

## RESEARCH ABOUT TV STEREOTYPES

### RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Last year, the former Australian Broadcasting Tribunal conducted research on community attitudes regarding the representation of cultural diversity on television.

Issues considered in this research included people of non-English speaking background on television, Aboriginal people on television and the role of television in presenting cultural diversity.

This research was carried out in association with the Broadcasting Standards Council (BSC) in the United Kingdom.

The third ABA monograph, *The People We See on TV*, includes the results of this research program.

The research, based on a sample of 1,223 people, shows many people believed commercial television should reflect and support Australia's ethnic diversity:

- 89% said television should actively promote good community relations by showing ethnic groups getting on well together;
- 73% said 'soapies' should show people from the full range of ethnic backgrounds found in Australian society;
- 62% said television should not show people expressing racist views.

When asked whether particular groups of people should be shown more often on commercial television, viewer opinion varied:

- just under half (47%) of those surveyed said Aborigines should be shown more often on television;
- just over a third (35%) said people of Asian background should be seen more on television;
- a third (33%) said people of Italian or Greek background should be shown more.

One of the issues that arose from the research was the need for more input from Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders regarding their representation in the media.

The ABA commissioned further quali-

tative research in which a total of 124 Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were surveyed in urban and regional areas of NSW.

Sixty-six Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were interviewed in Campbelltown, 40 in Orange, five in Dubbo and another 13 from various parts of Australia were interviewed at a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Writer's Conference held in Halls Gap, Victoria.

A number of Aboriginal people were also interviewed on 26 January 1993 during the 'Survival Day '93' celebrations held at La Perouse in Sydney.

A variety of methods were used to



### The People We See on TV Cultural Diversity on Television

#### Monograph 3

collect the data - workshops, face to face interviews, questionnaires, house visits and audio interviews. A detailed questionnaire was used with the 106 survey participants from Campbelltown and Orange, while a less structured questionnaire was used with the remaining participants from Dubbo and from the Writer's Conference in Victoria.

#### ABORIGINAL RESEARCH PROGRAM RESULTS

The following results are taken from

the questionnaire responses of the 106 Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders interviewed in Orange and Campbelltown.

The results are based on the views of this small sample of people from two communities in NSW, they are not intended to be representative of what all Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders across Australia are saying.

Of the 106 participants from Campbelltown and Orange:

- 98% agreed there should be more Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders as presenters on commercial radio or television (71% strongly agreed);
- 96% agreed that television should actively promote good community relations by showing different groups getting on well together (60% strongly agreed);
- 75% agreed that commercial television usually shows Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders as victims of society (29% strongly agreed); and
- 73% agreed that commercial television should not show people expressing racist views (50% strongly agree)

The sheer strength of agreement for these questions indicates that the issue of the media representation of indigenous Australians is of great concern to the 106 Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders included in this survey.

For instance, the majority of participants felt the media persists in presenting stereotyped and negative images of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

It was felt the biases in the media were strongest with regard to the reporting of Aboriginal people in trouble - and in particular, when in trouble with the police. A number of participants cited the example of the drunken, homeless, or abusive Aborigine as being a commonly perpetuated stereotype in the media.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people included in this survey wanted to see Aborigines portrayed as a regular part of the television landscape, cast in any type of role, not just in a specifically or stereotypically Aboriginal role.

They also said Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders want to have their own voice and they want to tell their own stories.

The results of this research are published in detail in *From the Dark Side* as a supplement to ABA Monograph 3.

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are calling for fairer representation in the media, according to research released by the ABA.

The research consisted of a small scale study involving over 100 Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders from various parts of NSW and elsewhere.

The majority interviewed said the media persists in presenting stereotyped and negative images of Aborigines and

Torres Strait Islanders, particularly when reporting about Aboriginal people in trouble with the police.

They said there is a need for more positive, realistic and balanced portrayals of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the media.

'While the results are not intended to be representative of what all Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders across Australia are saying, they provide important information which should be considered by broadcasters,' said ABA Chairman, Mr Brian Johns.

'This is the international year of the world's indigenous peoples. Our research suggests there is concern both among the general population and among Aborigi-

nal people about the portrayal of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the media.'

Mr Johns said the research was important as the broadcasting industry was currently working on codes of practice which will replace broadcasting standards: 'I hope the ABA's research will be taken into account by both policy makers and industry representatives.'

The three monographs: *The People We See On TV - Cultural Diversity on Television*; *Living with Television* and *Classification Issues - Film, Video & Television* are available from the ABA, price \$9.95 each.



## ABA GRANTS PERTH ABORIGINAL RADIO LICENCE

**T**he ABA has granted a special interest Aboriginal public radio licence to serve Perth.

The licence has been granted to the Western Australian Aboriginal Media Association (WAAMA) and comes at the end of a public inquiry process begun by the former Australian Broadcasting Tribunal.

The ABA replaced the ABT on 5 October 1992, under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

WAAMA intends to provide programs by and for the Aboriginal community, to encourage discussion and awareness

within the community and to promote wider local knowledge of Aboriginal culture, beliefs and values.

Broadcasts are likely to begin towards the end of 1993. WAAMA will initially broadcast for 10.5 hours on weekdays (6.30-10.30a.m. and 3.30-8p.m.) and six hours on weekends (6-12p.m.), then gradually expand to a full-time operation after five years.

'WAAMA is to be congratulated for successfully meeting requirements for a community radio licence and I'm pleased to announce this grant during the United Nations Year of Indigenous Peoples,'

said Mr Tim O'Keefe, ABA Member.

Under the ABT legislation applicants for a community broadcasting licence had to demonstrate management, financial and technical capabilities and the ability to provide a comprehensive and adequate service, as well as encourage community participation.

Mr O'Keefe said WAAMA had considerable experience in Aboriginal broadcasting: 'Since 1986 it's done programs on other public radio services in Perth as well as ABC regional radio.'



## ABA AMENDS AD TIME STANDARD

**T**he ABA has amended the standard limiting advertising on television so debates between leaders of political parties are treated in the same way as policy speeches.

The Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) wrote to the ABA on 10 February 1993 requesting a variation of the standard to make up advertising time displaced by political debates.

The amendment allows advertising time displaced by political debates to be made up at the rate of one minute an hour

within 14 days of the debate being aired. This means television stations will not be disadvantaged by the time used up when political debates, free of advertisements, go to air during the election period.

Television stations will have to stay within the overall advertising time limit of a maximum 15 minutes an hour in prime time when making up displaced advertising time.

FACTS also asked for an extra minute of ad time during election campaigns which the ABA refused.

In response to FACTS' request for an

extra minute, ABA Chairman Mr Brian Johns said the Authority decided not to increase general advertising limits on television during elections, at this time, because industry codes of practice were pending.

'FACTS' code of practice on non-program time has just been released for public comment. The ABA looks forward with interest to further discussion of this issue within the wider process of code development,' said Mr Johns.

