

20 May 2008

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email:eca.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE on ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS and the ARTS  
Inquiry into Effectiveness of Broadcasting Codes of Practice  
FOXTEL Response to Submission**

ASTRA understands that a submission has been made to the Committee which comments adversely on the FOX8 programs *Australia's Next Top Model* and *America's Next Top Model*. The following response from FOXTEL is provided to assist the Committee's consideration of the issues raised in the particular submission.

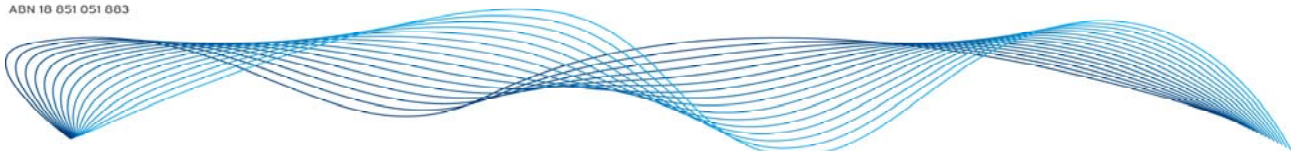
**1. Classification**

FOXTEL agrees that the correct classification is important in rating the programs it broadcasts, which is why FOXTEL ensures that relevant programs have the correct classification, consumer advice where needed and clear visuals of the appropriate classification symbols.

The submission claims that *Australia's Next Top Model* and *America's Next Top Model* are screened with a PG rating. This is incorrect, as all episodes of both *Australia's Next Top Model* and *America's Next Top Model* screened on FOX8 have been given an M classification and adhere to the requirements of the relevant ASTRA Code.

This is despite the fact that the majority of the episodes in the recently aired series of *America's Next Top Model* (Cycle 8) fit the requirements of a PG classification – FOXTEL has elected to classify the series M due to the sensitivity some viewers have around featured themes.

In respect of the particular episode referred to in the submission, which was entitled 'The Girls Who Changes Her Attitude' and aired as part of Cycle 8 of *America's Next Top Model*, the episode was classified M; FOX8 also broadcast an M classification board immediately prior to the program; and the classification of the program can be readily checked throughout the program via the 'i' plate (information bar available by pressing the 'i' button). Further, the program was broadcast at 8.30pm and not in the "early evening" as



claimed by the author of the submission. The episode sits very comfortably within the M rating as classified. In addition subscribers have the ability to ‘block’ certain programming via the parental lockout control.

## 2. Guidelines

We note that the Classification Board’s Guidelines (the **Guidelines**) provide the following in respect of material classified M:

- The impact of the classifiable elements should be no higher than moderate.
- The treatment of themes may have a moderate sense of threat or menace, if justified by context.
- Moderate violence is permitted, if justified by context.
- Sexual violence should be very limited and justified by context.
- Coarse language may be used, and aggressive or strong coarse language should be infrequent and justified by context.

## 3. Content

The submission criticises *Australia’s Next Top Model* and *America’s Next Top Model* for their “strong emphasis on sexualised content with depictions that objectify the contestants’ bodies, and even encourage them to self objectify”.

These shows are reality programs about girls who want to be successful models and make a career in the modelling industry. Modelling, by the nature of the profession, is about physicality – looking ‘good’ to sell a client’s product.

Given that *Australia’s Next Top Model* and *America’s Next Top Model* are classified M, the programs are able to appropriately deal with themes such as body image and sexual imagery, as they are fully covered by the Guidelines in respect of an M classification (as set out above).

In relation to the episode of *America’s Next Top Model* ‘The Girl Who Changes Her Attitude’, the submission states that “competitors had to devise and star in a sexy-in-death scene in which just prior violence, cruelty and sexual violence were strongly intimated”.

The theme of the shoot that the particular contestants were involved in for this episode was in fact ‘crime-scene’. The episode showed the girls being ‘assigned’ the respective crime scenes they had to portray, being made up in keeping with the theme and posing accordingly. On this basis, there was no more than a mild theme of violence or cruelty, as viewers are made well aware that the scenes are set up and posed. There was absolutely no intimation of sexual violence.

This episode was therefore properly classified as M, as the material contained in the episode clearly fell within the Guidelines in respect of an M classification. This demonstrates that

the current classification standards are both effective and an accurate reflection of the content contained in the programs broadcast by FOXTEL.

If you require any further information or clarification of the matters covered, I would be pleased to provide this to the Committee as necessary.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra Richards". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'D'.

Debra Richards  
CEO