

Australian Content Standard

Australian Broadcasting Authority, "Explanatory Notes to the Australian Content Standard," Australian Content Standard, Sydney, ABA, December 1995.

Australian Broadcasting Authority - Australian Content Standard

The ABA regulates the amount of Australian content on commercial television, by setting minimum levels required. By 1998 this transmission quota of Australian programming is to reach 55% of air time on commercial television. The following is excerpted from the Australian Content Standard, in effect from January 1, 1996.

Part 1- Introduction

The standard requires commercial television services to be predominantly Australian by requiring a minimum amount of Australian programming and minimum amounts of first release drama, documentary, children's drama and other children's programs.

The ABA made its decision on the final form of the new standard on 21 September 1995. The standard comes into effect on 1 January 1996.....

The objective of this standard is to promote the role of broadcasting services in developing and reflecting a sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity, by supporting the community's continued access to television programs produced under Australian creative control. It is based on one of the objects of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992, set out in Section 3(e).

The issue of cultural diversity is a central part of the objective of the standard. The absence of

any specific requirement which addresses the representation of cultural diversity is not a reflection on the importance of this aspect of the objective. Rather it is an acknowledgment of both the impracticality of applying quotas in this area and of the role of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice and Advisory Notes. (You can read excerpts of these Advisory Notes in the document on the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations elsewhere in this section.). The Advisory Note on the Portrayal of Cultural Diversity states that "in scripting and casting drama and selecting on-air talent, management and producers should be concerned to reflect Australia's complex and culturally diverse society".

Under TPS 14 the test for an Australian drama program required that drama programs have an Australian theme and perspective (if they are based on an original work by an Australian) or an Australian perspective (if they are based on a foreign original work). However, in administering the standard the ABA considered compliance with this requirement to be a result of the fulfilment of the other criteria of the test. In practice the on-screen content or look of a drama program was never directly assessed by the ABA or ABT for theme or perspective. It is assumed to be there if the program satisfied the objective test for Australian creative control over production.

The ABA considers that the object of the new standard makes clear that all Australian programming, not only drama, should reflect a sense of Australian identity and therefore it is not necessary to reiterate the objective as part of the test for Australian drama and other programs.