



media, entertainment & arts alliance
the people who inform and entertain



Screen
Producers
Association
of Australia

21/03/10

Senator Stephen Conroy
Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via facsimile: 02 6273 4154

Dear Minister

Re: Commercial free to air licence fee rebates and local content

The Australian Directors Guild, Australian Cinematographers Society, Australian Guild of Screen Composers, Australian Screen Editors Guild, Australian Writers Guild, Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance, the Music Council of Australia and the Screen Producers Association of Australia are writing to you with regards to your recent announcement (7 February 2010) that the Government will offer licence rebates to broadcasters in 2010 and 2011 to “protect Australian content on commercial television.”

Our organisations fully support moves by the Government to protect local content. However we are concerned that this has occurred at a time when local content is being shut out of the digital free to air multi-channelling and your Department is reviewing the application of local content standards on the multichannels.

The free to air multi-channels are currently screening minimal levels of Australian content. An analysis of content on the multi-channels shows that the Nine Network’s Go! featured a mere 3.2 percent local content, the Seven Network’s SevenTwo, 15.1 per cent and Network Ten’s One HD 14.3 per cent between the hours of 6am and 12 midnight in the first week of 2010. None of this was original programming.

If, as you state in your Media Release, that “broadcasters have a unique role in preserving our national culture,” then this is an appalling failure to safeguard Australian content.

Commercial free to air broadcasters have been provided with access to public spectrum, which remains a highly valuable resource both in terms of the commercial opportunities it enables and the social cohesion it promotes. Free to air television broadcasters have also received, at no additional cost, the benefit of public spectrum access allowing them to multichannel with the consequent additional commercial benefits.

Our organisations wish to discuss with you the reasons why this licence rebate has been provided; details of any conditions placed upon the broadcasters in receiving the rebate; and consideration of complementary conditions that could be put in place to ensure the ongoing viability of local content.



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A representative will be in touch with your office to arrange a time that is most convenient for you.

Yours sincerely

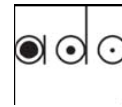
signed

Simon Whipp
National Director
Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance

Geoff Brown
Executive Director,
Screen Producers Association of Australia

on behalf of

Ray Argall
President
Australian Directors Guild



Jo Smith
Australian Cinematographers Society
Australian Guild of Screen Composers
Australian Screen Editors Guild



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Jaqueline Woodman,
Executive Director,
Australian Writers Guild



Richard Letts
Executive Director
Music Council of Australia

