



**Senator the Hon Helen Coonan
Minister for Communications,
Information Technology
and the Arts**

**Deputy Leader of the Government
in the Senate**

Representative Speech Notes for Senator Ronaldson

Young Media Australia 50th Anniversary

Friday 30 March 2007

Thank you

It is a pleasure to be here today on behalf of the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator Helen Coonan.

I would like to start by congratulating Young Media Australia (YMA) on its fifty years of service and achievement.

The Australian Government certainly recognises the valuable contribution that YMA makes in providing information about the social impacts of the media on children and young people.

I would like to outline very briefly today what the Australian Government is doing to encourage the production of quality children's programming and also the specific regulatory provisions designed to protect children.

Australian Children's Television Foundation

The Government provides direct funding to the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF) to develop, produce, finance and distribute children's television and film.

This financial year, this funding will amount to almost \$2.6 million.

Film Finance Corporation

In 2005-06, the Film Finance Corporation (FFC), the primary Australian Government film financing agency, allocated \$11.8 million to children's television drama.

In order to provide opportunities for young Australians to see locally made feature films that reflect their own society, the FFC is introducing the Children's Film Initiative.

Under this initiative, the FFC will give priority to the production of at least one feature film for children per year starting in July 2007.

The Australian Government is working with the sector to promote quality, diverse and educational children's programming as part of our commitment to strengthening the entire industry.

Children's Television Standards

Due to their developmental levels, children require special consideration in areas such as advertising and the presentation of material that may be harmful.

In light of this, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is required to develop Standards for children's programming.

The Standards ensure that broadcasters meet requirements which include screening certain amounts of Australian content created for Australian children.

The CTS requires commercial licensees to broadcast at least 390 hours of local children's programs per year.

This is to be made up of at least 130 hours of Preschool ('P') programs and at least 260 hours of Children's ('C') programs; at least 50% of this category must be first-release.

As part of the 'C' category, licensees must also broadcast at least 96 hours (or their equivalent) over three years, and 25 hours (or their equivalent) per year of first-release children's drama.

ACMA is currently undertaking a full review of the Children's Television Standards, and the Terms of Reference for the Review are available from the ACMA website (www.ACMA.gov.au).

The review will focus on the provision of children's programs and appropriate safeguards during children's viewing times on free-to-air commercial television.

The role of advertising in childhood obesity will also be considered as part of the review.

A comprehensive review of relevant research on advertising to children and an analysis of children's television viewing patterns are also underway.

An issues paper will be released in the first half of 2007, building on findings from the research, and public submissions will be invited at that time.

Online Content

Safeguards designed to protect children from offensive and harmful content are also in place for online content.

The *Communications Legislation Amendment (Content Services) Bill* will be introduced into Parliament soon and will extend the current safeguards that apply to content delivered over the Internet or television to new commercial content services delivered over convergent devices such as 3G mobile phones and subscription-based portals.

The Australian Government takes the physical, emotional and intellectual development of our children very seriously.

We are very pleased to be working with organisations such as the YMA and other industry bodies to ensure the best possible outcome for children.

Once again I would like to congratulate the YMA on this milestone and thank you all for your dedication to creating a strong and clear voice in children's media.

Thank you.