

**REPORT FOR
THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR CHINESE PROGRAMMES
2008/2010**

华文节目咨询委员会：2008/2010 汇报

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(I) INTRODUCTION

a) Background

1 The Advisory Committee for Chinese Programmes (ACCESS) [华文节目咨询委员会] was first set up in 1994 to advise and give feedback on the range and quality of Chinese programmes on the Free-to-Air TV channels and radio stations with the aim to enhance the broadcasters' role to entertain, inform and educate viewers. The Committee also advises on Chinese programmes on Pay TV.

2 This report by ACCESS covers the period July 2008 to June 2010. The current Committee was appointed by the Minister for Information, Communication and the Arts (MICA) for a two-year term with effect from July 2008. The list of Committee members can be found in Annex A.

b) The Committee's Work

3 The Committee undertook the following:

- a. Reviewed and gave feedback on Chinese programming on Channel 8, Channel U, Pay TV channels, and radio stations;
- b. Reviewed and provided recommendations on the range and quality of Chinese programmes;
- c. Reviewed and provided feedback on censorship issues, including those arising from public complaints; and
- d. Provided support and advice to the Media Development Authority (MDA) in the formulation of content guidelines, gathering of programme feedback and public education.

4 Under Associate Professor Lee Cheuk Yin's chairmanship, the Committee held a total nine meetings between July 2008 and June 2010. In order to seek more views about local Chinese programmes from the industry, the Committee also held dialogues with the programming staff of MediaCorp's Chinese channels, Channel 8 and Channel U, as well as StarHub Cable Vision (SCV).

5 During its term, the Committee formed several programme interest groups to assess the range and quality of programme offered across the various genres, such as those for the Elderly, Variety and Entertainment programmes, Dramas, Children's programmes, News and Info-Educational programmes. ACCESS' views were also sought on the validity of public feedback received on possible breaches of MDA's content codes.

6 In addition to the regular meetings, the Committee members also provided timely views and comments on other programming and advertising issues that surfaced between meetings via email consultations.

7 Beyond providing its views on specific content issues, the Committee was also consulted on various matters, including revisions of MDA's content codes, reviews of content regulatory guidelines, and recommendations for new TV programmes.

(II) Summary of Key Recommendations

8 The following is an overview of the key recommendations made by ACCESS based on its observations during the course of its term.

More exposure for Chinese Children's programmes

9 By and large, ACCESS was satisfied with the quality of the locally produced Chinese children's programmes but urged Channel 8 to give more exposure to these programmes. This could include making Children's programmes available beyond the existing Children's programme timebelt on the channel, more cross-promotion of these programmes on other channels and timebelts, and to work with the print media to highlight or review the Children's programmes.

More Programmes for the Elderly

10 ACCESS was heartened by MediaCorp's efforts to provide more programme choices for elderly viewers beyond its regular programme, "*Golden Age*", and encouraged MediaCorp to continue to do so. In addition, the Committee also recommended that the broadcasters should further engage the elderly by enabling them to be active purveyors of cultural content within programmes, and to share their life experiences and lessons with the young.

Content Standards

11 ACCESS urged the broadcasters to exercise more care in maintaining a good language standard within their programmes. For example, the broadcasters should ensure accuracy in the subtitling of programmes and Chinese programmes should avoid mixing Singlish, English or dialects with the Chinese dialogue. In addition, the Committee also observed the frequent presence of undesirable themes such as violence and brutality in local dramas and an increasing trend to include characters that cross-dress in variety programmes. ACCESS advised MediaCorp to refrain from capitalising on such content and consider introducing diversity and creativity in local programmes through tasteful and non-exploitative means.

Promote local media industry and nurture local media talents

12 ACCESS was pleased to note that MediaCorp's Channel U outsourced most of its local programmes, including info-education programmes and dramas, to independent production houses and is supportive of this approach. The Committee would like to urge MediaCorp to continue to provide a platform to nurture local homegrown talents, which would help bring about more creative programming and diversity in the local media scene.

More Public Education Efforts

13 The Committee acknowledged that the changing media landscape and technological developments had resulted in more media options, including online content over the Internet and programmes with more mature content (i.e. “16” and “18” rated programmes) on Pay TV platforms. It also recognized that media consumption habits were changing, especially amongst the young who are more technologically-savvy. As such, ACCESS stressed the importance of public education and outreach to groups like parents, teachers, and students on topics like cyber-wellness, safe-surfing habits, as well as raising awareness of the availability and features of parental locking mechanisms offered by Pay TV operators and Internet filtering software.

(III) Dialogues with Broadcasters

14 In the course of its two year term, ACCESS took the opportunity to meet with representatives from MediaCorp’s Channel 8 and Channel U, as well as the representatives in charge of Chinese programming from SCV to gain a better understanding of their upcoming programming plans and strategies. The dialogues also provided an opportunity for the broadcasters to share with ACCESS the challenges they faced, including the need to provide programming that remains relevant to the community, staying commercially viable, and keeping up with changing media consumption patterns as a result of technological advancement and convergence.

15 ACCESS expressed its appreciation for the opportunities to engage the broadcasters to exchange ideas and suggestions on Chinese programmes. Members look forward to more dialogues with the broadcasters with the aim of promoting and encouraging the production of quality Chinese programmes to cater to different segments of the community.

(a) Dialogue with MediaCorp Channel 8 and Channel U

16 At the dialogue with Channel 8, ACCESS reiterated the Committee’s calls for more programmes for children and the elderly. The Committee also highlighted to Channel 8 its concerns over the editorial integrity of sponsored programmes shown on Channel 8, which it found to be hard selling sponsors’ products and services. ACCESS advised MediaCorp to exercise greater caution and discretion to ensure that similar sponsored programmes in future should be presented in a more factual and objective manner. As for ACCESS’ meeting with Channel U, while the Committee noted Channel U’s strategy of focusing on infotainment and entertainment programmes, members still urged Channel U not to disregard the importance of offering info-ed or Current Affairs programmes as the provision of these genres on the channel would enable it to offer a balanced mix of programmes for viewers.

17 ACCESS also noted MediaCorp’s explanation that Channel U’s programming strategy was a deliberate move to create a distinctly different branding from that of Channel 8. The Committee supported the approach for programmes offered on both channels to be differentiated to complement each other as well as to serve the needs of different target audiences (*i.e. Channel 8 to cater to the mass audience with strong*

localized content, while Channel U to cater to more tech-savvy and sophisticated younger viewers through programmes with “globalised” content). This was illustrated by examples of how programmes on volunteerism shown on both channels differed in their treatment of the topic, with the one shown on Channel 8 (i.e. “心情大动员”) focusing on volunteerism in Singapore, while the one shown on Channel U (i.e. “明星志工队”) featuring local celebrities doing volunteer work in impoverished places overseas. In addition, ACCESS also welcomed Channel U’s approach of using social and online media tools such as Twitter, Facebook and official programme websites to promote and expand the reach and exposure of Channel U’s programmes, as well as to reach out to its youth and PMEB audiences who are more tech-savvy.

18 ACCESS applauded Channel U’s efforts in supporting the local media industry in Singapore through the outsourcing of its local programmes, including dramas, telemovies and infotainment programmes to local production houses. In particular, the Committee noted that most of the local programmes shown on Channel U, including three telemovies shown in December 2009 (“煮持人” (*Cooking without Clothes*), “向日葵的约定” (*The Promise*) and “一切从遗书开始” (*The Will*)) were produced by local independent production houses. ACCESS felt that this approach provided a good platform for the local production houses to showcase their programmes, as well as create greater diversity in programming and help grow the local media industry. Members encouraged Channel U to continue to build on its strengths in offering quality local programmes to create a distinctive brand for the channel, as well as to play a more significant role in growing the local media industry.

19 In view of the competition posed by Pay TV channels and content on the Internet, ACCESS encouraged the free-to-air channels to provide more creative and engaging programmes to attract and retain viewers, as well as to use other media platforms to create more exposure and awareness of their programmes.

(b) Dialogue with Channel 8’s “早安, 您好” (Good Morning Singapore) Production Team

20 ACCESS also had the opportunity to meet with the production team in charge of Channel 8’s long-running morning talk show, “早安, 您好” (*Good Morning Singapore*). Members provided further suggestions on the revamp of the programme which had remained unchanged since its inception, as well as views on how its offerings could be improved to make them more appealing to its audiences. The Committee was also heartened that the broadcaster had taken steps to revamp the programming format of “早安, 您好” (*Good Morning Singapore*), a recommendation which was made by the Committee in the previous ACCESS Report for 2006/2008.

21 The Committee found the new programming strategy of differentiating the content of “早安, 您好” (*Good Morning Singapore*) to cater to different demographics of viewers tuning in at different times to be a good approach, i.e. having an earlier segment focusing on business and news updates to cater to viewers who tune in before they go to work in the early morning, and a later segment focusing on lifestyle and info-ed content to cater to the home-makers.

22 ACCESS recommended that “早安, 您好” (*Good Morning Singapore*) provide more coverage of local sports events such as *Formula 1* and the inaugural *Youth*

Olympic Games (YOG) which Singapore would be hosting this year. The Committee also suggested that the production team source for insightful and interesting information from magazines such as “*亚洲周刊*” (*Yazhou Zhoukan*) to be offered during the programme. To give viewers more reasons to tune in, the programme could emulate *Phoenix Chinese Channel* (凤凰卫视) in its provision of regular weather and traffic updates via crawlers or a ticker-tape superimposed on screen.

23 While MediaCorp had incorporated some of the Committee’s earlier views and recommendations in the revamped programme, ACCESS felt that there was more room for “*早安, 您好*” (*Good Morning Singapore*) to further improve its content. Members cited the example of how professionals such as lawyers or doctors, who were invited as panel guests did not have the opportunity to express their professional opinion on the issue discussed as the programme hosts had already done so on their behalf. The Committee therefore encouraged the programme hosts from refraining from doing so as it would be more credible if the advice came from the experts themselves.

(c) Dialogue with SCV

24 ACCESS commended SCV for offering a wide range of Chinese channels with diverse content and encouraged the broadcaster to continue to source for more engaging Chinese content. In particular, the Committee expressed appreciation for the good mix of entertainment, info-ed and Current Affairs programmes from *CCTV-4* (中央电视台), *CTI Channel* (中天电视), *Phoenix Chinese Channel* (凤凰卫视) and *Phoenix InfoNews Channel* (凤凰资讯台).

25 Nonetheless, ACCESS noted that despite the range of Chinese channels available, there was a limited range of Chinese Children’s programmes as compared to English Children’s programmes which were offered on channels such as Disney, Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon. As such, ACCESS urged SCV to look into providing Chinese channels to complement its current offerings. With the upcoming NGNBN infrastructure where the broadcasters’ capacity to offer more content would be increased significantly, the Committee also suggested that SCV offers niche content to target specific segments of the community whose needs were currently not met by the existing channels.

26 ACCESS recommended that SCV continues to widen its range of channels and to look into new ways of packaging its content to appeal to viewers. The Committee also suggested that SCV consider producing its own programmes to be featured on its in-house packaged channels, *E-City Channel* (娱家都会台) and *VV Drama Channel* (娱家戏剧台), so as to offer content with local relevance for viewers.

27 With regard to compliance with content guidelines, ACCESS urged SCV to exercise greater caution and diligence when vetting the content offered by its channels. Noting that SCV’s channels offer “16” and “18” rated programmes which explore mature content such as homosexuality and violence, the Committee urged the broadcaster to be mindful when and on which channels these programmes were scheduled to ensure that children were not inadvertently exposed to the mature content. In addition, ACCESS also encouraged SCV to step up its public education efforts to raise public awareness of its parental lock mechanism as it recognised that the public awareness of this feature

was currently low. By doing so, parents would be better able to guide their children's TV viewing habits and prevent them from accessing unsuitable content.

(IV) OBSERVATIONS ON AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RANGE AND QUALITY OF CHINESE PROGRAMMES

28 Generally, ACCESS welcomed MediaCorp's efforts to provide a variety of locally produced and acquired programmes on Channel 8 and Channel U. The Committee also noted that programmes on food and entertainment continued to dominate the airtime on the two channels. This was similar to the observations made in the previous Report for the period from 2006 to 2008. The following are the key observations and recommendations for Chinese programmes made by ACCESS:

a) News

29 When ACCESS was consulted for its views on MediaCorp's intentions to cease its offering of Channel U's weekday 9pm News Bulletins, "*News Jab @9*", and its weekend 7pm News Bulletin, "*News Club*", members expressed support as they noted the low ratings for Channel U's "*News Jab @9*" and "*News Club*" in comparison to the Channel 8 news bulletins, and recognised the high costs of maintaining two daily news bulletins. ACCESS was also aware that the News Bulletins on Channels U and 8 tended to be largely similar and repetitive, and commented that this could have contributed to the low ratings of "*News Jab @9*" and "*News Club*".

30 However, ACCESS suggested that the timeslots left by Channel U's news bulletins could be filled with info-educational or infotainment programmes rather than more entertainment programmes, which the channel already had plenty of. This could then cater to Channel U's target viewers who were increasingly becoming sophisticated in their programming preferences.

31 With regard to the common news bulletin offered on Channel 8 at 10pm ("*News 8 at Ten*") and on Channel U at 11pm ("*News World @ 11*") from 29 March 2010, ACCESS recommended that it should include adequate coverage of both local and international news events so that viewers would have well-balanced coverage of news items. In addition, it was also suggested that the news bulletin could provide detailed analysis and insights of relevant news items to add more depth to the news reporting on both channels.

32 Since the introduction of the common news bulletin on Channel 8 and Channel U, ACCESS observed that the common bulletin had offered a satisfactory mix of local and international news items. The Committee was also heartened to note that the ratings of programmes which now occupy the timeslots previously filled by Channel U's "*News World @ 11*" and "*News Jab @9*" and "*News Club*" had improved. ACCESS encouraged MediaCorp to continue providing quality news bulletins for its viewers.

b) Current Affairs, Cultural and Info-educational Programmes

33 The Committee commended MediaCorp for its staple of local Current Affairs programmes such as “财经追击” (*Money Week*), “焦点” (*Focus*), “前线追踪” (*Frontline*) and “特写” (*TR Report*). These long-running programmes were found to be integral in giving timely perspectives and insights to events and matters of local interest and relevance.

34 ACCESS found the info-ed programmes “纵横中医” (*Modern TCM V*) and “生命实录” (*Life Watch*) to be informative as they created awareness of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and the work of medical professionals. The Committee also found that the various travelogues shown on Channel 8 and Channel U such as “消失地平线” (*Diminishing Horizons*), “美食寻根” (*Food Hometown*), “万里香” (*Singapore Flavours*) and “传说中的料理” (*Legendary Cuisines*) were commendable productions. In particular, “消失地平线” (*Diminishing Horizons*) was found to be well-produced and it meaningfully featured the history and cultures of remote countries in other parts of the world. This would enable viewers to learn more about these places which most Singaporeans would not have the opportunity to visit. ACCESS members indicated they enjoyed “传说中的料理” (*Legendary Cuisines*) for its use of the interesting premise where the programme host set out in search of legendary cuisines mentioned and featured in well-known Chinese stories and folktales such as “水浒传” (*Water Margin*).

35 With regard to acquired info-ed programmes, ACCESS found that “向世界出发” (*On the Road*), “走近科学” (*Approaching Science*), and “地球脉动” (*Planet Earth*) were very well-produced and informative. In particular, ACCESS was pleased with how the quality BBC production, “地球脉动” (*Planet Earth*), was shown in dual sound track (i.e. Mandarin and English) on Channel U as this allowed Chinese-speaking viewers to enjoy them as well.

c) Programmes for the Elderly

36 ACCESS noted that Channel 8’s “黄金年华” (*Golden Age*) and dialect operas continued to be the main programmes catering to elderly viewers. The Committee was heartened to observe that Channel 8 made an effort to revamp “黄金年华” (*Golden Age*) into a full one-hour singing competition programme for elderly viewers to take part in. Members also commended Channel 8 for the introduction of another info-tainment programme, “黄金年华之乐龄手札” (*Living the Golden Age*) offering useful lifestyle information, such as household and exercise tips, cooking recipes, healthy diets etc., that were previously provided in “黄金年华” (*Golden Age*) before its revamp into a full singing competition programme.

37 In addition, ACCESS was pleased with the info-educational programme “我也做得到” (*I can do it too!*) shown on Channel 8 which featured case studies of elderly viewers taking part in various hobbies such as sports and learning musical instruments. The Committee felt that such programmes were valuable as they portrayed the elderly as contributing to society and, at the same time, encouraging and inspiring other elderly viewers to live their lives to the fullest and engage in meaningful activities.

38 The Committee expressed appreciation for the availability programmes for the elderly on TV and urged MediaCorp to continue to provide more of such programmes; there would be an increasing demand in view of Singapore's rapidly aging population. In addition, ACCESS recommended that Channel 8 further engage the elderly more by letting them become active purveyors of the cultural content in programmes. Members were of the view that the elderly had many interesting life experiences and lessons to share with the young, and such cultural capital would make good content sources for programmes targeted at both the elderly and the young.

d) Dramas

39 For local dramas, ACCESS indicated that it enjoyed Channel 8's productions such as “书包太重” (*My School Daze*), “游戏人生” (*Priceless Wonder*) and “不凡的爱” (*By My Side*) for their exploration of the universal themes of friendship and family relationships. In particular, the Committee found that “游戏人生” (*Priceless Wonder*) and “不凡的爱” (*By My Side*) were valuable in creating awareness among viewers on social issues such as the ills of problem gambling and promiscuity, as well as the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

40 ACCESS commended MediaCorp for Channel 8's local drama “小娘惹” (*The Little Nonya*) which members found to be a quality production that meaningfully showcased the unique traits of the Penarakan culture and history. On a related note, ACCESS suggested that MediaCorp leverage on the strengths of new media platforms to showcase different aspects of Singapore's culture and heritage.

41 The Committee also found Channel U's locally produced dramas, “魔幻视界” (*The Illusionist*), “一切完美” (*Perfect Cut*) and its sequel “一切完美 2” (*Perfect Cut 2*) to be well-produced and scripted with an interesting and educational storyline. Despite exploring the theme of plastic surgery which some may deem controversial, the “*Perfect Cut*” series was able to convey positive values of love, kinship and the importance of relationships with family and friends without promoting plastic surgery as a means to improve oneself. ACCESS also found these programmes to be a refreshing change from the usual in-house dramas shown on Channel 8 as the former had a distinctively different production style and storyline.

42 As for acquired programmes, ACCESS expressed appreciation over the availability of new Taiwanese idol dramas, e.g. “不良校花” (*Miss No Good*), “桃花小妹” (*Momo Love*) and “就想赖着你” (*Down with Love*) one-week after these dramas were aired in Taiwan. However, members found that other Taiwanese dramas such as “爱” (*Love*) and “台湾龙卷风” (*Taiwan Tornado*), contained negative themes and storylines such as family feuds, deception, manipulation, attempts to inflict harm on others or take revenge, etc. ACCESS therefore urged MediaCorp to exercise greater discretion in its acquisition of programmes.

43 On content standards, the Committee was disappointed to note that despite its recommendation in the previous ACCESS Report that drama serials should not exploit undesirable values, themes or scenes, such as violence and brutality in order to garner higher viewership, such themes remained key features in local dramas. Members cited dramas such as “双子星” (*The Ultimatum*), “叮当神探” (*Crimebusters X 2*) as examples

of dramas where such themes were prevalent, and even “小娘惹” (*Little Nonya*), which ACCESS had commended for its portraying the Peranakan culture, also included violence and rape scenes as part of its storyline. ACCESS reiterated its earlier recommendation that local dramas should not resort to featuring violence and torture on a regular basis, as doing so could lead to viewers becoming desensitised to such content. In turn, such content can have a negative impact on viewers in the longer term, which was a concern to the Committee since these dramas are shown during Family Viewing Hours and are therefore accessible to children.

44 ACCESS clarified that while it was not advocating that MediaCorp completely avoid that such themes in its dramas, it recommend that MediaCorp consider presenting such themes in a more tasteful and non-exploitative manner. If necessary, ACCESS also encouraged MediaCorp to consider scheduling such programmes outside of Family Viewing Hours and have them carry programme advisories so that viewers are made aware of their sensitive content.

e) Variety and Entertainment Programmes

45 ACCESS found Channel 8's “国记交意所” (*It's a Small World*) to be well-presented and interesting as it showcased the unique traits cultural practices and lifestyles of people from different nationalities and ethnic groups living in Singapore. The Committee also enjoyed the infotainment programme “新客到” (*New Foreigner in Town*) which featured foreigners in Singapore interacting with and living among the locals by showing them taking public transport, interacting with the hawkers and shopowners in the HDB heartlands, etc.. With Singapore becoming more globalised and cosmopolitan, ACCESS recommended that more of such programmes be produced to keep local viewers updated on global developments, and to foster greater cross-cultural understanding of the new immigrants to Singapore by featuring their cultures and lifestyles.

46 ACCESS found the programmes “心晴大动员” (*Life Transformers*) and “明星志工队” (*Stars for a Cause*) to be touching and well-produced as they featured different artistes participating in volunteer work in Singapore and in various impoverished and remote villages in Taiwan and China. The Committee was of the view that these programmes helped to create a greater awareness of the plights of the less fortunate and could help to promote and encourage volunteerism. The programme “绿设兵团” (*Go Green*) was also found to be interesting and engaging in highlighting innovative methods of recycling and conservation, and is in line with Singapore's aim of making its residents more environmentally-conscious.

47 ACCESS commended MediaCorp for bringing viewers timely coverage of significant events such as the total solar eclipse in 2009 by simulcasting CCTV's “live” coverage of “日全食 — 世纪奇观全程直播” (*2009 Total Solar Eclipse Special*) on Channel U, and the Shanghai World Expo in 2010 in the programmes: “拥抱世界 — 2010 上海世博会外滩国际音乐盛典” (*2010 Shanghai World Expo International Music Extravaganza*) and “上海世博会开幕典礼” (*2010 Shanghai World Expo Opening Ceremony*)”.

48 ACCESS also observed that cross-dressing in local variety programmes such as “女王本色” (*Paris & Milan*) and “城人新杂志” (*New City Beat*) by local artistes such as Bryan Wong, Gurmit Singh, Dennis Chou, Chen Jian Hui, had in recent times, become more frequent. Although members recognised that these artistes cross-dressed in variety programmes solely for entertainment purposes, they urged the broadcaster to refrain from featuring cross-dressers in its programmes. This could confuse children who were watching these variety programmes. In addition, members were also aware of public complaints on cross-dressing characters on TV.

49 On talk show programmes such as “女人大主义” (*Woman on Top*) and “从心开始” (*Life Navigator*), ACCESS recommended that MediaCorp exercise greater discretion to ensure that the views put forth during such programmes remained objective and factual. The Committee was of the view while different perspectives on an issue could be featured, that programme hosts had the responsibility of moderating the discussions to prevent the discussions from becoming skewed or overly sensationalised.

f) Children and Youth Programmes

50 The Committee was pleased with the programme, “艺起青奥” (*Go! YOG*) which was shown as a lead-up to the inaugural Youth Olympic Games 2010. ACCESS recommended that the broadcasters could produce more Chinese programmes on key sports programmes such as the *YOG 2010*, *FIFA World Cup*, *F1 Race*, *Commonwealth Games* and the *ASEAN Games*. The Committee also recommended that the broadcasters consider emulating ESPN Channel in offering dual track (English and Mandarin) commentaries in its coverage of sports events like soccer matches, which were targeted at the youths.

51 With regards to Children’s programmes in Channel 8’s Children’s programming belt “乐乐窝” on weekends, the Committee found “Fun 学去!” (*Fun Learning*), “Fun 学去! 2” (*Fun Learning 2*), “我的超级便当” (*My Yummy Lunch Box*) and “桃树桃园” to be educational and informative. The Committee encouraged MediaCorp to provide more programmes along the likes of “华文? 谁怕谁!” (*The Chinese Challenge Grand Final*) which they found to be engaging, informative and could encourage children to speak and learn Mandarin.

52 As for Youth programmes, ACCESS found “青涩部落格 2” (*My World My Blog 2*) to be an interesting portrayal of youths’ perspectives.

53 Notwithstanding the above, ACCESS observed that Chinese Children’s and Youth programmes continued to be lacking, as these programmes are only available on weekend mornings on Channel 8, from 8am to 11am, on the channel’s Children timebelt “乐乐窝”. The Committee reiterated its call for more Chinese and Youth programmes to be made available. With children’s programmes only shown on weekend mornings, ACCESS also expressed concern that with the short timebelt, the programmes’ had limited reach. Hence, the Committee suggested that MediaCorp consider splitting up or repeating programmes in the children’s timebelt on other timeslots and on weekdays to make them more accessible to viewers.

54 Similarly, ACCESS recommended that the Children’s programmes on Channel 8 be cross-promoted on other channels like okto, Channel U and Channel 5, as well as

during primetime on Channel 8 to create more awareness amongst parents of these programmes. The Committee opined that parents play an important role in guiding their children in their selection of TV programmes and would therefore appreciate being informed of Channel 8's Children's programming belt. ACCESS also recommended that MediaCorp consider collaborating with the print media to publish articles and reviews of new Children's programmes available to create greater public awareness of them.

(g) Radio Programmes

55 For radio programmes, ACCESS encouraged the radio stations to exercise greater discretion in vetting pre-recorded content prior to them being aired. This was following the consultation with the Committee on a 100.3FM programme during which excerpts of a Taiwanese radio programme “*陶子晚报*” contained crude terms with sexual connotations in its discussion on gender issues. While ACCESS noted that this programme was positive in discouraging listeners from engaging in promiscuous behaviour and educating listeners that extra-marital affairs were unacceptable, the Committee felt that more sensitivity should have been exercised to ensure that the crude terms were not aired. In addition, ACCESS found the pre-recorded interview segment “*我是过来人*” on 97.2FM which featured a prolonged interview with a caller on his numerous extramarital affairs to be inappropriate, especially when the DJ did not give alternative views to provide balance to the topic of discussion, and appeared to condone the caller's behaviour. ACCESS therefore urged the broadcasters to ensure that all discussions and interviews should be handled in a careful and sensitive manner, and to refrain from sensationalising negative behaviours.

56 The Committee also noted that some DJs adopted foreign accents, e.g. the Hong Kong accent, in some radio programmes, and urged the DJs to refrain from doing so as this could send conflicting signals on the use of the Chinese language on radio.

(V) OTHER PROGRAMMING CONCERNS

(a) Language Standards and Subtitling of Programmes

57 ACCESS observed that some English subtitles in local dramas did not accurately reflect the dialogue in the programmes, and that there had also been instances where Chinese subtitles on “*News 8 at 10*” did not correspond with what the newscasters were saying.

58 In addition, ACCESS also observed, on certain occasions, poor standards of language used by some local programme hosts and newscasters. Members cited the example of the Channel 8 variety programme “*Don't Forget the Lyrics*” (*我要唱下去*) where one of the guests on the programme said “*那你要好好上路*” [*This phrase is used to refer to dead people*] when telling a fellow guest to buck up when participating in the game when the phrase should have been “*那你要好好加油*” [*meaning: “You should do your best.”*]. ACCESS also observed another instance when a newscaster reporting “live” from the F1 race track commented that there were few people on the scene by

using the phrase “一小撮人” [meaning: This “one small bunch of people”], which could have been better phrased by using “人数很少” [meaning: “There are very few people.”]

59 As such, ACCESS urged MediaCorp to be more vigilant in the vetting of subtitles in programmes as such lapses would not reflect well on the national broadcaster which viewers would expect to have high language standards.

(b) Use of Colloquial Language within Programmes

60 ACCESS noted that locally-produced programmes on Channel 8 and U have started incorporating non-Mandarin phrases in their dialogues (e.g. “Hey, 那个 project 怎么样了?” or “我要准备多一点 vitamin 给你” and some dialect). The Committee was of the view that broadcasters should refrain from doing so and to strive to maintain a good standard of language within programmes, as viewers, especially children, tend to emulate how TV artistes speak.

(c) Programme Titles of Local Variety Programmes

61 Similarly, ACCESS observed that the programme titles of some local programmes played on the words of Chinese idioms; this could be confusing. Examples of these programmes include: “艺点心思”(CelebriTea Break), and “七步成食”(Easy Cooking). As such, ACCESS recommended that the broadcasters look into other ways of introducing creativity into programme titles without comprising language standards.

(d) Sponsored Programmes

62 With regard to sponsored programmes, ACCESS expressed its concern over the editorial integrity of sponsored programmes on beauty and slimming services such as “Jean Yip Beautiful Couple” (Jean Yip 魅力男女), “I am Perfect” (我最完美) and “Bioskin Dreams Come True II” (Bioskin 要你好看 II). The Committee was concerned with how the beauty advisors were featured as “expert” professionals on skincare and slimming services by extolling the benefits of their own products and services. In addition, the Committee was worried that the presence of such programmes could promote and glamourise unrealistic notions and perceptions of beauty. Similar to its recommendations in the ACCESS Report 2006/2008, ACCESS reiterated that broadcasters should exercise greater editorial integrity by ensuring that sponsored programmes are presented in a more objective manner.

(VI) ACCESS' VIEWS ON REVISION OF CONTENT CODES

63 During its term, ACCESS was consulted for its views on various content Codes which were being reviewed and amended as part of MDA's regular reviews. These included the review of the Subscription TV Programme Code, the TV Advertising Code and the Radio Advertising Code. Some of the key recommendations made by the Committee are highlighted below.

(a) Review of the Subscription TV Programme Code

64 ACCESS supported the move to remove the tier system (i.e. “basic” and “premium” channels) in the previous version of the Subscription TV Programme Code (introduced in 2004), which was drafted based on SCV’s business model as it was the only pay TV operator in Singapore then. The Committee opined that this approach was in line with local media industry developments with new entrants such as SingTel’s mio TV service, and would create parity for the media players.

65 With regard to the availability of “16”- and “18”- rated programmes on Pay TV, ACCESS recommended that pay TV service operators promote greater awareness of their parental lock mechanisms so that parents could make more informed choices and better guide their children in the selection of TV programmes, as well as prevent access to mature content by the underaged. It also suggested that the pay TV operators clearly publicise and label rated programmes in programme listings in the newspapers, publications such as “i-weekly”, “8 Days” and “Telescope”, in their Electronic Programme Guides (EPG), as well as provide a suitable viewing advisories (e.g. “*This programme contains violence/sexual content/coarse language*”) to allow viewers to make informed viewing choices. The Committee was also of the view that “18” rated programmes should continue to be aired only after 10pm as these programmes contain mature content which were unsuitable for children.

(b) Review of the TV Advertising Code and the Radio Advertising Code

66 ACCESS was supportive of the proposed amendments to the TV Advertising Code which included clearer guidelines on the scheduling of advertisements and trailers for rated programmes and cinematic movies, as well as guidelines for death-related services and SMS downloads targeted at children.

67 In particular, ACCESS expressed concern over the numerous advertisements for SMS download services which were shown on TV, as they found these advertisements to be misleading. The Committee observed that the terms and conditions for the purchase of these services were provided in very fine print at the bottom of the TV screen and were too small for viewers to read. Furthermore, ACCESS also found that children would not be discerning enough to read or understand the terms and conditions of subscribing to these SMS download services.

68 Hence, ACCESS recommended that all terms and conditions and payment or subscription modes for subscribing to these SMS download services should be provided in bigger print, as well as be verbalised so that viewers would be made aware of the purchase terms. In addition, the Committee was also of the view that these advertisements should also carry the disclaimer for children to seek parental consent in both visual and audio form.

69 With regard to the review of the Radio Advertising Code to become the Radio Advertising and Sponsorship Code, ACCESS supported the approach to expand the scope of the Code to include guidelines for sponsorship of radio programmes which were absent in the current version of the Code. Noting the increasing trend of radio advertisements being presented in the form of “live reads”, “open talks” or DJ endorsements as part of regular radio programming, ACCESS agreed that the amended

Code should stipulate that such advertisements be clearly identified so that listeners would not be misled.

70 For the reviews of both the TV Advertising Code and Radio Advertising Code, ACCESS strongly recommended that TV and radio advertisements should maintain high language standards and should not contain Singlish or sub-standard Mandarin.

(VII) ACCESS' VIEWS ON CONVERGENCE AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

71 During its term, ACCESS was consulted for its views on how new media content offered over the Internet, such as video-on-demand (VOD) or streaming services offered by online operators like Clicknetwork.com, as well as online media services operated by SPH (STOMP and RazorTV), should be regulated.

72 The Committee noted that content offered over the Internet was currently subjected to the light-touch Internet Code of Practice even though such content was easily accessible and could offer raunchier or more controversial content as compared to traditional platforms. Members were concerned over the discrepancy between content regulation standards of the Internet versus Pay and Free-to-air TV platforms.

73 While acknowledging that such online media services should be made more accountable for the content they offer, ACCESS was also of view that regulating these online operators in the same manner as traditional broadcasters was not a practical approach due to the borderless nature of the Internet. In addition, subjecting them to stricter regulation would run contrary to MDA's light-touch regulatory framework for the Internet and might even cause them to relocate overseas which would in turn make it even harder to regulate them.

74 As such, ACCESS stressed the importance of public education and outreach to groups like parents, teachers, and students children on topics like cyber-wellness, safe-surfing habits, as well as to raise awareness of the availability and functions of Internet filtering software as a useful tool for parents to control access to undesirable content. Members were of the view that creating public awareness of such initiatives was vital due to the changing media consumption habits of the young who watch less scheduled programmes on TV and increasingly watch videos on the Internet on sites such as YouTube, often without parental supervision.

(VIII) CONCLUSION

75 ACCESS has in this Report, made several recommendations on how the range and quality of Chinese programmes available on TV and radio could be improved. The Committee would like to reiterate the importance of balancing the need to stay commercially viable with the social responsibility to provide quality programming choices to meet the needs of the community.

76 In view of convergence and the rapidly changing media environment, as well as the rise of new media, ACCESS urges the broadcasters to stay abreast of these media developments in order to gain better insight into new content delivery models and media consumption habits. The Committee also encourages the broadcasters to tap into the synergies of different media platforms to create innovative programmes, as well as to maximize the reach of its programmes. With the wide plethora of easily accessible media content, ACCESS reiterates its recommendation that the broadcasters should play a greater role in public education to educate and inform viewers of safe and responsible media consumption habits.

77 Responses from the broadcasters to the Report can be found in Annex B.

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ANNEX B**BROADCASTERS' RESPONSE TO REPORT**

The following are the responses from the broadcasters to ACCESS' feedback and recommendations:

A) MEDIACORP'S RESPONSEMore exposure for Chinese Children's programmes

MediaCorp said that Channel 8 is a mass family channel that caters to various demographic groups within the Chinese-speaking audience. Given the limited airtime and resources, Channel 8 needs to ensure that its cross-promotion plan gives priority to programmes with the highest audience reach.

Channel 8 would however, explore cross-promoting its kids programmes on okto and publicising the programmes in the print media. Furthermore, Channel 8 would also study the feasibility of re-running some kid's programmes on weekday timebelts.

More Programmes for the elderly

MediaCorp shared that the production team of the elderly series is currently engaging the senior citizens in their research by understanding their interests and needs before setting the direction for the programme. Channel 8 would explore the suggestion of including cultural content in the elderly series and involving the elderly in sharing their experiences in the programme.

Dialogue and Subtitles

Channel 8 noted the Committee's concerns and would exercise greater care in maintaining good language standards in dialogue and subtitling, and in the production treatment of sensitive themes in local drama and variety shows.

Language Matters

MediaCorp noted the comments on the use of dialects in programmes.

Good Morning Singapore (GMS)

MediaCorp shared that there had been a considerable improvement in the content and ratings of GMS since its latest revamp in October 2009. Besides the news and financial updates, GMS also incorporated a number of new discussion forums like "城事大家谈" and "乐活新主张" to improve the engagement level with viewers. As a result, there was a 14% increase in the P15+ average weekly reach of the programme.

Since its inception, GMS has introduced new segments/series along the way to stay relevant to the viewers. The studio set and opening sequence have been refreshed, new

faces introduced to host the program. Moving forward, the GMS team is also exploring having regular weather updates.

With effect from 12 July 2010, GMS would be introducing a news ticker with the latest financial, sports, local and world news running from 7am to 8.30am.

GMS noted ACCESS' comment about the host giving advice on behalf of the invited guests, and clarified that it was the exception rather than the norm as the host in that instance, was likely trying to keep time.

Acquired Dramas

In response to the Committee's opinion that acquired dramas like *Love (爱)* and *Taiwan Tornado (台湾龙卷风)* had negative themes and storylines such as family feuds, deception, manipulation, attempts to inflict harm on others or revenge, MediaCorp said that “爱” and “台湾龙卷风”, being melodramas, had essentially two themes in common. They were the feud between the good and the evil with the good always prevailing; and the importance of the family. According to MediaCorp, it is through the family feuds that the villains are crafted as the much-hated antagonists, enabling viewers to root for the protagonists. There were also many lead characters in the dramas that embodied positive values such filial piety and respect for elders, being caring towards their friends, as well as unfailing love, perseverance, with these characters portrayed as beacons of virtue. As such, Channel 8 was confident that viewers would be able to have a balanced perspective of the different themes and issues explored in these dramas while watching them.

Radio Programmes

MediaCorp noted the comment on foreign/Cantonese accent and highlighted that the deejays were aware of the sensitivity, and if used, the accent was always “tongue in cheek” and contextual.

B) STARHUB'S RESPONSE

StarHub welcomed the opportunity to comment on the ACCESS Report.

With regard to ACCESS' recommendation that pay TV service operators promote greater awareness of their parental lock mechanisms, StarHub highlighted that: information on its channel-locking mechanism is provided in its cable TV handbook which all customers receive once they become cable TV subscribers. In addition, this information is also available on StarHub's website.

On the issue of ratings, StarHub replied that the rated programmes carried on StarHub's platform do carry ratings. However, the ratings reflected might not be the same as the ones used in Singapore given the regional nature of the channels. StarHub also assured ACCESS that the majority of StarHub's content offerings do not contain much objectionable content.

C) SAFRA RADIO'S RESPONSE

SAFRA Radio noted ACCESS' comments on and recommendations for radio programmes.

D) SPH UNIONWORKS' RESPONSE

SPH UnionWorks noted ACCESS' comments on and recommendations for radio programmes.