

Dear Secretary,

Please allow me to express my pleasure at having the opportunity to speak out against what appears to be a rising tide of linguistic wowsersism.

The vocal opponents of programs such as 'Gordon Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares' are more offensive to me than the foulest of language. What right have they to demand that I and millions of other Australian adults be denied entertainment based on their own straitlaced prudishness?

I want to pose a question to Senator Bernardi: what does he fear will happen to his children if they are accidentally exposed to one or two instances of swearing on a late-night television program? Today it's the 'f-bomb' (by which I mean 'fuck' - see, that wasn't so bad, was it?), tomorrow it's dressing cats in inappropriate attire and the improper use of laser pointers. Who needs gateway drugs when we have gateway words?

Perhaps I am desensitised to foul language and violence. I blame this on the time when, as a five-year-old, I walked into the living room while my parents were watching 'The Flying Doctors' and saw a man's teeth being pulled out with pliers. (This, my imaginative father explained, was why my parents insisted that I brush my teeth twice daily. To this day I maintain immaculate dental hygiene, proving beyond doubt that responsible parenting comes in many forms.)

Of course I'm exaggerating to get my point across, which is this: it takes far more than exposure to the relaxed standards of post-8:30pm television to corrupt a child. Child abuse, poverty, underage drinking and drug use, unemployment: how fortunate for Senator Bernardi's home state of South Australia that these social ills are in such short supply that he can now find time to focus his attention on the idiot box. (Unless, that is, we find in television the root cause of all these evils, which of course we can't, because it isn't.)

In all seriousness, the continued cohesion of Australian public life and the relative dearth of complaints into the standard of language expressed on public television point to the success of existing regulatory measures. The power to preserve one's purity still rests in the almighty Big Red Off Button, conveniently located at the top of most modern remote controls. For those who must watch television at the continued risk of imperiling their children's souls, Teletext and headphones may prove to be effective filtering mechanisms. The delay associated with the resolution of complaints to ACMA may be tied directly to the fact that Earth's fate does not hang in the balance of an inquiry's outcome. People on television will continue to speak as people in the world do, and the sun will rise in the east tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Senator Bernardi et al have proven once again that the most effective form of publicity is controversy, and 'Gordon Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares' continues to rate its pants off on the back of conservative criticism, as well as being a fucking entertaining show.

There, that wasn't so bad, was it?

Yours faithfully,

Tim Bennett