



cluded in industry codes of practice that will apply to on-line service providers including the operation of effective complaints procedures;

(b) national and international developments in the use of on-line content labelling services to protect children from content which may be unsuitable for them;

(c) national educational strategies to ensure that Australians accessing services available on-line utilise these services in the most effective and productive manner;

(d) international developments in relation to the regulation of the content of on-line services.

In undertaking the investigation, the ABA is to consult with the on-line services industry, relevant government agencies and community organisations. Such consultation may include, but is not limited to, convening working groups with industry, community and other appropriate representation to assist in the development of codes of practice by the service provider industry or sectors of the industry and to develop appropriate standards for labelling on-line content in Australia.

I direct the ABA under subsection 178(1) of the Act to keep me informed of the progress of the investigation and to prepare a short report on the matters investigated on or before 30 June 1998.

I direct the ABA under subsection 179(2) of the Act to publish its report.

Richard Alston
Minister for Communications and the Arts

The ABA has registered codes of practice for television and radio narrowcasting services, concluding a period of extensive consultation between the ABA and the Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA).

Codes of practice for narrowcasting services

The ABA has registered codes of practice for television and radio narrowcasting services. The codes come into effect immediately.

This concludes a period of extensive consultation between the ABA and the Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA) which developed the codes on behalf of this industry sector.

'The ABA is very encouraged by the responsiveness shown by the industry, particularly to concerns about program classification,' said Mr Peter Webb, ABA Chairman. 'We are satisfied that the codes provide appropriate safeguards for the community, and are encouraged by the emphasis in the codes on the need to protect children from exposure to harmful or distressing material.'

The codes set out the obligations for narrowcasting services in relation to issues such as the classification of program material, the presentation of news and current affairs programs, and the handling of public complaints. Additionally, the codes for subscription



narrowcasting services provide a framework for the handling of consumer service issues, such as confidentiality of consumer information, and disputes about fault repair and billing.

The narrowcasting television codes prohibit the broadcast of X classified material. Open narrowcasting television services will also be prohibited from broadcasting R classified material, while the broadcast of R classified material on subscription narrowcasting television services will be restricted to access by those with ap-

propriate disabling devices. Services devoted predominantly to adult erotica will be restricted to late night access only.

ASTRA has set these limits in response to a Federal Government decision relating to the broadcast of X and R classified material, announced in April 1997.

Narrowcasting services

Narrowcasting services, as defined in sections 17 and 18 of the Broadcasting Services



Act, are television or radio services whose reception is limited in some way. The factors which may limit reception of such a service include that they are:

- targeted to special interest groups; or
- intended only for limited locations; or
- provided during a limited period or to cover a special event; or
- providing programs of limited appeal.

Narrowcasting services are either made available on subscription, or are 'open'; that is, free-to-air.

ASTRA have developed a code for each type of narrowcasting service: subscription narrowcasting television; open narrowcasting television; subscription narrowcasting radio; and open narrowcasting radio.

Codes of practice

The codes of practice for narrowcasting services have been developed in response to the requirements of section 123 of the Broadcasting Services Act. This section sets out Parliament's intention that groups representing particu-

lar sections of the broadcasting industry will develop, in consultation with the ABA and taking account of any relevant research by the ABA, codes of practice that are to be applicable to those sections of the industry.

Commercial television, commercial and community radio, the ABC and SBS all operate under codes of practice, while codes are currently being developed for subscription television broadcasting services.

Primary responsibility for compliance with the codes and for resolving complaints rests with the broadcasters. The ABA, however, supervises the operation of the codes and performs the role of an independent adjudicator where complaints about code issues are not resolved between the complainant and the broadcaster concerned.

The codes relate to various programming issues, including:

- (a) ensuring the content of programs is consistent with standards acceptable to the relevant specific audiences involved; and
- (b) methods of ensuring

that the protection of children from exposure to program material which may be harmful to them is a high priority; and

(c) methods of classifying programs that reflect community standards; and

(d) promoting accuracy and fairness in news and current affairs programs.

The codes are also to set out the procedures to be followed by the broadcasters in handling complaints from the public.

The Act requires the ABA to register the code if it is satisfied that:

(i) the code of practice provides appropriate community safeguards for the matters covered by it; and

(ii) the code is endorsed by a majority of the providers of broadcasting services in that section of the industry; and

(iii) members of the public have been given an adequate opportunity to comment on the code.

Enforcement of the codes

The ABA may make a finding that a broadcaster has

breached a code of practice or a broadcaster may admit a breach of a code. Breaches of the codes are not breaches of the Act, although the ABA may make compliance with a code a condition of licence. Generally the ABA seeks to ensure that broadcasters take action to remedy breaches or to put in place procedures to ensure they do not recur.

The codes apply to all narrowcasting service providers, even those who are not members of ASTRA.

ASTRA

ASTRA has advised the ABA that it will be conducting a seminar on the codes of the practice in the coming month.

This is intended to ensure that narrowcasters are made aware of the registration of the codes, and the application of the code provisions to their activities.

For further information contact: **ASTRA:**
Mark McDonnell, CEO and Secretary, (02) 4575 1836.

Programs granted C or P classification

Programs granted C or P classification between 14 August and 11 September 1997. Producers interested in submitting programs for classification should contact Liz Gilchrist, Manager, Children's Television section on (02) 9334 7840.

Title	Origin	Class.	New/ Renewal	Decision date	Applicant
AMAZING (Series 8 & 9)	Australia	C	new	20.8.1997	Southern Star Entertainment Pty Ltd
GINGER MEGGS	Australia	PRC	new	20.8.1997	ICA Productions
SHINGALANA	South Africa	C	new	10.9.1997	Network Ten
SPELLBINDER II - The Land of the Dragon Lord	Australia	CAD	new	25.8.1997	Southern Star Pacific
THE WHY FILES	Australia	C	new	3.9.1997	Banksia Productions Pty Ltd

C - children's program, CAD - C Australian drama, P - preschool, PRC - provisional C