

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the effectiveness of the broadcasting codes

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The advent of 'new technologies', the emergence of so-called "reality TV" and the passage of time has led to the current broadcasting code of practice becoming anachronistic in its content (Dockrill, 2006); it has failed to keep pace with developments within society thereby failing to provide adequate protection for some section of our community i.e. I refer to fact that there has been a distinct lack of care when it comes to the protection of children (Sheehan, 1997).

It is patently obvious that 'self regulation of the industry' is failing dismally with the prevalence of an 'anything goes as long as no one complains' attitude being the norm. The code of practice appears to have become more of a set of guidelines that is constantly being pushed to the limit (Jean, 2007).

Breaches of the codes are only given a slap on the wrist with the general public not made aware of proceedings to remedy the situations when a breach has occurred. A case in point is the infamous "turkey slapping" incident that occurred on Big Brother; if this incident had occurred in the general population the person involved in it could and possibly would have been charged with sexual harassment (at the least) and/or sexual assault (at the worst) (Cartwright, 2007). This incident alone set back the cause of women's rights by years.

I would like to address the issue of parental supervision. It is easy to say that it is the parents' responsibility to supervise their children's access to media and computers etc but the problem is that there are cases of children being left to their own devices (Lavelle, 2005). Unfortunately this is becoming the norm with societal and economic pressures for children to be let unattended; for some children this is a regular occurrence (Ochiltree, 1992). This begs the question if we are unable to supervise the children's viewing habits how do we protect them from undesirable influences? The answer (albeit a simple one) is upgrade the broadcasting codes to come in line with this goal.

There will be outrage from the civil libertarians but contrary to their beliefs children are not capable of the kind of maturity to discern the quality of the information they are given. Children are like a blank page they need to be guided to reach their full potential. Our current structures lack a diversity of positive role models. As a former “latch-key kid”, I formed a lot of my impressions of social norms from the media. I know if I grew up hearing four letter words and watched promiscuous sexual encounters displayed as normal behaviour I think my life may have been very different.

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http://apcmag.com/big_brother_turkey_slap_controversy_threatens_net_freedom.htm

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Lavelle, P. (2005) *Where do the children play?* Pulse ABC Broadcasting
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Ochiltree, G. (1992) *Selfcare for School Aged Children* Family Matters Australian Institute of Family studies <http://aifs.org.au/institute/pubs/fm1/fm33go.html>
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Sheehan, P. W. 1997 *The Effect of Watching Violence in the Media: Policy, Consensus and Censorship*. Violence, Crime and the Entertainment Media
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