

Council of Churches in New South Wales

Incorporated

ABN 24 348 552 048

Advancing a Christian Perspective

Website <http://www.nswchurches.com>

Representing the Anglican Church (Diocese of Sydney), Baptist Church, Christian Reformed Churches, Churches of Christ, Fellowship of Congregational Churches, Presbyterian Church and The Salvation Army.

Secretary: Rev Bruce Thornton OAM

President: Rev Chris Moroney

SUBMISSION ON THE REVIEW OF THE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION

INDUSTRY CODE OF PRACTICE

The following submission is made by the NSW Council of Churches (hereinafter called “the Council”).

1. The Council notes that CTVA proposes to slash the “G” timeslot in favour of “PG” and that it is proposed that “PG” begin at 5 pm on weekdays, instead of 7 30 pm as at present, and that most daytime programs on weekends will change to “PG” instead of “G”.
2. The substantial ground upon which this change is based appears to the Council to be that parents will supervise their children, and that their viewing and monitoring of their children’s viewing and interaction with the range of electronic media now available in the home environment will be sufficient protection for the children from the harmful effects of the electronic media.
3. The Council also notes that, according to the CTVA, ABA research has found that Australians are less concerned about violence on television than they were a decade ago.
4. The Council believes that the very reason Australians are less concerned about violence on television than previously is not because there is less of it. On the contrary, it is because they have been increasingly hardened by it and to it. If that trend continues, a trend about which CTVA shows little real concern, then inevitably parents, who under the proposed changes to the Code are supposed to become their children’s monitors, will become less and less effective as monitors as their own lack of concern about violence on television grows less and less.
5. Another effect of the proposed “PG” changes will be, the Council believes, that the “PG” advertisements, many of which are objectionable for children, will simply be moved forward to time slots when even the best parental supervision cannot prevent their viewing by children, inasmuch as they make

their appearance at random and without prior notice in the midst of otherwise appropriately supervised programs.

6. The Council is also concerned that, having regard to the fact that in many two parent families, both parents work, and that in single parent families, that sole parent works, there will be no parental supervision at critical times, and the responsibility of supervision will inevitably fall on older children and/or neighbours, who may be far less discriminating in their supervision than the parent or parents.
7. The Council therefore believes that to place the monitoring responsibility upon parents who are increasingly unconcerned by violence is a very dangerous and irresponsible proposal, and that such a proposal clearly places expediency, financial profit and convenience above any concern for the welfare of children and their socialization to reject violence.
8. The Council believes also that no good reason has been shown for increasing alcohol advertising in more sporting programs, and that CTVA has not, in this matter as well, given sufficient, or indeed, any, consideration to the harmful effects upon children of the proposed increase. This proposal totally cuts across the many concerns and recommendations re alcohol advertising aired in the recent NSW State Alcohol Summit.
9. The Council regrets that complaints phoned to TV stations are not regarded as valid complaints. A phoned complaint, often made immediately the offending item or program is viewed, is a powerful instant reaction to something deemed unacceptable. To have to put it in writing will discourage many people who would otherwise complain, but who, through pressure of time or other valid circumstance, are not able to proceed further. It thereby unduly discriminates against such complainants. It ensures, of course, that fewer complaints will be forthcoming.
10. For these reasons, the Council submits that the changes proposed above are unacceptable. They are completely detrimental to the well-being of viewers, especially vulnerable young ones, and should not go ahead.