TV – news via satellite', *B & T*, 8 July 1965, p. 24.
[85] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 287-88.

The new technology also enabled viewers in Melbourne and Sydney to see live coverage simultaneously. President John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963 was the first occasion when film was carried via co-axial cable from Sydney to Melbourne.[86] A few days later marked television's first large-scale election coverage via the co-axial cable – the 1963 Australian federal election night. In Sydney, TCN-9, ATN-7 and ABN-2 interrupted night-time programming schedules to provide non-stop coverage to both metropolitan and regional areas of NSW. According to *TV Times*, in preparation for the event all stations gathered 'hundreds of reporters, batteries of teleprinters, co-axial cable and telephone links, all available production staff and facilities', to ready themselves for the live telecasts. Each station planned similar components: national tally broads, special graphics, interviews and panel discussions with expert political commentators and party members.[87]

To gain a foothold on its rivals, TCN-9 proposed to broadcast its special coverage 30 minutes earlier than ATN-7 and ABN-2. TCN-9's election night coverage, 'by far the most complex of any telecast planned', also saw the beginning of regular relays between Sydney and Melbourne, with TCN-9 and GTV-9 providing a combined telecast 'master-minded' from Sydney. Camera switches were planned to take place between various locations in each city: Sydney (TCN-9 studios and *The Daily Telegraph* newsroom), Melbourne (GTV-9 studios, the Melbourne tally room and the Windsor hotel election headquarters of prime minister, Sir Robert Menzies), and the tally room in Albert Hall, Canberra. Unique to TCN-9 was the use of a computer, stationed at the Melbourne Institute of Technology, designed to send direct updates and predict election results as early as possible.[88] The televising of the 1963 election shares strong similarities with contemporary election night coverage, suggesting little has

[86] S. Lipski, 'The TV Newsmakers', *The Bulletin*, 10 July 1965, p. 24.
[87] 'TV takes you to the tally room', *TV Times*, 27 November 1963, p. 4.
[88] Ibid.

changed except for the sophistication of election technology and the speed of broadcast delivery.

By 1965, commercial news services regularly utilised the co-axial cable and compact mobile OB units.[89] These consisted of light-weight transistorised equipment, enabling virtually an entire OB unit to be carried on one reporter's back. Before the compact mobile broadcast unit, local reports were generated by enormous three-camera OB vans. These hindered quick movement and some locations were unreachable with the volume of equipment.[90] At the same time, camera, sound and videorecording equipment became more compact and much easier to use, with the telecam multi-camera system in heavy demand.[91] By 1966, several stations had newscar fleets, and the addition of planes and helicopters provided on-the-spot immediacy to bulletins.[92] Television built on Australian commercial radio practices of 'actuality' broadcasts since 1949, and 'talk jockeys' in the 1960s.[93]

The coverage of Prime Minister Harold Holt's disappearance at Portsea, Victoria, in late 1967 was one of the biggest collaborations of Australian news services during the period and tested the bounds of national news-gathering. Putting aside rivalry, newspapers, radio and television pooled their resources to bring extensive non-stop coverage of the story, interrupting normal schedules. But the story proved challenging particularly for television journalists, who had little to show but an empty beach. The situation caused one newsman to ponder: '…how long can you talk about a static situation. The body had not been found…the search was

[89] ABCB, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 1965, p. 72.
[90] 'Soon in TV – news via satellite', *B & T*, 8 July 1965, p. 24.
[91] 'Heavy demand for telecam system', *B & T*, 29 August 1963, p. 52.
[92] 'News on radio and TV', *B & T*, 21 July 1966, p. 1.
[93] Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, pp. 336-346.

continuing…that basically was all there was to say.' Television stations resorted to staging a re-enactment on the beach for effect.[94]

The visual accent on drama and spectacle in television news was tested by events that lacked telegenic qualities, no matter how newsworthy the story. Occasionally major local and overseas stories were not covered by television simply because pictorial content was unavailable. The 1977 Jonestown Massacre of 400 people in the US received little coverage in Australia because stations had no available access to pictures.[95]

Emerging technology enabled greater efficiency in the rapid transfer of news across great distances. Overseas stories could now be screened within 24 hours of the event occurring, in contrast with earlier days when stations had to wait three days or longer to receive overseas film.[96] Satellite technology was mostly responsible for the improved link between the news location and the newsroom,[97] and for broadening the horizons of television journalism. Throughout the 1960s the use of satellite transmissions developed, but the heavy expense ensured its deployment was reserved only for major stories. There was also a need for programme-sharing between stations to mitigate the cost.[98] There was little variety given all three Sydney stations subscribed to Visnews, the foreign supplier of overseas news. Time differences, language barriers and the different transmitting frequencies provided additional challenges for satellite relays. These relays were taped recordings made in the US and transmitted in Australia at a viewing time suitable for local audiences.[99]

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[94] 'Handling news of the Holt tragedy', *B & T*, 4 January 1968, p. 13.
[95] Cunningham et al., *Contemporary Australian Television*, p. 45.
[96] 'A nightly TV newscast with 1 1/4m audience', *B & T*, 21 July 1966, p. 40.
[97] Crisell, *A Study of Modern Television*, p. 55.
[98] ABCB, *Twentieth Annual Report,* 1968, p. 85.
[99] 'TV Can Promise the World', 3 September 1966, *TV Week*, n.p.; P.A. Torney-Parlicki, *Somewhere in Asia: War, Journalism and Australia's Neighbours 1941-75*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000, p. 17.

The development of satellite technology was boosted by a series of momentous historical and sporting events. The first public use of the Moree earth station and the INTELSAT II satellite enabled Australian commercial television stations to relay coverage of President Lyndon Johnson's speech on 1 April 1968 announcing a cutback to bombing in Vietnam and his withdrawal from the next presidential election campaign.[100] During 1968, the satellite provided direct coverage of events following the assassinations of Dr Martin Luther King and Senator Robert Kennedy, and the stories attracted large audiences.[101] Australian audiences watched telecasts of the America's Cup yachting contest in 1967 and the World Heavyweight Boxing Championships in 1968.[102]

In 1969-70, Sydney television stations relayed immediate telecasts of the inauguration of the Prince of Wales, President Richard Nixon's key policy statements on Vietnam and Cambodia, and the 1969 Australian federal election. The lunar flights of Apollo 11, 12 and 13 were arguably the most dramatic and telegenic news telecasts of the period and celebrated as technological breakthroughs.[103] Sydney was particularly transfixed on 21 July 1969 watching the live telecast of the US "Moon landing". The telecast garnered a spectacular combined rating of 47 amongst all four stations, which covered the event.[104]

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[100] ABCB, *Twentieth Annual Report,* 1968, p. 22.
[101] In 'Satellites boosts TV news', *B & T*, 18 July 1968, p. 17.
[102] ABCB, *Twentieth Annual Report*, 1968, p. 23.
[103] ABCB, *Twenty-second Annual Report,* 1970, pp. 106-7; 'Australian viewers see live telecast from space', *B & T*, 29 May 1969, p. 20; 'The Great Moon Venture', *B & T*, 17 July 1969, p.1.
[104] Anon., *Australian Television*, n.p.

Station identification and the rise of the newsreader

In the first two years of television, ATN-7 and TCN-9 imported the bulk of programming from the US and it was difficult to convince viewers they could provide different programming offerings. Increasing competition between the stations meant station identification (branding) became essential. 'The process of station identification', observes Hall, 'began to devolve on the news service and a small number of showcase productions, by which house personalities could be promoted.'[105] Promoting a newsreader's profile and manufacturing an impression of sincerity and friendliness ultimately reflected on the identity of the television station.

Newsreaders thus became pivotal in maintaining audience loyalty. A Sydney viewer, Mr J. Charles of Castlecrag, reported in *TV Times*: 'My wife giggles like a schoolgirl when the news comes on. I like to watch the ABC news, but I haven't a hope. She says it's Chuck [Faulkner] or no news. So we settle for Chuck.'[106] A loyal Eric Baume fan wrote into *TV Times* that it was not the same when the ATN-7 newsreader was absent.'[T]here is only one Eric Baume and no one will ever take his place', she insisted.[107]

Packer however was initially reticent to promote newsreaders' star-power in the 1950s because he believed they would demand higher wages. Promoting television personalities to 'stars' could also create more work. By contrast, Fairfax's managing director, Rupert Henderson, believed in the show business dictum: 'You must send them flowers and call them darling.'[108] Yet Packer began to change his tune once he observed GTV-9's success in

[105] Hall, *Supertoy*, p. 31.
[106] *TV Week*, 24-30 January 1959, p. 9.
[107] *TV Times*, 13 August 1958, p. 20.
[108] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, pp. 32-33.

Melbourne. As Stone explains, GTV-9 used its stars, such as newsreader, Eric Pearce, to shape and promote the station's early image. Pearce sealed GTV-9's dominance in news.[109] Taking their cue from the US, it was only a matter of time before Australia's commercial television stations latched on to the marketability of newsreaders as key personalities or celebrities. After touring the US, Britain and Japan in 1967, Adrian Jose, the ABCB's Director of Programme Services, observed that in the US at least, 'the major [news] television programmes are basically personality programmes rather than news reports'.[110] Faulkner admitted that his own style of news-reading was based on American newsreaders 'who projected their personality into both newscasting and commentary'.[111]

Writing for *The Bulletin* in 1965, Sam Lipski addressed the question of 'showmen' versus 'newsmen', and the criticism levelled at stations for employing newsreaders for their looks, voice and personality rather than for their understanding of news. No channel could boast of having on its staff a 'political, industrial or international affairs expert'. No station allowed their journalists to specialise in such areas, nor did they maintain any fulltime representatives overseas whose sole responsibility was news.[112] Indeed, many of Sydney's stalwart newsreaders including Chuck Faulkner, Roger Climpson, Brian Henderson, John Bailey, James Dibble and Ian Ross, began their careers in show business.[113] Henderson and Dibble continued with their compering duties on *Bandstand* and *Hit Parade* for some time,

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[109] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 87-88.
[110] NLA: Adrian Jose Papers, MS7702 folder 7702/5/79, Box 16; 'Report on official overseas visit by the Director of Programme Services Division', Control Board Agendum No. 1967/1228, 22 August 1967, p. 37.
[111] 'The men who read the news', *TV News*, 23 August 1958, p. 10. A viewer complained in *TV Times* that Faulkner's 'dramatising' of the news was 'unnecessary' as viewers were 'capable of forming their own opinions on the seriousness or otherwise of the news'. See 'News best left alone', Brickbats & Bouquets, *TV Times*, 30 April 1960, p. 20.
[112] S. Lipski, 'The TV Newsmakers', *The Bulletin*, 10 July 1965, p. 28.
[113] J. Bainbridge & J. Bestwick, '"And here's the news": Analysing the evolution of the marketed newsreader', *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2010, p. 208.

and Faulkner dabbled in quiz shows and drama, in addition to anchoring news bulletins.[114] It would be some time before television newsreaders were more than just 'talking heads' and trained first as journalists.[115] The Vietnam War was most responsible for this transformation, forcing television reporters to develop specialised expertise distinct from newspapers and radio skills.[116]

Marketing a newsreader's image is important.[117] Advertising and television magazines were instrumental in this process. For example, in *TV Times*, ATN-7's chief newsreader, Eric Baume, was described as a 'learned man'. His former role as a foreign correspondent provided him with 'extraordinary information from reliable people' across the globe.[118] TCN-9 increasingly identified its personalities with the image of the ordinary Australian male, particularly, as we shall see in Chapter 5, in the area of sports programming. Chuck Faulkner, 'Sydney's top-rating TV personality', was described as a 'big-time golfer and amateur fisherman'.[119] Indeed, much of the early tone of TCN-9 can be traced back to the *Telegraph*, which in the 1940s and 1950s was, according to Moran, a 'solid, workmanlike newspaper', with a readership that was 'downmarket' and working class.[120]

The intimacy of television helped to foster the authenticity and ordinariness of the television personality. Referring to Faulkner, Roderick Dean, a TCN-9 viewer from Concord, told *TV*

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[114] Lipski, 'The TV Newsmakers', *The Bulletin*, 10 July 1965, p. 28; 'James sings, announces', *TV Week*, 7-13 March 1959, pp. 10-11.
[115] A. Meade, 'Final bulletin: Roscoe to go on a high note', *The Australian*, 23 November 2009.
[116] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p.164.
[117] 'TV Studio Segments', *TV Times*, 23 July 1958, p. 52.
[118] 'TV Studio Segments', *TV Times*, 26 June 1958, p. 4. The bombastic newsreader was also a radio commentator and former editor of the *Sunday Sun* and *Guardian*. See *TV Times,* 26 June -17 September 1958; V. Lawson, 'Baume, Frederick Ehrenfried (Eric) (1900–1967)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/baume-frederick-ehrenfried-eric-9456/text16631, accessed 5 November 2012.
[119] 'Off Camera', *TV Times*, 27 August 1958, p. 65.
[120] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 92.

Week, 'He makes you feel that he knows you and is speaking to you personally'.[121] Advertisers and local business capitalised on Eric Baume's perceived influence and credibility to sell household goods. *TV Times* reported that, 'Over a big apple stall on the Pennant Hills sign is a huge sign reading: "The best apples that money can buy. THIS I BELIEVE". As we shall see in Chapter 3, 'This I Believe' referred to the name of Baume's radio and TV commentary programme.[122] In Lipski's opinion, both Bailey and Henderson had 'teenage appeal', but were also 'parent approved', a 'dream' combination for programmers intent on attracting large audiences.[123] Newsreaders' vital link in the bond between the television station and the community would become even more important in later years.

Scheduling and the demand for news

Having experienced first-hand the mysterious art of television programming, Stone observed that when it comes to news, 'No area of programming is surrounded by more conflicting theories about what it takes to win the ratings'.[124] In the first two decades of television, stations fiddled with scheduling to such an extent that weekly television guides were rendered almost useless.[125] In 1959 *TV Week* mischievously likened the on and off-again programme changes to Hollywood actress 'Ava Gardner's romances'.[126] No doubt the high turnover of staff and the challenges of running a television station played a role. ATN-7 had three general managers in its first three years, a fact that inevitably led to a measure of instability for ATN-7's programming.[127] In 1966, after retiring as general manager of TCN-9, Ken Hall described

[121] *TV Week*, January-March 1959, pp. 8-9.
[122] 'TV Studio Segments', *TV Times*, 23 July 1958, p. 52.
[123] Lipski, 'The TV Newsmakers', *The Bulletin*, 10 July 1965, p. 28.
[124] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 290.
[125] It appears not much has changed since then. Seven, Nine and Ten still frequently change programmes to different timeslots and now also move low-rating programmes to their digital channels.
[126] 'TV stations shuffle their programmes', *TV Week*, 16-22 May 1959, p. 53.
[127] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 31.

the last decade as 'the most hectic, exciting, devastating, exhilarating' years of his life.[128] His remark illuminated how frenzied Sydney television was during this time.

Sponsors, ratings and a desire to differentiate themselves from their competitors led TCN-9 and ATN-7 to experiment with their programme schedules. Initially news bulletins were no longer than fifteen minutes and generally telecast during the evening from 6.45-7.00 p.m. A late news segment was broadcast on both stations at 11.10 p.m. Sydney's commercial stations also canvassed the idea of making 'breakfast' news a permanent fixture, but felt it would not be financially viable to proceed until additional television receivers were sold and more sponsors entered the market.[129]

ATN-7 was the most experimental and haphazard with its programming schedule, introducing news updates or 'news flashes', afternoon bulletins, and longer news programmes than its rivals. But such changes were short-lived.[130] TCN-9's news-programming schedule was far more consistent and developed a general blueprint for programming that, in Hall's opinion, could be summed up as: 'It dared little, lost little and gained ratings'.[131] By 1961, most of Sydney news was shown between 5 and 7.30 p.m.[132]

In 1963, television news became more prominent as advertisers, politicians and special interest groups capitalised on the steady audience demand for news. Surveys and research reports conducted in 1964 found newscasts on ATN-7 and TCN-9 remained the evening drawcard, attracting 58% of the audience. This was in marked contrast to the ABC news bulletin, which attracted 20% of the viewing audience as it was broadcast half-an-hour later

[128] Griffen-Foley, *House of Packer*, p. 279.
[129] *TV Times*, 1957. The periodical covered the possibility of breakfast news throughout 1957.
[130] 'News Digest', *SMH*, 17 March 1958, p. 11; *TV Times*, August-November 1958.
[131] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 31.
[132] ABCB, *Thirteenth Annual Report*, 1961, p. 46.

than the main commercial news bulletins.[133] In 1966, research claimed that of all the homes in the five mainland capitals, 71% of television sets were tuned to newscasts, the majority to commercial stations.[134]

Although news bulletins were costly to produce, advertisers considered them prime time for product placements. In *B & T*'s view, the value of news bulletins lay in their 'sense of urgency', which advertisers and sponsors believed would create a 'keener reception for the commercial messages associated with them',[135] while also providing advertisers with a certain 'aura of reliability and integrity'.[136] Products advertised during bulletins ranged from high-priced items such as motorcars to consumer products including soap, cigarettes, chocolate, electrical goods and clothing.[137] As a result of this surge in demand and revenue, Sydney commercial stations increased the amount of programming time devoted to news, and 'news flashes' became permanent fixtures in the programming schedule in the mid-1960s.[138] During this time, TCN-9, with the help of Gyngell, introduced in-house television promotion ('promo'). Rather than rely on print advertisements to generate interest in TCN-9 programmes, Gyngell spliced clips of programmes together to form an 'enticing' form of 'movie trailer'. Within three months, according to Gyngell, TCN-9's ratings rose by 10%.[139] This new technique benefited news programming, as well as entertainment, and 'news flashes' may well have been used in this promotional way.

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[133] 'The Great Appetite…Programming moves & counter-moves affect news audiences', *B & T*, 10 September 1964, p. 1. This was partly due to the leadership of the ABC's long-serving general manager, Sir Charles Moses, who showed little interest in developing the news service and was content to run television as an extension of radio. By the time Moses retired in 1964, ABC's audience share for all programmes was below 10%. See Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 72.
[134] 'News on radio and TV', *B & T*, 21 July 1966, p. 1.
[135] 'Key advertising vehicle', *B & T*, 17 July 1969, p. 12.
[136] 'The top sponsors of air news', *B & T*, 25 July 1963, p. 15.
[137] 'TV's 3.3 mil. news audience total', *B & T*, 21 July 1966, p. 21.
[138] ABCB, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 1965, p. 72.
[139] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 53-54.

TEN-10 enters the news market

TEN-10 entered the Sydney market on 5 April 1965. Even though the new station hoped to provide greater programming diversity, TEN-10's mix of sport, variety, imported programmes, drama, and newscaf rarely differed from that of its commercial rivals. Historian Nick Herd argues that the homogeneity of TEN-10's programming offerings reflects the tendency for competition to be moderate within oligopolistic markets and supports the argument that there was indeed 'too much television' within Sydney.[140] The high hopes of establishing a competitive third station in Sydney and Melbourne soon proved unwarranted. Both TEN-10 and ATV-0 Melbourne greatly under-estimated their operating costs, and quickly found themselves in financial difficulty.[141] From the outset, they were forced to adopt defensive programming strategies.[142]

Although TEN-10's programming mix was similar to its rivals', it made some unsuccessful attempts to depart from established news presentations. Following trends in Europe and the US, TEN-10 presented a mid-evening bulletin. This enabled TEN-10's news division to gather material up to 8 p.m., four hours later than the deadline for ATN-7 and TCN-9.[143] A key problem, remembers Bill Peach, was in the sporadic timing of the bulletins as they generally followed feature films, all of varying length. TEN-10 failed to build a loyal audience and secure key advertisers by breaking the first two laws of television programming: attracting the evening audience with news (thus securing them for the rest of the night) and

[140] Herd, '"The weaker sisters"', p. 126.
[141] TEN-10's financial woes were compounded by the rising costs of imported programming, licence fees, regulation and Australian programming. A decline in primetime viewing (a levelling out of the audience), a downturn in advertising revenue, and an increase in transmission hours over the decade further worsened the situation. See Ibid., pp. 122-25.
[142] Ibid., pp. 122-26.
[143] 'New concept in TV newscasting', *B & T*, 8 April 1965, p. 30.

programming regularity. TEN-10 soon followed the blueprint set by its commercial rivals and brought the daily news service forward to 6.30 p.m., ultimately improving its ratings.[144] However some of TEN-10's attempts to pioneer fresh approaches to news programming eventually prevailed. TEN-10 set a precedent in 1965 by employing the first female newsreader on Australian commercial television, twenty-three year old Jan Leeming.[145] Soon Tanya Halesworth also joined TEN-10's news. These appointments were part of TEN-10's attempt to appeal to, and connect with, the female audience.[146] Later TCN-9's Bruce Gyngell and Desmond Tester hired Penny Spence, a NIDA graduate, who became the first female on commercial television to read daytime bulletins.[147] ATN-7 had introduced 'glamor [sic] girls' to news bulletins in 1963, employing them to present the weather forecast in the hope that they would attract viewers, and using a different one each night of the week.[148] Appointments to TEN-10 and TCN-9 signalled that women could be taken more seriously in newscaf, and their penetration of this genre accelerated in the 1970s, as we shall see in Chapter 3.

Consolidating the News: The 1970s and 1980s

News programming in the 1970s and 1980s became more streamlined, particularly once colour television arrived in 1975.[149] The informal use of networking – which increased during this period – facilitated a 'buying pool' between Australian commercial stations to share programme production costs. In 1975, Visnews convinced the pool to take on the added cost

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[144] Peach, *This Day Tonight*, pp. 18-19.
[145] 'New concept in TV newscasting', *B & T*, 8 April 1965, p. 30. Jan Leeming was employed to primarily handle the weekend news and special interviews on *Telescope* (TEN-10's nightly topical news programme). *TV Times* noted that Brisbane's commercial TV station, QTQ-9, already had two female weather presenters and BTQ-7 had four. Brisbane's weather girls were also given opportunity to read the news on some occasions, which suggests that TEN-10 may not have been the first to have a female newsreader, but may have been the first to *formally* employ a female newsreader. See 'Glamor girls for ATN weather', *TV Times*, 19 January 1963, p. 3. ATN-7 was the first to employ a female for news *commentaries*, as we shall see in Chapter 3.
[146] 'New concept in TV newscasting', *B & T*, 8 April 1965, p. 30.
[147] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, pp. 227-28.
[148] The girls were graduates from Sydney's acting schools. See 'Glamor girls for ATN weather', *TV Times*, 19 January 1963, p. 3.
[149] Henningham, *Looking at Television News*, p. 14

of a daily satellite service from London; this was quickly followed by a second satellite service from New York.[150] Expenditure increased as news-gathering resources were extended to improve and enlarge services. Electronic news-gathering (ENG), which used electronic means instead of film,[151] was employed sparingly in 1976-77, even though it promised to provide greater flexibility in various news applications.[152] Over time, greater use of ENG and satellite services signalled the gradual prominence and importance of international news. From the early 1980s analogue tape replaced the use of 16mm film, allowing greater technological proficiency and more frequent live-to-air transmission.[153]

From the 1970s, Sydney commercial stations took greater heed of news programming trends in the US, consciously injecting entertainment values into the style and content of bulletins.[154] News reporters were also given higher profiles in news bulletins and encouraged to develop tightly scripted and polished 'packaged' news reports.[155] Each station provided audiences with approximately four hours of comprehensive news coverage per week, and early evening news bulletins were included in some of the highest rating programmes.[156] By 1976, most news programmes had established a 30-minute early evening bulletin, along with additional five to ten minute updates.[157] In 1977, however, TEN-10 introduced a 60-minute bulletin Monday to Friday and a 30-minute midday service.[158]

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[150] R. Colville, 'News and current affairs Programs', in ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 2, p. 53.
[151] W. A. Morrison & D. Brogden, *E.N.G. (Electronic News-gathering)*, Australian Film and Television School, North Ryde, NSW, March 1981, n.p.
[152] ABCB, *Twenty-ninth Annual Report*, 1976-77, p. 55.
[153] B. Alysen, 'Reporting Australian television news: Professional practice in the analogue-to-digital transition', *MIA*, No. 121, November 2006, p. 150.
[154] Henningham, *Looking at Television News*, p. 14
[155] The switch to ENG increased reporters' workloads, particularly as networks had more access to stories and pictures. Reporters' stories became longer and more complex to produce. This was also a time when news producers had greater power over stories and reporters' autonomy declined. See B. Alysen, 'Reporting in the "New Media" Environment: How Today's Television Journalists are Recycling Work Practices of the Past', *Global Media Journal* (Australian Edition), Vol. 3, No. 2, 2009, pp. 8, 10.
[156] ABCB, *Twenty-third Annual Report*, 1971, p. 125.
[157] ABCB, *Twenty-ninth Annual Report*, 1976-77, p. 55.
[158] ABCB, *Thirtieth Annual Report*, 1977-78, p. 69; United Telecasters Sydney Limited, *Annual Report and Notice of Annual General Meeting*, United Telecasters Sydney Limited, 1978, p. 8.

News & the public interest

Stations sought new ways to innovate and promote their news programmes as competition intensified. Running parallel to this ratings 'war' was a debate about the responsibility television news had to the public as a bearer of truth.[159] The public became better educated about their rights as consumers of information, expressing concern about the failure of commercial television stations to meet the Programme Standards for news first introduced in 1957. According to the Standards, news programmes were to observe the following principles in the presentation of programmes: they are to be accurate, impartial and in good taste with regard to the likelihood of child viewers; commentary and analysis should be clearly distinguished from news; morbid, sensational or alarming details not essential to factual reporting should be avoided; fairness should be ensured in the pictorial representation of news; no advertising matter should be represented as news; and if weather information is presented it should be accurate and up-to-date.[160] A series of complaints led to an examination of the Programme Standards, particularly newscaf, by the ABCB and, later, the ABT.[161]

The commercial stations came under increasing scrutiny for breaching Programme Standards, and circumventing the requirements both implicit and explicit in their licences. The ABCB had been hesitant to intervene in the presentation of news items, believing the independence of news services was important. However, three cases all involving various levels of 'nudity' in early evening news bulletins in 1971 prompted the ABCB to issue warnings. The ABCB considered these news items had breached a stipulation of the Programme Standards which required 'special care to be exercised' during times when children would be watching. The placement of news flashes involving distressing items was also causing controversy when

[159] Edgar (ed.), *The News in Focus*, p. 2.
[160] These represent the 1970 version, which slightly updated the 1957 Standards. See ABCB, *Television Programmes Standards*, Government Printer, Canberra, 1970, pp. 5, 18-19.
[161] Edgar (ed.), *The News in Focus*, pp. 2-5.

shown during the course of children's programmes.[162] Yet the ABCB's warnings did little to deter television news services from pursuing their own agenda. That is, until 1974.

In the first three decades of Australian television, management interference in commercial television news departments was routine.[163] This was no better illustrated than on 16 August 1974 when TCN-9, ATN-7 and TEN-10 decided not to broadcast a report from the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the inflated price of household soaps and detergents, because it would be detrimental to two of their chief advertisers, Unilever and Colgate-Palmolive.[164]

The failure to report on an item of public interest prompted the ABCB to hold a public inquiry.[165] While TEN-10 and ATN-7 cited other reasons for not broadcasting the story, TCN-9 received the biggest reprimand from the ABCB when it became known that management interference in the news department was to blame. Ultimately the ABCB decided to give TCN-9 the benefit of the doubt, while ruling that 'decisions regarding the news are entirely the responsibility of the news editor, subject only to managerial direction in matters involving questions of taste or legal requirements'. At the time, explains Stone, the recommendation was a kind of 'journalistic magna carta', giving independent-minded news producers extra gravitas when faced with a pushy sales executive wishing to use the news department for a free plug.[166] However, this overlooks the reality that news directors and editors are likely to self-censor in response to the views, attitudes and corporate line of their employers.[167] Ian Baker's study of 'gatekeeping' and news values provides substantial

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[162] ABCB, *Twenty-third Annual Report*, 1971, p. 126.
[163] Stone, *Who Killed Channel 9?*, p. 113.
[164] The report accused the leading soap manufacturers of making excessive profits through misleading product information and using inflated prices to pay for saturation television advertisements. See C.M. Evans, 'Cold power in the newsroom', *Nation Review*, 23-29 August 1974, p. 1443.
[165] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 276; Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations, *Annual Report*, The Federation, Sydney, 1974-75, p. 28.
[166] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 277, 281.
[167] See Australian Broadcasting Authority, *Sources of News & Current Affairs: A Research Report in Two Stages Conducted by Bond University for the Australian Broadcasting Authority*, Australian Broadcasting Authority, Sydney, 2001, pp. 26-29.

support for this hypothesis, concluding: 'news is not so much what newsmen make it as what they *know* the news organisation they work for sees as news'.[168]

During Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne licence renewal hearings in 1979, a group calling itself The People's Commission presented evidence that ATN-7's evening news had 'repeatedly withheld or limited the news coverage of grave and important social and political and economic and ethnic issues facing Australia'. The submission, based on 660 minutes of ATN-7 news examined in November 1978, argued that self-regulation required television stations to take an active role in consulting with the viewing public about their news programming preferences, rather than allow ratings to primarily influence broadcasts. In response, ATN-7's general manager, E.L. Thomas, refuted allegations of management interference in the selection of its news and emphasised the variety of the station's news broadcasts.[169] The submission underscored the tension that television commercial news manages: maximising viewers on the one hand, and providing information that is considered to be in the public interest.

Covering politics

There is a prevailing view that the very functioning of a democracy relies on the media to adequately inform the public on political issues.[170] Television news departments come under the greatest scrutiny when they fail to report balanced, relevant, and accurate political information. As early as the 1961 federal election, reported *B & T*, politicians and advertisers were also aware that 'more impact was to be gained by short announcements and talks at

[168] Baker, 'The Gatekeeper Chain', in Edgar (ed.), *The News in Focus*, p. 155.
[169] The licence was subsequently renewed. Australian Broadcasting Tribunal Licence Renewal Hearings – March 1979. Submission to ATN-7, The People's Commission, in Edgar (ed.), *The News in Focus,* pp. 4-5.
[170] See J. Schultz, *Reviving the Fourth Estate: Democracy, Accountability and the Media*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998.

frequent intervals'.[171] In the 1970s, slogans became a stronger feature of campaigns following the 1972 federal election when Gough Whitlam and the Labor Party famously used 'It's Time' for dramatic effect on television.[172] This was a conscious decision on behalf of the ALP to emulate American advertising techniques, featuring well-known celebrities. The slogan 'It's Time' was rather clever. Commenting on the effect of the advertisement, Stephen Mills observes that:

> not a single policy is hinted at…It's Time for what? No specific answer is given: indeed the slogan's ambiguity was intentional according to Paul Jones, who invented it: 'You say 'It's Time' and they'll fill in what it's time for…whatever is important to the individual. There's nothing to disagree with. It's the perfect statement'.[173]

Australian political journalist and commentator, Mungo MacCallum, bemoaned the influence that television was having on the election process. Campaigns had become more expensive and policy issues reduced to highly emotive slogans and imagery to suit the medium.[174] Journalist Laurie Oakes shared similar sentiments, observing that 1972 was the year of the 'soft sell', and Australia had finally caught up to American and British election campaign methods and technology.[175]

During the political turmoil of 1972 and 1975, when Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was dismissed,[176] the media, particularly the press, was prominent.[177] There were allegations of bias; less so, regarding television. A content analysis of Sydney television during the 1977

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[171] 'Radio-TV's part in elections', *B & T*, 23 November 1961, p. 5.
[172] 'Move on from cant catchphrases', *The Age*, 19 July 2010, p. 14.
[173] Stephen Mills cited in S. Young, 'A Century of Political Communication in Australia, 1901-2001', *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 78, 2003, p. 103.
[174] M. MacCallum, *Mungo on the Zoo Plane: Elections 1972-77*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld, 1979, p. 218.
[175] Young, 'A Century of Political Communication in Australia, pp. 103-4.
[176] 'The Dismissal' refers to the 1975 constitutional crisis in Australia's political history. It resulted in the removal of the Prime Minister Gough Whitlam of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) by the Governor-General, John Kerr, who appointed Malcolm Fraser, the leader of the opposition, as caretaker Prime Minister. See P. Kelly, *November 1975: The Inside Story of Australia's Greatest Political Crisis*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1995.
[177] See Chapters 3 and 7 in Griffen-Foley, *Party Games*, pp. 62-84; 177-203.

Australian federal election campaign found that commercial television maintained an 'overall anti-ALP bias' which primarily manifested in 'superfluous editorialising, omissions and inappropriate emphasis'. The ABC's current affairs programme, *This Day Tonight* (*TDT*), was the only programme that attempted to engage in serious coverage of all viewpoints through interviews with politicians. By contrast, the study found that news coverage of political leaders on commercial television was 'largely confined to extracts from press conferences', reflecting an increase in the presidential style of campaign coverage.[178] The author, Chris Duffell, pointed to the concentration of media ownership which had reduced the variety of political viewpoints and decreased 'the possibility of entry and survival in the mass media by new interests'.[179] Commercial stations are, according to the Programme Standards, implicitly required to offer informed and varied political information to the public. This became increasingly undermined with the official recognition of networking and media deregulation in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Competition and innovation

By 1969, Gyngell had tired of Frank Packer's constant interference with programming decisions on TCN-9, and felt restricted in his role as managing director. Several telephone conversations and meetings with Packer failed to persuade Gyngell to stay.[180] After an overseas sabbatical, he returned to Australia as managing director of ATN-7 Sydney and HSV-7 Melbourne. In September 1969, Gyngell launched the 'Seven Revolution', an innovative promotional campaign engineered to 'revolt' against the rigidity of programming schedules.[181] The campaign displaced the Nine Network from the top of the ratings ladder. Meanwhile TEN-10 emerged as a serious ratings' competitor with its controversial yet highly

[178] C. Duffell, 'Bias and Television Coverage of the 1977 Federal', *Media Papers*, No. 5, 1980, p. 16.
[179] Ibid., p. 4.
[180] Hall, *Supertoy*, pp. 38-39.
[181] Griffen-Foley, *The House of Packer*, p. 282. Gyngell also used this marketing campaign as a way of promoting HSV-7 and ATN-7 as the Seven Network in a far more official manner.

successful soap, *Number 96*. For the first time, the ratings in Sydney and Melbourne were no longer predictable.[182] In the July-August 1971 survey, ATN-7 gained an overall win against TCN-9. The results precipitated a management reshuffle and streamlining of sales operations at TCN-9 and GTV-9. Although TCN-9 managed to regain the lead, the episode was a reminder that TCN-9's overall dominance in programming could no longer be guaranteed.[183]

On Sir Frank's death in 1974, Kerry Packer (the younger son of Sir Frank) took over the Nine Network, and indulged his own programming tastes with little regard for the audience. It was this recklessness that allowed TEN-10 and ATN-7 on many occasions in the mid-1970s to score higher overall ratings than TCN-9. In a desperate attempt to salvage TCN-9's prominence, Kerry Packer appointed Gerald Stone, an American reporter and former producer of *TDT*, as news director of the Nine Network (TCN-9 and GTV-9).[184]

Sydney and Melbourne news bulletins had traditionally focused on local news stories, while overseas events in comparison received no more than a cursory coverage. Stone decided it was time for a change. He wanted 'real newsmen' reporting on 'real news'. And so he introduced *News Centre Nine*, a national network news bulletin which had TCN-9 Sydney and GTV-9 Melbourne providing combined coverage of the news. The two newsreaders, GTV-9's Peter Hitchener and TCN-9's Brian Henderson, alternated presenting national and overseas news from each capital. The latter part of the bulletin returned to local news stories, sport and weather.[185] However, Stone's attempt at innovation failed miserably. In the opinion of John Little, a former *60 Minutes* reporter, audiences were not interested in 'real news'.

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[182] Hall, *Supertoy*, pp. 39-40.
[183] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 162; Little, *Inside 60 Minutes*, p. 1. See also Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 288.
[184] Little, *Inside 60 Minutes*, pp. 1-2; Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 288.
[185] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 91.

Technical difficulties arose. Additionally, there was 'gross incompatibility' and rivalry between the Sydney and Melbourne newsrooms.[186]

It did not matter to viewers if a news item was a good story, Stone reflected. If it broke in Melbourne and the viewer lived in Sydney, or the reverse, the story was not looked upon favourably because of the city rivalry.[187] A content analysis of television news in Australia in 1975 showed widespread differential treatment in the selection of news items among the capital cities.[188] It was not until September 1977 that TCN-9 and GTV-9 led the ratings in news programming once again. The network's clever advertising campaign of selling 'the two Brians' (TCN-9's Brian Henderson and GTV-9's Brian Naylor) had proved successful.[189] Ten years later, it seemed viewers were still not ready for a national news bulletin when the ABC launched *The National*, a one-hour bulletin that combined news and current affairs from 6.30-7.30 p.m. Within nine months, the programme was axed and the traditional 7 p.m. news was restored, followed by the *7.30 Report*.[190] This pattern of newscaf, with news followed by current affairs programmes, has become the norm for most Sydney commercial television stations.

Another major attempt at programming differentiation occurred in April 1979 when TEN-10, turning to the US for inspiration, employed controversial American news consultancy company, Frank Magid & Associates, to revamp its news services.[191] TEN-10 implemented 'happy talk' news: a style and format characterised by 'brevity' and 'fragmentation', with an

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[186] Little, *Inside 60 Minutes*, p. 2.
[187] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 91.
[188] B. Grundy, 'Where is the News? A Content Analysis of a Week's Television News in Australia', in Edgar (ed.), *The News in Focus*, pp. 103-12.
[189] Edgar (ed.), *The News in Focus*, p. 2; G. Levine, Australian Commercial Television, Identity and the Imagined Community, PhD thesis, Macquarie University, Sydney, 2009, p. 183.
[190] Inglis, *Whose ABC?*, pp. 67, 76-77, 81-82.
[191] Colville, 'News and Current Affairs Programs', in ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 2, p. 65.

emphasis on 'crime, sex and human interest stories'.[192] The changes were made in response to extensive local research conducted by Magid & Associates, which believed it was important to discern what audiences wanted to see in the news.[193] This highlighted the commercial imperative driving Sydney's news, which was intent on providing news that would appeal to the masses.

TEN-10's new format was not warmly received. Several employees resigned and the ratings for the newly launched *Eyewitness News* were poor initially. TEN-10 was criticised for trying to 'Americanise' the news, and others opposed the informality of the format.[194] Later TEN-10 managed to fight its way from third place into second place behind TCN-9. Among some of the most significant changes TEN-10 adopted were an 'Action-line' team of journalists to investigate consumer complaints; a special report series in which a particular subject was examined by senior journalists specialising in areas like health, education and law; the replacement of the traditional solo newsreader with a female-male pairing; scripted conversation between presenters to create a more personal and conversational style; 'Live Eye' (live-to-air) crosses; and the redesign of news studios to signify locality, immediacy and authenticity.[195]

These changes were designed to market TEN-10 as a news service that was involved with community concerns.[196] During this time, Katrina Lee came to prominence as TEN-10's chief

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[192] G. Speer and P. Heldoff, 'Eyewitness News, Unemployment and Poverty', *Media Papers*, No. 13, September 1981, p. 2.
[193] Colville, 'News and Current Affairs Programs', in ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 2, p. 66.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid. Wide studio shots were used to deliberately show papers on the news desk as well as cable and camera equipment in order to emphasise credibility. See also Speer and Heldoff, 'Eyewitness News, Unemployment and Poverty', pp. 2-3.
[196] Bonney & Wilson, *Australia's Commercial Media*, p. 296.

newsreader.[197] Lee's male counterparts at TEN-10 were also considerably younger than TCN-9 and ATN-7's middle-aged newsreaders, and were marketed as youthful and concerned helpers. Likewise the decision to front TEN-10's news with Lee, a woman who was promoted as caring and concerned for Sydney, was designed to create a personal connection with Sydney viewers. This was emphasised by a billboard that simply displayed the words, 'Katrina's Back' when she returned from maternity leave in 1981.[198] TEN-10's attempt to adapt and refine an American model of news programming paved the way for future experimentation.

The commercial and regulatory climate of the 1980s, which was outlined in Chapter 1, intensified the extent to which television networks marketed their news programmes. The official recognition of networks, the relaxation of cross-media ownership laws in 1987, increasingly fierce competition for national advertising revenue and the satellite boom contributed to greater importance being placed on news programming. Networks became willing in the 1980s to spend millions of dollars on local and international news coverage to stay one step ahead, or at least on a level with, their opposition.[199]

In 1981, Nine held the lead in news, observed Hall, because it managed to 'suggest experience and accuracy without boredom', and did not need to reinvent itself like other commercial stations.[200] However perhaps what made Nine stand out from its rivals was the way it marketed newscaf, proving station success also relies on branding. Nine's corporate emphasis on newscaf and sport was a tactic employed since the 1970s; the genres proved

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[197] Anne Fulwood joined TEN-10's late night news team from 1991-1995 to give the conventional news bulletin a relaxed style. Both Lee and Fulwood were reportedly the only female senior newsreaders on Sydney commercial television during this time. See S. Owens, 'Newsfront', *SMH*, 22 October 1991, p. 46.
[198] Bonney & Wilson, *Australia's Commercial Media*, p. 296.
[199] F. Knight, 'The TV news wars – big guns and satellites', *B & T,* 19 August 1982, p. 22.
[200] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 12. See also G. Turner, 'Television News and Current Affairs: "Welcome to Frontline"', in G. Turner & S. Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2000, p. 94.

popular with viewers and were less costly than local drama and comedy production. During 1980, TCN-9 used an assertive and catchy jingle to promote its 30-minute news bulletin:

> Brian told me
> Brian told me
> Brian told me so,
> I know everything I need to know
> 'Cos Brian told me so. [201]

This strategy seemed to pay off, with Henderson estimated to be worth $30 million dollars in advertising revenue to TCN-9 in the 1980s.[202] But TCN-9 could not rely solely on Henderson's appeal. ATN-7's news anchor, Roger Climpson, an almost twin-like comparison[203] to Henderson, ensured that TCN-9 would have to look for additional strategies to attract viewers. When Sydney stations telecast the same BBC footage of Prince Charles' and Lady Diana Spencer's wedding in 1981, TCN-9 managed to win the ratings for that night, primarily because it had consistently promoted itself as 'the one to watch'.[204] It was especially in 1984, once TCN-9 moved the main news bulletin back half an hour to 6.00 p.m., that Henderson appeared unbeatable.[205]

Overseas news

The most expensive attempt made by commercial networks to 'concentrate on bulletins as key market differentiators' occurred in the 1980s.[206] Competition for foreign news was minimal among the commercial networks as they received the same satellite service – primarily

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[201] P. Bell, K. Boehringer, & S. Croft, *Programmed Politics: A Study of Australian Television*, Sable Publishing, Sydney, 1982, p. 19. The jingle seems to have been used only in Sydney, and not in Melbourne where Naylor was the principal newsreader. Cunningham et al. suggest the jingle may have been a reference to Henderson's prior career as presenter of pop music variety programme, *Bandstand.* See Cunningham et al., *Contemporary Australian Television*, p. 45.
[202] Cunningham et al., *Contemporary Australian Television*, p. 44.
[203] Both in appearance and in the confidence and trustworthiness they inspired in viewers.
[204] L. M. Garcia, 'The message? No, it's the medium that counts', *SMH*, 12 July 1982, p. 24. Windschuttle suggests Nine was also able to win the ratings for that night because the network had a strong flow of popular programmes preceding the wedding telecast. See Windschuttle, *The Media*, p. 66.
[205] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 292.
[206] Cunningham et al., *Contemporary Australian Television*, p. 42.

Visnews supplemented by Australian Associated Press (AAP), United Press International (UPI) and Reuters.[207] As a result, networks generally put the same content to air and endured the same delays and limitations.[208] This changed in February 1980, when TCN-9 announced that it was no longer going to use the same international service as everyone else.[209]

Keen to 'inject some originality into its news',[210] TCN-9 negotiated an exclusive arrangement with the American CBS service and United Press International Television News (UPITN) for satellite coverage. TCN-9 also leased a 24-hour transponder, which enabled an unlimited amount of overseas new coverage around-the-clock and allowed Nine to receive satellite feeds as 'breaking news' during news bulletins. Previously, if a story had missed the satellite feed, stations would have to wait another 24 hours. TCN-9 was determined to convince Australian audiences that it was 'the one to watch' when it came to breaking international news.[211]

To stay competitive, ATN-7 and TEN-10 made their own arrangements with supplementary overseas suppliers. ATN-7 negotiated an exclusive deal with NBC and the American cable network CNN, obtaining a share of material from its 24-hour service, and also invested in a transponder.[212] Soon after, TEN-10 also reached an agreement with CNN, entered in an arrangement with Group W (Newsfeed),[213] and obtained an extra satellite feed of BBC's main bulletin for showing on Saturday mornings in Sydney.[214] The variety of satellite services available allowed Australian stations to televise different versions of overseas events.[215] In the

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[207] ABCB, *Twenty-ninth Annual Report*, 1976-77, p. 55.
[208] Colville, 'News and Current Affairs Programs', in ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 2, p. 53.
[209] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 11.
[210] F. Knight, 'The TV news wars – big guns and satellites', *B & T*, 19 August 1982, p. 22.
[211] Colville, 'News and Current Affairs Programs', in ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 2, p. 53.
[212] F. Knight, 'The TV news wars – big guns and satellites', *B & T*, 19 August 1982, p. 23.
[213] Westinghouse Broadcasting Company (US).
[214] Colville, 'News and Current Affairs Programs', in ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 2, p. 53.
[215] Henningham, *Looking at Television News*, p. 21.

space of two years, overseas news effectively became the hottest commodity in the television ratings war, pushing commercial stations into a spending frenzy on costly satellite technology.[216] The measure of success now became dependent on who was prepared to spend the most in the foreign news 'war'.[217]

TCN-9's second major attempt to differentiate itself came with its decision to open a bureau in London. A journalist and camera crew were employed to create material specifically for Australian audiences.[218] Within two years, ATN-7 and TEN-10 had also invested in a London bureau for news from the UK, Europe, and Africa. Shortly after, all three networks set up bureaux in Los Angeles, and eventually moved into East Asia.[219] Competition with the ABC's large overseas news networks, and the global vision of SBS *World News* established in 1980, also influenced the commercial networks' shift towards internationalism.[220] However, the commercial channels maintained a far more parochial approach to international news compared with SBS. In keeping with its charter, SBS was far more 'outward looking' in its focus.[221]

The investment in satellite technology was paralleled by sharp increases in news staff. TEN-10 employed a news staff of 102 by November 1981. From 1981 to 1991, staff levels in news services at TCN-9 increased 280%. ATN-7's news staff levels increased approximately 47% after the CNN satellite and the one-hour news began in 1984.[222] Both ATN-7 and TCN-9

[216] F. Knight, 'The TV news wars – big guns and satellites', *B & T*, 19 August 1982, p. 22.
[217] Colville, 'News and Current Affairs Programs', in ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 2, p. 53.
[218] F. Knight, 'The TV news wars – big guns and satellites', *B & T*, 19 August 1982, p. 22.
[219] Colville, 'News and Current Affairs Programs', in ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 2, p. 54.
[220] Cunningham et al., *Contemporary Australian Television*, p. 42.
[221] Ang et al., *The SBS Story*, p. 179.
[222] Colville, 'News and Current Affairs Programs', in ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 2, pp. 58-59.

spent exorbitant amounts of money constructing new programmes after the satellite material was obtained. Excess material was slotted into morning and late-night news sessions.[223] Additional morning sessions were introduced to take advantage of the excess material: TEN-10's *Daybreak* and *Good Morning Australia*; Nine's *Sunday Today* and the 11.30 a.m. bulletin; and Seven's *News Overnight*.[224] On all networks, the share of overseas stories in news bulletins increased from 20% in 1978 to 33% in 1987.[225] Australian audiences now had access to news coverage from bureaux in every major city in the world and over 600 American television stations. This was a marked change to previous decades when networks and audiences considered overseas content less important and 'a non-competitive area of news programming'.[226]

Nevertheless, Australian networks' enhanced satellite services and heavy reliance on both AAP and foreign news agencies attracted some criticism.[227] At Sydney and Melbourne licence hearings in 1985, the Australian Journalists' Association, one of the most vocal critics, raised concerns that the networks' reliance on AAP and satellite services were limiting the diversity of television news and Australian employment opportunities.[228] The cost of gathering international news independently meant television broadcasters relied on purchasing material from major news agencies based in the US and UK.[229] This monopoly of western news agencies over the flow of international news threatened to undermine public knowledge of developing nations due to neglect and misrepresentation.[230]

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[223] F. Knight, 'The TV news wars – big guns and satellites', *B & T*, 19 August 1982, p. 23.
[224] Colville, 'News and current affairs Programs', in ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 2, pp. 55-56.
[225] Cunningham et al., *Contemporary Australian Television*, p. 42.
[226] Colville, 'News and current affairs Programmes', in ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 2, p. 53.
[227] Ibid., p. 57.
[228] Henningham, *Looking at Television News*, p. 22.
[229] York, *How Australia Gets Its TV News*, p. 2.
[230] P. Edgar, 'The Rip and Read Service: AAP, A Study of a News Agency', in Edgar (ed.) *The News in Focus*, pp. 114-19.

Late-night news

During the late 1980s, the 10.30 p.m. news bulletin became the next target for programming experimentation. Intensified competition between the networks led to the development of hybrid news programmes, which blurred the distinction between news, information and entertainment. In 1987, Seven replaced its traditional late-night news bulletin with Clive Roberston's *Newsworld.* The Nine Network responded to Seven's success by enticing Graham Kennedy out of retirement and creating *Graham Kennedy's News Hour*, later renamed *Coast to Coast*. Both programmes undermined the traditional conventions of television news bulletins by introducing a live studio audience and injecting comment, irreverence and comedy.[231] But that did not mean that such programmes undermined viewers' ability to understand and engage with important issues in the public sphere.

Nevertheless, this transgressive programming turned the 'graveyard timeslot' into a competition for ratings. Seven and Nine battled it out until Robertson's show was axed in 1989, leaving Kennedy to dominate the late night timeslot. In 1990, Seven re-entered the fray by introducing Steve Vizard's *Tonight Live* news/comedy programme, which borrowed heavily from America's *David Letterman Show*. Vizard earned a Gold Logie for the programme in 1992. Such hybrid programmes demonstrated that news could provide a different framework in which people could engage with issues, as will be explored in Chapter 3. However by 1994, these programmes had run their course and were replaced by conventional late-night news bulletins.[232]

[231] Turner, 'Television News and Current Affairs', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 95.
[232] Ibid., p. 96.

News Horizons: The 1990s and 2000s

The fight for national advertising revenue and the entrance of pay TV into the market dramatically increased competition amongst commercial television networks. Much of this competition played out in commercial newscaf programming during the 1990s and 2000s and fuelled criticism of commercial television's news standards.[233] The impact of commercial imperatives on news programming increasingly became a subject of research during the 1990s. An ABA report in 1999 detailed the results of an inquiry into the study of community attitudes to FTA television programmes between 1994 and 1997 and in 1999. Examining attitudes to certain programming genres, the study found that newscaf was the public's top concern between 1994 and 1997. Complaints related to unnecessary graphic material, bias, and intrusive reporting techniques. The 'widespread view' amongst participants was that some news stories and footage were primarily used to entertain and win the battle for ratings, rather than to inform.[234]

A content analysis of public and commercial television and radio undertaken by Turner in 1996 revealed that politics was no longer a leading subject in Australian news; crime had taken its place. Compared with previous decades, there had also been substantial growth in sport and celebrity stories in news bulletins.[235] This has had implications for television's function to inform the public on political issues in the traditional sense. Increasingly, time and space restrictions hamper the reporting of in-depth political news. In 1997, Lucy York observed that in the first two newsbreaks before the sports report, the Nine Network covered 19-20 items in its news bulletin, as opposed to seven in 1993.[236]

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[233] G. Turner, 'Sold Out: Recent Shifts in Television News and Current Affairs in Australia', in M. Bromley (ed.), *No News is Bad News: Radio, Television and the Public*, Longman, Harlow, 2001, p. 51.
[234] M. Cupitt & Australian Broadcasting Authority, *Community Views About Content on FTA Television, 1999*, Australian Broadcasting Authority, Sydney, NSW, 2000, pp. 7, 15, 25, 29.
[235] Turner, 'Sold out', in Bromley (ed.), *No News is Bad News*, p. 55.
[236] York, *How Australia Gets Its TV News*, p. 11.

This economy of coverage is compounded by Australian television's tendency to frame political coverage around individual leaders and their actions rather than issues and parties. Nevertheless, since the early 1970s, television has been viewed as a critical component of election campaigns and their outcomes. Although the audience for FTA commercial television is increasingly fragmented, political parties still focus their electoral campaigns on generating favourable coverage from television news. This is because a broad cross-section of Australian voters still relies on FTA television as their main source of political information.[237]

In their study of the 2001 Australian election on FTA television, David Denemark, Ian Ward and Clive Bean found that on the whole, television news (commercial and ABC) was especially restrictive in its coverage of minority parties and their issues. Thus the election was presented as a superficial, 'two-horse' race between the major parties. Moreover, in relation to the major parties, each channel maintained a clear bias towards covering the leaders rather than the parties and key issues. This 'presidential' style of coverage suggested the fate of the election rested heavily on the performance of the leaders. This has implications when most late-deciding voters, according to Denemark et al., are likely to be influenced by leader images.[238]

Politicians and 'spin doctors' likewise play a role in managing television news coverage, influencing the way in which reporters cover political news. Major parties make provision for reporters and camera crews to follow them throughout election campaigns, while their daily itineraries are carefully planned and scripted for favourable media coverage.[239] Despite the

[237] D. Denemark, I. Ward, & C. Bean, 'Election Campaigns and Television News Coverage: The Case of the 2001 Australian Election', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 42, No. 1, March 2007, pp. 89-90.
[238] Ibid., pp. 95-98, 101-2
[239] Ibid.

long-established view of the mass media's limited influence on voter behaviour, Denemark et al. argue that contemporary patterns of television coverage of elections highlight the significant 'gatekeeping' role of the news media.[240]

Staying competitive

According to surveys and audience consumption data over the last two decades, traditional sources of newscaf – television, newspapers and radio – have encountered a decline in their audience share.[241] A study conducted by John Casimir for the *SMH* found that audience numbers for the early evening news bulletin in Sydney declined 10% between 1991 and 1998.[242] In part, this was caused by the overall drop in audience figures for the 6-7 p.m. timeslot and the introduction of late-night news bulletins. However, Casimir's study revealed that both the ABC and Ten had gained viewers in their respective 7 p.m. and 5 p.m. timeslots, and it was the 'top-rating' leaders in news – Seven and Nine – which were failing to retain and grow their audience share.[243] By 2009, there was a clear trend for Australians to consume less television. More specifically, data collated over the last two decades suggest that fewer Australians aged under 40 are watching traditional newscaf programmes. This trend has coincided with the arrival of digital transmission and the expansion of online news media.[244]

Networks looked for new ways to keep FTA television viable throughout the transition to pay TV and digital technologies, leading mainstream news organisations to develop online news sites. As noted in Chapter 1, large-scale investment in television networks by private equity

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[240] Ibid., p. 107.
[241] S. Young, 'The decline of traditional news and current affairs audiences in Australia', *MIA*, No. 131, May 2009, pp. 147-159; MEAA, *Life in the Clickstream: The future of Journalism*, http://www.alliance.org.au/documents/foj_report_finalpdf, accessed 12 November 2010; P. O'Donnell, D. McKnight & J. Este, *Journalism at the Speed of Bytes: Australian Newspapers in the 21st century*, Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, Redfern, NSW, 2012.
[242] J. Casimir, 'The Big Turn Off', *SMH*, *The Guide*, 22-28 June 1998, pp. 4-5.
[243] Turner, 'Television News and Current Affairs', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 98.
[244] Young, 'The decline of traditional news and current affairs audiences in Australia', pp. 149, 155-57.

corporations ushered in a heightened focus on short-term profitability. Owners of television networks are no longer media barons, but major corporations that are primarily intent on maximising profits and cultivating advertising revenue. [245] Stone explains the 'margins between profit and loss are meticulously analysed on a programme by programme basis'.[246] Finding ways of building large audiences has led to 'synergies' – cutting costs by effectively repackaging the same news content across multiple delivery systems.[247] This has had major repercussions for the way news is sourced, and the diversity and quality of content.

Television networks have looked for ways to arrest the migration of news audiences. The ABC launched its online news site in 1995, as a strategy to compete with websites set up by newspapers.[248] In 1997, Nine's parent company, PBL, joined Bill Gates' Microsoft Corporation to launch the online content provider, ninemsn.[249] With access to the Hotmail email website, Nine was able 'to gain a foothold in the online advertising industry', argues Levine.[250] At the beginning of ninemsn's operations, online advertising in Australia was almost non-existent. In April 2007, however, it accounted for more than $1 billion in revenue, allowing PBL to claim one in every four dollars spent, most of which was generated by the cross-promotional link between the Nine Network and Microsoft.[251]

It was not until 2006 that Seven merged with the Internet site Yahoo! to create Yahoo!7.[252] Earlier, Seven, as well as Ten and Nine, fostered audience participation by using SMS polls, phone-ins and email. More recently, Twitter and other forms of social media have been

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[245] J. Waterford, 'Short-term gains', *Eureka Street*, May-June 2006, n.p.
[246] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 267.
[247] Waterford, 'Short-term gains', n.p.
[248] Inglis, *Whose ABC?*, p. 424.
[249] Stone, *Who Killed Channel 9?*, p. 279.
[250] Levine, Australian Commercial Television, Identity and the Imagined Community, p. 23.
[251] Stone, *Who Killed Channel 9?,* pp. 279-80.
[252] Levine, Australian Commercial Television, Identity and the Imagined Community, p. 24.

employed to maintain viewer interest and loyalty.[253] The interactivity between news programmes and viewers was given impetus with the release of small video cameras by Panasonic and Sony in 1994, paving the way for citizen video journalism.[254]

Turner argues that access to digital technologies and 'the capacity for producing, copying and circulating content cheaply and easily' have fostered public journalism – a collaboration between journalists and communities.[255] Alysen observes that advances in cameras and delivery systems have changed the way audiences are encouraged to think of themselves, not simply as informants, but as participants in the news-gathering process. In 2006, the Nine Network's afternoon national bulletins concluded with, 'Don't forget you can be part of the news team too'. Major local, national and world events, such as the 2004 Asian tsumani, the 2005 London bombings and the 2010 Victorian bushfires accelerated internationally the rate at which newsrooms openly solicit material from non-news sources. However the speed at which visual material can be accessed and televised in the digital environment puts additional pressure on broadcasters to verify the accuracy of material collected.[256]

Commercial networks have sought to strengthen their place in the local metropolitan market. In the last decade, Ten has built a solid audience for its 5 p.m. news and for its hybrid news panel programme, *The Project* (formerly the *7pm Project*).[257] Pictures of Sydney's CBD feature on the news set backdrops of both Seven and Nine, as a strategy designed to create familiarity with viewers.[258] In the 1990s, Seven's news service promoted itself with the

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[253] Viewers are encouraged to send in footage, help with breaking news, and respond to online or phone polls. Since news anchors have a direct line of contact with viewers, they are more readily able to encourage audience participation.
[254] Levine, Australian Commercial Television, Identity and the Imagined Community, pp. 27-28; Alysen, 'Reporting in the "New Media" Environment', p. 7.
[255] G. Turner, *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn*, Sage, London, 2010, pp. 78-79.
[256] Alysen, 'Reporting Australian Television News', p. 154.
[257] L. Sinclair, 'Home and Away top non-news show', *The Australian*, 29 November 2009.
[258] Levine, Australian Commercial Television, Identity and the Imagined Community, p. 29.

trademark, 'Nobody knows Sydney like Seven'.[259] In the last two years, Nine's claims to 'see it first' have been highlighted by a montage of the network's reporters stationed in key areas of Sydney. The implication is that Nine provides more immediate and direct local coverage from all over Sydney than do its rivals. The increasing use of live crosses and interviews during television bulletins underscores this, but also requires different training for newsreaders from earlier decades. Since bulletins are no longer fully scripted or pre-packaged, newsreaders are now predominantly journalists.[260]

The launch of the ABC's digital channel, ABC News 24, in July 2010 signalled the beginning of a new era in FTA news programming. Access to 24-hour news feeds intensified the need for speed and accuracy in news reporting. It also presented challenges to commercial stations and the subscription-based competitor, Sky News Australia (jointly owned by BSkyB, Seven Media Group and Nine Entertainment Co.), which had had a monopoly on 24-hour news provision in Australia since 1996.[261] Compounding these challenges is the fact that commercial broadcasters maintain relatively few foreign bureaux compared with the SBS and the ABC.[262] In recent years, commercial stations have either closed or cut back their London bureaux, choosing to maintain their chief permanent overseas presence in Los Angeles.[263] This has also led to a growing emphasis on local news on commercial FTA television.
Even before this, Nine's dominance in Sydney news ratings came under threat when Brian Henderson retired in 2002. TCN-9 played musical chairs with its news talent in a desperate effort to maintain its edge, first replacing Henderson with Jim Waley, then replacing Waley

[259] P. Putnis, 'The Production of Overseas News at Channel 7', *MIA*, No. 82, November 1996, p. 104.
[260] Alysen, 'Reporting Australian Television News', p. 155.
[261] M. Scibilla & B. Hutchins, 'High-stakes television: Fan engagement, market literacy and the battle for sports content', *MIA,* No. 141, December 2011, p. 27.
[262] Alysen, *The Electronic Reporter*, pp. 36-38.
[263] Alysen, 'Reporting Australian Television News', p. 155.

with the younger Mark Ferguson.[264] The loss of key people from Nine's newsroom operations, such as Peter Meakin and David Leckie, further sealed Nine's fate. Since 2005, Seven has predominantly held the lead in newscaf programming, promoting itself as 'Sydney's No. 1 News'.[265]

Seven's rise was influenced by several factors, including Nine's 2005 management purge[266] which led key members of Nine's newscaf staff to join Seven, and *Deal or No Deal*, the popular game show preceding *Seven News,* which has provided the 6 p.m. bulletin with a generous lead-in audience.[267] Seven's higher levels of local content in its half-hour bulletins in 2005 may have also ensured it maintained a consistently stronger performance in Sydney.[268] But it could not have held sway without the help of news anchor, Ian Ross, who was lured out of retirement in 2003 to front *Seven News*.[269] With Chris Bath now at the helm, *Seven News* remained dominant in the ratings until 2011, when Nine's Sydney news bulletin overtook Seven for the first time since 2005.[270] Sydney's *Nine News*, led by Peter Overton, has continued to maintain the ratings' lead and appears to have reclaimed its title of 'the one to watch'. But as we have seen, nothing is certain in the realm of news programming.

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[264] Stone, *Who Killed Channel 9?*, pp. 109-23.
[265] Seven Network, 'Year in review', press release, 28 November 2005, http://sevenwestmedia.com.au/news-media, accessed 12 October 2010; Free TV, '2009 Year in Review', media release, 1 December 2009, http://www.thinktv.com.au/media/Homepage/Year_In_Review_2009.pdf, accessed 12 October 2010. See also D. Knight, 'Seven holds ratings crown at 2011 halfway mark', *TV Tonight*, 10 July 2011; L. Sinclair, 'Home and Away top non-news show', *The Australian*, 29 November 2012.
[266] This followed changes in the Nine Network's ownership and management in 2005.
[267] Stone, *Who killed Channel 9?*, p. 114.
[268] Phillips & Tapsall, 'Australian Television News Trends', p. 10.
[269] A. Meade, 'Final bulletin: Roscoe to go on a high note', *The Australian*, 23 November 2009.
[270] Seven's *Deal or No Deal* lost its lead to Nine's *Hot Seat* in the 5.30 p.m. timeslot before the news, which may explain, in part, why Nine has regained the lead. See 'Nine News Sydney takes ratings crown from Seven', *Media Spy*, 22 October 2011, http://www.mediaspy.org/report/2011/10/22/nine-news-sydney-takes-ratings-crown-from-seven/, accessed 6 November 2012; H. Byrnes, 'Sevens team married to news…and each other', *Daily Telegraph*, 27 July 2012.

Conclusion

A combination of technological advances, commercial pressures and changes in news production and audience tastes has shaped news programming on Sydney's commercial stations. Isolation has also been a key force in shaping Australia's news-gathering processes, creating 'an ideal breeding ground for oligopolies of information'.[271] The oligopolistic market has fostered a 'sameness' in news programming across the channels. To counteract this, networks have tried to differentiate their news programmes from their competitors. However these innovations have been largely cosmetic, and have not challenged the highly standardised model of news bulletins.[272]

Developments in technology have facilitated immediacy of news as well as greater access to sources of local and international news by Sydney commercial television stations. These, in turn, have fuelled the popularity and demand for news content and shaped new media environments and journalistic practices. But changes in technology and business practices, and the development of digital media, have created an environment where journalistic accuracy is increasingly undermined. These changes are also indicative of wider global shifts in social and cultural discourse, which favour a more democratised discourse of 'soft news' compared with the overly traditional 'hard' news agendas.[273]

Television news is shaped by the *medium* itself, which is primarily dominated by visual imagery. More complex and abstract issues have always been elusive on television, partly because they rarely translate well into the physical and visual.[274] Time constraints also

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[271] P. R. Gerdes & P. Charlier & Australian Film and Television School, *TV News – That's The Way It Was: A Comparative Study of Sydney's Television News, August 1978 and August 1983*, Resources Unit, Australian Film and Television School, North Ryde, NSW, 1985, p. 2.
[272] Neville Petersen, cited in Henningham, *Looking at Television News*, p. 192.
[273] Turner, 'Sold Out', in Bromley (ed.), *No News is Bad News,* pp. 54-55.
[274] B. Courtis, 'News and Documentaries' in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 108.

limit serious discussion of political news. Every 30-minute news bulletin covers many stories, along with sport and weather reports, and advertising. This has had great repercussions for the reporting of political information on television.

There has been continuity as well as change in Sydney news. While there has been a marked shift in news values in the past two decades, the personality of the newsreader has always been important in Australian news bulletins. This only accelerated once commercial television stations progressively emulated American news trends, technology diversified and business practices changed. Indeed, Barbara Alsyen argues that the history of television news is not so much linear as it is circular, demonstrating that many of the shifts are more 'an echo of earlier practice than something new'. Continuity likewise extends backwards from the interactive news formats of today to the 1970s when the public was given a greater role in stories with the inclusion of question and answer sequences. Today's strong focus on live-to-air broadcasts finds its precedent during the 1970s and 1980s when live-to-scene reports became popular. Moreover, the diminished news production budgets of today, and their concomitant impacts on news programming, recall earlier times when news budgets were squeezed, but eventually adapted and recovered.[275]

Finally, although the attrition of news audiences over the last two decades suggests a diminished future for conventional news bulletins, in 2012 most of the networks' traditional flagship bulletins increased their audiences.[276] In fact, ratings for 2012 show that the nightly news bulletin often delivers a network's largest audience for the day, giving the industry

[275] Alysen, 'Reporting in the "New Media" Environment', pp. 2, 8-11.
[276] This growth may reflect the population growth of the over-55 age group, which makes up the largest proportion of viewers for FTA television's news programmes. See Young, 'The decline of traditional news and current affairs audiences in Australia', p. 155.

confidence that news is still effectively the glue that keeps viewers tuned into commercial FTA television.[277]

[277] P. Kalina, 'Why the nightly news bulletin reigns supreme', *SMH*, 26 November 2012.

3

Current Affairs: The Story Behind the Story-Makers

'Television is a good information medium but an even better entertainer.'[1]

On 15 October 1958, esteemed American broadcaster and journalist, Edward R. Murrow, caused a stir when he posed a warning to fellow and future newsmen about the encroaching danger of entertainment journalism on American culture. Speaking at the Radio Television News Directors' Association convention in Chicago, Murrow observed:

> Our history will be what we make it. And if there are any historians about, fifty or a hundred years from now and there should be preserved the kinescopes for one week of all three networks, they will there find recorded in black and white, or perhaps in colour, evidence of decadence, escapism and insulation from the realities of the world in which we live… Just once in a while, let us exalt the importance of ideas and information...Would the stockholders rise up and object? I think not.[2]

His prescient words continue to resonate in today's radically transforming mediascape, where laments for the loss of mainstream journalism's quality and character are stronger than ever. Television 'current affairs'– also commonly referred to as 'public affairs'[3] – is a genre often at the centre of debates concerning journalism standards. Current affairs programming on commercial television has increasingly been characterised by a tension between its prioritising of profit and its provision as a service to the public.[4]

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[1] Masters, *Not for Publication*, p. 4.
[2] E. R. Murrow, RTNDA Convention, Chicago, 15 October 1958, http://www.turnoffyourtv.com/commentary/hiddenagenda/murrow.html, accessed 23 December 2010.
[3] Throughout this chapter I use 'current affairs' and 'public affairs' interchangeably, unless a distinction is specified.
[4] S. Harrington, 'Popular news in the 21st century: Time for a new critical approach?', *Journalism,* Vol. 9, No. 3, 2008, p. 267.

While there remains no clear-cut definition of 'current affairs' in key media legislation,[5] its implicit function is to provide the background to the news, whether directly related to the news agenda or to ongoing public concerns.[6] Analysis and interpretation, as well as depth of coverage and length of time allocated to each news item, are the distinguishing features of current affairs programming.[7] Great importance is attributed to its analytical function because it is thought to provide the public with the tools needed for active and informed participation in the public sphere. The fact that there are so many public inquiries and complaints into current affairs programmes demonstrates community concern about the genre, its changing function and the far-reaching impact it has on viewers.[8]

Since the late 1960s, the traditional function of current affairs programming has been eroded on an international scale, reflecting what Turner describes as 'the political withdrawal from framing media activities within the context of the public interest'. In other words, television's social role as an instrument of democracy is no longer considered fundamental to commercial broadcasters. Underpinning this change are broader cultural and structural movements brought on by globalisation, market-friendly regulatory policies, the impact of new technologies and the way in which television networks have viewed their public and broadcasting responsibilities.[9]

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[5] ABA, *Sources of News & Current Affairs*, p. 5. The Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice broadly defines 'current affairs' to mean: 'a programme focussing on social, economic or political issues of current relevance to the community'. See Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice, January 2010, 4.2, p. 21, http://www.freetv.com.au/media/Code_of_Practice/2010_Commercial_Television_Industry_Code_of_Practice.pdf, accessed 17 November 2011.
[6] P. Goddard, J. Corner, & K. Richardson, 'The formation of *World in Action*: A case study in the history of current affairs journalism', *Journalism*, Vol. 2, No.1, 2001, p. 81.
[7] ABA, *Sources of News & Current Affairs*, p. 5
[8] Turner, 'Television News and Current Affairs' in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 101.
[9] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, pp. 44-45.

One of the outcomes of this 'withdrawal' has been the blurring of news and entertainment in current affairs programming and journalism in general. The term 'tabloidisation' has gained currency since the 1980s. It is widely used to refer pejoratively to a general shift towards the trivialisation of media content. S. E. Bird argues that the term 'tabloidisation' is problematic, not only because there is a lack of consensus about the term's meaning, but because the term is not always used in its cultural context. Its meaning may differ markedly from one cultural context to the next, reflecting a range of different social, cultural and political characteristics. However, when broken down to its constituent elements in a television format, 'tabloidisation' refers to an emphasis on the personal. Tabloid stories are more likely to use visual images and focus on crime, sex, gossip, human interest and celebrity. They are increasingly dependent on re-enactments, dramatisations, sensationalism and triviality.[10]

While it is important to recognise the history of commercial newscaf within the context of debates on tabloidisation, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage with this subject in detail. Commercial pressures have, at times, hindered the genre's ability to fulfil its function to inform and provide perspective. However, to frame this history purely in terms of political economy where corporate interests of profit and ratings have increasingly undermined the traditional notions quality journalistic practice only provides one part of the picture. As we shall see, a cursory survey of Australia's news organisations reveals that the networks' cross-hiring of staff from mainstream current affairs programmes to tabloid shows and the reverse breeds a 'sameness' in news values amongst the programmes. It is not simply a case of the entertainment format infiltrating the newscaf format; it is also true of the reverse. In fact, the blurring of both entertainment and news genres suggests that mainstream current affairs and

[10] S. E. Bird, 'Tabloidization: What is it, and Does it Really Matter?', in B. Zelizer (ed.), *The Changing Faces of Journalism: Tabloidization, Technology and Truthiness*, Routledge, London, 2009, pp. 40-43; M. C. Ehrlich, 'Not Ready for Primetime: Tabloid and Investigative TV Journalism', in M. Greenwald & J. Bernt (eds), *The Big Chill: Investigative Reporting in the Current Media Environment*, Iowa State University Press, Ames, 2000, pp. 103-4, 112-15.

tabloid programmes occupy common ground. Stephen Ehrlich identifies this as 'a certain body of literary devices and lore in telling their stories'. Although there are clear distinctions between the two, both styles commonly share 'stories of guilty villains and innocent victims; both feature dollops of irony; [and] both live and die on the strength of their exposés'.[11] This explains, to some extent, how and why Sydney's commercial current affairs programmes have evolved and why tabloid elements have co-existed alongside the conventions of investigative television current affairs.

A Genre Finds its Feet: The 1950s and 1960s

Talks programmes and commentaries

The alleged appetite for television news in the 1950s was accompanied by a greater yearning for extended comment on the daily headlines.[12] The fixed programming schedule of 15-minute news segments – a carry-over from radio – limited the degree of depth news programmes could provide. But as the ABCB dictated that television news segments exclude commentary of any kind, further news analysis would have to be reserved for separate 'public affairs' programmes.[13] Before 1961, however, the ABCB had no working definition for such a format. Nevertheless, the demand for extended news broadcasts and in-depth analysis – and the evidence of successful overseas news programmes – led to the creation of magazine-style current affairs programmes, which were anchored in the format of the studio discussion. The simple production format for this style of show was inexpensive and one which an amateur production crew could handle.[14]

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[11] Ehrlich, 'Not Ready for Primetime', in Greenwald & Bernt (eds), *The Big Chill*, pp. 104, 106-7.
[12] 'Heavy demand for telecam system', *B & T*, 29 August 1963, p. 52.
[13] ABCB, *Television Programme Standards*, 1970, p. 18.
[14] Griffen-Foley, *Party Games*, p. 68; R. Haakenson, 'Adapting debate to television', *Western Speech,* Vol. 17, No. 3, 1953, pp. 165-167.

The first current affairs programme that attempted to tackle the daily headlines was ATN-7's *At Seven on 7,* debuting on Monday, 3 December 1956. Howard Craven, whose radio programme, *Rumpus Room*, had proved hugely popular with 1950s teenagers, hosted the programme.[15] Following the nightly news bulletin, ATN-7 included the commentary section, *This I Believe*, with Eric Baume.[16] In 1957, Baume also hosted ATN-7's Sunday evening magazine programme, *State Your Case*, which invited leading personalities in the news to offer their opinions.[17] In 1959, ATN-7 provided *A Woman's View*, a five-minute news commentary programme for women at 11:55 a.m. weekdays, with Carolyn Berntsen.[18] These programmes were commercial television's first regular weekday news commentaries. The ABC had not yet developed any regular news commentary, although it featured occasional interviews on matters of national importance.[19] However the ABC's hesitancy in embracing the new medium for news proved unwarranted, for by 1961 ABC news attracted more than twice the audience proportion attracted to other ABC programmes.[20]

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[15] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 213.
[16] *TV Times,* 26 June -17 September 1958. See also Lawson, V., 'Baume, Frederick Ehrenfried (Eric) (1900–1967)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/baume-frederick-ehrenfried-eric-9456/text16631, accessed 5 November 2012.
[17] *Television Preview*, Vol. 1, July-6 September 1957, p. 18.
[18] See *TV Week* and *TV Times* January-December 1959.
[19] NLA: Adrian Jose Papers, MS7702, folder MS7702/5/22, Box 9, 'Television Programmes – A Review of Current Schedules', ABCB Agendum No. 1957/36, February 1957, p. 2.
[20] Inglis, *This is the ABC*, pp. 211-212.

Meet the Press

One of the earliest 'current affairs' programmes in Sydney was TCN-9' s *Meet the Press* (*MTP*). Along with *At Seven on 7* and the ABC's *Face the People*, *MTP* was introduced as a panel discussion of the week's news stories, and important political, economic and social issues facing the nation. *MTP* took its inspiration from the successful American programme, *Meet the Press*, first broadcast on NBC in 1947.[21] In February 1957, Sydney's *MTP* debuted on Sunday at 7 p.m., moving to a later timeslot in 1958. David McNicoll, editor-in-chief of Frank Packer's Consolidated Press group, was host.[22] Newspaper journalists, 'King' Watson, Alan Reid and Allan Barnes, appeared on the programme as panellists.[23]

In 1957, *MTP* was voted one of Sydney's 'most popular TV programmes', subsequently winning an Australian 'TV Oscar' award in 1958 for being 'the most timely and dynamic of the local talks features [sic] in both Sydney and Melbourne'.[24] *MTP* described itself as 'a press conference of the air, when a panel of journalists quiz a personality who plays a vital role in national and international affairs'.[25] Guests ranged from visiting entertainers and celebrities to doctors, professors and politicians. The programme's success depended in good part on the suitability of the guests being interviewed, which led *MTP*'s critics to question whether precautions were taken to select guests that would make 'good television',[26] rather than fulfil its provision to inform.[27]

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[21] R. Ball & NBC News, *Meet the Press: Fifty Years of History in the Making*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1998.
[22] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 61. *MTP* was also broadcast on Melbourne's HSV-7, owned by the Herald and Weekly Times. In the late 1950s it was hosted by journalist Reg Leonard, who later became the host of BTQ7's *Meet the Press* in Brisbane.
[23] D. McNicoll, *Luck's A Fortune: An Autobiography*, Wildcat Press, Sydney, p.137.
[24] K. Winser, 'TV Oscar Awards', *Australian TV Book and Tune-Up Manual*, No. 2, A Motor Manual Publication, Melbourne, 1959-1960, p. 13.
[25] 'Meet the Press sponsored by electrical co.', *RTN: Radio Television News*, 31 May 1957, p. 2.
[26] *B & T* does not mention who these 'critics' were; however television critics would have likely made up a fair proportion of them. See also 'Do you like a grill, under or well done?', *TV News*, 2 August 1958, p. 14.
[27] 'Meet the Press met with Success', *B & T*, 14 September 1961, p. 33.

According to McNicoll, Consolidated Press believed the programme was providing 'a much needed public service in enabling the public to see and hear its famous guests'.[28] This dual focus on celebrity and information suggests that TCN-9 and Consolidated Press interpreted the notion of the 'public interest' largely in free-market model terms. This construction, according to Keith Windschuttle, is understood in two ways: what the public is interested in and what is in the public's interest.[29] It highlights how the distinction between the current affairs interview and the talk-show interview has been blurred for decades. Turner suggests the celebrity interview may have been the first place where such blurring occurred; *MTP* certainly provides examples of this. Such interviews have now largely become a 'staple component' of both the current affairs and talk-show formats.[30]

The novelty that enabled audiences to 'see and hear' for themselves led to the idea in the 1950s that interviews conducted on television were more reliable and authoritative than in any other news medium. The advantage of 'seeing' events – whether sporting or newsworthy items – meant the audience could hold journalists, reporters and commentators to account when their reports did not match the images presented on screen. This proved to be particularly important when it came to politics. Politicians could no longer claim they had been 'misquoted' by newspapers; once in front of the camera, their words *and* body language were subject to public scrutiny.[31]

Without the permission of the General Manager, *Face the People* and other ABC programme equivalents were banned from approaching politicians because it was felt that politicians should appear for questioning primarily during election campaigns, and only under strict

[28] Ibid.
[29] Windschuttle, *The Media*, p. 262.
[30] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, p. 71.
[31] As programmers became more adept with technology, they could edit interviews so that quotes could be shown 'out of context'. See 'TV "Eyes"' provide accurate news', *TV Week*, 23-29 May 1959, pp. 12-13.

guidelines for such occasions. Until the Commissioners believed equal time and balance could be guaranteed for interviews with both political parties, they wished to avoid potential controversy. Unlike *Face the People*, however, *MTP,* interviewed several members from the Menzies government and the opposition.[32]

In several instances, the selection of guests and topics on *MTP* suggests there was a concentrated effort to *make* news and advance the Packers' political positions.[33] In 1957, during the NSW State Labor Party's annual conference, the *Telegraph* and *MTP* presented damaging rumours about malpractice in the Labor-dominated Sydney City Council.[34] In 1971, a special edition of *MTP* was staged to undermine John Gorton's leadership as Prime Minister and champion Billy McMahon as his replacement. Frank Packer's elder son, Clyde, who was then joint managing director of GTV-9 and TCN-9 as well as a Liberal politician in NSW, was responsible for engineering the television event, which, he remarked, made for 'riveting television.'[35] The Packers also produced a story for the next day's edition of their paper, the *Daily Telegraph*.[36]

The 'coordinated coverage' between the Packers' television and newspaper wings meant *MTP* was credited with several scoops, further boosting the show's profile.[37] Such incidents indicate the programme was, at times, marked by the self-interest of its panellists and TCN-9 management. Indeed, McNicoll conceded that for him and his fellow panellists, appearing on

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[32] Inglis, *This is the ABC,* p. 213.
[33] The Packers supported the Liberal and Country parties after the 1946 election. Packer's papers increasingly turned to the right during the Cold War. See B. Griffen-Foley, 'Packer, Sir Douglas Frank (1906–1974)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/packer-sir-douglas-frank-11326/text20221, accessed 23 June 2011.
[34] R. Fitzgerald & S. Holt, *Alan 'The Red Fox' Reid: Pressman Par Excellence*, New South, Sydney, 2010, pp. 119-20.
[35] Griffen-Foley, *Party Games,* p. 165.
[36] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 61.
[37] Fitzgerald & Holt, *Alan 'The Red Fox' Reid*, pp. 119-20; Griffen-Foley, *Party Games*, p. 68.

the programme 'was an ego trip'. [38] The pursuit of profits and the promulgation of an anti-Labor message, marched hand in hand.[39]

MTP certainly did not represent the harder-hitting, investigative style of current affairs journalism that would emerge in the mid-1960s. Instead, as Moran argues, *MTP* generally exemplified a far more 'sedate' style of current affairs.[40] In Robert Raymond's opinion, during this early period TCN-9 and ATN-7 failed to do the 'powerful journalism that Ed Murrow was doing for the top-rating US commercial network, CBS'.[41] Journalist, author and scholar, George Baker, host of ATN-7's Sunday evening talks show, *Comment*, confessed he did not intend to 'grill' his interview subjects; if he did expose poor behaviour, he'd run out of guests.[42] In Moran's view, the discussion on *MTP* was 'usually polite and dignified, the questions were never probing or uncomfortable, and the general atmosphere was usually one of exclusivity and smugness'.[43]

This perception of *MTP* as a sedate public affairs programme may be a result of a retrospective comparison with the ABC's flagship *This Day Tonight* (*TDT*), launched in 1968. Turner explains how *TDT,* unlike *MTP*, brought an 'irreverent approach to politics in general', questioning the Establishment and placing politicians under considerable scrutiny,

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[38] McNicoll, *Luck's a Fortune*, p.137.
[39] Fitzgerald & Holt, *Alan 'The Red Fox' Reid,* p. 119.
[40] Moran, *Moran's Guide to Australian TV Series*, p. 13.
[41] Raymond, *Out of the Box*, p. 4.
[42] Baker was more inclined to act as a foil in order to draw out a guest's 'personality and ideas'. See 'George Baker moves into TV spotlight', *TV News*, 12 July 1958, p. 7.
[43] Moran & Pinne, *Moran's Guide to Australian Television Series*, p. 13. However, *MTP* panellists did not always adhere to this dignified approach. *MTP* panellists were not always polite and self-effacing, but could be confrontational and partisan in their questioning of politicians. Moreover, the legendary Reg Leonard, when moderator of Melbourne's HSV-7's *MTP,* was controversial for his redbaiting of Communists and for 'grilling' of politicians. See NAA Canberra: M2568 Harold Holt papers, Folder 21, Richardson committee Report 1959, Meet the Press, Answered letters, Part V, Reg Leonard, 'Letters to Holt: Meet the Press interview in Brisbane', 21 April 1959. See also D. Dunstan, 'Howard, Frederick James (Fred) (1904–1984)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/howard-frederick-james-fred-12658/text22811, accessed 7 December 2010.

often in a satirical manner.[44] *MTP* and its commercial counterparts were a product of their time, at the whim of their managements and bound by the technology that later freed journalists to travel the world and bring hitherto ignored issues into the lounge rooms of average Australians. In Stone's view, newscaf on commercial television before the 1970s was, for the most part, 'an anaemic imitation of the full-blooded coverage we see today: starved of resources and shy of controversy'.[45] Broadcast intermittently throughout the 1950s through to the early 1970s,[46] it was only later, when revived by Network Ten, that *MTP* adopted a more probing and agenda-setting profile.[47]

Documentaries and current affairs: overlapping genres

In 1961 the ABCB officially acknowledged 'current' or 'public' affairs as a distinctive programming genre. Its annual report described the genre as 'Australian activities; political matter; religious matter; social and human relations and controversial matter'.[48] A rather vague categorisation, the description provided flexibility for stations to develop the genre across a broad range of topic areas. Stories were either directly related to the daily news or dealt with ongoing public concerns. A decade later, the ABCB clearly defined the genre's parameters:

> Programmes dealing with social and economic problems of modern society. Includes news commentaries which deal with the subject matter "in depth". Also historical and biographical programmes excluding dramatised presentation.[49]

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[44] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, p. 38.
[45] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 274.
[46] On 21 April 1963 *MTP* was replaced by the popular American adventure/western series, *Cheyenne*. *MTP* was at one time sponsored by Australian Gaslight Company, but in the latter stages of its consecutive six-year run it had no sponsor, which may have influenced the station's decision to rest it. It was programmed irregularly after 1963. 'Meet the Press off', *TV Times*, 1 May 1963, p. 3.
[47] P. Holmes, 'Buried treasure', *SMH*, 29 March 1993, p. 62.
[48] ABCB, *Thirteenth Annual Report*, 1961, p. 40.
[49] ABCB, *Twenty-third Annual Report*, 1971, p. 224.

By this stage, Australian documentary-making was on the rise with a burgeoning number of films produced by the Commonwealth Film Unit, ABC TV and commercial broadcasters.[50] These institutions provided a training ground for filmmakers and television journalists.[51] *Four Corners*, *Seven Days*, *Telescope*, *Encounter*, *Project*, *Chequerboard,* and *TDT* drew on formats derived from overseas innovations, many of which fused together production and stylistic elements of the documentary and current affairs genres.[52]

Kit Denton's review of Australian documentary-making in the mid-1960s suggests there was significant overlap with current affairs. Denton identified three modes of documentary broadcasts, categorising them into 'news, follow-ups and examinations'.[53] The wide spectrum of current affairs programming fell into the 'follow-ups' category, comprising shows which were either 'immediately topical' or at one remove from a hard news story.[54] The development of this genre paralleled changes in radio and television news coverage, also now embracing a more interpretative and in-depth approach.[55]

The ABC paved the way for this new form of programming, establishing a Film Unit in 1960 and pioneering Australia's first national public affairs programme, *Four Corners,* in 1961. Produced by Robert Raymond and hosted by Michael Charlton, the programme became a hit, attracting one-tenth of the population. Meanwhile, writes Ken Inglis, commercial television

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[50] P. Laughren, 'The 1960s down under: Television, documentary and the "new nationalism"', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, June 2010, p. 372.
[51] ibid. See also A. Moran, *Projecting Australia: Government Film Since 1945*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1991.
[52] D. Horne, *Time of Hope: Australia 1966-72*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1980, p. 91.
[53] The primary difference between 'follow ups' (second-level) and 'examinations' (third level) was that third level programming could delve considerably deeper into issues and was unconstrained by time. There was no need for examinations to be topical. Denton explains that third level documentary programming emphasised 'quality of output rather than any immediacy'. See K. Denton, 'Public affairs', in M. MacCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television,* Sun Books, Melbourne, 1968, p. 48. For a further discussion on the difference between documentary and current affairs, see P. Holland, 'Authority and Authenticity: Redefining Television Current Affairs', in M. Bromley (ed.), *No News is Bad News: Radio, Television and the Public*, Longman, Harlow, 2001, pp. 80-95.
[54] Denton, 'Public affairs', in MacCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television,* pp. 46-47.
[55] 'News on radio and TV', *B & T*, 21 July 1966, p. 1.

owners were 'down to the business of providing entertainment'.[56] They doubted the economic value of current affairs, particularly as programmes struggled to obtain much-needed advertising support to fund their expensive ventures.[57] However by 1962, Sydney television stations were turning to commentary and documentary-style programmes as audience-builders, with independent surveys offering proof that such programmes encouraged a 'regular audience'.[58] Robert Raymond's move to TCN-9 to produce a series of current affairs specials, *Project '63* and *Project '64*, gave commercial television current affairs reporting 'a new depth'.[59]

The audience was ripe for an interrogative approach to the news, allowing, in *B & T's* opinion, greater 'opportunity for every point of view to find expression'.[60] As Donald Horne explains, public affairs programmes were designed to appeal to the 'new educated market' that had developed as a result of the newly-formed educated middle class. A sense of 'responsibility' and concern for societal issues characterised the new culture,[61] which consisted largely of filmmakers, artists, young journalists, commentators and concerned citizens.[62] According to Horne, Australian society was on the threshold of renouncing the traditional values and domestic ideologies of the 1950s.[63] In stark contrast to the previous decade, therefore, documentary and current affairs programmes in the 1960s led the way for Australians to embrace a new, more progressive nationalism, which found its culmination in the election of the Whitlam Labor government in 1972.[64]

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[56] Inglis, *This is the ABC*, pp. 217, 222-25.
[57] Cunningham et al., *Contemporary Australian Television*, p. 47. See also FACTS, *Annual Report*, The Federation, Sydney, 1970-71, p. 22.
[58] 'Australia switches on the news', *B & T*, 22 February 1962, p. 8.
[59] Herd, *Networking*, p. 245.
[60] 'Controversy a healthy sign', *B & T*, 18 July 1968, p. 18.
[61] Horne, *Time of Hope*, pp. 90-91.
[62] Laughren, 'The 1960s down under', p. 373.
[63] Horne, *Time of Hope*, p. 5.
[64] Laughren, 'The 1960s down under', p. 373. See also Jacka & Johnson, 'Australia', in Smith & Paterson (eds), *Television*, p. 214.

Seven Days

The first weekly commercial current affairs programme of this boundary-pushing brand began in January 1963 with ATN-7's *Seven Days*. Adopting a topical documentary style, the programme was introduced by a studio host and was occasionally supplemented by studio discussion.[65] *Seven Days* projected itself as 'a weekly news programme reviewing major events both overseas and in Australia and [aimed] at seeking essential and controversial facts often hidden below the surface.[66] In reality, it was difficult to cover such a vast terrain of news with so few resources by way of budget, staff and equipment.[67] Consequently, reports were more likely to focus on Sydney.

The circumstances culminating in *Seven Days* began in 1962 when Rupert 'RAGS' Henderson, managing director of Fairfax, lured John Douglas Pringle back to Australia to become managing editor of *The Canberra Times*. Formerly the deputy editor of the London *Guardian* and *Observer* and editor of the *SMH,*[68] Pringle was asked to produce *Seven Days* in the months before his Canberra appointment in June 1963. An intellectual with no television experience, Pringle found producing the programme somewhat of a 'novelty'.[69]
Following Pringle's departure, Peter Westerway was appointed ATN-7 director of public affairs and producer of *Seven Days*. Fairfax and Henderson had sought out Westerway, a lecturer in Government and Public Administration at the University of Sydney and a writer and TV commentator,[70] for his ability to 'rock the boat' and to make programmes that would 'upset advertisers, parties and interest groups'. [71]

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[65] Success led to the programme's extension from 30 to 45 minutes in 1965. See 'Documentary to be Longer', *SMH*, 18 January 1965, p. 13.
[66] 'ATN to produce 2 series', *B & T*, 16 January 1964, p. 20.
[67] Denton, 'Public affairs', in MacCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television*, p. 59.
[68] J. Waterford, 'The changing role of a newspaper editor', *Australian Studies in Journalism*, Vol. 8, 1999, p. 15.
[69] J. D. Pringle, *Have Pen: Will Travel*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1973 pp. 158-160.
[70] 'ATN public affairs director', *B & T*, 18 June 1964, p. 24.
[71] Peter Westerway, Letter to author, 13 November 2009, p. 2.

Westerway remembers, 'Warwick [Fairfax] wanted something worthwhile on his network; Rupert wanted ratings if he could get them, but was prepared to pay for some prestige'. For the most part, Westerway was given editorial independence at *Seven Days*, although there was certainly a level of 'negotiating' that occurred with management. As he would find out during his time as producer: 'Although we were Amalgamated Television, I never had any doubt that we worked for Fairfax'.[72]

From 1964 to 1967,[73] Westerway was instrumental in steering the programme from success to success. The original *Seven Days* team consisted of Westerway (who also hosted the show from 1964 to 1965), host John Bailey, and reporters Richard Croll and Peter Martin. This small unit drew on contract reporters such as Anne Deveson and Kit Denton, and cameraman Keith Smith.[74] What the team lacked in numbers and technical support, it made up for in intellect and talent. Regarded as an 'enclave of ABC types' by Henderson, the tightly knit team was unafraid to produce stories that strayed into controversial territory and raised the social and political conscience of their audience.[75]

Seven Days also produced some stories that were lighter in nature and used the technique of the 'vox pop interview' – a *Four Corners* innovation that ushered in 'the politics of the everyday' and focused on issues in the public and domestic domain. At a time when phone-in radio was not yet legalised (this injunction was over-turned in 1967), the vox pop technique

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[72] ibid. Interestingly, Carolyn Berntsen said that 'At ATN, I can say pretty much what I like, fortunately', but admitted the only time ATN-7 management mildly 'frowned' at her was when she 'held up a copy of "The Sydney Morning Herald", thumped it, and said, "This editorial is bunk."' This suggests she was given considerable leverage as a commentator on ATN-7, but ATN-7's connections with the *SMH* did hold some sway. See R. Clark, 'A woman's place, *TV Times*, 13 May 1961, p. 13.
[73] In late 1967 Westerway left *Seven Days* to pursue political ambitions. John Moses replaced him as producer until mid-1968, when the programme was axed.
[74] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 153.
[75] Peter Westerway, letter to author, 13 November 2009, p. 2; 'Documentary to be Longer', *SMH*, 18 January 1965, p, 13.

proved especially significant. However it increasingly became sensationalised on commercial television in the 1980s.[76]

In its early days, *Seven Days* took risks with several of its stories. Deveson's first *Seven Days* documentary on the Australian funeral industry was highly praised and sparked a government inquiry into the business.[77] Another controversial story was Deveson's, 'Love is Love', an in-depth report on female homosexuality. *TV Times* explained that the documentary, rather than opting for the sensational, 'performed a public service' and gave the audience 'a vocabulary' to discuss homosexuality.[78] Previously, the ABCB had stepped in 'to protect public innocence' when *Seven Days* had expressed a desire to screen two imported British films on homosexuality. In stark contrast, the Board imposed very little official interference on the local production, 'Love is Love', suggesting it may have been more kindly disposed to a local production.[79]

Anne Deveson was one of the rising female 'stars' to emerge from commercial television current affairs. Considered part of the broadcasting intelligentsia, Deveson made her mark as a razor-sharp interviewer who rivalled some of the best and well-known male interviewers on commercial television.[80] Women led some of the most probing and controversial documentary and public affairs investigations on Australian television, playing an important role in representing a different perspective on controversial questions.[81] Bill Peach records how Tanya Halesworth's stories for TEN-10's *Telescope* 'made our conservative management pop the buttons off their suits.' Topics such as child abuse, homosexuality, mental illness,

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[76] Cunningham et al., *Contemporary Australian Television*, p. 49; B. Griffen-Foley, 'Voices of the People: Audience participation in Australian radio', *MIA*, No. 137, 2010, p. 13.
[77] 'Rugged men listen when this TV girl starts talking', *Daily Telegraph* (London), [unknown date] October 1966.
[78] F.C. Kennedy, 'Heartening break for documentaries', *TV Times*, 23 February 1966, p. 21.
[79] S. Short, 'Hard-look programmes to stimulate viewers', *Sunday Telegraph*, 20 February 1966, p. 87.
[80] 'Where have all the girls gone?', *Sun Herald*, 27 October 1967.
[81] 'The provocative approach', *B & T*, 30 June 1966, p. 7.

prostitution and menopause could have been treated sensationally. Yet Peach suggests it was Halesworth's 'intelligent approach and sympathetic understanding' that promoted a greater tolerance and understanding of social issues such as these.[82]

These instances provide early examples of what Catharine Lumby and others have identified as the democratisation of the public sphere. Issues traditionally consigned to the private sphere were made accessible and increasingly politicised in the public arena.[83] In true investigative tradition, the style in which such stories were presented was intended to evoke outrage, spurring the audience towards action rather than indifference. However, the controversial nature of stories broadcast on these programmes indicates the fine balancing act reporters had to maintain to avoid blurring the lines between investigative and tabloid journalism.

Women, despite their scarcity, were largely responsible for bringing such private issues into the public sphere. The prevailing attitude to women in newscaf at the time was reflected by journalist Mike Willesee's defence of *A Current Affair's* (*ACA*) male-only reporting team: 'I would hire a woman if I could find one good enough. They don't come up well in this kind of program.'[84] Eventually reporters Kate Baillieu and Susan Peacock joined *ACA* in the 1970s.[85] Deveson, Halesworth, Berntsen,[86] Suzanne Baker, and Caroline Jones were some of the small

[82] Peach, *This Day Tonight*, p. 21.
[83] Lumby, *Gotcha*, pp. 2, 8; J. Langer, *Tabloid Television: Popular Journalism and the 'Other News'*, Routledge, London, 1998; G. Turner, *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn*, Sage Publications, London, 2009.
[84] Place & Roberts (eds), *50 Years of Television in Australia*, p. 101 do not provide the date for this quote; Inglis, *This is the ABC*, p. 227.
[85] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 166.
[86] By 1961 Carolyn Berntsen was providing news commentaries for women *and* men, alongside other male commentators. See F.C. Kennedy, 'At last – a woman emerges from the Stone Age', *TV Times*, 6 May 1961, p. 19; R. Clark, 'A woman's place is…', *TV Times*, 13 May 1961, p. 13.

number of women making their mark in the genre, paving the way for future female journalists.[87]

Telescope

TEN-10's *Telescope* was the first *nightly* current affairs programme on Australian television.[88] Initially produced and compered by Peach, it emulated a popular BBC programme, *Tonight*. Formatted as an early evening magazine programme, *Telescope* earned 'professional admiration' on its launch in 1965.[89] Unlike *Seven Days* and *Four Corners, Telescope* typified the 'immediately topical'[90] form of current affairs programming both in relation to production pace and content variety. *Telescope's* small budget and crew, and the pressures of a nightly Monday to Thursday schedule, limited the programme to parochial Sydney stories that were anchored by the studio host. *Telescope* did on many occasions seek to fulfil its aim to 'stimulate' and 'infuriate' its audience, but appeasing TEN-10 management hamstrung the programme's ability to do so. On the opening night, Reg Fox, general manager of TEN-10, instructed Peach that the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, was not to be annoyed.[91]

Telescope's more 'commercial' approach to the genre was a forerunner of the standard current affairs formula adopted in the 1970s. Even before *ACA* emerged with its high-rating stories, *Telescope,* in Peach's words, 'ran plenty of sexy, sensational and voyeuristic stories which had no great redeeming social merit, but did us no harm in the ratings'.[92] Eventually the

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[87] 'Where have all the girls gone?', *Sun Herald*, 27 October 1967.
[88] Although the ABC was prominent in the genre of current affairs and set the pace with *Four Corners*, it could not claim pioneer-status for the nightly current affair programme.
[89] Inglis, *This is the ABC*, p. 266; Peach, *This Day Tonight*, p. 19.
[90] Denton, 'Public affairs', in MacCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television*, pp. 46-47.
[91] Peach, *This Day Tonight*, pp. 19, 23, 25.
[92] Ibid., p. 145. Peach became fed up with the limitations of *Telescope*'s tiny crew and budget. In order to survive, *Telescope* would have to move to a late night spot twice a week. Peach resigned in 1966 and moved to the ABC to host *This Day Tonight* (*TDT*). See pp. 23-29.

budget could not sustain Mondays to Thursday production, and the programme was cut back to two evenings a week. By 1966 Peach had left, and it was not long before *Telescope* was axed.[93]

Conscious of its commercial competitors, the ABC in 1966 decided to launch a 'daily version' of *Four Corners* five-nights-a-week. It was this new programming format for the ABC, Inglis writes, that was believed to be 'the way to pursue ratings most effectively' by also modelling *TDT* on the BBC's version of *Tonight*.[94] *TDT* is credited with providing the main training ground for a fresh generation of television journalists, and for setting the benchmark for Australian television current affairs.[95] However it would be remiss to underestimate the value of earlier commercial experiments. Without their contribution, Australian viewers may not have been ready for the edgier, iconoclastic style of *TDT* in the years that followed.

Popularising current affairs: The 1970s and 1980s

ACA and *60 Minutes*

By the early 1970s, *TDT* was a 'regular household habit'.[96] Increasingly, however, a nervous and impatient ABC management was keen to avoid controversy, and it pressured some of its best reporters to leave.[97] *TDT* was operating under heavy scrutiny from critics for its biting

[93] Inglis, *This is the ABC*, p. 266.
[94] Ibid.; L. Wright, 'Four Corners: It had the key to the door and now it's 21', *SMH*, 16 August 1982, p. 22.
[95] Jacka & Johnson, 'Australia', in Smith & Paterson (eds), *Television*, p. 212. *TDT* set the 'look' for the current affairs studio and reduced the number of items covered in a programme. Politics was established as the main subject for discussion, and reporters were self-promoting and became stars in their own right. See G. Turner, '"Popularising Politics": *This Day Tonight* and Australian Current Affairs Television', *MIA*, No. 106, February 2003, p. 139.
[96] Peach, *This Day Tonight*, p. 142.
[97] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, p. 40.

satire, and supposed bias against the Liberal government.[98] In addition to these pressures, *TDT* faced increasing competition from a commercial rival, TCN-9's *ACA*.[99]

Commercial executives at TCN-9 were wary of launching another current affairs programme after TCN-9's short-lived 1969 programme, *Today.* Sir Frank Packer envisioned TCN-9's version of NBC's *Today* show to be more like a quality 'television newspaper' along the lines of *The Australian.*[100] *Today* was aimed at the 'fringe, hard-to-get audience'[101] who were, according to Robert Raymond, the decision-makers waiting to be catered for – 'politicians, businessmen, scientists, academics…. an intelligent audience…'.[102] But viewers were not quite ready for such a programme, and it was soon axed. In the meantime, former *TDT* reporter Mike Willesee had established his own company, Transmedia.[103] Well known for his scathing assessments of the Liberal government and his Labor pedigree (his father was a Labor senator), Willesee seemed an unlikely candidate to head a current affairs show under the watchful eye of Sir Frank.[104] However, Willesee's reputation as a formidable political interviewer and his friendship with Clyde Packer appear to have sealed his appointment as host of *ACA.*[105]

The style of *ACA* and *TDT* shared some similarities: political interviews, investigative foot-in-the-door tactics and cheeky satirical pieces.[106] Yet the typical 'commercial approach' employed by *ACA* distinguished itself from its ABC counterpart with a primary focus on

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[98] Inglis, *This is the ABC*, pp. 272-73.
[99] Peach, *This Day Tonight*, pp. 145-46.
[100] Raymond, *Out of the Box*, p. 119; Littlemore, *The Media and Me*, p. 61.
[101] 'Daytime TV, 7am-9am', *B & T*, 27 February 1969, p. 27.
[102] Raymond, *Out of the Box*, pp. 119-20.
[103] Herd, *Networking*, p. 245.
[104] Peach, *This Day Tonight*, p. 127.
[105] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 296; Barry, *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer Uncut*, p. 144. It was Clyde Packer who suggested Transmedia package *ACA* on a full-time basis and sell it to TCN-9. TCN-9 paid Transmedia $500,000 ($4.5 million) a year for the programme. See Herd, *Networking*, p. 245.
[106] *TV Week*, 4 January 1975, p. 53; 'A Current Affair Goes A'Jousting!', *TV Week*, 5 July 1975, p. 41.

'softer "human interest" stories' rather than politics.[107] Willesee also introduced a consumer element to the current affairs mix, pursuing shady used-car dealers and tradesmen and get-rich quick operators.[108] The popularity of these stories suggests they tapped into Australians' sense of egalitarian justice. At a time when the church and major institutions were increasingly lacking the power and authority to comment on society, as we shall see in Chapter 4, current affairs programmes and the media more generally took on a greater watchdog role.[109]

In Hall's opinion, Willesee was able to persuade commercial television to return to current affairs by designing programmes for audiences who disliked current affairs.[110] Willesee recruited Paul Hogan as his comic sidekick, providing an entertaining routine at the end of the programme. This proved popular with audiences and launched Hogan's career.[111] Growing competition with entertainment programmes explains, to some degree, the frequent intrusion of comedy and drama elements into *ACA*'s story mix during this time.[112] Denton suggests that it was ATN-7's revue programme, *The Mavis Bramston Show* (1964-68), which paved the way for 'a widened scope of comment' in current affairs programming. *Mavis* introduced 'cursing, colloquialism and candour' as acceptable, amusing entertainment. Eventually this seeped into some newscaf programmes.[113] Given the style of *TDT*, in the vanguard of the genre, had drawn more on the Phillip Street Revue theatre than on news reporting conventions, it is not surprising that other newscaf programmes emulated this popular fusion of satire and information.[114]

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[107] Peach, *This Day Tonight*, pp. 144-145; Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 296-297; Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 166.
[108] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 166.
[109] D. Millikan, *The Sunburnt Soul: Christianity in Search of an Australian Identity,* Anzea, Homebush West, NSW, 1981, p. 64.
[110] Hall, *Supertoy*, p. 98.
[111] Peach, *This Day Tonight*, p. 145.
[112] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 26.
[113] Denton, 'Public Affairs', in MacCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television*, p. 47.
[114] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, p. 35.

Willesee is largely credited with setting the popularised formula for commercial television current affairs.[115] However his control as executive producer of *ACA*'s format and direction was often undermined by Frank Packer's desire to exert control over news stories for his own interests. During the 1972 election campaign, oil refinery workers staged an eight-week strike against the oil companies, greatly affecting the Australian economy. The McMahon Coalition government backed the oil companies against the unions. Sir Frank, known for his dislike of trade unions, overrode Clyde to veto *ACA*'s story on Bob Hawke, then President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. This incident at *ACA* was the trigger for Clyde's dramatic resignation from TCN-9 and estrangement from his father.[116] Following additional confrontations with Sir Frank, Willesee's contract was cancelled with TCN-9 and *ACA* in 1973, forcing him to leave.[117]

When moving to Seven, Willesee emphatically told *TV Week* that *The Willesee Show*[118] would not be a current affairs programme, nor would it provide a follow-up or round-up of the week's news. Instead, it would be a studio-based interview programme with some of the 'best and most interesting subjects' and include sketches and musical numbers only where relevant to the subject being interviewed. The programme's simple aim was 'to get people to reveal a little more about themselves' and perhaps marks the point at which Willesee began to withdraw from the hard-nosed political interview and embraced the cosy celebrity interview.[119]

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[115] S. Littlemore, *The Media and Me*, ABC Books, Sydney, 1996, p. 182.
[116] Barry, *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer Uncut*, p. 142.
[117] Ibid., pp. 144-45.
[118] In 1976 the show was renamed *Willessee at Seven*.
[119] 'It's a new TV life for Willesee!', *TV Week*, 19 July 1975, p. 8; Turner, *Ending the Affair,* p. 30.

During the 1980s, commercial current affairs programmes increasingly chose to broaden their audience appeal by bridging the gap even further between the news and entertainment-oriented genres. In September 1980 the *SMH* reported somewhat sharply that:

> The ratings show we can be a fickle lot. Mike Willesee enjoyed a long run as master of the 7.00pm slot. Along came a ten-year old game show with an old compere and new set, titled *Sale of the Century,* [on TCN-9] and Willesee lost his crown and about a third of his audience.[120]

Hall observes that by the 1980s, Willesee was employing 'an uneasy mix' of consumer advocacy stories on behalf of the ordinary citizen, vox pop, show business interviews, along with the occasional appearance of a politician to keep the programme vaguely in touch with the news agenda. Once *Sale of the Century* threatened *Willesee at Seven*, Willesee and his producer, Phil Davis, introduced more comedy into their format, inspired by the British satire show, *Not the Nine O'Clock News*. In sketches, Willesee played the straight man and Davis the comic.[121] Considerable emphasis was given to celebrity interviews and personality items, which in 1980 comprised 58.9% of the programme's content.[122]

Meanwhile, following Willesee's departure, by the mid-1970s TCN-9's *ACA* was beginning to stagnate. The programme saw a succession of hosts – Sue Smith, Kevin Sanders and Michael Schildberger.[123] According to Gordon French, TCN-9's programming manager, Kerry Packer, was unwilling to axe Nine's flagship, *ACA*. For Kerry Packer, *ACA* was now the last vestige of 'political muscle' his network held because in 1972 Sir Frank had been persuaded by his sons to sell the unprofitable *Telegraphs* to Rupert Murdoch's News Limited.[124] Until another programme could be found to replace it, *ACA* was there to stay.[125]

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[120] Quoted in Bell et al., *Programmed Politics*, p. 48.
[121] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, pp. 12, 20.
[122] Bell et al., *Programmed Politics*, p. 56.
[123] Little, *Inside 60 Minutes,* p. 5.
[124] Griffen-Foley, *The House of Packer*, p. 293.
[125] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 162.

However in April 1978, with *ACA* being comprehensively beaten in the ratings by ATN-7's *Willesee at Seven* and Graham Kennedy's *Blankety Blanks* on TEN-10, it was finally axed.[126] In 1978, CBS' *60 Minutes* was proving enormously successful in the US and caught the eye of Kerry Packer, who was keen to fill the hole left by the demise of *ACA*.[127] Plans were hatched to adapt *60 Minutes* to an Australian market. The executive producer, Gerald Stone, set out to recruit Australia's best journalists including George Negus, Iain Leslie, and Ray Martin. Stone personally handpicked all 31 of the cameramen, reporters, and producers appointed to the show.[128]

60 Minutes was launched on Sunday 11 February 1979 at 7.30 p.m.[129] Few Australian current affairs programmes have been as heavily promoted beforehand. Yet despite the hype that preceded it, the first edition attracted few viewers and left Nine in a panic.[130] Both Packer and the staff believed Stone had made a 'disastrous choice' with the line-up of stories, which ranged from cigarette smuggling across state borders to a New Age therapy called 'primal screaming'.[131]

To the press, the new programme was 'yet another attempt to jazz up current affairs'.[132] *TV Week* reported the first programme was received with 'caution and curiosity' by the public, if not 'pessimism'. The morning after its debut, the afternoon *Daily Mirror* was scathing in its assessment:

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[126] ABT, *Annual Report 1978-79*, A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1980, p. 70; Stone, *Compulsive Viewing,* p. 163.
[127] *60 Minutes* first aired in the US in 1968. See Barry, *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer Uncut,* p. 242.
[128] 'The 60 Minutes Team has really put the show on the map', *TV Week*, 29 September 1979, p. 8.
[129] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 166; ABT, *Annual Report 1978-79*, pp. 70-71.
[130] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 21.
[131] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 182.
[132] 'The 60 Minutes Team has really put the show on the map', *TV Week*, 29 September 1979, p.8.

> Whatever sort of programme it is, it is not a current affairs programme…None of it seemed to live up to the "hardest hitting pubic affairs show ever seen on television" tag which its publicity promised…60 Minutes was bland and trivial…[133]

But within a few weeks, *60 Minutes* was receiving wide acclaim.[134] Its series of loosely-related stories generally included an expose of something controversial, a political piece and a portrait of a celebrity.[135] Reporting was direct, simple and dramatic, with a style based on the basic tenets of the CBS version: employing polished filmmaking and a focus on personal profiles. Stone issued a style book to ensure the formula would not be varied by the staff.[136] A focus on the *person* and not on the *event* was essential. According to Ray Martin, Gerald Stone used to tell his reporters, 'Let Four Corners tell the tedious story of the Great Flood – we'll do a riveting profile of Noah'.[137] In the formative stages of the programme, reporters were required to unlearn some of the basic conventions of investigative reporting. Indeed, 30% of the stories were deemed unusable because they did not meet Stone's formula. Little recalls, 'Where most editors would demand more facts, Stone wanted less so as not to overtax viewers.'[138] This formula suggests it was more rooted in the tabloid tradition which, as Ehrlich explains, is typically more interested in 'exposing personal flaws than systemic flaws'.[139] This focus on the personal inevitably left providing context and analysis to other current affairs programmes.[140]

A study of commercial television coverage of the 1980 election observed how *60 Minutes'* deployed its formula in its report on Labor's Bill Hayden and the Liberal Party's Malcolm Fraser. The authors commented, '*60 Minutes* focused on the leaders [Bill Hayden and

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[133] Little, *Inside 60 Minutes,* p.14.
[134] 'The 60 Minutes Team has really put the show on the map', *TV Week*, 29 September 1979, p. 8.
[135] Bell et al., *Programmed Politics*, p. 75.
[136] Little, *Inside 60 Minutes*, p.10.
[137] R. Martin, *Ray: Stories of My Life*, Random House Australia, North Sydney, 2009, pp. 166-67.
[138] Little, *Inside 60 Minutes*, pp. 10-11.
[139] Ehrlich, 'Not Ready for Primetime', in Greenwald & Bernt (eds), *The Big Chill*, p. 114.
[140] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, p. 97.

Malcolm Fraser], not the parties; on the leader's personalities, not their philosophies; on their personal power, not the institutional processes of managing power'.[141] *60 Minutes'* was more concerned with uncovering what made political leaders 'tick', than with policy. In order to attract a large audience and justify charging high advertising rates, the programme sought to inform in as entertaining a way as possible. The report led Bell et al. to comment:

> The bulk of *60 Minutes'* coverage appears to be generated neither by social/political significance, nor even by currently topical controversy, but rather by a cynical marketing strategy which centres on a judgement of what will pass as "current affairs" and still be a commercial product.[142]

The programme certainly fulfilled Packer's brief to Stone, which was to achieve 'the highest possible ratings in keeping with the highest possible production standards.'[143] In this sense, it obtained a measurable standard of quality in terms of ratings and production values, but not in the traditional middle-class idea of quality 'serious' news.

What set *60 Minutes* apart from other commercial newscaf programmes at the beginning was its enormous budget, a third of which was met by its main advertiser, the mining behemoth BHP. In 1982 the programme's annual budget amounted to $2,500,000, which equated to $1000 per minute of programme.[144] At a time when other commercial programmes rarely sent their crews overseas, the *60 Minutes*' team had the capacity to travel overseas every week.[145] *60 Minutes'* commitment to feature film production values was crucial to its success and revolutionised the style of current affairs production processes in Australia.[146] The

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[141] Bell et al., *Programmed Politics*, p. 75.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 169.
[144] Bell et al., *Programmed Politics*, p. 73.
[145] Barry, *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer Uncut*, p. 242.
[146] 'About 60 Minutes', http://sixtyminutes.ninemsn.com.au/about60minutes/264119/about-60-minutes, accessed 5 October 2010.

programme became a brand, with some of its reporters – in particular George Negus, Ray Martin and Jana Wendt – becoming stars in their own right.[147]

In June 1980, the ABT reported that *60 Minutes* was the most popular regular television programme in Sydney and Melbourne.[148] The focus on the personal, celebrity and infotainment, foreshadowed an increasing blurring of the boundaries between current affairs' and entertainment and tabloid conventions. By the 1990s, the focus on personality rather than policy was indicative of most commercial current affairs programmes.[149]

Searching for quality: *Sunday* and *Page One/Public Eye*

60 Minutes achieved a strong following from audiences and advertisers alike, but it fell short of the serious, investigative current affairs genre that Packer had initially envisaged – a commercial equivalent to *Four Corners* and BBC's *Panorama*.[150] Always keen to imitate successful overseas programmes, Packer licensed *Sunday* from America's CBS to fill the void in serious current affairs on the Nine Network.[151] Presented by Jim Waley and launched on 15 November 1981, *Sunday* was a broadly based two-hour magazine-style current affairs, arts and politics programme broadcast on Sundays from 9 to 11 a.m. With no proven source of revenue in the timeslot, the decision was considered a gamble. The move was also contentious since it was the first time a station had removed religious programming from the Sunday morning schedule, but such risks defined TCN-9's 'gutsy' approach to newscaf programming during this period.[152] After all, as we saw in Chapter 2, TCN-9's enormous investment in

[147] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 210.
[148] ABT, *Annual Report 1979-80*, A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1981, p. 59.
[149] M. Hirst, T. White, D. Chaplin & J. Wilson, 'When too much entertainment is barely enough: Current affairs television in the 1990s', *Australian Journalism Review*, Vol. 17, No.1, 1995, p. 84.
[150] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 171.
[151] Barry, *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer Uncut*, p. 242.
[152] A. Meade, 'Aunty's Sunday crunch', *The Australian*, 14 June 2001; Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 248-49.

cultivating the image of a reliable and credible news service drove programmers to push the boundaries of convention. Sunday was no longer a day of rest, but a day of news. *Sunday*'s primary brief was not just to follow, but to *set* the main news agenda. It was to offer informed commentary that the A/B demographic (viewers with the highest disposable income) associated with quality broadsheet journalism.[153] *Sunday* did this on many occasions, interviewing key opinion leaders and dishing up hard-hitting investigations.[154] On 17 November 1981, Packer's own news magazine, *The Bulletin*, unsurprisingly described *Sunday* as 'the first attempt by television in this country to produce an electronic equivalent of a quality Sunday newspaper for a national audience'.[155]

This was not, however, television's first attempt to produce a quality 'Sunday newspaper'. In many ways, *Sunday* was the fulfilment of TCN-9's initial efforts to cater for a breakfast newscaf audience with the fleeting *Today* in 1969.[156] By 1981 it appeared as though viewers were ready for such a programme. The economic boom of the 1980s and the rise of business and economic journalism had primed audience appetites for the same kind of fare on television. Moreover as the *SMH* pointed out, it was able to 'attract the viewers advertisers love – people with high disposable incomes…'.[157] The success of TCN-9's *Sunday* sparked a series of business shows on commercial television, including TCN-9's *Business Sunday* and TEN-10's *Business Week* in 1986 and ATN-7's *TVAM* in 1988.[158] In 1984, SBS launched its international current affairs programme, *Dateline,* on Fridays at 8 p.m., which also covered

[153] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 298, 300.
[154] M. Bodey, 'Never on a Sunday: TV programme calls it quits', *The Australian*, 2 August 2008, p. 3; M. Grattan, 'Sharing the Same Kennel: The Press in Parliament House', in J. Disney & J. R. Nethercote (eds), *The House on Capital Hill: Parliament, Politics and Power in the National Capital*, The Federation Press, Sydney, 1996, p. 224.
[155] G. Bell, 'Quality for the Sunday morning slot, *The Bulletin*, 17 November 1981, p. 56.
[156] Although *Today* was broadcast Monday to Friday.
[157] J. Freeman, 'The battle for the big spenders', *SMH, The Guide,* 11 August 1987, pp. 4-5.
[158] 'TVAM Seven means business', *The Bulletin*, 4 June 1988, advertising supplement.

international events, and combined studio interview segments with a blend of investigative reports from around the world.[159]

Although *Sunday* did not have mass appeal, it managed to survive because it was a credible rival to *Four Corners* and gave the Nine Network prestige. The riveting political interview, first demonstrated by Willesee, Paul Lyneham and Richard Carleton, was strongly featured on *Sunday* and carried by political reporter Laurie Oakes. Oakes earned recognition for securing key interviews with political leaders and for asking tough questions. These interviewees often became the 'newsmaker', setting the news agenda for the following week and earned *Sunday* a reputation for being a 'serious opinion shaper'.[160]

Sunday's success paved the way for the resuscitation, in 1982, of TCN-9's daily breakfast programme, *Today*, hosted by Steve Liebmann and Sue Kellaway. However it little resembled its 1969 predecessor, opting instead for a lighter approach to the news. Jim McKay, TCN-9 and GTV-9's programme director, was responsible for a raft of bold initiatives, including the launches of *Sunday* and *Today,* and moving the nightly news from 6.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.[161] In 1984 Mike Willesee returned to Nine to present *Willesee* from Monday to Thursday at 9.30 p.m. Within a year, Willesee had moved to the primetime 6.30 p.m. timeslot five-nights-a-week.[162] Willesee's company, Transmedia, sold the rights of the programme to the Nine Network and *Willesee* was re-launched as *ACA* in 1988, after a ten-year hiatus. Jana Wendt hosted the show from 1988. With a stable of newscaf programmes, *60 Minutes*, *Sunday* and *Today* together with the revival of *ACA* placed 'back to back' with the main news bulletin, Nine was cementing its reputation as the place to turn to for breaking news. This decision was

[159] Ang et al., *The SBS Story*, pp. 209-10.
[160] L. McIlveen & K. Murphy, 'The Sunday Brunch-Up – Sunday Say-So', *The Australian*, 19 June 2003.
[161] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 248, 255.
[162] Little, *Inside 60 Minutes*, p. 134.

principally economic, however, as it enabled Nine to share programme material amongst the shows, cutting production and promotional costs and maintaining a strong flow of viewers between the programmes.[163] Yet competition was rife, not only between commercial networks,[164] but also between *60 Minutes* and every other programme on the Nine Network.[165] *ACA* and *60 Minutes* were continually at odds over exclusive stories.[166] Ray Martin explains that the fierce battle for ratings and the national advertising dollar caused journalists to 'push the envelope'. According to Martin, examples of questionable journalistic practice had been around since *Four Corners* and *TDT*.[167] However in 1986, chequebook journalism, an example of questionable journalism, emerged and 'took on a whole new dimension' when *60 Minutes* and *The Australian Women's Weekly* paid $25,000 for the exclusive rights to the Lindy Chamberlain story.[168] The exclusive helped to boost the *60 Minutes'* ratings and its reputation for scoops.[169]

The ever-elusive quest for a quality commercial current affairs programme was re-visited in 1988 by TEN-10's *Page One*. The programme, according to the producer, Richard Carey, was 'part of a strategy to build up Ten's image as a current affairs channel rather than a vehicle for ratings or advertising'.[170] TEN-10 had first attempted to reinvigorate current affairs in 1982 with *The Reporters*. The programme lasted 16 weeks, suffering a change of presenters and a generally lack-lustre performance both in terms of quality and ratings.[171] *Page One* was big

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[163] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 293.
[164] C. Masters, *Chris Masters: Inside Story*, Angus & Roberston, Pymble, NSW, 1992, p. 211.
[165] Martin, *Ray*, p. 360.
[166] Little, *Inside 60 Minutes*, pp. 134-39.
[167] Martin, *Ray*, p. 360
[168] Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton was an Australian woman wrongfully convicted of killing her nine-week-old baby, Azaria, during a camping trip at Uluru in 1980. Chamberlain-Creighton maintained that she saw a dingo leaving Azaria's tent the night Azaria disappeared. In 1986, she and her then husband were acquitted of all charges after new evidence was discovered. See N. H. Young, *Innocence Regained: The Fight to Free Lindy Chamberlain*, Federation Press, Annandale, NSW, 1989; L. Chamberlain-Creighton, *Through My Eyes: An Autobiography of Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton*, Rev. ed., East Street Publications, Bowden, SA, 2004.
[169] Little, *Inside 60 Minutes*, pp. 150-51.
[170] A. Slee, 'Can Page One survive new test?', *SMH*, 12 February 1989, p. 15.
[171] R. Oliver, 'When the news is as bright as a button', *SMH*, 27 May 1988, p. 4.

budget, rivalling *60 Minutes*, and 'poached' from the ABC Chris Masters and Kerry O'Brien to add prestige to the network's newscaf line-up.[172] It promised front-page 'breaking news', yet received mediocre ratings. The blame was assigned to the programme's style and the difficulties in breaking stories each week, as well as to the executive producer's inexperience. Perhaps tellingly, the programme won its highest ratings when it broadcast a story on singer Kylie Minogue.[173]

After a short hiatus, the programme was re-named and re-vamped in 1989 into a less expensive programme, *Public Eye.* It also employed a troupe of former ABC *Four Corners* reporters: Masters, O'Brien, Peter George, Maxine McKew and new executive producer, Jonathan Holmes.[174] The programme was axed soon after, ending the network's foray into the traditionally serious current affairs and prompting a mass exodus from TEN-10 of some of its finest reporters.[175]

In 1989 commercial current affairs was beginning to look decidedly wan. The once invincible *60 Minutes* proved it was no match for ATN-7's American science fiction sitcom, *Alf,* earlier in 1987[176] and was now facing an attack on both flanks from TEN-10's *Comedy Company* on Sunday nights and ATN-7's popular police support show, *Australia's Most Wanted.*[177] Some television commentators foresaw the end of the Australian public's love affair with current affairs.[178] Re-invention would become the new stratagem in the 1990s and 2000s.

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[172] Ibid.
[173] A. Slee, 'Can Page One survive new test', *SMH*, 12 February 1989, p. 15.
[174] G. Negus, '"Eye" more in focus with target', *SMH*, 20 August 1989, p. 209.
[175] J. L. Lewes, 'Antennae', *SMH*, 6 November 1989, p. 65.
[176] Little, *Inside 60 Minutes*, p. 140.
[177] R. Oliver, 'Trouble time for 60 Minutes', *SMH*, 23 February 1989, p. 7.
[178] C. Sutton, 'Rumours rife as Ten's ratings dive', *SMH*, 19 March 1989, p. 26.

What is old is new again: The 1990s and 2000s

After the dramatic ownership upheaval of the 1980s, commercial television managements increasingly looked to current affairs for network stability. The established 6.00-7.30 p.m. timeslot was deemed crucial for building both an audience and a network image. Big dollars were invested in the format to keep pace with a restive audience who appeared to have little appreciation for current affairs.[179] Throughout the 1990s a host of current affairs programmes was developed, but a tightening of budgets affected the life span of the new programmes.[180] The bitter struggle for ratings would inevitably drive executive producers to 'further downgrade the story mix' to arrest audience decline.[181] More blatant examples of tabloid programmes emerged, along with vain attempts to recapture the serious, investigative edge of current affairs from its halcyon days.

After its failed attempts at quality current affairs in the late 1980s, TEN-10 took a new direction with Gordon Elliott's one-hour weekly reality programme, *Hard Copy*, in 1991.[182] This was the first unashamedly 'flash trash' tabloid television programme in Australia, ushering in a new hybrid genre and impacting on the perception of current affairs reporting, as we shall see in Chapter 9.[183] Turner notes that the success of talkback radio in the 1980s and 1990s, which seemed to suggest that mass audiences could be obtained by taking a downmarket approach, may have influenced current affairs television. Prominent talk-back hosts, Derryn Hinch and Alan Jones, were even recruited to host current affairs programmes on Seven and Ten.[184] During 1991 *ACA* proved too strong for the Seven Network's *Hinch,* hosted by the former Fairfax foreign correspondent, talk-back host and *Beauty and the Beast*

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[179] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, pp. 2-5.
[180] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 382.
[181] Ibid., p. 296; See also Turner, *Ending the Affair,* pp. 2-5.
[182] Turner, *Ending the Affair,* p. 2.
[183] 'Mass Crass', *SMH*, 29 June 1992, p. 59.
[184] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, pp. 9-10. Unlike Hinch, Jones' foray into television current affairs was very short-lived.

host.[185] Supposedly too downmarket for the Seven Network, *Hinch* was bought by the Ten Network, but later discontinued.[186] Following *Hinch's* departure, in 1992 the Seven Network recruited Gerald Stone – after a four-year stint working for Rupert Murdoch's Fox network in the US – to develop a 'new' current affairs culture.[187]

Tabloid prime-time competition: *Real Life, Today Tonight* and *ACA*

The launch of *Real Life* on 20 January 1992 stemmed from Seven's aggressive determination to challenge Nine's *ACA*. Hosted by Stan Grant, *Real Life* was a nationally based current affairs programme based on the same tabloid format as *ACA* and *Hinch*. The show positioned itself as 'soft edge' in contrast to the 'macho' image reflected by Mike Munro and Willesee, hosts of *ACA* in 1993.[188] (Jana Wendt signed off as host in 1992).[189] According to Stone, the executive producer, *Real Life* deliberately set out to make current affairs more accessible to the female audience.[190] Up to that point current affairs had been geared toward men.[191]

For Stone, the key to beating *ACA* was to tap into a variety of consumer stories considered appealing to women,[192] because Nielsen figures had shown there were more women than men watching television in primetime.[193] With Nine's new focus on cost efficiency, the network was especially interested in attracting the 'diamond-studded demographic of twenty-to-thirty something women'.[194] The *Sun Herald's* Marjory Bennett suggested this 'new trend'[195] gave way to 'marketing oriented' journalism as both shows became more preoccupied with the

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[185] J. Schembri, 'Hinch: down – but not out', *SMH*, 9 December 1991, p. 55.
[186] Littlemore, *The Media and Me*, p. 183.
[187] D. Tarrant, 'Gerald's Current Affair', *Sun Herald*, 8 November 1992, p. 17.
[188] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 300.
[189] J. L. Lees, 'Antennae', *SMH*, 19 October 1992, p. 51.
[190] M. Bennett, 'TV woos women viewers', *Sun Herald*, 24 October 1993, p. 3.
[191] 'Gerald's current affair', *SMH*, 8 November 1992, p. 18.
[192] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 300.
[193] M. Bennett, 'TV woos women viewers', *Sun Herald*, 24 October 1993, p. 3.
[194] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 382.
[195] M. Bennett, 'TV woos women viewers', *Sun Herald*, 24 October 1993, p. 3.

ratings.[196] This shift in address from citizen to consumer and the prioritising of entertainment over information was also indicative of overseas trends in the 1990s.[197] By 1993, Willesee was becoming increasingly concerned about the direction of *ACA* and its descent into what he called 'consumer crap'.[198] As he had only been signed on for one year to anchor and conduct special interviews, he had no control over production.[199]

Not only was Willesee dissatisfied with the direction taken by current affairs, but some reports even received official rebuke from the ABA. One of the most well-known was *ACA's* story involving the 1993 police siege at Cangai in northern N.S.W. Three fugitives wanted for killing five people had taken refuge in a farmhouse while holding two children hostage. When *ACA* managed to make a phone call to the gang leader, Leonard Leabeater, Willesee was rushed into the studio to take the call live to air. His interview with Leabeater and brief exchange with the two abducted children provoked a public outcry. The story was condemned as a reckless act. The lives of children and police were endangered in the name of ratings. The incident prompted the ABC's *Frontline* to parody the event and highlighted the decline of journalistic practice in commercial current affairs.[200]

Despite Willesee's involvement in this incident, he is widely credited with influencing the outcome of the 1993 federal election following his interview with Liberal opposition leader, John Hewson, on *ACA*. Willesee asked Hewson to explain how the opposition's proposal for a Goods and Services Tax (GST) would work. When Hewson was unable to answer Willesee's simple question about how the GST would apply to a birthday cake, the interview achieved

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[196] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 318.
[197] R. Moseley, 'The 1990s: Quality or Dumbing Down?', in M. Hilmes (ed.), *The Television History Book*, BFI, London, 2003, p. 105.
[198] Martin, *Ray*, p. 321.
[199] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 317.
[200] Ibid., pp. 313-316.

legendary status. The Labor government was re-elected even though polls predicted a Coalition victory.[201]

During the last weeks of the 1993 ratings season, *ACA* adopted a defensive programming stance. Willesee recalls that *Real Life* 'started doing back pains and cellulite…and then *A Current Affair* started doing it. And I was saying…"Why is the winning programme chasing the losing programme?"'.[202] The constant monitoring of the opposition and effort to match what the competition aired led to a homogenising effect on the programmes' stories.[203] At the end of 1993 *Real Life* overtook *ACA* in the ratings. Although *Real Life* won a Logie for Most Popular Current Affairs Programme, it failed to gain 'equal stature' with its main competitor, *ACA*, particularly once Nine installed veteran Ray Martin as host in 1994.[204]

Martin's experience on Nine's *Midday* taught him how to build a strong rapport with a female audience. With Martin at the helm of *ACA*, it regained its ratings' dominance within a month.[205] Further nails were added to *Real Life*'s coffin when Stone resigned as executive producer and *Frontline's* fictional character, Mike Moore, a poorly disguised parody of Grant, hindered *Real Life's* profile as a reputable current affairs programme.[206] *Today Tonight* (*TT*) replaced *Real Life* and began in 1995 with Neil Mercer as host in Sydney.[207] Prior to his

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[201] A. Ramsey, 'Hot pies, cold pies and pie-eaters', *SMH*, 6 March 1993, p. 27.
[202] Ibid., p. 318.
[203] For a discussion of this in the American context, see Ehrlich, 'Not Ready for Primetime', in Greenwald & Bernt (eds), *The Big Chill*, p. 107.
[204] M. Lawrence, 'Turning Point In Current Affairs', *The Age*, 19 August 1994, n.p.
[205] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 301.
[206] M. Lawrence, 'Turning Point In Current Affairs', *The Age*, 19 August 1994, n.p.
[207] Prior to 2001, *TT* had three separate East Coast editions: one in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. In 2001 an East Coast edition was developed covering NSW, Victoria, Queensland, and Tasmania. Both South Australia and Western Australia broadcast their own *TT* editions. See 'TT Does Its Best to Spark Initial Interest', *The Age*, 12 December 1994, p. 11; J. Freeman, 'Mercer in Motion for Sweet Victory', *SMH*, The Guide, 8 May 1995.

appointment, Mercer had headed Seven's late night weekly current affairs programme, *The Times*, which had combined 'hard news' with 'a quirky style' in 1994.[208]

Over the years, *TT* and *ACA* have been criticised for resorting to tabloid tactics to stay ahead of their opposition. According to Ben Fraser, the principle of 'oneupmanship' between primetime current affairs programmes has refashioned the way 'news is sourced, manipulated and marketed'. The approach to current affairs is not so much about being relevant or providing informed comment and analysis of the daily news agenda, but about using stories 'carefully marketed to rattle the opposition.' Concern is not given to investigating the news, but rather pilfering exclusives from competitors.[209] In-house cross-promotional content also makes up a large proportion of current affairs stories. Turner notes that by 2001, *ACA* devoted an average of 30% of its programme to content that was not on the news agenda, but instead was generated 'in-house and in advance, for its entertainment value'. [210] The recycling of programme material, often prepared in-house and weeks in advance, serves 'the interests of organisational efficiency'.[211]

These shifts in programming were not merely a result of a decline in ethical standards, but of larger structural changes in production and work practices. Journalists' access to communication, now increasingly controlled and organised by public relations, hinders their ability to undertake investigate reporting.[212] Buying exclusive rights to stories has become common practice. To do this, news journalists must first go through agents, managers and publicists, before they can access news sources. These factors are part of what Turner defines

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[208] 'TT Does Its Best to Spark Initial Interest', *The Age*, 12 December 1994, p. 11. Throughout its tenure, *TT* has employed several hosts: Helen Wellings, Peter Luck, Stan Grant, Melissa Doyle, Naomi Robson, Anna Coren, Matt White, and currently, Helen Kapalos.
[209] B. Fraser, 'Dumbing down the news', *Eureka Street*, July-August 2005, p. 25.
[210] Turner, 'Sold Out', in Bromley (ed.), *No News is Bad News*, p. 52.
[211] Ehrlich, 'Not Ready for Primetime', in Greenwald & Bernt (eds), *The Big Chill*, p. 107.
[212] Turner et al., *Fame Games*, p. 39.

as the 'post-journalism' environment in which informed comment, analysis and a deeper comprehension of the daily news – once thought fundamental to current affairs – are noticeably absent.[213]

Despite the failings of primetime current affairs, Barbara Alysen explains that these tabloid programmes do 'raise issues that resonate with sections of the community'.[214] While current *ACA* host, Tracy Grimshaw, acknowledges that public broadcasters include more investigative journalism in the same timeslot, she maintains that 'a story on an individual's struggle with corporates is equally as valid'. Grimshaw claims *ACA* receives hundreds of emails from people who have been 'ripped off' asking for help. Usually such people are members of the community who fall through the cracks of police and regulatory agencies. Grimshaw explains that a mere phone call from *ACA* to an unreasonable party can fix the problem and make 'a difference on the ground to people's lives'.[215] In this respect, *ACA* and *TT* can claim that they are in one sense acting as 'The Voice of Sydney', and still having cultural and political value.[216] Yet, as Harrington notes, such stories:

> tend to mask the deeper and more complex causes of problems – the things that journalists should be exposing – instead of looking for a simplified narrative in which (all too often) an average Joe is the innocent victim of a powerful person's lack of compassion.[217]

The search for quality: *Witness*

In an effort to distinguish itself from the Monday to Friday consumer journalism variety such as *ACA* and *TT*, *Witness* began in 1990s as an attempt to undermine Nine's dominance in newscaf and raise Seven's profile.[218] Promoting the show as 'Australia's leading public

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[213] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, p. 10; Turner, 'Sold Out', in Bromley (ed.), *No News is Bad News*, p. 55.
[214] Alysen, *The Electronic Reporter*, p. 236.
[215] Tracy Grimshaw cited in D. Knox, 'Current survivor', *TV Tonight*, 12 November 2008, http://www.tvtonight.com.au/2008/11/surviving-the-currents-of-news.html, accessed 4 November 2010.
[216] *TT* markets itself as 'Sydney's Voice', while *ACA* uses 'The Voice of Sydney'.
[217] Harrington, 'Popular news in the 21st century', p. 272.
[218] J. Freeman, 'Newsroom wars', *SMH*, 26 December 1995, p. 5.

affairs programme', Seven set out to produce a 'high quality' show under the leadership of former *Four Corners* executive producer and ABC head of television newscaf, Peter Manning. [219] *Witness* was launched in 1996 at 9.30 p.m. with an annual budget estimated at $12 million and a large team boasting some of the industry's finest reporters. Jana Wendt was signed on as host under a lucrative contract.[220]

Witness described itself as a weekly 'public affairs' programme. According to Gary Rice, Seven's managing director, 'public affairs' was the 'more responsible' kind of 'broadsheet news', not unlike *Sunday* and *Four Corners*.[221] On reflection, Wendt said *Witness* set a goal to make 'news priorities the trademark of the programme' and 'take the definition of current affairs TV back to its original meaning'.[222] But this goal was not based on any objective criteria upon which everyone could agree. It explains, in part, the reason for the internal disputes over the programme's direction that emerged within months of *Witness'* launch. Within a year, *Witness* was mired in acrimony as Wendt became dissatisfied with Manning's 'middle of the road' approach.[223] *Witness* lasted two years and two months before Wendt was embroiled in a legal battle with the Seven Network for breaking her three-year contract worth over $1.5 million a year.[224] After a bitter legal and public relations battle, she settled out of court in 1997.[225]

This episode not only underscores the difficulties of making high-quality journalism attractive to large audiences, but also gives resonance to speculation concerning the future of television

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[219] A. Conway, 'It's Just Too Divine', *SMH*, 24 June 1996, p. 2; C. Hogan, 'I, Witness', *The Age*, 28 March 1996, p. 1.
[220] C. Hogan, 'High Stakes', *SMH*, 25 March 1996, p. 6.
[221] C. Hogan, 'I, Witness', *The Age*, 28 March 1996, p. 1.
[222] M. Farmer, 'The Struggle Over Witness: How Jana Prevailed', *SMH*, 12 November 1996, p. 1.
[223] R. Oliver, 'Jana Battles 7 in ''Witness'' Row', *Sunday Age*, 3 November 1996, p. 6; Hogan, 'High Stakes', *SMH*, 25 March 1996, p. 6.
[224] Alysen, *The Electronic Reporter*, p. 231.
[225] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 204.

current affairs.[226] Furthermore, it highlights the elusiveness of news values and the complications involved in pursuing quality programming. *Witness* was not only hampered by a series of timeslot changes, but most fundamentally by a shift in audience tastes towards infotainment, explored further in Chapter 9.

Indeed, producing programmes of high quality, investigative journalism is more time-consuming and therefore more expensive than the infotainment variety. The threat of libel action and lengthy court proceedings designed to drain the time, energy and resources of journalists and networks is also a hindrance to the pursuit of quality journalism.[227] *Witness*, like all subsequent current affairs programmes seeking a large audience, faced a predicament: whether it should persevere with serious journalism and hope the market rose to its level, or seek a larger audience by taking a 'downmarket' approach.[228] In accord with commercial television's business practices, networks looked for 'new' ways to redefine current affairs programming.

Breakfast TV: reinvention in the post-journalism era

The shift towards a redefinition of current affairs is best observed in the format of Seven's breakfast programme, *Sunrise*. Since its revival in 2001,[229] the programme has gradually eclipsed Nine's *Today* show in the ratings and transformed the landscape of breakfast newscaf.[230] Hosted by Melinda Doyle[231] and David Koch (better known as 'Mel and Kochie')

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[226] 'Quality Plus Ratings Is The Challenge', *SMH*, 18 November 1996, p. 12.
[227] Pullan, *Four Corners*, p. 76; Masters, *Not for Publication*, pp. 6-7.
[228] Alysen, *The Electronic Reporter*, p. 231.
[229] In 1999, Seven cancelled *Sunrise* and *11AM* in response to a decline in the advertising market. See M. Farmer, 'Birthday elevenses', *SMH*, 5 July 1993, p. 51; A. Meade, 'Axe falls on Seven morning news', *The Australian*, 18 May 1999, p. 3.
[230] Stone, *Who Killed Channel 9?*, pp. 101,108. However in 2009, the gap between *Sunrise* and rival breakfast programme, *Today*, closed considerably. Since then, *Today* has managed to win the timeslot on several occasions. See P. Farquhar, 'Special Investigation: The five key differences between Sunrise and Today', news.com.au, 1 February 2012, http://www.news.com.au/entertainment/television/special-investigation-the-five-key-differences-between-sunrise-and-today/story-e6frfmyi-1226258432579, accessed 10 October 2012.

the programme broadcasts Monday to Friday from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m., and exemplifies a relaxed and personalised approach to newscaf.[232]

Former *Sunrise* executive producer, Adam Boland, reportedly responsible for kick-starting the breakfast revolution, described *Sunrise* as 'newstainment', which merges news with entertainment so that people can be both informed and entertained at the same time.[233] Stephen Harrington argues newstainment is also distinctively different to 'infotainment': a term, which he claims suggests news and entertainment are separate domains, and the very presence of entertainment 'either dilutes news coverage or ''distracts'' viewers'. Essentially *Sunrise* does not 'infotain', explains Harrington, but presents straight news items alongside entertaining segments.[234]

Sunrise has attracted criticism for its 'dumbed down' approach to news and for treating it as a commodity. Particular concern was raised early on when Boland hired a marketing person to approach advertisers directly to sponsor the programme. This undermined the traditional boundaries between newsgathering and revenue raising, and drew criticism from both the news and sales departments at Seven. The 'cult' of *Sunrise* has also had a more pervasive effect, encouraging Seven and its arch rival Nine, to adopt a relaxed, conversational style, and an informal dress code for its news reporters.[235]

In an ethnographic study, Harrington argues that *Sunrise* demonstrates how newscaf can still be commercially successful and popular, while maintaining a connection with its audience.

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[231] This thesis covers 1956-2012. However in mid-2013 Melinda Doyle left the breakfast programme and was replaced by Samantha Armytage.
[232] S. Harrington, *How Does 'Newstainment' Work?: Ethnographic Research Methods and Contemporary Popular News*. In International Communication Association (Creating Communication: Content, Control, and Critique), 24-28 May, San Francisco, CA, 2007, p.3.
[233] Adam Boland quoted in Harrington, *How Does 'Newstainment' Work?*, pp. 4-5.
[234] Harrington, *How Does 'Newstainment' Work?*, pp. 4-6.
[235] M. Price, 'The cult of Mel and Kochie', *The Australian Magazine*, 8 July 2006, p.1.

Much of *Sunrise*'s success hinges on its ability to present the news in an approachable way that, Harrington argues, 'very heavily relies on the personal and individual impact of the news event'. It is worth noting that this also reflects *60 Minutes'* far-reaching impact on the genre's format. *Sunrise*'s approach to current affairs essentially works because it knows its audience – by 'constant soliciting of viewer input' – and listens to them.[236] *Sunrise* viewers are encouraged to email/Tweet the show with questions and suggestions for the programme to follow up. These are placed on a whiteboard called the ROSwall (Responses of Sunrise).[237] Invitations to join the 'Sunrise family and friends' via Facebook, Yahoo7 and Twitter are additional strategies to instil loyalty and offer the same level of interactivity that competing convergent media outlets provide.[238]

Weekend Sunrise seems to have been responsible for slashing *Sunday*'s audience, from 493,000 to 310,000.[239] *Sunday* was also facing additional pressure from the ABC's *Insiders* and Ten's *Meet the Press*. Competition between the three programmes was fierce, as they fought to secure key political interviews and set the weekly news agenda.[240] In light of the competition, Nine's oldest and finest programmes became casualties of the network's corporate business practices following ownership changes in 2005, as noted in Chapter 1.[241] Nine's struggling *Business Sunday* was merged with *Sunday* in 2006. On 3 August 2008, *Sunday* broadcast its final episode and was replaced by a one-hour Sunday news bulletin

[236] Harrington, *How Does 'Newstainment' Work?*, pp. 3, 16-18, 20, 27-28.
[237] This has been used less frequently in the last few years.
[238] 'ROSwall questions and answers' http://au.tv.yahoo.com/sunrise/factsheets/article/-/6675105/, accessed 25 August 2011.
[239] M. Price, 'The cult of Mel and Kochie', *The Australian Magazine*, 8 July 2006, p. 1.
[240] L. McIlveen & K. Murphy, 'The Sundy Brunch-up – Sunday Say-So', *The Australian*, 19 June 2003.
[241] Stone, *Who Killed Channel 9?*, pp. 270-71.

broadcast at 8 a.m.[242] In 2009 a Sunday edition of *Today,* later re-named *Weekend Today,* took its place.[243]

Sunday's axing sparked an outcry from critics already lamenting the demise of quality newscaf and the impact de-regulation, cross-media laws and foreign ownership were having on programming.[244] Nine's business strategy not only gave the impression it was no longer serious about newscaf but also, as Rodney Tiffen argues, gave credence to the view that 'market forces [had] very substantially supplanted social obligation'.[245] In Stone's opinion, Nine's new dictum became 'profits before ratings', leading to the sacrifice of quality. Searches for more affordable formats for current affairs production, anchored around studio discussion and interviews, have mostly replaced bigger budget investigative reports.[246] In one sense, commercial current affairs programmes in today's mediascape are no different to what they were when they were first introduced in the 1950s, before reporters ventured outside the studio walls to gather in-depth reports. They just have new varnish.

Serious political newscaf has been primarily left to the public broadcasters. The ABC's newscaf stable includes *7:30*, *Stateline*, *Lateline*, *Lateline Business*, *Four Corners*, *Media Watch*, *Foreign Correspondent* and *Q&A*. SBS continues with *Insight* and *Dateline*, all of which tackle more issues and generate more agenda-setting news than the commercial channels.[247] Political editor, Laurie Oakes, is arguably Nine's most important political asset.

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[242] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 445-46; M. Bodey, 'Never on a Sunday: TV Programme calls it quits', *The Australian*, 2 August 2008, p. 3.
[243] D. Knox, 'Weekend Sunrise wakes up to Today's alarm', *TV Tonight*, 28 January 2009, http://www.tvtonight.com.au/2009/01/weekend-sunrise-wakes-up-to-todays-alarm.html, accessed 11 December 2009.
[244] 'Sunday too far away', *The Australian*, 29 July 2008, p. 13.
[245] Tiffen, 'Media ownership changes 1987 and 2006', p. 15.
[246] Stone, *Who Killed Channel 9?*, p. 185.
[247] G. Dwyer, 'ABC leads the pack as commercials abandon the news', *Crikey*, 28 July 2008.

In 2010, Oakes won a Gold Walkley[248] award for the reporting of leaks during the 2010 election campaign, which made headlines around the country.[249] With a reputation for tough political reporting and an ability to scoop his competitors, in 2011 Oakes was also inducted into the Logies Hall of Fame[250], for his contribution to journalism. Oakes' political interviews, which featured on Nine's *Weekend Today*, remained the last vestige of *Sunday* and political muscle on the network in 2012.[251] However Nine, Seven and Ten still maintain a hand in serious political newscaf of the traditional kind in the form of election debates.

Following *Sunday*'s demise, Seven launched *Sunday Night* in early 2009 – the network's first current affairs show since *Witness*, featuring Mike Munro and *Seven News* anchor, Chris Bath, as hosts. The 'newsmagazine' programme was scheduled at 6.30 p.m., an hour earlier than Nine's *60 Minutes*, to maximise audience share on Sunday nights. Ross Coulthart, a multi-Walkely award-winning and former *Sunday* investigative reporter, was hired as chief reporter to add prestige to the programme.[252]

In early 2011, Ten attempted to achieve credibility in the field of newscaf by poaching George Negus from *Dateline* at SBS, to front a current affairs programme called *6.00pm with George Negus*, later changed to *6.30pm with George Negus*. In direct competition with Seven's *TT* and Nine's *ACA*, the programme remained the only commercial prime-time current affairs show with any investigative clout that included reports relating to immediate

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[248] The annual Walkley Awards recognise and award excellence in Australian journalism (print, television, radio, photographic, online media). The Gold Walkley award is the highest accolade journalists can receive.
[249] Oakes challenged Prime Minister Julia Gillard with the claim that she broke her promise on a leadership deal she had made with Kevin Rudd, and also that 'Gillard had privately opposed parental paid leave and an increase to the aged pension'. This was considered significant during the election campaign. See Media Spy, 'Laurie Oakes win the Gold Walkley', 10 December 2010, http://www.mediaspy.org/report/2010/12/10/laurie-oakes-wins-the-gold-walkley/, accessed 24 March 2011.
[250] The Logie Awards are the Australian television industry awards. Only a handful of popular and outstanding personalities are given 'Hall of Fame' status.
[251] Oakes gave up the Sunday morning slot in late 2012. See A. Meade, '"Chuffed" Oakes to be inducted into the Logies Hall of Fame', *The Australian*, 18 April 2011.
[252] A. Meade, 'Ross Coulthart's Sunday Night vs 60 Minutes', *The Australian*, 2 February 2009, p. 31.

local and world news agenda. However it was axed in October 2011 due to low ratings, which preceded Ten's widespread sacking of journalists in 2012.[253]

Conclusion

Current affairs television programmes have evolved from studio-anchored panel discussions and investigative documentary-style exposes, through to hybrid forms of both styles. Once commercial networks recognised the value of the genre, programmes were increasingly provided with the resources necessary to pursue stories worth telling and uncover issues of public importance. Yet, ironically, as more resources were channelled towards current affairs programmes, they increasingly pursued entertainment and consumer-driven content removed from the daily news agenda. This trend peaked during the 1990s and early 2000s, mirroring international trends, and revealing an alarming decline in audiences for mainstream versions of the genre.[254] Audiences are now treated as consumers, rather than citizens and members of a national political community, but views differ on the consequences of this change.

The blurring of current affairs and entertainment style formats has a long tradition, as Edward R. Murrow's lament in 1958 reveals. 'Tabloid' characteristics can be found in earlier forms of media alongside concerns about the effects of such journalism on the public. News and entertainment have always sat and developed alongside one another.[255] Cross-hiring of newscaf staff and the development of what Moran calls a 'vernacular literature' in current affairs and documentary programming facilitated the blending of shared news values between more tabloid and investigative variances of the genre.[256] The dramatic requirements of television also make it difficult for reporters to maintain the fine balance between 'hard' and

[253] M. Idato, 'Ten axes Negus' news show', *SMH*, 19 October 2011.
[254] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, p. 3.
[255] Lumby, *Gotcha: Life in Tabloid World*, pp. 8, 31.
[256] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 77.

‘soft’ news without sensationalism. The search for ‘quality’ current affairs programming indicates that networks are aware such programming can be created, but they struggle to produce quality since the term is not based on any objective indicators upon which everyone can agree. Terms such as ‘tabloid’, ‘downmarket’ and ‘quality’ remain contentious, value-laden and open to interpretation.[257]

It would be historically myopic to suggest there was a ‘golden era’ of Australian current affairs television, where commercial pressures did not impede upon current affairs’ function to inform and provide analysis of ongoing public concerns. Rather, broader de-regulatory processes, financial pressures, changes in television business practices and audience preferences have *accelerated* the commercialisation of newscaf.[258]

Commercially successful current affairs programmes appear to be the kind that understand the increasingly fragmented media world of the 21st century and adapt their format and content to better connect with the audience. News agenda and programmes have become more tailored to niche audiences. In the post-journalism environment, hybrid formats of newscaf have emerged to meet corporate needs and audience preferences. Many of these programmes have been dressed up as new and innovative, but in several instances they find their historical antecedents in earlier current affairs outings. Whether such programmes are successful at providing in-depth analysis on socially and politically significant issues varies, although it must be conceded that tabloid forms of the genre can often make a valuable and democratic contribution to our media and culture.[259]

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[257] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, p. 57.
[258] Ibid., p. 17.
[259] Lumby, *Gotcha: Life in Tabloid World*, pp. 8, 31.

As the genre of current affairs is continually evolving, it is still uncertain whether the higher quality-end, investigative style journalism is compatible with the principles of entertainment-driven commercial television. The dilemma for investigative reporting is managing to provide interesting and entertaining stories to attract and maintain an audience, without compromising its claims to quality reporting.[260] Earlier examples of the genre in Sydney, such as *Seven Days,* show that on occasion it is possible to serve both corporate interests and the public interest. *60 Minutes* has on several occasions produced quality journalism. However, its focus on the personal and the dramatic does limit the programme's ability to provide context and analysis. Stephen Harrington argues that 'overly pessimistic' and 'over-celebratory' accounts of modern newscaf are unhelpful and counter-productive in helping to address the issue. A middle ground needs to be established – one that does not lament the popularizing of the news but rather, Harrington argues, remains 'critical of what news becomes popular'.[261] The fact that commercial current affairs programmes were in the top five rating programmes in Australia in 2012 suggests viewers have not yet tired of the genre in all of its variances.[262]

[260] Ehrlich, 'Not Ready for Primetime', in Greenwald & Bernt (eds), *The Big Chill*, p. 116.
[261] Harrington, 'Popular news in the 21st century', pp. 276, 280.
[262] P. Kalina, 'Why the nightly news bulletin reigns supreme', *SMH*, 26 November 2012.

4

Religious Programming: Television's Sacrificial Lamb

'I don't like coming on [television] at a time when most viewers have insomnia'[1]

– *B.A. Santamaria*

Since 1956 religious programming has struggled to maintain a presence on commercial television. Commercial imperatives have progressively pushed it to the fringes of the programming schedule, even though parliamentary legislation mandates its inclusion. First consigned primarily to the Sunday morning 'religious ghetto' alluded to by Catholic political commentator, B.A. Santamaria,[2] religious programmes have now largely disappeared from the main FTA television schedule altogether.

Religious programming failed to secure a prominent place on commercial television partly because it inherited several legislative ambiguities from the regulation of religion on radio. Despite opposition from commercial stations, religious broadcasting was made compulsory in the *Broadcasting Act 1948*.[3] Underpinning the legislation recommended by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting was the belief that 'Australia is a Christian nation and that Christian teaching, both in its spiritual and moral aspects, is of great importance to

[1] B. Santamaia quoted in M. Vistonay, 'The Lord Giveth, the Network Taketh Away', *SMH*, 20 August 1988, p. 74.
[2] T. Blombery & P. Hughes, *Combined Churches Survey for Faith and Mission: Preliminary Report*, Christian Research Association, Newtown, 1987, p. 36.
[3] The Act of 1948 gave the ABCB responsibility to 'ensure that divine worship or other matter of a religious nature is broadcast for adequate periods and at appropriate times and that no matter which is not of a religious nature is broadcast by a station during any period which divine worship or other matter of a religious nature is broadcast by that station. (*Broadcasting Act 1948*, s. 6K (2)(b)(ii)). See Horsfield, 'Down the Tube: Religion on Australian commercial television', p. 137.

national morale and national development'. The legislation also reflected the drive of Arthur Calwell, a devout Catholic and Minister for Information, who was chair of the Standing Committee.[4] As religious programming is ill-suited to popular entertainment, regulatory safeguards were considered necessary to ensure it was not left vulnerable to the economic imperatives of commercial broadcasting.

Several legislative challenges encountered by the ABCB were not satisfactorily resolved before television arrived. Radio stations sought clarification on what constituted religious programming and opposed the ABCB dictating the terms and conditions of programming content. Some also argued that such dictation contravened Section 116 of the constitution: the Commonwealth could neither make a law to establish a religion nor impose religious observance. This objection, even though it was never clarified by the government nor legally tested, weakened the ABCB's authority to enforce legislation.[5]

This set the context for the 1953 Royal Commission on Television. Although commercial interests once again opposed mandating religious content, the Royal Commission affirmed the value of religious programming as 'one of the important obligations of television stations to the public' and recommended that mandatory religious content continue on television.[6] When the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942-1956* came into operation, Section 103 required that the licensee of each television station should televise divine worship or religious matter during such periods as the ABCB determined.[7]

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[4] Australian Parliament, Joint Committee on Wireless Broadcasting, *Report of the Joint Committee on Wireless Broadcasting*, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1942, cited in P. Horsfield, 'Issues in Religious Broadcasting in Australia', *Australian Journal of Communication*, No. 14, 1988, p. 53.
[5] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia from 1956 to 1978, p. 9.
[6] Royal Commission on Television, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television*, p. 192.
[7] ABCB, *Eighth Annual Report*, 1956, p. 48.

Furthermore, the ABCB's Programme Standards stipulated that commercial television stations were to allocate free time of at least 30 minutes each week for religious programming, with free use of station facilities for churches. Denominations were allocated time in proportion to their demographic size, following discussion between commercial stations and the churches.[8] The onus of responsibility now shifted from the ABCB to the stations, and churches were placed in charge of their religious content and production costs.[9] However, as Douglas Tasker points out, the ABCB entered the television era in a weakened state, with no legislated reserve power[10] and no government support to enforce its Programme Standards.[11] In essence, the ABCB and its successors were confined to a consultative role. The scheduling of religious programmes was a source of considerable tension between stations, church production agencies and regulatory bodies.[12] 'Scheduling' in the context of religious programming refers to programmes being scheduled at marginal times that made it nearly impossible for programmes to establish and build an audience.

Although the Programme Standards stated that the scheduling of religious programmes was to be a matter of 'mutual agreement' between stations and churches, they did not specify when the programmes should be broadcast and what should be done if 'mutual agreement' was not reached, or the scheduling was altered.[13] Stations had the responsibility to manage their own programming scheduling and often moved programmes around in order to maximise their audience share. Religious programmes were generally broadcast on Sunday mornings, in

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[8] ABCB, *Television Programmes Standards*, 1970, p. 14.
[9] Horsfield, 'Down the Tube', p. 140.
[10] The Royal Commission had suggested that should the ABCB, the Federation of Australian Commercial Broadcasters and commercial operators fail to agree on the administration of television, the ABCB should have a reserve of authority (exercised at the licensing process) designed to ensure that commercial programmes serve, in the broadest sense, the public interest. See Royal Commission on Television, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television*, p. 152.
[11] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, p. 40.
[12] Horsfield, 'Down the Tube', p. 142.
[13] ABCB, *Television Programme Standards*, Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Melbourne, Vic., 1959, p. 10.

keeping with what the ABCB believed should reflect the character of Sundays. Over time, the ABCB noted the gradual displacement of religious programmes by commercial programmes and advertising on Sunday mornings. This led to increasing conflict between the ABCB and the commercial television industry.[14]

Furthermore, the question of religion's proper role and purpose on commercial television was never adequately defined or articulated. In an increasingly secular and pluralist society, which questioned the relevance of mainstream religion, Christian churches gradually lost a large part of their authority to comment on and influence the culture by the second half of the 1960s.[15] Church production agencies[16] responsible for religious programming were now faced with a dual challenge: establishing relevance to the Australian community, and communicating their message by way of television. The Christian message of love but *also* sin and judgement was philosophically at odds with a medium intent on pleasing and maximising its audience.

Solving the theological dilemma of what concept or image of religion should be presented was difficult for church production agencies. Who was the audience and what did it want? What was the purpose of religious programming? Was it for evangelism, edification, or social justice? Lack of unity on such matters further complicated the realities of inadequate church funding, the division of resources between denominations and geographic localities, and the

[14] Horsfield, 'Down the Tube', p. 143.
[15] Wilson, 'The Church in a Secular Society', in Harris et al., (eds), *The Shape of Belief*, p. 8.
[16] This chapter primarily explores the role of the mainstream Christian church production/media agencies: Christian Television Association (CTA) in NSW and Australia, the National Catholic Radio and Television Society, the Church of England Television Society (CETS), and the Christian Television Association, which were mainly responsible for religious programming on commercial FTA television in Sydney and NSW. Mainstream churches refer to the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant Churches (Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist etc). Pentecostal Churches also come under the banner of 'Protestant', but they have historically been more marginal.

churches' failure, in some cases, to grasp the significance of new technologies, methods and skills for television production.[17]

In other cases, some church production agencies have more successfully identified the needs of Australians and combined this with a bold and contemporary approach. More commonly, rapid developments in technology have forced church media agencies to seek new avenues for disseminating their message and influencing the culture. While some have moved to community and pay TV, the lack of funding for other church media agencies has contributed to their overall demise on FTA commercial television.

The churches' call to television: The 1950s and 1960s

Religion in Australia was at a crossroads when television arrived in 1956. The enormous wave of post-war immigration had ushered in rapid social change and introduced a spate of non-British cultures into Australia. Mainstream churches were forced to come to grips with social changes, and eventually, the declining strength of their membership and theological conflicts developing within their denominations.[18] While Australia was developing a new sense of nationhood in the 1960s, Protestant and Roman Catholic Church (RCC) policies still reflected overseas Christian mores.[19]

Calls for an indigenised Australian church – one that addressed Australians in culturally specific ways – were reinforced by a general mood of dissatisfaction with traditional church

[17] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, pp. 9-10.
[18] A. Walker, 'The Church in the New Australia', *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3, September 1961, pp. 70-75.
[19] Ibid., p.75.

institutions and conservative theology.[20] Mainstream churches were confronted by the challenge of changing attitudes towards Sundays, with growing attendances at sporting fixtures and a corresponding decline in church attendance.[21]

The introduction of television gave greater resonance to the call for Christian evangelism. Television was a revolutionary form of mass communication, and institutions concerned with how hearts, minds and wills were affected were challenged to use the medium or risk losing their voice and relevance in the community. At the Royal Commission on Television in 1953, church leaders were initially suspicious of television's potential influence on society.[22] Yet it was also clear to witnesses from the major denominations[23] that their survival meant exploiting modern mass media. And so it was declared that it was of 'utmost importance that the Christian message be brought to the people through television'.[24]

Various churches bought shares in Television Corporation in the hope of influencing its programming.[25] The Anglican Diocese of Sydney and the RCC were both represented on TCN-9's board. No doubt this was a strategic decision by Packer to make Television Corporation's bid more attractive at the licence hearings in 1955. The ABCB made it clear through its Programme Standards that anything 'blasphemous, indecent, obscene, vulgar or suggestive' would not be tolerated.[26] Two of TCN-9's directors, Father Martin Pendergast and

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[20] D. Hilliard, 'The Religious Crisis of the 1960s: The Experience of the Australian Churches', *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 21, No.2, June 1997, pp. 213-215. See also C.G. Brown, 'What Was the Religious Crisis of the 1960s?', *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 34, No. 4, December 2010, pp. 468-479.
[21] A. Walker, *Love In Action: The Thrilling Story of an Australian Company of Christians*, Fount Paperbacks, [London], 1977, p. 13; Hilliard, 'The Religious Crisis of the 1960s', pp. 219-220.
[22] Royal Commission on Television, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television*, p. 187.
[23] Witnesses appeared from the Australian Council for the World Council of Churches, Australasian Inter-union Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, the New South Wales Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia, the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, the Methodist Church of South Australia, the Catholic Church in Australia, and the Australian Religious Film Society.
[24] Royal Commission on Television, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television*, p. 187.
[25] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, p. 296.
[26] ABCB, *Television Programme Standards*, 1959, p. 4.

Major General Rev. C. A. Osborne, assured *Telegraph* readers that they would 'pay strict attention to the moral and cultural standards of telecasting', ensuring that programmes neither affronted Christian teaching nor endangered children's development.[27]

Tasker maintains that during these licence hearings, Clive Ogilvy, the managing director of Amalgamated Television, confirmed the company did not want churches to have a financial interest in it. Rather, it encouraged churches to conserve their finances for the production of religious programmes.[28] At the board's invitation, leading clergymen formed a religious advisory panel for ATN-7 to provide guidance and mediation for the production of religious programming.[29] The Rev. Dr Malcolm Mackay, a Presbyterian minister and secretary of the Australian Council of Churches (ACC) at that time, became chair of ATN-7's religious advisory panel and was involved in directing the production of religious programmes.[30]

Before Sydney television commenced, churchmen from seven Protestant denominations established the Christian Television Association of NSW (CTA NSW) under the patronage of the ACC, as a consequence of its submission to the Royal Commission and the 1955 licence hearings. In conjunction with the newly established Church of England Television Society (CETS), CTA NSW aimed to provide suitable religious programmes for broadcasting in Sydney.[31] Although churches moved into the television age with strong denominational loyalties,[32] the formation of the CTA NSW and subsequent inter-church cooperation between

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[27] Rev. Father Martin Pendergast and Major General Rev. C.A. Osborne cited in Barry, *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer Uncut*, p. 117; 'Archbishop Mowll praises TCN', *Daily Telegrap*h, 25 September 1956, p. 3; 'Church backing for TV sessions', *Daily Telegraph*, 26 September 1956, p. 31.
[28] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, p. 290.
[29] 'Ranks with World's Best', *SMH*, 3 December 1956, p. 27.
[30] 'Successful first year of religious Programmes on TV', *SMH*, 2 November 1957, p. 6; Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, p. 305.
[31] "Live" Religious TV Soon', *SMH*, 23 February 1957, p. 8.
[32] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, pp. 304, 433.

Protestant and RCC production agencies demonstrated an increasing commitment to ecumenism on the part of those involved.

Denominational programming and evangelism

Prior to 1960, Australian church production agencies followed the custom of the fledgling television industry by using a large proportion of imported overseas programmes.[33] The RCC and CTA NSW shared a weekly half-hour slot on ATN-7. However, on TCN-9 church production agencies were forced to be content with 5-10 minute 'thought for the day' segments, otherwise known as prologues and epilogues.[34] It was not until 1958 that TCN-9 regularly featured quarter and half-hour religious programmes.[35]

The ABC's religious programmes occupied more than twice the minimum prescribed for commercial stations by the ABCB. Together with the occasional documentary, ecclesiastical discussion and interview on religious themes, 'Divine Worship' services were regularly telecast at 11 a.m. from local churches.[36] Televised worship services were seldom used on commercial television, as they were considered unsuitable for an entertainment medium.[37] However, in 1958 ATN-7 televised *Wednesdays at St Stephens*, a film of the Wednesday lunchtime non-conventional service at St Stephen's Presbyterian Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney, conducted by the Rev. Gordon Powell.[38]

This service had already enjoyed considerable success on radio. Powell earned the nickname 'Dr Wednesday' for dispensing a religious message that, according to *TV News*, acted as a

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[33] ABCB, *Eighth Annual Report*, 1956 p. 48; ABCB, *Ninth Annual Report*, 1957, p. 46.
[34] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, p. 305.
[35] See weekly programme guides from January 1958 onwards in *TV News* and *TV Times*.
[36] Inglis, *This is the ABC*, p. 208.
[37] ABCB, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 1965, p. 66; ABCB, *Nineteenth Annual Report*, 1967, p. 94.
[38] 'Varied Religious Features', *SMH*, 10 November 1958, p. 13.

healing 'tonic' to his audience. His 'mass therapy for the spirit' targeted men and women prone to anxiety and neuroticism.[39] Powell was a 'soft evangelical' who was less conservative than his Presbyterian colleagues.[40] His somewhat liberal approach to theology suggests a willingness to adapt and communicate a Christian message for television.

Following the successful 1959 Billy Graham Crusade in Australia, *TV Week* critic, 'Dolly Shot', noted that Graham was more than a spiritual and artistic triumph. He was a 'technical triumph' for television. The camera not only captured Graham's 'passion and fervor', but also skilfully held visual interest by providing a 'fine balance between close-ups of silent, rapt faces and long shots of the acreages of listening humanity'; the sound tracks were 'true and clear'. These technical developments apparently gave ABN-2's Sunday morning church telecasts a 'new lease on life'. So impressed was 'Dolly Shot' with the 'delicate flowing camera work', he remarked that it was 'like sitting in the back pew without having to contribute to the collection'!.[41]

The Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) pioneered the first religious television programme on TCN-9, *Faith for Today*.[42] Having already developed one of the most successful radio ministries in post-war Australia, the SDA was eager to extend its evangelism to television.[43] In his study of Seventh Day Adventist and Roman Catholic television in Australia, Robert John Peters explains that commercial and evangelical factors underpinned the SDA's decision to telecast popular overseas programmes, *Faith for Today* and *It Is Written* (1964). As a

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[39] In 1964 *Wednesdays at St Stephen's* was broadcast on 25 radio stations in five states of Australia. See J. McPhee, 'Christian Broadcasting and Recording', *Church Heritage*, Vol. 15, No. 1, March 2007, pp. 16-29; 'Dr Wednesday', *TV News*, 20 September 1958, p. 14.
[40] S. Piggin, 'Billy Graham in Australia, 1959: was it revival?', *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review*, No. 6, October 1989, p. 12.
[41] 'Close-up with Dolly Shot', *TV Week*, 9-15 May 1959, p. 62.
[42] R. J. Peters, A Tale of Two Centres: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist and Catholic Television in Australia, unpublished MA thesis, Faculty of Humanities, Griffith University, Brisbane, 1997, pp. 11-12.
[43] Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, p. 187.

minority denomination, the SDA did not have the expertise or financial support required to provide locally produced material.[44]

Faith for Today's quality and dependability facilitated its successful syndication overseas.[45] In Horsfield's analysis of American religious television, he maintains the programme appealed because it was 'low-key in approach, doctrinally moderate and often employed a dramatic format'.[46] However *Faith for Today* struggled to gain wide acceptance in Australia. Nevertheless the programme's reasonable price justified its use and enabled the SDA to extend its presence on television.[47] TCN-9 also screened *Christian Science Heals,* a 15-minute weekly programme featuring guest testimonials. It was produced on behalf of the Christian Science Churches.[48]

Responsible for religious telecasts at TCN-9, Osborne offered station facilities to the Great Synagogue in Sydney on the fifth Sunday in a month. He was keen to offer station time to the Orthodox Church, but was unable to find a representative who could speak English well enough. The representation of minority faiths, unique to TCN-9, was primarily a result of his benevolence. While there were no specifically made Jewish programmes on the ABC, Jewish representatives were often included in panel-style programmes to present their viewpoint, and occasionally a Jewish choir featured during Jewish New Year festivities. ATN-7 did not provide Jewish telecasts, nor were any requested.[49]

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[44] Peters, A Tale of Two Centres, pp. 10-12.
[45] *Faith for Today* first aired on the US's ABC-TV network in 1950 and went on to win several awards. See H. Erickson*, Religious Radio and Television in the United States, 1921-1991: The Programs and Personalities*, McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, Jefferson, North Carolina, 1992, p. 74.
[46] Horsfield, *Religious Television: The American Experience*, p. 5, cited in Peters, A Tale of Two Centres, p. 12.
[47] Peters, A Tale of Two Centres, p. 13.
[48] 'Successful first year of religious Programmes on TV', *SMH*, 2 November 1957, p. 6; Erickson*, Religious Radio and Television in the United States, 1921-1991*, p. 58.
[49] NAA: MP1170, folder: TR/3/11 Part 2 Religious TV Programmes – General, 'Time devotes to the Jewish Religion on Commercial Television', ABCB Programmes Service Division – Information Service 17 June 1964, n.p.

The RCC preferred to provide its own programming, as it had done with radio. The RCC also generally had an advantage over other churches. The whole church maintained relatively consistent doctrinal and theological positions. Sometimes this meant programmes could be shared across Australia.[50] In Sydney, the Roman Catholic Radio and Television Committee prepared a variety of programmes for ATN-7 and TCN-9, including Masses, epilogues, studio panel discussions, and segments for women and children.[51] Occasionally Catholic dramatic and choral organisations took part in live television plays such as *Joan of Lorraine*, *The Upper Room* and *Bernadette of Lourdes*. During 1958, the Committee experimented with panel interviews on ATN-7 featuring experts on Catholic teaching and practice. A series of monthly programmes titled *Catholic Life* (ATN-7) and *Design for Living* (TCN-9) consisted of overseas films. These were followed by an address given by a local priest on the film's subject.[52]

A highly popular programme distributed by the RCC was Bishop Fulton Sheen's programme imported from the US. The half-hour *Life Is Worth Living* began in Australia in 1959-60. Ecumenical in content, it emphasised apologetics. The emphasis on apologetics was a common style adopted by religious programmers.[53] This emphasis shifted over the next twenty years as religious programmes began to emulate popular magazine and current affairs style programmes.[54]

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[50] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, p. 265.
[51] Varied Religious Features', *SMH*, 10 November 1958, p. 13; Peters, A Tale of Two Centres, pp. 44- 45.
[52] 'Varied Religious Features', *SMH*, 10 November 1958, p. 13; *TV News* 1958; 'Successful first year of religious Programmes on TV', *SMH*, 2 November 1957, p. 6.
[53] Christian apologetics is a field of theology that aims to present a rational defence for the Christian faith. See Peters, A Tale of Two Centres, p. 44.
[54] Peters, A Tale of Two Centres, p. 45.

In Horsfield's opinion, *Life Is Worth Living* was successful because of Sheen's engaging manner and ability to communicate with a wide range of people. In many respects, his programme offered 'a model which was to be adopted by later conservative broadcasters'.[55] Similarly, *Dr Rumble's Question Box*, which began on Australian commercial radio in 1931, provided a blueprint for successful religious programming. Rev. Dr Leslie Rumble maintained a high profile on 2SM delivering short talks on Catholic doctrine. His programme remained the most famous religious programme on Australian radio until he retired in 1968.[56]

Prior to the establishment of media offices in Brisbane in 1964 and Melbourne in 1969, Sydney was the focal point of the Australian Roman Catholic Churches' response to television. The RCC's first official step into television had occurred with Father Kevin Burton's appointment in 1960 as Secretary of the Catholic Radio and Television Committee for the Sydney Archdiocese. This was consolidated in 1962 with the opening of the National Catholic Radio and TV Centre (NCRTC), with former radio announcer, John Dwyer, as director.[57] This facility had a library of overseas films and distributed material first produced for the Sydney Archdiocese for stations interstate.[58] Programming received added help from the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), which advised the church on modern media and how to respond to it.[59]

The purpose and quality of religious programmes

In 1957, CTA NSW began producing live religious programmes in NSW, which included a variety of forums, musical programmes and talks. The supply of imported religious films had

[55] Horsfield, *Religious Television*, pp. 7-8.
[56] Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, pp. 173-75.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Peters, A Tale of Two Centres, p. 45; Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, p. 266.
[59] P. Ingham, 'We live in a media world', http://www.dow.org.au, accessed 22 October 2011.

been exhausted and calls were made for Australian-produced programmes relevant to an Australian audience.[60] ATN-7 pioneered the first live serial religious dramatic production in Australia, *The House on the Corner*, written by CTA director, Harry Howlett.[61] A former radio actor, writer and producer, Howlett was the first salaried officer, chief script writer and producer at CTA.[62] His ability to undertake diverse duties later earned him the nickname of 'Mr Christian Television'.[63]

In 1957 *The House on the Corner* was one of CTA's principal regular programmes on ATN-7. The other was *The Burning Question* (1956-61).[64] This raised issues about the nature and purpose of religious programmes. Chaired by the Rev. Dr Malcolm Mackay, the weekly panel discussion invited guests to debate topical subjects such as 'What's new for NSW?', 'Can we end Children's Diseases?', and 'What is the Future of the Antarctic?'.[65] The programme attracted criticism from both secular and religious quarters for its failure to provide a distinctive religious message. Referring to an interview on the programme with NSW Premier Cahill, *TV News* critic, F.C. Kennedy, observed:

> …the only time a moral issue was raised was when Dr. [Mackay] gently needled the Premier on hotel trading-hours. This oversight on the part of Dr. [Mackay] is the equivalent of a commercial compere forgetting to mention the name of his sponsor.[66]

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[60] '"Live" Religious TV Soon', *SMH*, 23 February 1957, p. 8.
[61] 'Successful first year of religious Programmes on TV', *SMH*, 2 November 1957, p. 6.
[62] '"Live" Religious TV Soon', *SMH*, 23 February 1957, p. 8; 'Two big projects for Christian TV', *SMH*, 16 December 1957, p.15.
[63] NLA: MS7702, folder 7702/9/3, Religious broadcasting 1959-1970 Part 2/2, Adrian Jose Papers, Box 25, 'The Christian Television Association of NSW 1969 Annual Presidential Report', p. 9.
[64] 'Two big projects for Christian TV', *SMH*, 16 December 1957, p. 15. The programme was sponsored by ATN-7, which allowed the churches an additional independent programme. See 'Protestant action on migrants', *SMH*, 14 February 1958, p. 8.
[65] *TV News,* 26 July – 8 November 1958
[66] F.C. Kennedy, 'A burning question for Dr. McKay', *TV News*, 16 August 1958, p. 9.

The NSW Council of Churches' views were similar.[67] The CETS, already disapproving of Mackay's role at ATN-7 and his concept of religious programming, advised the CTA that they were 'strongly of the opinion that the "Burning Question" had so small a value for assimilating the Gospel of Christ that it should be replaced by a CTA Programme with a more positive message'.[68] Despite these criticisms, the sensational nature of certain topics discussed provoked a great deal of correspondence. Following an episode on teenage promiscuity, ATN-7 received a record volume of mail.[69]

To assist in the administration of policy issues, the ABCB established in 1959 an Advisory Committee on Religious Television Programmes (ACRTP), comprising six eminent churchmen under the chairmanship of Rev. B. R. Wyllie.[70] The committee issued three reports before it was disbanded in 1972. In its first report (1961), the ACTRP expressed concern about religious programmes that avoided stating 'the Christian belief in simple terms':

> The amount of time required to be provided for the presentation of religious Programmes is too small to be squandered on subjects which any station manager of our acquaintance would be prepared to deal with under some other heading, such as news commentary, social welfare or charitable and community service.

The ACTRP further stated, rather idealistically, that religious programming should be approached on an ecumenical and non-denominational basis, and that programmes should cater for non-churchgoers as well as churchgoers.[71]

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[67] ML: 1277/99, folder 'Television', NSW Council of Churches, Box 7 (24), 'Letter addressed to Mr. J. H. Oswin, ATN Television Centre, 20 November 1957,' unsigned.
[68] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, pp. 305-306.
[69] NAA: MP1170/4/0, folder: TC/5/1 Part 1, Complaints and Criticisms, 'Minute Paper The Chairman: Question on notice by Mr E.J. Ward, signed D.A. Jose', 1960.
[70] ABCB, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 1959, p. 39.
[71] 'Extracts from the First Report of the Advisory Committee on Religious Television Programmes' Appendix F, ABCB, *Thirteenth Annual Report*, 1961, pp. 4, 63.

If these discussions of purpose paralleled the broader question of Christianity's relevance in an increasingly secular society, they also highlighted the ambiguity arising from Section 103. What was the purpose of mandatory religious programming? Was it a concession for the private use of the churches, or was it a public community service that licensees were to provide at their discretion?[72] These questions were interpreted differently over the years and never adequately resolved. This was partly because, even though the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade across Australia was successful, the initial signs of spiritual revival were accompanied by the tremors of a world-wide religious crisis.[73]

The quality of programmes was an additional area of concern for the ABCB, commercial stations and church bodies.[74] Consequently, commercial stations were reluctant to broadcast religious programmes in peak viewing times for fear of jeopardising audience share and advertising revenue. Religious programmes' lack of quality and sophistication was often attributed to the financial constraints burdening church production agencies and the inexperience of their personnel. Ironically, some of the most popular religious programmes had only basic production values. One of these programmes was *I Challenge the Minister* (*ICTM*).

In 1958 TCN-9 invited the Rev. Alan Walker, superintendent of the Methodist Wesley Mission, to compere *ICTM*. Walker had already proved his dynamism on commercial radio

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[72] Horsfield, 'Issues in religious broadcasting in Australia', p. 53.
[73] Hilliard, 'The Religious Crisis of the 1960s', pp. 211-19. See also Piggin, 'Billy Graham in Australia, 1959', pp. 2-33; D. Aikman, *Billy Graham: His Life and Influenc*e, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, Tennessee, 2007, pp. 103-104; B. Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham*, HarperCollins World wide, New York, 1997, pp. 326-331; S. B. Babbage & I. Siggins, *Light Beneath The Cross: The Story of Billy Graham's Crusade in Australia*, The World's Work, Kingswood, NSW, and Melbourne, 1960, pp. 18-29.
[74] NLA: Adrian Jose Papers, MS7702, folder: 7702/9/2, 'Religious broadcasting 1959-1970 Part 1/2', Box 25, 'Faith in Television: Address to the Fourth Federal Conference of the Christian Television Association, Sydney, November 1962, by Adrian Jose, Programme Services Director, Australian Broadcasting Control Board', p. 5; ABCB, *Tenth Annual Report*, 1958, pp. 36-37; ABCB, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 1959, p. 39; ABCB, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 1960, p. 37.

throughout the 1950s and was primed for television after studying it overseas.[75] The simple format of *ICTM* employed an open-air meeting style where audience members 'challenged' Walker with questions ranging across religious, psychological and current affairs subjects.[76] The half-hour programme was telecast twice monthly until the CTA decided to reduce its screening time to the first Sunday of the month after representatives from other denominations complained the Methodists were receiving an undue proportion of broadcasting time.[77]

ICTM was primarily set in a studio, although increasingly it used outside broadcasts across Sydney. This was particularly innovative, for preachers rarely ventured outside the pulpit and certainly not into areas such as wharves or factories.[78] On 5 April 1959, *ICTM*'s telecast at the Sydney wharves drew 100,000 viewers, twice as many people Billy Graham attracted to the Sydney Showground in the same month.[79] At its peak, *ICTM* was the highest rating religious programme on Australian television, drawing an audience of over 500,000. CTA Victoria was so impressed that it purchased the programme for a fee of $500 for broadcast on GTV-9.[80]

During *ICTM*'s tenure at TCN-9, the press asked Walker for his thoughts on the Governor General, Lord de Lisle, who had been gambling at the races. When Walker stated how regrettable it was that the Governor General had endorsed a social evil, the comment made

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[75] Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, p. 188; 'If you're a heckler, your WELCOME!', *TV Times*, 16 July 1958, p. 51.
[76] A. Walker, *A Vision for the World: Alan Tells His Story*, New Melbourne Press, Wantirna, Victoria, 1999, p. 65; D. Wright, *Alan Walker: Conscience of the Nation*, Openbook Publishers, Adelaide, 1997, pp. 152-153; 'We Challenge the Minister', *TV Week*, 25 April – 1 May 1959, pp. 12-14; 'We didn't rock 'n' roll in Church', *TV NEWS-TIMES,* 12 July 1958, pp. 10-12.
[77] "I Challenge the Minister" Synod Demands Increase', *Impact*, September 1963, p. 4.
[78] Interview with Martin Johnson, Gymea Anglican Church, Gymea, 27 April 2012.
[79] 'We Challenge the Minister', *TV Week*, 25 April – 1 May 1959, p. 14.
[80] The sources do not clarify whether the programme as a whole was purchased for a flat fee of $500 or whether each programme/'episode' was $500.
http://www.wesleymission.org.au/Christian_life/Television/About_Us/Our-history.asp, accessed 2 August 2011; *Impac*t, February 1963, p. 5.

headlines in the press. Consequently Packer and the TCN-9 board discontinued the programme; Packer was known for his love of race horses and gambling. *ICTM* subsequently moved to ATN-7.[81]

ICTM's obvious authenticity and laid-back format appealed to an Australian audience. To defeat the 'ivory tower' complex, Walker deliberately chose not to wear clerical robes, opting instead for an ordinary business suit. He knew none of the audience's questions in advance, choosing to respond 'off the cuff'.[82] As sociologist David Millikan observed, the tradition of anti-intellectualism in Australia cultivated a general impatience with abstract thought. In Millikan's view, churches needed to concentrate on doctrines that touched on contemporary concerns and assisted them in daily life, rather than concentrate on complex apologetics or evangelism.[83] Religious programmes needed to do the same.

B.A. Santamaria was another telegenic conservative commentator, whose weekly programme, *Point of View* (*PoV*), ran on TCN-9 and GTV-9 from 1963 to 1991. The format was simple. Without props or music, Santamaria looked straight down the barrel of the camera and spouted his views on national and international affairs. Perhaps echoing Bishop Sheen, Santamaria believed that the way to build a small viewing audience was to include 'short, straight talks by telegenic people' rather than dramatic presentations that competed with the 'current fare of sex and violence'.[84]

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[81] Walker, *A Vision for the World*, pp. 66-67.
[82] 'If you're a heckler, your WELCOME!', *TV Times*, 16 July 1958, p. 50.
[83] D. Millikan, 'Christianity and Australian Identity', in Harris et al. (eds), *The Shape of Belief*, p. 37.
[84] Santamaria expressed this view in a letter to John Dwyer in 1962. See M. Cole, 'Prolific Point of View', *The Courier Mail*, 23 February 2007.

Prior to *PoV,* Santamaria had provided a weekly news commentary on HSV-7's 15-minute Roman Catholic television programme, *Sunday Magazine*.[85] However, RCC Archbishop, Justin Simmonds, terminated Santamaria's appearances on the programmes in 1963. Santamaria's biographer, Peter Morgan, suggests this was done because of Santamaria's involvement in the tumultuous split in the ALP in the 1950s and his leadership of the anti-communist organisation known as 'The Movement'.[86] This was certainly the view of the Sydney press; Simmonds, however, claimed his primary motivation was to restore the 15-minute session to its original purpose: 'spiritual guidance and instruction of the people'.[87]

Within a fortnight of Santamaria's sacking, Packer gave him the opportunity to establish a Channel 9 alternative with *PoV*.[88] Santamaria's anti-Communist stance appears to have won him favour with the staunchly conservative Packer.[89] In 1965 the weekly audience for *PoV* was estimated at 300,000. Santamaria's commentaries were brief and topical, and not as overtly religious as Walker's. *PoV* was not sponsored by the RCC, and the views presented were more indicative of the National Civic Council, a grassroots Australian political movement.[90] Santamaria's belief that religion and politics could not be separated may help to explain why his programme endured on television for so long. But having Packer's blessing was key.[91]

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[85] J. Hetherington, *Uncommon Men*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1965, p. 171.
[86] P. Morgan (ed.), *B.A. Santamaria Running the Show: Selected Documents: 1939-1996*, Miegunyah Press in association with the State Library of Victoria, Carlton, Vic., 2008, p. 311.
[87] SL Melbourne: B.A. Santamaria Papers, MS 13492, Series 27 Sunday Magazine and Point of View texts, Box 1, Folder 7, 'Dr Simonds explains show change', *Tribune*, 28 November 1963, Vol. 63, No. 3331.
[88] Morgan (ed.), *B.A. Santamaria Running the Show*, p. 311.
[89] In an interview years later, TCN-9 General Manager, Ken G. Hall, said that 'Packer *had* to have him [Santamaria]…It [*PoV*] didn't rate, but Packer kept it going because Santamaria was way to the Right – anything to destroy the opposition.' See Shirley, 'Ken G. Hall and Australia's Fledgling TV', in Watson et al., *TV Times*, p. 41.
[90] The National Civic Council was considered socially conservative and evolved from the Catholic Social Studies Movement, which was established in the early 1940s. SL Victoria: B.A. Santamaria Papers, MS 13492, Series 27 Sunday Magazine and Point of View texts, Box 1, Folder 7, 'Santamaria's new Programme', *Sun*, 23 November 1963.
[91] Hetherington, *Uncommon Men*, p. 172. See also B.A. Santamaria, *Point of View*, The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1969, pp. iii-ix; T. Coady, 'Religion and Politics in Australia – A Catholic Perspective', in J. Jupp

Ecumenism and national programming

Generally, religious broadcasting negotiations for airtime between the NCRTC, CETS and CTA were amicable.[92] In 1960, Australian commercial television stations allocated 75% free time to Protestants and 25% to the RCC, figures aligned with the number of adherents to each denomination. The CTA, which provided mainly for Protestant churches, encouraged the continuation of this arrangement.[93] In the 1960s, the barriers that had long separated the RCC from other Christian denominations began to break down. The Second Vatican Council and its 1964 Decree on Ecumenism encouraged greater work for unity across denominations.[94]

By 1965 Sydney had four church agencies working in television production: the CTA of NSW, the NCRTC, the CETS, and Adventist Radio and Television Productions.[95] The ABCB noted in its 1965 annual report how a 'growing ecumenical outlook' had developed between Protestant and Roman Catholic churches, and had led to the joint presentation of religious programmes in the form of 'scatter' announcements and discussions.[96]

However, there were tensions between the CETS and the CTA over programming time and production. From 1961 the CETS gradually withdrew financial support from the CTA, preferring to work as a denominational enterprise. In 1965, the ABCB reported that in Queensland and NSW, the Church of England retained a programme production unit separate from CTA. Tasker argues that the CETS were of the belief that free broadcasting time existed

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(ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, Vic., 2009, pp. 630-31.

[92] Peters, A Tale of Two Centres, p. 46.

[93] ABCB, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 1960, p. 37.

[94] Hilliard, 'The Religious Crisis of the 1960s', pp. 215-16.

[95] 'The late, late show', *SMH*, 30 November 1968, p. 11; Peters, A Tale of Two Centres, p. 14.

[96] ABCB, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 1965, p. 66.

for the benefit of Sydney Diocese and were intent on maintaining their independence.[97] CETS broke away and became independent in 1968.[98]

By 1969 the CETS, CTA and NCRTC agreed to block programming – a form of scheduling whereby each production agency was allocated a weekly half-hour programme slot in blocks of 13 weeks on one television station.[99] The first Sydney (and possibly Australian) ecumenical programme produced by the CTA in cooperation with the CETS and NCRTC was *On the Line* (TEN-10). The panel-style programme featured official representatives from both the RCC and Anglican Church and attempted to reach non-church people. Panellists provided their views on problems telephoned in by viewers, all of which was overheard by the audience. The programme tackled 'hot' questions such as: 'I married a homosexual and am in a mess. Can you help me?' and 'My girlfriend is pregnant. What can I do to help?'. The programme gradually built up a strong following and paralleled the growing popularity of talk-back radio.[100]

There was need for a centralised and effective Christian organisation to carry out the task of liaising with industry representatives.[101] Collaboration between Protestant church media agencies[102] took place under the auspices of the Australian Churches Media Association, a national ecumenical organisation that allowed joint approaches to the ABCB and FACTS, as well as programme sharing between states. The financial strain under which church

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[97] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, pp. 313-15.
[98] NLA: Adrian Jose Papers, MS7702, folder: 7702/9/4, 'Religious broadcasting 1959-1969 Part 1 of 2', 'Advisory Committee on Religious Programmes Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting', ABCB, Agendum No. 1969/11, File No. TC/4/6, 15 April 1969, p. 2.
[99] For example, between March-May 1969, the Anglican agency was given a half-hour slot on ATN-7; the Catholic agency a half-hour programme on TCN-9; and the CTA a half-hour programme on TEN-10.
[100] NLA: Adrian Jose Papers, MS7702, folder 7702/9/3, Religious broadcasting 1959-1970 Part 2 of 2, Box 25, 'The Christian Television Association of NSW 1969 Annual Presidential Report', p. 2; 'The Christian Television Association of NSW 1970 Annual Presidential Report', p. 5.
[101] D. Tasker, 'Witness Through Mass Media', in I. Southall (ed.), *The Challenge*, Lansdowne Press in association with The Australian Council of Churches, Melbourne, 1966, p. 95.
[102] Primarily Anglican Media, Christian Media and the CTAs in each state.

production agencies operated underscored the need to pool resources and share costs across interstate boundaries. Yet the Australian Churches Media Association was only a consultative body, with no authority to unite, or to censure, church agencies. As the organisation was dominated by several large church production agencies, they could veto decisions that were not in their interests. This hindered the production of national, consistent and coherent programming, and also restricted resource-sharing.[103]

A national approach to religious programming by the RCC assumed that there was an agreed national formula by all participating dioceses. It was advantageous to speak with one voice to commercial broadcasters and share the burden of production costs.[104] However the RCC faced the dilemma that not all Catholic committees were working on an inter-church basis; some dioceses were adamant about maintaining their separate denominational identity, while others supported the CTA.[105]

In 1964 CTAs from each Australian state formed a Programme Collaboration Committee (CTA of Australia) so that programmes could be produced in some states and then shared with others, thereby conserving their resources. The plan developed slowly, partly because state production agencies had difficulty reaching agreement over the nature of programmes being exchanged.[106] This could have been because Sydney churches – both Protestant and Catholic – have traditionally been more conservative than Melbourne churches.[107] The CTA of Australia resolved to put in motion a plan for organising the production of Christian television programmes on a national basis. This idea was developed further in 1966 during the

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[103] Horsfield, 'Down the Tube', p. 140.
[104] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, pp. 272- 273.
[105] This latter group were full members of the CTA. Not all RCC dioceses were.
[106] ABCB, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 1965, p. 66.
[107] Millikan, *The Sunburnt Soul,* p. 80; R.C. Thompson, *Religion in Australia: A History*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, Vic., 2002, pp. 120-121; Piggin, 'Billy Graham in Australia, 1959', p. 14.

Ormond Consultation on Religious Telecasting in Australia,[108] where a wide range of church groups considered proposals for organising their goals and programmes, under the umbrella of a national collaborative effort.[109] However, the issue of national programming was left unresolved.

The search for an Australian religious identity: The 1970s and 1980s

The external and internal struggles facing mainstream Christian denominations intensified during the 1970s and 1980s as doctrine became more liberal. In the RCC, changes to liturgy and culture emanating from the Second Vatican Council were felt most strongly in the 1970s. Particularly in Sydney, the Anglican Church debated women's admittance to the priesthood, and the Presbyterian Church faced internal struggles concerning theology and women's ordination.[110] A general decline in Christian religious commitment and public Christianity meant that established Protestant churches lost some of their influence over moral matters.[111] Even before this, television's Sunday night movies had made a dent in evening church attendance and the overall downturn in church membership affected church finances.[112] By contrast, Pentecostal churches grew as they projected a 'youthful, modern and democratic image' in tune with the times.[113]

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[108] The consultation was held at Ormond College, University of Melbourne.
[109] ABCB, *Eighteenth Annual Report*, 1966, p. 58.
[110] H. M. Carey, *Believing in Australia: A Cultural History of Religions*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1996, p. 190. See also B. H. Fletcher, 'Anglicanism and National Identity in Australia Since 1962', *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 25, No. 3, October 2001, pp. 324-45; M. Hutchinson, *Iron In Our Blood: A History of the Presbyterian Church in NSW 1788-2001*, Ferguson Publications, Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, Sydney, 2001.
[111] Thompson, *Religion in Australia*, pp. 118-19.
[112] Walker, *Love In Action*, p. 13; Hilliard, 'The Religious Crisis of the 1960s', pp. 219-20.
[113] Carey, *Believing in Australia*, pp. 188-190.

Claims for freedom of individual choice and conscience were heard throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[114] The privatisation of religious belief[115] – a disengagement of faith from the public arena – was given greater resonance by the 1977 Report of the Royal Commission on Human Relationships, which stated: '[I]ncreasingly morality has to become the preserve of the individual'.[116] There was no longer a national or religious moral code to which people adhered. This questioning of mainstream religion's authority and relevance further undermined the ambivalent purpose of religious television programming and the regulator's authority to protect it. As religion became more detached from institutional structures, there was also a cultural shift away from British and American religious practices.[117] This coincided with the revival of Australian cultural production in television, which overflowed into Australian religious programming and influenced new strategies for Sydney audience connection.

Self-regulation and regulatory challenges

In 1970, FACTS challenged the ABCB's right to place restrictions on Sunday morning programming, particularly as it allowed commercial radio 'unfettered freedom to programme on Sunday mornings'.[118] The ABCB's intention was to protect minority programmes, being aware of their lack of commercial power against the inroads of advertising and popular programmes. Sunday morning programming was subject to regulation under Standard 35 of the Programme Standards, which stated that televised programmes must consist of Australian content and first be approved by the ABCB. Such programmes were limited to religious and instructional matter, and charitable activities. In response, the ABCB sought an amendment of

[114] A. Healey, 'A Critical Alliance: ABC Religious Broadcasting and the Christian Churches', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 26, 2005, p. 22.
[115] Privatisation of religious belief implies a self-construction and customisation of faith to suit the individual. See 'The privatisation of religious belief', http://www.e-n.org.uk/p-2411-The-privatisation-of-religious-belief.htm, accessed 30 October 2012.
[116] Millikan, 'Christianity and Australian Identity', in Harris et al. (eds), *The Shape of Belief*, p. 40.
[117] Fletcher, 'Anglicanism and National Identity in Australia Since 1962', p. 327.
[118] FACTS, *Report*, The Federation, Sydney, 1971-72, p. 12.

the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942* from the Attorney-General's Department to specify its power to determine the character of Sunday morning programmes. Disappointingly for the ABCB, no amendment was allowed. Instead, the ABCB was informed that according to the Act, its functions did not extend to determining the *content* of programmes, thus gravely limiting its power to enforce the Programme Standards.[119]

Debate over religious programming issues continued with two ABT initiatives and public comment by community organisations.[120] The ABT's Self-regulation Inquiry raised two main questions in relation to religious programming: whether Christianity predominantly represented religion in Australia and whether Christianity was predominantly represented by the churches.[121] Community groups challenged the constitutionality of Section 103 of the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942* governing religious programming and the preference for traditional religious programming over other community groups. The Australian Humanists lobbied the government to be given the right to airtime 'similar to that of the churches free of charge to present secular ethics and morality and to provide Programmes able to critically examine religion and religious teachings'.[122]

By now there were signs that ABC radio and television were embracing religious pluralism, with religious programming falling under the heading of 'Features'. Critics both within and outside the ABC began to see Divine Worship services as outdated and privileging major

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[119] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, pp. 71-73.
[120] There were key regulatory reviews in the late 1970s and early 1980s, including the Inquiry into the Concept of Self-regulation for Australian Broadcasters in 1977, and the Discussion Paper on Religious Matter on Television and the Review of Television Programme Standards in 1983. See ABT, *Self-regulation for Broadcasters*, pp. 107-16; ABT, *Discussion Paper – Religious Matter on Television*, Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, North Sydney, 1983; ABT, *Discussion Paper – Review of Television Programme Standards*, Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, North Sydney, 1983.
[121] Tasker, The Place of Religion in Commercial Television in Australia, p. 137.
[122] Australian Humanists, S*ubmission to Australian Broadcasting Tribunal's Review of Television Programme Standards*, Australian Humanists, Melbourne, 1983, p. 7, cited in Horsfield, 'American Religious Programs in Australia', in Abelman & Hoover (eds), *Religious Television*, p. 315.

denominations. Viewers were offered a variety of documentaries, exploring questions about the nature of the human condition rather than providing orthodox answers to religious questions.[123]

The ABT's Self-regulation Inquiry report reaffirmed religious programming as part of a licensee's obligation to the community.[124] Later the ABT restated the stations' obligations to 'allocate at least 1% of their normal weekly hours of service, with a minimum of 30 minutes each week, free of charge' for religious programmes. However the minimum amount could be negotiated if church agencies wished to provide less. Stations were also instructed to provide production facilities free of charge.[125]

In its 1983 Discussion Paper, the ABT raised the issue of scheduling. Despite the legal clarifications at the end of the 1970s, this issue was unresolved. Scheduling remained the bone of contention 'between the pressure on stations as commercial businesses and the direct or indirect costs of meeting statutory obligations'.[126] The ABT showed no interest in dealing directly with disputes between church production agencies and stations in implementing legislation. Instead the ABT defined itself as a mediator of last resort, rather than an enforcer of Standards.[127]

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[123] Inglis, *Whose ABC?*, pp. 71-72.
[124] ABT, *Self-regulation for Broadcasters*, p. 116.
[125] Horsfield, 'Down the Tube', p. 144.
[126] Ibid., p. 142.
[127] ABT, *Self-regulation for Broadcasters*, p. 114; Horsfield, 'Down the Tube', p. 144.

American evangelism

In 1973 Australian religious programmes shown on Sunday consisted mainly of short, five-minute epilogues and segments in children's programmes, scatters[128] and half-hour programmes. By this time, American televangelists had begun to make their presence felt on Australian commercial television through sponsored programmes.[129] Sponsored overseas programmes did not form a 'significant' part of commercial television programming at that time.[130] However by 1975, metropolitan stations filled half of religious statutory time with sponsored religious programmes, mostly of overseas origin.[131]

The encroachment of American religious programmes and televangelists had already begun on the airwaves of commercial radio, reaching a peak during the 1960s. Historian Bridget Griffen-Foley maintains that radio was an important tool in the 'worldwide expansion of evangelical Protestantism' as American interests were willing to pay for airtime and distribute professionally produced programmes. During the 1950s and 1960s, Australian commercial radio stimulated interest in the growing Pentecostal and charismatic renewal happening overseas.[132] During the 1960s and 1970s, Australia and the US shared many cultural, political and economic similarities, which generated and supported the expansion of evangelical broadcasters over alternative forms of religious broadcasting. This provided in Australia what Horsfield describes as a 'fertile social subculture' for televangelists to exploit.[133]

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[128] Scatters is a programming term that is also synonymous with 'spot' programming. This is a short form of programming consisting generally of 15, 20 or 60 second annoucnements for television broadcast. The first reference to scatter programming appeared in the ABCB's 1962 Annual Report. See ABCB, *Fourteenth Annual Report,* 1962, p. 52.

[129] The first official mention of the presence of American televangelists and their sponsored programmes on Australian television was made in the ABCB's 1971-72 annual report. See ABCB, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, 1971-72, p. 109. Sponsored programmes were broadcast during time purchased from commercial television stations.

[130] ABCB, *Twenty-fifth Annual Report*, 1972-73, p. 125; ABCB, *Twenty-sixth Annual Report*, 1973-74, p. 131.

[131] ABCB, *Twenty-seventh Annual Report*, 1974-75, p. 121.

[132] Griffen-Foley, 'Radio Ministries', pp. 50-51; Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations,* pp. 187-89.

[133] Horsfield, 'American Religious Programs in Australia', in Abelman & Hoover (eds), *Religious Television*, p. 317.

This subculture received little benefit from the statutory allocation of free time for religious programmes because of their low demographic representation in proportion to mainstream churches.[134] Australian Pentecostal groups found greater resonance with the American evangelicals and were willing to support the upbeat style and technological sophistication of US programmes.[135] In a church survey conducted in 1987, Australian audience figures showed that Pentecostals constituted 36% of the audience for American programmes (the largest share) while Baptists formed 23%.[136]

The ABT's move toward greater self-regulation contributed to the rise in overseas-sponsored and syndicated[137] television programmes. In 1977 the volume of locally produced religious programming had dropped by 25% while the volume of overseas programming had almost tripled. Horsfield suggests stations saw this emphasis on self-regulation as an opportunity to sell time for religion, rather than provide it for free as a way of meeting their mandatory obligations.[138] The average amount of overseas religious programming on each metropolitan station rose from 30 minutes each week in 1976-77 to 97 minutes in 1980-81. This was more than double the volume of Australian content within religious programmes.[139]

The NSW Council of Churches had expressed concern in its submission to the ABT's Self-regulation report that, on occasion, broadcasters appeared to give preference to sponsored

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[134] Carey, *Believing in Australia*, pp. 188-90.
[135] Horsfield, 'American Religious Programs in Australia', in Abelman & Hoover (eds), *Religious Television*, pp. 317- 18.
[136] Blombery & Hughes, *Combined Churches Survey for Faith and Mission*, pp. 32-33.
[137] Syndication refers to the sale of the right to broadcast radio and television shows by multiple radio stations and television stations without having to go through a broadcast network.
[138] Horsfield, 'Down the Tube', p. 144.
[139] Horsfield, 'American Religious Programs in Australia', in Abelman & Hoover (eds), *Religious Television*, pp. 316-17; Horsfield, 'Down the Tube', p. 145.

religious programmes.[140] The superior technical and production quality of overseas programming and overseas organisations' willingness to pay for airtime made them more attractive to commercial stations. The Seventh Day Adventist Radio and Television Productions (ARTP) largely held this pragmatic mentality, choosing to use sophisticated American programmes rather than Australian equivalents. Although the SDA had ventured into local production, producing its first Australian programme, *Focus on Living*, in 1969, the period between 1972 and 1983 was marked by a reliance on American-produced programmes. ARTP was one of the first church production agencies to telecast colour programmes, which it sourced from the US.[141]

The explanation for the general increase in imported programmes correlated with the expansion of televangelists and their influence.[142] Horsfield argues that, on the one hand, the takeover of American religious television by 'conservative, paid-time religious broadcasters' was partly to do with the declining influence and membership of mainstream denominations and the concurrent increase in power and growth of evangelical groups during the 1960s. On the other hand, evangelical broadcasters presented a message that appealed to viewers' self-interest and consumerism. Their willingness to adapt to television and sophisticated use of technology remained part of their successful syndication.[143]

Criticism of American religious programmes intensified in the Australian press. Debate focused on cultural imperialism, the role of the mass media and its impact on broader issues

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[140] ABT, *Self-regulation for Broadcasters*, p. 115.
[141] Peters, A Tale of Two Centres, p. 18, 28.
[142] Horsfield, 'American Religious Programs in Australia', in Abelman & Hoover (eds), *Religious Television*, pp. 316-17.
[143] Horsfield, *Religious Television*, pp.15-18. The rise of the religious 'right' and the courting of evangelicals during Republican Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign also marked the beginning of modern evangelicals' influence and involvement in the American political sphere. See J. D. Cardwell, *Mass Media Christianity: Televangelism and the Great Commission*, University Press of America, Lanham, MD, 1984, pp. 145-55.

of cultural autonomy. Already in 1972 the Australian and US relationship was undergoing review as a result of the Whitlam Labor government's initiative to restore a 'more independent Australian national and cultural identity'. US programmes held little cultural and practical relevance for Australian society, as many were unable to deal with national issues of multiculturalism, Aboriginal affairs and economic reform. Criticism also centred on the problem of US programmes drawing money away from local churches and towards projects sponsored by the programmes. The perceived political and economic agenda espoused by American televangelists was also condemned. The Australian Humanist Society opposed American religious programmes on the assumption that they were a 'guise' used to 'support the fund raising and political campaigns of American right-wing groups'.[144]

US sponsored religious programmes reached a peak in Australia in the early 1980s and then declined, possibly following in the footsteps of American audiences.[145] The decline may also be attributed to the Nine Network's abandonment of three hours of sponsored Sunday programming and replacing it with newscaf, educational, children's and local religious programmes.[146] In 1988 the *SMH* reported that Ten had axed the US programmes *Hour of Power* and *The World Tomorrow* to make room for Australian religious programmes. These decisions by networks were reinforced following public criticism over the financial and personal integrity of US-based broadcast organisations.[147]

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[144] Horsfield, 'American Religious Programs in Australia', in Abelman & Hoover (eds), *Religious Television*, pp. 321, 323.
[145] Ibid., p. 318.
[146] The earlier Sunday morning format included three hours of sponsored religious programmes from the US. See ABT, *Annual Report*, 1981-82, p. 74.
[147] Horsfield, 'American Religious Programs in Australia', in Abelman & Hoover (eds), *Religious Television*, pp. 321, 323.

The decision to cancel Robert Schuller's *Hour of Power*, the longest-running American religious programme in Australia,[148] marked the beginning of an open rejection by local networks of sponsored religious programmes. Ten replaced *Hour of Power* with two locally produced religious programmes – the RCC's *Mass for You at Home* and *Good Day*. According to Ian Gow, Ten's managing director, there was 'a degree of discomfort' in having paid religion on television, particularly in light of the scandalous sexual revelations surrounding American televangelist Jimmy Swaggart, but primarily because overseas religious programmes deprived local church production agencies from using the statutory requirement. Gow claimed the network's decision was conscience-inspired: accepting funds from overseas religious programmes went against the spirit of the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942*.[149]

Strategies for Australian religious programmes

The cultural renaissance in Australia during the 1970s spurred on calls for a national religious presence on television. Although mainstream churches had taken steps to bring their identities more fully in line with the nation and reposition their stance on social issues,[150] more radical calls for an 'Australian' church presence on television were echoed amongst church production agencies impatient with sectarianism. Douglas Tasker and Ray Watson, presidents of CTAV and CTA NSW respectively, had ambitions for the creation of a national religious television organisation.[151]

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[148] It ran for twelve years.
[149] M. Vistonay, 'The Lord Giveth, the Network Taketh Away', *SMH*, 20 August 1988, p. 74.
[150] Fletcher, 'Anglicanism and National Identity in Australia Since 1962', pp. 334-45.
[151] Tasker, 'Witness Through Mass Media', in Southall (ed.), *The Challenge*, pp. 93-100; NLA: Adrian Jose papers, MS7702, folder: 7702/9/4, 'Religious broadcasting 1959-1969 Part 1 of 2', 'Advisory Committee on Religious Programmes Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting', ABCB, Agendum No. 1969/11, File No. TC/4/6, 15 April 1969.

Programming experimentation resulted, but often such attempts were met with resistance.[152] In 1978, Roman Catholic layman and experienced Australian actor, Bill Lyall, produced and presented 'Ocker ads' designed to provide a 'common person's view of Christ'. Although details of how they were produced and funded are elusive, the ads had an instant impact in Australia and overseas.[153] However, conservative groups in the Australian RCC found them 'too colloquial' and they were never broadcast on Australian television.[154] Distaste for the ads may have reflected, in part, a concern with attempts to 'Australianise' a universal God. The Anglican Church was careful not to identify itself too closely with extreme forms of nationalism. Anglican Bishop Bruce Wilson of Bathurst argued, 'We don't need an ocker Christianity'. Rather the church's purpose was to make 'Christians from Australians, including ockers'.[155]

Marking a decisive change in religious programming, CTA's one-minute 'spots' or 'scatters' increasingly used overtly Australian themes and presenters.[156] The spots frequently adopted a social and political perspective, addressing issues of racism, poverty and social isolation.[157] Spot programming was frequently televised in prime viewing time on metropolitan stations, and held an advantage over longer programmes which were televised at less favourable times.[158] In 1988, Ian Gow estimated that TEN-10 ran up to 50 spots per week. Gow believed

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[152] Millikan, 'Christianity and Australian Identity', in Harris et al. (eds), *The Shape of Belief*, p. 33.
[153] Millikan notes they were 'played on the BBC and NBC. Video tapes were made for the American church. There was discussion of them in Italy.' See Millikan, *The Sunburnt Soul*, p. 101.
[154] Ibid., p. 80; Millikan, 'Christianity and Australian Identity', in Harris et al. (eds), *The Shape of Belief*, p. 33.
[155] Cited in Fletcher, 'Anglicanism and National Identity in Australia Since 1962', p. 327.
[156] Spots (otherwise known as 'scatters') were designed for use between longer programmes. They aimed to present the Christian message in a short and relevant way. The religious spot concept was developed by Douglas Tasker at CTA Victoria and received local and international awards for its innovative design. The CTA and RCC are reported to have used this form of programming from the early 1960s. It was subsequently adopted by community service organisations. See ABCB, *Fourteenth Annual Report,* 1962, p. 52; Horsfield, 'Down the Tube', p. 143. Furthermore, some of these spots were either animated material or used Australian musicians who performed with broad Australian accents. The Australian bush also featured in spots. Examples can be found on YouTube.
[157] D. Mackay & T. Lane, 'Pathfinders of the airwaves', *The Age*, 26 December 2009; J. Button, 'Graphic designers who challenged the norm', *The Age*, 10 November 2002.
[158] ABCB, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, 1971-72, p. 109.

that religious documentaries and spots were less likely to repel viewers than the more overt, traditional religious programmes.[159] However not all church bodies supported spot announcements, believing they commercialised religion and treated it as a marketable product.[160] These less conventional programming strategies once again opened the debate about the purpose of religious programmes and highlighted lack of unity amongst church bodies. A national religious television organisation and message were unlikely to eventuate.

In 1979, Wesley Mission began *Turn 'Round Australia* (*TRA*), an Australian-produced programme compered by Sydney's Wesley Mission Superintendent, Gordon Moyes. *TRA* initially aired as a 13-week series of religious programming on TEN-10. The response to the first series was so positive that the Mission negotiated further time with TEN-10. *TRA*'s popularity and Moyes' telegenic presence, however, naturally caught Kerry Packer's attention. Nine was always on the lookout for rising stars and programmes to help cement its number one status. The network swiftly negotiated a 'statutory facilities and time' deal and *TRA* found a permanent home on the Nine Network.[161] According to the programme's producer, Martin Johnson, Australian viewers embraced *TRA* because it was 'scratching where Australians itch', and proved that Australian viewers 'do respond to someone who is an ordinary bloke like them and talks to them about life and God as you would to your mates'.[162]

The show featured Australian and overseas celebrities, including sports stars, and provided a launch pad for Christian musical talent. Its popularity prompted other states to request national distribution of *TRA*.[163] By 1983 *TRA* was the most widely viewed Australian

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[159] M. Vistonay, 'The Lord Giveth, the Network Taketh Away', *SMH*, 20 August 1988, p. 74.
[160] ABT, *Self-regulation for Broadcasters*, p. 111.
[161] http://www.wesleymission.org.au/Christian_life/Television/About_Us/Our-history.asp, accessed 2 August 2011; Interview with Martin Johnson, Gymea Anglican Church, 27 April 2012.
[162] 'Turn 'Round Australia: Entering our 10th Year…', *Impact*, May 1989, p. 15.
[163] 'TRA's popularity grows', *Impact*, Spring Issue, October 1980, p. 12.

religious programme.[164] At this stage, Moyes decided *TRA* needed a new direction so he produced a series of interactive programmes. After establishing Wesley Film Productions Limited, *TRA*'s major productions of Bible study series 'Discovering Jesus', 'Discovering Paul' and 'Discovering the young Church' were widely accepted by all Christian denominations in Australia and penetrated local and overseas markets.[165] The series were also recipients of an international award from the National Broadcasters of America in 1988.[166]

In the mid to late 1980s, Australian church bodies no longer held a monopoly on Sunday morning television. Successful business/current affairs programmes such as *Sunday*, *Business Sunday*, *Business Week* and *Face to Face* (discussed in Chapter 3) displaced locally produced religious programmes. *Sing Me A Rainbow* (produced by the Anglican Church), *Mass for You at Home* (RCC), *Focus on Living* (Sydney Adventist Hospital) and *TRA* were relegated to early Sunday mornings. In 1988, Santamaria's 10-minute programme was broadcast at 7.20 a.m.; a decade earlier, it had been broadcast at 10.55 a.m.[167] The ABT's annual reports from 1984 to 1987 show that religion had become a minor component of television programming, holding ninth position, and occupying just 0.1% of programming time during peak viewing times (6.30-9.30 p.m.).[168]

In 1987, the Australian Churches Media Association met with FACTS in an effort to improve timeslots for religious programmes. However its appeals then and later were unsuccessful, with the stations predictably arguing that, unless religious programmes attracted larger

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[164] 'Milestone for TRA', *Impact*, March 1984, p. 20; *TRA* was also shown on the Aboriginal based IMPARJA TV network in Alice Springs. See 'Turn 'Round Australia: Entering our 10th Year…', *Impact*, May 1989, p. 15.
[165] *Impact*, August 1985, p. 17; *Impac*t, August 1986, p. 23.
[166] 'Media', *Impact*, October 1988, p. 47.
[167] M. Vistonay, 'The Lord Giveth, the Network Taketh Away', *SMH*, 20 August 1988, p. 74.
[168] ABT, *Annual Report*s, 1984-85, p. 115; 1985-86, p. 196; 1986-87, pp. 223, 225.

audiences, they could not expect to occupy commercially competitive timeslots.[169] In response to religious programmes' continued marginalisation on commercial television, church media agencies sought to broaden their involvement in various media to maximise their evangelism.

Religion, media and popular culture: The 1990s and 2000s

During the 1990s and 2000s religious television programmes were pushed further into marginal timeslots and spot programming was scheduled off-peak.[170] Most church production agencies did not have sufficient finance to provide programmes to fill the time allocated to them. Production and staff were expensive and denominational funding was hard to attract due to the marginalisation of religious programming, despite the *BSA 1992* still recommending its continuation.[171] To improve the situation, the CTAs of NSW and Queensland merged in 1996 to form Christian Television Australia, which provides programmes for the Seven, Nine and Ten networks and the Australian Christian Channel.[172] All other state-based CTAs eventually closed down and other production agencies faded away.[173]

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[169] M. Vistonay, 'The Lord Giveth, the Network Taketh Away', *SMH*, 20 August 1988, p. 74.
[170] Australian Churches Media Association, Submission to The Productivity Commission, 4 May 1999, http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/26805/sub007.pdf, accessed 25 August 2011, p. 5.
[171] Telephone interview with Michael Bennett, 9 January 2013.
[172] The Australian Christian Channel is a non-for-profit faith-based media ministry. It has partnerships with other ministry broadcasters that work together to establish a new model of Christian Television. See http://www.acctv.com.au/cmspage.php?intid=141&linkid=88, accessed 13 October 2012; 'Christian Television Australia moves to Sydney and appoints new CEO', press release, 1 February 2009, Christian Television Australia. http://www.christiantelevision.org.au, accessed 16 July 2011.
[173] M. Johnson, 'Christian television in Australia – does it have a future?', 6 November 2010, Christian Television Australia, http://www.christiantelevision.org.au, accessed 16 July 2011; Horsfield, 'Down the tube', p. 145.

A further consequence was that existing church media agencies sought alternative broadcasting outlets, such as community channels and pay TV.[174] Catholic Church Television Australia (CCTVA) was one of the first organisations to volunteer its services and provide programmes for the Victorian-based community channel, Aurora, paying for the number of hours it aired. Other bodies that agreed to take part in Aurora included Anglican Media, the Salvation Army, UNICEF, Mission Australia and the Red Cross.[175] By 2010, the Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting was promoting and overseeing CCTVA.[176] CCTVA aired *Mass for You at Home* and 40 different programmes through Aurora Community Channel 183, Foxtel and Austar Digital. Even though these media outlets have become important platforms for religious programming, legislation continues to ensure it has a presence on FTA commercial television. Following the cancellation of *PoV* in the early 1990s due to Santamaria's ill health, *Mass for You at Home* has managed to remain on TEN-10 at 6 a.m.[177]

Sydney's Wesley Mission also produces programmes across multiple media platforms. *Wesley Impact!* (formerly *Rise and Shine*)[178] is broadcast on the Nine Network at 5.30 a.m. and on the Australian Christian Channel, as well as overseas. Additionally, the Wesley Mission media department has embraced the Internet and YouTube to create and distribute

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[174] For example, in 1995, the Sydney-based Christian Outreach Centre was one of the front-runners to establish religious programming on pay TV, entering into discussions with Foxtel and Optus. See J. Niall, 'Pray TV Picked To Be The New Savior for Religion', *Sunday Age*, 8 October 1995, p. 8.
[175] 'Fed: Catholic Church takes to pay TV', *Australian Associated Press General News*, 1 March 2005.
[176] The Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting provides consumer information about films for members of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and members of the Australian Catholic Press Association. It offers media education for the Catholic community, comments on Australian film and broadcasting culture and advocates on media legislation and classification issues. See Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting, http://www.catholic.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1182:australian-catholic-office-for-film-and-broadcasting&catid=91:agencies&Itemid=306, accessed September 30 2011.
[177] Morgan (ed.), *B.A. Santamaria Running the Show*, p. 400; P. Ingham, 'We live in a media world', http://www.dow.org.au, accessed 22 October 2011.
[178] *Rise and Shine* replaced *TRA* in 2006. See http://www.wesleymission.org.au/Christian_life/Television/About_Us/Our-history.asp, accessed 2 August 2011.

stories about the work of Wesley Mission among the poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable.[179] Andrew Jakubowicz observes that the Internet has 'transformed the way in which religions proselytise and build communities of believers'.[180] Mark Hadley, former director of radio and television for Anglican Media, suggests that many church media agencies have moved away from television production because Internet communication is perceived to be word-based (which is a more comfortable medium for Bible-based cultures), is cheaper and audience levels are easier to quantify. Christian churches and evangelistic cultures in particular are looking for more direct results for their investment and want assurance that the medium they invest in will provide them with the outcomes they desire.[181]

In addition to embracing new forms of media, several church media agencies have adopted bolder, glossier and more contemporary approaches aimed at reaching the unchurched, employing marketing tactics that the church had previously criticised the secular media for using. In 2004 the Sydney Diocese's Anglican Media produced a controversial programme, *Good Sex,* on the Ten Network. When Ten offered the 11.30 p.m. timeslot after *Sports Tonight* (*ST*), Anglican Media decided to opt for a programme that would appeal to the *ST*'s 25-35 male demographic. *Good Sex* was comprised of a series of one-hour discussion programmes featuring medical professionals and Christian panellists who frankly tackled philosophical and practical sexual issues from a Christian perspective.[182] The programme caused a media fanfare with national and international press and radio coverage.[183] In an

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[179] Ibid.
[180] A. Jakubowicz, 'Religion, Media and Cultural Diversity', in J. Jupp (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, Vic., 2009, p. 661.
[181] Telephone Interview with Mark Hadley, 9 January 2013. For a fuller discussion on the effectiveness of Christian television (as a tool for reaching the unchurched and bringing *new* members into the church), see P. Horsfield, 'Christian Television: How Effective Is It?', in Harris et al. (eds), *The Shape of Belief*, pp. 175-81.
[182] S. MacLean & V. Walker, 'Hyped to the Heavens', *The Australian*, 3 June 2004, p. 15.
[183] Sydney Anglicans, 'Focus on Good Sex', 28 May 2004, http://sydneyanglicans.net/news/1459a, accessed 15 December 2011.

interview for Radio National, Mark Hadley admitted that *Good Sex*, which he produced, was a result of Anglican Media's 'striving to be relevant'.[184]

It was also reportedly part of a wider Sydney Anglican agenda to become more Australian, changing from the 'Anglo-Saxon enclave' into a more reactive body that embraced migrant and Aboriginal cultures. In 2004 *The Australian* reported that as a result of conscious effort, Sydney synod registered 11% growth while most other dioceses revealed an annual fall of 2% and rural dioceses as much as 20%.[185] Under the direction of Archbishop Peter Jensen, Anglican Media in 2004 maintained three websites, and produced the church's largest newspaper, *Southern Cross*, 30 hours' of television a year, and 20 half-minute to one-minute spots on radio a year.[186] However in 2009 Anglican Media disbanded its television unit after the Sydney Diocese experienced a catastrophic financial loss during the GFC.[187]

The cost-cutting measures of commercial networks in the 2000s, referred to in Chapter 1, impacted on religious programming and production agencies. 2005 marked the turning point when networks tightened their belts and churches could no longer support 30-60 minute programmes.[188] Furthermore, when ACMA was established in 2005, Schedule 2, Part 3, Clause 7 of the *BSA* 1992 stated that commercial licensees 'will broadcast matter of a religious nature during such periods as the ACMA determines and, if the ACMA so directs,

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[184] Good Sex ran during 2004. 'The Media Report', ABC Radio National, 6 May 2004, http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8:30/mediarpt/stories/s1101120.htm, accessed 10 October 2011.
[185] J. Murray, 'God's falling from grace', *The Australian*, 23 December 2004, p. 9.
[186] S. MacLean & V. Walker, 'Hyped to the Heavens', *The Australian*, 3 June 2004, p. 15.
[187] Telephone interview with Mark Hadley, 9 January 2013; M. Griffiths, 'Anglican Church loses in market speculation', *AM*, 10 June 2009, http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2009/s2593917.htm, accessed 9 January 2013; M. Johnson, 'Christian television in Australia – does it have a future?', 6 November 2010, Christian Television Australia, http://www.christiantelevision.org.au, accessed 16 July 2011.
[188] Telephone interview with Michael Bennett, 9 January 2013.

will do so without charge'. At present, ACMA has not made any specifications in relation to the volume of broadcast material required or whether it is to be provided free of charge.[189]

During this period, Christian Television Australia became a broker for independent producers and less involved with producing half-weekly religious programmes. Instead, it partnered with organisations such as the Bible Society NSW and Olive Tree Media to provide feature documentaries and special seasonal broadcasts. In 2009 Christian Television Australia moved its central offices from Brisbane to Sydney, appointing former *TRA* producer, Martin Johnson, as CEO.[190] This highlights the fact that religious programming, like other programming for commercial FTA television, is centralised in Sydney.

The rise of Hillsong

Since its humble beginnings in 1983, the Hillsong church has experienced a meteoric rise both in Australia and overseas. Established by Brian and Bobbie Houston, Hillsong is a mega, multi-site Pentecostal church affiliated with the Australian Christian Churches, the Australian branch of the Assemblies of God. It is the fastest growing church in Australia, and claims the biggest global reach of evangelical Christian churches.[191] In fact, Sydney's Hillsong has grown to be the biggest church in Australian history, claiming over 20,000 members.[192] Hillsong TV's half-hour programme, *Brian Houston @Hillsong TV,* is broadcast nationally and internationally on several Christian networks. Sydney's TEN-10 telecasts the programme on Sundays at 6:30 a.m.[193]

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[189] Horsfield, 'Down the Tube', p. 145.
[190] 'Christian Television Australia moves to Sydney and appoints new CEO', Christian Television Australia press release, 1 February 2009, http://www.christiantelevision.org.au, accessed 16 July 2011.
[191] Jakubowicz, 'Religion, Media and Cultural Diversity', in Jupp (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion in Australia*, p. 661.
[192] H. M. Carey, 'An Historical Outline of Religion in Australia', in Jupp (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion in Australia*, p. 21.
[193] http://www2.hillsong.com/tv/home.asp, accessed 14 July 2011; Jakubowicz, 'Religion, Media and Cultural Diversity', in Jupp (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion in Australia*, p. 661.

Shane Clifton's study of Pentecostal churches in Australia observes that their renewal embraced modernisation and contemporary styles of worship. This accent on cultural relevance, coupled with a focus on contemporary music and youth culture, has brought the Pentecostal church more generally into mainstream church life and society.[194] In 2004 *The Australian* reported that the most successful Christian bodies were those with less structure and institutional traditions. Hillsong abandoned traditional church buildings and replaced them with stadium-like structures, presenting a high-energy variety of Christianity capable of attracting a wider constituency.[195]

Slickly-produced televised church services are now the most common form of religious programming and the most cost-efficient. The Hillsong style has inspired other Pentecostal and mainstream churches to adopt entertaining styles of worship and communication.[196] In 2010, *Rise and Shine* was renamed *Wesley Impact!* and given a contemporary 'new look', showcasing some of 'Australia's leading Christian artists'. The programme's efforts to appeal to youth culture were demonstrated during Easter 2011 when Australian Idol winner and professed Christian, Stan Walker, featured at Wesley Mission's annual Easter Sunrise service televised live from the Sydney Opera House on Seven.[197]

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[194] The dramatic increase in Pentecostalist identification over the period between 1996-2006 (a 26% increase compared with Catholicism's 7%, while Anglicanism declined by 5% and the Uniting Church by 15%) is a testament to this fact. In Jakubowicz, 'Religion, Media and Cultural Diversity', in Jupp (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion in Australia*, p. 661; S. Clifton, *Pentecostal Churches in Transition: Analysing the Developing Ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia*, Brill, Leidon; Boston, 2009, pp. 151-52, 194.
[195] J. Murray, 'God's falling from grace', *The Australian*, 23 December 2004, p. 9.
[196] The Awesome Church, a Pentecostal church in Five Dock, broadcasts its main service –'contemporary, inspirational and meaningful'– live to community channel TVS in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Australian churches, ShireLive, LifeSource and Inspire Church, also deliver Hillsong-inspired worship service formats on TVS. See http://www.awesomechurch.com/awesometv.phd, accessed 14 October 2011.
[197] *Wesley Impac*t!, Easter 2011, p. 11.

This ‘contemporary’ trend of Australian churches’ appeal to youth culture is arguably an extension of the philosophies and strategies that began in American evangelical youth groups during the 1930s and 1940s. Particularly after the Second World War, American churches recognised that their fate rested on winning over the next generation. In his history of American Christian youth ministry, Thomas E. Bergler argues that what began as a praiseworthy goal of reforming the church by creating a youth-friendly version of religion has resulted in ‘the Juvenilization of American Christianity’.[198] Bergler defines juvenilization as ‘the process by which religious beliefs, practices and developmental characteristics of adolescents become accepted as appropriate for Christians of all ages’.[199]

In Bergler’s assessment, what has resulted is widespread spiritual immaturity, Christianised adolescent narcissism, consumerism, vague doctrine and a popularised, dumbed down, feel-good faith that has influenced evangelical, mainstream Protestant, African American and Roman Catholic Church traditions.[200] A similar development has occurred in Australia over recent decades, readily seen in the way contemporary churches appeal to young people by providing an entertaining, fast-paced, informal, rock-music-like worship experience. These contemporary youth-oriented approaches adopted by Australian churches such as Hillsong are reflected in contemporary religious programmes on commercial television. Naturally this has reignited the debate about the purpose of religious programming and the influence of Christian evangelicalism in the public sphere.

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[198] T.E. Bergler, *The Juvenilization of American Christianity*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2012, p. 4.
[199] T.E. Bergler, ‘When Are We Going to Grow Up? The Juvenilization of Christianity’, *Christianity Today*, June 2012. See also J. L. Kincheloe & S. R. Steinberg (eds), *Christotainmnent: Selling Jesus through Popular Cultur*e, Westview Press, Bouder, 2009.
[200] Bergler, *The Juvenilization of American Christianity*, p. 224.

Conclusion

Despite the unique privilege of having its presence guaranteed by legislation since 1948, religion has failed to find a secure and prominent place on commercial television. More so than any other non-entertainment genre, religion has experienced difficulties in justifying its message, presence and purpose on a medium philosophically at odds with its content. As Australia has become more secular and pluralist, Christianity has likewise struggled to find its proper place in the public arena. Consequently, over the decades, there has been a marked decline in the presence of religious programming on Australian FTA commercial television. Regulatory bodies that have been responsible for overseeing the supervision of Section 103 of the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942* and *BSA 1992* have not been endowed with the power to enforce the statutory requirements nor have they shown much interest in clarifying its ambiguities.

Church media agencies too often lacked the skills, resources and financial backing to overcome an already difficult situation on FTA commercial television. Moreover, they occasionally suffered disunity and were hampered by a reluctance to share resources with other states. As a result, church media agencies were (and still are) forced to use alternative media platforms and adopt new approaches to counter off-peak television schedules. But it would be remiss to lay most of the blame on FTA television stations and the effect their commercial policies had on religious programming, since churches were reluctant to embrace the opportunities provided by television.[201] No doubt churches recognised television's role as an agenda-setting medium, but ambivalence remained over its usefulness for building a community of believers. With limited resources, churches wanted assurance that the medium

[201] Telephone interview with Michael Bennett, 9 January 2013.

they were investing in was having an impact and producing results. But as they would find out, the 'influence' of television is difficult to measure.

Like any other television genre, religious programming is most successful when its programmes are well-conceived and produced, and presented by expert, personable communicators. The most enduring religious programmes have arguably been ones that were less doctrinally conservative, offering a message more palatable to viewers intent on being entertained. More than that, successful religious programmes recognise the importance of employing a culturally specific approach to their audience; they cater to audience demographics watching during marginal timeslots, and are adept at embracing cultural and technological changes. Televised church services comprise the most common form of programming and reflect the continuity but also development in programming over time. Whereas in the 1950s these consisted only of worship services in a church building, today they integrate a magazine-style format with additional segments devoted to interviews and promotional material.

Religious programming on commercial FTA television is still the preserve of Christianity. Hillsong and other Pentecostal churches dominate airtime generally (FTA, pay TV and community channels) having effectively repositioned themselves from the cultural margins to the cultural mainstream. Much of their success on television has reflected their ability to tap into the youth and consumer cultures, operate large organisations, generate financial backing, employ advanced technology, and develop alliances with both sides of politics by focusing on common cultural concerns and values.[202]

[202] Horsfield, 'Down the Tube', p. 146.

5

Sport and Television: A Powerful Partnership

During the 1955 hearing for applications for Sydney's first commercial television licences, Frank Packer argued that television 'was going to be a very important factor in building up the character of the nation'.[1] Sport emerged as the ideal subject for the medium, sharing more than any other programming genre the same strengths that television possesses: 'liveness' and 'spectacle'.[2] Its partnership with television thus accelerated sport's centrality to Australian popular culture.[3] Since colonial times, sport has maintained a vital role in the social and cultural fabric of Australian life. Although Australians are divided religiously, economically, socially and ethnically, there is a sense in which sporting culture and sporting achievements unite the country and forge a national 'sense of self'.[4] Television has capitalised on sport's cultural currency.

According to historian Richard Cashman, much of what has been written in Australia on sport and the media suffers from an 'ahistorical' approach. He argues that there is a persistent assumption that sport has been transformed by television (and usually for the worse). This assumption ignores how much earlier media technology gradually changed sporting structures

[1] Cited in Griffen-Foley, *The House of Packer*, p. 213.
[2] Crisell, *A Study of Modern Television*, p. 98.
[3] B. Stewart, M. Nicholson, A. Smith & H. Westerbeek, *Australian Sport: Better by Design?: The Evolution of Australian Sport Policy*, Routledge, New York, 2004, p. 13; D. Rowe, 'Married with Friction: Sport and Television', in R. Lynch, *Sport and Pay TV: Strategies for Success*, School of Leisure and Tourism Studies, University of Technology, Sydney, Sydney, 1996, p.13.
[4] Stewart et al., *Australian Sport*, p. 9.

and culture.[5] By the time television arrived in 1956, the press and radio had contributed to an expansion of Australian sporting culture.[6] The press, in particular, had invested sport with significant social value, promoting the amateur ethic and defining what kind of behaviour was appropriate for players.[7] However, it was not until the 1970s that television made a significant impact on the Australian sporting landscape, which in turn was reflected in the commercial programming of sport.

Alongside broader transformations in contemporary culture, television accelerated the commercialisation of sport already begun in the eras of print and radio.[8] Rapid developments in technology, increased government intervention and corporate sponsorship have also coincided with the rise of professional sport and the privatisation[9] of sporting codes and organisations. These changes have also affected sports programming on FTA commercial television, which now contain features such as instant replays and advertisements for corporate sponsors.

In recent years, sports programming has come under threat as audiences drift towards pay TV. However, as we shall see, Australia has been far more reluctant to join the global trend of sport's migration to subscription-based television. Australia's stringent anti-siphoning laws and the role sport has played in debates about public interest and cultural citizenship reflects

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[5] R. Cashman, *Paradise of Sport: A History of Australian Sport*, Rev. ed., Walla Walla Press, Sydney, 2010, p. 131.
[6] C. Cunneen, 'Elevating and Recording the People's Pastimes: Sydney Sporting Journalism 1886-1939', in R. Cashman & M. McKernan (eds), *Sport: Money, Morality and the Media*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, NSW, 1981, pp. 162-76; Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 21.
[7] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, pp. 131-32.
[8] John McKay outlines some of these broader movements in Australia: 'the demise of class and community affiliations; the trend toward suburbanisation; the growth of individualism; the ascendency of professional experts; the emergence of mass media rather than direct forms of communication and social participation; and the commercialisation of personal and public life have all altered cultural norms.' See J. McKay, *No Pain, No Gain?: Sport and Australian Culture*, Prentice Hall, Sydney, 1991, p. 49. See also R. Cashman, *Paradise of Sport,* p. 139.
[9] Privatisation in this context refers to sporting clubs and leagues being owned by consortia, and media interests or magnates, such as Rupert Murdoch and Kerry Packer.

the significance sport holds in our social and cultural identity.[10] Further, the growth in telecommunications and online media and their impact on audience consumption habits have forced FTA networks to find new ways to deliver live sport that benefit both programmers and viewers.

Early Days: The 1950s and 1960s

Australian sport first featured on the small screen on 17 September 1956 as part of TCN-9's inaugural news bulletin.[11] Contrary to sporting folklore, coverage of the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games was preceded by live broadcasts of two major sporting events: the £2,500 Pelaco International Golf Tournament in Sydney (TCN-9) and the NSW Tennis Championships (ABN-2).[12] The Pelaco Golf Tournament was played on the Australian Club course at Kensington, NSW, and attracted high-profile Australian, South African and American professional golfers.[13] For over four days, two hours each day, TCN-9's telecast transfixed Sydney, declared the *Telegraph*. Viewers crowded footpaths to capture a glimpse of the action on television sets placed inside the windows of menswear and sporting goods stores.[14]

The tournament's popularity bore witness to the golfing boom in Australia at the time and signalled the important and profitable nexus between televised sport and advertisers.[15] This popularity convinced business firms that sponsoring sport broadcasts was a worthwhile

[10] D. Rowe & C. Gilmour, 'Getting a ticket to the world party: televising soccer in Australia', *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January 2009, p. 12.
[11] 'Religious Talk and News on TCN Channel 9', *Daily Telegraph*, 18 September 1956, p. 1.
[12] 'First Major sport televised in Australia', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 November 1956, p. 17; ABC Annual Report 1956-57, p. 29.
[13] 'First Major sport televised in Australia', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 November 1956, p. 17.
[14] 'Sport History', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 November 1956, p. 24.
[15] 'Golf is booming more than ever', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 November 1956, p. 17; 'First Major sport televised in Australia', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 November 1956, p. 17.

investment. Although corporate sponsorship[16] on television was 'scattered' during the 1950s and 1960s, sports with a greater international focus such as golf, tennis and motor racing attracted formal sponsorship agreements.[17] Ampol was the first Australian company to initiate large-scale corporate sport sponsorships on radio and television.[18] Some of its first promotions included the Davis Cup and Wimbledon Championships and early telecasts of Rugby Union on TCN-9. In 1956, Ampol exclusively sponsored the telecast of the Olympic Games,[19] helping stations with finance and the impetus to develop OB technology and improve production standards.[20]

The Olympic Games

The Olympic Games is recognised as the pinnacle of amateur international sporting competition. It was a competition, however, in the 1950s that encapsulated the amateur ideal; professionals were barred from competing. The amateur ideal of sport was essentially Anglo-centric and elitist.[21] Those who inherited wealth were able to enjoy sport without having to earn money for playing, but professionalised sport seemed an attractive proposition for the working-class and the 'emergent entrepreneurial capitalist'.[22] Amateur ideology received great support from the media, politicians and the public, underpinning not only the Olympics but also most codes of football, cricket, tennis, golf, and swimming. As a result, many of these groups viewed professional sport with great suspicion. Up until the mid-1970s,

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[16] Sponsorship and advertising share a great deal of overlap in practice, but there is a distinction. Advertising is a non-personal delivery of a paid advertising message through a form of mass media. Corporate sponsorship is a specific form of advertising. Corporate sponsorship is defined as 'the provision of financial assistance by a business organisation to a sports association or club with a view to obtaining some promotional or commercial benefit'. See Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism [and] Australian Sports Commission, *Australian Sport: A Profile*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1985, p. 57.
[17] W. Vamplew, Australian Sports Commission, & The Australian Society for Sports History (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Spor*t, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992, p. 326.
[18] These included Rugby Union, motor racing, tennis, bowls, golf, water skiing, basketball, baseball, hockey and rodeos. See 'Big involvement factor', *B & T*, 1 May 1969, p. 14.
[19] 'Heavy Ad Support', *B & T*, 2 May 1968, p. 20.
[20] ABCB, *Ninth Annual Report*, 1957, p. 44.
[21] McKay, *No Pain, No Gain?*, p. 49.
[22] Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 17.

Australian sport was largely influenced by a British amateur ideology in which participants engaged in sport for its own sake, largely or entirely without remuneration.[23]

Yet the amateur code faced steady erosion after the Second World War, as Australia emerged less economically reliant on Britain and, in the 1950s, forged a stronger relationship with the US.[24] Gradually Australian sporting bodies' relationships with business became even closer, providing employment and remuneration to amateur athletes who were tempted to turn professional. The pool of talented Australian amateurs available for the 1956 Melbourne Olympics was potentially larger with this liberal interpretation of the amateur code. Moreover, this gave an advantage in sporting competitions against other countries that strictly enforced the code.[25]

The Melbourne Olympics was the first Olympic Games to be held, and broadcast, in Australia.[26] The event officially opened on 22 November 1956, only days after the launch of Melbourne stations ABV-2 and HSV-7. [27] However the lead-up to the Games was marred by controversy. At one stage, the world governing body for the Olympics – the International Organising Committee (IOC) – threatened to host the Games in Rome, as the building for the 1960 Olympics was further advanced. The Olympic Games Organising Committee's problems were compounded by a tight budget, which was eventually met by the State and

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[23] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, pp. 54-56.
[24] K. Fewster, 'Advantage Australia: Davis Cup Tennis 1950-1959', *Sporting Traditions*, Vol. 2, No.1, November 1985, p. 63-64.
[25] 'Shamateurism' is a term given to the practice of providing athletes with 'indirect' payment despite professing their status as non-professional or amateur. See Fewster, 'Advantage Australia', p. 59-64, for an example of shamateurism that worked for the Davis Cup. See also Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, p. 285 for how 2UE, Associated Newspapers and a menswear store in 1931, were credited for keeping the famous cricketer, Donald Bradman, in Australia. See also T. Ward, *Sport in Australian National Identity: Kicking Goals*, Routledge, New York, 2010, pp. 142-43.
[26] R. Cashman, *The Bitter-Sweet Awakening: The Legacy of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games*, Walla Walla Press, Petersham, NSW, 2006, pp. 22-23.
[27] Anon., *Australian Television*, p. 14.

Federal Governments.[28] This was a rather benevolent undertaking considering Australian governments at the time applied a very minimalist policy towards sport.[29]

One issue raised during the build-up to the Games concerned the filming and televising of the competition. The Organising Committee believed it had a responsibility to safeguard the future of Olympic broadcasts by demanding payment rather than granting free broadcast access. This angered major news organisations both at home and abroad, which argued that the Olympics constituted a news event and not entertainment. Prior to the 1956 Olympics, the income from sponsorship and broadcasting rights was negligible, and so, in 1955, the Organising Committee considered the possibility of selling exclusive television and newsreel rights to an English company. This caused outrage with overseas television executives, who opposed any form of exclusivity and insisted on free access to cover the Games as news.[30]

The Organising Committee held steadfastly to its decision, although local television stations were allowed to cover the Games live for a minimal free, as there were only 5000 television sets in Australia and ground attendance would not be affected. Yet overseas television organisations such as the BBC, NBC and CBS, were required to pay a much larger fee.[31] The Australian episode became the catalyst for the revision of Rule 49 (Publicity) – the IOC's legislation concerning the marketing of television rights – and raised the question of whether the Games should be presented as a news event or an entertainment package.[32] The system of

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[28] B. Stewart, *Sport Funding and Finance*, Elsevier, Jordan Hill, Oxford, 2007, p. 11.
[29] Stewart et al., *Australian Sport*, p. 29.
[30] 'Overseas Television Firms Refuse to Buy Olympic Rights', *SMH*, 5 April 1956, p. 3.
[31] H. Gordon, *Australia and the Olympic Games*, 3rd ed., University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld, 1996, p. 223.
[32] S. R. Wenn, 'Lights! Camera! Little Action: Television, Avery Brundage, and the 1956 Melbourne Olympics', *Sporting Traditions*, Vol. 10, No. 1, November 1993, p. 39.

officially selling exclusive broadcasting rights to the highest bidder was introduced at the 1960 Rome Olympic Games.[33]

Coverage of the Rome Olympics underlined the rivalry among the Sydney stations. Although the ABC had bought the American CBS service for the Rome Olympics, the daily film would not arrive in Australia until five days after the events. TCN-9, not bound by contractual obligations, sent its own cameramen to cover the Games who sent back their unprocessed film to be edited and telecast in Australia 48 hours before any other station.[34] This form of rivalry ended when the ABC and commercial stations provided a joint coverage of the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964. This was based on a strategic decision to pool resources and share the cost.[35] By the late 1960s, with the development of global satellite networks and the expansion of a global audience, the broadcasting costs for Olympic Games increased substantially.[36]

Live telecasts

Early live telecasts of sporting events accelerated the popularity and success of television in Australia more than anyone anticipated. The Melbourne Olympic Games played a key role in the acquisition of television sets. Industry officials attributed one of the top reasons for increased television set sales in Sydney to the televising of sporting fixtures.[37] Until the installation of the coaxial cable between Sydney and Melbourne in 1962, most Australians

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[33] G. Hutchison, 'Sport', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 114.
[34] Ibid., pp. 112-13; 'All Channels to Cover Olympics', *SMH*, 22 August 1960, p. 13.
[35] Hutchison, 'Sport', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 113; 'Stage set for mammoth Olympics cover', *B & T*, 10 September 1964, p. 33. According to *B & T*, the cost of TEN-10's coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico alone would make it 'the biggest news operation undertaken by any station or network in Australia.' In 'Olympic Games cover', *B & T*, 8 August 1968, p. 20; Inglis, *This Is The ABC*, p. 203.
[36] In 1956 the official filming of the Games was estimated to cost up to £40,000 whereas by 1968 the Mexico Olympic Games television rights had risen to US $46 million. See Gordon, *Australia and the Olympic Games*, p. 223; Stewart, *Sport Funding and Finance*, p. 12.
[37] 'Ownership of Television Sets Is Rapidly Increasing', *SMH*, 18 May 1957, p. 2.

were restricted to watching sport in their own city.[38] The Olympics was not broadcast live across Australia, but recorded in Melbourne and then dispatched to each state within a few hours.[39] Like news film, overseas sporting programmes were flown in, and satellite broadcasts were the exception.[40]

Sydney's early television sports programmes usually consisted of filmed/video-taped previews and summaries of competitive team sports, as well as sports news and discussion panels.[41] Although TCN-9 had forged ahead with its pioneering telecast of the Pelaco Golf Tournament, it was the ABC which held television broadcasting rights to major sports.[42] For 25 years the ABC devoted Saturday afternoons to live and recorded sports events with a focus on cricket, golf, Rugby League and Rugby Union. True to its public service brief, the ABC also persevered with minority sports such as yachting, lawn bowls, archery, cycling, athletics, rowing, basketball and baseball. In some cases, the increased television exposure assisted some sports to acquire commercial sponsorship deals.[43]

However, various sporting authorities and promoters were opposed to live telecasts of sporting events. They feared that sports telecasts would adversely affect ground attendances and therefore gate takings, which were the primary source of revenue.[44] Debates concerning partial or full-time televising of amateur and professional sport had already engaged racing

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[38] Hutchison, 'Sport', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 112.
[39] ABCB, *Ninth Annual Report*, 1957, p. 44.
[40] Hutchison, 'Sport', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 112.
[41] ABCB, *Tenth Annual Report*, 1958, p. 35.
[42] Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism [and] Australian Sports Commission, *Australian Sport: A Profile*, A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1985, p. 59; Inglis, *This is the ABC*, p. 203.
[43] Hutchison, 'Sport', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 114; Inglis, *Whose ABC?*, p. 72.
[44] Veitch Associates, & O'Brien, *Commercial Television in Australia*, p. 87; D. Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, Open University Press, Philadelphia, USA, 1999, p. 21; 'TV cameras capture sporting highlights', *TV NEWS*, 2 August 1958, p. 25.

and football organisations, concerned about the impact of radio broadcasting on ground attendances since the 1920s.[45]

By 1959, the general consensus among sporting organisations was that professional sport was more affected by Saturday direct telecasts than amateur sport. As amateur and lesser-known sports attracted small crowds and negligible gate takings, they actually benefitted from television publicity. According to Terry McLenaughan, an executive member of the NSW Rugby Union, the success of the 1959 season was due to television exposure, amassing the biggest crowds since the Second World War.[46] Other sporting officials were more ambivalent. An Australian Jockey Club (AJC) spokesman maintained that telecasts would not be considered until off-course betting became legal and strictly controlled. Rugby League executives were the most opposed to television coverage, but appear to have accepted a partial 'match of the day' telecast by 1960.[47] Murray G. Phillips and Brett Hutchins suggest media proprietors were mostly unconcerned about the restricted telecasts, considering League 'of limited value'. The relationship between League administrators and television was one of mutual ambivalence and independence during this time.[48] Eventually, financial agreements were reached between sporting organisations and television stations permitting partial telecasts.[49]

This gradual shift in attitude reflected television's impact on the profile and popularity of sporting codes. In 1965 the enormous publicity Rugby League received from featuring on TCN-9's *Don Lane Tonight Show* helped to attract an all-time record crowd of 78,000 to the

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[45] Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, p. 291.
[46] 'Sport on TV: For, Against', *TV Week*, 24-30 October 1959, pp. 12-13.
[47] Ibid., pp. 12, 15.
[48] M. G. Phillips & B. Hutchins, 'From independence to a reconstituted hegemony: Rugby League and television in Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 58, 1998, pp. 134-35.
[49] 'Partial' telecasts provided coverage of either a quarter or half of the game. See Veitch Associates & O'Brien, *Commercial Television in Australia*, p. 87.

grand final at the Sydney Cricket Ground.[50] Live sports coverage reached new heights on 8 March 1969, when a made-for-TV boxing match between Aboriginal boxer Lionel Rose and British bantamweight boxing champion, Alan Rudkin, achieved a phenomenal rating of 67 on ATV-10 in Melbourne. This was the highest individual television ratings achieved by any programme in Sydney or Melbourne since the arrival of the third commercial channel and indeed until the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000.[51]

Sport and station image

Sporting authorities' initial reluctance to support live telecasts of whole contests shaped the development of sports programming on Sydney television. Magazine programmes quickly became popular with all stations. The ABC produced *Sports Cavalcade* from 1957 until 1967, followed by *Sportsnight* and *Spotlight on Sport*.[52] ATN-7 employed 2UE sports director, and highly regarded sports journalist and commentator, Clif Cary, to host *Today in Sport* at 9.30 p.m. on Saturdays.[53] The programme featured a précis of the day's sporting events, often with a provocative word on controversial sporting topics, and showed overseas sporting newsreels.[54] To provide human interest, Cary would interview sporting celebrities, and present ATN-7's 'Sportsman-of-the-Month' award.[55] Although the award excluded women, the programme did feature segments on women's sport.[56] But coverage was negligible, reflecting an enduring preference by commercial television programmers to cover male sport.

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[50] A. Baz, 'TV alive and vital', *B & T*, 8 September 1966, p. 26.
[51] Anon., *Australian Television*, p. 14. In Nick Herd's *Networking*, 1968 is the date given for the fight. However, the date given for the fight is incorrect. The correct date for the fight is 8 April 1969. (Herd cites the oral testimony of Len Mauger, former station manager of ATV-0 for his source). See Herd, *Networking*, p. 235.
[52] Hutchison, 'Sport', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 114.
[53] 'Many Sources for News Services', *SMH*, 25 February 1957, p. 20; 'Cliff Cary-horse-racing journalist', RaceRate.com, http://www.racerate.com/Cliff_Cary.htm, accessed 5 December 2010.
[54] *Television Preview*, Vol. 1, July-6 Sept 1957, p. 15; 'Award to Jockey?', *SMH*, 25 November 1957, p. 17.
[55] 'Sport Features on ATN Today', *SMH*, 31 August 1957, p. 3.
[56] 'Famed horse on ATN', *SMH*, 22 March 1958, p. 4.

From 1960, ATN-7 actively placed a greater focus on sports programming.[57] The appointment of dual international Rugby player, Rex Mossop, in 1964 as sports director helped to establish ATN-7's sporting reputation.[58] In 1965 Mossop was able to convince the NSW Rugby League to grant ATN-7 exclusive rights to televise the second half of Saturday afternoon matches live in Sydney.[59] The exposure benefited League and allayed previous fears of television's adverse impact. From then on ATN-7's OB van would broadcast the game across the state and Mossop would squeeze into a precarious makeshift commentary box.[60]

One of the most popular general sports programmes on Sydney commercial television was ATN-7's *Sports Action*, produced and hosted by Mossop for 24 years. The show began as a half-hour programme at 11 a.m. on Sundays, being later renamed *Sports World* and extending from 9 a.m. to noon in response to high ratings. It featured a variety of segments covering overseas sporting news and traditional Australian sports, although Rugby League became the centrepiece.[61] TCN-9 also increasingly built its reputation and station image on sports programming. Its first dedicated sports programme, *Westinghouse World of Sports*, was co-hosted by Lyall Richardson and Ray Connolly. The name pointed to the heavy reliance on sponsorship and commercial ties with advertisers for the production costs of early programmes. The show included a general sports discussion session with guest appearances by players and experts from various sports. Australia's boxing obsession, previously cultivated by commercial radio, was given new life on TCN-9 by studio boxing matches

[57] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 257. See also 'New Sports Programmes', *B & T*, 2 July 1964, p. 7; *Television Preview*, Vol. 1, July-6 September 1957, p. 14; 'New ATN Show To Start Today', *SMH,* 30 November 1957, p. 3.
[58] 'Top Footballer as ATN 7 Sport Head', TV Guide, *SMH*, 4 May 1964, p. 26. See also 'More ATN League coverage', *B & T*, 16 July 1964, p. 26.
[59] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 257.
[60] R. Mossop with L. Writer, *The Moose that Roared*, Ironbark Press, Randwick, NSW, 1991, p. 152.
[61] Ibid., pp. 154- 55.

during *Westinghouse World of Sports*.[62] On 14 April 1961 the first live telecast of an Australian boxing title match was conducted in TCN-9's main Willoughby studio before a crowd of more than 800 people. Following the fight, TCN-9 telephones ran hot for an hour with viewers' congratulatory calls.[63]

It was difficult for TEN-10 to break into the sporting consciousness of viewers, even though its coverage was diverse.[64] It included films of the main weekend sporting events on Saturday evenings, and the soccer match-of-the-day shown live on Sunday afternoons.[65] In March 1965, TEN-10 introduced a weekly half-hour motoring programme, *Road Show*, on Saturdays at 2 p.m. Bill Tuckey, editor of motoring magazine *Wheels*, hosted the locally produced show that dealt primarily with cars, but covered a variety of associated subjects including camping, caravanning, fishing, boating and water skiing.[66] *Road Show* was timely given the unprecedented growth of car ownership in post-war suburbia. By 1962, car ownership had risen to one in three.[67] Designed to appeal to both men and women, *Road Show* tapped into the growing market and influence of the female driver.[68]

In 1956, TCN-9 introduced Australia's first turf programme. *Ken Howard's Racing Review*, otherwise known as *Previews and Reviews*, was broadcast on Saturday and Sunday evenings.[69] Legend has it that in the early days when television finished at midnight, Frank

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[62] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 255. See also G. Oliver & S. Johnson, *The Pro Wrestling Hall of Fame: The Heels*, ECW Press, Toronto, 2007, pp. 10-11.
[63] Sponsored and promoted by TCN-9, the 10.30 p.m. match saw Alan Gibbards defeat defending champion Jackie Bruce over 15 rounds for the Australian flyweight championship. See 'Boxing Title to be contested at TCN', *B & T*, 13 April 1961, p. 4; 'TCN may promote another TV National title fight', *B & T*, 20 April 1961, p. 6.
[64] Hutchison, 'Sport', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 114.
[65] 'Live programming top priority', *B & T*, 8 April 1965, p. 22.
[66] 'TEN motoring programme', *B & T*, 11 March 1965, p. 20.
[67] G. Davison with S. Yelland, *Car Wars: How the Car Won Our Hearts and Conquered Our Cities*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2004, p. 15.
[68] Ibid., p. 24.
[69] R. Waterhouse, 'Howard, Kenneth Percival Frederick (1913-1976)', Australian Dictionary of Biography online edition, http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A140570b.htm, accessed 12 November 2010.

Packer[70] would arrange for TCN-9 to extend its racing broadcasts to impress his friends who were sharing a nightcap with him. If one of Packer's horses won a race at Randwick, he'd phone TCN-9's weekly racing programme to demand replays of the event.[71]

Previews and Reviews featured a round-up of racing coverage with film highlights of the day's racing, alongside interviews with sporting personalities.[72] Known as 'Magic Eye' for his uncanny knack of picking a winner in a tight finish, Ken Howard had made his mark as a flamboyant commercial radio commentator. His 'flair for the dramatic' and trademark call, 'You can bet London to a brick on So-and-So has got it!', made him a household name in Sydney. But his tendency to dramatise and over-state did not transfer well to television. When races were replayed on weekends, viewers were able to see the discrepancies between Howard's calls and reality. John Tapp, Howard's protégé, explained that, before long, 'accuracy became the byword. Colour still had to be there, but it came second to accuracy'.[73] For over 20 years, TCN-9 televised all the major races in Sydney, except for the Melbourne Cup. For reasons that are unclear, Kerry Packer's large bids for the Melbourne Cup rights were always knocked back and, instead were given to the poorest-rating commercial channel, Ten, and later to Seven.[74]

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[70] Frank Packer was a member of the AJC and owned several race horses.
[71] J. Tapp with M. Andrews, *Tappy: Memoirs of a Race Caller*, Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, 1999, pp. 52-53, 119.
[72] *Television Preview*, Vol. 1, July-September 1957, p. 14.
[73] Tapp, *Tappy*, pp. 51, 53. According to *TV Times,* television now encouraged viewers to 'spot the chucker' when it came to cricket. Viewers could now judge whether a bowler had 'chucked' the ball or given a legitimate delivery. See 'Spot the Chucker', *TV Times*, 3 December 1960, p. 3.
[74] Callander does not know why the Victorian Racing Club refused to grant Nine the television rights for racing, but suggests it may have been a result of jealousy, as Packer was so wealthy and powerful. See K. Callander, *Good Luck and Good Punting: Memoirs of a Racing Tragic*, Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, 2007, p. 64. From 1978, the Ten Network secured the rights to the Melbourne Cup until 2001. See 'Network Ten' – Australian Television archive http://austv.hostforweb.com/cgi-bin/cgi2/index.rb?page=Network%20Ten&section=Television%20History%20Reference/TV%20Stations/Network%20Ten&mode=0, accessed 11 December 2011.

Sports commentators and personalities

Television commentary is central to mediating the sporting experience for audiences. Yet it requires specific skills tailored to suit the medium. TCN-9's station manager, Alex Baz, discovered this when he became the first person to broadcast live sport on Australian television, primarily because he could not find anyone more suitable for the role. He had tried using radio commentators, but had decided that what was needed was someone who let the pictures carry the story.[75]

Television struggled initially to make a complete break from radio. It was not until the ABC's pioneering coverage of the 1958 Davis Cup that the broadcaster was able not only to film pictures but also record sounds as they happened.[76] This innovation had consequences for athletes, who were warned to 'watch their manners' because foul language could now be heard with 'crystal clarity'.[77] Conventional practice was to add sounds to sports broadcasts throughout the commentary.[78] During the audio of filmed Test cricket matches, the sound of a pencil tapping an empty cigar box was considered the 'most effective' way to re-create the sound of a ball striking the bat.[79] However, criticisms began to surface when viewers were faced with the underwhelming reality of watching particular sports on television.[80] For many who had never attended a cricket game, seeing it on television failed to meet the 'cinematic experience' established through radio commentary.[81] When television arrived, audiences were primed for a faster-paced and far more exciting game of cricket than actually existed.[82]
Baz encouraged the 1954 US Open champion, Vic Seixas, to commentate during the 1958 White City tournament. This began an Australian trend for famous players to call tennis

[75] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 254.
[76] 'Holiday sport coverage on all channels', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 27 December 1958, p. 3.
[77] 'Mind Your Manners, Boys and Girls', *TV Times*, 20 August 1958, p. 61.
[78] 'Holiday sport coverage on all channels', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 27 December 1958, p. 3.
[79] 'TV effects from early days of radio', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 27 December 1958, p. 15.
[80] 'Is this really cricket?', "Looking In with the Viewer", *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 29 November 1958, p. 17.
[81] Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, p. 287.
[82] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 137.

matches, a practice which gradually infiltrated other sports.[83] This had already begun on commercial radio, with cricket broadcasts among the first to supplement professional broadcasters with sports experts.[84] In 1958, *TV NEWS-TIMES* explained:

> …in radio the sports listener wants to know HOW the game is going, not WHY. Television sports commentaries call for the reverse. The HOW is obvious; the WHY is not. To be a good sports announcer requires the knowledge of a Harry Hopman in tennis, a Darby Munro in racing, a Ray Stehr in Rugby, a Donald Bradman in cricket. It's a tall order, but until the TV stations can find these men TV sports will be far from perfect for viewers. [85]

B&T further reinforced the importance of the 'expert' sports reporter in 1966:

> For a football segment a football expert; for baseball a baseball expert; for racing a racing man, and if he's got the language of the punter, so much the better. The moral is obvious. Get the man who gives off the smell and fury of the sport and you've got a winner.[86]

Yet expert sporting knowledge could only get television commentators so far. It was character and personality that ensured Mossop and others endured on television for so long. Popular personalities were vital ingredients to a programme's success. Just as listeners followed personalities on radio programmes, audience attachment to particular personalities on television was key.[87] Looking back on ATN-7's *Sports World,* Sydney journalist Mike Colman reflects on the power of the television persona: 'Sunday *was* Rex Mossop. The show might have been called *Sports World* or some such thing, but to us it was just "Rex"…'.[88] The success of HSV-7's *World of Sport* in Melbourne was largely dependent on the way audiences responded to the show's banter between former Australian Rules footballer players, Ron

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[83] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 254.
[84] Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, p. 284.
[85] 'Bradman + Munro+ Stehr + Hopman = The Perfect Sports Announcer', *TV Times*, 4 September 1958, pp. 68-69.
[86] 'Newscaster – man of many talents', *B & T*, 21 July 1966, p. 40.
[87] L. Johnson, *The Unseen Voice: A Cultural Study of Early Australian Radio*, Routledge, London, 1988, p. 76.
[88] Mossop, *The Moose that Roared*, p. 161.

Casey, Jack Dyer and Lou Richards.[89] First broadcast live in 1959, the show induced TCN-9 to launch a Sydney version in the late 1960s.[90]

TCN-9's *World of Sport* presented local sports news on Sundays with a special focus on racing and football reports. The first 35-40 minutes of the programme were dominated by Rugby League talk, and hosted by TCN-9 sports producer, Ron 'The Case' Casey (not to be confused with Melbourne's Ron Casey). Casey has a distinctive voice and an inability to pronounce the letter 'r', so he himself soon became known as 'Wan'.[91] *World of Sport* regularly featured a football panel of radio commentator Frank Hyde, former player Peter Peters, sports journalists Geoff 'Pinky' Prenter and Ray Chesterton, who would discuss the weekend matches.[92] The remaining time was devoted to racing, featuring Australian race-calling pioneers, Ken Howard and Keith Robbins, who would present filmed segments of Saturday's racing. In the 1970s, they were succeeded by John Tapp and Ken Callander.[93]

The 'meat and potatoes' of *World of Sport* revolved around somewhat contrived stoushes between Casey and Frank Hyde. A former Rugby League player and coach, Hyde had first been heard on 2SM. He brought the game to life with his trademark one-liner, 'It's long enough, it's high enough, it's straight between the posts!'.[94] On many occasions Casey and fellow panellists told Hyde, a devout Catholic, a dirty joke or subjected him to a rude picture on the autocue screen. The feisty banter between Casey and Hyde made them an entertaining

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[89] J. Cain, *On with the Show: A Glimpse Behind the Scenes of Entertainment in Australia*, Prowling Tiger Press, Richmond, Vic., 1998, p. 63.
[90] Ibid., pp. 62-64.
[91] A. Buzo, *Sydney: Heart of Rugby League*, Tom Brock Bequest Committee, Australian Society for Sport History, [Sydney], 2000, p. 8.
[92] K. Sutcliffe with I. Heads, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2009, p. 54. Other panellists included Keith Barnes, Johnny Raper, and Arthur Beetson. See *TV Week*, 3-9 July 1976, p. 48.
[93] 'Ron Casey appointed as TCN sports producer', *B & T*, 20 March 1969, p. 38; Callander, *Good Luck and Good Punting*, pp. 58-59.
[94] Mossop, *The Moose That Roared*, p. 164.

double-act for audiences.[95] This mixture of comedy and sport worked because it replicated the pace of other audience-oriented visual shows, like live theatre (including drama and comedy), where the action is broken up with light relief and the sporting tension off-set by crude comedy.

The camaraderie of the panel-style talk fests served to promote national characteristics of egalitarianism and mateship and created sites for exclusive male bonding. The hard-talking, 'masculine' sports commentator was the common image projected by commercial sports programmes. Naturally this image shaped the overall 'personality' of television stations. Reflecting on TCN-9's first ten years, *B & T* claimed that TCN-9 had been successful in developing a 'general station personality':

> TCN has succeeded splendidly in developing and fostering the image over the years of being *the ordinary man's station* [emphasis added]. It has done this to a large degree because it has carefully avoided any high falutin' programming ventures, although conscious that it has had to maintain the standard it set for itself.[96]

This observation was shared by *SMH* columnist Harry Robinson, who declared that TCN-9's sporting programme image was distinctively more 'blokey' than the other stations, with Ron Casey at the helm revelling in the 'slang of tough talkers'. Mossop was a 'promoter' of League and TEN-10's Jim Shepherd a 'preacher', 'to whom sports have all the seriousness and moral overtones of Scriptural conflict'.[97] Commercial television was particularly attuned to the anti-authoritarian and larrikin 'Australian type', which was increasingly incorporated into Australian sporting constructs.[98] Rugby League, in particular, drew on this form of masculinity and perpetuated this stereotype in various forms through Sydney's Rugby League commentators and sports presenters.

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[95] Sutcliffe, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, p. 54.
[96] 'We have come nearly ten years since the opening of television', *B & T*, 8 September 1966, p. 3.
[97] H. Robinson, 'The three Friday night faces of sporting talk', *SMH*, 7 October 1967, p. 11.
[98] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 61.

TCN-9's Arthur Davies, better known as, 'Clarence the Clocker', epitomised the 'ordinary man' image. A former bread carter and milkman, Clarence gained experience as a racecourse clocker[99] at Randwick before venturing onto 2KY.[100] Racing's popularity in the 1950s made celebrities out of its commentators, and together with football broadcasting provided more opportunity for the airing of untrained Australian accents.[101] Clarence found his niche in commercial radio, as commentators were generally more excitable and stridently Australian than those found on the ABC.[102] Moving to TCN-9 in 1957, Clarence dispensed racing tips to a Saturday audience at 10 a.m. Before long his racing segment expanded into a half-hour show.[103]

Clarence began as sole presenter but soon his make-up artist, Pam Bunyan, found herself increasingly involved on the programme. Poised and well-groomed, Bunyan was a marked contrast to Clarence, who was, in columnist Max Presnell's opinion, 'more Redfern than Point Piper' and appeared 'rough' around the edges.[104] Bunyan was eventually persuaded to appear on camera and, with Bruce Gyngell's encouragement, she became Clarence's polished sidekick. For the next ten years, the duo had a popular following.[105] Soon Ken Howard and John Tapp, and later Ken Callander, featured on the show as assistant presenters.[106] The show's longevity, and the popularity of Clarence the cheeky larrikin, are evidence of the way

[99] A racehorse clocker is someone who records the speed of racehorses during tryouts on the racetrack.
[100] M. Presnell, 'Big characters, names and even bigger egos', *SMH,* 2 May 2010.
[101] Andrew Lemon, 'Davies, Arthur Thomas (Clarence the Clocker) (1912–1984)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/davies-arthur-thomas-clarence-the-clocker-12407/text22305, accessed 5 December 2010.
[102] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 154.
[103] Callander, *Good Luck and Good Punting*, p. 68.
[104] M. Presnell, 'Big characters, names and even bigger egos', *SMH,* 2 May 2010.
[105] Tapp, *Tappy*, p. 55.
[106] Ibid., p. 55; Callander, *Good Luck and Good Punting*, pp. 68-69.

the Australian character resonated with viewers, particularly as ockerism swept through Australian popular culture during the late 1960s and 1970s.[107]

Technology, sponsorship and entertainment

Throughout the 1960s, television changed the fortunes of various sports, while sports coverage provided the incentive for technological innovation. In 1958, TCN-9's telecast of a golf tournament had used three cameras with 'zoom' lenses to cover play from long distances, with the intention of covering almost every hole on the course from their fixed points. At 24.5 hours, it was reported to be the longest Australian telecast of a sporting event since the Melbourne Olympics.[108] The first large-scale surfing carnival to be televised was at Coogee. It proved challenging for technicians who devised ways of meeting the 'special problems' of televising outdoor events.[109] During the 1964 World Surfing Championships at Manly, ATN-7 camera crews pioneered filming from a helicopter, offering viewers a bird's eye view of the event.[110]

The first Sydney-to-Melbourne broadcast occurred in early January 1959 between GTV-9 and ATN-7 (before the GTV-9 and TCN-9 became the Nine Network in 1960).[111] 'Operation Kangaroo', as it was called, had been in planning for over a year with the purpose of enabling the third cricket Test between Australia and England to be broadcast direct from Sydney's Cricket Ground (SCG) to Melbourne. With no coaxial cable, a vast team of technicians climbed and hung off the tops of Mount Buffalo, Kosciusko, and along the Great Dividing Range to install five microwave links and power generating units in appalling weather

[107] J. Rickland, *Australia: A Cultural History*, Longman, London & New York, 1988, p. 221.
[108] 'A big week for sport on television', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 1 November 1958, p. 5.
[109] 'Coogee Carnival brings Report on Surfing', *SMH*, 16 December 1957, p. 19.
[110] Mossop, *The Moose that Roared*, p. 151.
[111] Hutchison, 'Sport', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 112.

conditions. It was a daring engineering feat and enabled Melbourne viewers to see the Third Ashes Series from the rain-soaked SCG.[112]

Video revolutionised sports programming. Later slow-motion replays were introduced, along with multi-camera coverage of football matches. Lightweight cameras allowed cameramen to run up and down the sideline with a soundman in tow. The challenge lay with the sports director who was responsible for deciding what shot and angle to cover for live telecasts.[113] Further technological development ensued with direct satellite transmissions of the America's Cup yachting contest in 1967 and the World Heavyweight Boxing Championship in 1968.[114]

During the mid-1960s, sporting bodies indicated a growing need for advertisers and sponsors to subsidise the outlay of sporting services and the manpower to run them. Yet commercial television was slow to discover how to sell sport to advertisers.[115] In the initial stages, sport was not thought of as a medium for advertising in the way general news and entertainment were. Advertisers were ambivalent towards any sport other than the very top events, unconvinced of its ability to attract a large cross-section of viewers.[116] This attitude changed once advertisers observed the growing demand for televised sport, which by 1963 occupied fourth place among the other programming genres on commercial television.[117]

By the late 1960s, sport was considered integral to commercial programming particularly as advertisers discovered the selling power of its products advertised during live sporting

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[112] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!,* p. 263.
[113] Mossop, *The Moose That Roared*, pp. 168-169.
[114] ABCB, *Twentieth Annual Report*, 1968, p. 23; 'Cup coverage new first', *B & T*, 7 September 1967, p. 1.
[115] Inglis, *This Is The ABC*, p. 203.
[116] 'Sport – strong media service with vacancies for clients', *B & T*, 2 May 1968, p. 3.
[117] Veitch Associates & O'Brien, *Commercial Television in Australia*, p. 86.

telecasts. There was also blatant promotion in sports programmes.[118] Several advertising clients used sport to project a 'sportsman' image aiming to reach a predominantly male audience, while others believed having an association with sport provided greater return for their product.[119]

The staging of competitive team sports and professional ring contests built strong audiences in the main capital cities. Television provided the perfect vehicle for the endless flying-around action of TCN-9's *Ringside With the Wrestlers* telecast on Fridays at 9.30 p.m. and on Saturdays at 4 p.m.[120] In 1964, two of the most popular sporting programmes on TCN-9 were *World Championship Wrestling* and *The Roller Game*, both telecast in front of a live audience.[121] The enthusiasm for the shows reflected the influence of American programming and the growing acceptance of commercialised sport in Australia. According to a TCN-9 executive, *The Roller Game* was 'simply selling entertainment'. Costumes were bright and gaudy with professional skaters sporting zany hairstyles of various colours.[122] However, the show polarised some viewers and commentators, and in 1967 it received a reprimand from the ABCB for its gratuitous violence, particularly among female participants. The Board reached an agreement with TCN-9 whereby its chief executive, Bruce Gyngell, was to scrutinise the tapes more closely before putting them to air.[123]

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[118] 'Sport an essential service', *B & T*, 1 May 1969, p. 1; Veitch Associates & O'Brien, *Commercial Television in Australia*, p. 86.
[119] 'Heavy Ad Support', *B & T*, 2 May 1968, p. 20.
[120] 'Are the TV wrestlers a lot of softies?', *TV NEWS*, 13 September 1958, p. 21.
[121] 'Live programme achievements', *B & T*, 8 September 1966, p. 36.
[122] H. Robinson, 'Sydney's Roller Game', *SMH,* 27 August 1966, p. 18.
[123] 'Warning on two TV shows', *SMH*, 27 July 1967, p. 4. The ABCB objected to *The Roller Game* being televised during family viewing time. See NAA Melbourne: MP1170/5/0, TCN/20 PART1 Complaints and Criticisms, 'Letter to Mr Gyngell from J.A. McNamara (ABCB secretary)', 11 July 1967.

From Amateur to Professional: The 1970s and 1980s

The Australian sporting landscape underwent dramatic changes in the 1970s and 1980s as Australia jettisoned the British amateur ideal in exchange for a more commercialised one.[124] What sports historian Bob Stewart entitled 'hyper-commercialism' emerged during the 1970s.[125] It refers to the process by which sport evolved from a modern to a postmodern state. While the modern state was underpinned by values such as 'orderly process, rationality, achievement and efficiency', writes Cashman, postmodernity represented the 'ephemeral… instantaneity, volatility and image production'.[126] This shift coincided with broader economic structural transformations that were occurring in highly developed capitalist societies such as Australia. In response to these developments, individual sports became more corporatised and their televised images reflected this.[127]

The 1970s also marked the beginning of an increasingly interventionist sport policy on the part of the federal government. The Australian sports system matured rapidly after the Whitlam Labor government initiated a series of sporting inquiries and established the Federal Department of Tourism and Recreation in 1972 and the Recreation Ministers' Council[128] in 1973. This was part of a general push by the Whitlam government to become more actively involved in leisure-planning for Australia's growing urban society, by supporting health and fitness initiatives for its citizens.[129] The concern for sporting excellence was reinforced with the establishment of the Australian Institute of Sport in 1981 and the Australian Sports Commission in 1984.[130]

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[124] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 158.
[125] Ibid., p. 145.
[126] ibid., p. 152.
[127] Ibid., pp. 145, 151.
[128] Later known as the Sport and Recreation Ministers Council.
[129] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 97.
[130] Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism [and] Australian Sports Commission, *Australian Sport*, pp. 38, 40.

This desire for high standards was mirrored in Australian technological innovations, which revolutionised several sporting codes and the television coverage of them, and helped to cement sport's importance in the national consciousness. For example, in the late 1970s ATN-7 engineers pioneered Racecam, in-car camera technology[131] that revolutionised sports coverage internationally, and even received an Emmy Award, while Ben Lexcen's winged keel design enabled Australia to win the America's Cup for the first time in 1983.[132] This victory, together with Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket (WSC), thrust Australia onto the world sporting stage. However, they also accelerated the commodification of Australian sport during this period.[133]

Big business

In the mid-1970s, corporate sponsorship provided economic support to professional mass spectator sports, and some amateur associations. With the advent of colour television in 1975, sport became an increasingly attractive vehicle for sponsorship. Television sponsorship experienced a boom in the late 1970s as businesses sought new ways to enhance their public image. At the same time, professional and amateur sporting associations and clubs sought additional financial support for expansion. The Commonwealth Government's prohibition on cigarette advertising on television in 1976 induced big business to circumvent such conventional and relatively inexpensive methods of advertising and seek it elsewhere.[134] Consequently, the three main tobacco companies in Australia – Rothmans, Amatil and Philip

[131] This included miniature cameras inbuilt into cars, along with microwave radio transmitters and relays from helicopters overseeing the race. Racecam was developed for the 1979 Bathurst 1000 racecar event. See Cox, *On the Box*, p. 40.
[132] Francis et al., *Forty Years of Television*, p. 101; Australian Story, '1983 America's Cup: A Moment in History', 1 April 2013, www.abc.net.au/news/2013-04-07/looking-back-at-australias-americas-cup-win/4609984, accessed 27 May 2013.
[133] M. G. Phillips, 'From Suburban Football to International Spectacle: The Commodification of Rugby League in Australia, 1907-1995', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 110, 1998, p. 33.
[134] Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism [and] Australian Sports Commission, *Australian Sport*, p. 57.

Morris – became the largest sponsors of sport in Australia.[135]

By early 1977, there was mounting criticism of the ACB's involvement with tobacco company, Benson & Hedges. Tobacco was widely condemned by medical experts as a 'dangerous health hazard', and yet it was sponsoring a sport that was considered a healthy leisure activity. The ACB remained silent, unwilling to jeopardise Benson & Hedges' $1 million investment in cricket.[136] Rugby League faced a similar issue as Sydney teams played for the Winfield Cup, named after the code's sponsor, the Winfield tobacco company. During the 1984 grand final, the scene was so saturated with Winfield images that it led to an ABT hearing on the matter. However, only a mild rebuke was meted out to the cigarette firm, the Ten Network and the Australian Rugby League (ARL).[137] In such a commercially competitive environment, sponsorship was vital to sport, big business and commercial television programming.

World Series Cricket

Australian cricket experienced a revival in the 1970s when colour television and slow-motion replays made the sport more exciting to watch. During the 1970-71 Test series between Australia and England, the ABC attracted an unprecedented television audience when it organised a live national hook-up for viewers around Australia.[138] The highly rated telecasts sparked Kerry Packer's interest and set in motion a bitter commercial battle over exclusive television rights to Test-match cricket.[139]

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[135] Vamplew et al., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Spor*t, p. 327.
[136] 'The Benson and Hedges connection', *Cricketer*, Vol. 4, No. 7, April 1977, pp. 4-5.
[137] B. Wilson, 'Pumping up the Footy: The Commercial Expansion of Professional Football in Australia', in Rowe & Lawrence (eds), *Sport and Leisure*, p. 32.
[138] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 138; D. Booth & C. Tatz, *One-Eyed: A View of Australian Sport*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2000, p. 188.
[139] B. Bonney, 'Packer and Televised Cricket', *Media Papers*, No. 2, NSW Institute of Technology, Sydney, 1980, pp. 5-6.

Packer's ambition for exclusive broadcasting rights for the Nine network was part of a 'simple business philosophy': he needed sport to satisfy Australian content requirements, and sport was cheaper than drama.[140] The popular summer game was also likely to attract advertising and sponsors and establish Nine's reputation as chief sportscaster. Although Packer cherished his cricket, he later made his strategic intent clear: 'We've gone into super test to make money. I have never suggested that we are going into it for philanthropic reasons.'[141]

In 1976, Packer approached the ACB offering a large sum for exclusive television rights to Australian cricket for five years.[142] Packer was refused three times as the Nine Network could not provide national coverage – it only covered Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Adelaide.[143] Following the ACB's refusals, Packer formed the breakaway WSC competition, signing up 35 of the world's top cricketers, including most of the then touring Australian Test team, to play in a new limited-overs competition to rival the International Cricket Conference (ICC) and the ACB's Test matches.[144] News broke of the spectacular coup on 8 May 1977, stunning both Australian and overseas cricket administrators.[145] Cricket's place on Nine was soon to be confirmed.

The majority of Australia's journalists and newspapers, and supporters of the establishment case both within Australian and overseas, initially deplored the concept of WSC, instantly

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[140] 'Man on the run', *Cricketer*, October 1977, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 13; G. Haigh, *Silent Revolutions: Writings on Cricket History*, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2006, p. 64.
[141] 'Man on the run', *Cricketer*, October 1977, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 13.
[142] Goldlust, *Playing for Keeps*, p. 161.
[143] 'Man on the run', *Cricketer*, October 1977, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 13.
[144] Booth & Tatz, *One-Eyed*, pp. 19, 188; J. Fetherstone, 'Howzat! The Inside story of how 9 clean-bowled the ABC over Test cricket telecasts', *TV Week*, 4 June 1977, p. 6; Haigh, *Silent Revolutions*, p. 59.
[145] J. Fetherstone, 'Howzat! The Inside story of how 9 clean-bowled the ABC over Test cricket telecasts', *TV Week*, 4 June 1977, p. 6

labelling the Packer promotion 'Hollywood cricket'.[146] The ICC responded by challenging the WSC competition in England's High Court and banning its players from Test match and first-class cricket, but was unsuccessful and left with heavy court costs.[147] After an expensive two-year battle, the ACB was forced to call a truce with Packer.[148] In May 1979, the ACB granted Packer exclusive broadcasting rights to domestic cricket for ten years and handed over the marketing responsibilities to Packer's PBL Marketing.[149] Packer was also given a say in which teams toured Australia, and WSC became the name of the official limited overs competition.[150]

Packer's intervention in international cricket marked a watershed in Australian sport and television. It also brought about a dramatic shift in Australian cricket culture. As a result, Australian cricket became 'even more unashamedly working-class and even chauvinistically Australian.'[151] And it was at this stage, Cashman argues, where the 'Ugly Australian' ocker and yobbo cricket fans revived the larrikin element in sport spectatorship, which has been an undercurrent since colonial times.[152] Advertisers rode the crest of ockerism during WSC, introducing 'Howzat' and 'C'mon Aussie, C'mon' into the Australian vernacular and promoted player personality cults in advertisements that were often sexually explicit. This form of exploitation of nationalism as a marketing device became more insistent during the 1970s as many products began to draw on quasi-nationalist images in advertising.[153] Nine

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[146] J. Benaud, 'Packer Cricket: What it's all about!', *Australian Cricket,* October 1977, p. 8; R. Cashman, *'Ave A Go, Yer Mug!: Australian Cricket Crowds from Larrikin to Ocker*, Collins, Sydney, 1984, p. 156.
[147] Booth & Tatz, *One-Eyed*, p. 188.
[148] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 153.
[149] Haigh, *Silent Revolutions*, p. 60.
[150] Vamplew et al., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Spor*t, p. 384; Booth & Tatz, *One-Eyed*, p. 188.
[151] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 154.
[152] Cashman, *Ave A Go, Yer Mug!*, pp. 135-136.
[153] Rickland, *Australia*, p. 221.

cricket commentators began to speak with broader and more animated Australian accents than their well-modulated and restrained ABC counterparts.[154]

WSC inspired numerous technical and programming advances. Employing Iso-cameras, Nine introduced the best production crews in Australia to operate a total of eight cameras instead of the normal four, enabling instant close-up replays of catches and highlights.[155] Other innovations included coloured uniforms, a white ball, freeze frames, and 'Daddles the Duck', a cartoon that added to the retiring batsman's shame. During the 1980s, stump microphones and cameras and the presentation of match statistics were introduced.[156] Day/night games, and a change in format of the Test and one-day internationals altered the programming of cricket and ultimately the leisure patterns of Australian cricket audiences.[157]

Following WSC, the Nine Network took deliberate action to expand the social base of cricket and market the game to non-traditional audiences. In an effort to draw female cricket viewers, Nine set a world precedent by employing the first female cricket commentator. Australian film and television actress, Kate Fitzpatrick, joined Nine's commentating team in 1983, but the move proved controversial amongst traditional cricket fans and Nine's all-male commentary team. Fitzpatrick was moved from the commentary box to a role that involved interviewing players, before being given the sack.[158]

In the 1980s, competition between the commercial networks intensified, driving them to diversify and specialise in sporting events most likely to 'reward investment'. A review of the

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[154] Cashman, *Ave A Go, Yer Mug!*, pp. 166-167.
[155] T. Kennedy, 'The inside facts: The Great Cricket Story', *The Bulletin*, 14 May 1977, p. 44.
[156] M. Williamson, 'Hawk-Eye, hotspots and Daddles the Duck'. *Cricinfo XI*, 7 June 2007, http://www.espncricinfo.com/magazine/content/story/297167.html, accessed 6 December 2010.
[157] Vamplew et al., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Spor*t, p. 102.
[158] K. Fitzpatrick, *Name Dropping: An Incomplete Memoir*, HaperCollinsPublishers, Pymble, NSW, 2004, pp. 310-30.

ABC chaired by Alex Dix in 1980 observed that the commercial stations were more willing and able to pay for exclusive rights to major sports events than was the ABC. Budget cuts and union bans on new technology impaired the ABC's sporting coverage.[159] According to a Ray Morgan Poll conducted in 1979, tennis and cricket were the two most popular sports for television, as they offered natural advertising breaks. Less popular, but still strong audience pullers, were Australian Rules football followed by snooker, soccer, motor racing, Rugby Union and golf.[160] Nine supplemented its monopoly of cricket with Wimbledon tennis, golf, gridiron football and international Formula One motor racing.[161] Seven focused on summer tennis, especially the Australian Open and all codes of football, while SBS had European soccer and the Ten Network took the remnants.[162]

The Nine Network was intent on building its image as the one to watch. Since the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, television networks had been pooling their resources for expensive international contests, sending one combined team of commentators. However in *TV Week*'s opinion, the 'gentleman's agreement' was voided when Nine 'tried to steal a march on its rivals' and went to Moscow to make a bid for exclusive broadcasting rights for the 1980 Olympic Games. Seven trumped Nine's move when in turn their network managers flew to Moscow and secured 'the most costly single-network sports deal in Australian TV history.'[163] Seven was rewarded with huge audiences for the Games' duration, but suffered a devastating financial loss because advertisers cancelled their contracts due to the controversial nature of the Games.[164]

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[159] Inglis, *Whose ABC?,* p. 72.
[160] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 73.
[161] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 93.
[162] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, pp. 69-70; Goldlust, *Playing for Keeps*, pp. 167-171.
[163] J. Murray, 'Operation Moscow: TV's Great Sporting Spy Drama', *TV Week*, 11 June 1977, pp. 6-7.
[164] Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser took exception to Seven's coverage of the Moscow Games in protest at the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, putting pressure on advertising agencies to renege on their broadcasting contracts. See T. Thomas, 'Australian TV 50 Years On', *MIA*, No. 121, November 2006, p. 191; Hutchison, 'Sport', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 113.

Rugby League

Rugby League is Sydney's flagship sport, dominating both live and studio-based sports programmes.[165] For several years prior to 1974, League administrators were unwilling to provide television-sponsored games at the low rates offered by commercial broadcasters. When television did reinvest in League, after the Seven Network won the rights to telecast the game, it was under 'proscribed conditions'. A deal was struck between the NSWRL, the sponsor and the Seven Network to create a new competition, the Amco Cup (named after a clothing company), that was more amenable to advertising scheduling. The Amco Cup was divided into four quarters, in contrast to League's usual two halves, and broadcast mid-week during primetime. Commercial broadcasters, sponsors and the ARL all benefited from the competition, which proved a ratings success and heralded a new era for League. The partnership between League and television accelerated with colour television's arrival in 1975. Television ratings improved and crowd attendances grew for the first time in seven years by 16.5%.[166]

The staging, promotion and tailoring of sport to suit television increased rapidly during the 1970 and 1980s. Unwilling to cover live matches, Seven edited out the slower moving parts of Rugby Union games to create a more dynamic game.[167] Rugby League footballer, Wayne Pearce, was advised to reserve his best tackles for the grandstand side of Leichhardt Oval, where the television cameras were stationed.[168]

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[165] Buzo, *Sydney*, p. 3.
[166] Phillips & Hutchins, 'From independence to a reconstituted hegemony', p. 135.
[167] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 74.
[168] A. Moore, 'Testosterone overdose: Popular culture and historical memory', *Sporting Traditions*, Vol. 10, No. 1, November 1993, p. 8.

Not only has sport adapted itself to television, but television has also transformed League from a game with limited exposure to an orchestrated mass media event. However television's impact on League has not been as radical as some commentators maintain. The two most significant changes in the game – the 'play the ball' rule (1926) and the introduction of limited tackles (1967)[169] – occurred prior to television's influence on League.[170] Even though these changes were generated from within the sport and were designed to attract spectators to the grounds, Phillips and Hutchins argue that television's main impact has been on curbing illegal violence in the game. Technological advances such as zoom lenses, replay and microphones on the field have also created more accountability for players and officials to abide by the rules.[171]

In 1982 the Rugby League 'State of Origin' became an iconic event on Sydney commercial television. The best-of-three series between Queensland 'Maroons' and NSW 'Blues' was another attempt by sporting authorities to re-invent the game and create a more entertaining brand of football for television viewers.[172] Nine held the broadcasting rights to the series and covered the event with a rotating commentary team, and innovative camera angles and speed. It also took cameras into the players' dressing rooms, and began the coverage with entertaining segments such as 'fractured fairytales' and fables. Nine's Head of Sport, David Hill, was largely responsible for these innovations, having helped to pioneer the coverage of

[169] After the limited four-tackle rule was introduced in 1967, crowds improved by almost 40%. See Phillips, 'From Suburban Football to International Spectacle', p. 39.
[170] Phillips & Hutchins, 'From independence to a reconstituted hegemony', p. 137.
[171] Phillips, 'From Suburban Football to International Spectacle', p. 39; Phillips & Hutchins, 'From independence to a reconstituted hegemony', p. 137.
[172] For Rugby League's constant attempts at reinvention, see D. Middleton, 'Rugby League: A Work in Progress', in National Museum of Australia (ed.), *League of Legends: 100 Years of Rugby League in Australia*, National Museum of Australia Press, Canberra, 2008, p. 27.

WSC.[173] At the end of the 1982 season, however, TEN-10 won the rights to the Sunday match of the day.[174]

By the 1980s marketing directors, who recognised the value of television advertising, were vital to the success of professional sports organisations, and corporate support gradually replaced gate receipts as the main source of income.[175] In 1983, following allegations of widespread corruption within the sport after *Four Corners* broadcast its 'Big League' report, NSWRL President Kevin Humphreys resigned.[176] A new, more streamlined management emerged which took deliberate steps to broaden the appeal of the sport.[177]

In 1986, Ten poached Seven's Rex Mossop as chief commentator, giving him the opportunity to once more call Rugby League. In Mossop's view, Ten executives were more interested in the 'razzamatazz, of style over substance' and this was often a cause of tension, with Ten introducing American gimmicks such as cheerleading and dancing girls, and arranging appearances of Ten's soap stars. There was also Wacka the Emu, a 'product' of Ten's publicity department: a man dressed in an emu suit who paraded along the sidelines during *Monday Night Football*. In 1987, Ten's Sunday night telecast, *The Big Game*, knocked the wind out of *60 Minutes*, stealing the ratings' lead in the timeslot from Nine.[178]

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[173] Sutcliffe, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, pp. 90- 91.
[174] When the 1983-85 rights came up for negotiation, the Ten Network offered $7 million for the right to replay the Sunday match of the day. According to Mossop, Seven did not fight hard enough to keep the rights. See Mossop, *The Moose That Roared*, p. 202. Mike Colman explains that Nine held the rights to Rugby League until 1989 before Ten surprised everyone in the television industry and bought rights to the game for $43 million over 3 years. Soon it became evident the deal would not pay dividends. See M. Colman, *Super League: The Inside Story*, Ironbark Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, 1996, p. 35.
[175] Booth & Tatz, *One-Eyed*, p. 18; Vamplew et al., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Spor*t, p. 328.
[176] Masters, *Inside Story*, p. 42.
[177] Moore, 'Testosterone overdose', p. 5.
[178] Mossop, *The Moose That Roared*, pp. 207, 213-14.

Rugby League's financial fortunes were closely linked to those of the television industry during the 1980s.[179] Ten's extravagance peaked when it purchased the rights to the 1988 Olympic Games, with the total cost of the rights and the coverage estimated at between $30 to $40 million. Ten's spendthrift policies eventually delivered the network into the hands of receivers.[180] In 1991, for the first time in a decade, both the income and profit of NSWRL fell from the previous year.[181]

The wide world of sports programming

The 1970s were the halcyon days of TCN-9's *World of Sport* and ATN-7's *Sports World*, and competition between the two was fierce.[182] *Sports World*'s 'Controversy Corner', a panel discussion on 'pertinent league matters', was, according to Mossop, a hit with viewers.[183] However, TCN-9's *World of Sport* ended when David Hill decided Ron Casey and his programme had run their course.[184] *Clarence the Clocker,* by then known as *TV Form Guide*, was dropped in 1981 after a run of 22 years.[185] Nine, as chief sportscaster, held the television rights for all the major tennis tournaments, Formula One, overseas cricket Test matches, swimming and skiing. Recognising the entertainment value of these world-class sports, Hill suggested that Nine develop a new programme named after an NBC show, *Wide World of Sports* (*WWoS*). Packer agreed, buying the rights to the name.[186] The launch of Nine's *WWoS* in 1981 heralded a new direction for television sports programming, pioneering technical and stylistic breakthroughs.[187]

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[179] Phillips & Hutchins, 'From independence to a reconstituted hegemony', p. 139.
[180] Mossop, *The Moose That Roared*, pp. 221, 226.
[181] Phillips & Hutchins, 'From independence to a reconstituted hegemony', p. 139.
[182] E. M. Berridge, 'Sportsworld', Guide Preview, *The SMH*, 13 August 1990, p. 74.
[183] Mossop, *The Moose That Roared*, pp. 156, 158.
[184] Sutcliffe, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, p. 54.
[185] Tapp, *Tappy*, p. 56.
[186] S. Kent, 'Move over, sportsfans', The Guide, *SMH*, 9 May 1988, p. 3; Sutcliffe, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, p. 57; Callander, *Good Luck and Good Punting*, p. 72.
[187] J. MacDonald, 'Technical wizardry won over armchair fans', *The Australian*, 14 September 1996.

WWoS dominated Saturday afternoon viewing on Nine and featured both traditional and fringe[188] sports coverage, introducing viewers for the first time to extreme sports.[189] The programme began with 60 to 70 items over a period of five hours; by the 1990s, there were 240 items over a four-hour period. Satellite was responsible for the dramatic increase and induced Nine to accelerate the pace of the programme.[190] Although *WWoS* consisted of pre-packaged footage, sometimes a week old, it was promoted slickly for maximum entertainment value. The programme broke new ground when Saul Shtein, a young protégé of Hill, pioneered the technique of showing sports clips to rock 'n' roll music, using Van Halen's *Jump* to good effect. Sports programming was now widening its appeal by not only targeting young people but also by presenting sport within the music video spectrum.[191]

Former *Daily Telegraph* journalist and radio presenter, Mike 'Gibbo' Gibson, and ex-cricketer Ian 'Chappelli' Chappell first hosted *WWoS*.[192] Gibson, with his use of the vernacular, was particularly influential in setting the trend for 'relaxed mateyness' on Australian sports programmes.[193] There was some attempt to make *WWoS* appealing to female viewers, but the blokey banter continued when Max Walker succeeded Gibson. However, Chappell and Walker lacked chemistry, and tensions remained from their former Test cricket days, so in 1989 Ken Sutcliffe became host of the programme.[194] By the end of the decade, Nine was setting the pace for both live and pre-packaged sports programming. Having pioneered technical and stylistic innovations for WSC, *WWoS* and State of Origin, the network would also lead the way in defending the right to broadcast sport on FTA television.

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[188] 'Trash sports' ranged from roller disco to a celebrity challenge of the sexes. See P. Luck, *The Best of Luck*, Heinemann Australia, Port Melbourne, 1990, p. 39.
[189] S. Downie, 'A sporting favourite is back in the game with a finely tuned format', *Daily Telegraph*, 12 March 2008, p. 6; Sutcliffe, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, p. 56.
[190] 'Blokesworld!', *SMH*, 24 August 1992, p. 49.
[191] J. Little, 'Shtein rises TV wave of success', *The Australian*, 9 November 2000.
[192] Sutcliffe, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, p. 56.
[193] R. Fishman, 'Nicknames, scripted jokes, free plugs: so bad it's good', *SMH*, 10 September 1990, p. 49.
[194] Sutcliffe, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, pp. 63, 81, 83.

Professionalism Accelerated: The 1990s and 2000s

By the 1990s, in order to remain commercially competitive, Australian sporting organisations became more aware of providing entertainment value that equalled or exceeded that of their competitors. As a result, professionalism accelerated and sponsorship revenue increased.[195] Signs of this have become more visible on television with the ubiquitous logos of sponsors, insignias, corporate boxes, and the re-branding of competitions such as KFC's Twenty20 cricket and the Qantas Wallabies. During the 1990s, ratings' highlights on FTA television were primarily sports-based, demonstrating the popularity of live broadcasts.[196]

The privatisation of sport has accelerated over the last two decades, with more clubs and leagues being owned by consortia, individuals and media interests. As a result, community ownership and involvement in sporting clubs have declined.

This has varied among sporting codes. In cricket and AFL privatisation has been minimal, while in soccer, basketball and Rugby League its presence has been more pronounced.[197] Whereas in 1971 'traditional' League administrators held a monopoly on the game, since the 1990s media companies have had greater control of the sport.[198]

Super League

Rugby League's remarkable ratings power on FTA television made it an attractive target for media barons in the 1990s. In 1992, the State of Origin series received an extraordinary figure of 51 in Sydney when it was telecast nationally in primetime for the first time. The competition's popularity soared in the third match of 1994 when it captured the highest ever

[195] Stewart, et al., *Australian Sport*, p. 8.
[196] Anon., *Australian Television*, p. 45.
[197] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, pp. 169-170.
[198] Phillips & Hutchins, 'From independence to a reconstituted hegemony', p. 143.

rating of any programme with a peak of 58.[199] In 1993 Kerry Packer purchased the FTA and pay TV rights to the ARL for $80 million, with the contract ending in 2000.[200] Rupert Murdoch's Foxtel, a joint venture between News Corporation and Telstra, identified League as a valuable asset to expand the viewership of its fledgling pay TV enterprise.[201] Packer refused News Corp's attempt to obtain the pay TV rights to League, and warned the ARL he would not hesitate to defend his contract through the courts.[202] In response, News Corp decided to establish 'Super League', an alternative League competition of 12 privately owned teams.[203] The conditions were ripe for a take-over and in one sense were reminiscent of Packer's WSC hijack. Super League was an attractive rival competition to players and clubs who were disillusioned with the traditional ARL administrators and were seeking greater reward from the game.[204]

The Packer and Murdoch parties became embroiled in two years of expensive court action, battling over FTA and pay TV rights to League.[205] In the first instance, Super League was prevented from commencing in 1996. However, following an appeal, the breakaway competition ran for one season in 1997, parallel to the ARL competition.[206] The struggle ended in a truce in 1998 when the rival competitions merged to form the National Rugby League (NRL). The hostilities undermined the code at all levels, costing the League significant income due to a decline in viewers, fans, advertisers and sponsors, adversely affecting the programming of League.[207]

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[199] Anon., *Australian Television*, pp. 5, 47.
[200] R. Jolly & Parliamentary Library, *Sport on Television: To Siphon or Not to Siphon?,* Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2010, p. 10.
[201] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport,* p. 141; D. Rowe, 'Rugby League in Australia: The Super League Saga', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1997, p. 221.
[202] Booth & Tatz, *One-Eyed*, p. 189.
[203] Jolly & Parliamentary Library, *Sport on Television*, p. 10.
[204] Colman, *Super League*, pp. 45-62, 73-75.
[205] Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 90.
[206] Jolly, *Sport on Television*, p. 10.
[207] Phillips & Hutchins, 'From independence to a reconstituted hegemony', p. 142.

Comedy, variety and gender

In 1994 Rugby League's *The Footy Show,* with Paul Vautin at the helm, began on TCN-9. The sports panel comedy-variety programme took its lead from Melbourne's AFL *The Footy Show*.[208] A great deal of the success of the show in Sydney came from the larrikin antics of Vautin and the other presenters, Steve 'Blocker' Roach and Peter 'Sterlo' Sterling. Vautin's alter ego, 'Fatty', resonated particularly well with Rugby League fans .[209] The brand of 'boofhead' humour used on *The Footy Show*, laden with sexual innuendo and toilet humour, has been the target of critics over the years.[210] In recent years, attempts have been made to temper this and re-focus primarily on League matters.[211] Female presenters have also been given a stronger presence on the show since 2012, with Nine's sports journalist, Erin Nolan, and journalist and *Weekend Today* presenter, Leila McKinnon, providing their insights on League matters and joining in with the blokey banter. Despite the criticism and fluctuating ratings over the years, *The Footy Show* remains commercially vital to Nine, particularly in relation to Nine's NRL broadcast contract.[212]

Some programmes have adopted a slightly more 'cerebral' approach to sport. The *SMH* labelled Ten's late night *Sports Show*, hosted by Mike Gibson during the early 1990s, as 'a show for those who take sport seriously'.[213] In 1993, Ten launched a nightly half-hour show, *Sports Tonight*, featuring a combination of hard news and light-hearted stories. It proved a

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[208] H. Silver, *Behind the Footy Show*, The Five Mile Press, Noble Park, Vic., 1997, p. 12.
[209] M. Colman, *Fatty: The Strife and Times of Paul Vautin*, Ironbark Press, Sydney, 1992, p. 301.
[210] T. Squires, 'Criticising the Footy Show Isn't Worth the Effort. So Here Goes', *SMH*, 30 May 1998, p. 24; B. Newstead, 'Readers put the boot into Fatty's ailing Footy Show', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 July 2008, p. 3; J. Tovey, 'More woe for Johns, Footy Show', *SMH*, 28 May 2009, p. 3.
[211] In 2009, one of *The Footy Show's* former hosts, Matthew Johns, came under fire for a sex scandal that had occurred in 2002 during a football tour in New Zealand with 11 of his Cronulla Sharks team mates. The *Four Corner's* report, 'Code of Silence', disclosed details of the event and highlighted additional incidents of sexual misconduct among Rugby League players over the years. The scandal surrounding League culture influenced this tempering of *The Footy Show*. See Sutcliffe, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, p. 259.
[212] G. Dwyer, 'ABC leads the pack as commercials abandon the news', *Crikey*, 28 July 2008.
[213] 'Blokesworld!', *SMH*, 24 August 1992, p. 49.

mainstay of Ten's sports programming until it was axed in a cost-cutting exercise in 2011.[214] Ten's popular motorsports show, *RPM*, also provided a departure from the blokey banter of Nine's football panel shows, *Sunday Roast,* the *Sunday Footy Show* and *The Matty Johns Show*. But it was SBS, which led the charge in providing more serious, current-affairs style sports programming with *Sports Machine* (1990-91) and *World Sports* (1992-96), later renamed *Toyota World Sports* in 1996. These programmes were a departure point from the nationalistic and Anglo-centric bias inherent in commercial television sports shows.[215]

The style of television sports talk that consists of protracted post-mortems of matches has spawned its own parody in the form of quasi-sports and comedy shows.[216] Television sketch comedy show *Full Frontal* (Seven) parodied the all-male *Footy Show* when it featured an all-female panel of sexist netball experts.[217] The ABC pioneered the unconventional and subversive sports variety genre with *Live and Sweaty* in 1991 and *The Fat* in 1999*,* undermining the traditional 'masculine' sports show.[218] The successful sports satirists, 'Rampaging' Roy Slaven and H.G. Nelson (aka John Doyle and Greig Pickhaver), have also subjected the 'various excessive displays of sporting masculinity to ridicule'[219] on their shows *Club Buggery* and *This Sporting Life*. Their biggest television hit, however, was their commentary-interview programme, *The Dream with Roy & HG,* broadcast every night during the 2000 Olympic Games on the Seven Network, and during the Salt Lake Winter Games in 2002 and the Athens Olympic Games in 2004. *The Dream*'s irreverent interpretation of

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[214] B. Dorries, 'Thankgoodness for Sports Tonight', *Courier Mail*, 30 April 2004, p. 4; D. Knox, 'Ten dumps late news and sports tonight double', *TV Tonight*, 21 September 2011, http://www.tvtonight.com.au/2011/09/ten-dumps-ten-late-news-and-sports-tonight-double.html, accessed 22 September 2011.
[215] These programmes followed SBS sports shows, *Sports Magazine* (1981-85) and *Sport Report* (1985-89). See Ang et al., *The SBS Story*, p. 121.
[216] These shows also parody the sexism evident in traditional sports programmes. See D. Rowe, 'Sport: The Genre that Runs and Runs', in G. Turner & S. Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2000, p. 137.
[217] Ibid., p. 138.
[218] P. Brown, 'Piling on loads of fat', *Courier Mail*, 29 March 2003.
[219] Rowe, 'Sport', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 138.

Olympic hype and its sardonic commentary on sports, particularly men's gymnastics, reinforced phrases such as 'battered sav', 'dutch wink' and 'hello boys', in the Australian vernacular, demonstrating the centrality of sport to Australian popular culture.[220]

Commercial television programmers have displayed a clear preference for football programmes and international male sports. Ironically, while television programmers and sporting codes sought to broaden the appeal of sporting coverage to female and non-traditional audiences, the television coverage of women's sport remained negligible in the 1990s. In 1996 women's sport made up just 2% of total sport coverage on commercial and non-commercial television. A survey[221] revealed that only 12% of ATN-7's *Sportsworld* was devoted to women's sport, 1.6% of *WWoS* and *Sports Sunday*, and 5.7% of *Sports Tonight*. The ABC has been the most generous in its coverage of women's sport (basketball and netball in particular), screening 20%, and devoting 40% of total sports coverage to mixed sporting events.[222]

However, in August 2012 the ABC proposed to reduce coverage of women's basketball (WNBL) and soccer (W-League) as a result of declining audience figures. This attracted criticism.[223] In 2010, television coverage of women's sport was still grossly disproportionate to men's sport, comprising just 9% of all sports coverage in Australian newscaf and 7% of all other sports programming. Until women's sport is given consistent long-term coverage, its

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[220] S. Meacham, 'Roy & HG Scream for Ice Dream', *SMH*, 8 June 2001, p. 3; Rowe, 'Sport', in Turner and Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 136.
[221] The survey was conducted from Monday 24 June to Sunday 7 July 1996. See M. G. Phillips, *An Illusory Image: A Report on the Media Coverage and Portrayal of Women's Sport in Australia 1996,* Australian Sports Commission, Canberra, 1997, p. 2.
[222] Ibid., pp. 12-14. See also B. Stoddart, *Invisible Games: A Report on the Media Coverage of Women's Sport, 1992*, Australian Sports Commission, Canberra, 1994, p. 11.
[223] P. Kogey, 'ABC slammed for cuts in women's sports coverage', *The Australian*, 16 August 2012.

significance, funding and development will remain marginal.[224] This situation underscores the interdependent relationship between television programming and sport.

Pay TV and anti-siphoning legislation

Around one-third of the Australian television audience had subscribed to pay TV by 2010, which is significantly lower than other developed markets around the world.[225] Australia has been far more reluctant to join the global trend of sport's migration to subscription-based television, reflecting the significance sport holds in our social and cultural identity.[226] Because of sport's cultural value and the historical influence of FTA networks politically, Australian sport has been subject to stringent government regulations designed to protect the ability to watch popular sports on FTA television.[227]

The first anti-siphoning laws for sport[228], which came into effect in 1992, demonstrated the Federal Government's determination to ensure that broadcasting rights to major sporting events could not be bought exclusively by pay TV.[229] FTA networks are granted preferential access to acquire broadcasting rights to sport ahead of pay TV.[230] This has caused consternation within the pay TV industry, which has argued that the FTA network use the

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[224] C. Lumby, H. Caple, & K. Greenwood, *Towards a Level Playing Field: Sport and Gender in Australian Media*, Australian Institute of Sport, Canberra, 2010, pp. 143-45. See also H. Caple, K. Greenwood, & C. Lumby, 'What League? The representation of female athletes in Australian television sports coverage', *MIA*, No. 140, August 2011, pp. 137-146.
[225] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 141.
[226] D. Rowe & C. Gilmour, 'Getting a ticket to the world party: Televising soccer in Australia', *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January 2009, p. 12.
[227] Rowe & Gilmour, 'Getting a ticket to the world party', p. 12.
[228] Australian anti-siphoning laws regulate media companies' access to important sporting events. The *BSA 1992* gave FTA broadcasters first preference to certain broadcasting rights. The anti-siphoning list includes sports that are made available to the general public. Pay TV licensees are prohibited from acquiring anti-siphoning events unless FTA national broadcasters or commercial television broadcasters have the right to broadcast the events. See Department of Broadband, Communications & the Digital Economy, *Sport on Television: A Review of the Anti-siphoning Scheme in the Contemporary Digital Environment*: *A Review Report*, Department of Broadband, Communications & the Digital Economy, Canberra, 2010.
[229] www.keepsportfree.com.au, accessed 31 May 2010; Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 90.
[230] W. Snowdon, 'Sport and Pay TV: A Government Perspective', in R. Lynch, *Sport and Pay TV: Strategies for Success*, School of Leisure and Tourism Studies, University of Technology, Sydney, Sydney, 1996, p. 39.

anti-siphoning system to keep a stranglehold on major sporting codes.[231] This argument has been most potent when FTA networks have decided against showing major sports live in their entirety. During the 2010 Australian Tennis Open, the Seven Network caused a furore when it abandoned its coverage of the women's fourth round match between Serena Williams and Australia's Samantha Stosur, opting instead to continue with its normal news and primetime programmes.[232]

The arrival of pay TV marked the demise of well-established sports programmes on FTA television. Weekend wrap-up programmes could no longer compete with several dedicated sports programmes on pay TV outlets such as Fox Sports, Optus and Austar, which provided specialist coverage of domestic and overseas sport 24 hours a day.[233] The hostility between commercial FTA networks and pay TV subsided, however, when some parts of the former bought into the latter.[234] In 1997, Nine's parent company, PBL, purchased a half share of Fox Sports worth $150 million, as Nine moved away from traditionally televising live and pre-packaged sport on weekends. In 1999 Seven launched its C7 Sport pay TV service.[235] *WWoS* host, Ken Sutcliffe, explained: 'Live sport became the be-all and end-all – if it wasn't live it wasn't happening…'.[236]

Changes to the anti-siphoning list were announced for the first time in 2010, stipulating a 'use it or lose it', live and in full, rule for major sports and iconic sporting events, such as the

[231] L. Sinclair, 'Anti-siphoning laws for TV Sports being screened', *The Australian*, 21 August 2009.
[232] 'Anti-siphoning changes – hopefully a win for sports fans in Australia', *FOX SPORTS*, 26 November 2010. http://www.foxsports.com.au/other-sports/anti-siphoning-changes-hopefully-a-win-for-sports-fans-in-australia/story-e6frf56c-1225961557315#.UNAdbo5C820, accessed 7 December 2010.
[233] A. Meade, 'The end of Wide World as we know it', *The Australian*, 23 April 1999, p. 2.
[234] Rowe & Gilmour, 'Getting a ticket to the world party', p. 12.
[235] M. Colman, 'High profile Sports show axed because of economic reality', *Courier Mail*, 24 April 1999.
[236] C. Mathewson, 'Iconic show makes comeback to Nine – *Wide World of Sports* aims to tackle Sunday ratings slump', *Courier Mail*, 8 March 2008, p. 24.

Olympics.[237] Australia has the longest anti-siphoning list in the world and many of the sports listed are not shown on FTA television.[238] Moreover some minor sports that feature on the list have felt disadvantaged and have asked to be removed from the list as they have been required to pay for coverage on FTA television. Netball is a case in point.[239]

The battle for content

By 1998 viewers were no longer tuning in for the whole five hours of *WWoS*'s weekend wrap-up. Competition from live AFL coverage, changing leisure patterns, and the audience appetite for live sport resulted in a decline in ratings.[240] In 1999 the programme was streamlined in length. Former Olympic swimmer, Nicole Stevenson, replaced Max Walker as host, becoming the first female to host a national Australian sports television programme.[241]

Cost-cutting measures were adopted at Nine as the battle for ratings intensified. Sky Channel's more extensive racing coverage had lured devoted punters away from Nine, while it was suspected that *Sports Saturday*'s repeated crosses to racing coverage turned off non-racing viewers. *Sports Sunday* had been first produced in 1984 as a 'coffee table' sports programme; it was likened to *60 Minutes'* in its sophisticated presentation and quality reporting.[242] However the show suffered from constant timeslot changes. When Nine bought

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[237] Australian Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, *Sport on television: A Review of the Anti-siphoning Scheme in the Contemporary Digital Environment: Review Report*, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, [Canberra], 2010.
[238] L. Sinclair, 'Anti-siphoning laws for TV Sports being screened', *The Australian*, 21 August 2009.
[239] Jolly & Parliamentary Library, *Sport on Television*, n.p.
[240] Sutcliffe, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, pp. 86-87. For further detail on Australian leisure patterns and social conditions, see H. Mackay, *Reinventing Australia: The Mind and Mood of Australia in the 1990s*, Angus & Robertson, Pymble, NSW, 1993; H. Mackay, *What we do with Television*, Ipsos Australia, North Sydney, NSW, 2003.
[241] 'Nic's new life going swimmingly', *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 9 September 1998, p. 49. Female sports presenters held a marginal role in television sports coverage prior to the late 1990s. Pioneering reporters in the mid-1980s on *Sportsworld* were former Olympic swimmer, Johanna Griggs, Debbie Spillane and Dixie Marshall, who raised eyebrows by daring to interview male sportsmen in their locker rooms. See McKee, *Australian Television*, pp. 279-80.
[242] M. Colman, 'High profile Sports show axed because of economic reality', *Courier Mail*, 24 April 1999.

the rights to Rugby League, *Sports Sunday* was shifted from its 4-6 p.m. timeslot because it was believed a League game would attract a much larger audience.[243]

In 1999 Nine's *Sports Saturday*, *Sports Sunday* and *WWoS* were cancelled, despite the damage to Nine's image as the premier sports channel. The move partly resulted from the influence of Seven's exclusive rights to the Sydney Olympic Games, as well as network restructuring.[244] The audience drift towards pay TV induced advertisers to spread their revenue more widely, subsequently reducing the flow available to FTA commercial television.[245] It was not until 2009 that Nine broadcast a new 90-minute version of *WWoS* on Sunday mornings, with Sutcliffe once more at the helm.[246]

The introduction of digital FTA television in 2009 intensified the battle for sports content amongst FTA and subscription sectors. Ten's decision to launch a specialist sports channel, One, ensured there was another major bidder for sports' rights. The expansion of online competitors such as Internet Protocol TV (IPTV) services, web TV, internet TV, mobile TV and 3D TV not only poses a threat to pay TV and FTA networks, but also demonstrates television's ability to adapt and redefine itself.[247] The competition for live sports' coverage across several competing mediums, platforms and devices has coincided with anxieties about the implementation of tight controls over Internet distributed content. Moreover, changing categories of television create challenges for sporting codes seeking to value their rights packages and sort them into parcels for FTA, pay TV, digital TV, online and mobile media

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[243] Sutcliffe, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, p. 84.
[244] A. Meade, 'The end of Wide World as we know it', *The Australian*, 23 April 1999, p. 2.
[245] Sutcliffe, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, pp. 114-15; A. Meade, 'Axe falls on Seven morning news', *The Australian*, 18 May 1999, p. 3.
[246] Sutcliffe, *The Wide World of Ken Sutcliffe*, p. 87; C. Mathewson 'Iconic show makes comeback to Nine – *Wide World of Sports* aims to tackle Sunday ratings slump', *Courier Mail*, 8 March 2008, p. 24; S. Downie, 'A sporting favourite is back in the game with a finely tuned format', *Daily Telegraph*, 12 March 2008, p. 6.
[247] Scibilla & Hutchins, 'High stakes television', pp. 26-27.

services.[248] The completion of the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN), scheduled for 2021, will also have a significant impact on the way fans access sport. The AFL's 2012-16 rights package (worth $1.25 billion), which balances coverage of the sport across FTA, pay TV and digital media, provides a blueprint for future rights agreements amongst sporting codes and media partners. Providing multiple access points for live coverage of sport acknowledges the fact that viewers are interested in more than one audiovisual medium. No doubt this model will influence further developments in media consumption habits and viewers' experiences.[249]

Conclusion

Since the 1970s, Australian commercial television programmers have shown increasing interest in sports programming as a means of filling transmission time, fulfilling content quotas and providing audiences for advertisers. By the 1980s FTA networks had effectively monopolised broadcasting rights to most major sports.[250] Since the 1990s media companies have become increasingly involved in the ownership, as well as the coverage, of sport.[251] Not only does sport occupy a dominant share of programming on commercial FTA television, but also over time, commercial FTA television has influenced sport in various ways.

Commercial television's impact on sport has been criticised, particularly with respect to the growing intrusion of corporatisation into the sporting landscape, and the transformation it has had on the playing conditions and financial infrastructure of sporting codes.[252] However television has been the vehicle for change in Australian sport rather than the immediate catalyst. Broader economic structures and cultural practice have influenced the greatest

[248] Hutchins & Rowe, *Sport Beyond Television*, pp. 24-26.
[249] Ibid., pp. 179-80.
[250] Men predominantly play most of the 'major' sports. See Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 70.
[251] Cunningham & Turner (eds), *The Media and Communications in Australia*, pp. 4-5.
[252] Crisell, *A Study of Modern Television*, p. 104.

developments in sporting codes. Elements of professionalism and commercialism have been present since the rise of organised sport in the 1850s and have subsequently been accelerated with new technology. Television has been key in transforming sport from parochial to national and international competitions.[253] In this way, the partnership between sport and FTA commercial television reveals more continuity rather than discontinuity in the development of Australian sporting codes.[254]

Sydney's commercial television programmers have been decidedly conservative in their approach to programming. Australian national sports – namely, cricket, horseracing, and the main football codes – have dominated the screens and subsequently become the cornerstone of sports programming on commercial television. Commercial FTA television's preference for masculine Anglo-centric sporting codes not only highlights the gender discrepancies in Australian sport, but also underscores the marginalisation of sports associated with ethnic groups on commercial FTA television.[255]

The studio-based panel sports programme – largely consisting of protracted post-mortems of sporting games and events – has become a staple on Sydney television. The continued presence of these shows on television, in spite of the growth of live televised sport, reflects the fact that sport is a form of popular culture and is therefore the subject of what Umberto Eco describes as 'sports chatter'.[256] Sports programming has developed into various sub-genres, combining and synthesising elements of variety, comedy, panel/talks and quiz. The acceleration of commercialism, and television's willingness to embrace global influences and programming trends, has shaped this programming evolution.

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[253] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 170.
[254] Phillips, 'From Suburban Football to International Spectacle', p. 47.
[255] Stoddart, *Invisible Games*, pp. 9-14; Rowe & Gilmour, 'Getting a ticket to the world party', pp. 11-14.
[256] Cited in Rowe, 'Sport', in Turner and Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 136.

Nevertheless, sports programming on Sydney commercial FTA television has maintained a distinctive Australian flavour, projecting a strong larrikin image through its sports presenters and personalities. This accelerated as Australia drifted away from its British roots and the amateur ethic began to erode. But more telling is Nine's influence in determining the blokey character of sports programming which has set the pattern for other FTA networks, arguably 'building up the character of the nation', as Frank Packer declared.[257] This reinforcement of dominant cultural values has affected the development of female and second-tier sports and their visibility on commercial television.[258]

Live sport has always provided compelling content for television. In convergent media markets where television, online and mobile media overlap and compete, the value of live sport has increased significantly. This is because the appeal of watching sporting events greatly diminishes once the outcome is known. The exorbitant cost of sporting rights and future deals for Olympic Games requires non-traditional partners, such as Foxtel, to create the breadth of coverage and delivery needed to justify costs of multi-platform coverage. Competition for broadcasting rights will also intensify as more sporting teams and bodies develop their own media businesses, broadening the 'exclusivity' of broadcasting rights to profit from content themselves. [259] As the influence of the telecommunications and digital media sector develops, the challenge for FTA networks and sporting codes will be how to negotiate a convergent rights model that benefits the audience who are interested in more than a 'single audiovisual experience'.[260]

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[257] Griffen-Foley, *The House of Packer,* p. 213.
[258] Caple et al., 'What League? The representation of female athletes in Australian television sports coverage', pp. 137-39.
[259] A. Ferguson & M. Idato, 'Television networks on the blink as online eats into revenue pie', *SMH*, 20 October 2012.
[260] Hutchins & Rowe, *Sport Beyond Television*, pp. 22, 179.

6

Children's Television: From *The Mickey Mouse Club* to *The Wiggles*

'Clearly television has emerged as the dominant experience in the life of the average Australian child, monopolizing more of his or her time than any other single activity apart from sleep.'[1]

What is children's television? If everything children watched was considered children's television, then it would be necessary to look at all kinds of programmes. The primary focus of this chapter, however, is on programmes that Sydney commercial stations specifically produced or intended for children. From 1959, ABCB programme standards distinguished children's programmes ('specially designed for children in various age groups') from family programmes.[2] Developing standards for children's programmes is a subjective process, involving 'constant trial and error' between the commercial television industry, regulators and child advocacy groups.[3] The resultant tension is the main subject of this chapter.

The focal point of dissent has changed little throughout the decades. Some argue that the networks have a social and cultural obligation to provide programmes specially designed for children; others maintain that children do not watch such programmes, so the networks'

[1] Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, 1978, cited in E. Halliday, An Overview of the History and Regulation of Children's Programs on Commercial Television in Australia, unpublished PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1987, p. 1.
[2] See ABCB, *Television Programme Standards*, 1959, p. 7.
[3] Addressing the Tasmanian Council for Children's Film and Television in Hobart 1965, the ABCB's Director of Programmes, Adrian Jose, declared: 'If we cannot speak for ourselves as grownups, and decide what we as a nation should or should not wish to see (and you will note that I did not say should or should not see) how can we hope to determine on behalf of the vast variety of thought which exists in the very many homes of Australia what any parent will want his children to see, or not to see? Neither the lowest common denominator nor the highest moral level is the answer to this problem. The only answer is the constant trial and error, and a flame of enthusiasm to pursue the cause you believe in.' See NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4/0, folder TC/2/1, Television Children's Programmes General, Box 6, ABCB Agendum No. 1965/280 Television Programmes for Children, 17 November 1965, 'Extracts from Address to the Tasmanian Council for Children's Film and Television' by Adrian Jose, Director of Programme Services, ABCB Hobart, 19 November 1965, p. 5.

obligation is void. Underpinning these competing viewpoints are broader ideological, political and moral concerns that mirror the early discord between those who favoured a market-driven system and those who advocated government control.[4] Because of the inherent distrust between stakeholders in children's programming, the industry could not self-regulate, resulting in a 'trend toward greater government intervention'. This increase in Australian children's television regulation has been profoundly affected by the success of child advocacy groups and widespread social pressure to ensure that children's rights are protected.[5]

Ideologically and socially constructed definitions of childhood have further complicated the development of children's television policy.[6] This is especially true when the very definition of 'childhood' is debated either as a universal constant or, as Philip Aries argued in his controversial yet seminal 1973 work, *Centuries of Childhood*, a modern invention.[7] It is unarguable that historical processes have facilitated shifts in how cultures define childhood as a stage of life. [8] In this sense, the concept is rather fluid as it is subject to social and cultural expectations, time and place, as well as age, gender, race and class.

But as Karen Wells convincingly argues, there are 'universal features' pertaining to childhood that are both biological and emotional. Not only do children have similar physical limitations: they (ideally) rely on adults for food, shelter and hygiene, but also, children, like adults, have

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[4] J. M. Lisosky, 'For all kids' sakes: Comparing children's television policy-making in Australia, Canada and the United States', *Media Culture Society*, Vol. 23, No. 6, 2001 p. 838. See also B. Hodge, 'Children and Television', in Tulloch & Turner (eds), *Australian Television*, p. 166.
[5] Lisosky, 'For all kids' sakes', pp. 823, 838; W. Keys, 'Children's television: A barometer of the Australian media policy climate', *MIA*, No. 93, November 1999, p. 17; See also 'Conventions on the Right of the Child', http://www.unicef.org.au/Discover/What-We-Do/Convention-on-the-Rights-of-the-Child.aspx, accessed 11 December 2011.
[6] Keys, 'Children's television', p. 11; ABT, '*'Self-regulation for Broadcasters'*, p. 51.
[7] P. Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973. Neil Postman also argues that 'childhood' is a social artifact, although his overall premise in *The Disappearance of Childhood* is different to Aries. See N. Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood*, Delacorte Press, New York, 1982.
[8] J. Hawes & N.R. Hiner, *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook*, Greenwood Publishing Group, Wesport, CT, 1985, p. 3, cited in K. Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, Polity, Cambridge, UK, 2009, p. 6.

similar needs for strong emotional attachment to close caregivers (whoever they are). Children's biological and emotional immaturity does make them more dependent, and therefore, it can be argued, more vulnerable than adults.[9]

Moreover, Wells argues that there are ethical dilemmas if we overstate the similarities between adults and children and minimise the extent 'to which childhood *is* biologically conditioned'. She observes: 'The dialectic of childhood is not only the play between social structures and children's agency; it also involves the movement between the materiality of the child's body (its immaturity, size, vulnerability) and the sociability of the child's life world.'[10]

One of the problems in arguing that childhood is not only shaped by external factors but is *also* biologically determined, is that the 'vulnerable' image of the child can be used for political interests to advance political agendas. Although Western countries with tendencies towards liberal politics are founded on principles that advocate liberty, equality and the autonomy of the individual, there is still a strong desire, explains McKee, for politicians (on the left and right) to control the population.[11] Before formerly disenfranchised groups such as working-class men, women, ethnic and colonial populations were given rights within the democratic polity, governments were able to control them because they were unable to vote against legislation that could control their behaviour. Though limited, their place in the polity now allows them to have their say on public issues.[12]

Children, on the other hand, remain outside citizenship and therefore can be controlled. Children, argues McKee, 'represent one group who, politically, we can still lay a claim to

[9] Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, p. 2.
[10] Ibid., p. 14.
[11] A. McKee, 'Everything is Child Abuse', *MIA*, No. 135, May 2010, p. 135.
[12] ibid.

"protect". They are the one group still seen to be helpless.'[13] As a result, 'any public argument for government interference in the behaviour of citizens can immediately gain rhetorical force by claiming that we have to interfere in order to protect children'. The logic is 'X is about children; we must protect children; therefore me must do/not do X'.[14]

In *Why TV is Good for Kids*, Catharine Lumby and Duncan Fine argue that prejudice and emotion generally drive what is considered to be 'rational debate'. Lumby et al. explain how 'sensational media reporting and grandstanding by politicians has led to some wrong-headed ideas becoming entrenched as "common sense"'.[15] One of these issues is that television violence causes violent behaviour in children. The important point, argue Lumby and Fine, is to 'distinguish between media influence and direct media effects'.[16] The media influences us all, but there is 'an enormous difference between influence and the direct cause-and-effect relationship critics of popular culture continually want to establish'.[17] Contentious debates about children and media-related harm are not a new phenomenon, as this chapter will explore. However, debate is often muddied when, as McKee rightly explains, 'generalised rhetoric of protecting children' is used to cover important issues with distinct aetiologies.[18] This has important consequences for children's television policy and policies in general.

Furthermore, while it is important not to minimise children's vulnerability to media influence, children's greater access to information about the adult world in this media-saturated culture[19] calls into question their perceived 'innocence'. It is impossible to shield children from the

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[13] ibid.
[14] ibid., p. 136.
[15] C. Lumby & D. Fine, *Why TV is Good for Kids: Raising 21st Century Children*, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 2006, p. 5. See also J. Hartley, '"When Your Child Grows Up Too Fast": Juvenation and the Boundaries of the Social in the News Media', *Continuum*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1998, pp. 9-30.
[16] Lumby & Fine, *Why TV is Good for Kids*, p. 7.
[17] ibid., p. 8.
[18] McKee, 'Everything is Child Abuse', p. 136.
[19] S. R. Steinberg & J. L. Kinchelkoe (eds), *Kinder-Culture: The Corporate Construction of Childhood*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1997, p. 3.

media and its influences, but creating an open dialogue of communication with children provides opportunities for understanding these issues better. As the history of children's television programming in Sydney attests, this is still a work in progress.

Children's television policy has also been complicated by the diversity of the child audience has forced the television industry to pursue creative options in the programming of children's television. Yet these efforts have often been compromised by industry-related influences, including the internationalism of the broadcasting environment, the establishment of co-production relationships forged with overseas children's networks, and increasing media convergence.

Children's programming is determined by a pragmatic interrelationship between advertisers, the aims of programmers and the need to satisfy a public perception of quality children's programming.[20] Over the years, the programming tastes of children have bewildered adults, but there has remained a general agreement about the need for children to have access to a variety of quality, age-specific and Australian and non-Australian programmes.

Children are special: The 1950s and 1960s

'Television is the one poison cupboard in the house which cannot be locked up', declared Mrs E. Shann as she addressed the Victorian Family Council's 1962 symposium on the social impact of television. Shann was a member of the ABCB Children's Advisory Committee, and the convenor of the Radio, Television and Cinema Committee of the National Council of Women. Her comment reflects a widespread community concern to shield vulnerable children from the potentially harmful effects of television viewing during this period. It was a concern

[20] Keys, 'Children's television', pp. 12-13.

that increasingly took issue with the lack of Australian produced age-specific children's programmes and prompted a growing recognition by the government of the need for effective regulation.[21]

This concern had appeared earlier in relation to radio and can be traced through the ABCB annual reports.[22] In 1944, the first examples of programme standards were formulated after the Australian Teachers' Association raised alarms about children's radio programmes.[23] Growing criticism centred on the impact radio, particularly suspense and horror programmes, would have on children. Both broadcasters and parents were increasingly expected to exercise care and responsibility during times when children might be listening.[24] Thus even before the advent of television in Australia, the stage was set for concern over the impact of broadcasting on children.

Before television arrived on Australian shores, a host of research reports had drifted across the Pacific. These reports stirred pre-existing community anxiety, which appears to have stemmed from deeper ideological questions of morality, spirituality and culture.[25] During this period, Australian society was still very much recovering from the effects of the Second World War. Horror was to be avoided and optimism promoted, in keeping with a time of socio-economic boom.[26] Some Australians were worried about the psychological effects of violence, having lived through it in their recent pasts. Thus people did not want their children to be exposed to unnecessary violence on television.

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[21] N. Mencinsky & B. Mullen, 'Regulation of Children's Television in Australia: Past and Present', *MIA*, No. 93, November 1999, p. 27.
[22] ABCB, *Ninth Annual Report*, 1957, p. 21.
[23] Halliday, An Overview of the History and Regulation of Children's Programs, p. 7.
[24] ABCB, *Ninth Annual Report*, 1957, p. 21.
[25] Royal Commission on Television, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television*, p. 39.
[26] H. Mackay, *Generations*, Macmillan, Sydney, 1997, pp. 26-8.

The 1953 Royal Commission on Television, therefore, attracted many witnesses who expressed their misgivings about the psychological effects of the medium on children. General discussion identified issues of excessive violence on television and its connections with juvenile delinquency, and the impact of television on children's leisure activities, reading habits and bedtime curfews. The Royal Commission report concluded that the 'child [was] more vulnerable than the adult'. As such, it recommended the establishment of an advisory committee on children's television, and programmes specifically designed for children.[27] These recommendations were taken up, with an Advisory Committee on Children's Television Programmes (ACCTP) established in November 1956,[28] and the issue being addressed in the newly formulated Programme Standards.

When formulating these general Standards, the ABCB gave special attention to the 'great anxiety in the public mind' about the effects of television on children.[29] The Standards stipulated the times when programmes of different classifications could be screened. Safe viewing periods were identified as 'family time', and the Commonwealth Censorship Board determined the classification. Programmes rated 'G' could be screened at any time. 'A' programmes were deemed unsuitable for children and were not to be shown during family time (5.30-7.30 p.m.) weekdays and prior to 7.30 p.m. on weekends. 'AO' (adults only) could not be shown before 8.30 p.m.[30]

The Programme Standards recommended that stations provide regular sessions for children that would impart a broader knowledge of Australia's history, current affairs and culture, and encourage an active interest in scientific investigations. They suggested using examples from

[27] Royal Commission on Television, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television*, pp. 39, 40-41, 80, 104.
[28] Members of the ACCTP consisting of five men and two women, had qualifications in the education and welfare of children.
[29] ABCB, *Eighth Annual Report*, 1956, p. 43.
[30] ABCB, *Television Programme Standards*, 1959, pp. 4-7.

the Bible, history, biography and literature to 'impart a real appreciation of the spiritual values' and qualities that were 'essential to the full development of the individual and of national greatness'.[31] The ABCB believed that children should be educated broadly for a life of moral and spiritual integrity within a society that also valued these qualities. Parents were expected to care for their children by supervising their television viewing. The ABCB, however, was aware of television's 'irresistible attraction' to children, so it believed that it had a responsibility to regulate children's television to provide quality programmes.[32]

Overseas programming

Commercial viability was the preoccupation of broadcasters in the fledgling years of television.[33] In 1956, commercial television was scheduled from 7 to 11 p.m. and programmes catered for general family viewing. In 1957, programmers were keen to extend these hours to afternoons without increasing production budgets.[34] Following the established patterns of radio and cinema, Sydney television stations identified two main audiences – children and adults – and catered for both groups primarily through American programmes.[35]

To satisfy the market for children's programmes, commercial stations stacked their vaults with cheap imported cartoons including *Bugs Bunny*, *Huckleberry Hound*, *Yogi Bear*, *Road Runner*, *Tom and Jerry* and *Heckle and Jeckle*, along with animated series.[36] Local hosts on ATN-7 and TCN-9 introduced these popular overseas offerings to give programmes a local flavour.[37] The NSW Association of Women Graduates surveyed Sydney primary school children in 1962 and found that across all ages *Superman* was the most popular programme,

[31] Ibid., p. 9.
[32] ABCB, *Television Programme Standards*, 1959, p. 7.
[33] A. Moran, 'Three Stage of Australian Television', in Tulloch & Turner (eds), *Australian Television*, p. 3.
[34] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 46.
[35] M. Arrow, '"Mum likes *Bandstand* too": Creating the teenage audience on Australian television', *MIA*, No. 134, February 2010, p. 111.
[36] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 176.
[37] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 53.

followed by the *Three Stooges*, general cartoon fare and *Disneyland*.[38] The study praised the *ABC Children's Club* for balancing entertainment with enrichment but concluded wryly that 'many parents find their children do not share their enthusiasm for these sessions, especially with the lure of *Superman* and cartoons drawing them to the commercial channels.'[39]

Cartoons, westerns and adventure films stimulated debate about the impact of excessive violence and anti-social behaviour and their impact on impressionable young viewers.[40] Several Australian studies attempted to ascertain the social and psychological effects of television on children.[41] The results were inconclusive; the ABCB decided that the acceptable degree of violence in television programmes was a matter of personal opinion. The ABCB and the ACCTP also became aware of the increasing hours of children's television consumption.[42] Data compiled by Anderson Analysis in mid-1959 showed that Sydney and Melbourne had a 'substantial children's audience' during the peak hours of 6.30 to 9.30 p.m.[43] Broadcasters, therefore, had to take into account that both children and adults comprised their audience for at least three hours every evening.

By 1959, the ACCTP had produced two reports.[44] The committee's main concerns centred on the prevalence of American programmes, prize-giving in programmes, the unsuitability of comperes and producers of children's programmes, conflicts of interest between programmes

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[38] The Association's members largely comprised mothers and teachers. The Association conducted the survey because it wanted to know what children were viewing between 4.30 p.m. and 8.30 p.m. and how it affected them. Viewing categories included kindergarten and live sessions for children aged 4 to 12 years, teenage variety, religious programs, sport, films, cartoons and news. See 'Violence, False Values, Monotony', *TV Times*, 10 November 1962, p. 7.
[39] Ibid., p. 6.
[40] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 176.
[41] ABCB, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 1959, p. 45; F. E. Emery & D. Martin, *Psychological Effects of the "Western" Film: A Study in Television Viewing*, Department of Audio-visual aids, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 1957.
[42] ABCB, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 1959, p. 45.
[43] Crawford, *Commercial Television Programmes in Australia*, pp. 13-14.
[44] ABCB, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 1959, p. 45.

and advertisements, and the classification of programmes shown while children were viewing. The ACCTP argued that progress in developing quality children's programming was slow due to a lack of specific regulation. Regulation would be key to correct an imbalance between licensees' obligations to their shareholders and to viewers.[45]

Programmers assumed that viewers would be satisfied with the basic format and style of programmes that had pleased radio audiences.[46] However, ABC radio's wildly successful *The Argonauts' Club* failed to translate to television, as its shoestring budget and aging presenters were unable to compete with *The Mickey Mouse Club*. As we have seen, TCN-9 had the added advantage of beating ABN-2 to air in Sydney in 1956.[47]

In 1956, ATN-7 employed an Australian actor, Alan Herbert, with a fake beard and naval uniform, to compere *Captain Fortune*. The 90-minute show featured a cast of experts who came 'on-board-ship' to talk to children about a variety of topics, from road safety to the Australian environment. The producer, Dawn Dingall, was intent on providing children with both educational and entertaining material. Cartoon segments, therefore, were shown along with educational films supplied by *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the Surf Life Saving Movement and the Department of Fisheries.[48] The US's *Romper Room* took up a 15-minute segment of *Captain Fortune*.[49] A ventriloquist, script-writer and puppeteer, Clifford Warne, also featured with his puppet, Gus.[50] *Captain Fortune* encouraged child participation by featuring dance schools, Boys Scouts and local choirs.[51] Compared with other shows of its ilk,

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[45] D. Richards & Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, Australian Content Inquiry Discussion Paper, *Regulation of Children's Programs*, The Tribunal, North Sydney, NSW, 1987, p. 2.
[46] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 174.
[47] Hall, *Supertoy,* p. 149.
[48] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!,* pp. 49-51.
[49] Ibid., p. 51.
[50] Captain Fortune Official website, http://www.captainfortune.com/, accessed 12 January 2012. See also P. White, *Alias Jungle Doctor: An Autobiography*, Paternoster Press, Exeter, NSW, 1977, pp. 170-173.
[51] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!,* pp. 50-51.

Captain Fortune was singled out by the ABCB as 'the most positive attempt to bind children to its compere'.[52]

The ACCTP and other observers were less satisfied with TCN-9's *Channel 9 Pins.* Introduced in 1957, and compered by English/Australian actor and presenter, Desmond Tester, the programme featured a puppet called Amanda the Cat (Anne Davis was the puppeteer) who co-compered the show.[53] Music was an important part of the programme, which launched the career of Geoff Harvey, who became TCN-9's musical director for thirty years. Penny Spence, who regularly appeared on the show in later years, described the programme as 'simple, entertaining wholesome television'. The programme's popular 'Cabbage Quiz' encouraged children to answer general knowledge questions. The winner received toys and prizes provided by sponsors.[54]

It was this prize-giving, however, that aroused the criticism from the ACCTP and other 'responsible quarters'. They believed that awarding prizes out of proportion to the merit of the competition or the age group concerned did not contribute to 'sound standards of values for young people'.[55] Children were lured to appear on programmes through lavish prizes such as Polaroid cameras, television sets, and trips to Disneyland.[56] Unsuitable and untrained comperes also came under fire. Without specially-qualified people to compere, how was the standard of children's programmes to improve? In 1961, the ABCB expressed relief at the gradual emergence of people suitably qualified to host or carry a children's programme.[57]

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[52] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/5/0, folder TCN/19 Part 1, 'ABCB Agendum No. 1957/36 Television Programmes – Review of Current Schedules', February 1957, p. 7.
[53] An optical illusion prevented the audience from seeing the puppet strings. See 'Amanda the cat tells her own story', *TV Times*, 23 July 1957, pp. 34-35.
[54] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!,* p. 48.
[55] ABCB, *Thirteenth Annual Report*, 1961, p. 42.
[56] Inglis, *Whose ABC?*, p. 210.
[57] ABCB, *Thirteenth Annual Report*, 1961, p. 42.

Early live programmes struggled to compete with well-polished imports. One of the most popular and highly sought after children's programmes was the American import, *The Mickey Mouse Club*. Frank Packer and Sir John Williams of the Melbourne *Herald* were personally responsible for closing the deal with Disneyland. *TV-NEWS Times'* John Query described the deal as one of 'the biggest scoops in Australian commercial television'.[58] *The Mickey Mouse Club* ran on TCN-9 from 1958 to the mid-1960s, regularly scoring high ratings. The club's members included over 200,000 Australian children, making it one of the strongest communities of television fans in Australia.[59]

The ABC also ventured into children's television programming in the 1950s, with *Kindergarten Playtime* and *Partyland.* These programmes initially fell under the heading of 'Youth Education'. Both were popular and well-received, but lacked the outrageousness and spontaneity of commercial television offerings.[60] Between 1963 and 1965, to reduce in-house production costs, the ABC Children's Department commissioned a freelance producer, Patrician Films, to supply its programmes. But as costs of dramas and animations continued to rise, the ABC looked increasingly to overseas for material.[61]

Kindergarten Playtime was replaced in 1966 by *Playschool*, modelled on the BBC programme of the same name. It was to become the longest-running children's show in Australia.[62] Another popular ABC show was *Mr Squiggle* which focused on a pencil-nosed puppet, created by puppeteer and *Bulletin* cartoonist Norman Hetherington. Mr Squiggle would turn children's 'scribble' into drawings. The character first appeared on the ABC's

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[58] According to Desmond Tester, TCN-9 and HSV-7 were offered the rights to *The Mickey Mouse Club* largely because the owners of these television stations ran their comic strips in their Australian newspapers. See 'They all run in Packers' colors', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 15 November 1958, p. 11.
[59] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 174.
[60] Horgan, *Radio with pictures!*, p. 58.
[61] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 181.
[62] Inglis, *Whose ABC?,* p. 209; Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 181.

Children's TV Club, before the eponymous show was launched in 1959.[63] Together with the ABC, commercial stations continued to be innovative in children's programming in an effort to appeal to young Australians and to satisfy the demands of regulators and child advocacy groups. Wedged between longer programme formats were shorter five-minute children's segments. An ATN-7 writer and producer, Chris Beard, used these segments to read Dr Seuss books to children during *Smalltime*.[64]

In 1961 the Advisory Committee on Religious Programmes raised concerns about the lack of religious matter for children. This resulted in the gradual introduction of religious content into children's programmes.[65] The Christian Television Association believed religious television programmes had a special mission:

> If we are going to admit – and I think we must, that our Sunday Schools are not shaping the pattern of the thinking of the children of today as much as television is, then the church has a responsibility to use television to help the children to a better assessment of values…[66]

The ABC pioneered regular religious telecasts for children in its *Stories of Jesus* series.[67] The RCC provided five-minute children's segments to TCN-9.[68] As noted in Chapter 4, the CTA developed programmes to cater for a range of demographics, with special emphasis on teenagers.[69] In 1958, ATN-7 produced, on behalf of CTA, *Teenage Club,* designed to allow youths to express their opinions on topical issues.[70] Teenagers appeared regularly on the

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[63] S. Collerton, 'Mr Squiggle rockets to 50th birthday', 2 July 2009: http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-07-01/mr-squiggle-rockets-to-50th-birthday/1338502, accessed 13 January 2012.
[64] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!,* p. 53.
[65] ABCB, *Fourteenth Annual Report*, 1962, p. 52; ABCB, *Fifteenth Annual Report*, 1963, p, 59.
[66] NAA Melbourne: TR/3/2 Part II Television Religious Programmes Christian Television Association, CTA Research Division, First Report, Presented to members of the Association, November 1962, p. 5
[67] 'Successful first year of religious programs on TV', *SMH*, 2 November 1957, p. 6.
[68] Peters, A Tale of Two Centres, p. 45.
[69] NLA: MS7702, folder 7702/9/3, Religious broadcasting 1959-1970 Part 2/2, Adrian Jose Papers, Box 25, The Christian Television Association of NSW 1969 Annual Presidential Report, p. 4.
[70] 'Varied Religious Features', *SMH*, 10 November 1958, p. 13.

programme and viewers were able to join the club.[71] In 1962, segments in children's programmes were made available to religious bodies.[72]

Defining the child audience: Teenagers and tiny tots

As we have seen, children made up a substantial percentage of the television audience, and by the mid-1950s, advertisers had identified teenagers as a specific market. Consumerism transformed Australian teenage culture,[73] encouraging commercial television to venture into programming specifically for teenagers. Additionally, this helped stations fulfil their Australian content quota. From 1957, musical programmes designed for teenagers included TCN-9's *Bandstand*, ATN-7's *Teen Time*, and the ABC's *Six O'clock Rock,* which later transferred to TCN-9. In the early 1960s, ATN-7 produced similar fare with *The Johnny O'Keefe Show* and *Sing, Sing, Sing*.[74]

Johnny O'Keefe and Col Joye became two of Australia's first rock n' roll stars. Billed as 'the wild one' and 'Australia's king of rock and roll', O'Keefe found a larger working-class fan base than Joye and had an edgier image with highly sexualised performances.[75] In 1959, *Listener In-TV* named *The Johnny O'Keefe Show* the best 'kids' show' and 'Australia's sole world-class' programme.[76] This enthusiasm for rock 'n' roll and Johnny O'Keefe was not shared unanimously. In 1962, the ABCB commented that, in teenage programming, stations were not so much following public taste as leading it.[77] What this does highlight is the distinctive classed televisual cultures that existed amongst Sydney television viewers.

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[71] 'TV Guide', *TV-NEWS TIMES*, November 1958
[72] ABCB, *Fourteenth Annual Report*, 1962, p. 52.
[73] M. Arrow, *Friday On Our Minds: Popular Culture in Australia since 1945*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2009, p. 63.
[74] 'Violence, False Values, Monotony', *TV Times*, 10 November 1962, p. 6.
[75] Arrow, *Friday On Our Minds*, p. 61.
[76] J. McKay, 'Kids', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 125.
[77] ABCB, *Fourteenth Annual Report*, 1962, p. 47.

Pop star Col Joye appealed more to middle-class audiences, particularly after becoming a regular on *Bandstand*. Based on *American Bandstand*, TCN-9's *Bandstand* became a national teenage programme in the early 1960s and ran until 1972. It not only launched musical talent but also cemented the career of its amiable host, Brian Henderson. The programme's longevity may be attributed to its reputation as a 'healthy, well-conducted family programme',[78] but undoubtedly stations found it easier and more profitable to cater for larger demographics. According to *The Age*'s 'Monitor', one of the industry's difficulties was agreeing on the age of a child. The different interests of particular age groups deterred stations from creating age-specific programmes. The industry tried to find a solution by classifying programmes as suitable for pre-school, school and teenage young people. The classification was abandoned as no one agreed on the age of a teenager.[79]

Pre-schoolers were easier to identify. Programmes targeting them formed an increasingly important part of morning television, with the ABCB in 1968 reporting a significant increase in kindergarten programmes on metropolitan television.[80] In 1963, the local edition of *Romper Room* debuted on ATN-7. Originally produced in Baltimore, the Australian production of *Romper Room* was handled by Fremantle International (Aust.) Pty Ltd, and marked the beginning of a different form of franchising and programme trade. The owners of *Romper Room* did not sell their rights to networks; they licensed the format and permitted licensees to employ their own comperes.[81] As part of the franchise remaking arrangement, the teachers who hosted the programme underwent specialised training in Baltimore and New York with the originators of *Romper Room*, before making their Australian television debut.[82]

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[78] 'BANDSTAND stays up late', *TV Times,* 22 December 1962, p. 13.
[79] 'Monitor', 'What is a teenager?', *The Age*, 9 October 1965.
[80] ABCB, *Twentieth Annual Report*, 1968, p. 86.
[81] Moran, 'Makeover on the move', pp. 463-64.
[82] 'Melbourne must change the law before it can – Get the Rompers on', *Listener-In TV*, 19-25 January 1963.

Romper Room was designed to develop the physical and mental health of pre-school children.[83] Combining educational and physical fitness activities in the form of games, songs, and manners, the programme sought to prepare children for school.[84]

Despite its unprecedented success and worldwide acclaim, it was initially greeted warily by Australian education authorities and parents. Concern centred on the programme's methods and pedagogy. The Inspector of Preschool Nurseries protested about the 'regimentation and exploitation' of the infants in the programme, while the Australian Pre-school Association described the programme's methods as 'inhibiting, formal and lacking in any element of fun'.[85] Perhaps the Association was referring to one of *Romper Room's* well-known exercises, which taught correct posture by requiring the children to balance a bucket on their heads as they walked around the room.[86] The Kindergarten Union and the Sydney Day Nursery Association were also critical. Consequently, the ABCB issued several monitors' reports on the programme, all of which were favourable.[87]

Other critics disliked *Romper Room* for giving away expensive toys and for providing an 'artificial stimulus' for children participating in the studio.[88] The greatest concern, however, seemed to be about the appearance of young children on television. Under Australian child welfare legislation, the employment of infants under the age of seven was prohibited. In *Listener-In TV's* opinion, the legislation was interpreted more 'liberally' in NSW than in

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[83] 'Trend-setting Kindergarten', *SMH*, 28 January 1963; Moran, 'Makeover on the move', pp. 463-464.
[84] 'Melbourne must change the law before it can – Get the Rompers on', *Listener-In TV*, 19-25 January 1963.
[85] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4/0, folder TC/2/1, Television Children's Programmes General, Box 6, Letter addressed to the Director, ABCB, from the Secretary of the Australian Pre-School Association, 20 December 1963, p. 1.
[86] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!,* pp. 52-53.
[87] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4/0, folder TC/2/1, Television Children's Programmes General, Box 6, ABCB Report on Romper Room – ATN Sydney, prepared for the fifteenth meeting of the Advisory Committee on Children's Television Programmes, 18 April 1963, p. 14.
[88] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4/0, folder TC/2/1, Television Children's Programmes General, Box 6, letter addressed to the Director, ABCB, from the Secretary of the Australian Pre-School Association, 20 December 1963, p. 2.

other states, which may explain why ATN-7 was the first to produce a local version of the programme. The prohibition of small children from television studios was initially designed to protect their eyesight from studio cameras, although the improvement in modern equipment made the prohibition redundant.[89]

As pre-schoolers and teenagers were well-catered for in early programming, the ABCB and ACCTP were critical of the lack of attention to 7-11 year olds. There was, however, a scattering of Australian programmes provided for them.[90] Moreover, the industry suggested that adventure films, comedy and cartoons were adequate for children of all ages. However the Board believed that such offerings could not be *both* entertaining and beneficial to the child.[91]

Australian content

In 1960 attempts were made to produce children's adventure television programmes 'to emphasize the Australian outlook',[92] but for budgetary reasons local content consisted of as little as fifteen minutes per day on some commercial stations.[93] Throughout the decade, the ACCTP frequently expressed concern about the lack of Australian material in children's programmes.[94] In 1965, the ABCB and FACTS met to discuss the ACCTP's views on the state of children's television. FACTS' general manager, Arthur Cowan, believed that the ACCTP's opinions 'tended to be idealistic rather than practical', and ignored the commercial

[89] 'Melbourne must change the law before it can – Get the Rompers on', *Listener-In TV*, 19-25 January 1963.
[90] For example, *Where in the World*, a children's quiz show hosted by Eric Baume. See 'Baume's show for children', *TV Times*, 23 July 1960, p. 3.
[91] ABCB, *Sixteenth Annual Report*, 1964, p. 62; ABCB, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 1965, pp. 62-63.
[92] ABCB, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 1960, p. 34.
[93] ABCB, *Fifteenth Annual Report*, 1963, p. 58.
[94] ABCB, *Sixteenth Annual Report*, 1964, p. 63.

realities of television. He cited the industries' difficulties of high production costs, competition for audiences and advertisers, and government licence fees for films.[95]

According to an ABCB monitor, the new stations TEN-10 and ATV-10 made a 'genuine effort' to provide the type of children's programmes envisaged by the ACCTP. TEN-10's *Space Station Ten* was described as 'directed at sub teenagers' and contained a higher concentration of educational material than any equivalent programme. The programme was applauded for being 'entirely free of cartoons and comedy films…used so much to dilute similar local productions' and for containing 'much that is recommended in paragraph 15 of the Standards'. The report warned that new stations were unlikely to continue their efforts 'if other stations are permitted to abolish children's programmes in favour of films, or trim existing adult programmes to attract a child audience'.[96] Because commercial stations in Melbourne favoured imported programmes over locally produced ones, several Australian actors had been displaced. This worrying precedent led Actors' Equity to implore ABCB to play a more 'decisive role' in ensuring commercial television stations fulfilled their obligations to children. Children's programmes were at risk of disappearing altogether.[97]

In response, Colin Bednall, GTV-9's managing director, told the ABCB that it was the ABC's duty rather than commercial television's to televise children's programmes. They were licensed to cater for adults, not five-years-olds.[98] Consequently in 1967, the ABCB introduced

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[95] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4/0, folder TC/2/1, Television Children's Programmes General, Box 6, ABCB Agendum No. 1965/206, Television Programmes for Children – Comments from Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations, 17 August 1965, pp. 2-3.
[96] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4/0, folder TC/2/1, Television Children's Programmes General, Box 6, Minute Paper addressed to Mr Jose from K. Blackie, June 1965.
[97] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4/0, folder TC/2/1, Television Children's Programmes General, Box 6, letter addressed to R. G. Osborne, ABCB, from Victor Arnold, Acting Victorian Divisional Secretary, Actors and Announcers Equity Association of Australia, 1 June 1965.
[98] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4/0, folder TC/2/1, Television Children's Programmes General, Box 6, ABCB extracts from notes of meeting with Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations in Melbourne on 28 May 1965, p. 4.

an incentive scheme whereby licensees broadcasting local children's programmes would receive double credit towards their overall Australian content quota.[99]

Even so, some stations were already trying to produce 'attractive and original children's programmes in their studios'.[100] In 1966, ATN-7 and the ABC co-produced *The Interpretis*, a science-fiction children's series set in 3000 AD. It was soon followed by another sci-fi series, *Vega 4,* and succeeded by *Phoenix 5* in 1970. The programmes used futuristic costumes, special effects and imaginative sets in a similar vein to hugely popular overseas sci-fi programmes such as *Doctor Who*, *Star Trek* and *The Avengers*. TCN-9 produced one of the most successful locally-made adventure series, *Skippy* (1968-70). It was widely distributed overseas, giving confidence to Australia's drama industry that local television productions were internationally marketable.[101]

In 1968, the ACCTP submitted its final report, expressing exasperation at the lack of progress. The ACCTP's four reports reveal an idealistic belief that station managements would discount commercial considerations and televise children's programmes as a community service. In twelve years, the ACCPT had achieved little because its status was only advisory, and the ABCB was not inclined to act.[102] In 1968, the ABCB decided to disband the ACCTP in favour of 'specialist ad hoc committees'.[103] Unfortunately the local content incentive scheme did little to increase the number of quality Australian children's programmes.[104] The trend towards greater imported material in children's television

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[99] ABCB, *Eighteenth Annual Report*, 1966, p. 56.
[100] Ibid., p. 57.
[101] Moran, *Moran's Guide to Australian TV Series*, pp. 239, 419, 473.
[102] J. James Bailey, 'Regulatory Bodies and Children's Television Committees', *MIA*, No.11, February 1979, p. 34.
[103] ABCB, *Twenty-first Annual Report*, 1969, p. 104.
[104] Halliday, An Overview of the History and Regulation of Children's Programs, p. 10.

programmes continued. By 1969, traditional types of children's programmes formed a very small proportion of all programmes televised.[105]

Advancing the public interest: The 1970s and 1980s

In the 1970s and 1980s, children's programming became less concerned with forming the moral and spiritual dimension of a child, and more with instilling a sense of citizenship and Australian identity. Indignation over definitions of quality programming escalated. Keys argues that children's programming was used to advance an era of 'public interest' in the broader environment of media policy.[106]

The ABCB made minor changes to family and children's viewing classifications, expanding 'G' periods to between 6.30 and 8.30 a.m. and between 4.00 and 7.30 p.m. weekdays, and on weekends between 6.00 a.m. and 7.30 p.m.[107] Australian drama was reduced and overseas-produced children's programming in the afternoon viewing period increased.[108] In 1971 an Australian children's programme quota was introduced and the Children's Television Advisory Committee (CTAC) was formed by the ABCB to make practical recommendations on the type of programmes eligible for the quota.[109] Each station was required to transmit children's programmes for at least four hours every 28 days for a nine-month experimental period. The CTAC's *Production Guidelines for Children's Television Programmes* was designed to assist producers and stations to meet the quota for school-aged children (6-13 year olds). However the CTAC had difficulty in interpreting the ABCB's requirements. Two

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[105] ABCB, *Twenty-first Annual Report*, 1969, pp. 63,104.
[106] Keys, 'Children's television', p. 21.
[107] ABCB, *Twenty-second Annual Report*, 1970, p. 108.
[108] Halliday, An Overview of the History and Regulation of Children's Programs, p. 50.
[109] The CTAC was made up of seven members consisting of five men and two women who were experts in the fields of education, children's entertainment, television programme production and administration. See Interim report of the Children's Television Advisory Committee, 26 June 1972, Appendix L, ABCB, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, 1972, p. 174.

avenues were opened to them: focus on the needs of children, or on the limitations faced by licensees to meet the quota.[110]

The content quota caused a flurry at the commercial networks but resulted in four new programmes. The first, on the Seven Network, was *This Week Has Seven Days* (two hours weekly). The magazine style format allowed the coverage of topics including newscaf, sport, entertainment, careers, competitions, music and workshops.[111] Nine produced special school-age editions of *Here's Humphrey.*[112] Ten produced *Walk a Young World* and the low-budget but extremely popular *Young Talent Time* (*YTT*) (one hour each weekly). Surprisingly, the ABCB was unenthusiastic about *YTT* and did not approve it for quota purposes beyond the experimental period.[113]

Despite some genuine attempts to produce quota programmes, stations generally showed little commitment to going beyond the bare minimum requirements, complained the CTAC. Programmes were produced on comparatively limited budgets and only televised early on weekend mornings.[114] To minimise conflict amongst broadcasters, the CTAC recommended trialling simultaneous screenings of quota programmes after 4 p.m. on weekdays.[115] However, the ABCB did not take up this recommendation. In 1973, the CTAC was disbanded. Its third and final report lamented that its initial optimism had not been justified because children's programmes were not of a high quality. Those programmes screened for quota were televised at 'peripheral times' and were 'often so

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[110] See Appendix L, ABCB, *Twenty-third Annual Report*, 1971, p. 198.
[111] McKay, 'Kids', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV,* p. 131; ABCB, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, pp. 106-7.
[112] This Australian-produced show for pre-schoolers was first aired in 1965 and is now screened in over 20 countries. It is the second longest running children's programme in the world, according to its official website, http://www.humphreybear.com/, accessed 3 April 2013.
[113] ABCB, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, p. 106.
[114] Richards & ABT, Australian Content Inquiry Discussion Paper, *Regulation of Children's Programs*, p. 3.; ABCB, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, p. 107.
[115] Interim report of the Children's Television Advisory Committee, 26 June 1972, Appendix L, ABCB, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, 1972, p.174.

stolid, unimaginative and poverty ridden in presentation, that very few children actually watch them.'[116]

The CTAC acknowledged the difficulty of defining standards that would produce quality programmes, but criticised the ABCB for its approval of programmes which were well below the quality, standards and attractiveness stipulated in the guidelines.[117] The CTAC also criticised the restricted budgets and production facilities provided for children's programming and the ABCB's tendency to approve programmes after they had already gone to air.[118] Ultimately, according to the CTAC, children's needs were still not being met; more research was needed into their activities and interests.[119]

The CTAC recommended: establishing a Standing Committee to determine acceptable quotas; televising quota programmes between 4.30 and 7.30 p.m. on weekdays; gradually extending the quota requirement until quality children's programmes comprised ten hours per week; and introducing an Australian children's drama quota. It also recommended that the Commonwealth Government establish an independent foundation to produce quality children's programmes. The ABCB's response to the CTAC's final report revealed a preference for appeasing commercial licensees at the expense of the public interest. Although it agreed to implement some of the recommendations, the ABCB claimed that many of them did not fall 'within the Committee's terms of reference – nor within the ABCB's powers to implement'.[120]

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[116] Final report of the Children's Television Advisory Committee, 28 February 1973, Appendix L, ABCB, *Twenty-fifth Annual Report*, 1973, p. 204.
[117] Ibid., pp. 192, 196.
[118] Ibid., pp. 124, 196.
[119] Ibid., p. 190.
[120] Ibid., pp. 123-124, 198, 201-205.

Between 1973 and 1978 there were no children's advisory committees to the ABCB and programmes previously rejected by the CTAC for not meeting quota guidelines were still shown. The ABCB, however, gradually raised the quota to ten hours by 1976.[121] But the ABCB included overseas material in the quota in 1977, effectively reducing Australian-produced programming to four hours.[122]

In 1975, the ABCB appointed an advisory committee to undertake a general review of the Programme Standards for adult and children's television. The committee became known as the Edgar Committee, after its resolute chair, a media academic, Dr Patricia Edgar.[123] Once again, the public expressed dissatisfaction with the ABCB's handling of children's programming. In its 1976 report, the Committee reiterated many of the CTAC's concerns and recommendations. It suggested that commercial stations were either unable to produce children's programmes that were both entertaining and educational, or they deliberately misinterpreted this requirement, resulting in boring low-budget programmes to meet the quota.[124]

The ABCB had already reminded stations to produce quota programmes that were both entertaining *and* informative in order to compete with 'purely diversional material'.[125] But the reminder went unheeded. Nine's *Molecules to Man,* presented by Professor Harry Messel,

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[121] ABCB, *Twenty-eighth Annual Report*, 1976, p. 128.
[122] Halliday, An Overview of the History and Regulation of Children's Programs, pp. 52-53; ABCB, *Twenty-eighth Annual Report*, 1976, p. 129.
[123] P. Edgar, *Bloodbath: A Memoir of Australian Television*, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton, Vic., 2006, p. 137, acknowledges that Phillip Adams once described her as a 'relentless human tank'.
[124] Halliday, An Overview of the History and Regulation of Children's Programs on Commercial Television in Australia, pp. 53-54. In summary, the Committee recommended that: there be a Standing Committee to report on the overall consistency and quality of each station's children's programmes; programmes be assessed before receiving quota credit; a firm policy of withdrawing unsatisfactory quota programmes be pursued; and a government subsidy be provided for the production of children's programmes. The Committee also recommended that advertising should be removed from children's viewing periods. However, the ABCB was abolished at the end of 1976 before it could finalise children quota requirements.
[125] ABCB, *Twenty-sixth Annual Report*, 1974, p. 130.

prompted a critic to joke that 'a lecturer is a man who talks in someone else's sleep'.[126] The ABCB subsequently rejected it for quota approval. The ABC also tried to tackle the 9-13 age group with a magazine-style programme, *Target*. However, due to a meagre budget it struggled to compete with the pop music show, *Countdown*, and the adult variety programme, *The Aunty Jack Show*, both on the ABC. In spite of *Target*'s difficulties, the net result was that both teenagers and sub-teenagers were attracted to the ABC rather than to commercial television stations.[127]

There were, however, some innovative programmes produced at this time which tried to engage as well as educate children, such as Nine's *The Curiosity Show* (1972-1990). Professor Rob Morrison and Dr Deane Hutton presented the show, which emphasised science, nature and the environment and kept its viewers' attention with experiments. The programme was a genuine attempt to balance information with entertainment.[128]

The production of drama serials alleviated the shortage in children's programmes. In 1973, the Australian Film Productions' children's serial *Catch Kandy* (Seven), won praise from both regulators and critics. The 13-part serial, shot on film and in colour, told the story of two young Sydney orphans who ran away from their uncle and befriended a crazy zoology student living in a cave.[129] Ten's *Lost Islands* (1976), set in a Pacific paradise occupied by descendants of convicts, was the most expensive children's serial undertaken by a commercial network. Produced by Roger Miriams and Paramount Pictures, *Lost Islands* cost $750,000 and was widely distributed in the US, Europe and Japan.[130] However, Brian Davies notes,

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[126] McKay, 'Kids', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 131; ABCB, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, 1972, p. 107.
[127] Inglis, *Whose ABC?*, p. 356; Hall, *Supertoy,* p. 150.
[128] 'Curiosity Didn't Kill Off This Hep Cat', *Canberra Times*, 6 May 2001, p. 4. Banksia Productions produced *The Curiosity Show* for the Nine Network.
[129] Ibid., p. 132; Moran, *Moran's Guide to Australian TV Series*, p. 106.
[130] McKay, 'Kids', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV,* p. 132.

curiously, that while *Lost Islands* 'enjoyed significant success overseas', it failed to rate in Melbourne.[131]

At the end of 1976, the ABCB stated rather ruefully that stations had not yet 'solved the problems involved in devising local material which will attract children and hold their attention while informing and entertaining them'.[132] In fact, the situation appeared to have deteriorated. Five metropolitan commercial stations did not televise any kindergarten material and commercial stations screened on average less than 30 minutes of children's programmes per day.[133] Consequently, these stations were in breach of children's television quota requirements. The ABCB reported that among the most-watched children's programmes of the year were *Happy Days, I Dream of Jeannie, The Flintstones, Bandstand, Six Million Dollar Man, Wonderful World of Disney* and *Here's Humphrey*. Most of the top ten children's programmes were not locally-made, reflecting the ABCB's failure to regulate stations effectively.[134]

Self-regulation

As we saw in Chapter 1, the ABCB was succeeded by the ABT in January 1977. The change coincided with the inquiry by the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts into 'The Impact of Television on the Development and Learning Behaviour of Children'. The public response to the Senate's inquiry reinforced the general concern with the state of children's programming.[135]

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[131] Davies, *Those Fabulous TV Years*, p. 185.
[132] ABCB, *Twenty-eighth Annual Report*, 1976, p. 130.
[133] ABCB, *Twenty-ninth Annual Report*, 1976-77, p. 49. In 1975 the ABCB noted that kindergarten material decreased as a result of a contraction daytime/afternoon programming and economic difficulties faced by stations. The ABCB responded by increasing the value of kindergarten programmes as part of a revision of the Australian content requirements to encourage stations to produce such programming. See ABCB, *Twenty-seventh Annual Report*, 1975, p. 120.
[134] McKay, 'Kids', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 132.
[135] Halliday, An Overview of the History and Regulation of Children's Programs, p. 55.

Between March and June 1977, the ABT conducted a more general inquiry into a proposal for self-regulation by Australian broadcasters, during which it received 539 submissions and heard 292 witnesses predominantly about the standard and impacts of children's television. This inquiry's report concluded that there was 'a natural conflict between the needs of commercial broadcasters and the interests of the public' and expressed doubt about whether commercial broadcasters could be relied upon to adequately cater for children without 'firm requirements'.[136]

Consequently, even though the commercial industry lobbied for self-regulation, the public reaction was so strongly against the self-regulation of children's programming that the ABT instead established more stringent regulations for children's television. Australia was 'swimming against the tide' as there were movements in other Western democracies towards widespread industry de-regulation. The new regulations illustrated the strength and effectiveness of advocates for the interests of Australian children.[137]

The new standards included 'C' classifications and 'C' time (4.00-5.00 p.m. on weekdays). The Children's Programme Committee (CPC) was established to provide advice to the ABT.[138] A 'C' programme:

> 1) was made specifically for children or groups of children within the pre-school or the primary school age range; 2) was entertaining; 3) was well produced, using sufficient resources to ensure a high standard of script, cast, direction, editing, shooting, sound and other production elements; 4) enhanced a child's understanding and experience; and 5) was appropriate for Australian children.[139]

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[136] ABT, '*'Self-regulation for Broadcasters'*, pp. 7, 68.
[137] Lisosky, 'For all kids' sakes', pp. 825, 836. See also Edgar, *Bloodbath*, p. 405.
[138] ACMA, *Children's Television Standards Review*, Issues Paper, Australian Communications Media Authority, Belconnen, ACT, 2007, p. 2.
[139] ABT, *Kidz TV: An Inquiry into Children's and Preschool Children's Standards*, Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, North Sydney, 1991, cited in Lisosky, 'For all kids' sakes', p. 825.

From discussions with Australian independent producers, it became obvious that 'C' programmes needed firm regulation and protection. To ensure that 'C' programmes competed only with one another, there was widespread agreement within the television industry that they needed to be scheduled in the same hour on all networks.[140] Additionally, the ABT recommended that commercial stations broadcast for at least 30 minutes per weekday programmes designed specifically for pre-school children (classified as 'P').[141] By the end of the 1970s, the regulation of children's television had become a priority for the ABT. The stage was now set for a renewed drive to improve the quality of children's programmes.

The controversy over quality children's programming

In order to raise the standards of children's television, the CPC set about its task with vigour. Having been given authority to set down guidelines for 'C' time[142] and classify programmes accordingly, the committee approved 131 programmes in its first year.[143] *The Curiosity Show* was among the first to be classified 'C'. The Seven Network's *Shirl's Neighbourhood* and *Simon Townsend's Wonder World* were also awarded 'C' classifications as they were specifically designed for children.[144]

Wonder World was a result of six years' research both at home and abroad, and when it finally arrived on Network Ten in 1980, it attracted one million viewers.[145] The programme was based on the magazine-style format of *ACA*, where the host, Simon Townsend, had first worked as a reporter. *Wonder World* won five Logies and concentrated on telling stories

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[140] Edgar, *Bloodbath*, p. 72.
[141] ABT, '*Self-regulation for Broadcasters*', p. 68.
[142] The ABT introduced 'C' programmes in two stages. On 1 July 1979 commercial stations had to broadcast no less than 3 hours of 'C' programmes between 4.00-5.00 p.m. each week. The second stage was introduced on 1 July 1980 when 'C' hours were extended to 5 hours per week. See ABT, *Kidz TV*, Vol. 2, p. 282.
[143] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 51.
[144] *The Curiosity Show* was popular as well as educational because children could replicate the experiments they observed on the show, as household articles were used. See Edgar, *Bloodbath,* p. 75.
[145] McKay, 'Kids', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 133.

about 'simple things – music, animals, lifestyle things…how Vegemite is made'.[146] Adopting a similar magazine format, *Shirl's Neighbourhood* examined children's neighbourhoods, thus encouraging community involvement.[147] The host, Shirley Strachan, from the Australian rock band Skyhooks, was criticised for his 'ocker' approach, but within a year his show had won awards for best show and best personality.[148]

Not only did the CPC approve programmes, it also rejected them –126 in its first year of operation. Amongst these were two programmes that had absorbed a great deal of time and money.[149] *Carrots* was the first production of the newly established Children's Television Unit at ATN-7. The Seven Network spent upwards of $250,000 on the programme, which the CPC rejected on the grounds that it was confusing and unsuitable for the age group concerned. The format of TCN-9's *Razzle Dazzle* was an adult quiz-style game show. In Kerry Packer's *Bulletin*, Greg Sheridan ruminated:

> One could hardly cite *Razzle Dazzle* as television's finest hour…perhaps it is of little educational value, but how can the Committee possibly determine that it is of little entertainment value when it is so popular? What other criterion is there for judging entertainment value than whether children watch a programme?[150]

The failure of these two highly publicised and expensive programmes to obtain a 'C' classification created a controversy in which not only the ABT's and CPC's competence were questioned, but so too was the very notion of quality children's programming. FACTS described the CPC as a group 'determined to exercise their personal judgement to measure the elusive and undefined element of "quality"'.[151] In a similar vein, Sheridan criticised the

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[146] K. John, 'Fed: Wonder World's Simon Townsend returns to the small screen', *AAP*, 28 April 2006.
[147] Edgar, *Bloodbath*, p. 75.
[148] Moran, *Moran's Guide to Australian TV Series*, p. 133.
[149] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 51.
[150] G. Sheridan, 'Tribunal gets kids' TV out of focus', *Bulletin*, 17 July 1979, p. 56.
[151] FACTS, *Report*, The Federation, Sydney, 1978-79, p. 23.

subjective views of the Committee.[152] The controversy also reflected debate about adults' perceptions of children's needs and wants. Less attention was paid to what programmes were popular with children.

FACTS maintained that the CPC's guidelines were unclear and ill-defined.[153] It had two main objections to the guidelines: first, 'C' programmes should be made 'suitable' for children and *not* 'specifically designed' for them; and second, there should be no time restrictions on when 'C' programmes were shown.[154] Packer had raised the same issues at TCN-9's licence renewal hearings earlier in 1979, maintaining that the separate 'C' category was not necessary and that the 'G' classification (family viewing) would adequately cater for and 'safeguard' children's interests. Edgar saw in this self-interest at work: children's programmes at 4.00 p.m. could interfere with Packer's massive investment in cricket.[155]

Advertising guidelines were yet another source of controversy for the CPC for two reasons. First, the broadcasting industry CPC members refused to compromise their revenue base and, according to Edgar, the member representing the advertising industry was 'fiercely protective' of the industry's rights to resolve its own issues. Second, because children were not considered a profitable market, since their audience share was so small, commercial networks would struggle to attract advertising revenue for 'C' time. Therefore some network players argued there should be no children's programmes. The CPC did not agree. Programmes produced for the general audience would not qualify for 'C' classification because they were not specifically designed for children. Consequently, the CPC did not fully tackle the issue of

[152] G. Sheridan, 'Tribunal gets kids' TV out of focus', *Bulletin*, 17 July 1979, p. 58; This subjectivity possibly stemmed from the composition of the CPC, which consisted of seven members, four representing the public and three the radio, television and advertising industries, with the likelihood of partisan views. Of course, Sheriden was also being subjective. See Halliday, An Overview of the History and Regulation of Children's Programs, p. 58.
[153] FACTS, *Report*, The Federation, Sydney, 1978-79, p. 23.
[154] Halliday, An Overview of the History and Regulation of Children's Programs, p. 60.
[155] Edgar, *Bloodbath*, p. 75.

advertising guidelines until after it had resolved its opinions on programme content. This was also contentious, as seen by the CPC's aforementioned battles with FACTS.[156]

As a result of its focus on programme content, not only did the CPC review, approve or reject, and classify existing programmes, but it also encouraged producers of Australian children's television to move in new directions. The CPC recommended Australian producers prioritise children's drama, arguing it could contribute to a child's intellectual, social and emotional development, as did quality children's literature. The CPC also advised networks to send their children's producers overseas to gather experience in the field. Furthermore, the CPC promoted local settings for these dramas, such as Australian cities or coastal or rural areas. This meant that stations could increase community involvement in their productions, as, for instance, 'extras' could be drawn from the local population.[157]

Programming trends

The views of the CPC were not the only factor that determined the nature of children's programming at this time. Production costs were also important, encouraging networks to use the magazine format rather than drama. The 'C' classification system was meant to encourage quality children's television programming both from Australia and overseas. However, the networks bought very few of the approved drama programmes created overseas and produced very little Australian drama. From 1979 to 1983, only 6% of Australian 'C' programmes were drama.[158] Instead networks chose to pursue more cost-efficient options.[159]

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[156] This resulted in the CPC's sidelining the discussion on advertising; a sub-committee was charged with this responsibility. See ibid., pp. 69, 71-3.
[157] Ibid., p. 73-4.
[158] Aisbett, *20 Years of C*, p. 20.
[159] S. Kearney, 'TV kids turn to games', *Sun Herald*, 2 April 2000, p. 19.

In the early 1980s, therefore, magazine shows such as *The Curiosity Show*, *Shirl's Neighbourhood*, *Wombat* and *Simon Townsend's Wonder World* made up the largest component of children's television content.[160] In fact, Australian-produced (non-drama) programmes were predominantly in this format. Other formats included documentary, variety and quiz/game shows. The magazine format had several advantages: it could be shown in strip format on weekdays throughout the year during the dedicated 'C' time; it also was flexible as it gave producers scope to include both Australian and overseas material to ensure diversity; and it could provide age-specific stories, which 'C' programming required.[161]

The formation of an Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF) underlined the importance of children's programming in this period. Its main purpose was to encourage the development, production and transmission of Australian children's television.[162] The Victorian government pledged the first $200,000 and by mid-1981, personnel drawn from a cross-section of businessmen, industry members and public interest groups had been appointed.[163] In Keys' opinion, the establishment and funding for such a foundation illustrates the 'strength and bargaining power of children's television.'[164]

Children's television on commercial stations became even more strongly regulated in 1984 with the introduction of the Children's and Preschool Television Standards (CTS).[165] Stations were required to televise 30 minutes of pre-school programmes each weekday and limitations

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[160] Ibid.
[161] Richards & ABT, Australian Content Inquiry Discussion Paper, *Regulation of Children's Programs*, p. 9.
[162] C. Holding, 'The Australian Children's Television Foundation: A Co-operative Venture between the Commonwealth, States and Territories', *MIA*, No. 52, May 1989, p. 55.
[163] It was envisaged that the ACTF would work on the same structure as a film corporation and was to be a limited company with a board that would commission independent producers. See Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off,* pp. 56- 57.
[164] Keys, 'Children's television', p. 21.
[165] Aisbett, *20 Years of C*, p. 14; Potter, 'A very special audience', p. 5.

were imposed on the repetition of programmes and on advertising during 'C' time.[166] An additional requirement was to broadcast eight hours of Australian children's drama a year. At that time, networks had to broadcast 104 hours of Australian drama. As an incentive, which also reflected the power of children's television, the eight hours of Australian children's drama, if granted a 'C' classification, would count as 12 hours in the overall Australian drama quota.[167]

The 1984 Australian children's drama quota was somewhat successful in stimulating a degree of diversity into children's programming. Throughout the mid-to-late 1980s, independent production houses in association with the three major networks produced the greatest proportion of children's television drama. After two years of 'C' drama quota, 20 programmes had been produced with three in production.[168] In partnership with Crawfords, the Ten Network produced *The Henderson Kids* and the *Winners* anthology series. The Nine Network commissioned *Colour in the Creek* (co-produced with the BBC) and *The Zoo Family* (Crawfords), while the Seven Network screened *Saturdee* (LJ Productions) and *Runaway Islands* (Reg Grundy Enterprises) among many other 'C' drama programmes.[169]

Such partnerships were a typical feature of the film and television industries, as we shall see in Chapter 8. Originally the CPC gave a provisional 'C' classification to children's drama programmes at the script stage. A provisional 'C' meant that a programme had the potential to meet the 'C' classification. However the film industry was dissatisfied with this procedure. The Film Industry Standing Committee argued that if a children's drama programme received

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[166] ACMA, *Children's Television Standards Review*, Issues Paper, Australian Communications Media Authority, Belconnen, ACT, 2007, p. 2.
[167] ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 3, p. 62.
[168] Richards & ABT, Australian Content Inquiry Discussion Paper, *Regulation of Children's Programs*, pp. 26, 29.
[169] ABT, *Kidz TV*, Vol. 2, p. 356.

only a provisional 'C' classification, financial backing was difficult to obtain, adversely affecting production. Experience had shown that networks were unwilling to commit to a pre-sale of a children's drama programme without a 'C' classification first. This meant that stations were never at risk; but investors were in danger of receiving no return on their investment, if the 'C' classification did not eventuate. This hampered producers' ability to obtain production finance.[170] In response, the ABT agreed in 1988 to a trial period to allow programmes to achieve the 'C' classification at the pre-production stage to enable producers to obtain finance. Furthermore, the Commonwealth Government formed the Australian Film Finance Corporation (AFFC) to 'provide financial support for Australian feature films, telemovies, mini-series and documentaries'.[171]

The ABT's review of the CTS in 1987, entitled 'An Inquiry into the Regulation of Children's Programmes', summed up programming trends during the 1980s. All children's categories (preschool children's, 'C' drama, 'C' other [non-drama], and cartoons) were included. Cartoons emerged as the dominant form of children's programming in all markets and over all time periods. In Sydney, there was a noticeable increase in the percentage of children's programming devoted to cartoons from 27% in 1979/80 to 53% in 1986/87.[172]

The CPC disapproved of this trend of including imported cartoons and music video clips in magazine programmes, believing this contributed to an erosion of the 50% Australian content requirement. The commercial television industry disagreed, claiming that the inclusion of cartoon material and regular video clips or satellite news stories was already a well-established practice. Moreover, this custom was used in moderation within a diverse programme format and it did not necessarily diminish Australian production. Despite these

[170] Richards & ABT, Australian Content Inquiry Discussion Paper, *Regulation of Children's Programs*, p. 22.
[171] Mencinsky & Mullen, 'Regulation of Children's Television in Australia', p. 34.
[172] Richards & ABT, Australian Content Inquiry Discussion Paper, *Regulation of Children's Programs*, p. 8.

arguments from the television industry, submissions to the 1987 Inquiry (which lasted for three years), overwhelmingly urged for more 'C' Australian drama.[173]

Although there was more regulation by the end of the 1980s with the introduction of the CTS and the Australian children's drama quota, there was also more flexibility as 'C' programmes were no longer required to be shown between 4.00 and 5.00 p.m. weekdays. This change allowed for the displacement of programmes for live coverage of 'major sporting events and events of national importance'.[174] Another change involved the format of programmes. Magazine programming gradually declined, and was replaced by the increasingly popular game show format.[175] Early game shows such as *Matchmates* were followed by *Now You See It* in the mid-1980s and *Blockbusters* and *Double Dare* were soon to appear in the 1990s, all of which pointed to a new trend in format programming, as we shall see in Chapters 7 and 9.[176]

Change is in the air: The 1990s and 2000s

As we observed in Chapter 1, the 1990s ushered in a general liberalisation of the broadcasting landscape. In response to the 1987 Inquiry, from 1990, the ABT made children's television standards more flexible, replacing the fixed 'C' hour with 'C' time bands.[177] This was done in order to encourage a greater commitment of resources to children's programming. Restrictions on advertising were also loosened but the minimum required hours of children's

[173] Ibid., pp. 13-14.
[174] ABT, *Kidz TV*, Vol. 1, p. 33.
[175] Game shows comprised 43% of Australian programme hours during 1996-1999. In 1999, magazine programmes accounted for 23% of 'C' classified material and there had been a substantial increase of 'C' Australian drama to 22%. See Aisbett, *20 Years of C*, p. 8.
[176] Ibid., p. 19.
[177] Licensees were now required to transmit 260 hours of 'C' programming and 130 hours of 'P' programming per year; a minimum of 30 minutes of 'C' programmes were to be televised between 4.30 p.m. and 8.30 p.m. (the 'C' time band); and the remaining hours were to be made up in either the 'C' time band or between 7 a.m. and 8.30 p.m. on weekends and during school holidays. Stations were required to transmit 30 minutes of 'P' programmes each weekday between 8.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. See ABT, *Annual Report*, A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1989-90, pp. 72, 73.

television drama were doubled to 16 hours per year.[178] It was clear that, despite the relaxation of some regulations, the federal government was still concerned to monitor drama and Australian content in children's programming.

The CPC's demise

Another sign that the broadcasting landscape was liberalising was the disbanding of the CPC in 1992. This followed a period of tension between the CPC and both production houses and broadcasters. Complaints included the CPC took too long to assess programmes, especially as it met only monthly; and the industry was dissatisfied with CPC's reasons for the failure of some programmes to achieve 'C' or 'P' classification. Tensions soared when the CPC decided not to grant a 'P' certificate to Seven's preschool programme *Fat Cat and Friends* and a 'C' classification to four episodes of Nine's *Skippy*. The CPC rejected *Fat Cat and Friends*, claiming the programme appeared to be cheaply produced and that the role and character of Fat Cat was ambiguous (was he an animal or a child?). The four episodes of *Skippy* failed to obtain a 'C' because the CPC deemed them not to be designed exclusively for children.[179] Most commonly, children's programmes failed to achieve 'C' classification because they were not age-specific.[180]

The CPC's demise also followed a well-orchestrated attack in the media on the ABT. In academic Elizabeth Jacka's view, the 'public interest' was the biggest casualty in the debate:

> [T]he issue of children's regulation has been blown up by the media as a stick to beat the tribunal with. This has been assisted by what amounts almost to a deliberate campaign of misinformation in which the actual grounds for *Fat Cat* and *Skippy* decisions have not been made and the impression given that the tribunal has banned these programmes whereas all they have done is withheld from them P and C classifications respectively…There is nothing from preventing them being shown.[181]

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[178] Ibid., pp. 73, 84.
[179] B. Hodge, 'Is there a case for regulating children's TV?', *MIA*, No. 65, August 1992, p. 71.
[180] Mencinsky & Mullen, 'Regulation of Children's Television in Australia', p. 36.
[181] E. Jacka, *Film News*, April 1992, cited in Hodge, 'Is there a case for regulating children's TV?', p. 70.

Another academic, Bill Hodge, disagreed. He argued that, although the ABT stressed that it was not engaged in censorship or banning shows, the 'unstated intent [of C classifications] was to remove such programmes from the air'.[182] The CPC intended to promote innovative programmes that captured the interest of children and discouraged programmes of a mediocre standard. To achieve this, however, the CPC had to impose its own tastes and standards. And while it did not want to appear as either a censor or an enforcer, its reasons for rejecting programmes from 'C' were not clearly discernible, which added to the frustration of producers.[183] Rather than defend the CPC, the ABT dismissed it, making the assessment and classification process more efficient by transferring it to federal regulatory agency staff and specialist consultants.[184]

Regulation and response

The regulation of Australian children's programming has been influenced by several factors since 1990. First, there were three regulatory bodies involved so the level of support for children's programming was high. The Australian Film Commission was concerned with the development of special-interest programming and the promotion of diversity in children's programming through the allocation of funds, while the Film Finance Corporation also encouraged children's television, and the ABA acted as a 'watchdog' of the industry and administered the rules which govern all aspects of programming in relation to children.[185]

Second is the motivation at work amongst regulators. According to Keys, this motivation in Australia has primarily been fuelled by cultural concerns. Australian, unlike American

[182] Hodge, 'Is there a case for regulating children's TV?', p. 71.
[183] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 54
[184] ABA, *Annual Report*, Australian Broadcasting Authority, Sydney, 1992-93, pp. 64-65; Mencinsky & Mullen, 'Regulation of Children's Television in Australia', p. 33.
[185] Keys, 'Children's television', p. 17.

programming, is little shaped by the need to protect children from violence and sex. Instead, the intention is to promote Australian culture. In 1986, Edgar observed:

> Because the industry was underdeveloped at the time of TV and because we were swamped by products from the US and UK, there has always been a strong lobby arguing that there must be quotas. The argument for children's programming grew up alongside this, so there was a feeling that children ought to know something about their identity. Sex and violence was not the big issue, although violence in cartoons has been important, it was mainly the cultural component.[186]

Consequently, the ABA classified children's programmes based on how culturally suitable they were for Australian children.[187] In 1994, the ABA initiated a review of the Australian content standard, and considered how the existing regulation could be improved. In order to reflect Australian society more thoroughly and promote a sense of Australian cultural identity for children, the children's television Australian drama quota was expanded.[188] Standards were revised in 1996, doubling the quota for quality first-release children's drama, and increasing it further to 32 hours by 1998.[189] Other changes included expanding 'C' time to include weekday mornings from 7.00-8.00 a.m., and requiring 'P' programmes to be 100% Australian, already the practice amongst commercial television stations.[190]

A third factor, of perennial concern to regulators, was the importance of advertising and financial matters to commercial networks. Commercial networks believed that compulsory quotas should be removed and government funding focused less on children's drama.[191] By way of compromise, ATN-7 suggested, but not until 1999, that a production fund should be established, with contributions from television networks (FTA and pay) and video distributors. This would provide financial incentive for the industry and improve the

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[186] P. Edgar, 'Top Value Drama for the Smaller Australians', *The Business of Film*, March 1986, p. 81, cited in Keys, 'Children's television', p. 17.
[187] Keys, 'Children's television', p. 17.
[188] ABA, *Annual Report*, 1994-95, p. 53.
[189] ABA, *Annual Report*, 1995-96, pp. 46-47.
[190] Mencinsky & Mullen, 'Regulation of Children's Television in Australia', p. 35; ABA, *Annual Report*, 1995-96 pp. 46-47.
[191] Keys, 'Children's television', p. 20.

attractiveness of Australian children's drama.[192] In 1996, however, changes were introduced to allow up to 13 minutes of advertising time during Australian children's drama programmes broadcast between 6.00 and 8.00 p.m. This would have benefitted advertisers, as it was prime time, with a large viewing audience, including children. Consequently, commercial networks should have been more willing to broadcast Australian children's drama, as they would thereby reap more income from advertisers.[193]

A programme screened in the unregulated hours of the early morning, judged by the community to contain excessive advertising, was Seven's *Agro's Cartoon Connection* (*ACC*). A large proportion of *ACC* was taken up with direct and indirect advertising for food, toys and games.[194] Interestingly, according to the Australian Consumers' Association magazine, Australia had the highest number of advertisements in children's programmes (34 per hour); the US had 24 and Britain 17.[195] Seven was reprimanded due to the complaints about *ACC*, and ceased broadcasting it in 1997. Understandably, this fuelled Seven's complaints about the lack of financial incentives for children's television, mentioned earlier, and no doubt helped to prompt their suggestion of a production fund.

Not only has there been criticism of broadcasters for excessive advertising during children's programmes, but also for unhealthy food marketing. However, the causal link between unhealthy food marketing and childhood obesity remains contentious. Food and advertising

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[192] Seven Network Australia, May 1999, cited in Keys, 'Children's television', p. 20.
[193] Mencinsky & Mullen, 'Regulation of Children's Television in Australia', p. 35; Aisbett, *20 Years of C*, p. 14.
[194] D. Dempsey, 'Agro Makes Us Cross Indeed', *The Age*, 14 September 1995, p. 10; A. Stewart, 'Agro's Cartoon Connection', *SMH*, 11 January 1993, p. 13.
[195] In early 1996, the Australian Consumers' Association conducted a study designed to gather facts concerning advertising practice and regulation regarding television advertising to children. This was an international study coordinated by Consumers International (UK). This was to record 20 hours of children's television programmes on one national commercial channel over a 7-14 day period. The programmes were to be broadcast during term time and were aimed at children under 12 years of age. Programmes monitored included *ACC* and *Disney Adventures*. Advertisements for food represented 39% of the total number recorded and toys 15%. See P. Cerexhe, 'Ad nauseam', *Consuming Interest*, Spring, 1996, p. 9.

industry groups argue that there is no causal connection between food and beverage advertising and childhood obesity, citing that the data is difficult to attain. This is despite recent studies conducted by the World Health Organisation revealing strong links between food marketing and children's food knowledge, attitudes, preferences, behaviour and health status.[196]

This issue has become highly politicised in Australia, which has affected children's programming in two ways. The first is the revised standards governing television food advertising to children, released in 2009 by ACMA following two years of consultation. Disappointingly for lobby groups, few additional regulatory restrictions were placed on advertising of food, despite the report's highlighting strong public concern and sentiment.[197] Second, the debate did, however, prompt the government to establish the Australian National Preventative Health Agency (ANPHA) in 2011.[198] ACMA, in collaboration with the ANPHA, continues to investigate complaints about food and beverage advertising during children's programming.[199]

The sexualisation of children is a further issue associated with advertising on children's television. Following an inquiry in 2008 by the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts, and extensive public consultation, the Australian Association of National Advertisers released a revised Code for Advertising and Marketing

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[196] B. Kelly, K. Chapman, L. King & L. Hebden, 'Trends in food advertising to children on free-to-air commercial television in Australia', *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2011, p. 131.
[197] ACMA, *Children's Television Standards 2009*, Australian Media Communications Authority, Canberra, 2009, http://www.cfac.net.au/whatwedo.html, accessed 9 April, 2013. See also Kelly et al., 'Trends in food advertising to children on free-to-air commercial television in Australia', p. 131.
[198] This body plays a key leadership role in preventative health, research, evaluation and policy advice to tackle obesity.
[199] ACMA, *Industry Self-regulation of Food and Beverage Advertising to Children*, ACMA monitoring report, Australian Media Communications Authority, Melbourne, December 2011, p. 37.

Communications to Children, which now specifically bans the use of sexual imagery of children in advertising or marketing in the media.[200]

The final factor affecting regulation of children's programming is complex, made even more so by technological developments and globalisation.[201] Throughout the 1990s, the level of regulation for Australian children's television increased, which, together with the Australian content regulations and the CTS, sparked negative responses from the industry and some independent producers. Their objections were presented in submissions to the 1999 Productivity Commission Inquiry into Broadcasting, where the issue of children's television featured as a point of contention among policy makers, industry practitioners and 'advocacy groups'.[202]

Submissions revealed conflicts between: industry and cultural interests; adults and children; the perceived needs and the recognised (or unrecognised) rights of children; and the desire to provide Australian children with quality age-appropriate experiences as well as entertainment. FACTS stated that the current Australian programme quota system was 'prescriptive and inflexible' and acted as a 'constraint on industry growth and development' particularly relating to children's programming. Keys argues that the submissions portrayed the Australian broadcasting environment as a 'volatile system'.[203]

Despite the negativity revealed at the 1999 inquiry, a survey conducted during the late 1990s of 12 high-profile independent producers of children's programming and four television

[200] Australian Government, Senate Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts, *Inquiry into the Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media Environment*, Australian Government Response to the Committee's Report, July 2009, p. 4. See also McKee, 'Everything is Child Abuse', pp. 131-40.
[201] Keys, 'Children's television', pp. 18-19.
[202] ibid., pp. 17-19.
[203] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

network executives indicated general support for regulation of children's programming. These producers unanimously stated that quota requirements were essential in generating demand for quality children's programmes and some believed that without the standards there would be no Australian children's drama.[204] Moreover, the conflicts of interest between commercial broadcasters and child advocacy groups highlight the importance of regulatory measures to ensure industry compliance in protecting children's programming.

Production and finance

In 1994-95, the ABA published a report, *Kids Talk: 'super wicked' or 'dum',* outlining the findings of research on what children aged 5 to 12 liked and disliked on television. According to the report's findings, comedy, drama, action-adventure and variety were favourite programme types.[205] Between the 1970s and 1990s, 90% of 'C' programming was in the form of live-action, which is not surprising considering magazine and game shows (then the major formats) were predominantly in the live-action format.[206] By the late 2000s, however, many live-action productions were based on music and song. Successful live action programmes for pre-schoolers included *Hi-5* (Nine Network), *The Fairies* (Seven Network), *The Wiggles* and *Bananas in Pyjamas* (ABC).[207]

The inclusion of animation was an important change in 'C' Australian drama between 1984 and 1999. Animated drama increased from 6% of all 'C' Australian drama in 1984-1989 to 37% in 1996-1999. This increase occurred because independent producers struggled to find adequate sources of finance within Australia during this period, forcing them to rely more

[204] Aisbett, *20 Years of C*, p. 45.
[205] ABA, *Annual Report*, 1995-96, p. 40.
[206] Aisbett, *20 Years of C*, p. 8.
[207] Z. M. Tan, 'Kids TV Conquests', *Inside Film*, No. 116, December 2008/January 2009, p. 52.

heavily on foreign partners and offshore funding.[208] These foreign partners, especially American ones, favoured animated drama for the international market, as animation is thought to be less culturally biased and easier to distribute internationally with minimal changes.[209] Furthermore, animation has become more popular with both Australian broadcasters and audiences. This resulted because computer-generating imagery, which is currently used in 2D and 3D animation, is significant in other areas of television. Additionally there were many years of successful co-production involvement in animation with Hanna-Barbera and Disney, both of which previously had studios in Australia.[210]

Co-productions are popular between television broadcasters and transnational production corporations to lessen the financial burden on each. Although producers can recover costs through international sales, the production budget is still tight. Consequently, programmes are generally 'cheap and cheerful' and have short shooting schedules containing mostly studio-based scenes. However, Aisbett argues that this model has not been successful, largely because sales have not met budget deficits, due to the international demand for higher quality programmes. Instead the demand is for Australian children's drama, since it is different to the products of other nations. As we have seen, however, this is costly to generate unless sales can be made internationally due to the small domestic market within Australia.[211]

In 2001, the ABA therefore sought comment on the difficulties relating to the production and financing of quality Australian 'C' drama programmes. As a result, amendments were made to the CTS to allow for more flexibility in the Saturday morning schedule.[212] Subsequently,

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[208] Aisbett, *20 Years of C*, pp. 8, 10.
[209] Edgar, *Bloodbath*, p. 274.
[210] Tan, 'Kids TV Conquests', p. 52.
[211] Aisbett, *20 Years of C,* pp. 52-3.
[212] ABA, *Annual Report*, 2000-1, pp. 28-29.

new standards were released in 2009.[213] These reaffirmed the major decisions already in effect, but introduced further flexibility: quota obligations could now be fulfilled by the broadcast of all 'C' programmes in 60-minute periods on two full days.[214]

The content requirements of the CTS continue to stimulate Australian children's drama production, yet since the mid-2000s some 'C' Australian drama productions have become culturally diluted. Moreover, transnational companies (TNCs) are now the main producers. For example, local independent producers like Matchbox Pictures and Burberry Productions have been at least partly purchased by TNCs such as Universal Pictures, All3media and BBC Worldwide. As a result, many independent Australian producers have become merely local branches for their majority owners. Consequently, in Potter's view, the CTS now support very different programming from that which they were designed to protect and encourage. This has resulted from a mixed policy environment where, on the one hand, cultural nationalism is promoted, and on the other, internationalism and free trade are encouraged. These latter policies are now dominant.[215]

Free trade has been promoted through several agreements. The Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA), published in 2004, 'ensures that there can be Australian voices and stories on audiovisual and broadcasting services, now and in the future.'[216] This appears to still encourage cultural nationalism. However, one wonders how broadcasters defined

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[213] The CTS states that Australia's FTA networks must transmit at least 260 hours of 'C' programmes, and 130 hours of 'P' programmes per year. Of the 'C' programmes, at least 50% must be first release Australian programmes, 8 hours per year must be Australian drama and 96 hours over a 3 year period must be first-run Australian drama. Of the 'P' programmes, 100% must be Australian. See CTS 8, 13, 14 and 18 in ACMA, *Children's Television Standards*, Canberra, 2009 and Sections 12, 12A and 13 in ACMA, *Australian Content Standard 2005 as amended*, Canberra, 2010.

[214] ACMA media release 118/2009 – 1 September, 'ACMA releases new children's television standards', http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC-311872, accessed 2 April 2013.

[215] Potter, 'A very special audience', pp. 2-3, 9.

[216] Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement', http://www.dfat.gov.au/fta/ausfta/outcomes/, accessed 22 April 2013.

'Australian voices and stories' in 2004, as opposed to how they were articulated in 1984 when the CTS were first formulated. It could be argued, though, that the policy environment is not as confused as Potter suggests; perhaps Australian voices in these days of globalisation have an international twang to them. For example, *H20: Just Add Water* (2006-2010, Ten Network) was set in Queensland with an Australian cast, but has been screened in 120 countries, satisfying the goals of both cultural nationalism and internationalism.[217]

H20 was commercially successful internationally partly because it was culturally-neutral. This avoided the threat identified by Edgar in the 1990s when she foresaw a 'danger to children's culture … [from] the pollution of television with homogenised commercial, exploitative programming'. She saw the need for the Americanised worldview to be less dominant in children's television and so encouraged non-American producers and networks to form production alliances based upon shared values.[218] Australian Jonathan M. Shiff, and ZDF Enterprises, a German commercial network, formed such an alliance in their production of children's drama, *Ocean Girl* (1994-97), which was filmed in Australia and promoted humanist and environmental ideals. It was sold to 130 countries and won a BAFTA Award in 1998.[219]

In 2009, there was a relaxation of the CTS regarding Australian drama but advertising strictures became more stringent: no advertising during 'P' programmes; more restrictions within 'C' programmes; and no use of popular characters in advertising unless the character was a toy or part of a game, a non-commercial initiative or a campaign.[220] Since the late

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[217] S. Ward & A. Potter, '*H20*: Just Add Branding: Producing High-quality Children's TV Drama for Multi-channel Environments', *MIA*, No. 133, November 2009, p. 36.
[218] Edgar, *Bloodbath*, pp. 274-5.
[219] Ward & Potter, '*H20*', pp. 33-4.
[220] ACMA media release 118/2009 – 1 September, 'ACMA releases new children's television standards', http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC-311872, accessed 2 April 2013.

1990s, commercial networks increasingly viewed 'P' programmes as potential sources of revenue. This idea stemmed from the actions of the Disney Corporation. The Disney marketing phenomenon took hold internationally in 1991 with the animated *Beauty and the Beast*. The boom inspired other marketing and merchandise-driven programmes such as *Barney* (US), *Teletubbies* (UK) and *Bananas in Pyjamas* (Australia).[221] A natural progression was the launch in 1996 of the Disney Channel in Australia. By 2004, it was the dominant channel among subscription television homes and had won numerous awards for creative excellence.[222]

Digitsation from the mid-2000s led to even more dedicated children's channels such as ABC3 in 2009. This has resulted in an abundant supply of television to children with diverse content. In fact, ABC3 soon commissioned quality Australian children's drama that conformed to a 'C' classification, despite the ABC not being subject to the CTS.[223] Consequently, children began to drift away from FTA channels to which the CTS do apply. Compounding this was the popularity of the Internet amongst children in Australia.[224] According to Aisbett, child audiences, aged from 5 to 12, during the 4.00-5.00 p.m. slot on FTA channels declined from 8.1% of total audience in 2001 to 3.9% in 2006.[225] Indeed the erratic scheduling practices of commercial broadcasters and their tendency to displace children's programming with live sports broadcasts has further limited their ability to capture and build a loyal child audience.[226]

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[221] Edgar, *Bloodbath*, p. 71.
[222] 'Media Release: Walt Disney Television International', *AAP*, 27 September 2004.
[223] Potter, 'A very special audience', pp. 7, 9.
[224] The 2009 Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities survey reported that of the children aged 5 to 14 years, 79% used the Internet, the most common locations being at home (73%) and school (69%). 42% of children who used the internet at home did so for 2 hours or less per week, while 4% were online for 20 hours or more. See 'Australian Bureau of Statistics', http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1301.0Chapter25042009-10#, accessed 17 April 2013.
[225] K. Aisbett, *Children's Television Production Project,* ACMA, Canberra, 2007, p. 4.
[226] Screen Australia, 'Child's Play: Issues in Australian Children's Television 2013', http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/documents/SA_publications/Rpt_ChildsPlay.pdf, accessed 28 June 2013.

Conclusion

Since 1956, children's television has represented a relatively small component of Sydney FTA commercial programming, despite being one of the most highly regulated forms of programming. Although children have been identified as an audience with special needs, these have at times been compromised by commercial television's objective to run a profitable enterprise. Commercial broadcasters' understandable bias against high-cost programmes that appeal to a relatively small audience, and the fact that children lack the same purchasing power as adults, have persistently coloured broadcasters' attitudes towards children's programming.

Child advocacy groups and regulators have been equally persistent in resisting this attitude. Broader ideological and moral concerns traditionally informed this resistance, before narrowing to a single focus on cultural nationalism: programmes should impart children with a sense of citizenship and Australian identity. For advocacy groups, quality programming increasingly became framed in this way. More importantly, they argue, children, like adults, are entitled to viewing choice and diversity, and commercial television licensees have a public responsibility to provide such programmes. Children, being particularly impressionable, are seen as deserving quality, age-specific, locally produced programming that is not only entertaining and innovative, but also educative. The challenge, however, has been in producing programmes that meet these criteria to everyone's satisfaction; not just adults, but also, more importantly, children.

The most contentious issue debated amongst commercial broadcasters and advocates of government control is not so much about whether children's programmes should be regulated,

but rather, how rigorous that regulation should be. Incremental regulatory measures have not only added fuel to the fire, but more importantly, raised issues about how effective such measures have been in stimulating quality, age-specific, locally produced programming. Clearly, regulation has been vital to the production and scheduling of children's programming, but equally so has been the commitment (albeit fluctuating) of regulators to ensure industry compliance. The fact that the Australian children's television sector has led the way globally in safeguarding, promoting and producing quality, live-action and animated drama series is testament to the strength, vision and dedication of local advocacy groups, regulators and local producers.[227]

Broader television programming trends have shaped the pattern and style of Sydney's children's programmes, with commercial networks historically favouring cheaper magazine or studio-based formats to reduce production costs. Branding and marketing-driven programming have also formed important economic strategies for commercial networks and even the ABC. The rapid expansion in the number of dedicated children's channels and their availability on various digital platforms both domestically and internationally have intensified FTA commercial networks' desire to find ways to keep children's programming viable. This fragmentation of their traditional child audience has placed additional pressure on advertising revenue. Commercial networks' tendency to cancel or reschedule children's programming to accommodate live sports broadcasts has further hampered their ability to capture and build a local child audience.

The international demand for expensive quality children's programmes has nevertheless stimulated the production of Australian-produced children's drama and the development of

[227] Ibid., pp. 3, 12.

co-production partnerships with overseas financers. However one of the biggest challenges is raising finance, with sources drying up both domestically and internationally. The recent GFC made it difficult for local producers to attract funding from international sources, and the strong Australian dollar reduced the total finance of international sources if they did become available.[228]

Raising finance for productions that are culturally specific, relevant to children, and still internationally marketable is perhaps the most difficult challenge. Australia's mixed policy environment, which encourages goals of cultural nationalism, and internationalism and free trade, creates further complexity for children's television producers and regulators. In recent years, the CTS has gradually supported very different programming from which it was originally designed to protect and encourage. The challenge then is to ensure that broadcasting regulation changes take account of broader cultural and economic shifts both domestically and internationally. This is especially important in light of rapid technological developments. The introduction of digital multi-channels and video-on-demand by the FTA broadcasters, and viewers' use of tablets and smart phones, pose a challenge to regulators in ensuring children's content quotas are extended to multi-channels within the new media environment. Without continued regulatory support, it is questionable whether Australian children's needs and programming preferences can be met.

[228] Ibid., pp. 1, 11.

7

Light Entertainment: A Mixed Bag of Tricks

Personality is central to all light entertainment programmes. The success of a programme often hinges on the performer and the connection he or she shares with viewers. Those lucky enough to win and hold viewers' adoration and loyalty become television institutions. Although commercial stations searched for programmes and personalities that were identifiably 'Australian', the outcome was often a local adaptation or straight borrowing of overseas influences.

Before national networking developed, Sydney maintained a very separate television culture, which Melbourne programmes and personalities found difficult to penetrate. Magazines and daily newspapers constructed these distinctive television cultures and perpetuated city rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne. As light entertainment programmes formed the bulk of local programming, and the basis for station identity, they initially became the subject of discussion in measuring the development and polish of Sydney production and personalities, against both imported and Melbourne offerings.

This chapter adopts a thematic rather than a chronological approach. In one sense, the structure represents the 'mixed bag' that light entertainment programming is, and the way it has evolved overtime. 'Light entertainment' can categorise variety, quiz, music and comedy programmes that are diverse in style, format and genre. The boundaries of these genres have

blurred and evolved over time, reflecting a combination of technological and social change, regulatory and industry developments and a shift in audience tastes.[1]

Light entertainment-style programmes are often labelled the 'poor cousin' of other more serious genres, such as newscaf.[2] The use of the term 'light' denotes a certain frivolity, in contrast to 'quality' drama. Over time, government television policy has also served to reaffirm light entertainment's lowly status among local productions.[3] Nevertheless, light entertainment offers some of the most flexible, economical and staple television formats. Its longevity and adaptability to overseas markets highlight its industrial importance for local production, and its influence on popular culture.[4]

Developing a Sydney television culture

Packed into the bathroom of an old house, 200 yards from ATN-7's main studio, the stars of television's first local 'Tonight'/variety show, *Sydney Tonight* (*ST*), caked their faces with make-up. If it rained, they would be forced to sprint the distance from house to studio, hiding under umbrellas with their skirts and trousers hitched to their knees. With little rehearsal time, *ST* beamed into Sydney homes on 4 December 1956, just a day after ATN-7's launch.[5] The fanfare cemented the show's reputation as ATN-7's foremost local production and a marker of the station's identity.[6]

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[1] Because of this 'blurring', the author does acknowledge the problems associated with using terms such as 'variety'. Over the years, Australian regulators have struggled to define the term, as well as the concept of 'light entertainment' in general.
[2] Collins, Turnbull & Bye, 'Television comedy and light entertainment', p. 60.
[3] Moran & Keating, *Wheel of Fortune*, p. 3.
[4] Ibid.
[5] V. Marshall, 'Australian TV has been growing up', *Sun Herald*, 30 October 1960, p. 51.
[6] Bye, 'Sydney Tonight versus In Melbourne Tonight', p. 20.

The *Daily Mirror* described the show's opening as 'potentially the best "live" TV variety show yet screened' in Sydney.[7] The unnamed reviewer undoubtedly had very little to compare it with, apart from TCN-9's short-lived 15-minute music programmes, *The Johnny O'Connor Show*, *Accent on Strings* and *Campfire Favorites*, which had been axed within three months for failure to find a sponsor.[8] However, locally produced programmes during television's infancy were scrutinised for their potential contribution to the medium. Following the show's launch, *ST* and its amiable host and radio personality, Keith Walshe, were the critics' benchmark for measuring the growth and maturation of Sydney television.[9]

ST was an eclectic mix of 'musical-interview-variety'[10] and spontaneous 'stunt-based casualness' similar to its American model, *Steve Allen's Tonight Show* on NBC.[11] According to *TV NEWS-TIMES*, originally the show's 'spontaneous, unrehearsed incidents' were the key elements that earned *ST* viewers' support. Memorable 'unexpected' moments involved an elephant lifting Walshe high off the studio floor and a monkey biting him on the nose.[12] In May 1957, the *SMH* quoted a ratings survey which revealed *ST* to be 'consistently one of the top three shows of any kind'.[13]

However the *SMH's* support for ATN-7's local programmes (*SMH* was a majority shareholder in ATN-7) was sporadic during the first year of television, as the newspaper had no regular television commentary section until late 1957. Academic Susan Bye argues that ATN-7's local shows were therefore 'delivered unsupported to its opposition reviewers' who

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[7] 'Radio-TV Roundup', *Daily Mirror*, 12 December 1956, p. 44.
[8] J. Murphy, 'Light entertainment', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 60.
[9] Bye, 'Sydney Tonight versus In Melbourne Tonight', p. 21.
[10] 'ATN's big changes in Sydney Tonight', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 29 November 1958, p. 3.
[11] Bye, 'Sydney Tonight versus In Melbourne Tonight', p. 20; Blundell, *King*, p. 83.
[12] 'ATN's big changes in Sydney Tonight', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 29 November 1958, p. 3.
[13] 'Ownership of Television Sets is Rapidly Increasing', *SMH*, 18 May 1957, p. 2, cited in Bye, 'Sydney Tonight versus In Melbourne Tonight', p. 20.

shared little investment in *ST*'s survival.[14] *ST's* status as ATN-7's flagship local production and its regularity as a five-nights-a-week programme naturally attracted critics' attention.[15]

At first critics' remarks were generally benign. However the performance of Walshe and his show was not always seen to keep pace with the development of Sydney television; by 1958 they were often admonished for their lack of professionalism and progress. This was partly due to the informality of *ST* compared with other variety shows such as the *Johnny Gredula Show* and *Say it with Music*, which combined older forms of live entertainment with the new style of television. Bye argues that *ST*'s 'everydayness' ensured that the show was more about 'sociability', a term coined by Paddy Scannell, than it was about 'performance.'[16] As far as critics were concerned, the ABCB reported, the initial period of 'uncritical enthusiasm' for anything that moved on the screen was over.[17] The consensus was that viewers' tastes had become sophisticated, and local productions needed to recognise and accommodate this development to justify their place in the programming schedule. Thus it was more difficult to defend the casual and somewhat frivolous antics on the show.[18]

In response to *ST*'s fading appeal, ATN-7 rested the show for two weeks in July 1958. *ST* underwent a costly re-vamp and viewers were primed to expect a 'new' and improved show on its return.[19] Not all were convinced. *TV NEWS* journalist, Ross Campbell, wrote, 'If you haven't yet tuned in[to] the "new" Sydney Tonight, don't worry, you'll recognise it'. The

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[14] Bye, 'Sydney Tonight versus In Melbourne Tonight', p. 21.
[15] N. Musgrove, *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 29 January 1958, p. 13; 'Do stars' HABITS ANNOY you?', *TV Week*, 24-30 January pp. 9-10. Alexander MacDonald, television critic for the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*, was a harsh critic of *ST*. Hal Alexander, secretary of Actors' Equity, quipped that he doubted very much if MacDonald would criticise the *Joe Martin Late Show*, *Ford Show* or *Laugh Till You Cry*, because he wrote the scripts for those shows. See "Equity' reply to critic's attack', *TV Week*, 28 March–3 April 1959, p. 11.
[16] Bye, 'Sydney Tonight versus In Melbourne Tonight', pp. 21-23.
[17] ABCB *Fourteenth Annual Report*, 1962, p. 45.
[18] Bye, 'Sydney Tonight versus In Melbourne Tonight', pp. 22-23.
[19] 'Keith Walshe returns', *TV NEWS*, 26 July 1958, p. 3.

show appeared only 'slightly improved'.[20] In December 1958, *TV Times* asked Sydney critics to name the worst shows on television. *ST* was voted the show 'most generally disliked' and was given a 'wooden spoon' for its performance. The *Daily Mirror*'s Jeremy O'Brien stated unapologetically, 'I shudder every time I think of [*ST*]'.[21] *ST* was finally laid to rest in early 1959 with its low ratings no longer justifying production costs.

Sydney vs Melbourne television

In Melbourne a small, elfin-looking young man with boggly eyes and a crooked nose was slowly winning the affection of southern audiences. At age 23, fresh from radio, Graham Kennedy was the star of Melbourne's most popular live variety show, *In Melbourne Tonight* (*IMT*). The show launched on GTV-9 in May 1957. *IMT* took its lead from ATN-7's *ST*, which Bye argues reflects the perception that *ST* was worth imitating.[22]

IMT's format was similar to *ST* and included a mix of music and dance segments, comedy skits, novelty acts, interviews, live commercials and general spontaneous haphazardness. Yet what set the two programmes apart were its hosts. Kennedy's greatest asset was his ability to 'make comedy out of conversation'.[23] Combining a risqué ad-libbing style of comedy with a shared sense of intimacy and authenticity, Kennedy attracted viewers and encouraged them to buy the very products he rubbished on the show. While Sydney was lamenting the standard of its locally produced shows,[24] *IMT* was challenging the ratings dominance of popular imported

[20] R. Campbell, 'Round the bend with Ross Campbell', *TV NEWS*, 9 August 1958, p. 9.
[21] 'Sydney's critics name the worst shows on TV', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 13 December 1958, p. 3.
[22] Bye, 'Sydney Tonight versus In Melbourne Tonight', pp. 23-24.
[23] Blundell, *King*, p. 82.
[24] 'TV variety at an all time low in Sydney', *TV Week*, 11-17 July 1959, pp. 8-11.

programmes and gaining the support of key sponsors.[25] Moreover the press was already hailing Kennedy as a vital part of 'a Hollywood that ha[d] hit Australia so suddenly'.[26] In March 1958, an official audience measurement survey revealed that *IMT* was the most popular live programme on Australian television. In 1960 Kennedy launched a national programme, *The Graham Kennedy Show*, in addition to *IMT*, to break into the Sydney market. Yet it was not until December 1966 after 300 episodes that audience measurement figures declared Kennedy the star of Sydney television.[27] Earlier unsuccessful attempts to gain acceptance in Sydney not only points to the distinctive television cultures that developed in each city, but also to the way the media cultivated Sydney and Melbourne rivalry throughout its programming.

Reflecting back on 1959, *TV Times* critic, F. C. Kennedy, observed that Sydney's tastes were more mature than those of Melbourne:

> No personality here is given the adulation received by Graham Kennedy in Melbourne. This may be a grave disappointment to those who aspire to the heights, but to me it is an encouraging sign that *Sydney audiences have an adult approach to TV and are more concerned with programmes than personalities* [emphasis added].[28]

Indeed, Sydney audiences, suggested F.C., were sophisticated enough to recognise *The Graham Kennedy Show* as 'the ghost of Sydney Tonight', and went on to list the clumsy similarities between the two shows: 'Camera switches are fumbled, cues are accepted tardily and comedians hoot their punchlines into the eye of the camera.'[29] Compared with Melbourne, personalities had to work harder for success in the Sydney television landscape. This one-upmanship between the cities was discernible from the beginning, with the

[25] Bye, 'Sydney Tonight versus In Melbourne Tonight', p. 24.
[26] Blundell, *King*, p. 121.
[27] Ibid., pp. 149, 189, 256-57.
[28] F.C. Kennedy, 'The honeymoon is over', *TV Times*, 2 January 1960, p. 14.
[29] 'A ghost to haunt Kennedy show', *TV Times*, 27 February 1960, p. 21.

Telegraph running an article entitled, 'Our programmes beat Melbourne's', and it continued in the city's television columns as a regular part of the conversation around television.[30] Even audience participation in Sydney's television culture was framed in a way that evoked city rivalry. *TV Times* reported that 'residents of Sydney's dockside suburb of Woolloomooloo claim they have something bigger and better than anything Toorak can boast of…a full-time television club'.[31] The inter-city rivalry became more pronounced once television spread across all Australian capitals, ushering in what F.C Kennedy described as 'an inter-city, inter-channel battle for the national variety market'. Subsequently TCN-9's *The Bobby Limb Show* and ATN'7's *Curtain Call* 'carried the banner for Sydney', while *The Graham Kennedy Show* did the same for Melbourne.[32] According to Ken G. Hall, GTV-9 was 'annoyed' that TCN-9 could not make Kennedy work in Sydney. In response, they put TCN-9's top-rating show in 1964, *Bobby Limb's Sound of Music*, in a 'terrible timeslot' so that it would fail in Victoria.[33]

Was it prejudice that led Sydney viewers and television management to turn their noses up at Melbourne's 'stars'? F. C. Kennedy believed the rivalry went far deeper. The reason, he claimed, was rooted in the different attitudes both cities held towards their local heroes:[34]

> ...Sydney, in the mass, cheers or boos its heroes according to their performance of the moment, does not readily forgive failure and remembers the bad with the good. Melbourne crowds (and TV watchers are a crowd) are different. Their heroes can do no wrong. When they perform well they are given personal adulation which amounts almost to worship. When they do badly they are not condemned and their

[30] 'Our programmes beat Melbourne's', *Daily Telegraph*, 31 July 1957.
[31] 'Woolloomooloo is just one big television club', *TV Times*, 3 July 1958, pp. 28-29.
[32] F. C. Kennedy, 'Television in 1960', *TV Times*, 31 December 1960, p. 12.
[33] Shirley, 'Ken G. Hall and Australia's Fledgling TV', in Watson et al., *TV Times*, p. 42.
[34] In *TV Week*'s view, Keith Walshe had been 'inflicted' with the 'near-fatal television disease known as "over-exposure"'. Walshe, along with Chuck Faulkner, were the 'martyrs of the early pioneer years', performers who were on television nearly everyday for three years. Naturally, Sydney viewers tired of them. But was this an exclusively 'Sydney' characteristic, or did Melburnians tire of their stars too? The way Sydney television magazines frame this general discussion suggest Sydney viewers were more impatient and picky than Melbourne viewers. See Dolly Shot, 'Television's Fourth Year…', See *TV Week*, 19-25 September 1959, pp. 7-8.

> failures are overlooked with the shortsightedness of a doting mother covering the weaknesses of a favorite [sic] offspring.[35]

Despite Sydney's general resistance to Kennedy recorded by the press, some Sydney viewers were fans.[36] In the 'Brickbats and Bouquets' section of *TV Times*, a viewer wrote:

> We're always reading that no one in Sydney likes Graham Kennedy yet we don't know anybody who doesn't like him and everyone wishes he was on earlier. We have friends at Penrith, Ryde, Eastwood, and Seaforth and they and their neighbours all vote for Graham Kennedy.'[37]

Clearly, the fate of TCN-9's programmes depended heavily on the whims of Frank Packer. Indeed Packer's hostility towards Kennedy was well-known. Not only was Packer reported to be homophobic (Kennedy was allegedly homosexual), but he also thought Kennedy was a 'terrible' performer. This may have been one of the reasons why Kennedy's show was relegated to the late-night timeslot, making it hard for Sydney viewers to watch the programme, while imported movies filled primetime timeslots.[38] However it appears the privileging of imported programmes over local product was common practice. According to Actors' Equity, national advertisers complained to them about commercial stations' general unwillingness to offer advertisers the much sought-after, peak viewing timeslots for local content. Thus viewers were forced to stay up late, no matter what city they were made in.[39]

This begs the question: to what extent did Sydney critics' and viewers' tastes align? The *Mirror's* Jeremy O'Brien believed his role was not just about communicating information to

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[35] 'You'll never make it, Graham', *TV Times*, 20 November 1963, p. 6.
[36] Not all Melburnians adored Kennedy; his star power proved to be equally divisive. See S. Bye, '"Mother's Like Him": Graham Kennedy and the Great Divide', Australian Media Traditions Conference, 2007, http://www.csu.edu.au/special/amt/publication/bye.pdf, accessed 21 May 2011.
[37] V. W. Wilbur Street, Greenacre, 'Brickbats and Bouquets', *TV Times*, 29 December 1962, p. 36.
[38] Blundell, *King*, pp. 196-97. See also ABCB, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 1960, p. 38. In 1959 *TV Week* reported that *IMT*'s producer, Norman Spencer, had 'intimated that Sydney executives had been trying to keep Graham Kennedy out of Sydney.' Whether this was true or not, there is no clear answer. However, it seems personalities did come up against a certain level of resistance in Sydney, perhaps more so than in Melbourne. See 'Look Out Sydney…Here Comes Kennedy', *TV Week*, 7-13 November 1959, pp. 18-19.
[39] 'Australian performers and Australian Television', *Show Biz*, 1960, p. 2.

viewers.[40] There was a sense in which columnists and critics treated their readers as 'collaborators', part of a 'participatory media' that Griffen-Foley outlines from the nineteenth-century print media through to the emergence of reality TV and *Big Brother* in the new millennium.[41] In *TV Times*, F.C. Kennedy identified strongly with his audience. He claimed, 'I see television strictly from the viewers' point of view' and tried to reinforce this by his column 'Looking in with the viewer' and by-line, 'The Viewer'. Other television critics likewise played down their expertise, instead emphasising their rapport with viewers. *Bulletin* reviewer, Frank Roberts, said, 'I just try to put myself in the place of the average viewer'.[42]

How regularly Sydney critics were able to accurately represent the majority of viewers' opinions is difficult to measure. Who was the audience? Clearly no critic could legitimately claim to speak for or represent Sydney viewers *en masse*. Nevertheless, the television columns offer significant insights into the form of public discussion about television in the early years and how, as Bye argues, the first viewers were 'produced, understood, and in turn, asked to understand themselves' in this collaborative conversation.[43]

Variety and live entertainment

The death of *ST* did not quell ATN-7's commitment to live entertainment. Its purchase of the Artransa film studios demonstrated substantial monetary investment in local production.[44] Furthermore, ATN-7's ownership roots in radio (the Macquarie broadcasting network, centred on 2GB Macquarie) provided the station with a ready-made talent pool from which to draw.[45]

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[40] Bye, 'Reading television in the fifties', p. 84.
[41] Griffen-Foley, 'From *Tit-Bits* to *Big Brother*', pp. 513-48.
[42] J. Smith, 'TV critics' pet hates', *TV Times*, 13 November 1963, pp. 8-9
[43] Bye, 'Reading television in the fifties', p. 80.
[44] ABCB, *Thirteenth Annual Report*, 1961, p. 40.
[45] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, pp. 110-11.

Moran describes this as the 'Macquarie inheritance', a connection that was passed on to ATN-7 by several key figures who had worked for the 2GB/Macquarie/Artransa group. These included James Oswin, ATN-7's general manager; Len Mauger, station manager; Brian Wright, first programme and production manager; Harry Dearth, drama producer; and Richard Lane, contract script writer and editor. Several personalities including Walshe, June Salter and Peggy Mortimer also worked for Macquarie group, as the network had been an important nursery for radio talent.[46]

ATN-7's policy of making 'showcase' productions was also a carry-over from 2GB, which had done the same in its studios for relay to other stations. ATN-7's policy led to the production of various programmes which were popular and critical successes. These included *Revue '61* and *'62*, followed by *Startime* and *Studio A*, the *Mavis Bramston Show*, and a comedy series, *My Name's McGooley – What's Yours?*. Moran credits Jim Oswin, a member of the board of directors from 1957 to 1973, as the most instrumental in pursuing ATN-7's programme policy. Moran argues that while the Macquarie inheritance was important, equally so was the support Oswin received from Rupert Henderson, who was ATN-7 Chairman and by the 1960s the only remaining member of the original board. The partnership lasted until Oswin resigned as general manager in 1973, and Henderson resigned in 1974.[47]

The development and character of programming at TCN-9 had the stamp of Frank Packer on it. But it was also driven by the creative force of its general manager, Ken Hall, who had been one of Australia's most prominent film directors in the 1930s and 1940.[48] Given that Hall was known for his 'unerring instinct for the public taste', and treated 'films as an industrial

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[46] Moran, *Images & Industry*, p. 72.
[47] Ibid., pp. 72-73; 'The show must go on', *TV Week*, 31 October 1964, p. 16.
[48] See K. G. Hall, *Directed by Ken G. Hall: An Autobiography of an Australian Film Maker*, Lansdown Press, Melbourne, 1977.

commodity first, [and] a cultural commodity a distant second',[49] he seemed the perfect fit to run a medium intent on maximising audiences and giving them what they wanted. In 1958, Hall invited former radio stars Bobby Limb and his talented wife, Dawn Lake, to host a musical variety programme, *Bobby Limb's Late Show*, on Fridays at 7.30 p.m. It was soon renamed *The Bobby Limb Show* to avoid confusion with another late show. In 1961 the show was so popular it was renamed *The Mobil Limb Show* after the Mobil Oil Company came on board as chief sponsor.[50] By 1962, it became the first Sydney-produced variety show to make it into the top ten national programmes.[51]

The show's successful trajectory was buoyed by the enormous drive and talent of its main star, Bobby Limb, but also by the steady growth in local production. Towards the end of 1959, TCN-9 had the space to produce live shows on a much larger scale than ever before with its new theatre. 'The Television Theatre' was reportedly one of the 'largest' and 'most modern' in the Southern Hemisphere.[52] By this stage, the growth of Sydney viewers, and the concomitant entrance of advertisers into the television market, meant that there was more money available. Stations could now pay more for talent, better equipment, costuming, musicians, vocalists *and* rehearsal time. And it was often the hidden cost of rehearsal time that separated earlier haphazard variety shows, such as *ST*, from their comparatively well-rehearsed contemporaries. *TV Week* highlighted this difference, noting that the cost of one *Bobby Limb Show* or 'BP spectacular' (a sponsored variety 'special') 'would have produced almost a week of "Sydney Tonight" in the first year of television'.[53]

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[49] Australian Screen, Ken G Hall (22 February 1901- 8 February 1994), http://aso.gov.au/people/Ken+G_Hall/portrait/, accessed 23 December 2012.
[50] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, pp. 91-92.
[51] Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 21.
[52] 'You'll hear more of the Luton Girls', *TV Week*, 19-25 September 1959, p. 51. However, TCN-9 was not nearly as committed to producing live programming in-house as ATN-7. Instead, TCN-9 established early links with NLT Productions, a major independent packager of Australian television, preferring to farm their productions out to the packaging company rather than produce in-house. See Moran, *Images and Industry*, p. 67.
[53] Dolly Shot, 'Television's Fourth Year', *TV Week*, 19-25 September 1959, p. 8.

Even though singers on shows such as *Bandstand*, the *Bryan Davies Show*, *Startime*, *Singalong* and *Sing, Sing, Sing*, were Australian, Sydney television still lacked a distinctive 'national flavour'. Moreover, the supply of genuine local talent and hits was limited; most singers resorted to mimicking American teenage shows in accent, gesture, dress and jargon.[54] Locally produced variety, it seemed, was yet to find its own voice. The spate of contemporary music shows was not just a reflection of television's desire to cater for youthful tastes and key sponsors. It was also a pragmatic programming initiative, as vocalists formed the bulk of Australian talent. When Mobil ceased sponsoring *The Mobil Limb Show* in 1964, the show was renamed *Bobby Limb's Sound of Music* (*SOM*). Due to the nationwide shortage of writers, the comedy routines, which had become prominent on the show, were replaced by a renewed focus on music.[55] Consequently *SOM* was Limb's most successful show, reaching the top ten in Sydney in the first four months of its run.[56]

The trend in teenage music programmes continued in 1965 when TEN-10 launched into light entertainment, recruiting Sydney's top radio DJ, Mike Walsh, to host *Ten On The Town*.[57] TEN-10 discovered early on that to compete in an oligopolistic market, it was necessary to innovate within the bounds of what was accepted as audience taste. One strategy it adopted was to lure successful stars and personalities from other channels, which was already common practice.[58] In 1966, TEN-10 sought another well-known star and Gold Logie winner, Jimmy Hannan, to host *Jimmy,* a lavishly produced variety programme. Yet before long, *Jimmy* was

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[54] F. C. Kennedy, '1962 – Start of TV's Do It Yourself Era', *TV Times*, 29 December 1962, p. 14; G. Turner, 'Australia Popular Music and its Contexts', in P. Hayward (ed.) *From Pop to Punk to Postmodernism: Popular Music and Australian Culture from the 1960s to the 1990s*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1992, pp. 15-16. For an early discussion on Aboriginal talent in Sydney and Melbourne see 'The Aboriginal Question: Are they getting a go?', *TV Week*, 14-20 November 1959, pp. 18-20.
[55] *TV Times*, 22 December 1965, n.p.
[56] R. Hall, '100 happy returns for S.O.M.', *TV Week*, 28 August 1965, pp. 24-25.
[57] J. Fetherston, 'Top radio man to compere TV show', *TV Week*, 18 September 1965, pp. 12-13.
[58] Herd, '"The Weaker Sisters"', p. 126.

replaced with *The Barry Crocker Show* and later with *Say It With Music*, both contemporary-style music programmes hosted by Crocker. By 1968, TCN-9 management believed *SOM* to be 'outdated and sentimental' and replaced it with the more modern *Barry Crocker's Sound of Music.*[59] A disgruntled Limb moved to TEN-10, replacing Barry Crocker's *Say It With Music*, just as Crocker had moved to TCN-9 to take Limb's place.[60] This is another example of pragmatic programming in response to commercial television managements' perceptions of audience tastes.

The many faces of the 'Tonight' show format

As local programmes became more acceptable to the viewing public, the earlier variety format of lavish song and dance spectaculars was scaled back and gradually evolved into the 'Tonight' show format. The 'Tonight' format revolved around a high-profile presenter who emphasised 'chat', punctuated by a variety of acts, comedy sketches (live or pre-recorded), musical items and celebrity interviews.[61] ATN-7's *Tonight* succeeded *ST* in 1959.[62] Once the 40% Australian content quota was imposed in 1960 and increased to 50% by 1965, stations increasingly looked to cheaper formats to offset general running costs.[63] It was also clear to station management that the success of the 'Tonight' show format hinged on the skill and personality of the compere. Television's intimacy in the home called for entertainers to play themselves. This did not work for many theatrical stage and radio stars, who were skilled in larger-than-life character performances.[64] With a shortage of skilled local performers, Sydney

[59] J. Judd, *Life & Limb*, Horwitz Grahame, Sydney, 1987, p. 78.
[60] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!,* pp. 94-95.
[61] C. Collie, *The Business of TV Production*, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2007, pp. 69-70.
[62] Murphy, 'Light entertainment', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 64.
[63] See ABCB, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 1960, p. 38; ABCB, *Fourteenth Annual Report*, 1962, pp. 53-54; ABCB, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 1965, pp. 68-70.
[64] B. Newton & J. Larkins, *Bert Newton, My Australia*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1983, p. 47.

stations recruited several overseas performers with ready-made reputations to headline local shows, including Roy Hampson, Ray Taylor, and Ray McCready.[65]

In 1962, TCN-9 introduced Australian radio DJ, Bob Rogers, in a 'Tonight' format. However, Jim Murphy credits Irish comedian, Dave Allen, as the first star of Sydney's 'Tonight' format.[66] Allen was willing to try anything for a laugh and often found himself embroiled in a series of dangerous stunts.[67] But Allen had no intention of staying in Sydney long-term and returned to London to be with his family.[68] TCN-9 was 'desperate' to replace him and sent producer, John 'Fatty' Collins, to LA in search of new talent. American entertainer, Don Lane, later known as the 'Lanky Yank', hesitantly agreed to fill in for six weeks, and within a month he was hired permanently. From 1965 to 1969, Lane was the host of *Sydney Tonight*, otherwise known as *Tonight with Don Lane* and the *Tonight Show*.[69]

Basing the *Tonight Show* on Johnny Carson's format in the US, Lane featured interviews with visiting entertainers, comedy sketches and musical items.[70] In mid-1965, Lane and Kennedy took part in a technically pioneering television experiment, appearing on a split screen together via coaxial cable. The transmission of *IMT* and *Tonight Show* simultaneously allowed Kennedy and Lane to slowly break the parochial bias of Melbourne and Sydney audiences.[71] Lane and Kennedy performed songs or scenes together via split screen to great comic effect. TCN-9 took advantage of the innovation, filling air-time with Melbourne's high-budget and extravagantly-staged productions. The favour was returned with TCN-9's top acts beamed into Melbourne on GTV-9. However the studio and production facilities at TCN-

[65] Murphy, 'Light entertainment', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 64.
[66] Ibid., p. 65.
[67] Place & Roberts (eds), *50 years of Television in Australia*, p. 107.
[68] R. Hall, 'Hard days' Tonight', *TV Week*, 26 December 1964, p. 11.
[69] D. Lane with J. Beaumont, *Never Argue with a Mug: The Don Lane Story*, New Holland Publishers (Australia), Frenchs Forest, NSW, 2007, pp. 26-30.
[70] Ibid., pp. 122-23.
[71] 'How to make friends by long distance', *TV Week*, 7 August 1965, p. 16.

9's *Tonight Show* could not compete with GTV-9's lavish studio constructed specially for Kennedy. Lane recalls that *IMT's* studio was 'a thousand times better than ours in Sydney'.[72] The extravagance of GTV-9's studio was testament to Kennedy's star power, but also to GTV-9 general manager Colin Bednall's determination to invest in high-quality local production.[73] (This extravagance became a source of tension between Bednall and Packer, and subsequently led to Bednall's resignation from the Nine Network in 1965).[74] Lane's observation also calls into question Sydney's sophisticated and supposedly superior television landscape, an image that was frequently shaped by the local press. Rivalry still existed between Sydney and Melbourne television, but it was tempered by the introduction of informal networking and programme-sharing. Now that TCN-9 and GTV-9 and HSV-7 and ATN-7 were aligned, it was not in their interests, nor in the interests of newspapers who were so closely connected with them, to remain so exclusive and unaccommodating.

Variety in the 1970s and 1980s

As part of a broader strategy to regain its ratings' dominance in the 1970s, Nine lured stars like Mike Walsh and Paul Hogan away from its competitors and signed them to Nine under enticing contracts.[75] *The Mike Walsh Show* began in 1973 as a 90-minute programme running from Monday to Friday on the Ten Network, before moving to Nine in 1977.[76] In 1979, Walsh was able to negotiate a contract reputedly worth $4 million for three years. Just as networks need a trusted face for their flagship newscaf programmes, personalities such as Walsh were crucial for promoting commercial network identity. Yet the reality is that few people have the ability to appear natural and sincere on screen, or possess the elusive 'star

[72] Lane, *Never Argue with a Mug*, p. 124.
[73] Blundell, *King*, p. 196.
[74] W.F. Mandle, 'Colin Bednall, 1913-1976', *Australian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1997, pp. 129-30.
[75] Herd, *Networking*, p. 237.
[76] 'A Happy Mike Walsh', *Sun-Herald*, 8 April 1973, p. 106.

quality' that wins viewers' affections. The scarcity of stars with the skill, talent and general appeal to attract large audiences forced networks to recycle Kennedy, Lane, Walsh, and Bert Newton for various shows and also to look overseas. In the 1970s, stations recruited Britons David Frost and Michael Parkinson for the 'Tonight' show format.[77]

Walsh pioneered a daytime equivalent of the 'Tonight' format, which proved popular with women, the largest proportion of daytime viewers.[78] Walsh made what he did look natural and easy, appearing genuinely interested in those he was interviewing and, according to producer, David Price, had the ability to 'talk on any subject for any length of time'.[79] His colourful female sidekick, Jeanne Little, provided a refreshingly unpretentious humour to the show, which scored her a Gold Logie in 1976 and Walsh a win in 1979. This was an exceptional achievement for daytime personalities.[80] Price attributed the programme's overall success to its accessibility: the show was 'the first to use Australians, not half a dozen stars, but everyday people'.[81]

From 1981 commercial television was bent on programmes that sold the appeal of 'real people' to audiences. Sandra Hall identifies Walsh's popularity as a factor, but also attributes this trend to the revival of interest in breakfast television, along with quiz and game shows with big cash prizes and simple questions and formats. The aim was to create some level of identification with the audience and break down barriers between viewers and contestants.[82] This coincided with a general push in advertising towards unknown people in everyday situations using everyday products. In a 1977 feature on the trend, the *Bulletin* declared that

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[77] Hall, *Turning On Turning Off*, pp. 65-66.
[78] ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 3, p. 171.
[79] D. Groves, 'The Secret World of Mike Walsh where the TV cameras never go', *Sun-Herald*, 7 May 1978, p. 24.
[80] Place & Roberts (eds), *50 Years of Television in Australia*, p. 107, Cox, *Out of the Box,* p. 12.
[81] Groves, 'The Secret World of Mike Walsh where the TV cameras never go', *Sun-Herald*, 7 May 1978, p. 24.
[82] Hall, *Turning On, Turning Off*, p. 64.

'the brash, loud ocker of television commercials has had his day. He is being replaced by real people in real situations'.[83]

In 1985 Walsh decided to move on from daytime television to host his own weekly *Tonight* show. At Walsh's request, Ray Martin filled the daytime slot with *The Midday Show* (1985-1993). For a man who had spent his television career in newscaf, the shift to daytime television was somewhat risky, although the *Midday* creed of 'make 'em laugh, make 'em cry, make 'em gasp' was not far removed from what *60 Minutes* intended for its audience. *Midday* was highly profitable for the Nine network and provided a training ground for talent and production personnel. In Martin's opinion Seven and Ten could not compete.[84] Keen to de-throne Martin, Seven attempted a 'blunting strategy'[85] by recruiting Bert Newton to host *The Bert Newton Show* in the same timeslot, followed by its new soap, *The Power, The Passion*, but the strategy failed to diminish *Midday*'s ratings.[86]

There was a slight resurgence in variety programming in the late 1970s in response to complaints from performers' unions about the lack of opportunity on Australian television. This led in part to the introduction of the specials quota in 1976.[87] However with the arrival of the mini-series in the 1980s many networks decided to meet the specials quota through drama.[88] By the mid-1980s, American and British television had mostly abandoned live

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[83] S. Symons, 'Real folks oust the ockers', *The Bulletin*, 9 July 1977, p. 52.
[84] Martin, *Ray*, pp. 226, 232, 234, 252.
[85] 'Blunting' refers to a programme strategy whereby networks choose to match their competition by scheduling a programme with 'identical appeal', thus blunting their competition. This strategy is often short-lived as generally one show will prove more popular than the other. See Eastman & Ferguson, *Media Programming*, p. 59.
[86] A. Mercado, *Super Aussie Soaps: Behind the Scenes of Australia's Best Loved TV Shows*, Pluto Press Australia, North Melbourne, Vic., 2004, p. 282. Martin, *Ray*, pp. 226, 232, 234, 252.
[87] A definition of the 'big budget specials' quota was set out in the Television Programme Standards, and required stations to: 'Transmit each statistical year not less than four special Australian programs of the highest quality, which may be in the form of variety spectaculars or one-shot dramas, using higher than normal budgets and employing substantial numbers of Australian actors, artists or musicians as well as, if necessary, overseas artists.' Cited in ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 3, p. 187.
[88] ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 3, p. 170.

variety television, as viewers' taste in music became more divergent. Australian television networks had predominantly done likewise,[89] primarily because, in Martin's view, '[t]he potential for disaster was too real'. Live television was 'no second chance television'. There was little control over singers' forgetting their lines, foul language and defamatory comments. Managing the 'frenetic buzz' of a live studio audience also proved challenging.[90]

Consequently, in 1987, there were only three regular Australian programmes on Sydney and Melbourne stations that featured traditional variety: *Midday*, *Young Talent Time* (*YTT*) and *Hey, Hey It's Saturday*.[91] In addition, three specials were classified as variety for that year: The *Australia Day Live Concert*, *John Farnham 'Whispering Jack in Concert'* and the *1987 Logie Awards* all broadcast on the Ten Network.[92]

It was more than just the unpredictability of live television that led networks to rethink variety in its traditional form, particularly in primetime. In a 1991 ABT inquiry into Australian content, the three commercial networks explained their hesitancy to televise traditional forms of variety programming. Crucially, ratings did not warrant the production costs entailed; if a variety show rated lower than 20 in primetime it was not deemed viable. The audience for traditional variety tended to be older (40-50+) and therefore generally unattractive to advertisers. Moreover variety, which was originally based on older styles of music, was not considered sufficiently attractive to younger audiences. Finally, networks struggled to find a star with the right skills, talent and broad appeal around which to package a show.[93]

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[89] There were two exceptions: *Midday* and *Hey, Hey It's Saturday*.
[90] Martin, *Ray*, pp. 235-36, 239.
[91] *Hey Hey It's Saturday* ended in 1999 as part of the general TCN-9 purge when new management took over. See Martin, *Ray*, p. 439.
[92] ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 3, 1991, p. 170.
[93] ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 3, p. 172.

The downturn in television variety also coincided with a widespread funk in traditional live variety on the local club circuit. Rock, cabaret and new comedy now dominated live entertainment.[94] Music video shows supplied the remaining light entertainment programming on television, and reflected television's versatility in adapting musical stage performance. The ABC's *Countdown* with Molly Meldrum pioneered the conventional music programme in November 1974, updating the rock-variety music format first established on the ABC's *Six O'Clock Rock* and its nationally televised *GTK* (*Get to Know*) and TCN-9's *Bandstand*.[95] *Countdown's* national launch coincided with the arrival of colour television and was used to promote Top 40 singles.[96] *Countdown* dominated the market and its wide appeal spawned several local music programmes of the conventional and alternative strains.[97] TCN-9, ATN-7 and TEN-10 produced a handful of music programmes between them, but many of them were short-lived.[98]

Music video shows were favoured by commercial networks as they provided an 'Australian' component to light entertainment and were cheap to produce.[99] By 1985, however, commercial and public broadcasting stations were more cognisant of overseas trends, particularly as America's *MTV* became the benchmark for style and 'quality'.[100] Despite the openness of local music programmes towards Australian material, the flood of overseas clips and the 'power' of record companies and television networks 'as arbiters of "quality"',[101] overpowered attempts to create an authentic 'Australian' music programme. Imitation and

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[94] Ibid., pp. 170-71, 185.
[95] S. Stockbridge, 'From Bandstand and Six O'Clock Rock to MTV and Rage: Rock Music on Australian Television', in P. Hayward (ed.) *From Pop to Punk to Postmodernism: Popular Music and Australian Culture from the 1960s to the 1990s*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1992, p. 73.
[96] S. Stockbridge, 'Rock 'n' Roll and Television', in A. Moran (ed.), *Stay Tuned: An Australian Broadcasting Reader*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, NSW, 1992, pp. 135-42.
[97] Stockbridge, 'From Bandstand and Six O'Clock Rock to MTV and Rage', in Hayward (ed.) *From Pop to Punk to Postmodernism*, p. 72.
[98] Stockbridge,'Rock 'n' Roll and Television', in Moran (ed.), *Stay Tuned*, pp. 136-40.
[99] ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 3, 1991, pp. 170-171, 185.
[100] Stockbridge, 'Rock 'n' Roll and Television', in Moran (ed.), *Stay Tuned*, pp. 137, 142.
[101] Ibid., p. 142.

reliance on overseas material remained a strong feature just as it had years earlier, when rock music programmes first beamed into viewers' homes.

Sydney comedy from 1956

When asked by *TV Times* in 1962 to comment on Australian television, US producer, Gil Roden, declared that the 'one bug area' in Australia that had been overlooked was 'developing comedians'.[102] Local comic performers had simply not been given the same opportunities and support as imported talent. By 1959, Sydney's only full-time vaudeville hall, the Tivoli theatre, provided the training ground for budding comedians.[103] Because of this reduced opportunity for performers to practise their craft, comic vaudeville and variety sketches, as well as situation comedy, migrated to television with varying levels of success.[104] Comedy was largely incidental to variety, chat and children's shows and usually consisted of a single act or sketch performance. During the earliest days of Sydney television, vaudeville performers – many of whom had developed their skills on the Tivoli stage – found a platform on programmes such as *ST* and *IMT*, *Sunnyside Up*, *Revue '61* and *Delo & Daly*.[105]

A handful of comediennes – Barbara Wyndon, Maggie Dence, Ruth Cracknell and Dawn Lake – made their mark on the small screen during this period. In 1964, Lake began her own national half-hour, weekly variety show, *Here's Dawn* (TCN-9), which was produced by her husband, Bobby Limb, and his company NLT Productions. *Here's Dawn* eventually received solid ratings, appearing in 'Sydney's top ten shows list'. This was in spite of critics initially

[102] G. Roden, 'You've got to have pride', *TV Times*, 7 July 1962, p. 16.
[103] 'Where have the comedians gone?', *TV Week*, 31 October - 6 November 1959, p. 56; The trend had already beset the US. See 'New form for 'Super Show'…New talent, New comedians', *TV Week*, 7-13 November 1959, p. 17.
[104] ABT, *Oz Content*, Vol. 3, p. 166.
[105] Place & Roberts (eds), *50 years of Television in Australia*, p. 208.

claiming it was 'impossible' for a woman to maintain a top-rating series.[106] Melbourne's Toni Lamond had paved the way for her contemporaries, being the first woman in Australia to have, on GTV-9, her own *Tonight Show* in the early 1960s.[107]

Television comedy, however, was generally a graveyard for Australian performers and scriptwriters. In 1962, a lack of quality scripts stopped Limb and Lake from pursuing a sitcom series. Quality scripts were expensive, being the product of several writers, each of whom commanded hefty salaries.[108] With very few opportunities to develop comedians and comedy programmes, Australian sitcoms were unable to compete with the overseas selection that dominated the television menu in the early 1960s.[109] It was not until ATN-7's 1966 sitcom, *My Name's McGooley, What's Yours?,* starring Gordon Chater, that Australian comedy could tickle the nation's palate with more than just sketch comedy.[110]

The Mavis Bramston Show

The arrival of satirical television comedy in the UK in the early 1960s spawned a similar style in Australia. On 11 November 1964 Australian comedy broke new ground with *The Mavis Bramston Show* on ATN-7. Modelled on Britain's satirical programme, *That Was The Week That Was*, *Mavis* was a controversial mix of political and social satire, predominantly delivered in a revue-like format of stand-up and sketch comedy with a touch of music.[111] The show's counterpart was *Oz* magazine, which emerged in 1963 and became infamous for its

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[106] *Here's Dawn* initially had a shaky start and reportedly received severe criticism from Sydney critics. Lorrae Desmond also had a top-rating show on the ABC. See 'Dawn on a Pedestal', *TV Week*, 9 May 1964, pp. 10-11; V. Marshall, 'Show Business', *Sun Herald*, 21 June 1964, p. 108.
[107] It became too much for Graham Kennedy to host *IMT* five nights a week. The solution was to give Kennedy hosting duties three nights a week (Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday), Bert Newton (Thursday) and Toni Lamond (Friday). See Hogan, *Look At Me!*, p. 22.
[108] 'Comedy costs plenty', *TV Times*, 17 March 1962, p. 16.
[109] 'A year for comedy', *TV Times*, 29 December 1962, pp. 18-19.
[110] Collie, *The Business of TV Production*, p. 51.
[111] Place & Roberts (eds), *50 years of Television in Australia*, p. 208; Moran & Keating, *Historical Dictionary of Australian Radio and Television*, p. 101.

pulling down of sacred cows and defiance of censorship laws.[112] *Mavis* boasted ten scriptwriters – an unprecedented number for an Australian television programme, guaranteeing that high quality material could be sustained.[113] No doubt it was one of the reasons why *Mavis* became the first Australian programme to make it into the nation's top five most popular programmes, earning the number two rating position in 1965.[114]

The introduction of *Mavis* represented a determined effort by ATN-7 to produce a new form of light entertainment that was capable of competing on its own merits with imported programmes. ATN-7 had lost its lead in live production, had ceased producing live drama, and was determined to boost its local production by seeking out fresh new formats. Although no expense had been spared producing *Studio A*, ATN-7's extravagant variety programme, the show had failed to find a suitable host.[115] The economic strain of running two big budget programmes on ATN-7 compelled management to select *Mavis* over *Studio A*. *Mavis* became a nursery for rising talent, launching Gordon Chater, Carol Raye and Barry Creyton, and encouraged the development of Australian scriptwriters.[116] Ironically several of the show's leading stars were British. They themselves used satire in order to comment on Australia's cultural cringe.[117]

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[112] Hilliard, 'The Religious Crisis of the 1960s', p. 211. See also R. Neville, *Hippie Hippie Shake: The Dreams, the Trips, the Trials, the Love-Ins, the Screw Ups…Sixties*, William Heinemann Australia, Port Melbourne, Vic., 1995, pp. 23-57.
[113] 'Mavis goes in where angels fear to tread', *TV Week*, 21 November 1964, p. 19.
[114] Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 27.
[115] P. McDonald, 'The town's talking about MAVIS', *TV Week*, 28 November 1964, p. 11.
[116] 'The show must go on', *TV Week*, 31 October 1964, p. 16; 'Did Studio A win? Who cares?', *TV Week*, 3 October 1964, p. 22; Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 114.
[117] McKee, *Australian Television*, p. 72. A. A. Phillips first coined the term 'cultural cringe' in 1950. The term originated from Phillips' observations about the efforts that Australian readers would go to point out the unflattering comparisons between Australian and English literature. Since then the term, in the Australian context, widely refers to Australians' tendency to dismiss our culture as inferior when compared to other countries, for example, Britain and the US. See A. A. Phillips, *AA Phillips on the Cultural Cringe*, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton, Vic., 2006.

Mavis was greeted with some incredulity, even at ATN-7, where personnel struggled to comprehend how the programme got away with the often outrageous content.[118] Voluminous complaints addressed to the ABCB during *Mavis*' four-year run expressed a strong dissatisfaction with the Board's inability to enforce the Programme Standards, particularly in relation to the show's general vulgarity and 'smut'. The Board admitted that it struggled to apply specific standards to programmes in the field of satire and sophisticated topical comment, yet assured viewers that it would concentrate action on 'restraining vulgarity and matter which is patently offensive'.[119] In many instances criticism of *Mavis* actually served to recommend the programme to viewers and fuelled the show's popularity.[120] At one stage during 1965, *Mavis* rated over 50 in Sydney.[121]

In its 1965 annual report, the Board noted that complaints suggested 'serious topics had been treated with ill-considered levity' and advised stations to avoid 'appearing to give irresponsible comment'.[122] And yet it was *Mavis'* refusal to treat 'serious topics' with reverence that, in *B & T's* opinion, was the show's greatest contribution to Australian television. *Mavis* represented 'television growing up with its own mind and attitude', argued *B & T*.[123]

In response to the deluge of criticism in early 1965, ATN-7 arranged an on-air discussion of *Mavis*, inviting five eminent church, educational, political and civil representatives to examine the role of the ABCB, the nature of satire and where writers and producers should

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[118] P. McDonald, 'The town's talking about MAVIS', *TV Week*, 28 November 1964, p. 15.
[119] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4, TC/5/3 Part 4, 'Complaints and Criticisms – Mavis Bramston Show', ABCB, letter from ABCB acting secretary, J. P. Coker, to Mrs Moffit of Pascoe Vale, south Vic., 8 January 1968.
[120] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 114.
[121] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4, TC/5/3 Part 4, 'Complaints and Criticisms – Mavis Bramston Show', Letter from J. H. Oswin ATN manager to Mrs T. Hemsley, of Warrimoo, NSW, 21 February 1967.
[122] ABCB, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 1965, p. 73.
[123] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4, TC/5/3 Part 1, 'Complaints and Criticisms – Mavis Bramston Show', 'Personal Memo: TV: medium with the greatest power to annoy the mostest', *B & T*, 8 April 1965.

'draw the line'.[124] The highly publicised discussion was telecast on *Seven Days*, and compered by Westerway. Hosting the panel discussion was a strategic move by ATN-7 management. To what extent it appeased public antagonism towards *Mavis* is difficult to measure. However, the telecast registered the conviction of all members of the panel that *Mavis* was 'stimulating, entertaining and needed in Australia' and legitimised the show's presence.[125]

A day before the telecast, 'Veritas' (Keith Sadlier), the *Sunday Mirror's* venomous television critic, warned reader-viewers that *Mavis* was in danger of being 'killed off'. In a bid to empower his reader-viewers, Veritas implored them to take action by filling out a poll coupon and sending them into the newspaper. Such 'action by YOU, the viewers', Veritas wrote, 'could prevent this [death] happening to Australia's only satirical programme'.[126] Once again, Sydney newspapers formed a conduit for public opinion and facilitated a collaborative conversation with viewers.

Placing *Mavis*' fate in viewers' hands may have encouraged viewers to feel part of an imagined television community, but whether their input had a bearing on station decisions is unclear. *Mavis* had its critics, but it also had friends in high places. In March 1965, W. J. Hart, Senior Programme Officer of the ABCB, wrote to Adrian Jose informing him that: 'Mr [Rupert] Henderson is very much in favour of the type of presentation [on *Mavis*] and is on the set personally when each episode is taped for the air…'.[127] Prior to *Mavis*' debut, *TV Week*

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[124] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4, TC/5/3 Part 1, 'Complaints and Criticisms – Mavis Bramston Show', 'Panel of 5 to discuss "Mavis"', *Sun Herald*, 4 April 1965.
[125] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4, TC/5/3 Part 1, 'Complaints and Criticisms – Mavis Bramston Show', 'Personal Memo: TV: medium with the greatest power to annoy the mostest', *B & T*, 8 April 1965.
[126] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4, TC/5/3 Part 1, 'Complaints and Criticisms – Mavis Bramston Show', Veritas, 'Do you want Mavis to die?', *Sunday Mirror*, 4 April 1965.
[127] NAA Melbourne: MP1170/4, TC/5/3 Part 1, 'Complaints and Criticisms – Mavis Bramston Show', letter written from W. J. Hart, Senior Programme Officer to J. A. Jose, 26 March 1965, p. 2.

confirmed Henderson's role as guardian of the show, reporting that he was 'the key' that assured *Mavis*' 'future and freedom'.[128]

Mavis never managed to hold its position in the national top ten after 1965. In 1968, *Mavis* was cut from one hour to 30-minutes. By this stage, argues Brendan Horgan, *Mavis* had become 'more of revue rather than pure and spontaneous reactions to current affairs.' Heavy production costs and waning popularity led to the show being axed at the end of 1968.[129] But its influence would live on, being revived by the ABC's edgy and outlandish working-class satire, *The Aunty Jack Show*, in 1972.[130] When the figurehead of the show, Grahame Bond, confronted 'Veritas' over his scathing reviews, the cynical journalist quipped: "'Mate, I'm only trying to sell newspapers. If I were to say that I liked your show, then there'd be no letters to the editor, so I'm helping you get viewers.'"[131] This once again calls into question the degree to which television critics and viewers' tastes are aligned, but also how such reviews shape the public memory of programmes. Critics' reviews are not simply a matter of individual taste, but reflect the interests of their employers.

Laughing at ourselves: Comedy since the 1970s

The most successful comedies on Australian television are often ones that make us laugh at ourselves. During the 1970s, commercial stations broadcast few locally produced comedies, with two exceptions. *The Paul Hogan Show (*Seven 1973-78 and Nine 1978-84) and *The Naked Vicar Show* (Seven, 1977-1978) offered humorous national characters and images that resonated with viewers.[132] Paul Hogan emerged as one of Australia's top comedians, having

[128] P. McDonald, 'The town's talking about MAVIS', *TV Week*, 28 November 1964, p. 15.
[129] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 115.
[130] Inglis, *This is the ABC,* p. 295; Murphy, 'Light entertainment', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 72; See also G. Bond, *Jack of All Trades, Mistress of One*, New South, Kensington, NSW, 2011.
[131] Bond, *Jack of All Trades*, p. 169.
[132] R. Harris, *Punch lines: Twenty Years of Australian Comedy*, ABC Books, Sydney, 1994, pp. 115-16, 118.

been catapulted to fame on his long-running sketch comedy series.[133] Hogan created the persona of an unpretentious working-class hero, which challenged the archetype of the bush legend and fused the traditional Australian bloke with a contemporary urban personality. Hogan's new archetype ('Hoges') soon became known as 'the ocker'.[134]

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the ocker-type saturated Australian popular culture and advertising, reaching its peak in 1974, which Australian cultural critic, Max Harris, dubbed 'The Year of the Ocker'.[135] Hogan's rise to fame was significant in Australian television culture. He recalled:

> What set me apart was that at a time when half the people on Australian TV were speaking this ridiculous Oxford English accent that they don't even speak in England – and the other half were copying a kind of Californian-American accent – I was talking like the blokes down at the pub. Like an Australian….everyone thought it was bloody amazing.[136]

Hogan maintained high ratings because he 'stay[ed] close to his audience both philosophically and physically', developing his humour from real life and the various foibles of Australians.[137] He portrayed an archetype that people identified as 'Australian' and Sydney advertisers successfully exploited this image in the marketing of Australian tobacco and tourism.[138] Commercial stations did likewise, capitalising on television's potential to reflect Australian culture back to its audience. They were instrumental in constructing images and characters that were thought to be typically 'Australian'.

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[133] Moran & Keating, *Historical Dictionary of Australian Radio and Television*, p. 290.
[134] S. Jobson, *Paul Hogan: The Real-Life Crocodile Dundee*, W H Allen, London, 1988, p. 44; J. McClelland, 'Time to confess – Paul Hogan is simply the greatest', *SMH*, 10 December 1987, p. 15.
[135] Jobson, *Paul Hogan*, p. 49.
[136] Hogan quoted in Ibid., p. 46.
[137] Ibid., p. 53.
[138] C. Page, 'Paul Hogan's television commercials', in A. Moran (ed.), *Stay Tuned: An Australian Broadcasting Reader*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, NSW, 1992, pp. 116-17, 119.

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Sydney viewers were exposed to strong national characters with greater diversity. The ABC's *Australia? You're Standing In It* (1983) and *The Gillies Report* (1984-85), Seven's sitcoms *Kingswood Country* (1980-84), *Hey Dad* (1987-1994), and sketch shows *Eleventh Hour* (1985), *Fast Forward* (1989-92) which developed into *Full Frontal* (1993-99), Nine's sitcom, *All Together Now* (1991-93) and Ten's *The Comedy Company* (*TCC*) and *D-Generation* (1986-88), shared the ability to define and reflect Australian urban culture through comedy. Such programmes achieved varying degrees of commercial success because they mirrored the social and cultural milieu of their audience.[139]

Although Sydney could boast of its well-known comedy club, *The Comedy Store*, which launched the careers of popular stand-up comedians, most of the aforementioned sketch shows that emerged in the 1980s began in Melbourne. Therefore Sydney was not responsible for the unprecedented wave of local comedy production on Australian television that occurred at this time.[140] Live comedy in Melbourne during the 1970s and 1980s, and developments on ABC television, cultivated a rich breed of new talent which successfully moved from the live circuit to television. The Melbourne International Comedy Festival, established in 1987, and its recognition as one of the top three international comedy events, reinforced the revival of television comedy.[141]

Seven's *Acropolis Now* (1989-92) marked the gradual emergence of multicultural comedy on television, reflecting social changes in Australia. It provided alternative images to traditional Australian archetypes.[142] A strong feminist consciousness that had appeared on the live circuit in the 1970s was also seen on television by the late 1980s, transforming women's approach to

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[139] Harris, *Punch Lines*, pp. 127, 129-30.
[140] Johnson & Smiedt, *Boom-Boom*, p. 268.
[141] Harris, *Punch Lines*, pp. 106-7.
[142] T. Bosanquet, 'Don't Fence Me In: Australian TV Comedy – The Next Wave', *Metro Magazine*, No. 149, 2006, p. 92.

comedy as television writers and performers.[143] In 1992, comedians Jean Kittson and Maryanne Fahey launched Australia's first all-women television comedy, *Kittson, Fahey* (1992-93). This was followed by *Big Girls' Blouse* (*BGB*) for the Seven Network, which was produced by comedians Gina Riley, Jane Turner and Magda Szubanksi. *BGB* was notable for providing a female perspective on Australian life, and for challenging the conventional television comedy format by using extended character-driven sketches that were not focused on delivering a quick succession of punchlines. Unfortunately Seven's haphazard scheduling meant that *BGB* had little chance to establish a loyal audience, leading to *BGB*'s eventual demise in late 1995.[144]

At that time, the tide began to turn. Plateauing ratings hinted at a market that was over-saturated with comedy. The economic recession was tightening the purse strings of network executives and television's insatiable demand for new material left many comedy writers and performers in need of a break.[145] Australian sketch comedy had all but ground to a halt, and sitcoms were noticeably absent from television. Australians lacked a large contingent of writers to replicate the success of overseas sitcoms and commercial stations were more risk-averse than the ABC, preferring to use performers (who were not necessarily comedians) and well-used programme ideas with guaranteed success.[146]

The D-Generation thrived at the ABC once they jumped ship from the Nine Network, because on commercial television there is too much expectation to rate well from the very beginning

[143] Johnson & Smiedt, *Boom-Boom*, p. 288.
[144] Despite its promise, *BGB* was scheduled against the popular US medical drama, *ER*, and consequently suffered poor ratings. Seven removed *BGB* from air, re-edited and changed the show's timeslot; yet the adjustments failed to deliver. In Ibid., pp. 345-346; S. Hughes, 'Why Australian TV Comedy Isn't Funny', *The Age*, 7 September 1995, p. 13.
[145] Johnson & Smiedt, *Boom-Boom*, pp. 345-346.
[146] S. Hughes, 'Why Australian TV Comedy Isn't Funny', *The Age*, 7 September 1995, p. 13.

and little scope for programmes to experiment and grow in a timeslot.[147] Comedy in its traditional form was no longer 'flavour of the month', especially once commercial television discovered the importance of developing lifestyle and infotainment programming in primetime. The emergence of the docusoap and mockumentary in the 1990s, however, provided Australian comedians with fresh opportunities to poke fun at Australian society while also maintaining a critical eye on contemporary television.[148]

Trivia, trivia: Quiz and game shows since 1956

On the evening of its launch, TCN-9 wasted no time broadcasting what was to become the staple live content of Australian television: quiz and game shows.[149] Emanating from St David's Church hall in Surry Hills was *Name That Tune* and George Foster's *What's My Line?* (1956-58), the first panel quiz programme on Australian television.[150] *Name That Tune* was a local version of a US game show (first broadcast in 1953), and set the pattern for import substitution on Australian television.[151] Most quiz and game shows that emerged during this period were adapted from radio. ATN-7 transferred the radio panel programme, *Leave It to the Girls*, to television, with host Terry Dear and a panel including Margo Lee and cartoonist Jim Russell. ATN-7's *Quiz Kids* (1957) was another television adaptation of a long-running radio programme.[152] In 1957, ATN-7 made an exclusive deal with radio giants Jack Davey and Bob Dyer and their production units to simulcast their top-rating shows: Dyer's *It Pays to be Funny* and *Pick-a-Box*, and Davey's *Give It a Go*, *The Dulux Show* and *The Pressure-Pak Show*. ATN-7 and GTV-9 kinescoped the programmes at 8 p.m. However Davey and Dyer

[147] Ibid.
[148] See W. Davis, 'Playing the Television Field: Kath and Kim and the Changing Face of TV Comedy', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3, June 2008, pp. 353-361.
[149] There has been much written on the genre distinctions between quiz and game shows and the overlap they share, as well as sub-types of the genres. A crude distinction between the game show and quiz show is that quiz shows are classified by reliance upon knowledge, whereas game shows are characterised by a reliance on 'random chance' or 'physical prowess'. See Moran & Keating, *Wheel of Fortune*, pp. 20-24.
[150] Ibid., p. 129.
[151] Moran, *Inside Australia Media*, p. 69.
[152] Moran & Keating, *Wheel of Fortune*, p. 111.

initially made the mistake of sticking too closely to their radio format. In the end, Dyer emerged triumphant over Davey, adapting best to television.[153]

A distinguishing feature of game shows in the 1950s and 1960s was their 'older, avuncular-type comperes' like Dyer and Roland Strong, each typically sporting moustaches and spectacles. Moran and Keating note that quiz shows almost always had male comperes, as they do today. They describe this as 'a general type of genial patricianism'. It characterised numerous other shows during the period, including newscaf.[154] Women, on the other hand, were primarily chosen for variety or daytime lifestyle shows, which suggest certain programming genres were more gender-specific than others.[155]

HSV-7's *My Fair Lady* (1959), a game show featuring female contestants competing for a make-over, was the first example of the genre to have a female host, June Finlayson. The content of the show actually served to reinforce chauvinistic assumptions that women were best-placed hosting shows revolving around 'the home' rather than anything vaguely cerebral. The programme spawned several local versions, with TCN-9 producing its own *My Fair Lady* (1961-63), a 30-minute game show where housewives were 'magically transformed' with hints and advice given by Elaine White and Ray Leighton.[156] For the most part, however, female presenters held a largely decorative position of 'hostess' on quiz and game shows, even though Nine decided to upgrade the 'hostess' title to 'co-host' on *Sale of the Century* in the 1980s. By the early 1990s co-hosts first shared in the 'pre-match' conversation and banter with contestants, reflecting changing attitudes to women on game shows.[157]

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[153] Murphy, 'Light entertainment', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, pp. 62-63.
[154] Moran & Keating, *Wheel of Fortune*, p. 25.
[155] S. Bye, '"A Cruel Medium for a Woman": Female personalities and the early days of Australian television', *Feminist Media Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2010, p. 164.
[156] Joan Andrews took over from White in 1962. In Moran & Keating, *Wheel of Fortune*, p. 97.
[157] Barber, *Who Am I?*, pp. 98, 152-54.

Developments in Australian quiz and game shows

Some of Sydney's most prominent light entertainment stars had stakes in the main production houses ('packaging companies') from the 1950s onwards. Packaging companies were independent companies that undertook all the production and organisation details for television broadcasters at a set price.[158] In 1959, Reg Grundy sold a television version of his radio game show, *Wheel of Fortune*, to TCN-9, which led to the establishment of his first company, Reg Grundy Enterprises (Grundys).[159] Dyer and Limb were also involved in the main production houses during this period. In 1959, Limb and his business partners, Les Tinker and Sydney entrepreneur Jack Neary, began NLT Productions, which produced shows such as *Here's Dawn*, *Sound of Music, Singalong, The Mobil-Limb Show*, *The Bob Rogers Show, The Dave Allen Show* and *The Don Lane Show*, several quiz shows and drama series.[160]

In 1962, Limb found himself coping with sole directorship of the organisation following the sudden death of Tinker and the nervous breakdown of Neary.[161] Naturally Limb and his staff felt the strain. Similarly Dyer suffered enormous pressure running radio and television versions of *Pick-a-Box* and making sure both presentations were compatible.[162] Grundy discovered he needed to produce several programmes to keep his business afloat, eventually spreading them across several networks.[163] Over time, Grundys' ability to adapt and branch out would prove central to the company's survival.

Reg Grundy played a key role in the distribution of game shows in Australia. Encouraged by Bruce Gyngell, TCN-9's general manager, Grundy adapted successful US game shows to the

[158] A. Moran, *Making A TV Series: The Bellamy Project*, Currency Press, Sydney; Australian Film Institute, Carlton South, Vic., 1982, p. 169.
[159] Moran & Keating, *Historical Dictionary of Australian Radio and Television*, pp. 187, 189.
[160] 'From the cash register, SOUNDS OF MUSIC', *TV Week*, 12 December 1964, p. 36; Judd, *Life and Limb*, p. 56.
[161] 'Boss Bobby: Rubber-faced comic finds that he's running the office', *TV Times*, 10 November 1962, p. 15.
[162] 'After three years of TV Mr. Pick-a-box says…I've weathered the storm', *TV Times*, 27 February 1960, p. 15.
[163] T. Barber, *Who Am I?*, Random House Australia, Sydney, 2001, pp. 98,188.

Australian context, resulting in quiz shows such as Jimmy Hannan's *Say When*, *Concentration* and *Tic Tac Dough* for TCN-9.[164] Around this time, formatting became central to many game shows. The format resembles a template that is devised and licensed in one part of the world for the purposes of being reworked and broadcast in another.[165] The trend began in the US in the 1950s with *The $64,000 Question* and later transferred to Britain.[166] International radio format programme exchange had already been in operation since the 1930s, facilitated by connections between Australia, the US and Britain. In the early 1940s, Australian commercial radio had its own versions of numerous popular US radio programmes. In 1951, licensing agreements over radio formats were enacted, and by the 1960s licensing remakes occurred overseas, albeit sporadically.[167] By the late 1970s, trade in programme formats adopted formal licensing agreements. A formal arrangement with Goodson-Todman Productions in the US gave Grundys, which held a monopoly on quiz and game shows on commercial television, the first choice on Goodson game show formats outside the US and continental Europe. This secured Grundys future in the Australian television market and presented opportunities for overseas expansion.[168]

Quiz and game shows were relatively cheap to produce and made easier by developments in video-recording. They could be recorded back-to-back and stripped into the same timeslot five-days-a-week – an American trend copied by Grundys.[169] The 1970s were also significant for Australian quiz shows as they marked the end of *Pick-a-Box*. This top-rating show, hosted by master-showman Dyer and his wife Dolly, ran successfully for 14 years. They were a hard

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[164] Moran & Keating, *Wheel of Fortune*, pp. 90, 92; R. Grundy, *Reg Grundy*, Murdoch Books, Millers Point, NSW, 2010, p. 87.
[165] Moran, 'Makeover on the move', pp. 460-61.
[166] R. Paterson, 'Drama and Entertainment', in A. Smith & R. Paterson, (eds), *Television: An International History*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford; New York, 1998, p. 64.
[167] Moran, 'Makeover on the move', pp. 463-464; See also Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, pp. 337-55; Moran, *TV Format Mogul*, p. 59.
[168] Moran & Keating, *Historical Dictionary of Australian Radio and Television*, pp. 189-91; Moran & Keating, *Wheel of Fortune*, p. 147.
[169] Moran, *Images & Industry*, p. 149.

act to follow. ATN-7 now faced the dilemma of filling the gap in the primetime 7 p.m. slot. The solution was Tony Barber and *Temptation*, a quiz show which had been airing five days a week, and was now elevated to the 7 p.m. timeslot on Mondays.[170]

Barber represented the changing face of Australian game show hosts. Moran and Keating suggest that, in contrast to the 'older, often moustached first-generation' of Dyer, Grundy and John Dease, the younger, more energetic, and 'fun-loving' type of host emerged in the form of Barber, Ernie Sigley, Jimmy Hannan and Philip Brady. This faster-paced joviality was all part of the emphasis on play, entertainment and everyday knowledge rather than dry, factual knowledge.[171] The newer, slicker variety of imported game shows such as *The Price is Right* and *Blind Date* made earlier quiz formats such as *Pick-a-Box* and *Coles' $3000 Question* appear outdated and stingy. This re-invention of the quiz genre emerged as a result of American producers wanting to distance themselves from the American quiz show scandals of 1958.[172] A friendlier show that placed more emphasis on contestants' game-playing skills resulted, rather than the factual and potentially 'corrupt' knowledge quiz format.[173]

The 7 p.m. version of *Temptation* soon became *The $25,000 Great Temptation* (*TGT*) and within two months was regularly the number one rating show during primetime. Eventually *TGT* became stripped from Monday to Friday evenings as an important lead-in for the remainder of the night-time schedule. From that moment, stripped game shows became a staple on commercial television in primetime, and were important for 'hooking' the audience

[170] V. Marshall, 'Big, rich quiz show', *Sun-Herald*, 4 July 1971, p. 108
[171] Barber, *Who Am I?*, p. 27; Moran & Keating, *Wheel of Fortune*, p. 26.
[172] Moran & Keating, *Wheel of Fortune*, p. 26; The American quiz show scandals in 1958 'erupted' when it became known that two of the most popular and largest-earning quiz shows were rigged. See B. Moore, M.A. Benson & J. Van Dyke, *Primetime Television: A Concise History*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, 2006, pp. 96-101.
[173] Moran & Keating, *Wheel of Fortune*, p. 26.

to the rest of the night-time schedule.[174] But in mid-1974 Seven made a fatal decision in moving *TGT* from 7 to 8.30 p.m., where it competed against TEN-10's unbeatable soap, *Number 96*.[175] TGT's loyal audience had no intention of changing their allegiance from the 7 p.m. timeslot. Grundy's soap drama, *Class of '74,* replaced *TGT* at 7 p.m., before *TGT* was cancelled at the end of 1974.[176] It was a reminder that programmes relied just as much on expected scheduling and audience habits as they did on personality.

The demise of *TGT* was in part a casualty of Seven's whimsical management decisions. But it may also have been affected by incremental changes in the drama quota, and the introduction of the new points system in 1973.[177] The points system rewarded expensive and labour-intensive dramas, thus encouraging stations to cut down on variety and the number of game shows they were buying.[178] To stay afloat, Grundys expanded into drama production, as we shall see in Chapter 8.

Nevertheless, Grundys still adapted game shows for primetime. By this stage, *Match Game*, a popular American game show, had caught Grundy's eye. An Australian version was made for TEN-10, but lacked a strong comic performer. In Reg Grundy's view, if the casting is 'wrong', even 'the most promising format will fall over with an embarrassing thud'.[179] This was why Grundys signed Graham Kennedy in 1976 for a reputed $1 million to host *Graham*

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[174] Barber, *Who Am I?*, pp. 105-6; Moran, *Images and Industry*, p. 151.
[175] There is a discrepancy in the details of this story. Barber and Grundy maintain that *TGT* was televised on Seven, while Moran and Keating record that *TGT* was on Nine, and thus it was Nine that moved *TGT* from the 7 p.m. to the 8.30 p.m. timeslot. A close look at Barber and Grundy's autobiographies reveals that *TGT* was in fact on the Seven Network. The incorrect information is cited in Moran & Keating, *Historical Dictionary of Australian Radio and Television*, p. 186.
[176] Barber, *Who Am I?*, p. 134.
[177] ABCB, *Twenty-fifth Annual Report*, 1973, pp. 110-18.
[178] Grundy, *Reg Grundy*, p. 141.
[179] Ibid., pp. 107, 194.

Kennedy's Blankety Blanks.[180] *Blankety Blanks* revolved around Kennedy and his gags. Kennedy used his comedy to invert the conventions of the traditional quiz format, along the way providing a prototype for later hybrid game shows. Graeme Blundell observes:

> [Kennedy] pushed the traditions and conventions of the quiz show into his live theatre of foolery, propelled it all sideways into nonsense. He satirized the notion that played out in game and quiz shows: people as subjects of consumerism, the systematic production of false needs.'[181]

Blankety Blanks was launched in early 1977 against tough competition – *ACA* and *Willesee at Seven* – but quickly conquered them in the ratings, receiving a spectacular rating of 41 in Sydney.[182] The half-hour show was stripped across five-nights-a-week with large cash prizes for contestants, who were required to match words with a celebrity panel.[183] The panel consisted of comedians Ugly Dave Gray, Noeline Brown, Barry Creyton, Stuart Wagstaff, Carol Raye and several other celebrities from musical and theatrical shows, who gained additional exposure from the network cross-promotion.[184] This use of celebrities as contestants solved the problem of drawing from a small talent pool, a dilemma that increasingly faced knowledge-based quiz shows.[185]

In 1979, Grundys was selling variants of game shows on a regional/state and national basis. It also began to purchase several game show formats from the US, one of which was *Sale of the Century,* first produced on NBC between 1969 and 1973. Grundys adapted it for Australia, selling it to the Nine Network in 1980, after which *Sale* became the most popular and longest-

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[180] 1976 was the opportune time for Kennedy to return to television after his ban from live performances two years earlier. Kennedy created controversy after imitating a crow 'faaaaaarrrkk' that sounded highly reminiscent of the word 'fuck' during the live reading of an advertisement. According to the ABCB, they were 'convinced that Mr Kennedy deliberately made use of an expletive which [it] had previously ruled as totally unsuitable for use on the family medium of television…' See ABCB, *Twenty-seventh Annual Report*, 1975, pp. 122-3. See also Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!,* pp. 246-47.
[181] Blundell, *King*, pp. 331.
[182] Ibid., p. 335.
[183] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures,* pp. 246-247.
[184] Blundell, *King*, p. 330.
[185] Barber, *Who Am I?*, p. 156.

running game show on Australian television. (*Sale* wound up in 2001, before returning under its original Australian name, *Great Temptation*, in 2005.)[186] In the early 1980s, Grundy World Wide was established and headquartered in the West Indies, facilitating an expanding overseas market for Australian game shows and drama serials. As the organisation became increasingly transnational, Grundys provided a blueprint for the ownership, control and operation of format distribution in game shows and serials.[187]

The early 1980s also signalled a shift in the 'general pattern' of Australian game shows. The supply of US game shows declined, as most American quiz and game shows had moved from primetime to daytime programming, where they were forced to compete unsuccessfully with talk shows. Consequently, Australian producers had to look elsewhere for formats and genre variations. Grundys' adaptation of the BBC's *It's A Knockout* (1985-87) marked the beginning of a limited return to the primetime game show aimed at family viewing. Moreover, the introduction of the ABT's 'C' classification in 1984 encouraged the inclusion of children's game shows. Thus a different type of game show with a specific host, contestants, audience and structure emerged,[188] as mentioned in Chapter 6.

The most defining change, however, has been in the area of reality and game show formats, following the launch of the BBC's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*, which spawned an Australian version in 1999 and several spin-offs, including *Millionaire Hot Seat* (later abbreviated to *Hot Seat*) on the Nine Network.[189] Given the popularity of format game shows, Sydney commercial television networks have increasingly programmed them before the nightly news bulletin. In 2005, Seven's *Deal or No Deal* reportedly changed the fortunes of

[186] *Great Temptation* ran on-and-off on until 2009. See Grundy, *Reg Grundy*, p. 130.
[187] Moran & Keating, *Historical Dictionary of Australian Radio and Television*, pp. 190-91.
[188] Moran & Keating, *Wheel of Fortune*, pp. 27-28.
[189] Ibid; W. Boddy, 'The Quiz Show' in Creeber (ed.), *The Television Genre Book*, p. 81.

Seven News, providing a strong lead-in audience for the 6 p.m. bulletin, and reinforced the pivotal role game shows played for the primetime schedule.[190]

As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9, hybrid styles of light entertainment programmes fusing celebrity, comedy, vernacular knowledge and music into a panel game show format have mostly taken the place of the traditional quiz show. In a multi-channel environment, where audiences are smaller and more fragmented, it is important to maximise audience share by offering programmes that appeal widely. For this reason hybrid formats have become attractive programming alternatives. Creating hybrid formats is not only economic, but the fusion of various genres is more likely to attract a mainstream audience with broad tastes.[191] The ABC's music-themed quiz show, *Spicks and Specks* (2005-11), *RocKwiz* (2005-) on SBS, and Ten's *Talkin' 'Bout Your Generation* (2009-), are indicative of this shift towards comedic panel shows. This has reinforced the successful strategy of using celebrities instead of 'real' contestants. It allows cross-promotional opportunities for in-house stars, guarantees high entertainment value, and saves money by not always including extravagant prizes.

Conclusion

The production and development of Sydney's light entertainment programmes offer insights into the way Sydney television culture was initially constructed and how viewers were encouraged to imagine their place within it. The collaborative conversations between television critics and viewers in the early years also underscore the long-standing tradition of a participatory media in Australia. Sydney's showcase variety productions provided the stimulus for such discussions, particularly when it came to evaluating local talent and

[190] Cox, *Out of the Box*, p. 29.
[191] A. Moran & J. Malbon, *Understanding the Global TV Format*, Intellect, Bristol; Portland, Or, 2006, p. 11.

productions against interstate and imported examples. Sydney television critics were careful to identify themselves as being in tune with Sydney viewers, but to what extent they reflected viewers' preferences *en masse* remains elusive.

Of particular interest is the way rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne productions and personalities was constructed and cultivated by the press. Were Sydney viewers really that averse to Melbourne offerings as recorded in magazine dailies and newspapers? How authentic was this rivalry? As we have seen some viewers who wrote in were baffled by the distinctions. Others acknowledged and perpetuated the competition. Nevertheless, this rivalry served an important purpose. Just as competitive sport propels disparate people together to barrack for a certain team, the rivalry between the two cities united Sydney viewers and provided the television community with an identity – one that was comparatively more sophisticated than Melbourne's. Sydney critics were harsh on Sydney productions, but their acidic critiques of Melbourne productions were often framed within a discourse of one-upmanship. Such rivalry may also have helped to foster audience loyalty to local stars and to the stations that employed them, particularly when Sydney productions had to compete for the national advertising dollar. This sense of ownership and belonging for Sydney viewers was further reinforced by television fan clubs built around local variety stars.

The distinctiveness of Sydney's television culture was blunted once national programming sharing ensued. An identifiable 'Sydney stamp' on light entertainment programmes and its personalities became less obvious over time, and the rivalry was toned down. Discussion about Sydney's television culture became overshadowed by a preoccupation with developing a national television culture. But given programmes comprised material adapted or borrowed from overseas, 'Sydney' or 'Australian' television would invariably have an international

flavour. This was despite commercial stations' best efforts to promote constructed national characters and images, particularly in comedy.

Light entertainment programmes have been instrumental in launching some of the most enduring personalities on Sydney (and Australian) television. But although light entertainment programmes provide the platform, the success of these shows is largely dependent on the skill and personality of the performers propelling them. The skill-set of the performer and the volume of available talent has shaped the development of certain styles and emphases in variety, comedy, the Tonight show and quiz and game show programming. But national and international cultural movements, economic conditions, regulatory decisions, competition, television management, developments in technology and audience tastes have all had an impact on the evolution of light entertainment programming in Sydney, influencing the trajectory and intersection of these genres. Light entertainment programming has therefore evolved and diversified over time.

Quiz and game shows arguably provide the best example of how the genre distinctions of light entertainment programming have blurred over time into hybrid formats. Much of this change has been wrought by international programming trends and the development of a globalised television marketplace. Grundys has been at the vanguard in delivering the local television market into a wider global format exchange. Since the 1990s and 2000s, the more traditional form of quiz and game shows has moved towards hybrid reality and comedy-based formats, fusing variety, music, competition and comedy together to produce high entertainment at low cost. In a multi-channel environment where audiences are increasingly fragmented, hybrid formats are designed to appeal to a wide cross-section of viewers.

Commercial networks have chosen to adapt, recycle and create new hybrid formats as part of a broad strategy of cost-effective and 'Australian' programming.

Traditionally Australian comedies – both narrative and non-narrative – have embraced a transgressive form of satire and parody that have, on many occasion, fuelled discussions about Australian national identity and society, yet also prompted questions about women's control over comic discourse and their function as television writers and performers. The ABC has generally led the charge in experimenting with new comedic trends and being less hampered by ratings and advertising than commercial stations. Comparisons with overseas programmes have only served to reinforce the cultural cringe in regards to Australian comedy. It is important, however, that confidence is shown in new forms of indigenous product and light entertainment in general,[192] for there is no denying the importance light entertainment programming holds in the collective televisual memory of Australians. Moreover, its adaptability to overseas markets highlights its industrial importance for local production.

[192] B. Pobjie, 'No sheepishness to our Shaun, *The Age*, 23 June 2012, p. 47.

8

Drama: The 'Heart' of the Programming Schedule

Historically, Sydney commercial stations have been slow to embrace Australian-produced drama. The art of make-believe is risky business. Not only is drama the most expensive form of television production, but it also occupies the largest proportion of screen time. Broadcasters' preferences for screening either imported or local drama depend on the extent to which a drama can generate audience share.[1] Greater risk of failure is associated with producing local drama than purchasing an imported substitute. Broadcasters consider imported programmes more commercially attractive; their audience appeal has been pre-tested in overseas markets and there is lower up-front investment.[2]

If Australian drama programmes are to match the quality of overseas productions, broadcasters have to spend equivalent amounts of money – a cost which commercial stations argue is too burdensome, especially in a small market such as Australia. However the presence of Australian-made drama is considered vital for a robust sense of national identity. As television is widely believed to help shape the social and cultural values of a nation, so it follows that the images and stories presented on screen should reflect the perceptions of Australians, our land and our way of life. Moreover, local drama production is essential to the

[1] F. Papandrea, 'Explaining Television Stations' Preferences for Imported Drama Programs', *Prometheus: Critical Studies in Innovation*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 1998, p. 73.
[2] Ibid., pp. 76-77.

proper training of Australian artists and technicians and to the development of the film and television industries.[3] It is, in Moran's words, 'the bread and butter' end of show business.[4]

For these reasons, creating local content has been seen as an important counter to large volumes of imported product. Since 1967, drama quotas have been a feature of Australian content regulations.[5] Although it is thought that regulation encourages broadcasters to meet minimum quota levels, data shows that most stations regularly exceed mandated levels.[6] As we shall see, this has caused some to question the demands and effectiveness of these regulations and even their necessity.

In discussing Australian television drama, certain clarifications need to be made. The very notion of 'Australian' drama is problematical as what is considered distinctly 'Australian' is a fusion of overseas influences. In Moran's view, 'even what [is] distinctly Australian is a complex active negotiation of conventions and formulas derived from elsewhere.'[7] As a genre, drama is porous and rather difficult to define. There is also a tendency among critics to categorise drama as 'high' and 'low' culture. This is an ideologically informed way of making sense of the genre.[8] Low-grade drama generally refers to soap operas (soaps), serials and long series. High-grade refers to telemovies, one-off plays and major mini-series. High-grade dramas generally have greater export potential than longer series dramas. However some

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[3] ABCB, *Twenty-second Annual Report*, 1970, p. 104.
[4] A. Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History: Television Drama', in A. Moran & T. O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic., 1989, p. 238.
[5] A. McKee, 'Prime-time Drama: *77 Sunset Strip* to *SeaChang*e', in G. Turner & S. Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2000, p. 145.
[6] Papandrea, 'Explaining Television Stations' Preferences for Imported Drama Programs', p. 70.
[7] Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History', p. 237.
[8] John Tulloch cited in McKee, 'Prime-time drama', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2000, p. 150.

Australian soaps have been the greatest export earners and have enjoyed ongoing success overseas.[9]

This chapter traces and explores the cyclical trends in Australian drama programming and production. One of the most defining influences driving these developments is industry economics. Sydney's commercial television stations have generally been unwilling to meet cultural policy objectives in isolation, adopting instead an economic pragmatism towards drama programming. It was not until locally produced drama proved commercially viable in the mid-1960s that all three stations decided to invest in it. At this time, commercial FTA stations also recognised the economic advantages of farming out drama production to independent programme packagers rather than shouldering the full burden of the cost themselves.

The proliferation of drama series, serials, soaps and mini-series during the 1970s and 1980s was a calculated effort on behalf of stations and advertisers to maximise audiences and create regularity in programming schedules. In more recent years the threat of new technologies and pay TV, together with growing production costs, have forced commercial networks to rethink local drama. In an increasingly globalised television marketplace, commercial networks are forced to invest in higher budgets, glossier production values and universal storylines in order to remain competitive both nationally and internationally. One of the most enduring challenges for commercial television networks, however, is producing drama that resonates both at home and abroad.

[9] Docker, 'Popular Culture versus the State', p. 15.

The emergence of local television drama: The 1950s and 1960s

Commercial stations produced very little local acted or written drama during the first decade of Sydney television. Instead, local drama was welcomed on the ABC. *The Twelve Pound Look*, a short drama broadcast on the first night of ABN-2's transmission, initially set the pace for local production and stage adaptation to television.[10] In the 1950s and 1960s, the ABC generally broadcast one play a month,[11] telecast Shakespeare plays for school exams and produced an historical serial once a year.[12] ATN-7 and its Melbourne counterparts, GTV-9 (until 1960),[13] and HSV-7, were the first commercial stations to prioritise drama, just as they invested in local variety and musical programmes by equipping themselves with in-house production.[14] However they were restricted in what they could achieve, as most stations lacked the editing facilities for the strict pace and narrative structure of drama.[15]

Consequently, early television drama primarily took the form of a single play.[16] A handful of stage actors were invariably used and brought a strong theatrical quality to televised productions.[17] Live plays, however, were expensive to produce. Actors' Equity reportedly banned TCN-9's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* from television in 1958, after the union discovered TCN-9 had used amateur theatricals to avoid the 'tremendously high costs' of employing professionals.[18] As most dramas were live productions, the lack of recording facilities added to the stress levels of cast and crew. Often a drama production had to be

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[10] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!,* p. 138.
[11] Three a year of which were locally written.
[12] M. MacCallum, 'Drama', in MacCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television*, pp. 69-70; Inglis, *This is the ABC*, p. 204.
[13] As explained in Chapter 1, ATN-7 and GTV-9 were affiliated before 1960 when TCN-9 bought GTV-9 and established the Nine Network.
[14] Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History', in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, p. 240.
[15] Moran, *Images & Industry*, p. 67.
[16] Creeber (ed.), *The Television Genre Book*, p. 8.
[17] Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History', in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, p. 242.
[18] 'Actors' Equity bans TCN-9's "Hamlet"', *TV Times*, 4 September 1958, p. 3. The matter is not mentioned in *Show Biz*, the Actors and Announcers' Equity Association of Australia' s newsletter.

completed within strict time constraints, so that the studio could be set up for the main live entertainment shows that evening, highlighting its status as secondary to variety at this time.[19]

The form and conventions of the one-off play or 'oncer', as it was called, did not translate well onto television, nor did it fit neatly into programming schedules. The 'oncer', whether locally produced or imported, was also expensive and less likely to act as a rewarding audience trap for commercial stations.[20] This explains, to some extent, why commercial stations turned their hands to the more cost-efficient series and serial formats, which by the late 1960s proved to be more popular with viewers. Series generally consist of more than three episodes which have self-contained narratives. A sequence of episodes usually shares the same characters, situations or themes, but with little other interdependence, especially in relation to plot or significant character development. Serials, on the other hand, have a continuous narrative spanning three or more episodes, are generally melodramatic in style and include soaps or mini-series. Mini-series tell a story in a limited number of episodes, with an overarching continuous plot that is resolved at the series' conclusion. Soaps have an indefinite length, include multiple plotlines and unresolved cliff-hangers to draw the viewer back the following week.[21]

Series and serials made more economic sense to stations and sponsors. Unlike television plays, which posed scheduling problems as they varied in length, series and serials, being produced in blocks, offered regularity and routine. They could be shown at the same time each week and the continuous plot gave both stations and sponsors the opportunity to build a

[19] Variety programmes were able to command a higher profit. See Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!,* p. 139.
[20] MacCallum, 'Drama', in MacCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television*, p. 73.
[21] For more discussion on the genre variances of drama, see McKee, 'Prime-time Drama', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 149; K. Bowles, 'Soap opera: "No end of story, ever"', in G. Turner & S. Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2000, pp. 118-19.

loyal audience.[22] Series and serials (soaps in particular) were more likely to recoup their production costs, encouraging realistic budgets and predictable filming schedules. Moreover, props could be recycled and actors could be signed for extended contracts.[23]

But these advantages were not immediately evident when ATN-7 pioneered the first live serial dramatic production in Australia, *The House on the Corner*, in 1957. The serial was written by CTA director, Harry Howlett, and consisted of 15-minute morality plays broadcast on Sunday afternoons.[24] David Cahill reflected on his experience directing *The House on the Corner*:

> No money was spent on it. We used to scrounge cents from everywhere. But it served a purpose, funnily enough, because it gave the crew and myself and everybody else an opportunity to *feel* what television drama *might* be like [emphasis added].[25]

It would take additional efforts before dramatic productions moved beyond the embryonic stage. ATN-7's *Autumn Affair* (1958-59), inspired by radio soap serials, became the first soap opera to appear on Australian television via the ATN-7-GTV-9 link, screening at 8.45 a.m. from Mondays to Wednesdays.[26] If *House on the Corner* provided a *feeling* of what television drama might become, *Autumn Affair* offered an opportunity for ATN-7 production and technical staff to learn 'the technique of drama'. This proved vital once ATN-7 moved into its most ambitious full-scale dramatic productions in 1959 with *Shell Presents*, sponsored by Shell's London office. These productions were one-hour plays presented once a month on

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[22] Moran, *Images & Industry*, pp. 36-37.
[23] Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History', in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, pp. 240-41.
[24] 'Successful first year of religious programs on TV', *SMH*, 2 November 1957, p. 6. See also Day, 'Drama' in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 141.
[25] Cited in Day, 'Drama' in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 141.
[26] Some official histories and companions vary on the time and scheduling of *Autumn Affair*. The *TV Week* programming schedules listed throughout 1958 and 1959 show that it was presented as stated above.

Sunday nights, directed by Cahill and produced by Brett Porter.[27] At the end of 1959, *TV Week* praised ATN-7's *Shell Presents* for offering Sydney viewers 'regular locally produced and acted dramas' of 'world-class' technical and artistic standards.[28]

These developments in drama production led to more ambitious projects with ATN-7's *Whiplash* (1960), the first British-Australian co-production, produced for Britain's ITV commercial television service. Filmed in Sydney's Frenchs Forest, *Whiplash* was an Australian Western set in the gold rush era, starring American, Peter Graves. The co-production arrangement marked the beginning of the Seven Network's commitment to purchasing British programmes and maintaining regular co-production arrangements with UK companies.[29] ATN-7's historical serial, *Jonah*, followed in 1962. *Jonah* traced the voyages of merchants trading across the Tasman Sea between Sydney and New Zealand during the 1830 and 1840s.[30] The serial received mixed reviews and lacklustre ratings. Although ATN-7 had a made a sale to Associated Television in England, this only partly covered production costs. Eventually the serial came to an end in December 1962 after a dispute with Actors' Equity over replay fees. This suspension marked the beginning of a four-year hiatus for ATN-7 in drama production.[31]

If the form of television drama and its high production costs (for scripts, casts, sets and locations) hindered commercial stations' programming efforts in the early years, so did the

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[27] Cited in R. Lane & L. Murphy, *The Golden Age of Australian Radio Drama*, Vol. 2, ScreenSound Australia, the National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra, 2000, p. 85.
[28] Close Up with Dolly Shot, 'What has happened: 1959- The Year of "Live" Television', *TV Week*, 31 December 1959 – 6 January 1960, p. 69. The *Shell Presents* series produced seven plays in Sydney and six in Melbourne. However Shell decided not to renew its contract in late 1960 and the anthology series continued under the sponsorship of General Motors Holden. But falling ratings and escalating production costs in 1961 led to the series being dropped. See 'Shell Drops Curtain on Plays', *TV Times*, 6 February 1960, p. 3; Moran, *Images and Industry*, p. 76.
[29] Cox, *Out of the Box*, p. 17; Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 95
[30] Day, 'Drama' in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, pp. 141-42; Moran, *Images & Industry*, p. 77; T. Harrison, *Australian Film and Television Companion*, 2nd ed., Citrus Press, Broadway, NSW, 2005, p. 480.
[31] Moran, *Images and Industry*, pp. 78-79.

supposed lack of Australian talent. The employment of overseas actors operated to the detriment and exclusion of Australian actors and writers, who suffered widespread unemployment. With a non-existent local film industry, Australian talent had few opportunities to practise their craft.[32] Without government financial aid, the industry was destined to stagnate. As noted in Chapter 2, commercial stations were initially hesitant to invest in the star status of most performers. Stations did however promote their variety stars, as variety and musical programmes dominated live local entertainment.[33] Fan clubs were particularly significant in stimulating and maintaining publicity, promotion and funds for local variety stars, but not dramatic actors.[34] Fame of such proportions was reserved only for a handful of performers like Kennedy, Limb and Johnny O'Keefe. Consequently, many talented writers, actors and producers went abroad to seek more work and higher salaries.[35]

The struggle by Australian actors to receive recognition was further compounded by television's thirst for good looks. Some radio actors, those whom Ken Hall referred to as the 'old and wobbly-looking types', found it more difficult to break into television, as they were required to pass the additional hurdle of physical presentation.[36] The general lack of support for Australian (drama) talent may have stemmed from a lack of confidence in Australian productions of any kind. In Mungo MacCallum's opinion in 1968, Australians 'preferred a fifth-rate American programme to a third-rate Australian programme' and generally ignored local effort until it succeeded.[37] It was difficult for local product to compete with popular American shows with higher production values such as *Father Knows Best*, *77 Sunset Strip,*

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[32] 'That Australian Television Quota', *Show Biz*, Vol. 1, No. I, May 1962.
[33] Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History', in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, p. 239.
[34] Fan clubs were also formed around imported personalities. This is a general impression from looking through countless television trade magazines. See also J. Loudon, 'Fan clubs: They're not born, they just happen', *TV Times*, 6 February 1960, pp. 12-13.
[35] MacCallum, 'Drama', in MacCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television*, pp. 73-74.
[36] Shirley, 'Ken G. Hall and Australia's Fledgling TV', in Watson et al., *TV Times*, p. 42.
[37] MacCallum, 'Drama', in MacCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television*, pp. 76-77, 80.

and *Perry Mason*.[38] Station policy and at a further remove, government policy, may have simply reflected this national attitude.[39]

Even so, commercial stations did make some genuine attempts to support local talent. In its 1958 annual report, the ABCB praised ATN-7, GTV-9 and the Shell Co. of Australia for jointly sponsoring a contest for Australian playwrights. The competition, £3000 in prize money, was launched in the hope of discovering an original television play.[40] What the report does not reveal is that the competition was fraught with difficulties. In a revealing *TV Times* interview, GTV-9's station manager, Colin Bednall, confessed:

> Now more than 400 entries were received for that contest and to our horror, when these were submitted to the judges, they refused to award any of the prizes to any one of the plays submitted. We had to then go to the judges and say, "Well look, this has put us into an extremely awkward position because if the £3000 is not distributed, we'll be accused of having made the conditions so hard as to ensure that it didn't cost us any money. Would you please, therefore, recognize our predicament and allocate the prize money as best you can.[41]

Perhaps the ABCB was aware of this dilemma as its annual report went on to state that there was a 'very real need for competent television writers' and that it hoped that Australians who had the natural ability to write well 'will realise the need to acquire [the] special technique required for this medium.'[42] The competition appears to have been an attempt to find a good script writer for GTV-9's *Emergency*, a 30-minute medical drama that was screened on ATN-7 on Mondays at 7 p.m. Apart from technical and production flaws, *Emergency*'s poor scripts were still a problem in 1959 and the programme was cancelled.[43]

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[38] Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, pp. 11, 13, 15, 17.
[39] MacCallum, 'Drama', in MacCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television*, p. 80.
[40] ABCB, *Tenth Annual Report*, 1958, p. 38.
[41] J. Query, 'The truth about live TV shows', *TV Times*, 23 January 1960, p. 13.
[42] ABCB, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 1959, p. 41.
[43] 'Australian Series Killed: "Emergency" to end next month', *TV Week*, 30 May – 5 June 1959, p. 12.

In Bednall's view, the Sydney press was to blame for *Emergency*'s low ratings: its 'merciless knocking' was a 'calculated campaign to kill drama production in Australia', for such productions were expensive, and beyond the capacity of some commercial stations. But even Bednall conceded that the criticism was not solely responsible for *Emergency's* demise.[44] Some hard-bitten radio writers – still working under the illusion that television was 'radio with pictures' – failed to translate their scripts to television. The deficiencies of television writers during this time were a worldwide phenomenon. Yet the scarcity of effective scriptwriters was more keenly felt in Australia. According to figures released from the international Congress of Writers, the amount of local drama produced in the US, Britain, Canada, Sweden and Finland greatly exceeded that of Australia's.[45]

Moreover, Australian writers struggled to reflect contemporary Australia in their plays.[46] In 1962, *TV Times* critic, F.C. Kennedy, underlined the inability of local playwrights to write convincingly of ordinary Australians, and the even greater inability of Australian actors to portray them. On the whole, he wrote, 'plays dealing with contemporary Australians were crashing failures'. Australian actors were paradoxically at their best when they were playing anything other than Australians.[47] Ian Crawford, from Melbourne's Crawfords production company, recalled numerous viewer complaints over the Australian accents heard in HSV-7's courtroom drama series, *Consider Your Verdict.* British culture had left a residual impact on Australian film and theatre with actors encouraged to speak in an English accent or, following

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[44] In the end, the production cost of *Emergency* became too high for the sponsor and GTV-9 was underwriting the balance. See 'Australian Series Killed: "Emergency" to end next month', *TV Week*, 30 May – 5 June 1959, p. 12.
[45] MacCallum, 'Drama', in MacCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television*, pp. 68, 74-75.
[46] This struggle to reflect contemporary Australia was indicative of Australian drama generally. The breakthrough came with Ray Lawler's 1954 play, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, which provided Australian actors and actresses opportunities to present Australian images and characters on the stage. However the process of reflecting Australian life in plays was generally a very gradual one. For more discussion on this see L. Rees, *The Making of Australian Drama: From the 1830s to the Late 1960s*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1978, pp. 141, 250, 256, 288-300, 304-29.
[47] F.C. Kennedy, '1962 – Start of TV's do it yourself era', *TV Times*, 29 December 1962, pp. 14-15.

Hollywood, an American one.[48] From the mid-1960s to the 1980s, the voice coach became an important feature on the sets of Crawfords' television series and serials.[49]

However the devaluation of Australian cultural product was not all pervasive. One of the most significant changes in the pattern of television in the 1960s was the abrupt end to the flood of overseas artists in 1962, which appears to have coincided with the introduction of Australian content quotas.[50] But there was also a shift in audience tastes. During this time, audience measurement surveys suggested a general decline in viewing hours. The novelty of television had worn off and Australian viewers were becoming more discriminating.[51] American programmes no longer held viewers' interest as they had years earlier.[52]

An upsurge in national feeling was slowly gaining traction within the local industry and amongst Australian politicians and citizens, partly as a result of the Vincent Committee's report in 1963, which acknowledged the impact on local drama production of overseas competition. Subsequently, there were changes to the quota system in 1967, requiring stations to televise thirty minutes of locally produced drama a week and televise at least two hours of Australian drama a month in peak viewing time, between 7.30 and 9.30 p.m.[53] As discussed in Chapter 1, audience demand and persistent public pressure, however, appear to have been the dominant factor in stimulating Australian-produced content, rather than incremental changes in content quotas.

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[48] B. Collis, 'The Hats Are Back', *The Age*, 13 October 1994, p. 1.
[49] T. O'Regan, *Australian National Cinema*, Routledge, London, 1996, p. 198.
[50] F.C. Kennedy, '1962 – Start of TV's do it yourself era', *TV Times*, 29 December 1962, p. 14.
[51] F.C. Kennedy, 'The honeymoon is over', *TV Times*, 2 January 1960, p. 12.
[52] Moran, *Images & Industry*, p. 29.
[53] Ibid., p. 32.

Rise of the Australian-made series

It was a Melbourne, rather than a Sydney production, that changed the face of Australian-produced television drama. HSV-7's *Homicide*, a Crawford-produced police series, began in late 1964 and within weeks found itself amongst the top five most popular programmes on television. Sydney also profited from syndication, with ATN-7 screening the series in early 1965.[54] By 1967, *Homicide* was the highest rating drama in both Melbourne and Sydney.[55] This is particularly significant considering commercial television stations expected *Homicide* to fail. Indeed *Homicide*'s success, by implication, overturned arguments, conveniently advanced by government policy and television station owners, that Australians did not care for Australian-produced drama, nor was there enough Australian talent to produce programming capable of competing with imported product.[56] *Homicide* therefore paved the way for the development of Australian television drama.

The context in which *Homicide* emerged provides some clue as to why it was embraced so enthusiastically by audiences, but less so by commercial stations. The introduction of a third network in the Sydney and Melbourne markets had created a scarcity of available programming material. This was compounded further when the relationship between Australian commercial television stations and American programme distributors soured to such an extent during 1966-67 that no American programmes were purchased for almost a year.[57]

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[54] Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History', in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, p. 242.
[55] Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 31.
[56] R. Bazzani, 'TV Cops Take the Running', *Australian Cultural History*, No. 26, 2007, p. 119.
[57] Up until 1963 the two commercial networks and the ABC had the choice of American programmes from the combined output of three American networks. Once the third Australian commercial network arrived in 1964-5, it intensified the demand for programmes. As a result, the market now favoured the seller and prices could be set accordingly, first creating friction amongst the buyers. The Australian buyers then agreed not to purchase any more American programmes until prices were reduced. See Moran, *Images & Industry*, p. 30; Herd, '"The Weaker Sisters'", p. 123.

Homicide became a major stimulus for regular independent drama production in Australia, developing professionalism within the industry and providing an important training ground for television writers, actors and technicians.[58] Until 1964, television stations produced most drama productions in-house.[59] From 1965 onwards, stations primarily farmed out drama productions to independent packagers, such as Crawfords. At the helm of Crawfords was Hector Crawford, an Australian radio and television producer.[60] This packaging arrangement released stations from the burdens of production and enabled them to focus on news sessions, sport, outdoor broadcasts and documentaries, which were becoming increasingly popular.[61] After 1965 packagers became a permanent part of the industry and it was rare for television stations to produce drama themselves.[62]

*Homicide'*s success stimulated a glut of Crawford-produced police dramas. The pilot of *Homicide* was initially met with indifference when Crawfords approached TCN-9. The station believed cowboy and American programmes would out-rate it. When *Homicide* succeeded on Seven, TCN-9 commissioned Crawfords to produce a police programme of similar ilk.[63] TCN-9's lack of commitment to in-house drama production meant it was more inclined to follow, rather than pioneer, trends in drama.[64] The other commercial stations also coveted *Homicide*'s success and commissioned Crawfords to produce a variant of the police series to stay in the 'ratings race'.[65] For the first time, Australian actors became stars in their own right and Crawford used every opportunity to promote his stars.[66] This was key in attracting

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[58] T. Flew, 'Images of Nation: Economic and Cultural Aspects of Australian Content Regulations for Commercial Television', in Craik et al. (eds), *Public Voices, Private Interests*, p. 78; Day, 'Drama' in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 143.
[59] Moran, *Images & Industry*, pp. 67-68.
[60] Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History', in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, p. 239.
[61] ABCB, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 1965, p. 70.
[62] Moran, *Images & Industry*, pp. 67-68.
[63] B. Collis, 'The Hats Are Back', *The Age*, 13 October 1994, p. 1.
[64] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 94.
[65] Bazzani, 'TV Cops Take the Running', p. 120.
[66] Ibid.

sponsors; without personalities, drama was unable to attract the funding necessary for production.[67]

Crawfords became the largest drama packager, producing *Hunter* and *Division 4* for the Nine Network in 1967 and 1968 respectively, and *Matlock Police* for the Ten Network in 1970. Crawfords also produced a private detective series, *Ryan*, for Seven and a musical series, *Showcase*, for the Ten Network.[68] Other Australian police series, screening throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, included *Contrabandits*, *The Long Arm*, *The Link Men* and *Boney*. Series on the fringes of the police genre included *Hunter*, *Barrier Reef*, *The Rovers* and *Spyforce*.[69] All of these series differed in dramatic style and convention from the one-off play. They were less melodramatic and theatrical, embracing instead a 'gritty realism' and naturalism. The camera style was smoother and the availability of lightweight recording sound equipment, mobile cameras and superior editing functions allowed for more outdoor location shooting.[70]

Homicide marked a watershed in local programming, introducing integrated studio and location shooting, and set the climate for a later rebirth of the Australian feature film.[71] It also pioneered the stripping of programmes, with episodes screened across five-nights-a-week, thus confirming the viability of the packaged series programme.[72] *Homicide* was particularly instrumental in familiarising Australian audiences with local accents, idioms, and locations.[73] Local audiences responded positively to authentic urban landscapes with which they were personally familiar. Given *Homicide* and *Division 4* were set in Melbourne, it is surprising

[67] Shirley, 'Ken G. Hall and Australia's Fledgling TV', in Watson et al., *TV Times*, p. 40.
[68] Day, 'Drama' in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 142.
[69] Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History, in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, p. 142; Harrison, *Australian Film and Television Companion*, p. 249.
[70] Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History, in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, pp. 242-43.
[71] Collie, *The Business of TV Production*, p. 50.
[72] Moran, *Images & Industry*, pp. 36-37.
[73] Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History, in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, pp. 242-43.

that Sydney audiences embraced the programmes as quickly and enthusiastically as they did. It was not until the Seven Network's *Cop Shop* (1977-1984) that police dramas shed their Melbourne connection.[74]

The positive audience response towards urban authenticity was indicative of a wider ideological shift in Australian images. Whereas the bush and outback had been celebrated in Russell Ward's 1958 book *The Australian Legend*, writers increasingly searched for alternative national images apart from pioneers and diggers. John Douglas Pringle, Donald Horne and Craig McGregor all argued that Australia was an urban society and its characteristic images should be of the city. Television police and crime series, many of which focused on city suburbs, reflected these perceptions.[75] As Australian society evolved, so too did the appeal of certain programmes. The police series, however, was arguably just an updated version of the Western, expressing the same themes of law and order and good versus evil. It took its cue from the development of police shows in the US. [76]

By 1968, the volume of local drama had increased dramatically. The series effectively displaced the one-off plays, although the ABC continued with this form of drama until the early 1970s.[77] Variety also became a casualty of the series as stations and viewers gradually switched their loyalty to local drama. Both audience tastes and cultural trends tend to be

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[74] B. Salt, 'City of hills and tribes flying into urban chaos', *The Australian*, 31 March 2012, p. 15.
[75] J. D. Pringle, *Australian Accent*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1978; C. McGregor, *Profile of Australia*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Vic., 1968; D. Horne, *The Lucky Country: Australia in the Sixties*, 2nd (revised) ed., Angus & Robertson in association with Penguin, London, 1966, cited in Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History', in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, p. 244.
[76] J. Ronan, *From Daytime to Primetime: The History of American Television Programs*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 2005, p. xix.
[77] Cunningham & Jacka, *Australian Television and International Mediascapes*, p. 76.

cyclical, a pattern that inevitably means certain forms of programming displace other forms.[78] By this stage, radio dramas, a casualty of television, had all but gone.[79]

Soaps and mini-series: The 1970s and 1980s

'Tonight at 8.30 Television loses its virginity!' declared Sydney newspaper ads. The salacious byline referred to the premiere of TEN-10's new serial, *Number 96*. The racy soap revolved around the shenanigans of the tenants living at Number 96, a high-rise Sydney suburban apartment block. On 13 March 1972, Sydney viewers were served a movie-length episode full of controversial content. According to Andrew Mercado, viewers got to see:

> …horny husband Mark Eastwood (Martin Harris) groping under the skirt of his eight-months pregnant wife Helen (Briony Behets). Everywhere else, the bottom half of the TV screen was blacked out, leading viewers to imagine much worse was going on. After being rejected, Mark popped downstairs to the deli where he saved nice Jewish girl Rose Godolfus (Vivienne Garrett) from being raped by a bikie. Rose repaid Mark's gallantry by sleeping with him. When Helen discovered them in her bed, she ran out in shock, fell down the stairs and lost her baby.[80]

Number 96 shocked the nation and disgusted some viewers.[81] After the first screening, the ABCB directed TEN-10 to remove 'objectionable matter' from recorded material that was to go to other stations for broadcast.[82] Despite initially being derided by Sydney newspapers and advertisers, the programme quickly dominated the ratings, ranking number one on the Top Ten Australian Programmes in 1972, 1973 and 1974, and winning numerous industry awards.[83]

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[78] McKee, 'Prime-time Drama', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 144.
[79] Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, pp. 236-37.
[80] Mercado, *Super Aussie Soaps*, p. 44.
[81] *Number 96* was not the first drama to raise the nation's collective eyebrow. The first sex scene on Australian television was shown in 1969 on ATN-7's *You Can't See 'Round Corners*, which made headlines throughout Australia and incited the ABCB's wrath for breaching the Programme Standards. See Day, 'Drama' in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 147.
[82] ABCB, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, 1972, pp. 116-17.
[83] Day, 'Drama' in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 146; Moran, *Moran's Guide to Australian TV Series,* p. 329.

Number 96 dramatically changed the landscape of Australian drama, demonstrating the viability of the serial as a programming format. Prior to and following the programme's launch, there had been several failed attempts at the genre. The success of *Number 96* therefore surprised the television industry. In fact it was so successful that Crawfords produced *The Box* (1974-77) for the Ten Network. This was another raunchy soap opera that was set in a fictional television station and modelled on *Number 96*. The pace, multiplicity of storylines and the regular group of characters made *Number 96* more engaging than *Autumn Affair's* linear storyline, which revolved around three characters. This flexibility gave *Number 96* the opportunity to explore different moods and themes, and introduce multicultural characters, during a time when Australian society was widely perceived to be changing.[84]

The boundary-pushing content reflected changes in Australian sexual mores: the introduction of the contraceptive pill in 1961 and its widespread availability to unmarried women by the late 1960s; the proliferation of pornography and R-rated films from 1971; the spread of women's magazines such as *Cleo* and *Cosmo*, which embraced the sexual revolution; and changes in fashion which accentuated the body.[85] More significantly, the success of *Number 96* changed the balance of the commercial television industry. Holmes noted that, while *Homicide* did very well for Seven, it did not dramatically bridge the ratings' gap between Nine and Seven.[86] *Number 96*, however, brought a fledgling and financially ailing station back into close competition with its commercial rivals and signalled the beginning of Australian television's love affair with soap opera.[87]

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[84] Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History', in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, p. 247.
[85] See F. Bongiorno, 'January 1961 The Release of the Pill: Contraceptive Technology and the Sexual Revolution', in M. Crotty & D.A. Roberts (eds), *Turning Points in Australian History*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009, pp. 157-70; Arrow, *Friday On Our Minds*, p. 116.
[86] Holmes cited in Day, 'Drama' in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 148.
[87] See United Telecasters Sydney Limited, *Annual Report and Notice of Annual General Meeting*, United Telecasters Sydney Limited, 1972, p. 2. The introduction of colour television also sustained *Number 96*'s success. See Herd, '"The Weaker Sisters"', pp. 130-32.

Programme-stripping was carried on and strengthened with *Number 96*. TEN-10 stripped the programme five-nights-a-week, instead of the usual bi-weekly telecast.[88] Stations took advantage of stripping and repeating programmes throughout different times of the day to build both programme familiarity and larger audiences.[89] However, commercial television soon discovered the value of repeats.[90] Seven became over-zealous in screening eight hours a week of *Homicide,* including replays of early, final and 'best-of' episodes. This 'doubling' strategy enabled networks to schedule popular shows in blocks, particularly if they had fewer hit shows to fill timeslots.[91] Eventually viewers tired of *Homicide* and police series in general.[92] Whether this was a scheduling miscalculation on the part of commercial networks or a calculated effort to kill off Australian-produced drama is a matter of conjecture.[93]

As mentioned in Chapter 1, incremental changes in the drama quota in 1970 and 1976 and the introduction of the points system in 1973 were designed to encourage expensive and labour-intensive drama productions.[94] In early 1973, Grundys began to develop the company's first drama programme for the Seven Network, which premiered a year later as *Class of '74*. During this time, Grundys began to hire experienced drama people. Reg Watson, an experienced director, became the head of Grundys' drama production, while John Edwards, a former Crawfords' executive, came on board in 1973 as script editor and producer.[95]

Class of '74 was set in fictional, co-educational Waratah High School. The ABCB went on full alert, however, after *TV Week* and advertising teasers heavily promoted the show's sexy

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[88] Moran, *Images & Industry*, p. 37.
[89] Ibid., pp. 36-37.
[90] B. Collis, 'The Hats Are Back', *The Age*, 13 October 1994, p. 1.
[91] Eastman & Ferguson, *Media Programming*, p. 59.
[92] B. Collis, 'The Hats Are Back', *The Age*, 13 October 1994, p. 1.
[93] Lane & Murphy, *The Golden Age of Australian Radio Drama*, p. 110.
[94] ABCB, *Twenty-second Annual Report*, 1970, p. 104; ABCB, *Twenty-fifth Annual Report*, 1973, pp. 110-18; ABCB, *Twenty-eighth Annual Report*, 1976, p. 43. See also Grundy, *Reg Grundy*, p. 141.
[95] Moran, *Images & Industry*, p. 152.

content.[96] *Number 96* had already earned the ABCB's censure but was able to get away with its taboo-breaking content as it was conceived during a period of 'censorship liberalisation' in Australia during the early 1970s and was screened in the 8.30 p.m. timeslot. Its comedic plotlines may also have dulled the edginess of its dramatic content, making it seem more far-fetched.[97]

Despite *Class of '74* earning a sensational ratings figure of 37 on its first night at 7 p.m., the ABCB ordered the show to be moved to a later timeslot. This of course caused problems for Seven, which had no room in its programming schedule for an adult-rated serial. Seven was forced to shift the serial to 8 p.m., despite having stipulated to Grundys that it was to be G-rated. The ABCB made its distaste for the serial's 'immoral tone' known, and from that moment on it was heavily monitored. Scripts had to be submitted in advance to the ABCB and writers were even forbidden to use the expression 'Oh my God'. Within a few weeks, most of the sexual content was phased out.[98] This incident suggests the ABCB was not completely toothless, but was able to exercise some form of censorship over programming standards, even in a period of increasing censorship liberalisation.

Although *Number 96* popularised the serial format from 1972, it was not until 1976, argues Moran, that serials became 'the backbone' of the programming schedule.[99] The familiar characters and cliff-hanger plotlines in serials were important features designed to build audience loyalty, not only for the shows themselves, but also for programmes in adjoining timeslots, as they operated as 'lead-in' programmes.[100] This is where a strongly performing

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[96] Mercado, *Super Aussie Soaps*, p. 75.
[97] Moran, *Moran's Guide to Australian TV Series,* p. 320. See also Johnson & Smiedt, *Boom-Boom*, pp. 202-3.
[98] Mercado, *Super Aussie Soaps*, p. 75; See also Grundy, *Reg Grundy*, p. 182.
[99] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 81.
[100] Windschuttle, *The Media*, p. 67; Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 81. The popularity and success of soap operas in primetime influenced other programming genres. The soap opera's writing style – ongoing storylines,

programme gives a weaker programme a better chance of survival, by carrying over part of its audience. Serials also influenced the way audiences arranged their domestic routines around programme schedules, creating 'appointment viewing'.[101] During the mid-1980s, the Seven Network's policy of running two soaps together in primetime – *Sons & Daughters* and *A Country Practice* – proved to be both a lucrative and successful ratings' strategy. ATN-7 soared to the top of the ratings and its total revenue rose from $54.5 million in 1981-82 to $70.6 million in 1982-83.[102]

Some serials had immediate success while others took longer to build audience loyalty. Nine's wartime drama, *The Sullivans* (1976-82), initially only rated well in Melbourne, perhaps because it centred on a family living in Melbourne during the Second World War.[103] However by 1979 it was the top rating show in both Sydney and Melbourne.[104] During the same period, Grundys produced *The Young Doctors* (1976-83) for Nine, a relatively successful serial that later aired on British daytime television.[105] But Nine's impatience with drama programming during the 1980s rarely gave serials a chance to establish an audience. Unless a show was an immediate hit, there was little room given for it to grow.[106]

Kerry Packer was willing to persevere with *WSC* and *60 Minutes* during their initial bleak ratings because he trusted his instincts in the areas of sport and newscaf. But as Stone points out, Packer showed little aptitude for picking serials. In 1975, rejecting the counsel of his own

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character development and cliff-hanger finales – were adopted by other genres. For example, reality TV programmes use soap opera plotlines to create drama and 'the journey'. See D. Snauffer, K. Reynolds & C. Reynolds, *Prime Time Soap Operas*, Praeger, Santa Barbara, California, 2009, pp. 73, 133, 188.

[101] Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History', in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, p. 249.

[102] Windschuttle, *The Media*, p. 68.

[103] Mercado, *Super Aussie Soaps*, pp. 102-3; Harrison, *Australian Film and Television Companion*, p. 446. For Sydney-Melbourne rivalry in drama, see D. Aiton, 'Ron Casey's Wide World', *Sunday Age*, 13 February 1994, p. 4; Grundy, *Reg Grundy*, p. 178.

[104] Windschuttle, *The Media*, p. 67.

[105] Harrison, *Australian Film and Television Companion*, p. 490.

[106] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing,* p. 445.

programme executives, Packer commissioned Cash-Harmon to devise an early-evening serial for teenagers. What eventuated was *The Unisexers,* which failed to find an audience and was cancelled three weeks later. Packer was neither patient nor willing to own his mistakes. As one executive, Lynton Taylor, recounted, 'He was just good at saying, "Get the fucker off!"'. This pattern was repeated throughout the following decade as the network sought a swift solution to its drama quota. Stone questions whether the macho culture of Nine dulled its sensitivity to the 'delicate creative processes' required for drama production.[107]

From 1982 to 1983, Grundys produced three unsuccessful serials for the Nine Network: *Taurus Rising*, *Waterloo Station* and *Starting Out*. As they followed so rapidly after one another, the television industry was left wondering if Grundys had lost its stronghold on the serial business.[108] Conscious of *The Sullivans'* demise, Nine knew it needed a new drama for the 1982 ratings year. The American night-time soaps*, Dallas* and *Dynasty*, were proving popular in the US and Nine wanted something similar. Reg Watson conceived of *Taurus Rising* (1982), a glossy drama serial which revolved around two warring, wealthy families in the Sydney building industry. *Taurus Rising* was Grundys' most expensive production at the time. Cast members were encouraged to refer to the programme as 'quality drama' rather than 'soap', primarily because it was shot on film and almost every other show at the time was shot on videotape.[109]

Nevertheless, *Taurus Rising* never built a loyal audience, as it was scheduled against Ten's popular and well-established soap, *Prisoner* (1979-1986).[110] Only 21 episodes made it to air

[107] Ibid.
[108] Moran, *Images & Industry*, p. 155.
[109] Mercado, *Super Aussie Soaps,* p. 184; Harrison, *Australian Film and Television Companion*, p. 452.
[110] Harrison, *Australian Film and Television Companion*, p. 395.

before *Taurus* was shelved.[111] Similarly, the ill-fated soaps, *Waterloo Station* (1983) and *Starting Out* (1983), were dumped in quick succession, unable to gain a foothold on the audience share of more well-established soaps running in the same timeslot.[112] By the time *Kings* (1983) was commissioned and swiftly axed, Nine was gaining a reputation in the television industry for being a 'serial killer'.[113] *Primetime* (1986), *Possession* (1985) and *All the Way* (1988-89) likewise fell to Nine's 'soapie curse'.[114]

Exporting soaps

Australian soaps have arguably had more success in the international marketplace than locally. Since the 1980s, export sales have increased, most notably to the UK.[115] The parochial American market has been more difficult to penetrate. However *Prisoner* was sold to the US with spectacular success, despite being pitched at the Australian market and shot on videotape.[116] Regardless of the strong Australian accents, the soap gained acceptance in Los Angeles and achieved cult status in Britain.[117]

Neighbours is the programme most associated with the infiltration of Australian soaps into the European market. In 1985, the programme made an ill-fated debut on Seven where it was quickly axed. According to Ron Casey[118] (general manager of HSV-7) Sydney's reception to *Neighbours* was lukewarm because it had originated in Melbourne. ATN-7 gave the soap little hope of survival, choosing to schedule it in a weak afternoon timeslot, over which Casey

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[111] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing,* p. 443.
[112] Mercado, *Super Aussie Soaps*, pp. 189, 191; Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 443; Harrison, *Australian Film and Television Companion*, p. 441.
[113] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 443.
[114] Mercado, *Super Aussie Soaps*, pp. 280-81.
[115] Collie, *The Business of TV Production*, p. 50.
[116] FACTS, *Annual Report*, The Federation, Sydney, 1978-79, pp. 6-7; Moran, *Images & Industry*, pp. 154-55.
[117] K. Dunstan, 'The Sullivan's accents: no problem', *Equity*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1979, p. 29; Harrison, *Australian Film and Television Companion*, p. 395.
[118] As mentioned in Chapter 5, Ron Casey was a former AFL footballer and host of Melbourne's *World of Sport* programme.

had no control. Despite rating comfortably in Melbourne, *Neighbours* was cancelled in both television markets, because inevitably it did not work in Sydney.[119] As Tony Barber once said, '...Sydney will always be the market that sinks or saves you'.[120]

The Grundy Organization resold *Neighbours* to Ten for a successful re-launch in 1986. With an initial sale to 33 countries, *Neighbours* effectively transformed Australia's reputation in Europe both as a television exporter and as a tourist destination.[121] But without the slow infiltration of earlier Australian soaps into the international market such as *The Sullivans, A Country Practice, Young Doctors, The Flying Doctors, Richmond Hill, Prisoner: Cell Block H* and *Sons and Daughters*, which accustomed British viewers to Australian drama, *Neighbours* may not have found acceptance overseas so swiftly.[122]

Neighbours became the flagship for Grundys in the international market, particularly after the crises in Australian commercial television during the late 1980s and early 1990s. *Neighbours* represented an 'industrial' type of television for Europe which was a low-cost, long-running, stripped five-nights-a-week soap, with a capacity to build familiarity and a loyal audience.[123] In response to *Neighbours*' commercial success, the Seven Network's *Home and Away* (1988) began as a low-cost soap initially designed for an Australian (especially teen) audience, but later tapped into the international market, finding greatest interest from and success within the UK market.[124]

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[119] This was further complicated by the fact that the Seven Network was owned by the Herald & Weekly Times in Melbourne and by Fairfax in Sydney. See D. Aiton, 'Ron Casey's Wide World', *Sunday Age*, 13 February 1994, p. 4.
[120] Barber, *Who Am I?*, p. 188.
[121] S. Crofts, 'Global *Neighbours?',* in K. Bowles & S. Turnbull (eds),*Tomorrow Never Knows: Soap on Australian Television*, Australian Film Institute, Melbourne, 1994, p. 53.
[122] Ibid., pp. 58-61.
[123] Ward et al., 'From *Neighbours* to *Packed to the Rafters'*, p. 166.
[124] Ibid., p. 165.

Mini-series

The period between 1968 and 1975 is generally referred to as ABC television's golden era in drama, with the emergence of popular series and mini-series: *Bellbird, Contrabandits*, *Certain Women*, and *Rush*.[125] But the mini-series did not become a staple in commercial television schedules until Ten screened the internationally successful US mini-series, *Roots,* in 1977. Seven produced Australia's first major historical mini-series, *Against The Wind*, in 1978.[126] *Against The Wind* was a critical and commercial success both domestically and internationally. In the US it drew an audience of 50 million people per episode, marking the first time an Australian mini-series had been shown in the US in primetime.[127] *Against the Wind* proved that given the opportunity, Australian actors, writers and technicians could readily achieve international standards with their own drama.[128]

Although expensive, mini-series were attractive to programmers for their flexibility and potential. Telemovies were also useful as they could fill large gaps in the programming schedule.[129] These 'made-for-TV' movies revived the television play on Sydney commercial television, as they did in the US. [130] Both telemovie and mini-series formats, combined with block scheduling, drew large audiences and offered a strong counter to the VCR's popularity. [131]

During the 1970s and early 1980s, film and television drama was predominantly assisted by Australian investment and made for the local market. Most Australian features were funded

[125] Cunningham & Jacka, *Australian Television and International Mediascapes*, p. 76.
[126] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 81; Moran, 'Crime, Romance, History', in Moran & O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, p. 242.
[127] FACTS, *Annual Report*, The Federation, Sydney, 1978-79, pp. 6-7.
[128] Cited in I. Jones, & B. Binns, 'The real success of AGAINST THE WIND', *Equity*, Vol. 2, No. 11, p. 7.
[129] They were presented as 'event' television for their limited number of episodes, which were screened over three or four nights, their 'high production values and historical subject matter'. See Arrow, *Friday On Our Minds*, p. 158.
[130] Eastman & Ferguson, *Media Programming*, p. 86; Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 80.
[131] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 80.

through government agencies – the Australian Film Commission (AFC), NSW Film Corporation, South Australian Film Corporation and Victorian Film Corporation – while a small number were fully financed by distributors. [132] Crawford Productions and the Grundy Organisation became the two largest independent producers of Australian television drama. Smaller companies could not compete with the financing and facilities required for production. TEN-10 was the last of the commercial stations to do away with in-house drama production, finding itself ill-equipped to produce a high-output serial, *Arcade*, in 1980.[133]

The convergence of film and television in the 1980s, through the interchange of personnel, funding mechanisms and outlets, ushered in a new wave of creative input resulting in the production of mini-series, telemovies, feature films, series and serials of a volume, quality and popularity unparalleled before or since. The wave of popular national culture in the early 1970s was further assisted by the climate associated with the 1988 Bicentennial celebrations.[134] Noteworthy popular mini-series that brought national folklore to television, and cemented the link between history and nationalism in the Australian psyche,[135] included: *A Town Like Alice* (1981), *1915* (1982), *All the Rivers Run* (1983 and 1990), *The Dismissal* (1983), *Bodyline* (1984), *The Cowra Breakout* (1984), *Anzacs* (1985), *Vietnam* (1987) and *Brides of Christ* (1991).[136] Although Nine had trouble with serials, it did enjoy some success with its run of mini-series: *A Fortunate Life* (1985), *The Great Bookie Robbery* (1986), and *The Petrov Affair* (1987).[137]

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[132] 'Contributions of various types of investor to Australian feature films, 1995/96 – 2009/10' http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research/statistics/mpfeaturesfinance.asp, accessed 3 May 2012.
[133] Day, 'Drama' in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 158.
[134] Cunningham, *Framing Culture*, p. 29.
[135] Arrow, *Friday On Our Minds*, p. 159.
[136] McKee, 'Prime-time Drama', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 144.
[137] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 443.

In the 1980s, almost all features were funded using private and mostly non-industry finance raised under the 1981 10BA tax incentive system.[138] 10BA was introduced with the purpose of encouraging investors with a genuine interest in helping the Australian film and television industry develop. It offered generous tax concessions (150% tax deduction on investment and 50% deduction on earnings) and provided the incentive for corporate investment in the Australian film industry.[139] Additionally, by the mid-1980s, it was common practice for any Australian-produced projects to have overseas finance, usually either in a foreign pre-sale or co-production arrangement.[140]

In 1988 the 10BA tax deduction was reduced to 100% and the wholly government-owned Film Finance Corporation (FFC) moved in as the primary agency for providing investment to the Australian film and television production industry.[141] Prompted by the commercial television ownership crises of the late 1980s, eventually the mini-series was displaced by the series. Commercial networks began to seek contemporary storylines as the interest in Australian history waned following the Bicentennial. Local drama production subsequently began to struggle as the 1990s unfolded.[142]

High-end drama: The 1990s and 2000s

The Nine Network's drama output was especially poor at this time, as the 1991 and 1992 ratings' season proved. The only success story was Nine's sitcom, *All Together Now* (1991-1993), handled by executive producer, Kris Noble, who had become well known for sketch comedy, developing the ABC's *D-Generation*. He had then been head-hunted by the Seven

[138] 'Contributions of various types of investor to Australian feature films, 1995/96 – 2009/10', http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research/statistics/mpfeaturesfinance.asp, accessed 3 May 2012.
[139] Collie, *The Business of TV Production*, pp. 148-49; L. E. Lesley, 'Australian Films: Is it worth risking a long term future for short term jobs?', *Equity*, March 1982, p. 18.
[140] FACTS, *Annual Report*, The Federation, Sydney, 1978-79, p. 7.
[141] McKee, 'Prime-time Drama', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 147.
[142] Cox, *Out of the Box*, pp. 70-1.

Network as a light entertainment producer. By July 1992, Packer had lured Noble to the post of Nine's head of drama. Noble realised that Nine pursued a far more impatient and aggressive programming strategy than Seven, which generally adopted a caretaker approach to its drama production.[143] Both Seven's *Hey Dad!* (1987-1994) and *Home Away* rated poorly when they first premiered, but with patient handling they built an audience and rated well.[144]

Noble was determined to restructure Nine's approach to drama. His first priority was to eliminate the gender bias in Nine's programming, moving away from the aggressive, action-packed male-oriented dramas. Noble was responsible for convincing the network to back *Halifax f.p.* (1994-2001) with a strong female lead in Rebecca Gibney. A change in Nine's promotional style was also needed to rejuvenate its drama reputation. Noble described Nine's traditional approach to programme promotion as 'Wham! Bam! Thank you, ma'am!'. This action-packed promo-style worked for sport and *60 Minutes*, but not so well for drama. In Noble's opinion, dramas needed promos with 'heart' to draw viewers back each week.[145]

Nine's reputation for knee-jerk cancellations of drama, which had undermined its relationships with production houses and producers, led Noble, with the support of chief networking programmer, John Stephens, to slowly build new creative affiliations. Nine successfully wooed leading production house, Southern Star, and seized the rights to police drama, *Water Rats* (1996-2001), just before Seven was about to sign off on the show. By the late 1990s, Nine's weekly offerings of drama – *Water Rats*, *Murder Call* (1997-2000), *Good Guys Bad Guys* (1997-98) and *Stingers* (1998-2004) – enabled the network to shake off its

[143] Seven did not show the same fortitude with *Neighbours* as it did with other programmes.
[144] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 449.
[145] Ibid., pp. 450-51.

'soapie curse' reputation and enter the new century as a 'serious sponsor of Australian-made drama.'[146]

During the 1990s commercial FTA television was saturated with imported drama, rather than local drama. Indeed, throughout the 1990s, Australian commercial networks broadcast three and a half times more imported drama than local drama in prime time (5 -11p.m.). Despite this, by the late 1990s, there were eight locally produced adult drama series on commercial television, most of which were police dramas. These included *Blue Heelers*, *Water Rats*, *Murder Call*, *Stingers* and *All Saints* (1998-2009). And it was these Australian series that rated best. Although previously police dramas had struggled, the success of *Blue Heelers* and *Water Rats* had stemmed the tide.[147] Moreover, police dramas had, by the end of the decade, displaced the historical mini-series as the most popular drama productions on commercial television.[148]

The television drama slate – Australian and foreign telemovies, mini-series, series and serials – grew significantly during the 1990s with total production budgets peaking at $495 million in 2000/1. However, there was a reduction in the number of independent production companies working in Australia; between 1988 and 1993 the number fell by 43%. This was the most discernible effect of the 1990s commercial television crisis, and led to the production of Australian drama becoming highly concentrated, being undertaken by very few firms. During the mid-1990s, Southern Star, Artists Services, Village Roadshow and Beyond International consolidated their positions as the four main players. The only major Australian-owned independent international distributors were Beyond International and Southern Star.

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[146] Ibid., pp. 451-53.
[147] M. Bodey, *Broadcast Wars: The Money, The Ego, The Power Behind Your Remote Control*, Hachette Australia, Sydney, 2011, pp. 196-97.
[148] McKee, 'Prime-time Drama', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 144.

By the end of 1998, Southern Star was producing television's highest-rating drama series, *Blue Heelers* (1994-2006), *Murder Call* and *Water Rats* and had become the leading producer of programmes in Australia. Part of its success can be attributed to its international marketing presence, prompted by the lack of investment capital in the local and the growing global television markets. This environment encouraged local producers to seek co-production arrangements and international pre-sales.[149]

The introduction of the Official Co-Production Program in 1986 encouraged foreign investment as a major source of production finance throughout the 1990s and 2000s.[150] Between 1995 and 1998 the AFC governed the Australian Commercial Television Production Fund, which was introduced to advance quality commercial television drama production in Australia. The fund received $20 million per year from the federal government with the hope of promoting television drama production in excess of the quota requirement. Non-series forms of drama were the focus, as the government considered long-running dramas more financially viable than one-off drama specials and thus less likely to need financial assistance.[151]

The fund cushioned the impact of the financial crises experienced by commercial networks in the early 1990s. However, these crises did lead to a fall in production expenditure on drama and children's television from $127 million in 1990 to $85 million in 1995. Since then, the commercial networks have been more cautious about expending funds on high-quality drama;

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[149] Ibid., pp. 148-49.
[150] 'Contributions of various types of investor to Australian feature films, 1995/96 – 2009/10', http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research/statistics/mpfeaturesfinance.asp, accessed 3 May 2012.
[151] AFC report cited in McKee, 'Prime-time Drama', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, pp. 147-48; AFC Annual Report 1998-99, p. 73. http://www.afarchive.screenaustralia.gov.au/archive/annrep/ar98_99/pdfs/98afcar12.pdf, accessed 23 August 2013.

the production of series and serials, however, continues as the mainstay of drama on commercial television.[152]

Australian television drama was therefore forced to find its place again. Well-established dramas were plodding along safely, but it was the failure to launch new dramas that was the problem. This period had interesting parallels with the 1950s and 1960s when similar difficulties were experienced by producers. These included the high costs of drama production in Australia and being forced to make compromises if involved in a co-production, such as having to tell a story from a British or American perspective. Drama also competed unfavourably with panel shows which networks preferred as they rated well and were relatively inexpensive to produce. Broadcasters were, moreover, timid and conservative in their approach to drama, being reluctant, for instance, to develop darker or unlikeable characters.[153]

At the beginning of the new millennium, FTA commercial networks launched several new Australian dramas. Ten launched *The Secret Life of Us* (2001-2005), Seven, *Always Greener* (2001-2003), and Nine, *McLeod's Daughters* (2001-2009) and *Stingers* (1998-2004). The latter were to fill the void following the axing of *Water Rats*, due to rising costs and diminishing overseas sales.[154] Producers were under increasing pressure to provide polished programmes similar to those viewers were used to seeing from the US. *McLeod's Daughters* fitted the bill and sold well overseas, but most local product did not.[155] Originally, Nine was reluctant to support a drama series focused on female characters in the outback. It was not

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[152] AFC report cited in McKee, 'Prime-time Drama', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, pp. 147-148.
[153] T. Bosanquet, 'Is There a Doctor (or Lawyer or Cop), in the House?: The Sorry State of Australian Drama', *Metro,* No. 149, 2006, pp. 86-87.
[154] Harrison, *Australian Film and Television Companion*, p. 476.
[155] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, p. 197.

until the Sydney Olympics opening ceremony in 2000, which appeared to stimulate an interest in rural settings, that Nine's reluctance was overturned.[156]

Between July and September 2002, FTA television unveiled five locally-made drama series. Nine launched *Young Lions*, Ten, *White Collar Blue*, and Seven, *Always Greener*. Seven also backed a legal drama starring Lisa McCune in *Marshall Law* and the ABC hedged its bets on a hybrid medico-legal drama, *MDA*. Bodey says it was a case of 'too much [Australian drama] too soon'.[157] The market became over-crowded, and by September 2002, the new Australian dramas were limping in the ratings, while OzTAM figures confirmed that established dramas were performing much better.[158]

Both *Young Lions* and *Marshall Law* had premiered with over one million viewers, but had experienced viewer drift in the following weeks. The ABC's *MDA* halved its audience by the second week, having to compete with the Commonwealth Games on Seven, while Seven's *Always Greener* failed, due to the network's hesitancy and haphazard scheduling, as well as competition from *Big Brother* (Ten) and *60 Minutes* (Nine). *Always Greener* was axed in September 2003, just three months after Seven had committed to making a third season. Although Nine had cause to be relieved, the end of *Always Greener* represented a general malaise in Australian drama. The argument that it made no economic sense to spend $400,000-plus per episode of Australian drama compared with a more extravagantly-produced US drama worth a tenth of the price in acquisition fees gained momentum. The

[156] S. Ward & T. O'Regan, 'Defining a national brand: Australian television drama and the global television market', *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2011, p. 41.
[157] S. Williams, 'SOAPS THAT DON'T SELL: Why television drama is such a tough act', *Australian Financial Review*, 28 September 2002, p. 47.
[158] Ibid.

Australian film industry was also experiencing its own internal struggles and this further compounded the difficulties within the television industry.[159]

The downturn in drama

Australian drama was in a dire situation by 2003. International sales for the more parochial Australian dramas evaporated. This was the reason given for *White Collar Blue*'s termination, particularly since it competed with high-budget, slickly produced cops shows such as *CSI* emerging from overseas.[160] Australian networks were also pressing producers to push for overseas co-production arrangements in order to share the burden of costs. However the traditional partners, mainly Britain and the US, were increasingly looking to create programmes for their own domestic markets.[161]

As explained in Chapter 1, the new Australian Content Standard (ACS), which came into force on 1 January 2003 and was amended in 2005, 2009 and 2010, requires commercial television licensees to broadcast an annual transmission quota of at least 55% Australian programming between 6 a.m. and midnight.[162] Broadcasters fulfil their quotas by means of a 'points' system. Serials earn one point per hour, drama series, such as *Blue Heelers*, two and a half points per hour, while telemovies secure four points per hour. One aim is to meet a sub-condition of the ACS, which is that FTA commercial networks must screen 750 points of first-run Australian drama over three years.[163] Moreover, since the 2005 amendment to the ACS, these points must be gained through screenings in prime time (5-11 p.m.).[164]

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[159] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, p. 37.
[160] Ibid., p. 38.
[161] S. Williams, 'SOAPS THAT DON'T SELL: Why television drama is such a tough act', *Australian Financial Review*, 28 September 2002, p. 47.
[162] ABA, *Annual report* 2002-2003, 2003, p. 62.
[163] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, pp. 34-35.
[164] 'Australian drama format factor and licence fees', http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/_assets/main/lib100719/format_factor_licence_fees-2012.pdf, accessed 3 May 2012.

Fortunately for broadcasters, since 1999 the ACS regulations have allowed New Zealand programmes to count towards Australian content quotas under the Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement.[165] Ten took advantage of this rule in 2010 to earn 25% of its first release drama points from New Zealand productions *Go Girls* and *Outrageous Fortune*.[166]

Revisions of the ACS have been designed to encourage greater diversity in adult drama, and provide production incentives particularly for higher-end, independently produced and expensive series, mini-series and telemovies. The ABA administered the changes to better reflect the cost and risk involved in commissioning higher-quality programmes and formats. Other changes were made to the adult sub-quota to allow greater flexibility. The drama time-band was extended to 11.30 p.m. for programmes of at least one hour's duration, allowing more 'edgy' dramas to be screened later in the evening.[167] The ABA clearly recognised that local drama production and drama broadcasting in general were suffering during the mid-2000s, following the over-supply of 2002. For the years 2004-05, the AFC reported that 'Australian expenditure on drama [had] dropped by 36% and the number of hours produced … by 20%.'[168] The ABC had allegedly gone from 100 hours of drama a year to 20.[169] Production budgets reflected this picture as well; they fell to a low of $223 million in 2004/5.[170]

The worldwide drop off in television advertising revenues, gloomy economic forecasts, the growth in alternative entertainment options, and the acceleration of DVD sales all made overseas investment less inviting for foreign filmmakers and producers. The Howard coalition

[165] ABA, *Annual report 2000-2001*, 2001, p. 26.
[166] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, pp. 34-35.
[167] ABA, *Annual report* 2002-2003, 2003, pp. 47-48.
[168] Bosanquet, 'Is There a Doctor (or Lawyer or Cop), in the House?', p. 86.
[169] R. Warneke, 'ABC's rare hours of drama', *The Age*, 18 July 2005.
[170] Screen Australia, 'Number of TV drama programs produced, number of hours and total production budgets (current dollars), 1990-91-2009/10', http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research/statistics/mptvdramasummary.asp, accessed 3 May 2012.

government was also slow to offer tax incentives to them. However private investors in Australia helped to close the gap during this time, at least at the Nine Network. *Young Lions* and *McLeod's Daughters* were partly financed by the Federal Government's Film Licensed Investment Companies Scheme (FLICS), established to encourage private investment in television and films. Money subsequently came in via Macquarie Film Corporation.[171]

The Australian drama community was also shaken by the growth of reality TV, the rising tide of popular and lavish US dramas, high definition television sets and by new international formats, as we shall see in Chapter 9. Australian drama was unable to match the audience share for shows such as *Desperate Housewives, Lost*, *CSI* and *Heroes.* This only reinforced the view of Kerry Packer: Australian drama could never compete with American drama and Australian content regulations were a 'pesky tax' on his business.[172]

The local malaise in drama was also felt when *Blue Heelers* ended in 2006. Seven tried its hand at a new programme, *Last Man Standing*, but it failed to work and was unable to generate momentum, something that frustrated the network because for decades it had pinned its strength on drama. Seven did rejuvenate its popular medical drama, *All Saints,* but skewed it towards a younger audience than previously.[173] In 2004, the show was revamped, possibly in response to the award-winning popular American medical drama, *ER* (1994-2009). Like *ER*, *All Saints* was now set in a frenzied emergency ward; its cast was also overhauled. [174] However, its run was to finish in 2009 due to increased production costs and falling ratings.[175]

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[171] S. Williams, 'SOAPS THAT DON'T SELL: Why television drama is such a tough act', *Australian Financial Review*, 28 September 2002, p. 47.
[172] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, pp. 191-92.
[173] Ibid.; See also Ward & O'Regan, 'Defining a national brand', p. 41.
[174] Harrison, *Australian Film and Television Companion*, p. 183.
[175] M. Idato, 'TV casualty: All Saints axed after 11 years' *The Age*, 9 July 2009.

In 2004, not only was drama on commercial television in a trough, so too was the local film scene, which recorded its lowest share of the total cinema box office since 1977; the ABC broadcast only 14 hours of local drama in 2005. However SBS invested in some quality local drama. Subscription television channels also gradually saw the potential of producing unique Australian drama, believing it would provide incentive for audiences to pay for their Foxtel or Austar. Claudia Karvan's well-made, edgy, Logie-winning, adult drama, *Love My Way* (2004-2007), was a pivotal moment in pay TV's development in Australia and possibly indicated a resurgence of interest in local drama.[176]

The turnaround

The period post-2007 marks a watershed in the fortunes of drama on Australian FTA commercial networks. The decline experienced even by soaps began to slow down. Seven gradually revamped *Home and Away*'s production values in filming, lighting and editing to compete with US product.[177] *Neighbours*' production values were looking worn, too, but it did not at first receive the same 'paternal care' that *Home & Away* did from Seven, primarily because Ten did not own *Neighbours*. The catalyst for change in *Neighbours* began with the merger between Grundys and budding production house Crackerjack, under the auspices of global corporation FremantleMedia. A management review of *Neighbours* resulted in $3.5 million being injected into the show; new cast members were hired, the writing was improved and the theme song changed. In July 2007 the show attracted an audience of over one million. It continued to find relative popularity until 2010 when it underwent another major slump.[178] Nonetheless, *Neighbours'* most significant success has been its ability to manage its

[176] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, pp. 195-96.
[177] Ibid., pp. 202-3. According to Ward et al., *Home and Away* screens on the UK's Channel 5 twice a day. In recent years, Channel 5 has funded over half of the programme's production costs, and retains rights for editorial and creative input. *Home and Away* qualifies as UK 'originated' content and fulfils UK quota requirements. See Ward et al., 'From *Neighbours* to *Packed to the Rafters'*, p. 165.
[178] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, pp. 198-99.

Australian and UK orientations. It has been particularly effective in these markets, but also has achieved sales to other countries. As well, it has maintained its original purpose to help Ten fulfil its Australian content quota.[179]

Like Seven and Ten, Nine realised it was time to improve its drama stable. *Sea Patrol* was the result. A few years earlier, Hal and Di McElroy, the couple behind *Water Rats* and *Blue Heelers*, had conceived the idea of a drama on a navy ship. Premiering in 2007, *Sea Patrol* came at an opportune time when Seven's observational documentary, *Border Patrol*, was a hit with audiences. Nine financed the production with the FFC's specific production support for a 13 part mini-series and a large contribution from the Navy, which kept the boat in commission while filming. The first series of *Sea Patrol* cost $1.1 million an episode, significantly more expensive than the average $600,000 an episode for a quality first release drama series. However Bodey observes that bigger Australian drama budgets were needed to compete with American series that boasted impressive budgets and digital effects. Nine marketed *Sea Patrol* as Australia's most expensive drama. The show attracted 1.799 million viewers on its debut and restored hope to networks that Australian audiences would watch local drama.[180] *Sea Patrol* sold to more than 100 territories, including Britain, and was the first Australian series to be successfully marketed overseas before broadcast.[181]

In 2007, a new government measure to offer financial incentive and support for local drama production was introduced, entitled the Producer Offset. This is now administered by Screen Australia, as in July 2008 the FFC became part of Screen Australia.[182] The Producer Offset includes a refundable tax rebate of 20% for producers of television series. Quality naturally

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[179] Ward et al., 'From *Neighbours* to *Packed to the Rafters*', p. 169.
[180] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, pp. 199-201, 204.
[181] Bodey, 'Drama scoop international deals', *The Australian*, 19 April 2007, p. 14.
[182] 'Contributions of various types of investor to Australian feature films, 1995/96 – 2009/10', http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research/statistics/mpfeaturesfinance.asp, accessed 3 May 2012.

increased, as it allowed more time for shooting, larger casts and a wider range of locations.[183] The Producer Offset has provided over $320 million in government support and proved to be an important impetus for domestic film and television production.[184] The Producer Offset incentive was akin to an 'Australian Screen industry stimulus package' during the GFC and general downturn in global production. Initially, most cash through the Producer Offset scheme came from government sources and the film and television industry. However later there was significant private investment from banks and other private sources, which in 2010 supplied over 40% of Producer Offset finance.[185]

The steady growth in Australian drama continued on both Seven and Nine. Seven's police series, *City Homicide* (2007-11), which debuted with impressive ratings and averaged 1.6 million in its first year, received critical acclaim especially in its hometown, Melbourne. At Nine, Eddie McGuire (CEO in 2006-07) was behind the push to produce a mini-series based on the bestselling series of books, *Leadbelly: Inside Australia's Underworld Wars,* about the Melbourne gangland wars of 1995 to 2004. Initially Nine executives were doubtful about the series' ability to attract the female demographic, but this proved unwarranted.[186] *Underbelly* premiered on Monday 13 February 2008 in all states except Victoria[187] and attracted an audience of 1.32 million. During 2008 to 2011, *Underbelly* was the only film or television investment by Screen Australia to come close to recouping its investment. Riding on the hype and success of the first series, a further three *Underbelly* series were commissioned and have rated well.[188]

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[183] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, p. 203.
[184] 'Media Release – Screen Australia Welcomes Funding Increase and Producer Offset Reform', Tuesday 10 May 2011, http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/news_and_events/2011/mr_110510_budget.aspx, accessed 3 May 2012.
[185] 'Media Release –Producer Offset buoys up the Australian Screen Industry', Wednesday 10 November 2010, http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/news_and_events/2010/mr_101110_dramareport.aspx, accessed 3 May 2012.
[186] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, pp. 205-7.
[187] The series was banned in Victoria due to legal reasons.
[188] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, pp. 213-14.

Soaps, like police dramas, became popular again on Australian television in the late 2000s. This popularity relates to the home-ownership boom and audience fixation on domesticity, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9. Reflecting the enthusiasm by Australian audiences for dramas set in middle-class suburbia, Seven's *Packed to the Rafters* (2008-2013) has been the most successful contemporary reinvention of the Australian domestic soap to date. The drama-comedy or 'dramedy' has more filming time, resources and a larger budget to make it slicker than other domestic dramas. (Its high production costs are subsidised through DVD and music CD sales.) It is also liberated from the demands of strip programming, screening one night a week instead. While *Sea Patrol* and *McLeod's Daughters* were produced with the intention of appealing to both local and overseas audiences, *Rafters* was mainly focused on the domestic market. Even though *Rafters* was a significant outlay for the Seven Network, the programme's tremendous ratings, returns and industry awards have been worth it.[189]

Rafters was the highest ratings' performer in television drama in 2008, gaining twelfth place in the Top 20 programmes for the year. Since then, *Rafters* regularly attracted an average combined metropolitan figure exceeding 1.9 million each week and peaking at 2.07 million for each season finale. *Rafters*' success was often attributed to its breezy feel-good optimism, naturalistic acting and witty script. It seems that the high production values of *Rafters* and *Underbelly* indicate that commercial networks, private investors and the FFC have again proved willing to support expensive local television drama. These programmes no doubt also benefited from the Producer Offset tax and possibly the 2007-08 US writers' strike, which resulted in less American content on Australian television.[190]

[189] Ward et al., 'From *Neighbours* to *Packed to the Rafters*', p. 173.
[190] Ibid., p. 169.

Rafters' success was also indicative of the commercial networks' conservatism and reluctance to take risks in designing drama for Australians, who prefer drama to be cosy and unchallenging.[191] In Craig Mathieson's opinion, *Rafter*s has potentially encouraged viewers to switch off by trying to appeal to such a broad audience base. In 2012, Nine's successful reality programme, *The Voice*, may have attributed to the sharp drop in ratings. *The Voice* cut into *Rafters*' opening moments, often running over into the 8.30 p.m. timeslot. In 2012, *Rafters* attracted 1.1 million viewers, almost half of what it commanded during the second-half of 2010.[192]

Despite the conservative approach to television drama taken by local commercial networks, there have been experiments that have been influenced by the popularity of contemporary drama imports. The Nine Network's *The Strip* (2008), a police drama set on the Gold Coast, took its inspiration from Nine's high-rating import, *CSI-Miami*. Seven's courtroom drama, *Marshall Law*, was based on the US programme, *Ally McBeal*, while *Rafters* has adapted stylistic elements of Seven's successful import, *Desperate Housewives.*[193]

Adult television drama has clearly experienced resurgence since 2007/08 and recent critical claim has helped to buoy the success of the industry sector. Screen Australia's Annual Drama Report for 2010 revealed local television content was reported at a ten-year high with the highest level of expenditure on adult drama in more than ten years. Production budgets reached $324 million in 2009/10.[194] However, feature films were struggling. For the 2010/11 period, television drama accounted for 65% of production, whereas feature films constituted

[191] This emphasis on traditional family values was also an important reason why *McCleod's Daughters* and *Sea Patrol* were more easily transferrable into non-English speaking markets, particularly those with conservative cultural sensibilities. See Ward & O'Regan, 'Defining a national brand', p. 42.
[192] C. Mathieson, 'Confronting the empty plot syndrome', *SMH*, 10 May 2012.
[193] Ward et al., 'From *Neighbours* to *Packed to the Rafters*', p. 170.
[194] Screen Australia, 'Number of TV drama programs produced, number of hours and total production budgets (current dollars), 1990-91-2009/10', http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research/statistics/mptvdramasummary.asp, accessed 3 May 2012.

only 18%. High-quality productions such as Nine's *Underbelly: Razor*, the ABC's *The Slap* and Seven's *Wild Boys* contributed to the steady growth in adult television drama. *Rafters* and Ten's *Offspring* (2010-) have also helped to revive television drama as has Seven's newcomer, *Winners and Losers* (2011-).[195] Although Australian television audiences currently prefer cosy domestic dramas, given that audience tastes can be fickle and unpredictable, responding at times to general shifts in cultural movements, it is uncertain how long the boom in Australian drama will last.[196]

Conclusion

The emergence and development of Australian television drama have largely been dependent on the programming strategies of commercial FTA networks, production costs, audience demand, regulatory safeguards and cultural trends. Programming drama is a black art. A programme's success relies on a complex series of factors involving time, finance, patient nurturing and scheduling among other broader contextual matters. For the most part local drama has proved popular with audiences, but regulatory measures are still considered vital to safeguard levels of Australian content and promote a strong sense of national identity. On the one hand, commercial networks have often viewed the financial risks associated with local drama as a disincentive for local production. On the other hand, they argue that they would fill the drama requirements without mandatory stipulations, even though Seven is the only network to have consistently exceeded the content quota points for drama in the last decade.[197] Instead, broadcasters have keenly sought popular imported programmes because they generally have an audience and cost advantage compared with domestic drama.[198]

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[195] J. Leo, 'Home-grown television outshines feature films, report reveals Drama rides on Razor's back', *The Advertiser*, 25 October 2011, p. 11.
[196] Papandrea, 'Explaining Television Stations' Preferences for Imported Drama Programs', p. 78.
[197] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, p. 35.
[198] Papandrea, 'Explaining Television Stations' Preferences for Imported Drama Programs', p. 73.

However in very recent years, commercial networks have been re-evaluating local television drama, viewing it less as a cumbersome licence obligation, and more of a valuable investment. Local drama is increasingly recognised as a potential asset for flagship programming and a strategic way of differentiating commercial FTA networks from pay TV and other competing forms of media in a multichannel environment. This is because local dramas generally connect readily with Australian audiences and enhances the value of a network's brand.[199] Yet even when Australian product is presented to Australian audiences, it is still a fluid negotiation of various overseas' formulas and stylistic conventions.

Although commercial networks have sought to produce 'quality' drama for both the domestic and international markets, it is Australian soaps that have generally commanded large audiences both domestically and abroad. Soap opera has in some sense become the defining genre of the Australian television landscape; it is not only an 'economic product' but also, as Bowles argues, a 'cultural formation'.[200] For example, *Neighbours* and *Home and Away* are both strongly embedded in both international and domestic television markets.[201] Ironically, international demand for some Australian products have enabled them to stay on air in Australia, despite poor ratings domestically.[202] In an increasingly global mediascape, the challenge for commercial networks will be to cater for American and European tastes in drama, as well as keeping the interest of domestic viewers, and staying commercially competitive. Because drama is such an expensive investment, there is a temptation for networks to offset the cost by compromising on 'export-friendly concepts' to appeal to a wider market.[203] In an environment that relies on foreign partnerships and co-productions, the

[199] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, p. 36.
[200] Ward et al., 'From *Neighbours* to *Packed to the Rafters*', p. 162; Bowles, 'Soap opera', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 125.
[201] Ward et al., 'From *Neighbours* to *Packed to the Rafters*', p. 165.
[202] Ibid., p. 174.
[203] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing,* pp. 454-55.

challenge will be to raise finance for programmes which have international appeal but which retain local specificity and relevance.

Finally, the ebb and flow of Australian drama production are not just a result of national and international industry dynamics, but also reflect broad shifts in Australian society. The cyclical nature of audience tastes and cultural trends has influenced the way certain forms of drama have evolved and displaced other forms of the genre. Australian history has provided the stimulus for some of the most popular locally produced drama programmes, while the enduring reflection of cosy domesticity, traditional family values and gritty suburbia have continued to find emotional resonance with both Australian and international audiences.

9

Reality TV: Obsession with the Ordinary

'In the future, everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes'

– *Andy Warhol* (1968)

In 1992, Australians were served their first slice of a reality TV series: *Sylvania Waters*, a candid, fly-on-the-wall look at life among the *nouveau riche* on Sydney's southern shores. The show followed the larger-than-life, brassy blonde matriarch, Noeline Baker, her partner, Laurie Donaher, and adult offspring in the ordinariness of their day-to-day lives, punctuated only by people shouting at each other and 'storming around dramatically'. Co-produced by the ABC and BBC, *Sylvania Waters* pioneered a programme genre that embraced human surveillance and people's engagement with mundane trivia. A decade later, programmers and audiences believed such unrehearsed performances were worthy of primetime schedules.[1] When the global franchises, *Big Brother* and *Survivor*, burst onto our screens in 1999/2000, they accelerated the trend in 'reality' programming. These programmes also demonstrated the hybridity of the format by adding competition into the equation, launching reality 'stars' and blurring the line between fact and fiction.[2]

The term 'reality TV', now in widespread circulation, encompasses a variety of programming formats. Misha Kavka argues that reality TV does not merely consist of programme texts, but

[1] K. Murphy, *TV Land: Australia's Obsession with Reality Television*, John Wiley & Sons Australia, Milton, Qld, 2006, p. 3.
[2] M. Kavka, *Reality TV*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2012, p. 10.

also of 'the entire discursive field that surrounds them', namely, extra-televisual discourses including trade magazines, the tabloid press, television guides, official websites, television discussion forums and so on. Moreover, the cultural significance and historical trajectory of reality TV are still heavily contested. It is also difficult to categorise as it is not a specific genre.[3] This is reflected in the range of terminology surrounding it: 'popular factual', 'factual entertainment', 'infotainment' and so on.[4] Nevertheless, lifestyle programming has been part of the broadcasting landscape since the 1940s, finding its antecedent in radio. Lifestyle television, a container for a variety of sub-genres and hybrid formats, also fits loosely under the umbrella term of reality TV and borrows heavily from pre-existing forms of programming.[5]

In the last two decades, reality TV, including lifestyle programmes, has dominated primetime schedules and radically changed the television landscape. The explosion of 'makeover' television has often been attributed to the 'lifestyle turn' in modern culture. The popularity of these programmes can be viewed as a side effect of broad economic shifts in television production and increasing competition in a de-regulated television market.[6] The transnational mobility of reality TV programming has made the genre increasingly attractive to television networks and advertisers. While these programming forms have achieved global success, they have done so through complex negotiations with local television traditions, cultures and lifestyles.

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[3] Ibid., p. 2.
[4] A. Hill, *Restyling Factual TV: Audience and News, Documentary and Reality Genres*, Routledge, London & New York, 2007, p. 48.
[5] F. Bonner, 'Lifestyle programs: "No choice but to choose"', in G. Turner & S. Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2000, p. 103.
[6] T. Lewis, 'Revealing the Makeover Show', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4, August 2008, p. 441; T. Lewis, 'Changing rooms, biggest losers and backyard blitzes: A history of makeover television in the United Kingdom, United States and Australia', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4, August 2008, pp. 447-49.

This chapter traces the historical trajectory of reality TV programming in Sydney, placing it in its national and international context. As traditional lifestyle shows and makeover programmes hold a relatively prominent place on Sydney television, the development and appeal of these types of reality TV programmes will be the main focus of this chapter.

Reality TV and its antecedents

Never before has any television programme in the West attracted so much publicity nor generated so much debate as the reality franchise, *Big Brother* (*BB*). The name originates from George Orwell's 1949 well-known novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which depicts a totalitarian government employing extreme measures to maintain total surveillance and conformity over an oppressed population, with the threat of 'Big Brother is watching you'.[7] The *BB* format involves confining participants to a house and then placing them under heavy surveillance before facing elimination. While participants have a role in voting, viewers hold the ultimate power in determining who should leave and who should stay. *BB* was first broadcast in The Netherlands in 1999. It went on to become a 'global phenomenon'.[8] The Australian version began on the Ten Network in 2001 and attracted an unprecedented volume of media attention before the show's launch. During *BB's* run until 2008, more than 1000 newspapers mentioned either the show or its contestants, signalling reality TV's potential for cross-promotion.[9] The overwhelming response to *BB,* both in Australia and world-wide, signalled a revolutionary shift in 'factual' programming – a change that would dramatically influence the production, global distribution and audience reception of television programming.

[7] Murphy, *TV land,* p. 69.
[8] Ibid., p. 66-67.
[9] T. Johnson-Woods, *Big Bother: Why Did That TV Show Become Such A Phenomenon?*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld, 2002, p. 209.

The fanfare that accompanied *BB*'s arrival gave the impression that reality TV was 'new', something never before seen on television. But history tells a different story. Reality TV is not just a programming phenomenon, but it is also a historical phenomenon, aspects of which have been observed since the 1950s.[10] Annette Hill identifies a burgeoning array of academic works that explore the many areas that have contributed to the formation of reality TV – analyses of crime reporting, docu-dramas, soap opera, mock documentaries and tabloid journalism.[11] Moreover, Kavka explains it is because quiz, talent and talk shows have always invited 'real people' to face the television camera, critics argue reality TV offers very little by way of innovation.[12] Reality TV programming is also 'culturally specific'. In each broadcasting environment in which it has emerged, reality TV has developed in a different way.[13]

The origin of reality TV has also varied from country to country. Kerrie Murphy suggests reality TV programming in the US can be traced back to the 1948 television series, *Candid Camera,* where unsuspecting members of the public were captured reacting to practical jokes, before being told: 'Smile, you're on Candid Camera!'.[14] In Australia, perhaps the first reality TV show was HSV-7's *Wedding Day*, launched in November 1956. The Saturday afternoon series filmed real weddings and invited couples into the studio to open their presents.[15] In 1965, GTV-9's late night Sunday news programme, *Nightwatch,* provided some of the first instances of 'absorbing' and 'banal' human interest stories on Australian television, the kind that now frequently appear in contemporary reality TV shows such as Seven's *Highway Patrol*. In Sam Lipski's view, the 'typical' *Nightwatch* script generally presented 'a sorry

[10] J.A. Taddeo & K. Dvorak, 'Introduction' in J.A. Taddeo & K. Dvorak (eds), *The Tube Has Spoken: Reality TV and History*, The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, 2010, p. 1.
[11] A. Hill, *Reality TV: Audiences and Popular Factual Television*, Routledge, London; New York, 2005, p. 14; Kavka, *Reality TV*, p. 13.
[12] Kavka, *Reality TV*, p. 13.
[13] Hill, *Reality TV*, p. 8.
[14] Murphy, *TV land,* p. 3.
[15] M. Idato, 'Birth of a nation', *SMH*, 11 September 2006, p. 4.

story of car accidents and crime, sad strippers and pally policeman; everyone eager to get their heads on TV'.[16]

The most 'real' type of reality TV is the docudrama or 'docusoap', an observational, fly-on-the-wall show that creates the illusion of reality primarily because people are filmed in real circumstances. The plot is edited in a way that resembles the conventions of a soap opera. Although an ancestor of the documentary, argues Murphy, the docusoap differs in that its function is not so much to inform, as it is to entertain through observation. Docusoaps first emerged with the American television documentary series, *An American Family*, in 1973, spawning a British version of the programme, *The Family,* in 1974, produced by Paul Watson. These pioneering docusoaps signalled documentary's first move away from 'social issues' and towards ordinary people.[17] Australia followed the trend much later in 1992 with the aforementioned *Sylvania Waters*, another Watson-produced programme.

Although Australia did not produce as many docusoaps as did Britain, it did generate programmes along similar lines. Shows specialising in amateur footage such as *Graham Kennedy's Funniest Home Video Show*, and later *Australia's Funniest Home Video Show,* emerged following the introduction of the camcorder in the 1980s.[18] Most factual hybrids in Australia have centred on hospitals, the most successful being Nine's *RPA*, which began in 1995 and has consistently maintained its place as one of the highest rating documentaries each year on air. Yet Murphy maintains that docusoaps 'fell out of vogue' once reality TV programmes such as *BB*, *Idol* and *Survivor* arrived, generating similar programmes preoccupied with celebrities (or would-be celebrities). In recent years the docusoap has made a comeback. Launched in 2005, Seven's *Border Security* follows airport customs agents as

[16] S. Lipski, 'The TV Newsmakers', *The Bulletin*, 10 July 1965, p. 25.
[17] Murphy, *TV land*, pp. 51-53.
[18] Ibid., pp. 4-6.

they enforce the law and remains one of the highest-rating shows on Australian television. Seven's hospital docusoap, *Medical Emergency*, has also enjoyed commercial success, along with other long-running shows including *Highway Patrol*, *The Force*, *The World's Strictest Parents*, *RBT*, *Bondi Rescue* and *Bondi Vet*.[19]

Annette Hill identifies three waves of reality TV programming trends before these programmes entered primetime schedules in the 1990s. The first wave grew out of the US with 'infotainment' and successful crime and emergency services programmes. This wave spread to Europe during the late 1980s and early 1990s.[20] The American *Cops* appeared in 1989 when hand-held cameras followed police officers on their rounds. The show incorporated unscripted dialogue and narration, allowing events to be seen as they occurred. In the late 1980s, American daytime talk shows introduced more controversial topics into their repertoire of infotainment. This transformed the studio audience into active participants.[21]

Hill identifies that the second wave was cultivated by British television, before moving to Europe and beyond during the second half of the 1990s. This wave grew out of the success of observational documentaries or 'docusoaps', with lifestyle programming focusing on house and garden renovations. The third wave introduced a strong competitive element into the mix, with 'reality gameshows' and social experiments placing 'ordinary people in controlled environments' over periods of time. This wave began primarily in Northern Europe before moving to Britain and then the US and beyond. The genesis of the reality gameshow format can be traced to British producer, Charlie Parsons, who developed the idea for *Survivor* in the early 1990s before he sold the rights to the transnational television production and distribution

[19] Murphy, *TV land*, pp. 56-7.
[20] Hill, *Reality TV,* p. 24.
[21] Murphy, *TV land*, pp. 4-6.

company, Endemol. In the interim, Endemol had also been working on a similar idea, *Big Brother*, created by Dutch TV producer, John de Mol.[22] Hill also suggests the current wave of reality TV is a 'free-for-all' mixture of types, with the US focusing more on crime and relationships, Britain and Australia on lifestyle makeovers, and Northern Europe on adaptations of the game show format.[23]

Sydney's long tradition of lifestyle programming

Although the term 'lifestyle' did not become common parlance until the 1980s, some programmes in the 1950s and 1960s represented a kind of nascent form of this reality TV sub-genre. The gendered home and domestic space formed a large part of 1950s and 1960s public discourse, and television reflected this through programmes designed for housewives.[24] Home help came in the form of programmes about cooking and household chores. ATN-7's *Your Home* was a half-hour live-to-air women's infotainment-lifestyle programme hosted by Del Cartwright, while TCN-9's *Women's World* covered cooking, sewing and flower arranging. The ABC broadcast a similarly titled show, *Woman's World*, hosted by Mary Rossi, as well as *Hemline*, a daytime magazine programme targeting fashion enthusiasts.[25]

Programmes focused on household matters outside the home were also a regular feature on daytime television. In 1958, the ABC started *Handyman,* which re-emerged in various guises into the 1970s, providing practical instructions for 'male' household jobs. *In Your Garden, Sow What* (1967-88), hosted by Kevin Heinz, and *Gardening Australia* (1989-) catered for

[22] Hill, *Reality TV*, pp. 24, 31.
[23] Ibid., p. 24.
[24] Place & Roberts, *50 Years of Television in Australia*, p. 226. See also L. Johnson & J. Lloyd, *Sentenced to Everyday Life: Feminism and the Housewife*, Berg, Oxford; New York, 2004.
[25] 'Scrambling eggs with Del', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 1 November 1958, p. 10; Place & Roberts, *50 Years of Television*, p. 226.

garden enthusiasts.[26] These programmes tapped into Australia's preoccupation with the garden and backyard and the 'passion for neatness', which had become a strong characteristic of Australian display gardening, both institutionally and privately. This preoccupation, argues George Seddon, also identifies with Australia's cultural inheritance of 'keeping up with the Jones's'. The long list of tips and tricks, and the abundance of convenient gardening products used and promoted on these shows, further underscores the way gardening had become prominent in Australian metropolitan consumer society by the 1980s.[27]

Although cooking originally found an audience in women's daytime programmes, in later years, standalone cooking segments and programmes dotted television schedules and were directed towards both males and females.[28] Before Jamie Oliver and his boyish charm captivated Australian viewers, TEN-10, which pioneered the cooking show, sought to attract men with a half hour late night cooking show, *Entertaining with Kerr,* hosted by the charismatic Graham Kerr. Tall and good-looking, Kerr won himself a huge following (both male and female) and became the highest profile cook on early television in Australia and New Zealand.[29] He was also a novelty in a field dominated by female cooks. In a 1965 article focusing on Kerr's role as husband and family man, *TV Week* highlighted a reversal of conventional gender roles, with his wife Treena, who was not much of a cook, stating that '[t]heir upsidedown relationship [had led her] into various enjoyable household tasks, like mending fuses and screwing on door knobs'.[30]

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[26] Place & Roberts, *50 Years of Television in Australia*, p. 226.
[27] G. Seddon, 'The Australian Back Yard', in I. Craven with M. Gray & G. Stoneham (eds), *Australian Popular Culture*, Cambridge University Press, published in association with Australian Studies and the British Australian Studies Association, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 31-33.
[28] 'Del tops in women's survey', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 27 December 1958, p. 5.
[29] 'TV Week special feature', *TV Week*, 28 August 1965, p.12; F. Bonner, 'Early multi-platforming', *Media History*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2009, p. 348. See also Herd, '"The Weaker Sisters"', pp. 127-28.
[30] 'Out of the frying pan into television', *TV Week*, 31 July 1965, p. 35.

Entertaining with Kerr began in New Zealand in 1961 before production moved to Sydney in 1965.[31] From 1968 Kerr brought the cooking show out of the kitchen and into the countryside with *The Galloping Gourmet.*[32] His English accent, coupled with the refreshing format of both *Entertaining with Kerr* and *The Galloping Gourmet,* enabled the programmes to achieve significant international sales. As Frances Bonner argues, Kerr's success demonstrates that 'the international appeal of television food programmes was evident long before the arrival of celebrity chefs like Jamie Oliver, or even Keith Floyd'.[33]

The characteristics and appeal of lifestyle programming

Lifestyle programmes generally have a magazine format, with assorted short segments drawn together by an overriding theme or the host themselves. Just as newsreaders are vital to news programmes, on-screen presenters are one of the key characteristics of lifestyle shows. 'Friendly intimacy', explains Bonner, is an essential quality for a lifestyle presenter, since delivering 'unsolicited advice' may appear intrusive. The husband-and-wife team of actors Noni Hazlehurst and John Jarratt on *Better Homes and Gardens* offered a particularly personal touch through their banter.[34] Del Cartwright, host of *Your Home*, also understood something of how television fostered intimacy with its viewers: '"Is Del here yet?" is one of the questions I think frequently asked – as if I'm about to arrive like some other relative or member of the family'.[35]

Television magazines shared an important role in fostering this intimacy. In 1959, *TV Week* featured a regular column, 'Another star "AT HOME"', providing Sydney reader-viewers

[31] Bonner, 'Early multi-platforming', p. 349.
[32] Place & Roberts, *50 Years of Television in Australia*, p. 268.
[33] Bonner, 'Early multi-platforming', pp. 348-49. See also http://www.grahamkerr.com, accessed 12 November 2012.
[34] Bonner, 'Lifestyle Programs', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 111.
[35] 'Scrambling eggs with Del', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 1 November 1958, p.12.

with snippets of the 'other side' of local personalities. Magazines offered intimate details about stars' quirks and characteristics, information which reinforced their ordinariness.[36] Television stars were now opening *their* homes and inviting in viewers like friends or relatives. Magazines further reinforced this connection, allowing viewers to personally connect with stars through letters and questions. Cartwright's advice column in *TV Week* encouraged readers to write in on subjects that went beyond menial domesticity. One reader, named 'Serious', wrote, 'Dear Del, I am often lonely and fed up. Do you think it is normal to have these thoughts?'.[37] The intimate mode of address between television personalities and reader-viewers strengthened loyalty to lifestyle programmes centred on the home. This had been a technique used even more generally by radio to attract, maintain and engage listeners.[38]

The domestic lives of female 'lifestyle' presenters were an important part of their attraction to viewers. Magazines carefully constructed the images of Sydney female stars so that their television commitments were a natural extension of their already busy domestic lives. A *TV Times* article featuring ABN-2's Mary Rossi was headlined, 'Six children AND a TV SHOW'. The order of Rossi's priorities was reinforced throughout, as she was quoted as emphasising the 'home unit' as the most important thing in life. The author of the article agreed: 'Beautiful, brown-eyed Mary Rossi is calm and unruffled as she manages a large home, a family of six and a television program.'[39] The way in which magazines constructed

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[36] 'Charles is different away from TV', *TV Week*, 30 May-5 June 1959, pp. 18-19; 'TV Stars' Christmas', *TV Times*, 22 December 1965, p. 10. See also 'You Ask the Stars' section, *TV Times*, 29 December 1965, p. 18.
[37] 'Sincerely Yours Del Cartwright', *TV Week-Preview*, 5 February 1959, p. 50.
[38] Johnson, *The Unseen Voice*, p. 76. This public form of correspondence featured in *TV Week* was reminiscent of advice literature. Lifestyle media began to emerge in the 1950s offering expert advice on managing the self as well as the domestic space. See T. Lewis, *Smart Living: Lifestyle Media and Popular Expertise*, Peter Lang, New York, 2008, p. 35.
[39] 'Six children AND a TV SHOW', *TV Times*, 10 December 1960, p. 16. See also 'A change from the pots and pans', *TV NEWS*, 13 September 1958, pp. 10-11.

these narratives suggested female personalities had to reconcile their public lives with the discourses of domesticity in the 1950s and 1960s.[40]

For lifestyle shows, intimacy seemed best achieved through the appearance of ordinary, local presenters. Lisa Taylor suggests the appeal of lifestyle programming in the UK during the 1990s stemmed from the 'ordinariness' of hosts and their diverse backgrounds. They brought new faces and voices to television, with their specialist knowledge giving them legitimacy. This ordinariness was indicative of the trend towards the democratisation of primetime television during the 1990s, as well as a growth in anti-intellectualism within British society.[41] Australian audiences were no different in attaching significance to 'ordinary' personalities to whom they could relate.

Graeme Turner argues that such 'ordinariness' has always occupied a place among the range of celebrity discourses and within 'the core programming of western television itself'. An interesting feature is the 'contradictoriness of the discourses of celebrity', and their tendency to uphold a celebrity's elite status, while simultaneously celebrating their 'intrinsic ordinariness'.[42] This is particularly the case for television celebrity. Unlike film celebrity, argues P. David Marshall, television celebrity attempts to break down barriers of distance and develop 'a conception of familiarity' with its audience.[43] In 1965, *TV Week* introduced Kerr as a 'very human cook', with a habit of 'breaking things and making mistakes' and nursing 'an inferiority complex about flipping pancakes before the TV cameras', before listing his

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[40] See Bye, '"A Cruel Medium for a Woman"', pp. 161-77.
[41] L. Taylor, *A Taste for Gardening: Classed and Gendered Practices*, Ashgate Pub. Co, Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT, 2008, pp. 87-88, 90.
[42] Turner, *Ordinary People and the Media*, p. 12.
[43] P.D. Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*, University of Minneapolis Press, Minneapolis; London, 1997, p. 190. See also G. Turner, F. Bonner, & P. David Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Oakleigh, Vic., 2000.

impressive credentials as an accomplished food connoisseur.[44] In a women's television popularity poll, Cartwright emerged the clear favourite of 92% of women of all age groups who tuned into any women's programme. It was Cartwright's 'natural and relaxed' manner that gave her the lead over the glamorous Rossi and the honey-voiced Australian actress, Jacqueline Kott.[45] Such characteristics helped to suggest that hosts were accessible, and that the projects featured on lifestyle shows were achievable by anyone at home.

But accessibility means nothing without sincerity. In the 1950s, Sydney viewers of *Your Home* also demanded sincerity from its host and were upfront in voicing their preferences.[46] In Bonner's view, Don Burke's skilful ability decades later to convey sincerity and trustworthiness was key to his television success on *Burke's Backyard*.[47] It seems that the lure of infotainment and lifestyle programmes also stems from their ability to encourage personal involvement whether as active participants or better informed viewers. Just as local news is popular because of its relevance, so is a programme that resonates closely with people's experiences and provides useful advice.[48]

In 1993, TCN-9 launched an infotainment programme called *Money*. Nine executives were initially skeptical, believing the content to be far too specialised and dry for primetime. But Tim Clucas, executive producer of the show, and his creative team found innovative ways to explain complex information in a simplified format that was understandable to a general audience. *Money* used an original concept and spawned overseas imitators.[49] In one episode, a pizza was used to explain the share market. Over time, viewer response to the visual

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[44] 'Out of the frying pan into television', *TV Week*, 31 July 1965, p. 35.
[45] The ABC's Research and Statistics Department conducted the survey; see 'Del tops in women's survey', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 27 December 1958, pp. 4-5.
[46] 'Scrambling eggs with Del', *TV NEWS-TIMES*, 1 November 1958, p. 12.
[47] Bonner, 'Lifestyle Programs', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, pp. 108-9.
[48] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 376.
[49] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, p. 286.

gimmicks was overwhelming. Within a few months, the show was receiving as many as 40-50,000 letters per topic. By *Money's* sixth year, over one million phone calls, letters and emails had been received. By contrast, *60 Minutes*, in spite of its large audience, generally received between 200 and 2000 letters a week. Stone suggests that '[a] debate in the news is certainly capable of stirring up passion but nothing motivates like self-interest'.[50]

Burke's Backyard and the infotainment boom

Before they became the preserve of commercial television in the 1990s, infotainment programmes had emerged on the ABC in the 1970s and 1980s. In an effort to compete with commercial news programmes, ABC programmers set out to design new forms and patterns of programming. Examples include *The Investigators*, the ABC's flagship consumer affairs programme, and *Quantum*, a magazine programme featuring developments in science and technology.[51] The ratings success these programmes generated for the ABC were enough to convince commercial television networks that infotainment was worth developing.

Widely hailed as the 'trend setter' for infotainment programming in Australia and the father of primetime Australian lifestyle television, Don Burke is the first to admit there is no guarantee that original ideas will always make it to television.[52] Underneath Burke's congenial television persona is a steely determination, about which he is unapologetic:

> *Burke's Backyard* never got to air because it was what the public wanted. It got to air for one reason only, and that is I was persistent to a level of bloody-mindedness that most people can never imagine.[53]

Burke believed that Australians lived differently to every other country in the world: they lived in their backyards and it was the place where interaction between family, food, pets and

[50] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 376-79.
[51] Inglis, *Whose ABC?*, pp. 54, 73-74.
[52] Sue Turnbull cited in McKee, *Australian Television*, p. 257; Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 365, 368.
[53] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 354.

plants occurred. Although *Burke's Backyard* started out as an ordinary gardening show, the programme's focus on all these aspects inspired the term 'lifestyle'. Burke is credited with being largely responsible for changing lifestyle television away from daytime timeslots and special interest groups to cater for mainstream audiences in primetime.[54] Nevertheless, it would take seven painstaking years before *Burke's Backyard* became a primetime reality.[55]

Burke's Backyard began as the title of Burke's weekly column in the *Daily Mirror* in 1981. The following year, Burke and his wife Marea launched a radio programme with the same name. Despite having only brief segments on *Today*, the *Mike Walsh Show* and *Midday*, Burke never gave up on his vision for a gardening show on primetime television. Although Nine executives regarded Burke as a talented presenter, they believed his proposition was about as realistic as a talking garden gnome.[56]

In Burke's view, the media were out of touch with the interests of ordinary Australians. In spite of two failed pilots, he managed to persuade Nine to give him a run for 12 weeks. Yet Burke was unwilling to hand over his concept to network producers who would almost certainly interfere with its format. From the time *Burke's Backyard* launched on 12 September 1987, Burke insisted on maintaining creative control.[57] This may have been a pivotal moment in lifestyle-infotainment programming: Burke's production company, CTC Productions, became responsible for producing several successful primetime offshoots of *Burke's Backyard*, providing a training ground for lifestyle production personnel and launching the careers of several popular television hosts.[58]

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[54] Place & Roberts, *50 Years of Television in Australia*, p. 226.
[55] It was only in 1988 that *Burke's Backyard* was given the Friday 7.30 p.m. timeslot, which ensured it became a household favourite.
[56] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 356-57.
[57] Ibid., pp. 357, 364, 371.
[58] Horgan, *Radio with Pictures!*, pp. 284-85.

Within ten years of Burke's primetime debut, lifestyle-related infotainment programmes were some of Nine's most successful Australian-made shows. Stone credits Nine with developing the new wave of information programming on commercial television. As a network it was primed for the boom because of its long association with magazine formats. Nine employees from newscaf and sports programmes such as *Wide World of Sports* were highly experienced at turning factual information into primetime entertainment.[59]

Between 1993 and 1998, commercial television expenditure on infotainment and popular factual entertainment increased at an annual average rate of over 15%, while expenditure on Australian documentaries nearly halved every year between 1995 and 2000. In 2001, six infotainment programmes (*The Great Outdoors*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Ground Force*, *Hot Auctions*, *Hot Property* and *Harry's Practice*) appeared in the top ten regular programmes on the Seven Network.[60] When placed together with the ABC's *The Home Show* with Maggie Tabberer, and docudramas including *Animal Hospital* and *RPA* on other commercial networks, they represented a radical shift in the nature of information programming from newscaf into infotainment.[61]

Filling primetime schedules with popular factual formats and reality TV hybrids has had a discernible impact on newscaf and documentary programming on both commercial and public broadcasting networks.[62] Jane Roscoe argues that reality TV and infotainment have infected television with 'an internalization of reality TV production processes'. As a consequence, this has influenced the expectations of audiences and programmers about television's place within

[59] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, pp. 368, 372.
[60] Given, *Turning Off the Television*, p. 204.
[61] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 368.
[62] Hill, *Reality TV*, pp. 39-40.

modern media culture. Infotainment has largely squeezed expositional and political documentaries from primetime schedules. One-off documentary programming has also suffered, as commercial channels have a tendency to allocate a greater proportion of their budgets to infotainment than to documentaries.[63]

The ABC and SBS have responded to commercial realities by dealing with documentaries in less traditional ways. The ABC has increasingly moved away from traditional expositional essays to pursue stories that are character and narrative-driven. In a similar vein, SBS has adopted elements of infotainment in order to engage audiences both emotionally and intellectually with heavier political and social issues.[64] SBS's highest rating show in 2011 was Cordell Jigsaw's three-part documentary series, *Go Back to Where You Came From*, which followed the journeys of six well-known Australians, with differing views on the asylum-seeker debate, when they retraced the steps many refugees take on their way to Australia.[65] Infotainment has widened the appeal of documentaries to a younger demographic, helping to recruit a new generation of viewers. This kind of programming has also transformed the way audiences experience television, engaging them actively via technology, such as social media.[66]

Retreating home: Australian makeover programming

> What do you get when you mix…BIG BROTHER with RENOVATION RESCUE with SYLVANIA WATERS with CHANGING ROOMS with MELROSE PLACE with SURVIVOR with LOCATION, LOCATION?

[63] J. Roscoe, 'Television: Friend or foe of Australian documentary?', *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2004, pp. 289-90.
[64] Ibid., pp. 290-91.
[65] A. Diaz, 'The real world', *Inside Film*, No. 142, August-September 2011, p. 28.
[66] Roscoe, 'Television: friend or foe of Australian documentary?', p. 292.

The Block was the brainchild of two young producers, Julian Cress and David Barbour, who managed to capture the attention of Nine's executives with this pitch. The programme involved four teams competing to renovate homes in order to sell to the highest bidder. The concept entailed Nine investing in a run-down apartment block and shooting for 13 weeks with a multi-camera crew. Yet the harsher realities of television in the early 2000s, with shrinking advertising revenues and growing technological competition, tempered the enthusiasm of Nine executives, who were reticent to commit a substantial outlay lest the show failed.[67]

'Shit, tearing up a bunch of concrete rates well? There must be nothing else on', replied Kerry Packer as David Gyngell, then deputy CEO of Nine, informed him that *The Block* was rating spectacularly.[68] The audience in five metropolitan markets averaged over 2.3 million per week. Even more surprising was that a show based in Bondi attracted more viewers in Melbourne than in Sydney.[69] There were two more series, in 2004 and 2005, before the show returned in 2010. To keep the format fresh over the years, changes have been made requiring contestants to renovate both the interior and exterior of houses, instead of apartment blocks. In late June 2011, *The Block* enabled Nine for the first time in 2011 to beat Seven in all key demographics for the week, capturing 1.4 million viewers.[70]

The Block is just one of many variations on the makeover format incorporating elements of both reality and lifestyle TV.[71] The makeover format is concerned not just with the home, but also with self-improvement. Do-it-yourself (DIY) home and self-improvement shows featured on Sydney television as early as the 1950s and 1960s. On TCN-9 Brian Henderson and Letty

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[67] Stone, *Who Killed Channel 9?*, pp. 86-87, 89, 94.
[68] Ibid., p. 94.
[69] Ibid.
[70] '*The Block* smashes through *MasterChef*', *TV Insider*, 5 July 2011.
[71] Lewis, 'Revealing the Makeover Show', p. 444.

Craydon exploited the DIY mantra of the 1950s with their handy tips in *The House and Garden Show*, while TCN-9 provided female viewers with transformative beauty hints on *My Fair Lady*.[72] A strong feature of the 1950s, with its acute housing shortage, was a DIY culture. Home-making magazines provided a practical vocabulary for transforming the home and self. Magazines such as *Australian House and Garden*, *Australian Women's Weekly*, *Australian Homemaker* and *Australian Home Beautiful* all endorsed and reiterated the importance of home-ownership, running 'how-to' series on owner-building.[73] *Backyard Blitz* (2000-07), a popular garden makeover show, first began as a small segment on *Burke's Backyard* before it was turned into a 30-minute weekly programme of its own.[74]

Elements of the makeover were also evident prior to the 1990s in house and garden shows, often when a segment included the transformation of property. Makeover shows have, to varying degrees, successfully combined aspects of consumer-driven women's daytime television, with the personal confession and self-surveillance of the talk show format.[75] In her work on lifestyle television and culture, Tania Lewis argues that the lifestyle turn has become an increasingly important part of contemporary popular culture. The makeover is no longer just an extension of daytime television and women's magazines, but has infiltrated every aspect of our culture. In 1996 the BBC's DIY home improvement show, *Changing Rooms*, kick-started the makeover television primetime phenomenon. In the US, *Extreme Makeover* debuted in 2002. Lewis suggests that both shows played a significant role in placing the concept of the makeover at the forefront of the public imagination. *Changing Rooms* was a strong influence on the makeover format in Australia, with the Nine Network making an

[72] Murphy, 'Light entertainment', in Beilby (ed.), *Australian TV*, p. 82; Moran & Keating, *Wheel of Fortune*, p. 97.
[73] C. Pickett, 'Modernism and Austerity: The 1950s Home', in J. O'Callaghan (ed.), *The Australian Dream: Design of the Fifties*, Powerhouse Publishing, Haymarket, NSW, 1993, pp. 77-79.
[74] Bonner cited in Lewis, 'Changing rooms, biggest losers and backyard blitzes', p. 455.
[75] Lewis, 'Changing rooms, biggest losers and backyard blitzes', p. 454.

Australian version of the show in 1998. Since then there has been an upsurge of makeover lifestyle programmes with experts advising viewers to transform every aspect of their lives.[76]

The rise of popular expertise and advice media has generally been associated with times of 'social and cultural upheaval'.[77] Though the advice has changed over the years, Lewis notes it has been marked by enduring themes that particularly centre on 'the management and presentation of the home and self as important sites of "good" consumption, moral regulation and identity formation.'[78]

The 2003 *Mind & Mood* report on Australian social trends reveals that Australians were retreating into domesticity, transferring their attention away from issues of the public sphere and into smaller and more manageable aspects of life. This retreat was compounded by the 9/11 attacks, global terrorism, environmental destruction and broader economic instability. At home, it seems, people could find some level of comfort, security and control. The 'quest for the perfect bathroom tile', suggests Hugh Mackay, narrows people's focus to such an extent that larger questions in life cannot get a look in.[79] This widespread emphasis on the personal and local also coincided with a general boom in metropolitan real estate and housing construction in Australia, during the late 1990s and early 2000s.[80] Makeover home renovation shows, such as *Auction Squad* (Seven, 2001-2005) and *Renovation Rescue* (Nine, 2003-), not only exploited this boom, but also conveniently tapped into the home-ownership ideology in Australia where the home has become a marker of national identity.[81] While still focused on

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[76] Ibid., pp. 448, 452-55.
[77] Lewis, 'Revealing the Makeover Show', p. 443; B .C. Rosenberg, 'Property and home make-over television: Risk, thrift and taste', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 2008, pp. 506-7.
[78] Lewis, 'Revealing the Makeover Show', p. 442.
[79] Mackay, *Advance Australia…Where*, pp. 263-65.
[80] L. Ferrier, 'Benevolence and gift-giving in *Backyard Blitz*', *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 85, 2005, p. 11.
[81] The ideology of home-ownership as a marker of national identity is also evident in the US and UK. See Rosenberg, 'Property and home make-over television', p. 506.

advising the audience on everyday living, contemporary makeover formats tend to be more instructional and interventionist than earlier forms of lifestyle media.[82]

The 'makeover takeover'

Alongside wider social processes of individualism and consumerism, the proliferation of lifestyle programmes (referred to as the 'makeover takeover'[83]) has been partly driven by economic pressures on television networks to produce cheaper programming.[84] In May 2012, there were no less than seven major reality/makeover shows fighting for audience share in Australia – *The Block, The Voice*, *MasterChef Australia*, *Australia's Got Talent, Dancing With The Stars*, *Celebrity Apprentice* and *The Biggest Loser* – which highlight just how important reality TV shows are for FTA networks' balance sheets.[85]

Economic pressures on networks have been partly caused by the de-regulation of the global television market and competition from a multichannel environment. These in turn have been used to explain the rise in cheap franchised formats.[86] In uncertain times, broadcasters tend to seek brands that have worked elsewhere, rather than risk developing original ideas.[87] The format resembles a template that is devised and licensed in one part of the world for the purposes of being reworked and broadcast in another. This complex trade of international formats, ideas and practices has a long historical trajectory, as we saw in Chapter 7, but accelerated during the 1980s as producers moved toward a more formalised and systematic distribution of skills and knowledge used in adapting programming formats.[88]

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[82] Lewis, 'Revealing the Makeover Show', pp. 442-43.
[83] In 'Makeover takeover on British television', *Screen*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 299-314, Rachel Moseley coined the term 'makeover takeover' to denote the proliferation of factual programmes on UK television in primetime in the 1990s.
[84] Rosenberg, 'Property and home make-over television', p. 506.
[85] M. Idato, 'The Voice spoils MasterChef's party', *SMH*, 8 May 2012.
[86] Lewis, 'Revealing the Makeover Show', pp. 443-44.
[87] Moran, 'Makeover on the move', p. 462.
[88] Ibid., pp. 460-61, 464.

Since the late 1990s, Australian FTA commercial networks have produced home-grown versions of overseas formats,[89] including the UK's *Ground Force* and the US's *The Biggest Loser* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. Australian networks have also developed their own crop of successful makeover formats. Nine's *The Block*, for instance, has been enormously popular not only in Australia but also overseas, with rights licensed in the US, UK and Scandinavia.[90] The popularity of these formats has led to a shift in the relationship between commercial content and advertising, providing alternative advertising opportunities through product placement and commercial tie-ins.[91] Within the industry, Ten's *MasterChef Australia* is considered a prime example of using creative brand integration, marketing products throughout the show, producing a spike in revenue for Tourism Australia when the programme travels, and generating publicity for restaurants and sponsors through merchandise, mobile content, magazines, publishing and live events.[92]

Traditionally, magazines were the main source of cross-promotion for lifestyle programmes in Australia. Apart from *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine, which pre-dated the television show, *Good Medicine*, *Our House* and *Burke's Backyard* magazines all started more or less at the same time as their eponymous television counterparts.[93] With convergence, makeover formats provide networks with opportunities for much wider commercial exploitation. On the other hand, poor brand integration, essentially a misplaced endorsement of sponsors' products within a show, can hinder a programme's credibility.[94] Don Burke always prided himself on

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[89] Australian television has also imported several overseas makeover formats without necessarily adapting them, including America's *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Supernanny*, and the UK's *Supernann*y. Pay TV has also picked up several imported formats and in 1997 launched the LifeStyle Channel dedicated to lifestyle and makeover shows. See Lewis, 'Changing rooms, biggest losers and backyard blitzes', p. 455.
[90] Ibid., p. 456.
[91] Ferrier, 'Benevolence and gift-giving in *Backyard Blitz*', p. 14.
[92] Diaz, 'The real world', pp. 28-29.
[93] Bonner, 'Lifestyle programs', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, pp. 111-12.
[94] Diaz, 'The real world', p. 28.

never being compromised by advertisers, and being willing to criticise individual gardening products.[95]

Makeover programmes also serve the self-interest of networks and participants. One of the most distinctive tropes in popular makeover programmes is 'gift-giving'.[96] It is the gift, often revealed in the form of a renovation/home makeover, that provides the climax to a programme's narrative. Gift-giving allows the network to present itself favourably as a champion of community values. *Backyard Blitz* and *Renovation Rescue* have generated opportunities for Sydney commercial television networks to promote their own charitable activities as media content. This 'cause-related marketing' allows networks to manage their public image and show commitment to, and involvement with, local communities. Cause-related marketing became particularly important during the 1980s when Australian television and radio developed national networks, and their connections with local communities and audiences declined.[97] Makeover programmes, which emphasise the social value of what they do, provide a way for media organisations to rejuvenate their image and foster public trust.[98]

Although it has been shaped by a complex trade of international ideas and practices, the Australian makeover format still reflects distinctive Australian cultural values. Australian makeovers are less about individualism, humiliation and class conflict than are the US and UK versions. Indeed, argues Lewis, many of Australia's makeover shows tend to be more about 'constructing a familiar, neighbourly mode of address', and a sense of egalitarianism. Hosts or presenters generally have a broad Australian accent and are presented as 'resolutely

[95] Stone, *Compulsive Viewing*, p. 374.
[96] Ferrier, 'Benevolence and Gift-giving in *Backyard Blitz'*, p. 11.
[97] Ibid., p. 22.
[98] Ibid., p. 11.

average'.[99] In contrast to the American *Biggest Loser* and its emphasis on entrepreneurial individualism, the Australian version places focuses on losing weight for the benefit of one's family and the community.[100] In the last three years, Australia's *Biggest Loser* has reinforced family and community values by featuring couples and family members competing as teams.

Cultural factors also determine whether a local version of an international format becomes a 'carbon copy' or is adapted to suit Australian broadcasters and audiences. *MasterChef Australia* shows very little resemblance to the original UK format. According to Paul Franklin, head of production at Shine Australia,[101] and the architect of *MasterChef Australia,* the original format required a significant overhaul in order for it to appeal to a Network Ten audience. *MasterChef Australia* was made to be 'bigger, bolder and brasher', with more drama than the 'sedate' UK version. Yet in Franklin's view, although Australian audiences like to be entertained, they are more cynical about the celebrity and fame element than are Americans. Just as sincerity and authenticity were essential for earlier Australian lifestyle presenters, so it remains for current makeover show hosts *and* contestants.[102]

A key narrative trope in Australian makeover and reality programmes is aspirationalism, which essentially involves transforming an amateur into a professional. However few contestants are ultimately rewarded for their aspirations. The emphasis is placed instead on the 'experience' or 'journey' rather than the end result.[103] The concept of the 'journey' originated from the lexicon of *BB* and its contestants' time in the house. The focus on the narrative of the character has traditionally been the domain of the documentary; however

[99] Lewis, 'Changing rooms, biggest losers and backyard blitzes', p. 456.
[100] Ibid.
[101] In 2012, the key creators of the *MasterChef Australia* format moved from production house Fremantle Media to Shine Australia, which specialises in factual and reality TV programming, particularly local versions of international reality TV formats. See P. Kalina, 'Stirring recipe for old ratings magic', *SMH*, 3 May 2012; T. Kroenert, 'Keeping it real', *Inside Film*, No. 144, December-January 2012, p. 48.
[102] Kroenert, 'Keeping it real', p. 49.
[103] K. Seale, '*MasterChef's* amateur makeovers', *MIA*, No. 143, May 2012, pp. 33-34.

many reality shows are adopting a similar narrative style.[104] *MasterChef Australia* capitalises on the narrative of the journey, providing the 'aspirational fantasy that any amateur who can do something proficiently has the potential to commodify their skills and knowledge'. This use of amateur contestants is key to the show's success with viewers.[105] Fairfax journalist Amanda Dunn summed up the appeal of this narrative arc on *MasterChef*:

> At once accessible and aspirational…the talent quest stream of reality TV plays on the romance of pure potential, the idea that an 'ordinary' person (i.e. you there in the lounge room) might have lurking within them a special talent that just needs nurturing under the stern but loving gaze of seasoned professionals, the masters to our grasshoppers.[106]

In its own way, *MasterChef Australia* also represents a 'new nice' on Australian television.[107] While audiences might tire of gritty crime dramas, Gordon Ramsay's relentless swearing and put-downs on *Hell's Kitchen*, and the cut-throat eliminations on *Celebrity Apprentice*, *MasterChef Australia* provides viewers with a refreshing dose of feel-good optimism, revealing the personal stories of contestants through their food and cooking.[108] Just as Australians retreated into their homes at the turn of the twenty-first century, they continue to do so with these transformative shows offering a level of escapism for viewers and a general sense of community and personal involvement.

Aspirationalism lies at the core of most reality-talent programmes overseas, as well as local adaptations such as *Australian Idol*, *X-Factor*, *The Voice*, *Dancing With The Stars*, *Australia's Got Talent*, *So You Think You Can Dance*, *I Will Survive*, and *Make Me A Supermodel*. The glut of reality-talent shows recalls the 1950s, but it also represents a cultural

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[104] Diaz, 'The real world', p. 28.
[105] Seale, '*MasterChef's* amateur makeovers', pp. 28, 32.
[106] A. Dunn, 'Why the Great Song and Dance?', *The Age*, 25 July 2010.
[107] Bodey, *Broadcast Wars*, p. 284.
[108] P. Kalina, 'Stirring recipe for old ratings magic', *SMH*, 3 May 2012.

preoccupation with, and democratisation of, current celebrity culture.[109] Television critic Ruth Ritchie underlines this shift, noting that singing and karaoke were for a long time primarily confined to *Midday* and did not generally lead to life-changing opportunities. Recent talent singing shows, however, have garnered world-wide interest and have effectively propelled previously unknown contestants into the limelight. Being a judge on one of these programmes has also revived the careers of several celebrities.[110]

Conclusion

The proliferation of reality TV shows in the twenty-first century appears to have fulfilled Andy Warhol's prediction that everyone will have their fifteen minutes of fame. Reality TV has radically changed the televisual landscape. Hybrid programmes have developed from blending older broadcasting forms with newer popular television genres.[111] Although such programmes have clear precedents that date back to the 1950s, featuring ordinary people and their everyday concerns, recent reality TV shows draw together these elements to address 'distinctly' contemporary concerns.[112] The explosion of cheap, franchised makeover formats is often attributed to broad economic changes in television production associated with market de-regulation and the expansion in the number of broadcasting channels. In such a competitive environment, local producers feel increasing pressure to create programmes that can move across national borders.[113] More than that, such formats provide networks with opportunities for wider commercial exploitation through cross-promotional arrangements with radio and print media, Internet websites and telecommunication companies.

[109] Turner, *Ordinary People and the Media*, pp. 12-13.
[110] R. Ritchie, 'Sound judgment', *SMH*, 28 April 2012.
[111] Hill, *Reality TV*, p. 39.
[112] Lewis, 'Changing rooms, biggest losers and backyard blitzes', pp. 448-49.
[113] Lewis, 'Revealing the Makeover Show', pp. 443-44.

The proliferation of makeover formats are also indicative of wider socio-cultural developments, particularly linked to the 'lifestyle turn' in contemporary society, and the democratisation of the media. The potential meanings and importance of the makeover format are shaped by several factors including cultural context, television scheduling and audience demand.[114] Despite the transnational format exchange, significant socio-cultural factors and production practices peculiar to each nation have influenced the development of specific localised versions of lifestyle programmes in each country.[115] Audience demand for parochial information suggests the local is still an important aspect of televisual culture.[116]

On Sydney FTA commercial television, the popularity of lifestyle and home makeover shows reflects a fascination with these types of programming that taps into Australian ideologies of home ownership and national identity. Lifestyle programmes on Sydney television in the 1950s and 1960s mirrored broader national and international discourses that centred on the gendered home and domestic sphere. These early programmes, along with television magazines, were instrumental in constructing and perpetuating images of the domestic space and women's 'proper' role within it. Female lifestyle presenters were required, by inference, to reconcile their public profile with these discourses. Although modern lifestyle and makeover shows increasingly involve women in traditionally 'male' activities and domestic spaces, items relating to interior decoration and 'managing the home' are still generally associated with female presenters.

The presenter has always been a vital part of reality TV's success. For lifestyle programming, reflecting everyday concerns, entering people's home and offering unsolicited advice call for accessible, 'ordinary' experts. Some of Sydney's most popular television personalities, such

[114] Ibid.
[115] Bonner, 'Lifestyle programs', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, p. 116.
[116] Ibid.

as Del Cartwright and Don Burke, those especially skilled at conveying televisual sincerity, gained prominence in this way on lifestyle-related programmes. Reflecting a cultural shift in the democratisation of society and celebrity culture, ordinariness has now become the primary mode of address to viewers on reality TV programmes, not only characterising the choice of presenters and experts, but also contestants. This has been highlighted in recent years by the rise of aspirationalism, a key narrative trope in popular makeover and reality-talent shows. Such shows provide contestants and viewers with the desire and hope that self-transformation can be just as achievable as home-renovations.

The programming prominence of reality TV formats and its variances signals a new global order in television.[117] Hill argues that reality TV programming is evidence of television's ability to reinvent genres and 'cannibalise itself in order to survive in a commercially uncertain media environment.'[118] Although the proliferation of reality TV on primetime continues to divide critics over its impact on newscaf[119] and public service broadcasting, the interactive engagement that reality TV promotes across multi-platform technology suggests that personal participation in public discourse is empowering for viewers. The introduction of new patterns of viewing and engagement with technology is perhaps reality TV's most radical influence on the televisual experience in the twenty-first century, and points to a 'pervasive shift in cultural attitudes about self-exposure and the relationship between the individual and an increasingly global community'.[120]

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[117] Moran, 'Makeover on the move', p. 460.
[118] Hill, *Reality TV*, p. 39.
[119] In 2010, the federal election leaders' debate was rescheduled to 6.30 p.m. on all the national commercial networks to avoid clashing with the *MasterChef Australia* finale. This highlights how important reality TV has become, not just to commercial television networks, but also to Australians. See L. Curtis, 'Debate to avoid MasterChef cook-off', ABC NEWS, 20 July 2010, www.abc.net.au/news/2010-07-20/debate-to-avoid-masterchef-cook-off/911980, accessed 29 July 2013; Media Spy, 'Ratings: 1 in 4 watch MasterChef finale', www.mediaspy.org/report/2010/07/26/updated-ratings-1-in-4-watch-masterchef-finale, accessed 29 July 2013.
[120] Taddeo & Dvorak, 'Introduction' in Taddeo & Dvorak (eds), *The Tube Has Spoken*, p. 8.

Conclusion

In 2012, Sydney commercial FTA television programming generated some of the industry's highest ratings in years, putting to rest speculation that FTA television is a dying mass medium.[1] At least, that is, for now. To counter the growing fragmentation of audiences, the industry's 'new' buzz word and strategy is 'event television': programmes that are highly anticipated, time-sensitive and attract mass audiences. Live sport and local primetime reality TV are television's biggest draw cards. Their ability to traverse age boundaries and other demographics, and broadcast live action (or at least manufacture a sense of 'liveness' and spectacle), are all part of their appeal. But it is the sense of community, and the collaborative conversation that they generate, which makes them most valuable to television networks. These 'water cooler moments' – when people gather around the office or in the home to talk about a particularly compelling television event or show – are no longer just happening the following day, but in real time as a programme unfolds.[2]

Reality TV programmes, live sport and breaking news are more likely than drama and documentaries to facilitate these shared viewing experiences. Twitter and other social networking sites are most responsible for restoring this sense of community and novelty to FTA television. Social media have now become embedded in television viewing, enhancing

[1] D. Knox, 'The Voice smashes through the 2.5 M Barrier', *TV Tonight*, 17 April 2012, http://www.tvtonight.com.au/2012/04/the-voice-smashes-through-2-5m-barrier.html, accessed 1 September 2013; D. Knox, '2.5M watch as State of Origin breaks records', *TV Tonight*, 24 May 2012, http://www.tvtonight.com.au/2012/05/2-5m-watch-as-state-of-origin-breaks-records.html, accessed 1 September 2013.
[2] L. Managan, 'How Twitter saved event TV', *The Guardian*, 14 January 2012.

audience participation and engagement with programmes and fellow viewers, all in real time.[3] What is of interest, though, is how broadcasters and commentators depict these trends in programming. The impression given is that such developments are altogether new. Yet much of what we see today on FTA commercial television is a reworking of old ideas. The packaging is new, but the concepts are well-worn.

Television programming trends are cyclical. In fact, event television has been part of Sydney television history from the beginning. Since the 1960s, live sporting events, lunar flights, royal weddings, mini-series and breaking news have attracted mass audiences and generated 'water cooler moments'. Viewers in earlier times may not have had Twitter; instead the collaborative conversation within Sydney's television community occurred in local television magazines and newspapers. Fan clubs built around local and overseas personalities constituted another important way to foster a community of viewers and facilitated an exchange of ideas and opinions. Sydney's television history reinforces the fact that audience participation is hardly a new phenomenon in Australia's broadcasting history.[4] Therefore to fully understand current programming trends we must consider what has gone before.

In doing so, there is a temptation to frame programming developments within a discourse of progress. When we cast our minds back to the 1950s and compare the first kinescoped television programmes to the slickly-produced presentations of today, the logical conclusion we might draw is that programming has dramatically improved. And in one sense this is true. Technological innovation has revolutionised the delivery of programme content to such an extent that broadcasters are now able to achieve what was once thought impossible when television began. As we saw in several chapters, developments in camera technology, colour

[3] Ibid.
[4] See Griffen-Foley, 'From *Tit-Bits* to *Big Brother*', pp. 153-54.

transmission, satellite, digital and online services have transformed television programming and viewing in numerous ways.

However, the history of Sydney programming is not simply linear. Depending on which lens is used, the picture can look very different. Developments in cultural programme policy are not unanimously thought to have improved since 1960. Although there are more content quotas, they have not necessarily ensured that television stations have broadcast more Australian material or met the spirit of the legislation. Furthermore, the fluctuating fortunes of commercial FTA television, and its impact on programming have added to this pessimistic picture. As a consequence, some observers have predicted television's inevitable decline. However, the history of Sydney commercial FTA television programming reveals that commercial FTA television has always found a way to adapt and recover.

The most constant element driving commercial television programming is the quest for ratings and advertising dollars. This economic imperative has determined commercial television's character from the beginning, and continues to shape the development of programming. Not surprisingly, Sydney commercial FTA television programming has been greatly influenced by the structure of its television industry. The dual nature of the licensing system has brought with it considerable tensions, particularly where commercial licensees' social responsibilities conflict with their economic profitability. A defining feature of Sydney's, and indeed Australia's, broadcasting history is the struggle between commercial operators, regulators and the public in determining a broadcasting system and policy structure that satisfies all parties. Commercial viability remains a central part of broadcasting policy, often trumping social and cultural concerns.[5] This outcome is frequently a byproduct of the

[5] Herd, *Networking*, p. 142.

expedient relationships that exist between broadcasters and politicians – another enduring feature of Australia's broadcasting history.

Since 1956, programming decisions have focused on managing the tensions between cultural objectives and commercial television's pursuit of profits. This has shaped the production, scheduling and overall development of programming genres in various ways. Locally produced drama and children's programming are two areas that have galvanised the most vocal public support for regulation and generated debate about commercial licensees' obligations to the community. In the early years, ideological and moral concerns largely guided this public outcry. But as social values shifted, so too did the tenor of public protest; this protest became almost entirely concerned with driving cultural policy. This may have contributed to religious programming's comparatively minor status in regulatory debates and policy over time. Religion has arguably never been a core component of Australian national identity, which explains, in part, why religious programming has struggled to maintain a presence on commercial FTA television.

Drama is recognised as the genre most effective in reflecting a sense of national identity and for securing the greatest proportion of Australian employment in the industry. But since it is one of the most costly forms of programming, commercial television stations are generally unwilling to commit to producing high levels of Australian drama without regulatory stipulations. Consequently, locally produced drama remains an important part of Australian content quotas. Sydney's commercial broadcasters have generally preferred instead to promote national culture in a more populist manner, largely achieving this through the promotion and broadcasting of national sporting events.[6] Sport holds a central place in

[6] Herd, 'Trade Liberalisation and Australia's Television Cultural Policy', p. 49.

Australian culture and is arguably more effective in uniting disparate groups of people with varying tastes than locally produced drama. Sport is also highly profitable for commercial stations, making it one of the most valued broadcasting commodities.

It is not surprising then that Sydney commercial stations over time built their reputations and identity on sports programming. The Packer-run Nine Network was the most blatant promoter of populist sporting images – images that were intricately tied to those of Australian masculinity. Rugby League, Sydney's flagship sport, along with racing and cricket, drew heavily on larrikin and ocker constructs, perpetuating these stereotypes through the personalities, commentators and antics on local sports shows. This blokey character shaped the pattern of sports programming on competing channels and has had a residual impact on Nine's overall image. Advertising, the driving force of commercial television, was also instrumental in consolidating these popular nationalist images.

The programming output of Sydney's commercial television stations invariably reflected the tastes of their owners. Both Frank, and later, Kerry, Packer were known for their love of sport, disdain of high culture, and for privileging genres that were entertaining, informative and cost-efficient. Nine's proven formula for increasing ratings and profits was built on its commitment to sport, newscaf and game shows, rather than locally produced drama.[7] This commitment to sport and newscaf, in particular, led to technological and stylistic programming innovations that were either home-grown or imported.

Since Nine has dominated the Sydney ratings for most years since 1956, it has inevitably influenced the direction of programming trends, but has also pioneered general strategies

[7] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, pp. 92-93. See also Barry, *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer Uncut*, pp. 240-41.

adopted by all networks. Australia's oligopolistic television market has only served to strengthen this influence. In such a market where competition is moderate, the aim of programmers is to provide content that has broad appeal and does not diverge too much from its competition. In fact, if one network launches a highly successful programme, the rest usually follow suit and produce either a carbon copy or a slightly altered version. Inevitably, this has resulted in a level of 'sameness' in the programming output of Sydney's commercial television stations.[8]

While the Packers predominantly shaped Nine's image, Seven's image in Sydney was influenced by Fairfax and the Macquarie Radio Network. The Fairfax organisation saw itself as being publicly responsible and progressive, whereas the Macquarie Radio Network was particularly associated with high-status programmes, extravagant productions and major radio personalities. Over the years, the Seven Network consolidated its early connections with UK television and its purchase and borrowing of British programmes and concepts. Seven is largely recognised as an innovator in drama, variety and comedy, having proved its commitment to in-house production and locally produced drama. In one sense, Seven's programming has often resembled that of the ABC's, although Seven has maintained a distinctly commercial emphasis.[9] Seven has predominantly held the ratings lead in Sydney since 2005, following Nine's management upheaval and loss of key personnel.

In contrast to Nine and Seven, the Ten Network has had less ownership stability throughout its tenure, which has often had a bearing on the network's financial fortunes and programming. TEN-10 experienced financial difficulties from its start 1965, when it became clear the market at that time could not adequately sustain a third station. For the most part,

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[8] Flew, *Financing, Programming and Diversity in Australian Television*, p. 36.
[9] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, pp. 95-97.

TEN-10 has remained in third position, often forced to adopt defensive programming strategies to stay competitive. TEN-10 spent its first decade attempting to emulate Nine and Seven. It achieved this by recruiting on-screen and off-screen personnel from the other networks and commissioned packaging companies to copy successful programmes on Nine and Seven. From the mid-1970s, TEN-10 became an innovator in the area of serials and mini-series.[10] TEN-10's innovations in newscaf – introducing *Eyewitness News* and popular female newsreaders – did not always alter the rating pattern between stations, but did influence the direction of programming trends over time.

Responding to its near-bankruptcy situation in the 1990s, Ten adopted a counter-programming strategy which relied less on pursuing the mass audience, aiming instead at capturing the highly profitable 16-39 age group. To do this, Ten initially focused on broadcasting imported programmes from the US in the late 1990s, and supplemented these with local studio-based comedy programmes. The Ten Network cemented its position with the youth demographic in the 2000s following the success of *Big Brother* and *Australian Idol*. However Ten has been forced to revise its strategy by appealing to the 16-49 year olds, following diminishing returns throughout the 2000s.[11]

Just as the ownership structures and management styles of Sydney's commercial networks influenced the content, scheduling, development and longevity of programmes, so too have its producers and on-air personalities. As Chapter 3 argued, the cross-hiring of staff between the commercial and public service broadcasters facilitates the blending of news values between more tabloid and investigative varieties of newscaf. Naturally this creates conflict between

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[10] Moran, *Inside Australian Media*, p. 100.
[11] Flew & Harrington, 'Television', in Turner & Cunningham (eds), *The Media & Communications in Australia*, pp. 160-61; A. Whitley & D. Fickling, 'Murdoch son Seen Vying to Reclaim Ten Network: Real M&A', 14 December 2012, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-12-13/murdoch-son-seen-vying-to-reclaim-ten-network-real-m-a.html, accessed 20 February 2013.

those who hold either to populist or Reithian understandings of broadcasting and quality programming. This conflict is not exclusive to newscaf, as Chapters 4, 6, 7 and 8 explored to varying degrees. But the conflict is at its strongest when it concerns genres that are considered most influential in shaping people's ideas about the world, such as newscaf. The tension is unlikely to be resolved unless we come to understand, as Turner suggests, that traditional forms of newscaf do not need to be mutually exclusive or hostile towards entertainment versions. Nor do traditional forms of newscaf programming ensure quality journalism is produced. There are several engaging ways that newscaf can be presented without losing its credibility or its capacity to 'satisfy a serious newscaf audience'.[12]

As examined in Chapters 7 and 8, the skill-sets of performers and the volume of available talent have also played a role in driving programming trends. A nationwide shortage of writers and an apparent lack of comedic talent compared with an overabundant supply of vocalists and dancers in the early years privileged showcase variety productions over sitcoms and satirical sketches on Sydney commercial television. Likewise, Tonight shows petered out in the late 1970s as networks struggled to find suitable new hosts, while locally produced drama thrived.

Light entertainment shows are particularly dependent on the personalities propelling them. Talent is necessary, but rapport with the audience is vital. *TV Week* observed in 1959, 'Television is as intimate as a handshake. It is clear in two or three shows whether an entertainer has the peculiar composite of talents that gives him a potential in television.'[13] As networks came to learn, there is no simple formula for television stardom. For some stars, a meteoric rise to fame was followed by a sudden plummet from the skies. Those lucky enough

[12] Turner, *Ending the Affair*, p. 88.
[13] Dolly Shot, 'Television's Fourth Year…', *TV Week*, 19-25 September 1959, p. 8.

to win and hold viewers' adoration and loyalty become television institutions. The cosier, ordinary type of personality tends to be most successful in creating a personal connection with viewers, as we saw in Chapters 2, 4 and 9. Observing Australian television in 1968, Elizabeth Riddell wrote:

> The successful television personalities command through togetherness, through being not denizens of another richer and more powerful world but by being in the same world – though inflated – of bathroom jokes, indigestion, marital strife and the weekly paycheck.[14]

This connection between the television personality and viewer is vital for the ratings success of all genres. While there are several explanations for why some programmes rate highly and others do not, Hugh Mackay believes that the key factor that explains the popularity of top-rating programmes is their ability to create a 'personal link' with the viewer. In other words, 'this programme tells me something about myself'.[15]

But this is certainly not the only factor. Chapter 7 explored the role of Sydney's television critics and their influence in shaping viewers' perceptions about local and imported programmes. The critiques produced in publications such as *TV Week* are arguably the first layer in the public's collective memorialisation of Australian television. Moreover, they are important contributors to the process whereby value is ascribed to television shows and personalities. Although it is impossible to know for certain how much these critiques impact the decision-making of programmers and viewers, they still represent part of the evaluative

[14] E. Riddell, 'Entertainment', in M. McCallum (ed.), *Ten Years of Television*, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1968, pp. 27-43.
[15] H. Mackay & Centre for Communications Studies, *The Mackay Report: Behind the Ratings*, October 1981, Centre for Communications Studies, Bathurst, NSW, 1981, p. 27.

process that is central to the formation of the 'public archive'[16] of Australian television. Some programmes will be remembered 'forever'; others have been quickly forgotten.

In studying this process, we must not forget the role of scheduling, which has frequently been overlooked in cultural histories of television. Programmes are often judged or analysed according to their intrinsic value, and less attention is given to how the process of scheduling influences our judgements. Television programmes are mediated to us in a planned flow. Each programme is allocated a timeslot as part of a network's grand strategy to maximise audiences. How viewers evaluate a programme has much to do with where a programme is placed in the schedule, what programmes precede and follow it, the way it is promoted, how often it is scheduled, and the ratings' performance of programmes aired in the same timeslot on competing networks. Together these elements can determine the popularity and commercial success of programmes.[17] More importantly, they are able to influence our perceptions about what programmes are worthy of being remembered in our collective televisual memory.

How many programmes, with all the so-called 'right' ingredients, have vanished into oblivion because they were pushed to the fringes of the programming schedule? What about the programmes that were never given a chance to find an audience or grow in a timeslot, because they were axed too soon by an impatient programme executive intent on short-term ratings and profits. And what of the haphazard scheduling practices of some programmers who, by their indecisiveness, have killed any chance of a programme building a loyal audience because they broke one of the key laws in programme scheduling: regularity? On many

[16] This is a helpful term coined by McKee and explored in the introduction to his *Australian Television*. 'Public archive' refers to the end result of the daily memorialisation process conducted by the Australian media and the community, p. 6.
[17] Eastman & Ferguson, *Media Programming*, pp. 8-14; 18-30; 57-75.

occasions, a once-thought unpromising programme (such as *Neighbours*), has blossomed after finding the right timeslot. It is not simply a programme's content and production values that determine whether viewers watch it or ascribe worth to it; the way it is promoted and scheduled is also of great importance.

Perhaps it is not unreasonable to question how much choice we really have in *ascribing value* to television shows. Do programmers largely do it for us? How much are we guided by the ratings and the memorialisation of television by television networks? What influences our decision-making process and final evaluations? Sydney commercial television networks, being the main programme suppliers and powerbrokers in Australian television, have exercised their power of veto over programmes since 1956. In the early years, Sydney commercial stations made it difficult for programmes and personalities from elsewhere to penetrate or succeed in the Sydney market. Eventually, this parochialism was dulled somewhat with the development of national networking.

Sydney ratings have, however, mostly determined the life span of programmes broadcast on FTA commercial television. Sydney ratings are, according to Tony Barber, 'the first page of numbers [the networks] look at and the figures of which most notice is taken'.[18] Ultimately this has undermined the practice of localism in smaller television markets within Australia. But it also raises important questions about Sydney viewers. Were and are their tastes really that different to those of Melbourne's, or indeed, any other Australian city? Or did television magazines and newspapers manufacture this rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne? An oral history exploring these questions may help us to understand Sydney viewers, Sydney television culture and its programming history more comprehensively.

[18] Barber, *Who Am I?*, p. 188.

In writing a history of Sydney commercial television, it has been interesting to observe how interwoven popular ideas of 'Australian' television are with 'Sydney' television. Consequently, key moments in Sydney's commercial television history are often written about as though they were a shared part of every Australian's experience and memory of the medium. The reality is quite different. Australians living in indigenous communities or regional areas did not receive television until much later than 1956. Some communities were unable to access a broadcast signal, while others only had the choice of watching one or two channels.[19] In fact, some of the most popular Australian dramas, such as *Prisoner*, *Sons and Daughters* and *The Sullivans* were shown on regional stations years later than metropolitan stations.[20]

Since Sydney is the headquarters for each of the networks, Sydney programming has inevitably become synonymous with national programming. Apart from Sydney's newscaf service and general television advertisements, there are few other indicators that make Sydney programming identifiably local. Sydney may have had a distinctive television culture and personality in early years, but much of its programming was a locally-inflected version of overseas programmes. This is no different to commercial television programming today, where a good deal of what is broadcast is the result of a complex trade of international programming formats. As Sydney commercial television becomes increasingly entrenched in the global television marketplace, the pressure to produce programming that travels across national and linguistic borders will only intensify. Already more economical forms of programming such as quiz and game shows and soaps have been sold successfully overseas.

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[19] See S. Turnbull, 'A Gap in the Records: Television Audiences and the History of "Us"', in Darian-Smith, & Turnbull (eds), *Remembering Television*, pp. 23-25.
[20] Herd, *Networking*, p. 183.

How Australian regulators choose to navigate cultural policy in light of global marketplace change and technological convergence will be fascinating to observe.

Hybrid programming has become the distinguishing feature of programming globally. Just as programmes are no longer delivered via the traditional television medium, so genres once thought distinct are losing their clarity. The boundaries between information and entertainment genres have become increasingly blurred over time, accelerating change in newscaf and infotainment programming in particular. Reality TV is indicative of the way television is constantly in a process of reinvention in order to survive during times of broadcasting instability.[21]

Reflecting upon fifty-plus years of Sydney commercial television programming, the picture is not linear but circular, demonstrating that continuity extends backwards as well as forwards. There has never been a 'golden age' of programming, as the memorialisation of television, indulged in particularly by Nine, would like to suggest. Nor did Sydney commercial television programming develop in a vacuum. We must not forget the role earlier forms of media have played in television programme creation. The heritage of radio was central to the way television programming practices and audience consumption patterns developed. Global programming trends and broad socio-cultural and economic movements have also imprinted their influence on Sydney's television programming.

Finally, the influence of television programming does not flow in one direction only. Programming does not merely reflect cultural change, but also plays a role in constructing national images and characters and influencing cultural movements. For better or worse,

[21] Hill, *Reality TV*, p. 39.

Sydney's commercial television programmes have disrupted viewers' lives, offering escapism, enjoyment, frustration, entertainment and information. We can either praise or condemn commercial television, but one thing is certain: it connects us in a shared imagined world that goes beyond our immediate experience and environment. In an increasingly privatised and individualistic society, that's not such a bad thing.

Appendix 1

An Overview of the Australian Television Ratings System[1]

What are the ratings?

Australian television ratings are determined electronically by an independent company, the Sydney-based OzTAM (Australian Television Audience Measurement) ratings agency. The three metropolitan FTA commercial television networks – Seven, Nine and Ten – own and control the agency.

The agency surveys some 3,035 households across metropolitan Australia, in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide, and about 2,000 households in regional areas and Hobart. The agency also receives viewing information for pay TV data from another approximately 1,200 households. These surveys take place in ten blocks of four weeks' each,

[1] This information has been gathered from: 'The truth about TV ratings', *TV Times*, 27 November 1963, pp. 8-9; C. Jones & D. Bednall, *Television in Australia: Its History Through the Ratings*, Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, [Sydney], 1980; ACNielsen, *Australian Television: A Ratings History 1956-1998,* ACNielsen Australia, [Sydney], 1999; C. Collins, 'Getting Our Measure: Inside the Australian TV Ratings System', *Screen Education*, No. 36, Spring 2004, pp. 46-50; T. Thomas, 'Australian TV 50 Years On', *MIA*, No. 121, November 2006, pp. 188-198; C. L. Davies & J. Sternberg, 'The Spaces and Places of Audience Research in Australian Television', *MIA*, No. 122, February 2007, pp. 28-41; V. O'Donnell, 'TV ratings: now for a reality check', 16 December 2011, http://raws.adc.rmit.edu.au/~e81843/blog2/?p=1335, accessed 17 September 2012; http://www.oztam.com.au/faqs.aspx, accessed 17 September 2012.

excluding ten weeks over the Christmas/summer period and two weeks either side of Easter.

Television ratings represent the number of people tuned into a television programme at a particular point. A rating is a measure of a programme's audience. It refers to the proportion of homes with a television set on at a particular time. A rating of 30 in Sydney means 30% of television homes are tuned in to a particular programme in a fifteen-minute period. This is known as 'Quarter Hour' data. Ratings can also be based on 'Elemental' data, which refers to information on viewing behaviour derived from panel households and individual panel members on a minute-by-minute basis.

The total share of audience that any one station achieves is calculated as a percentage derived from all the figures for ratings and homes using television in a given period or over the whole day. Ratings also serve as an index of how much a network can charge for advertising airtime. Advertising prices are measured in CPM, meaning cost per mile (thousand). This represents the cost of reaching one thousand members in the specified target audience.

Since commercial television is centred on how to sell time to advertisers, the size of a programme's audience is critical to a commercial television network's capacity to generate advertising revenue.

A brief history of the ratings

The system of measuring radio audiences was carried over to television unaltered when it began in 1956. Two companies competed to provide ratings: McNair Surveys and Anderson Analysis. From 1957 to 1963, Anderson Analysis and McNair Surveys alternated survey periods. This changed when they began to compete in the same survey periods from 1964 to

1973. On 23 November 1973, the two companies merged to form McNair Anderson Associates Pty Ltd.

Prior to TEN-10's launch in 1965, a very popular programme was more likely to achieve a rating of 50. But with three commercial channels in the market, the audience was spread more thinly. Most of the surveys conducted prior to 1965 were based on an average of two or three weeks of surveys. After three to four-week ratings surveys became the norm, a demand grew for ratings for individual quarter hours of individual weeks. These were available on a sporadic basis from 1964, and from 1966 complete surveys were made available. By the 1980s, McNair Anderson provided figures showing the ebb and flow of audiences between stations every quarter hour. This data provided stations with a better estimate of audience viewing patterns at the beginning and end of programmes.

From 1974 to 1990, ratings were based on the McNair Anderson/AGB McNair data and from 1991 to 1998, ratings were based on ACNielsen data. Since 2001, OzTAM has been the official source for television audience measurement in Australia.

How are ratings measured?

1. Diary method

From 1956 both ratings firms, Anderson Analysis and McNair, employed the diary method. Anderson Analysis selected 500 people for 7 days a week, totaling 3,500 samples from the metropolitan area. McNair interviewed people to consolidate their results. The diary method involved people filling out a diary listing the programmes they watched each week. Both ratings' organisations selected their sample groups on the basis of census data. McNair

separated Sydney's population into five categories based on socio-economic areas. Category A represented the top 2.5% from the North Shore and Eastern suburbs; B represented the next 10%, which included rising executives and the 'glamour' professions; C referred to the middle class comprising 40% of Sydney's population; D included the industrial suburbs and Housing Commission (social housing) and semi-skilled trades; while E represented the remaining population.

2. Peoplemeters

The peoplemeter system, replacing the 'diary' system, has operated in Australia since 1991. The peoplemeter is an electronic measurement installed in selected homes to track when television sets are in use and what channels they are tuned into. The peoplemeters send collected information nightly to research service provider, ATR Australia (Advanced Television Research), via telephone line. Peoplemeters provide minute-by-minute information; allow information to be processed overnight; and run continuously 24 hours a day every day of the year. The peoplemeter system is considered more reliable than the 'diary' system, which is recorded partially at the time of viewing and partially via recollection.

3. Statistical sampling

In addition to peoplemeters, OzTAM uses statistical sampling. Statistical sampling is a method by which the ATR creates a sample audience and counts how many people in that programme view each program. From that sample, ATR estimates the number of viewers in the entire population watching the programme.

Appendix 2

Regulation Timeline

1942	*Australian Broadcasting Act 1942* passed
	Joint Committee on Wireless Broadcasting (Gibson Committee)
	Report of the Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting
1948	Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB) established
1953	Royal Commission on Television
	Television Act 1953
1954	Report of Royal Commission on Television
1955	Licence hearings for Sydney and Melbourne television
1956	*Broadcasting Act 1942* and *Television Act 1953* consolidated in the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942-1956*
	Television Programme Standards introduced and become part of the amendments to the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942*
	First transmission tests begin in Sydney
	In Sydney, TCN-9 launches on 16 September, followed by ABN-2 (ABC) on 5 November and ATN-7 on 2 December
	In Melbourne, HSV-7 launches on 4 November, followed by ABV-2 (ABC) on 19 November
	Advisory Committee on Children's Television Programmes (ACCTP) established
1957	GTV-9 Melbourne launches on 19 January
1958	A single licence is granted in Perth

1959	Advisory Committee on Religious Television Programmes (ACRTP) established
1960	The Nine television network (between Sydney and Melbourne) established when the Packers buy 62% of GTV-9
	ATN-7 and HSV-7 form the Seven Network
	Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) established
	ABCB introduces first local content quota requiring commercial stations to broadcast no less than 40% Australian material
1962	Coaxial cable launched
1963	Licence hearings for the third commercial stations in Sydney and Melbourne. Awarded to United Telecasters (TEN-10) in Sydney and Austarama Pty Ltd (ATV-0) in Melbourne.
	Senate Select Committee on Encouragement of Australian Productions for Television (The Vincent Committee)
1964	Third commercial station, ATV-0 Melbourne, launches in August
1965	Third commercial station, TEN-10 Sydney, launches in April
	Amendment made to the ownership laws, preventing a person or company from having a prescribed interest (5% of the voting, loan or shareholding interest in a license) in more than two television stations in Australia and more than one television station in any single market
1967	ABCB introduced drama quota requiring commercial stations to televise 30 minutes of locally produced drama a week and 2 hours of Australian drama a month in primetime (7.30-9.30 p.m.)
1969	ABCB introduces incentive system of credit loadings for Australian children's programmes
1970	Drama quota increases to 6 hours of first release drama per 28 days from 6-10 p.m.
	'TV – Make it Australian' campaign
1971	Second Children's Television Advisory Committee established to formulate guidelines for quota programmes
	ABCB introduces a minimum children's quota for 4 hours per station every 28 days of programmes for a 9-month experimental period.

1972	ACRTP disbanded
1973	'Points System' instituted in August
1975	Full-time colour transmission arrives on 1 March
1976	A Report on the Structure of the Australian Broadcasting System with Particular Regard to the Control, Planning, Licensing, Regulation, Funding and Administration of the System (The Green Report) releases a critique of Australia's broadcasting system
	ABCB Advisory Committee Report on Programme Standards (Edgar Report)
	Drama quota increased to 9 hours of first release Australian drama per 28 days
	ABCB abolished
1977	The Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT) established
	ABT Self-Regulation Inquiry
	Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Act 1977
1978	Children's Programme Committee (CPC) established
1979	ABT announces 'C' classification for programmes aimed at children aged 5-12 years
	News Limited acquires the Ten Network
1980	Channel 0/28 launches in Sydney and Melbourne, making SBS the first major Australian television broadcaster to use the UHF frequency
	10BA tax concession encourages production of high budget mini-series and telemovies
1982	Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF) established
1983	ABT releases a discussion paper on religion on television, and a Review of Television Programme Standards
1984	Children's and Preschool Television Standards (CTS) introduced
1985	SBS begins regular daytime transmissions and expands to Brisbane, Adelaide, Gold Coast, Wollongong and Newcastle
1986	Hawke Labor government changes television ownership rules, abolishing the two-station limit

1987	Alan Bond, Frank Lowy and Christopher Skase control the three commercial FTA television networks (7, 9, 10)
	ABT conducts a review of the CTS – *Inquiry into the Regulation of Children's Programmes*
1989	Quintex (Seven Network) and Northern Star (Ten Network) placed in receivership
	ABT inquiry into Alan Bond
1990	Kerry Packer buys back the Nine Network from Alan Bond
	New Australian Content Standard (ACS) introduced
1991	CanWest Global Communications buys the Ten Network from Westpac Bank
1992	*Broadcasting & Services Act 1992* supersedes the *Broadcasting & Television Act 1942*.
	ABT abolished
	Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) becomes the new regulator
	CPC disbanded
1994	Community television begins in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane
1995	Subscription television (Pay TV) commences
	The Seven Network is sold to a consortium including Kerry Stokes, a Perth media owner
1996	ABA's new ACS mixes overall time quotas with specific genre requirements using a points system
1998	Kerry Stokes acquires a controlling interest in the Seven Network
1999	Productivity Commission Inquiry into the regulation of Australian broadcasting services, including regulation, Australian content, ownership standards, technology and convergence
	Anti-hoarding rules introduced into the *Broadcasting & Services Act 1992*
2000	Television stations conduct digital test transmissions
2001	Digital television introduced in capital cities and some regional areas

ABC Kids channel is the first digital multi-channel to launch

2005 Australia-US Free Trade Agreement comes into force

ABA and Australian Communications Authority merges to become the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)

New ACS requires all commercial FTA television licensees to broadcast an annual minimum transmission quota of 55% Australian programming between 6 a.m. and midnight.

2006 *Broadcasting Services Amendment (Media Ownership) Act 2006* allows more foreign investment and mergers.

Kerry Stokes (Seven Network) enters into a joint venture with Kohlberg Kravis Roberts (KKR), a US private equity firm, and forms Seven Media

Anti-siphoning list comes into effect

2007 CanWest Media Works Holdings acquires 56.7% of Ten Network Holdings Ltd

Review of CTS 2005 commences

Seven HD (Seven's main digital channel) and TEN HD (Ten's main digital channel) launch

2008 Nine HD (Nine's main digital channel) launches

Inquiry into the Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media Environment

Global Financial Crisis (GFC)

2009 CanWest sells Ten Network to a group of Australian institutional investors

ABC3 launches.

GO! (Nine's second digital channel) and 72TWO (Seven's second digital channel) launch

One HD launches, replacing TEN HD

Federal Government conducts a review of the anti-siphoning scheme

ACMA determines new Children's Television Standards 2009 (CTS 2009) on 24 August

2010	New Children's Television Standards (CTS 2009) officially replaces CTS 2005 on 1 January
	GEM (Nine's third digital channel) launches
	PBL Media renamed Nine Entertainment Co.
	In November the Government announces reforms to the anti-siphoning scheme, introducing a two-tier anti-siphoning list of A and B events
2011	Eleven (Ten's new digital channel) launches
	Seven Media Group (owner of the Seven Network) merges with West Australian Newspapers Holdings Ltd to form Seven West Media
2012	The Government proposes a series of reforms to the anti-siphoning scheme
	Broadcasting Services Amendment (Anti-siphoning) Bill 2012
	The Final Report of the Convergence Review Committee released.

Appendix 3 of this thesis has been removed as it may contain sensitive/confidential content

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Daily Telegraph (London)

Equity

Eureka Street

Fox Sports

Herald (Melbourne)

Impact (*Wesley Impact*)

Listener-In

Nation

Nation Review

Nation Times

NEWS

Radio Television News

Show Biz

Sun

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Sun-Herald

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