

To the Content Review Team,

I would like to make a public submission to the Government's Screen Content Review.

Australian children's television has had a massive impact in my life and as a mother and acting coach I have seen it also have a major impact on the lives of others.

I have so many fond memories of Australian television shows. I was obsessed with 'Young Talent Time' as a child. Every Saturday night at 6.30pm I would sit down with my journal and take notes on what the kids wore, what they sang and how they interacted with each other. I was in awe of these kids and teens who I knew came from suburbs just around the corner from me and I wanted to be like them. I also loved many American television shows but I felt much more connected to the characters in shows from Australia. 'The Henderson Kids' left a big impression on me and I remember thinking that 'Cowboy' was much cooler than 'The Fonz' and felt more like a real person. When the Australian show 'Home' came along in 1983 I thought it was edgy and exciting and even though the series didn't last very long the theme song from it has followed me around for over 30 years! And 'Heartbreak High' was another show that I thought was groundbreaking. Several international teen shows such as 'Degrassi Junior High' and 'Beverly Hills 90210' have also left impressions on me...but nothing compared to seeing teenagers in Australia dealing with real life issues and feeling that I could identify with them. If they could get themselves through a certain problem then so could I...because I felt like we were the same. The kids in these shows ate sandwiches on the oval at lunchtime and I knew what that was like...not hot lunches with milk cartons in a cafeteria. I actually remember having these thoughts as a teenager and wanting more shows like this.

And this is very similar to what I hear teens say to me today. They want more Australian shows with characters they can identify with. They want to see kids that look like them and sound like them and do the things that they do and understand. When I question younger people on the Australian kids shows they have watched, I've noticed that they often don't begin to 'notice' whether it is Australian content or not until they are in their mid teens. Before that they are just consuming content and probably absorbing the messages that come from it unconsciously...whether they be from an Australian cultural perspective or not. Something that has really blown me away is how many children (usually under 12) turn up to acting classes with a 'normal' Australian accent and then when it is time to read a script or perform a character THEY DO IT IN AN AMERICAN ACCENT! I found this very unusual at first but have seen it so many times now. It is like they are relating performing with being American and something feels quite wrong about that.

I attended Vidcon last week and found the experience eye opening and am excited about the potential for online creators in Australia. But there was one thing that stood out about the kids there. Down in the expo area there were young kids lining up to meet their American YouTube heroes. There were 12 year olds crying with excitement and telling me how important these people were to them. It reminded me of myself when I was 12 and lining up to meet the Young Talent Team...but these idols weren't from Australia. And it made me think about whether we should be supplying our young kids with more home grown talent to be fans of and emulate. I spoke to one mother who brought her 11 year old over from Sydney to meet her favourite YouTuber. The mother said that she was trying to keep up with what her daughter was watching but not only did she have

trouble understanding how everything online worked, she also feared that her daughter may come across content that was not safe or positive. I think this is an issue that many parents today.

I have told some of these stories in hope that they help express how important Australian kids television has been to me. And not only did I want to watch it as a child, I began writing, performing and filming my own 'television' shows in my lounge room. I knew I wanted to be involved in making television and films in Australia from when I was 7 and started actively trying to do it when I was 12. I have studied screenwriting and film and television at university and have just written, directed and produced a 4 part teen drama webseries with funding from the Community Broadcasting Foundation that has recently aired on Channel 31. The series I have created is heavily influenced by the Australian shows I enjoyed as a kid and I aimed to make a show that feels authentically Australian but has universal themes that kids and teens from other countries can hopefully enjoy.

So these Australian kids shows from the 1980s and 1990s have not just become part of my own history and identity but I hope they will live on through me and the content I hope to make in the future.

I think it would be great if:

- the ABC has enough funding given to them to create high quality content for children and teens and that it is a requirement for them to do so.

- that Australian children's content is also available on commercial free tv, pay tv and on demand services.

- the VOD platforms in Australia (such as Netflix) are required to financially support some Australian (kids) content, either by investing in specific productions or putting money into a production fund that is specifically for creating kids content.

- that the Australian television funding support mechanisms include children's content as a priority.

- that parents and teachers could potentially be further educated in the importance of supporting and encouraging Australian content to and for Australian children.

(This last one reminds me of the weekly tv sessions we would look forward to in primary school classes where we would watch 'Behind The News' and 'Infinity Limited' and have to write reports on each. An educational way that Australian television was influencing kids every day!)

Thank you for taking my submission into consideration.

Warm Regards,

Rachel Soderstrom