

PROGRAMME ADVISORY COMMITTEE
7th ANNUAL REPORT
(1 MARCH 2001 – 28 FEBRUARY 2002)

INTRODUCTION

1 This is the seventh Annual Report by the Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) covering the period 1 March 2001 to 28 February 2002. The Chairman and Members of the PAC were appointed by the Minister of Information, Communications and the Arts for a term of two years starting from 1 March 2001. The members of the committee include the following:

Chairman	:	Prof Eddie Kuo
Members	:	Prof Koh Tai Ann
		Mrs Choo Cheh Hoon
		Mrs Maureen Goh
		Mr Teo Han Wue
		Mr John Ang
		Mr Bala Reddy
		Dr Mohd Maliki Osman
		Dr Vivian Balakrishnan
		Ms Yeoh Chee Yan
		Mr Adrian Peh
		Mr Lam Peck Heng
		Mr John Lim
		Mr Rama Meyyappan

Tasks Performed

2 For the period under review, the PAC held four meetings, while its five Programme Advisory Subcommittees, namely Info-Education, Children, Culture, Sports and Entertainment, held a total of 20 meetings. Dialogue was held with MediaCorp Singapore and SPH MediaWorks Ltd to get a better understanding of the broadcast challenges that they face. The work undertaken by the PAC included the following:

- a Reviewed feedback, range and quality of broadcast programmes,
- b Assessed sensitive programmes and broadcasters' overall exercise of programme standards,
- c Reviewed programme recommendations by committee members,
- d Selected for the first time quality TV programmes to highlight in the annual report captioned 'PAC's Choice' so as to encourage broadcasters to telecast more of such programmes.

PAC'S OBSERVATIONS AND EVALUATIONS ON BROADCAST PROGRAMMES

Range, Quality and Programme Standards

3 2001 saw significant developments by two key media players - Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) made its first foray into the broadcast industry with the launch of SPH MediaWorks Ltd, while the incumbent broadcaster, MediaCorp Singapore, launched its first newspaper, TODAY.

4 The introduction of SPH MediaWorks' two new channels, Channel U and TV Works, meant the availability of more viewing channels for audiences on Free-To-Air (FTA) TV. Viewers had more choices in terms of local and acquired Mandarin and English programmes, particularly in the genre of entertainment. At the same time, viewers continued to have access to a good range of programmes on Channel NewsAsia, Arts and Kids Central, Suria, Vasantham Central, while SCV offered 38 channels with an array of programmes of various genres and languages for subscribers to choose from.

5 It was observed that while the number of entertainment programmes on FTA TV had increased, their quality and range did not show marked improvement. With greater competition and the bid to achieve high ratings, members observed that broadcasters were inclined to appeal to the lowest common denominator, resulting in an overall decline of quality in entertainment programmes. Series such as *Super Manager* (Ch 8), *Temptation Island* (Ch 5) and *Ripley's Believe It Or Not* (TVWorks) were some examples.

6 Catering to popular tastes also meant more of the same kind of programming as evidenced by a proliferation of 'Reality TV' series such as *Survivor* (Ch 5), *Spy TV* (Ch 5), *the Mole* (TVWorks) and Taiwanese variety shows like *Super Sunday* (Ch 8), *East Versus West* (Ch 8 and Ch U) and *Fun Club* (Ch U).

7 A number of quality programmes with engaging plots and positive values such as *Judging Amy*, *Providence* and *Gilmore Girls* (Ch 5) were broadcast, but these were relegated to midnight slots.

8 Children and Arts programming on Central TV had, on the whole, maintained their range and quality. Quality programmes like *The Big Q*, *Blue's Clues*, *Wayang - The Final Curtain*, *High Notes* were telecast. As for news/current affairs/info-educational programmes, the main FTA TV source, Channel News Asia, performed credibly. It had timely reports on current issues such as the September 11 terrorist attack in the United States, the Singapore General

Elections and programmes which broadened Singaporeans' knowledge such as *The Medical Alphabet* and *Asia Today*.

9 The range of sports programmes on FTA TV was generally maintained in 2001, but it was observed that the loss of key soccer programmes such as the English Premiere League series was keenly felt by sports fans who were not cabled up. The recent closure of CityTV channel was also a blow to sports enthusiasts as there would be a lack of one clear FTA TV channel dedicated to sports.

10 For cable TV, two new channels offering light entertainment were added - TVB 8, a Mandarin channel from Hong Kong and JET TV, a Japanese channel. However, with the closure of Eureka channel on 1 April 2002, there would be less quality children's fare on cable TV. The repackaging of SCV's basic tier into 5 genre groups (News, Education, Entertainment, Chinese and Kids) enabled a lower entry price, and for those who chose to subscribe, they would have more programmes to select from other than the FTA TV offerings.

11 It was evident that in the drive to gain higher viewership, boundaries had been pushed for programmes and advertisements shown on TV, particularly FTA TV. More public concerns in programme standards surfaced with the bulk pertaining to sexual content/suggestiveness, social norms/lifestyles and violence. Examples included programmes such as *The Rude Awakening* and the advertisement on *Triumph G-String*.

12 The issue which generated the most public concern was the telecast of the *World Wrestling Federation* (WWF) programmes in afternoon timeslots on the then CityTV as the programmes were deemed unsuitable for young children's viewing. Most people, including the PAC, saw it as a violation of the 'family viewing hour' rule. SBA's ruling to broadcasters that all WWF programmes be scheduled after 10pm was a welcome resolution.

13 Members lauded efforts made by broadcasters to dub or subtitle quality programmes so that more viewers could enjoy them. However, it was noted that the standard of dubbing and subtitling was uneven.

14 For Radio in general, it was noted that the weekly listenership had hit an all time high of 95.8% (or 2.87 million listeners). Radio's range of programming remained largely similar to the previous year's output except for the new stations of UnionWorks (these were formerly the NTUC Radio Heart stations, 91.3FM and 100.3FM, which were relaunched in September 2001). The UnionWorks' new stations, WKRZ 91.3FM and UFM 100.3FM gave greater focus to music and

provided syndicated programming such as an MTV music block, with a diminished emphasis on news and information programmes.

15 It was observed that some information programmes on radio lacked sufficient objectivity and balance in their treatment, such as discussions on dialect (UFM) and New Age practices (NewsRadio).

News, Current Affairs and Informational Programmes

16 Channel NewsAsia (CNA) was commendable in its coverage of regional and world events with an Asian and local perspective. One example was *Asia Speaks* which looked closely at how Asians were affected by the developments following the United States September 11 terrorist attack and gave views from both Muslims and non-Muslims. By providing country reports from their correspondents based in various Asian/South East Asian countries, CNA also helped to enlarge awareness and understanding of our Asian/South East Asian neighbours. Overall, CNA had improved in its range and presentation of documentaries.

17 With the introduction of Ch U and TV Works, there was an increase in the amount of news, current affairs and informational programmes available to viewers on FTA TV. It was observed, however, that on the mass viewing channels, there was a tendency for some news reports to veer towards trivial subjects and a more sensationalistic style of reportage. As for Mandarin speaking viewers who had not subscribed to SCV channels, they could miss out on more important and in depth news coverage.

18 However, the quality of Mandarin current affairs series, namely *TR Report*, *Focus* and *Frontline* (Ch 8) remained high, providing good insights into local and international issues of significance. The human interest angle taken in *TR Report* features was found to be especially appealing. Features like '*Causeway Memories*' and '*Foreign Workers*' were able to touch both minds and hearts. *Inside Out*, an investigative current affairs series from Ch U was also a good addition as it examined issues of interest to the average Singaporean such as Chek Jawa in Pulau Ubin.

19 There were refreshing topics featured in the info-educational programmes telecast, most of which were of value not just to their target audience but the community as a whole. These included Ch U's *You're Ok, I'm Ok* (on conflict resolution through community mediation), and *Roots of our Origin* (on the origins of the different Chinese dialect groups in Singapore). Noteworthy programmes in a lighter vein included titles such as *Thinking Animals* (CNA), *Makansutra*,

(TVWorks/Ch i), *The Big Challenge* (Ch U) and *All Change* (Ch 5). These succeeded in informing and entertaining viewers at the same time.

20 It was observed that some quality info-educational programmes carried similar themes. For instance, Ch 8's *My Best Partner* (on family businesses), Suria's *I* (on technopreneurship) and CNA's *In Good Company* (on young entrepreneurs) and together they strengthened the call for a greater entrepreneurial spirit amongst Singaporeans.

21 While some info-educational/current affairs programmes had interesting topics, they could be further improved in terms of greater depth, balance or relevance to viewers. For example, *It's All In The Body* and *After Hours* (TV Works) would have benefited from more in depth and balanced treatment, while *Off Budget Measures* (CNA) could have been made more relevant to the man-in-the-street.

22 It was felt that there was room for improvement on NewsRadio. There could be more serious analyses of current affairs than what is offered presently.

Programmes for Children and Teens

23 Local children's programmes on Kids Central were generally of good quality. Children were able to identify with the characters in the dramas and the info-educational programmes were entertaining and educational at the same time. Examples of quality local programming included *Kids United*, *Art Factory*, *The Big Q*. Acquired children's series such as *Hi-5* and *Blue's Clues* also enjoyed high popularity and received very positive feedback from children and parents.

24 Members noted that there were more programmes aimed at developing children's intellect than those which helped them imbibe good social and moral values, and suggested a better balance be struck.

25 It was observed that acquired info-educational programmes such as *Encounters With Greatness* (which features artists, inventors and composers) were of high quality and would be of great benefit to children. However, these titles were given less accessible timeslots as compared to cartoon series which had the weekend timeslots.

26 Members noted that there was a trend towards scheduling many episodes from one or two popular children's series with a horror or evil theme on public holidays. For example, episodes of *Digimon Adventure* and *Powerpuff Girls* with horror/evil themes were scheduled back to back on Vesak Day. Members felt

that having so many scary programmes at one go might have disturbing side effects on young children.

27 Members observed that while *Goosebumps* (drama series) was acceptable for kids of school going age, its content might be too frightening for preschoolers who could not tell the difference between fictional and real life accounts. The documentary-style format adopted by *Scary But True* for presentation of supernatural content was judged unsuitable for children of some age groups as they might confuse and frighten children with accounts about encounters with ghosts.

28 Programming for teens was thin and only a few showed credible content. *Streetsmart* (TV Works) was informative and communicated good values to teens, but others like *Rollerjam* (Ch 5) displayed too much aggression to be acceptable for viewing by young people.

Cultural Programmes

29 Arts Central's contribution to the arts was commendable. Local arts programmes carried by the channel were of quality and helped in enhancing the public's knowledge and appreciation of the arts. Good examples were *Swing in the City* and *Life Stories*. Acquired arts programmes telecast were also very engaging, e.g. Broadway successes like *Les Miserables* and *Hey, Mr Producer*.

30 The resumption of a regular local arts magazine series on Arts Central, entitled *Art Nation*, was greatly welcomed by the PAC who had requested for it. The series provided a valuable vehicle for local art events and personalities, and created a greater awareness and appreciation of the arts.

31 It was also heartening to note that Ch 8, a mass entertainment channel, made an effort to air a number of programmes on the arts. Its locally produced arts programmes such as *Art TV* and *Common Art* were pitched at the appropriate level for the channel's audience, and its ratings were encouraging.

32 Programmes which highlighted our rich, cultural heritage were also enjoyable and informative. Examples were Arts Central's *The Cook, His Food and The Dishy Nonyas*, *Festive Cooking: My Christmas Special* (on traditional Eurasian dishes) and *Simply Sedap! A Hari Raya Special* (highlights the significance and customs of Hari Raya). It was observed that *Vannangal* (Palette), a local series on Vasantham which explored the cultural heritage of various Indian communities living in Singapore, was very well executed, and it would benefit other viewers in Singapore other than members of the Indian community. Such a series could

help in promoting greater understanding amongst the various races in Singapore.

33 Attempts to help local audiences relate better to recognised literary works were also laudable. One example was Vasantham's *Shakespeare's Macbeth* where the play's beautiful language was well translated into Tamil, allowing for even greater appreciation by Tamil viewers.

34 For Passion 99.5FM, it was observed that though it improved its service, its listenership size remained the same. It was felt that there was still low awareness of its service. It was noted that the station had a core of loyal listeners whose feedback was generally positive. The station's continued support of local and regional musicians, as in *The Singapore Jam* and *Asian Nation*, was important, otherwise most Singaporeans would have a narrower range of music to enjoy.

Entertainment Programmes

35 Generally, it was felt that the quality of local English entertainment productions, especially, sitcoms, needed improvement. While there were talented actors available, the main problem seemed to lie with a lack of quality scripting and directing. In the case of local sitcoms, it was observed that these normally depended on slapstick humour or language bordering on Singlish and dialect to get some laughs. Examples of programmes which failed to engage viewers included *Now Boarding* (Ch 5) and *Paradise Lost* (TV Works).

36 There were, however, some commendable local drama series such as *A War Diary* (Ch 5) and *AlterAsians* (Arts Central). It was observed that their scripts were more substantive and in the latter case, they were based on short stories which had succeeded in the print form. Other good efforts made to provide meaningful entertainment included two drama series set in the schools, namely *Moulmein High* (Ch 5) and *Apple Pie* (Ch U) which had storylines conveying pertinent social messages. Programmes which exhibited potential, though with scope for improvement in scripting and characterisation, included *Ah Girl* (TV Works/Ch i) and *House of Chow* (Ch 5).

37 It was observed that the mass entertainment channels were inundated by acquired programmes in the Reality TV format. It was felt that while some of these programmes like *The Amazing Race* (Ch 5) were entertaining and informative, most of them were of dubious value as they tend to focus on negative attitudes or behaviour like aggression, malice and infidelity. Examples included Ch 5's *WWF Tough Enough*, *Fear Factor*, *Temptation Island*. Members were heartened though that locally produced reality series such as *Celebrity*

Travellers, Exchange Lives (Ch U) and *All Change* (Ch 5) attempted to balance entertainment and education, and were refreshing entertainment programmes.

38 There were, however, instances where local producers copied closely what was produced abroad and there was minimal originality. One example was Ch 8's variety series *Top Fun* which seemed a close copy of Taiwan's *Super Sunday*.

39 Members welcomed the introduction of the local version of *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* in English and Mandarin and *Talentine 2001* on FTA TV. Both are entertaining family programmes. *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* enabled viewers to imbibe information in a fun way, while *Talentine 2001* marked a long-awaited return to showcasing local talents.

Sports Programmes

40 The PAC observed that the quality of local sports related programming had improved. Commendable efforts included the coverage of *SEA Games 2001* and *Dreams : The Team Singapore Story*.

41 Members assessed the coverage of *SEA Games 2001* to be the best so far for this important event. The high standards of production and comprehensive coverage of events were commended. As for *Dreams : The Team Singapore Story*, it provided a good insight into the lives and hopes of Singapore's own sportsmen/women, and served as a record of their valuable contributions.

42 Another commendable move was the initiative to reach out to the Mandarin speaking sports enthusiasts through *CityNight*, a Mandarin sports magazine programme aired on CityTV; while TV Works' News was found to offer a comprehensive coverage of sporting events and results.

43 The demise of CityTV meant the lack of one focused channel offering sports programmes on FTA TV. Sports fans would need to sieve out sports programmes of interest to them from different channels namely, CNA, Ch 5 and Ch i. The current lack of publicity of sports programmes would have more serious implications under the new circumstances.

44 The sports offerings from cable TV remained strong for acquired sports programmes, especially in the case of soccer. Keen soccer fans could find satisfaction in the ESPN and Star Sports channels which aired many of the popular Premiere League soccer matches.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

TV

Maintaining quality in news /current affairs reporting

a. News and Current Affairs programmes should not resort to sensational stories on sex shops, nude photography and Taiwanese sex scandal, to appeal to viewers. More worthy topics that can enhance an understanding of relevant issues in current affairs and in commerce, science, technology and the arts should be considered rather than topics which are frivolous and sensational in nature.

Sharing programme resources for richer programming

b. It is recommended that broadcasters fully explore the opportunities for greater collaboration within their organisation to dub or subtitle quality local programmes into different languages so as to benefit a wider audience and to promote cross-cultural knowledge, understanding and 'national consciousness' amongst Singaporeans.

c. Broadcasters can also draw upon good film footages available from various channels within their organisation to produce programmes with a national perspective. For instance, a series on '*Singapore Entrepreneurs*' could draw upon the footages from various local series which focused on the same subject, such as CNA's *In Good Company*, Suria's *I* and Ch 8's *My Best Partner*.

Higher standards in the dubbing and subtitling of TV programmes

d. It is important for the dubbing and subtitling of TV programmes to be well executed as this would enable more viewers to understand and enjoy the programmes fully. The PAC urges broadcasters to spare no efforts in securing quality dubbing and subtitling of TV programmes, bearing in mind that lower quality dubbing/subtitling could very well translate into lower viewership ratings.

Aiding children's total development and providing better timeslots for children's info-educational programmes

e. Members observed that programmes for children and teens tend to either entertain or focus on intellectual development. It is recommended that broadcasters make concerted attempts to source for or produce quality programmes for children and teens which also aim at fostering social, emotional and moral development.

f. It is recommended that instead of showing cartoons and other entertainment children's programmes throughout the weekend, Kids Central

considers allocating some slots for quality children's info-educational programmes.

Facilitating parents to guide their children in their viewing

g. To help parents guide their children to view programmes appropriate for their age, explanatory or cautionary graphics for children's programmes should be given, whenever necessary, in TV guides and prior to their airing. For instance, there can be an explanatory or cautionary graphic on TV to denote that while the programme *Goosebumps* is suitable for school going children, it is not appropriate for pre-schoolers.

Balanced programming for children

h. Kids Central is urged not to schedule a concentration of children's programmes with evil or horror themes as this could have disturbing side effects on young children. It is recommended that for children's programming, there should always be a combination of various genres in the schedules, for example, comedy, social drama, music-variety and info-education.

Making culture accessible to a wider audience

i. It was observed that MediaCorp TV Ch 8 had taken the commendable step of providing quality programmes on the arts, such as *Art TV* and *Common Art*, to its viewers. For Singapore to attain its objective of a Renaissance city, both MediaCorp TV's Ch 5 and MediaWorks' Channel U and Channel i are urged to consider airing some programmes on the arts which are suitable for their audience.

j. Broadcasters should also cross-promote local arts programmes on non-Arts channels to create better awareness of the arts.

Local dramas to be based on successful short stories/novels

k. Members appreciated the print-to-screen concept when successful novels/books were selected for use in TV dramas. *AlterAsians* shown on Arts Central illustrated this point well as it took stories from successful writers like Catherine Lim, and the TV dramas proved to be compelling viewing for viewers. The PAC suggests that broadcasters consider producing more TV dramas based on successful novels/books.

Telecasting better reality TV series

l. In view of the varying quality and value of Reality TV programming, the PAC reiterated that broadcasters be more selective and discerning in their acquisition and scheduling of series with the Reality TV format. Broadcasters are

also advised that local versions should not compromise quality for mere sensationalistic entertainment.

More accessible timeslots for quality dramas

m. The PAC recommends that broadcasters consider scheduling quality dramas with solid content and high production values at more accessible timeslots, instead of late night timeslots, so that more viewers can have the opportunity to watch them.

Greater responsibility in the airing of advertisements

n. While the advertising dollar is tightening with increased competition and the recession, TV broadcasters are urged, nonetheless, to exercise good judgement and social responsibility in the kinds of advertisements they accept for broadcast. Other than abiding by social standards of good taste and decency, the appropriate scheduling of advertisements should also be observed.

Programming to promote sports awareness and culture

o. It is recommended that broadcasters consider programme topics such as 'Sports at School level' and 'Opportunities and facilities for local budding sportsmen and women'. Programmes on these subjects would be a good lead up to the establishment of the proposed Sports School which is expected to open in 2004 and to develop Singapore's promising sportsmen and sportswomen to their full potential.

Greater publicity and promotion for sports programmes

p. Greater publicity efforts would be critical since sports programming has lost its main 'home' i.e. CityTV. Without sufficient publicity, sports fans may fail to locate certain sports programmes as these would now be dispersed across several channels - CNA, Ch 5 and Ch i. Within the MediaCorp Group, there could be more cross channel promotion of sports programmes.

q. Broadcasters could also consider working with national sports agencies and other sports industry partners to glamorize less popular sports by building up icons and personalities that have star attraction similar to the way that was done by NBA.

RADIO

More support to local talents by radio stations

r. It is suggested that mass entertainment-based radio stations consider giving airtime to local music talents, whether they play pop or non-pop music. This would help broaden the exposure of new talents in Singapore. It would also expose listeners to and cultivate their interest in a wider range of music.

Passion Radio to continue its focus on world music and the arts

s. It is advised that Passion Radio, 99.5FM does not dilute its identity by turning to more commercialised genres of music just to appeal to more listeners. Instead, Passion Radio should concentrate on establishing itself as a niche station with arts and world music programming so as to build up on its core of listeners.

More indepth and balanced discussions on news/info stations

t. It is important that discussions on news/info stations are presented with balance and depth. On certain topics, it would be essential to invite more than one speaker to take part in the discussion so that different perspectives can be represented. This would allow for a greater depth in the discussion and more balanced viewpoints to be put across.

PAC's choice of TV programmes

45 The PAC would like to highlight some quality programmes on TV which it has observed, and to recommend to broadcasters to produce and acquire more of such good programmes for telecast on their channels. Titles illustrative of PAC's choice of quality programmes are given in Annex A of this report.

CONCLUSION

46 While there has been a major change in the broadcasting landscape in 2001, greater competition has not lead to significant improvements in broadcast programmes. The economic recession has also made the situation harder for the broadcasters to perform well. In their quest to gain viewership, broadcasters had resorted to the ratings game, tending to appeal to the lowest common denominator and pushing the boundaries in programme standards. It will be undesirable if such trends should continue.

47 Nonetheless, it is noted that some broadcasters were trying harder to serve the best interests of their viewers and were more prepared to venture into new ground. This innovative spirit, tempered with a sense of responsibility, is most commendable and is the path to take towards fresher and higher quality programming in 2002. While the economic recession could have caused production budgets to shrink, producers and programmers should see this rather as a challenge to be more innovative and creative, and to focus on producing high quality scripts and presentation, knowing that they cannot fall back on big stars, special effects and other gimmicks to attract viewers. While broadcasters may also have been pressed to consolidate their resources in these hard times,

meeting the challenge could ultimately mean a leaner and more efficient broadcast network operation for them.

48 Ultimately, too, as it is audiences who determine the quality of the programmes, the PAC would like to reiterate the importance of taking measures to raise media literacy among the public such that they become more informed and discerning consumers of the media. This is a task to be shared by various media (from print to broadcast), as well as schools and voluntary groups. To this end, broadcasters should also take pro-active moves to work with relevant agencies to inculcate in viewers a taste for better quality programmes. The result would be a larger and more appreciative audience for programmes of quality.

49 As competition from foreign quarters is expected to gather momentum in the coming years, it is imperative that TV and radio broadcasters strive harder to serve up more compelling and higher quality local programming to viewers. Without strong local programmes to anchor our viewers and attract their loyalty, there is a danger that we may lose the competition to foreign players, and in the process, a sense of our common identity that only our media can inculcate.

PAC'S CHOICE

1 The PAC gives its 'thumbs up' for quality programming on TV and listed below are members' choice of some quality titles aired during the period March 2001 to February 2002. The titles listed are illustrative of quality titles observed by PAC members.

2 It is to be noted that the list is not intended to be an exhaustive one nor does it seek to strike a balance by language type as there are other PACs which look specifically at Chinese, Malay and Indian programming respectively. The list is also not arranged in any particular order of merit but simply by their genre type and production source (i.e. local or acquired) for easier reference.

CHILDREN

Kids United (Kids Central, local production)

Children can identify with the characters and the realistic local situations in school and at home featured in each episode. Values like the importance of family and friends and of teamwork are communicated. Problem solving and other pro-social skills are conveyed through the stories.

The Big Q (Kids Central, local production)

The lively and energetic hosts use examples around Singapore to demonstrate how science is relevant to our daily lives. This makes learning fun for the children and can stimulate their interest in science, as well as encourage them to acquire more knowledge of the world about them.

Art Factory (Kids Central, local production)

This series makes art and craft look fun and encourages children to try out the activities themselves. It also gives parents a lot of ideas to keep their children entertained at home. The simple yet arty ideas can also be useful to childcare teachers and helpers. The programmes can appeal to a wide age range from pre-schoolers to school going children.

Young Investigators (Ch 8, local production)

This is a detective series whereby four kids go around solving mystery cases. Done in the style of Alfred Hitchcock/3 Investigators, these children in the programme go through the thinking process in order to find the answers. It encourages rational and logical thinking.

In Kids (Ch 8, local production)

This is a magazine programme hosted by children which carries segments on hobbies, visits to places of interest, happenings in towns and children trying out their 'dream job'. With lively and enthusiastic presenters, the programme encourages children to learn from their peers and provides information in a very fun and entertaining way.

Hi-5 (Kids Central, acquired production)

This series for pre-schoolers uses upbeat, catchy songs and energetic dances to convey its educational content. The segments are interactive and therefore encourage children to participate whilst watching the programme. Each episode entertains and engages children in a creative and educational way.

Blue's Clues (Kids Central, acquired production)

This series is suitable for pre-schoolers. It poses questions for children to respond to. Its bright colours, engaging format and charming presenter makes the series very enjoyable for young children.

Arthur (Kids Central, acquired production)

This cartoon series is based on a book of the same title by Marc Brown. The stories convey family and moral values. Issues that children can identify with are treated sensitively with realistic examples.

Bob The Builder (Kids Central, acquired production)

The series teaches pro-social values and problem solving. It helps to nurture a positive attitude towards problems by presenting them as challenges to be resolved. The content is conveyed to children using very appealing animation and music.

CULTURE

Wayang - The Final Curtain (Arts Central, local production)

This two-part programme is well researched and produced giving audiences the rich history of street wayang, its decline and revival. It is very timely - marking the transition of Chinese street wayang to the present day amateur opera clubs. Through this programme, older people can reminisce. For the not so old, it is a reminder that Chinese opera has a rich history and high cultural value, and is worth keeping alive.

Hanging By The Thread (Arts Central, local production)

This programme takes a close look at the art of puppetry in Singapore, tracking its development and subsequent decline. The programme is well researched and captures the richness of this artform in its heyday. It is laudable that it has reached finalist status in the 'cultural issues' category of the New York Festivals.

Simply Sedap! A Hari Raya Special (Arts Central, local production)

Simply Sedap! A Hari Raya Special is a half-hour single special in English which informs viewers about the significance of Hari Raya and the customs being observed by those who celebrate it. This programme is commendable as it fosters cross-cultural understanding amongst Singaporeans.

Vannangal (Vasantham Central, local production)

This Tamil series on different Indian communities serves as a window not only to non-Indian communities but also Indian Singaporeans, to understand the culture, customs, language and activities of other Indian groups living in Singapore. The idea and efforts of the producers of this programme are very laudable.

Art TV (Channel 8, local production)

In introducing the arts, the series adopts a very light-hearted approach. This easy approach makes it appealing to audiences of all ages. The artforms introduced covers a wide spectrum ranging from the traditional to 'pop art'. The series succeeds in making even traditional artforms appear hip and cool. It is a good series to help get started on the arts.

Artistik Asia (Suria, local production)

This is an informative series covering the musical and cultural heritage of Asian countries. The series has good production values and is fronted by two very competent presenters. An example of a good episode includes one on Malay dance. It carries archival footages and present day interviews with practitioners of Malay dance who performed in Malay movies of the '60s. The programme is well researched and gives an insightful look at the development of Malay dance.

INFO-EDUCATION

In Good Company (CNA, local production)

A commendable and timely programme which gives encouragement to young people to become entrepreneurs and supports the government's call for a greater entrepreneurial spirit amongst the working population.

The Medical Alphabet (CNA, local production)

The series reveals thorough research into the subjects featured and there are good illustrations to explain the more technical medical concepts. The series is clearly of educational value and benefit.

Thinking Animals (CNA, local production)

This is a well researched and well produced series which gives a deeper insight into the animals and wildlife around Singapore and Asia. It is both informative and educational. After viewing, one gets a better understanding and appreciation of the natural wildlife around us.

TR Report (Ch 8, local production)

A current affairs series which provides human interest stories such as '*My Home*', '*Causeway Memories*' and '*Foreign Workers*'. The subjects are covered in an informative yet heart-warming manner.

Focus (Ch 8, local production)

A current affairs series which focuses primarily on international issues of impact such as September 11 terrorist acts in New York and Taiwan and China's disputes. It gives viewers a wider understanding of important social, economic and political issues occurring in the world.

My Best Partner (Ch 8, local production)

This series features families whose members are either partners in business or share the same interests/talents such as in music or dance. It reveals the need for compromise and teamwork amongst family members, and shows what families can achieve together.

You're Ok, I'm Ok (Channel U, local production)

It is a very educational series as it created awareness and some knowledge of the mediation process. There is a good balance of information and entertainment, and the series is quite easy to follow and absorb.

Roots Of Our Origins (Ch U, local production)

This series introduces viewers to the colourful, interesting and forgotten histories of the different dialect groups in Singapore, tracing the areas where they lived in Singapore and the trades in which they excelled or dominated. It is very informative for those who are unaware of their dialect heritage, eliciting a deeper appreciation of the roots and origins of diverse groups amongst us.

Makansutra (TV Works or Ch i, local production)

This food travelogue programme is very informative and entertaining at the same time with its own brand of humour. It is regarded as one of the best produced series among other shows of the same genre.

Building Dreams (Arts Central, local production)

Building Dreams is among one of the better-researched and educational documentaries shown on Arts Central. From its thought-provoking title to the visually interesting archival material and revealing interviews with diverse key architects and planners, it provides both historical and contemporary insights into the past destruction and current construction of Singapore's urban landscape, as well as into public housing policies.

The Blue Planet - A Natural History of the Oceans (Arts Central, acquired production)

This is a monumental and unforgettable series on the oceans. It reveals extraordinary lifeforms and behaviour that have never been seen or filmed before. Stimulating to both the mind and the senses, the series is an exciting exploration for viewers of all ages.

ENTERTAINMENT / INFOTAINMENT

A War Diary (Ch 5, local production)

This war epic is note-worthy for its high production values, good acting and dramatic sequences. The local series' attention to detail and the efforts made to ensure historical accuracy and authenticity are commendable. *A War Diary* is also educational for students and a good family oriented programme.

Talentine 2001 (Ch 5, local production)

Having successfully re-invented and rejuvenated the format of the nostalgic local hallmark singing competition *Talentine 2001* is creative, has quality production standards and is well paced. The show also boasts of a line-up of creditable contestants, making it highly entertaining and enjoyable.

Who Wants to be a Millionaire (***Ch 5 and Ch 8, local productions***)

Though the local version of this programme faced some teething problems, it has developed into one of Singapore's most successful and popular game shows. It is challenging, educational and a good form of family entertainment.

3 Women and A Half (Ch 8, local production)

This drama series successfully tackles the issue of the modern day career woman and challenges the stereotypical roles of women. It provides an insightful depiction of the working girl's dilemma in balancing the time between the demands of home and the work place. The drama's scripting and production quality coupled with the calibre of the actors renders it a drama series that is entertaining and heart-warming.

You Light Up My Life (Ch 8, local production)

You Light Up My Life which provides an enlightened perspective on the challenges faced by social workers and counsellors offers a realistic portrayal of social and family problems in Singapore. It is commendable for its compelling and poignant storylines, good research into issues and good acting from both veteran actors and new faces.

Apple Pie (Ch U, local production)

Apple Pie is light-hearted and appeals across the various age groups, presenting a good and realistic depiction of the issues faced by students and teachers nowadays. The acting in the series is creditable, and each entertaining episode usually takes on an educational slant and imparts good moral values.

Exchange Lives (Ch U, local production)

Exchange Lives, a programme which features a Singaporean and a tribal family swapping places and experiencing each other's habitat and lifestyle, is a reality series that is creative, entertaining and educational. It allows local viewers the vicarious experience of a tribal and more spartan lifestyle. By highlighting cultural differences, it also serves to promote inter-cultural understanding.

Lady Warriors of the Yang Family (Ch U, co-production in terms of casting support)

Boasting of a strong cast from Hongkong and Taiwan, and showcasing local talents, *Lady Warriors of the Yang Family* is a well-produced period drama with compelling scripting. The series is entertaining and the plot development as well as the pace at which the story unfolds enables it to successfully sustain the viewer's interest.

Judging Amy (Ch 5, acquired production)

Judging Amy is a thought-provoking and touching series which revolves round the determined judge Gray, her family and the many juvenile cases that represent moral and social dilemmas. The trials and tribulations of the show, the personal predicaments of main characters, and the strong relationships across three generations of women make it a drama which audiences can be involved in and relate to.

Whose Line Is It Anyway (Ch 5, acquired production)

Whose Line Is It Anyway has an excellent concept which serves as a platform for improvisational comedy, showcasing original ideas and talented comedians. The witty jokes, delivered with spontaneity, and the chemistry displayed among the invited studio guests, make the programme highly entertaining and enjoyable.

The Amazing Race (Ch 5, acquired production)

This well-produced, quality reality TV series combines creativity, competition and drama, giving rise to an exciting and engrossing programme. Other than being entertaining, *The Amazing Race* is also informative as it introduces viewers to famous as well as remote destinations around the world, offering bits of trivia along the way.

The Practice (Ch 5, acquired production)

This legal drama is a commendable legal drama series because of its strong casting, excellent scripting and ingenious plots. The series is well known for its multiple plot twists and surprise endings.

SPORTS

21st South East Asian Games (CityTV, local production)

The coverage of the 21st SEA Games on City TV is extensive and exciting. What the producers succeeded in doing is very commendable - an impressive line-up and coverage of various events and high production standards. In addition, a very human side of the games is achieved as the producers invited athletes into the studio during the nightly round-up where they were interviewed concerning their performance and feelings experienced during the day.

Dreams : The Team Singapore Story (CityTV, local production)

Dreams is an excellent production that captures the lives of athletes in Singapore, including their trials and tribulations. It provides tremendous support to everyone around the athletes - parents, coaches, Singapore Sports Council and the National Sports Associations. It is also very inspiring and possibly motivating for young Singaporeans in pursuit of excellence in sport. The 'human interest' format makes the series both engaging and informative. It enables the viewer to get a closer insight into the personal lives of athletes, showing them in their everyday life, away from the sporting arena and limelight.

STEPS TAKEN BY BROADCASTERS TO PAC'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Annex B gives some of the responses of broadcasters to PAC's recommendations in its 7th PAC Annual Report.

Maintaining quality in news and current affairs reporting

1 The MediaCorp Group said that while they would not sensationalize stories, they would also not hesitate to tell the facts of the story when it deserves it - whether it relates to the arts, science technology, commerce and sex/porn industry. In their view, it would not be the subject matter that is in question but rather the treatment of the subject. They reiterated that they would be mindful not to treat subjects/issues in a frivolous manner.

Sharing programme resources for richer programming

2 The MediaCorp Group expressed their keenness on sharing programme resources amongst its various channels. They highlighted that in 2001, Ch 8 had adapted for its telecast CNA's info-educational series, *The Medical Alphabet* and Ch 5's *Making A Difference*. They also informed the PAC that in the new financial year, CNA planned to adapt and telecast some highly recommended programmes such as Suria's *Semarak Budaya* and Central's *Bloodlines to the Arts* and *The Living Treasures of Cambodia*.

3 SPH MediaWorks highlighted to the Committee that they had already dubbed two of Ch U's series, *The Big Challenge* and *Celebrity Travellers*, and telecast them on Ch i, and they were currently dubbing two more Ch U series, *Ad War* and *Making Headlines*, for telecast on Ch i.

Higher standards in the dubbing and subtitling of TV programmes

4 MediaCorp TV responded that they closely monitored and conducted quality checks to ensure high standards in the dubbing and subtitling of their TV programmes, and in recent months, the station had not received adverse feedback.

Aiding children's total development and providing better timeslots for children's info-educational programmes

5 The MediaCorp Group said they shared the same objectives for children's programming as those outlined by the PAC. They highlighted some children's programming on Kids Central which they felt had emphasized social, emotional, moral development of children and teens. Some titles mentioned were *Adventures from the Book of Virtues*, *Sail Away*, *Lizzie McGuire*, *Tracy Beaker*, *Bob the Builder*, *Hi-5*, *Maggie & the Ferocious Beast*, *The Wild Thornberries*, *A Walk in Your Shoes* and local dramas like *Kids United*.

6 Kids Central feedback that they had now allocated some slots on weekends for quality children's info-educational programmes. They were as follows:

- a) Sat and Sun, 8-9am – *Blue's Clues* and *Dora the Explorer* (from April 02),
- b) Sat, 1-2pm – Dedicated one-hour local block showcasing award-winning titles like *The Big Q* and *Hobby TV* (from April), *Pet Ventures* and *Green Crusade* (currently running),
- c) Sun, 9.30am – *Kids United 2* (local kids' drama),
- d) Sun, 10am – *Croc Files*,
- e) Sun, 12noon – *Robbie and the Book of Tales*® (local kids' drama), and
- f) Sun, 12.30pm – *Art Attack*.

7 They added that Suria was complementing Kids Central on children's programming by re-scheduling their children's programmes to Saturday afternoon slots when Kids Central was off transmission.

8 On info-educational programmes related to children and youths, the MediaCorp Group also highlighted that Channel 8 had telecast recently *TR Report: Generation M* featuring stories of teenagers. Scheduled on Sunday at 7.00pm, the six-part documentary delved into the different aspects of teenagers' inner feelings, aspirations and outlook of life. The producers of *TR Report* were also now exploring the possibility of producing a series on the psychology and mental development of children.

Balanced programming for children

9 Kids Central noted the PAC's recommendation and responded that they firmly believed too in offering young viewers a good variety of genres. They were of the view that most of their titles fell under the info-ed genre (e.g. *Sesame English*, *The Wild Thornberries*, *Y*, *Bill Nye the Science Guy*), music variety (e.g. *Hi-5*), social drama (e.g. *Kids United*, *Tracy Beaker*, *Lizzie McGuire*). They also highlighted that apart from *Goosebumps* and *Are You Afraid of the Dark*, they had no other titles under this genre presently. Kids Central indicated that they were prepared to include some rating system to denote the suitability of such shows for different age groups.

Facilitating parents to guide their children in their viewing

10 Central would consider establishing, with SBA's guidance, an effective rating system for children's programmes wherever this is required.

Making culture accessible to a wider audience

11 Arts Central noted the PAC's recommendation and responded that they had been attempting to actively promote their arts programmes on Ch 5, Ch 8 and CNA. The programmes which had enjoyed cross-channel publicity included *Art Nation*, *The Cook, His Food* and the *Dishy Nyonyas*, *AlterAsians*, *I Collector*, *Life Stories*, *Min: First Voyage*, *A Fare Exchange* and all Chinese opera programmes.

Local dramas to be based on successful short stories/ novels

12 MediaCorp TV said that they always looked out for successful local novels or stories to adapt for their drama series/serials. One past example was the Chinese drama serial *In Pursuit of Peace*, which was adapted from a local novel of the same title. MediaCorp TV said that currently TV 12 was considering to produce a 12-part drama series based on local and regional writers' works.

Telecasting better reality TV series

13 MediaCorp TV said they were mindful of the need to be more selective and discerning in the screening of reality TV series.

More accessible timeslots for quality dramas

14 MediaCorp TV responded that for quality dramas with strong mass appeal, they would schedule them at more accessible timeslots so as to reach a wider audience. In the case of family-oriented programmes such as *7th Heaven & Touched By An Angel*, these would be given prime-time slots. As for the programmes mentioned by the PAC, namely *Judging Amy & Providence*, these were being rescheduled to weekdays 2pm and Sunday 4pm respectively to cater to a wider audience. For *The Practice*, the series was being scheduled at 10pm. MediaCorp TV added that they had also to be mindful of SBA's guidelines on the watershed time when scheduling dramas of a more adult nature.

Greater responsibility in the airing of advertisements

15 The MediaCorp Group said that they were aware of TV's great impact and were mindful of their social responsibility as the national broadcaster. They assured the PAC that all advertisements that they received were being carefully vetted according to SBA's Advertising Code and the industry's Code of Advertising Practice.

Programming to promote sport awareness and culture

16 The MediaCorp Group responded that the topic 'Opportunities and facilities for local budding sportsmen and sportswomen' would be covered in a *Sports Forum* programme that they intend to broadcast in the new financial year.

17 They also highlighted that Ch 8 was currently showing a six-parter series - *TR Report: Sports Series* - which features prominent local sporting figures like Benedict Tan, Quah Kim Song, Kunalan and Desmond Koh. The series represented the station's effort to promote sports awareness and culture amongst Singaporeans.

Greater publicity and promotion for sports programmes

18 The MediaCorp Group said that they would continue to do cross promotion of their sports programmes wherever appropriate.

Passion Radio to continue its focus on world music and the arts

19 Passion Radio responded to say that they had taken the following steps to consolidate their focus on the arts and world music:

- a) Gradually increasing their arts-based info-educational content from 30% to 35%,
- b) Strengthening the base of Mandarin speaking listenership by introducing two hours of arts programmes in Mandarin from Jan 2002 onwards,
- c) Continuing to ensure the quality of world music featured on the station using three key criteria - quality, integrity (in relation to culture/origin) and creativity.

More support to local talents by radio stations

20 MediaCorp Radio said that they did give airplay to local music talents recognising the need to give exposure to local music talents and artistes. The airplay of songs however is determined by the format of each radio station and the target audience. SAFRA Radio responded that they would like to support local music but would need to temper it with the commercial tastes of their listeners and ensure that it meets certain quality standards which the station abides by. UnionWorks said that while they fully supported local pop music, they would only be prepared to consider semi-pop local music on a case by case basis.

More in depth and balanced discussions on news/info stations

21 MediaCorp Radio agreed with the PAC that there was a need for balance and depth for topics discussed on radio. They said that on many occasions they had invited experts and newsmakers to air their views in panel discussions or radio forum programmes. However, such a programme format was difficult to achieve all of the time as when timely analyses of, or reactions to, news events and topical issues had to be undertaken. Under those circumstances, they would still attempt to interview more than one person, where possible; if not, they would select the more knowledgeable and objective of speakers available and try to find ways to balance his or her viewpoints.