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Cuts to kids' TV quotas must be resisted

Australia's commercial free-to-air broadcasters and the emerging streaming video-on-demand (SVOD) sector must not be allowed to walk away from an obligation to support original, home-grown children's television, says the union for performers and screen crew.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance says the existing children's Australian live action drama quota for commercial broadcasters should be maintained, and similar quotas introduced for SVOD and other types of broadcasting.

MEAA welcomes the #savekidsTV campaign launched today by the Australian Greens and has offered to work with screen producers and other industry stakeholders to ensure Australia continues to produce high-quality children's content for television and other broadcast media.

In addition to preserving the existing children's live action drama quota, MEAA is also calling for a study into whether a separate cap is required for children's animation to preserve live action drama as a total proportion of the commercial networks' Australian content obligations.

MEAA chief executive officer Paul Murphy said there was no case for the children's television quotas to be reduced or abolished.

As it is, the commercial networks are barely meeting the required quotas of a minimum of 25 hours of first release Australian children's drama a year, with the Nine, Seven and Ten networks producing a combined 85 hours in 2015.

"The content quotas currently in place ensure that commercial free-to-air broadcasters are continually commissioning high budget local children's drama programs and providing significant finance for the production of those series," Mr Murphy said.

"It goes without saying that we want children to see their own culture reflected on screen through Australian stories. The last thing we want is for our kids in their developmental years to be exposed to a uniform diet of American and British accents. And research shows that Australian kids prefer content made for them.

"Nor should the provision of children's live action programming be confined to the public broadcasters.

"Without enforceable quotas, it seems very clear that the media marketplace would jettison plans to produce quality children's drama in a heartbeat.

"The push to wind back these rules must be resisted and we welcome the public debate generated by the #savekidstv campaign."

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