

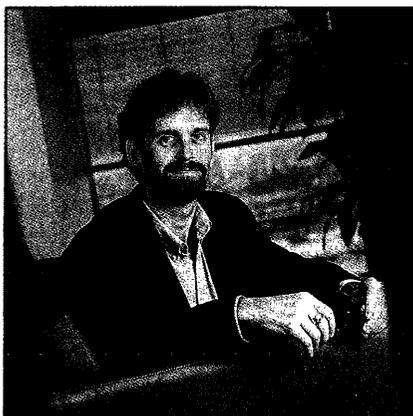
There are many views and opinions about what children should be watching on television. Some of these are canvassed elsewhere in this issue of *ABA Update*. In this article, **Stephen Nugent**, of the ABA's Research section, focuses on what children actually watch and how much time they spend in front of television.

## Children's viewing: what the ratings data tell us

### Amount of time spent watching

We know from the television ratings data collected by Nielsen that during 1993, Australian children (aged 5 to 12 years) watched an average of 2 hours and 34 minutes of television per day. In comparison, children in the United States watched an average of 3 hours and 29 minutes per day while children in Japan watched an average of 2 hours and 48 minutes per day<sup>1</sup>. Australian children, it seems, tend to be lighter viewers than some of their international counterparts.

They also tend to be lighter viewers than adult Australians as the figures in Table 1 indicate. In 1994, Australian children in the five mainland State capital cities watched an average of 18 hours 33 minutes of television a week. This compared to an average of 21 hours 21 minutes for men and an average of 24 hours 44 minutes for women. This pattern of difference between children and adults held across the four year period reported in the table.



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The ratings data also provide information about the amount of time spent watching television in comparison with the amount of time listening to the radio. Table 2 compares ratings data for television and radio across the five state mainland capital city markets.

While caution needs to be exercised in comparing television and radio ratings data due to the different measuring

systems used (people meters and diaries respectively) and the different demographics reported, the findings in Table 2 suggest that Australian children spend more time watching television than listening to the radio.

Further information on this comparison is being collected as part of the ABA's joint research project with the Office of Film and Literature Classifica-

**Table 1**  
Average weekly time spent viewing television, 1991-1994

Year	Children	Teens	Men	Women	All
	5-12 yrs hrs:mins	13-17 yrs hrs:mins	18+ yrs hrs:mins	18+ yrs hrs:mins	People hrs:mins
1994	18:33	18:33	21:21	24:44	21:56
1993	17:51	18:25	21:12	24:25	21:44
1992	17:42	18:36	21:54	25:00	22:12
1991*	18:36	18:42	21:18	24:36	22:06

\* In 1991, the system for measuring television audience size was changed from a diary based system to people meters.

Note: Data are averages for the period 6 a.m. to 12 midnight, Sunday to Saturday, February to November, and are averages for the five mainland State capital city television markets.

Source: Nielsen Media Research.

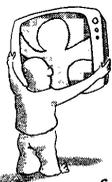
**Table 2**  
Average weekly time spent watching television and listening to the radio, 1994

Market	Television:	Television:	Radio:
	children	teens	youth
	5-12 ys hrs:mins	13-17 ys hrs:mins	10-17 ys hrs:mins
Sydney	17:37	19:43	12:41
Melbourne	20:04	18:33	12:44
Brisbane	17:58	16:48	13:02
Adelaide	18:26	18:05	14:47
Perth	17:58	17:58	13:03

Note: Television data are averages for the period 6 a.m. to 12 midnight, Sunday to Saturday, 6 February to 26 November 1994. Radio data are averages for the period 5.30 a.m. to 12 midnight, Monday to Sunday for all surveys conducted in 1994.

Source: Television data - Nielsen Media Research. Radio data - AGB McNair's 1994 Radio Audience Survey report.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Nielsen TV Trends 1994.



# Children's Television

tion on families and their use of electronic entertainment. One aim of the project is to collect diary data on the amount of time spent by Australian children on various leisure activities including electronic entertainment activities, for example watching television and videos, listening to the radio and playing computer/video games.

## Most Popular Programs

Nielsen's television ratings data provide an indication of the programs which are most popular with Australian children. Table 3 lists the top ten rating programs amongst children 5 to 12 years for 1994. The top ten are presented for each of the five mainland State capital city

markets followed by the top ten overall (averages for the five markets together).

In all markets, the top rating programs included a mixture of one-off programs such as movies and sporting events, and regular programs including comedy and drama series. Regular programs which were broadcast in more than one time-slot during the year are

**Table 3**  
**Top 10 rating programs with children aged 5 to 12 years:**  
**6 February to 26 November 1994**

<b>Sydney</b> <b>(potential: 404 000)</b>		<b>Channel</b>	<b>Rating</b> %	<b>Melbourne</b> <b>(potential: 367 000)</b>		<b>Channel</b>	<b>Rating</b> %
Lois & Clark (Sat)#	7	31	AFL Grand Final*	7	37		
Movie: Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory	9	29	Movie: Ferngully	10	35		
Lois & Clark (Mon)#	7	27	Movie: Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory	9	34		
Just Kidding*#	9	27	Full House#	7	33		
Movie: Jetsons	10	26	Movie: Jetsons	10	28		
Man O Man Footballers*	7	26	Hangin' with Mr Cooper#	7	27		
Movie: Ferngully	10	26	Movie: Hook	10	27		
Boy Meets World (Sat)#	7	25	Movie: Curly Sue	9	27		
Full House#	7	24	Movie: To Grandmother's House We Go	7	27		
Movie: To Grandmother's House We Go	7	24	Old Bear Stories - pm#	2	26		
<b>Brisbane</b> <b>(potential: 220 000)</b>		<b>Channel</b>	<b>Rating</b> %	<b>Adelaide</b> <b>(potential: 131 000)</b>		<b>Channel</b>	<b>Rating</b> %
Movie: Ferngully	10	33	Movie: Ferngully	10	30		
Rugby League NSW vs Qld (2nd Match)*	9	30	Movie: Jetsons	10	28		
Rugby League NSW vs Qld (1st Match)*	9	30	Movie: The Witches	7	28		
Movie: To Grandmother's House We Go	7	29	Lois & Clark (Sat)#	7	27		
Lois & Clark (Mon)#	7	28	Lois & Clark (Mon)#	7	26		
Full House#	7	27	Movie: Naked Gun	7	26		
Rugby League NSW vs Qld (3rd Match)*	9	25	Boy Meets World (Sat)#	7	26		
Lois & Clark (Sat)#	7	25	Full House#	7	26		
Movie: Jetsons	10	25	Simpsons (Weeknights)#	10	25		
Just Kidding #	9	25	Funniest Commercials You'll Ever See #	9	24		
<b>Perth</b> <b>(potential: 151 000)</b>		<b>Channel</b>	<b>Rating</b> %	<b>Five Market Average</b>		<b>Channel</b>	<b>Rating</b> %
Movie: Ferngully	10	36	Movie: Ferngully	10	31		
Disney: Totally Minnie	7	33	Movie: Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory**	9	29		
Full House#	7	32	Full House#	7	28		
Movie: The Witches	7	31	Lois & Clark (Sat)#	7	28		
Movie: Wayne's World	7	30	Movie: Jetsons	7	27		
Movie: Ducktales Movie	7	30	Lois & Clark (Mon)#	7	26		
Lois & Clark (Mon)#	7	30	Movie: To Grandmother's House We Go	7	25		
Hangin' With Mr Cooper#	7	29	Hangin' With Mr Cooper#	7	24		
Lois & Clark (Sat)#	7	29	Just Kidding*#	9	24		
Masters of Illusion	7	27	Boy Meets World (Sat)***	7	23		

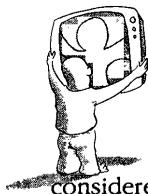
**Rating:** the percentage of the potential child audience viewing the program.

**Source:** Nielsen Media Research.

\* Australian program.

\*\* The ratings for these programs are averages for four markets only - Willy Wonka was not shown in Perth, while Boy Meets World was only shown in Melbourne on a Wednesday.

# Regular programs - rating is calculated by averaging the ratings achieved by the program during the period 6 February to 26 November 1994.



considered as separate programs for the purposes of Table 3. For example, 'Lois & Clark' started off in a Saturday time-slot and then switched to a Monday. The ratings for the two different time-slots are reported separately.

While there was some commonality across markets in terms of the top rating programs, there was also considerable variation. Some of this variation reflects the different sporting interests in different states with the AFL Grand Final rating at the top of the list in Melbourne, and the three State of Origin Rugby League matches rating in the top ten in Brisbane. The variation also reflects the apparent difference in popularity of movies across markets.

Some movies, however, rated well across all markets and four made it into the top ten for the five market average - *Ferngully* rating at the top of the list. The other six programs in the top ten were regular programs, mainly American comedy and drama series. 'Lois & Clark' was included twice in the top ten, reflecting the fact that it rated well in both time-slots that it was broadcast. Only one Australian program, 'Just Kidding', made it to the top ten for the five market average.

Further details will be contained in the ABA's forthcoming Trends and Issues publication which will consist of a detailed review of television and radio ratings data for 1993 and 1994. This publication will update the ABA's first Trends and Issues paper *Audiences & Programs in 1992*. □

From 'Full House', courtesy Channel 7



Research into community attitudes to program matters is one of the primary functions of the ABA. In this article, **Linda Sheldon**, Manager, Research section, discusses recent ABA research which focuses on children.

## Children and television

The ABA\* utilises accepted social research methodologies in its attitudinal research. These comprise exploratory qualitative methodologies such as focus groups and in-depth interviews, followed by a representative, national survey of the Australian community in a quantitative stage. Research results inform policy making in relation to implementation and monitoring of codes of practise and the development of standards and conditions of licence. This information is augmented by ratings data, Australian and overseas literature and information from the extensive consultation process with the industry and community groups.

The following discussion of published and in-progress research, focuses on results which relate to children's viewing.

### Published research

#### **Kidz TV (1991)**

As part of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal's\* inquiry into children's television standards which commenced in 1988 a study of child viewing was undertaken. Qualitative and quantitative research was conducted in primary schools in two states of Australia with 4055 children. The study examined C and P programs, viewing levels, the best time of day to broadcast children's programs and reactions to different genres. The results were published in *Kidz TV* in 1991, and showed age and other leisure options to have a marked effect on

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viewing of programs specifically designed for children.

#### **What We Want from Our TVs (1992)**

The 1624 adults surveyed in 1991 were asked about the role of television in society. They were questioned about their support for children's programs on television and what types of program they thought were good viewing. There was overwhelming support for children's programs to be an integral part of broadcast television. Most respondents listed educational, information type programs or documentaries as 'good' viewing for primary school aged children, whereas ratings data for 1991 showed children mainly watched comedies, cartoons and 'soapies'.

The results of the survey are contained in *What We Want From Our TVs*.

#### **Classification Issues. Film, Video and Television (1993)**

The ABA conducted research into community attitudes to classification

\* *The Australian Broadcasting Authority, established in October 1992, was formerly known as the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal.*