

LAUNCH OF 'CHANGING STANDARDS FOR AUSTRALIAN CONTENT ON TV'

SPEECH BY MAUREEN BARRON

ABA Conference – Canberra
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Good evening. I am Maureen Barron, chair of the Australian Film Commission and it is my pleasure to welcome our invited guests this evening, particularly Professor David Flint, Chair of the Australian Broadcasting Authority and other distinguished guests.

We are here to mark the publication of proceedings of the recent Workshop '*Changing Standards for Australian Content on TV*'.

The AFC would like to thank Professor Flint and the ABA for allowing us to take time out of their conference agenda and focus attention on our Australian content workshop.

This conference is the perfect occasion to present this publication because it brings together the widest assembly of broadcasting and content creation interests and it takes place at a time when the ABA is in the midst of reviewing the standard for Australian content on free-to-air television.

That review prompted the AFC to invite Network Insight to join us in coordinating a workshop, which we held in Sydney on 15 March with Allens Arthur Robinson.

Professor Mark Armstrong, who is here tonight and will step up shortly, chaired the workshop and his staff edited the transcript, which we are distributing here.

Issues discussed included regulating for diversity; encouraging higher budget programs; the market for children's TV drama; and documentary expenditure trends.

The back cover of the Workshop publication lists the speakers and you will see that they represent a wide range of perspectives from across the television sector. The publication features views of individual networks, producers, relevant government agencies and peak bodies – all of whom are attending the ABA conference.

The Workshop was distinguished by a frank exchange of views. Particularly encouraging was the desire of all sectors to identify and develop common ground.

We welcome the resources and attention the ABA has already devoted to the Review and are pleased to see the topic featuring prominently in the conference program tomorrow.

The AFC remains strongly committed to the interdependent goals of promoting Australian cultural identity and the development of the local production sector, that gives expression to our culture. The ABA and other arms of Government have also demonstrated a commitment to these goals. It is important that the Australian Content Standard continues to operate effectively and in a manner that responds to the changing nature of the broadcasting market. We are convinced that Australian content regulation is more important than ever – especially in the light of global trade agreements.

It is important that Government continues to monitor and respond to the changing nature of our industry and the AFC is proud of its role in assisting Government to do this by the provision of research, policy analysis and conducting industry events. Our Workshop and the joint publication of its proceedings are examples of such initiatives. The document is available for you to take away and it is also on the AFC website.

I would now like to hand over to Professor Flint. Please welcome Professor Flint.