

Chapter 1 : Australian Television Information Archive

Television in Australia began experimentally as early as in Melbourne with radio stations 3DB and 3UZ, and 2UE in Sydney, using the Radiovision system by Gilbert Miles and Donald McDonald, and later from other locations, such as Brisbane in

History[edit] Origins: Early transmission trials[edit] In , Henry Sutton developed a Telephane for closed circuit transmission of pictures via telegraph wires, based on the Nipkow spinning disk system, so that the Melbourne Cup could be seen in Ballarat. Reports differ on whether the Telephane was successfully implemented. The test transmissions, which were of 1 hour duration each day, were made by Thomas M. By , it expanded to lines. Early demonstrations[edit] Melbourne "housewife" Edna Everage a comic creation of performing artist Barry Humphries , first appeared on Australian television in the s. The two countries developed radically different industry models, which were based on the models each used for radio broadcasting. British broadcasting was entirely controlled by the government-created broadcasting corporation, the BBC , which derived its revenue from compulsory viewer licence fees. The United States adopted a commercial model, based on privately owned stations and networks that earned revenue by charging for advertising time, with public broadcasting forming only a minor component of the larger system. It decided to establish a government-controlled TV station in each capital city and called for tenders for the building of the six TV transmitters. The Broadcasting Act specifically prohibited the granting of commercial TV licences, a decision that the Liberal-Country Party opposition criticised as "authoritarian and socialistic". This policy was never put into practice, however, because the Labor government did not have the opportunity to establish the TV network before it was defeated in December . The incoming Robert Menzies -led Liberal-Country Party coalition, which was to hold power for the next 23 years, changed the industry structure by also permitting the establishment of American-style commercial stations. When the decision was made to go ahead with granting the first licences for broadcast TV in the early s, Australia was in a recession, [23] with severe shortages of labour and materials and an underdeveloped heavy industrial base, and in this context TV was seen as a drain away from more fundamental projects. Consequently, it decided to grant the initial commercial TV licences to established print media proprietors, with the expectation that these companies would, if necessary, be able to subsidize the new TV stations from their existing and highly profitable press operations. Buoyed by the success of these tests, in March , the Astor Radio Corporation embarked upon a tour of regional towns with a mobile broadcast unit, giving a series of 45 minute demonstration programs, allowing local performers and members of the public to appear on camera. The ABC, as an independent government authority, was not subject to the regulation of the ABCB and instead answered directly to the Postmaster-General and ultimately to the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs a situation that provoked bitter complaints from commercial radio in the mids when the ABC established its controversial youth station Double Jay. In , the Menzies Government formally announced the introduction of the new two-tiered TV systemâ€”a government-funded service run by the ABC, and two commercial services in Sydney and Melbourne , with the Summer Olympics in Melbourne being a major driving force behind the introduction of television to Australia. Sydney station ABN-2 also started broadcasting in November. All of these stations were operational in time for the Melbourne Summer Olympics opening ceremony, on 22 November . The character went on to great success in the United Kingdom and later, the United States. Videotape technology was still in its infancy when Australian television was launched in and video recorders did not become widely available to Australian TV stations until the s. For the first few years, the only available method for capturing TV programs was the kinescope process, in which a fixed movie camera filmed broadcasts screened on a specially adjusted TV monitor. Similarly, the playback of pre-recorded programs to air was only possible at this stage through the telecine process, in which films or kinescoped TV recordings were played back on a movie screen which was monitored by a TV camera. Because of these limitations, it was relatively difficult and expensive to record and distribute local programming, so the majority of locally produced content was broadcast live-to-air. Very little local programming from these first few years of Australian TV broadcasting

was recorded and in the intervening years the majority of that material has since been lost or destroyed. In the view of some media historians, these arrangements established a pattern of "high-level political allegiances between commercial broadcasters and Liberal-National Party governments" and that, as a result, the ABCB "was left very weak and uncertain in its capacity to control broadcaster conduct and exhibited strong symptoms of regulatory capture, or over-identification with the industry it regulated". The Vincent Report recommended a sweeping program of reforms but none were implemented by the Menzies Government at that time. Faced with almost unbeatable competition from American-made programming, local technical and creative professionals in radio were unable to make the transition to the new medium, as many of their American and British counterparts had done when TV was introduced there. Those Australian producers who did try to break into TV faced almost insurmountable challenges. Imported American and British programs benefited from high budgets, an international talent pool and huge economies of scale, thanks to their very large domestic markets relative to Australia, established worldwide distribution networks; additionally, since most American production houses and networks were based in Los Angeles, they had access to resources and expertise built up over decades by the Hollywood movie studios. These disadvantages were further exacerbated by the fact that American producers and networks offered Australian channels significant discount rates on bundled programming. Taken as a whole, these factors meant that local producers were faced with a relative production-cost ratio on the order of Broadcast times were gradually increased over succeeding decades, although the ABC did not commence hour broadcasting until Local content was limited to talk and variety shows, and news and current affairs. Several programs in the s were simply adaptations of already established radio programs, such as Pick a Box. Television and programming in the s[edit] The s saw the continued growth of television in Australia, particularly into regional areas. While the first television services were being established in regional areas, larger cities including Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, and Perth began to receive their second and, in the mids, third stations. In order to reduce costs, networks began to merge originally in between HSV-7 and TCN-9, but later between almost all the metropolitan stations of a certain frequency. Not all stations became a part of their respective networks TVW-7 in Perth remained independent for a number of years as the sole commercial station in the city. Beginning in, the federal government tried to address concerns about competition and local production by licensing a third station in major cities, beginning with Channel 0 in Melbourne and Channel 10 in Sydney. Channel 0 in Melbourne took an early lead in catering for teenage viewers and quickly became the preeminent network in pop music programming, commissioning a sequence of popular and influential local pop shows including The Go!! The establishment of a coaxial cable link between Sydney and Melbourne in marked the first step in the establishment of effective national networking for Australian TV stations. The introduction of satellite broadcasting in the late s allowed news stories and programs to be accessed from around the world. The first live satellite transmission occurred between Australia and the United Kingdom in Prime Minister Harold Holt officially opened the Australian pavilion and visitors watched events including boomerang throwing, sheep-dog trials, wood chopping contests and tennis matches with members of the Australian Davis Cup team. The entire hour program was televised live and several hundred thousand people across Australia sat up through the night to watch it. One newspaper reported that the picture was so clear that hundreds of viewers rang a Sydney television station to seek assurance that the pictures really were being broadcast live from Canada. Although Australian TV was still in black-and-white at the time, Skippy was filmed in colour with a view to overseas sales and it was the first Australian-made series to achieve significant international success, with sales to more than 80 countries worldwide, [46] and it became the first Australian TV show to be widely screened in the USA. Although the output was hobbled to monochrome until, many original long and short form productions were completed over the years until its closure and eventual absorption into other companies in the late s. Test broadcasting of colour began in the late s. In it was announced that all stations would move to colour on 1 March, using the European PAL standard mandated in Government subsidies provided for the production of local series led to a boom in Australian-produced content. ABC, the Seven Network and the Nine Network joined together to broadcast the Olympic Games in Montreal, with the opening and closing ceremonies telecast live, and highlights packages shown each night. The Special Broadcasting Service,

originally a group of radio stations broadcasting government information to ethnic minorities in Sydney and Melbourne, began test transmissions on ABC in the two cities – mainly showing foreign-language programming on Sunday mornings. It is now available in most areas. Although Australia had seen the introduction of the satellite in the s, saw the introduction of a new, domestic satellite called AUSSAT. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation and other commercial broadcasters were able to broadcast to the more remote areas of Australia without needing to set up a new station, and by the end of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation were broadcasting both television and radio to remote areas of Australia. Neighbours underperformed in the Sydney market and it struggled for four months before Seven cancelled it. The show was immediately bought by rival network, Ten. Ten began screening Neighbours on 20 January. Neighbours has since become the longest running series in Australian television and attained great success in the United Kingdom and launched the careers of several international stars, including Kylie Minogue and Guy Pearce. It premiered in January and is the second longest-running drama on Australian television, winning more than 30 Logie Awards. The late s saw the ownership changeover for many commercial and regional stations. Six main ownership groups emerged, three for commercial broadcasters and three for regional broadcasters [53] This was the beginning of aggregation for Australian television. One of the most significant developments in terms of high quality Australian programming was the establishment by the Federal Government of the Commercial Television Production Fund. Prime Television was one of the first television networks to be aggregated. One of the most significant changes for regional television in Australia began in the s with the introduction of aggregation. Instead of being covered by a single commercial channel, regional license areas would combine to provide two or three stations in line with metropolitan areas. As a result, most regional areas went from one to three channels, although some, particularly outside eastern states New South Wales , Victoria and Queensland , remained with two or even only one commercial station. Some areas too small to be properly aggregated, such as Darwin , Mildura or rural South Australia, however, either applied for a second license or introduced a supplementary second service run by the existing local station. The stations, which all broadcast on channel 31, were allocated long-term temporary licences until new legislation introduced in permitted permanent licences to be granted. Briz 31 was the first community television station to launch in Australia, on 31 July. C31 Melbourne and Access 31 in Perth followed in and respectively, along with a number of other stations in some capital and regional cities. During the s the first subscription television services were introduced to Australia. The first license was issued to Galaxy Television , which started in , providing services to most metropolitan areas by. Subscription television allowed customers to have access to more channels. The advent of pay television in Australia resulted in the Super League war which was fought in and out of court during the mids by the News Ltd -backed Super League and Kerry Packer -backed Australian Rugby League organisations over broadcasting rights, and ultimately control of the top-level professional rugby league football competition of Australasia. The Summer Olympics resulted in huge ratings for its broadcaster the event was hosted in Sydney for the Seven Network – over 6. The broadcast also ran on the short-lived C7 Sport subscription channel. The turn of the millennium introduced digital television to Australia , as well as the transition to widescreen standard-definition and high-definition television production. Community stations also began to receive permanent transmitter licences, replacing temporary licences that were renewed yearly. At this time it was thought that allowing Commercial Multicasting would be detrimental so the publicly owned networks ABC and SBS were the only networks that were allowed to create new digital SD Channels. This was only revised after Digital Television Uptake was not as high as expected in many areas, and from 1 January , Network 10, Nine and Seven were allowed to create alternative SD channels. Australian content on subscription television also grew, with shows such as the Logie Award winning Love My Way. In Tasmanian Digital Television launched, providing Tasmanian viewers a third commercial station, and nationally available stations Fly TV and the ABC Kids launched, later to be eventually shut down due to funding issues and replaced in by ABC2. Sydney also began testing datacasting transmissions with Digital 44 in. While digital television boomed in areas that received a third channel and with the subscription television services, growth in other areas has been slow, with analogue shut-down dates pushed back several times. A number of new community stations were also opened, including

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