

**REPORT OF
THE PROGRAMME ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR
ENGLISH PROGRAMMES (PACE)**

2009/2011

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(I) INTRODUCTION

(a) Background

The Programme Advisory Committee for English Programmes (PACE) was first set up in March 1995 with the aim of providing feedback on the range and quality of English TV and radio programmes, and make recommendations for improvement. The Committee is appointed by the Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts and is drawn from a cross section of society, comprising different ages, fields of interests and expertise, including the arts, sports, academia, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

2 The current Committee, chaired by Professor Leo Tan, is made up of 31 members and its period of review was from 1 August 2009 to 31 July 2011. The list of Committee members can be found in Annex A.

(b) The Committee's Work

3 For the period under review, PACE held a total of 12 meetings, which were complemented by email consultations to discuss issues between meetings. The Committee undertook the following:

- (i) Reviewed and gave feedback on the range and quality of broadcast programmes in English;
- (ii) Provided recommendations to improve English programmes;
- (iii) Assessed and provided feedback on censorship issues, including public complaints on programming; and
- (iv) Provided support and advice to the Media Development Authority (MDA) in the formulation of content guidelines, such as the TV Advertising Code, and the Free-To-Air (FTA) TV Programme Code.

4 The Committee also met with the programming staff of the various FTA TV and radio broadcasters, as well as pay-TV broadcasters. These dialogues enabled the members to gain a better understanding of the challenges in programming faced by the broadcasters and provide feedback and recommendations to the industry directly.

5 This Report covers the period of 1 August 2009 to 31 July 2011 and contains the Committee's observations on programming during the term, as well as recommendations on how the quality and range of English programmes can be improved. The relevant responses from broadcasters and MDA are appended in Annex B and Annex C respectively.

(II) SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Appropriate scheduling and labelling of content unsuitable for children

7 PACE strongly recommended that young audiences be protected from accessing material that is unsuitable for them through appropriate scheduling, as well as the provision of clear consumer advice. In particular, the Committee was of the view that remarks made on radio that contained sexual references should not be aired during time slots where children are likely to be listening, and TV programmes with mature content should be rated appropriately and carry the relevant consumer advisories so that parents can better guide their children in their TV watching.

Provide extensive and affordable coverage of key sporting events

8 PACE was pleased with MediaCorp's efforts to provide an extensive "live" coverage of the key sporting events on its FTA TV channels, especially those that took place in 2010 such as the inaugural Youth Olympic Games, the 16th Asian Games, as well as the 14th Commonwealth Games. On the pay-TV front, the Committee was also heartened that the FIFA World Cup was carried on both StarHub Cable Vision (SCV) and SingTel mioTV's platforms, with both operators providing comprehensive news updates and match analyses in addition to the "live" matches. However, members also shared the public's unhappiness over the high subscription rates that viewers had to pay to watch the FIFA World Cup matches.

Uphold editorial integrity in sponsor-commissioned programmes

9 PACE urged broadcasters to exercise more care in the production of sponsor-commissioned programmes, both editorially as well as to limit the amount of exposure given to sponsors in terms of logo appearances and in the form of product placements. The Committee was of the view that it was pertinent to protect viewers from commercial messaging and that audiences' viewing pleasure should not be affected by the appearance of sponsors' logos and references.

Provide more quality local content to attract viewers

10 PACE expressed that there was a need to create more engaging local content to continue to attract and retain viewers. The Committee cited *The Pupil*, *RenovAid*, *Lost Images* and *Fighting Spiders* as examples of quality local programmes that members found engaging. The Committee also encouraged broadcasters to inject local elements into foreign content where possible, such as by collaborating with foreign producers on co-productions or produce local adaptations of foreign programme formats so that the programmes can be more relevant and attractive to local audiences.

Produce more programmes to promote inter-generational bonding

11 PACE was heartened by MediaCorp's efforts to produce *Silver Lining*, which focused on inter-generational relationships that viewers can identify with. The returning season of *Parental Guidance* which explored the role of grandparents was also highlighted by members as a positive means to explore dynamics between members of an extended family. The Committee also found the game show *We Are Singaporeans* on Channel 5 that focused on facts and trivia about Singapore to be suitable for the whole family. The Committee would like to encourage broadcasters to air more programmes that can not only help to promote better understanding across the generations, but are also appealing to people of different age groups so that family members can enjoy them together. PACE also urged broadcasters to continue producing programmes for seniors to meet the entertainment needs of this underserved age group in the mainstream media.

(III) OBSERVATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON RANGE AND QUALITY OF ENGLISH PROGRAMMES**(a) General Content**

12 PACE was generally pleased with broadcasters' efforts to ensure that the quality of their programmes complied with MDA's guidelines, as well as to create and produce programmes that suit the needs of local audiences. The following section contains PACE's observation and recommendations on the range and quality of English programmes by genre.

(i) Radio Programmes

13 PACE felt that on the whole, there had been a healthy mix of genres of music, as well as an improvement in the content and delivery of programmes by the radio stations. The range and variety of programmes had also been broadened to cater to a diverse range of listeners. For example, PACE highlighted that the programme, *Campus*, on MediaCorp's 938LIVE was interesting as it allows views from students to be heard. This serves to engage the younger audiences. MediaCorp's Gold 90.5FM was also commended for providing a good mix of information and entertainment programmes that engaged its target group of listeners. PACE also noted some improvement in the standard of English in announcements and news reading, and an effort to balance entertainment and informative content on stations such as Safra Radio's Power 98FM, and MediaCorp's 98.7FM and Class 95FM. In addition, the Committee observed that SPH UnionWorks' Radio 91.3FM has actively made use of new media as an extension to its radio platform to provide music news updates and gather views from its listeners.

14 However, members observed that one of the common concerns raised by the public was the remarks and conversation made by deejays, especially during morning drive time. PACE felt that broadcasters needed to be more mindful of the content that is broadcast during time slots when children are more likely to be tuning in. Members opined that good, creative fun does not need to involve sexual references, which are unsuitable for the younger audiences. Members quoted the example of a segment on Radio 91.3FM that featured a discussion on finding out the sexual history of one's partner, which was aired during morning drive time. PACE felt that the topic was inappropriate for a time slot accessible to young listeners.

15 Members also felt that deejays need to be more sensitive and avoid humour at the expense of hurting or humiliating others, citing the incident on 987FM's *Shan & Rozz Show*, when one of the deejays disclosed specific details of a teacher, including her real name, as they made fun of her and embarrassed her. Members also commented on *Kena Pluck*, the regular segment on Radio 91.3FM's programme *The Married Men*, which allowed listeners to play pranks on their friends or relatives. PACE felt that playing pranks on others should be done with discretion and within limits such that victims were not offended, distressed or humiliated on air.

16 In terms of the range of programmes available on radio, the Committee wanted radio stations or time belts to be appealing and relevant to children, and more importantly, to provide an alternative channel for parents to tune in to when they are with their children such as when driving them to school. The Committee also felt that there could be more extensive coverage of school sports events, especially with more emphasis and support for local sports.

17 In view of the proliferation of Internet radio and the availability of other new media options in recent years, the Committee encouraged radio broadcasters to stay relevant and maintain their presence in the new media landscape by understanding the needs of its target audiences and actively reaching out to them. The Committee also recommended that radio broadcasters play an active part in promoting local music and cultivating listener appreciation for it, such as by giving local artistes exposure by featuring or interviewing them in addition to playing their music on the programmes.

(ii) Entertainment Programmes

18 PACE found some of MediaCorp Channel 5's local dramas such as *The Pupil* to be well-produced and engaging. This programme featured court cases and human stories that viewers could associate with. Members also commended *Fighting Spiders*, a drama set in early Singapore, which allowed viewers, especially the younger ones, to have a better understanding of what life in Singapore was like then.

19 However, PACE felt that there were some areas for improvement. MediaCorp needed to be more mindful of the themes and scenes explored as well as the standard of language used in local programmes, as these programmes have greater resonance with viewers. For instance, while *Fighting Spiders* had its merits, it also contained themes such as prostitution and gangsterism which some parents might find unsuitable for young children. As such, the Committee strongly emphasised the need for MediaCorp to be mindful of the target audience of its programmes. Programmes which require parental guidance should be appropriately scheduled, with viewing advisories clearly displayed, so that parents can be aware of them and provide guidance to their children. For programmes targeted at families, PACE reminded broadcasters of the need to ensure that the content was appropriate for all age groups.

20 PACE found it encouraging that Channel 5 aired several talent search programmes and contests such as *Singapore Idol*, *Live the Dream* and *OMG* to identify and showcase local talents. As with radio, members felt that TV broadcasters can also play a part in promoting the local music industry. The Committee highlighted the Channel 5 programme, *Live 'n' Loaded*, as a good example where viewers are exposed to local talent and locally produced music, and encouraged broadcasters to continue to produce such programmes.

21 On the pay-TV front, PACE welcomed the range of entertainment programmes such as drama, comedy and reality series available to the local

audiences. However, the Committee observed that certain drama series such as *Grey's Anatomy* and *The O.C. (Series 2)* (both aired on SCV's cable platform) explored mature themes like the homosexual lifestyle in a direct manner but did not carry any classification rating or consumer advisory. The Committee felt that SCV had not provided sufficient information to viewers for them to make informed choices on the type of content that was suitable for them or their family.

22 During dialogue sessions with SCV and SingTel, the Committee also urged the broadcasters to move beyond offering a wide variety of entertainment programmes from other countries and consider carrying more localised content on its channels. PACE highlighted the inaugural *StarHub TVB Awards* as a good example. This was an event jointly organised by SCV and TVB, which featured a campaign where Singapore viewers could nominate and vote for their favourite TVB artistes. PACE recommended that such efforts to bring local elements to foreign content should be extended to programmes in other genres, such as lifestyle, culinary, and sports.

(iii) Programmes for Children

23 The Committee was generally pleased with the quality and range of both local and acquired children's programmes on MediaCorp okto. They found these programmes to be diverse, educational and entertaining. PACE commended okto's dedicated preschool belt for providing a considerable amount of programmes for the young. This had been launched in September 2009 and airs from 9am to 3pm on weekdays and 7am to 9am on weekends.

24 Members were also pleased with the production of local preschool series *Club M.A.G.I.C* and *Witz!*. These interactive programmes were able to engage young viewers, and also complemented the acquired preschool programmes on okto. However, the Committee also noticed the high repeat rate for *Club M.A.G.I.C.*, which is aired daily, with two repeats on weekdays. While PACE recognised that preschoolers enjoy watching repeats, and that repeating programmes allows the channel to get more mileage out of them, members opined that repeats should not be excessive to the point that viewers are deprived of fresh programming. PACE therefore encouraged okto to continue to produce more new local content and increase the variety of programmes available for preschoolers.

25 PACE also observed that okto has produced quality info-education programmes for school-going children. Some of these include *Stranger Than You!*, which provides insights into the lifestyles of children in other countries, and *Knockout*, which introduces children to the arts as it features different art forms and arts-related jobs. Another notable programme was *A gURLs wURLd*, which is a joint production between Singapore and Australia about three teenage girls of different nationalities brought together by their common interest. Members found this co-production a commendable effort as it brought together talent from different countries while catering to the viewing needs of the pre-teen/early teen demographic.

26 Members also observed that the variety of children's programmes offered on both SCV and mioTV provided a variety of content that is entertaining and informative to both the preschoolers as well as older school-going children. In particular, members highlighted programmes such as *How It's Made* and *Man-Made Marvels* shown on Discovery Channel as being educational and engaging.

27 PACE recommended that broadcasters consider having more programmes that cater to youths between 12 and 16 years old, as well as programmes that feature iconic local personalities to inspire youths. Members also encouraged broadcasters to explore programmes that share life skills and social skills to educate the young and prepare them for the future.

(iv) Programmes for Seniors

28 PACE commended MediaCorp Channel 5 for its local series, *Silver Lining*, a drama about how two grandfathers, who are in-laws, bring up their young grandson and live their twilight years. The committee was heartened that the series explored inter-generational relationships as well as issues and challenges faced by seniors in today's society. As such, members would like to encourage broadcasters to continue producing such programmes that not only catered to the viewing needs of seniors, but also enabled other viewers to better understand this age group and the challenges they faced.

29 However, the Committee felt that more can be done to further engage and enrich the minds of senior citizens to ensure that this group does not get disenfranchised from the mainstream media. For example, members suggested talent contests and game shows targeted at seniors, which would contain information on issues relevant to them, such as managing finances and eating healthily. PACE was of the view that broadcasters should consider programmes about success stories of seniors who have returned to the workforce or engaged in life-long learning as such programmes would encourage and motivate the older generation. Members also suggested having programmes that featured new gadgets and technology for this growing age group. PACE urged broadcasters to take note of the different tastes and higher spending power of the aging "baby boomers" as compared to other seniors.

(v) Arts and Cultural Programmes

30 In terms of FTA TV channels, PACE has observed that MediaCorp's okto has increased its offering of arts content through a new time belt, "a-ok" (short for "Arts on okto"). Launched in April 2011, "a-ok" is dedicated to arts, culture, and heritage programmes. The Committee felt that this was an improvement following the previous PACE Report, in which members expressed disappointment about the general line-up of the arts and cultural programmes on okto. However, the Committee encouraged okto to do more to promote viewers' awareness of these programmes and continue to engage them.

31 The Committee also commended *okto's Project PDA*, which was a nationwide search for Singapore's most talented film director, where the winner would get to work at the prestigious Hyde Park Group on a 3-month internship. Members felt that such a contest could encourage and develop youths' interests in the arts and give local producers opportunities to work with international producers and distributors. On the other hand, members also encouraged broadcasters to produce heritage programmes on vanishing traditional arts and crafts, to ensure that Singapore's multi-racial heritage can be preserved and promoted. Members suggested that seniors with knowledge on these fields could be featured to share their expertise and life experiences, so that this invaluable information could be documented for future generations.

(vi) News, Current Affairs and Info-Educational Programmes

32 PACE is of the view that the quality of interviewing and news writing on MediaCorp Channel NewsAsia (CNA) was generally acceptable. However, there was some room for improvement in terms of the quality of the interviews, especially with prominent figures from the financial, business and political sectors. For example, the Committee felt that the questions asked during interviews should be better-researched and thought through so that viewers can gain deeper insights into the subject matter.

33 In terms of the coverage of breaking news, PACE commended MediaCorp for its extensive coverage of the General Election held in May 2011 and its round-the-clock updates on the campaign developments. The Committee also observed the effort put in by MediaCorp to provide balanced coverage of the 2011 General Election, which was especially useful with so many political parties contesting. However, the Committee commented that the presentation of election-related news could have been tightened and delivered more smoothly and professionally. Members also commented that while they understood the need for CNA to ensure that the results were verified before they were announced on air, the delay between announcements on other new media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, and the updates on CNA did not reflect well on the latter as a national news channel.

34 The Committee was of the view that CNA could produce more programmes on the social issues faced by the community at large, rather than putting the spotlight on professionals or elite groups of people. Members recognised that while the channel's target audience is the Professionals, Managers, Executives and Businessmen (PMEB), they were nonetheless concerned that the latter type of programmes was indirectly promoting materialism and the lifestyle of the rich and famous. As such, members recommended that the broadcaster be more mindful of societal concerns and sensitivities, and to reflect the different strata of the population in the programming for the channel.

35 PACE also recommended that CNA consider producing more youth-related programmes and topics such as *I, Journalist*, which allowed students to play the role of reporters and present news on happenings in their schools. Members were also of

the view that forums and debates would be good platforms to discuss topical and timely issues in an engaging way. In addition, members also recommended that CNA tackle more youth-oriented topics such as gang involvement and the use of social networking and its implications, so as to increase the level of interest in current affairs among youths, while conveying positive messages to them.

36 On the whole, PACE commended MediaCorp's efforts in featuring info-educational programmes, such as Channel 5's *RenovAid*, which featured the homes of the less-privileged being given a makeover in order to give these families and individuals a new start, as well as CNA's *Chasing Sleep*, which provided insights to sleeping problems. The Committee also praised okto for one of its local productions, *Lost Images*, a documentary feature that showcased never-seen-before footage of old Singapore from as far back as the 1950s and featured unique personal accounts of what life was like then.

(vii) Sports Programmes

37 PACE noted that there was a strong emphasis on sports programmes in 2010 due to several prominent events that took place in Singapore and the region, particularly the 1st Youth Olympic Games (YOG) that Singapore hosted, the 16th Asian Games 2010, the F1 Singapore Grand Prix, and the 14th Commonwealth Games. The Committee commended broadcasters for the extensive coverage of these key sporting events.

38 The Committee expressed appreciation for MediaCorp Channel 5's *Sports@SG*, which served as a one-stop guide to the local sporting scene. The programme also featured sporting personalities and their inspirational moments. The Committee encouraged MediaCorp to broaden its coverage to include student events from primary to tertiary levels.

39 PACE was pleased with SCV's offering of six dedicated channels that covered the YOG, as well as the High-Definition coverage of the Games via HD5 on its cable platform at no additional cost to its customers. Members also noted that SCV had offered 64 "live" FIFA World Cup matches across its three platforms (cable TV, online, and mobile) on a pay-per-view package which comprised of four channels. The Committee was also of the view that niche sports channels, such as the newly-launched Racquet Channel, were beneficial to viewers as these channels were more focused and could cover the smaller events of the particular type of sport.

40 The FIFA World Cup was also offered on SingTel mioTV's IPTV platform and the Committee indicated that mioTV's local sports programmes, *Score* and *The Goal Mouth*, were well-produced as they offered expert opinions with a local perspective from Singapore-based presenters like Abbas Saad and R. Sasikumar.

41 However, members were generally concerned with the two pay-TV operators' high subscription rates for the FIFA World Cup, which subscribers had to pay for over and above their monthly subscription fees for their sports channels.

42 In general, PACE encouraged broadcasters to continue to provide more “live” coverage of local athletes and key sporting events, as well as feature children and youth events to encourage the younger generation to take part in sports and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

(b) Advertising and Sponsorship

43 PACE expressed concern about the display of sponsors’ logos during SingTel mioTV’s initial broadcast of the 2010/2011 Barclays Premier League (BPL) season on its “mio Stadium” channel. PACE observed that undue prominence had been given to the programme sponsors as the sponsors’ logos were displayed on the screen for durations that exceeded what is allowed in MDA’s guidelines. Members were of the view that such displays affected the consumers’ viewing pleasure and proposed to MDA to disallow such excessive appearance of sponsors’ logos. They were therefore pleased that SingTel subsequently reduced the size of the displays as well as the duration of the logo appearances, making them less distracting to viewers.

44 The Committee continued to have issues with advertorial segments on radio, during which deejays or presenters market products and services. Members stressed the need for a clearer distinction between advertorial segments and regular radio programmes. Members would like to remind broadcasters that radio presenters should not inject their personal views when featuring sponsored products, as this suggested their endorsement of the products.

(IV) VIEWS ON REVISION OF CONTENT CODES

45 During its term, PACE was consulted on MDA's regular reviews of the TV Advertising Code and the FTA TV Programme Code. MDA took into consideration PACE's views in its revision of the codes and the Committee's key recommendations are highlighted below:

(a) Review of the TV Advertising Code

46 The Committee was concerned about TV advertisements that promoted mobile phone downloads scheduled in time belts or programmes that primarily target children. Members had noticed the proliferation of such advertisements on okto on weekends. Members also observed that these advertisements, which featured cute and appealing downloads, did not provide clear information on the cost and charging mechanisms. This could lead to children subscribing to such services unknowingly, and being billed for the content that was subsequently pushed to them at regular intervals. PACE recommended that all terms and conditions for such download services should be provided clearly and visibly, in a form that children could understand. In addition, members recommended requiring the advertisements to make it clear to children that they needed to seek parental consent before subscribing to such services.

(b) Review of the Free-To-Air TV Programme Code

47 PACE was supportive of MDA's plans to harmonise the content standards for TV with that of films, so that there would be greater consistency across platforms, which would also make it less confusing for consumers. In addition, PACE also recommended that a programme's rating and content advisory be prominently displayed before and during the programme so that viewers would be better informed of the content concern in question, and parents would then be able to better guide their children in their TV watching.

48 The Committee also expressed concerns with programmes featuring graphic scenes or visuals that could cause distress in the viewers, such as the incident where SCV's Asian Food Channel showed visuals of a fish being cooked alive, and the embalming and surgical scenes in MediaCorp Channel 5's *Unexpected Access*. Members recognised that these programmes were informational in nature, but recommended that broadcasters should still be mindful of viewers' tolerance levels for such visuals and not feature them for durations longer than necessary.

(V) VIEWS ON RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CENSORSHIP REVIEW COMMITTEE 2009

49 The Censorship Review Committee (CRC), which was formed to recommend refinements to the existing content standards and guidelines that took into consideration the results of a nationwide survey, put forth some key recommendations in its 2010 Report. PACE was consulted on some of these recommendations.

50 One of the key recommendations put forth by the CRC was to introduce a new “PG13” content rating to indicate content in PG films that was unsuitable for children younger than 13 years of age. At the same time, CRC also recommended that this new rating be made available on FTA TV. PACE was of the view that the liberalisation of content on FTA TV should be implemented carefully due to content concerns such as coarse language and sexual references. The Committee strongly recommended that the appropriate advisory should be provided when showing content of a higher rating on FTA TV. PACE was also supportive of the CRC’s recommendation that for FTA and pay-TV programmes, the classification advisory logos should be displayed on screen for a longer duration, in particular after commercial breaks.

51 The CRC also recommended that content rated “Restricted 21” (R21) should be allowed on pay-TV’s Video-on-Demand (VOD) platforms, provided that sufficient control mechanisms are in place to allow parents to effectively prevent access by children. PACE was generally supportive of this recommendation, but was concerned that this could lead to an influx of sexually exploitative movies. As such, members were of the view that only content that had previously been classified by the Board of Film Censors (BFC) should be allowed.

(VI) CONCLUSION

52 PACE has in this Report, made several recommendations on how the range and quality of English programmes available on TV and radio could be improved. The Committee would also like to reiterate the importance of protecting young audiences from content that is unsuitable for them and how broadcasters can play a strong role in ensuring that programmes are scheduled appropriately. In addition, broadcasters should provide adequate and sufficient information in terms of content concerns through ratings and content advisories to allow parents to make informed decisions on their choice of programmes to view.

53 The Committee also urged broadcasters to continue to come up with more local programmes to engage viewers, especially the youths and seniors. PACE would also like to reiterate that broadcasters play an influential part in conveying Singapore’s core values to viewers and have a social responsibility to provide quality programmes that met the needs of the community.

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BROADCASTERS' RESPONSES TO REPORT

The following are responses from the broadcasters to PACE's feedback and recommendations given in this report.

I. MediaCorp

TV

Entertainment Programmes

In response to the Committee's concern on the themes of prostitution and gangsterism in Channel 5's *Fighting Spiders*, Channel 5 clarified that both themes had been sensitively handled and were portrayed in a negative light. That said, the channel will be mindful of PACE's recommendation in its future programming.

Programmes for Children

On increasing the variety of programmes for pre-schoolers, okto explained that it faces challenges in maintaining a local pre-school belt as this is a relatively new initiative that requires dedicated funding, and additional production time is needed to come up with sufficient local content in this genre. However, okto notes PACE's observations on the repeat rate and will try to reduce this.

Pertaining to providing programmes for youths between 12 and 16 years old, okto highlighted that the channel did carry programmes targeting viewers aged 12 years and above, citing examples such as *Life*, *Planet Earth* and the locally-produced series *Celebrating Youth*, the latter of which focused on the Singapore Youth Festival. These programmes were scheduled at primetime slots and suitable for family viewing. On the recommendation for programmes to feature iconic local personalities who inspire youths, okto indicated that it would consider the Committee's recommendation for the upcoming year.

Programmes for Seniors

Channel 5 said that it regards senior citizens as an important demographic group. An example of a programme featuring this group is the recent game show *We Are Singaporeans*, which had a Senior Citizens' Special. Channel 5 would explore having more quality programmes that would appeal to as well as engage this demographic group.

Arts and Cultural Programmes

okto said that its launch of "a-ok" featured a strong promotion campaign, which included advertisements on MediaCorp TV channels, radio stations and print

publications. Since then, okto has continued promoting certain arts programmes across the various platforms. The channel would also be working with arts groups to cross-promote arts content to its audience.

News, Current Affairs and Info-Educational Programmes

Interview sessions

With reference to PACE's comments that there was room for improvement in terms of the quality of interview sessions, CNA explained that journalists, by training, are expected to think on their feet as there is often little or no time for preparation ahead of news interviews, especially if it is breaking news or if the interview is scheduled at the last minute. CNA would continue to reinforce this step of the training process especially with the newer journalists, and to step up its training efforts.

Coverage of the 2011 General Elections

CNA noted the comments that the presentation of election-related news could be tightened and delivered in a more professional manner. The channel explained that while viewers have a right to expect more out of presenters for such a high profile programme, the demands from a programme providing "live" coverage of the election results are greater than that of other programmes. The presenters had multiple duties during the programme, including rolling out information as it came in, analysing and interpreting results on the fly while liaising with several key production team members in the control room.

CNA added that a key element in the coverage was the lack of predictability, not just of when and what results might be announced, but also the follow-up production treatment of the information, for example, the team had to decide whether the show would be crossing to on-site reporters to field reactions or to another location for other developments. In addition, there was also a need to be mindful of the choice of words, facial expressions and the ideas to be conveyed to viewers.

With regard to the "delay between announcements on other new media platforms", CNA explained that MediaCorp had taken the editorial stand to go with only the official results and *Vote 2011 Singapore* therefore announced only results announced by the Returning Officer.

Programming for a wider audience

With regard to the Committee's views for the channel to provide programmes for a wider audience rather than cater to an elite one, CNA highlighted that while it is positioned as a news and information channel, this focus was not done at the expense of featuring "social issues" and those of societal concern. The channel cited examples of its programmes that highlighted issues affecting society, such as *Get*

Rea!, an investigative current affairs series that looks into issues such as illicit baby trade, *BlogTV.sg*, a talk-show on recent news and happenings, and *Saving Gaia*, which delves into green issues.

Youth-related programmes and topics

On the suggestion for CNA to provide more youth-related programmes, CNA said that while the channel's prime audience is the PMEBS and "adult decision makers", it has not excluded youth-related topics from its programming as long as they are relevant to viewers. As highlighted above, *Get Rea!* and *BlogTV.sg* featured subjects of direct interest to youths. For the latter programme, netizens were encouraged to engage the panel online and on-air "live". Last year, the channel also commissioned an 8-part series, *Millennials*, which shed light on the attitude, beliefs and values of those between 21 and 30 years of age.

In addition, the channel's main news and current affairs programmes have a Facebook presence to engage the public and viewers. The newly-launched one-hour news programme, *Primetime Asia*, has a daily segment where the presenter highlights Facebook responses to a particular topic in the news. CNA would continue to produce content for the digital platform and reorganizing itself to focus on both on-air and online engagement for the future.

Info-educational programmes

CNA recognized the interest in this genre of programmes. As such, the channel has invested in a wide range of titles, some of which have been very well received, based on feedback received by the channel. They include:

- *Find Me A Cure*, an 8-part series which sees a medical doctor checking out traditional and holistic cures;
- *Asians of the Year*, an 8-part series currently into its 6th season, which honours men and women who, in their own field of expertise, have significantly influenced and contributed to Asia's growth and development;
- *Spirit of Singapore: Life After Death* is a 6-part documentary series that re-examines some of the national tragedies that shook Singapore in the last two decades; and
- *Hooked on Huayu*, an 8-part series that ran for two seasons and delves into the Chinese language and culture in an innovative manner, exploring its usage among native speakers as well as people from different nationalities.

Radio

Pertaining to the Committee's concerns over remarks made by radio presenters which might contain inappropriate sexual content for children, MediaCorp Radio assured the Committee that it would continue to remind its presenters to exercise sensitivity especially during timeslots when children could be

listening, or when sharing personal details and information on-air to avoid hurting or humiliating others.

To better provide for a young audience, Symphony 92.4FM has introduced a new co-host, veteran presenter Koh Chieng Mun, on the morning show starting 15 August 2011. During the programme, Koh Chieng Mun would share her experiences as an arts educator. In addition, Gold 90.5FM has introduced a kids segment called *The World According to Them* where children would be asked adult-type questions. The capsules run eight times a week on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. 938LIVE would also look into having a morning segment catering to parents and children on the way to school.

With regard to the proliferation of internet radio, MediaCorp acknowledged that the media landscape has changed and that it has responded to this by launching the first radio mobile application, MeRadio, which has over 600,000 downloads to-date. With the introduction of Over-The-Top channel expected later this year, MediaCorp Radio would be embarking on its next phase of "Visual Radio". Furthering the efforts in new media, 987FM has also engaged younger listeners with social media to make it more encompassing and entertaining. For example, shows such as *Say it With Music* will post photos on Facebook and attempt to get its listeners to send comments and dedications through Facebook.

On PACE's recommendation to cultivate listeners for the local music industry, MediaCorp Radio would look into featuring and interviewing more local artistes. Current efforts include commissioning local producer Don Richmond to produce a commemorative song in celebration of MediaCorp Radio's 75th Anniversary. The song commissioned was *Turn Me On* sung by Don Richmond and Alicia Pan, and it enjoyed considerable airplay on MediaCorp's stations. Other efforts which cover local music content in programming include interviews with local composers and musicians by Symphony 92.4FM and special efforts are made for occasions like International Women's Day when Symphony interviewed Lynette Seah of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. MediaCorp Radio also celebrated "The Singapore Spirit" in classical music on National Day this year by giving extensive airplay of classical music composed or performed by Singaporeans. MediaCorp Radio would also be producing a Radio Musical written and produced by local talents in September 2011.

On lack of distinction for advertorial segments, MediaCorp Radio clarified that disclaimers are placed at the start and at the end of advertorial segments to differentiate them from programming content.

II. StarHub Cable Vision

StarHub said that it appreciates the Committee's feedback on its programming. With regard to PACE's comments on the subscription rates for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, StarHub clarified that the high content costs unfortunately necessitated an increase in the amount charged to customers. The broadcaster also

stated that both StarHub and its competitor incurred losses in their carrying of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

III. SingTel mioTV

SingTel mioTV was pleased with the positive review on the quality of its local sports programmes *Score* and *The Goal Mouth*. With the availability of Barclays Premier League (BPL) matches on mioTV, the broadcaster intends to give football fans an exciting experience by providing enhanced interactivity for mioTV viewers as well as holding as competitions for fans. SingTel indicated that it will continue to work towards providing viewers an experience second to none.

SingTel mioTV noted the concerns raised by PACE over the display of sponsors' logos during the initial broadcast of BPL matches. The broadcaster subsequently implemented the proposed changes to address these concerns. Nonetheless, SingTel mioTV highlighted that it is aware that sponsors are increasingly looking for more creative ways for media exposure, and looks forward to a review of the TV Sponsorship Code to meet sponsors' needs as well as retain the audience's viewing pleasure.

IV. SAFRA Radio Power 98FM

With regard to PACE's comments that advertorial segments on radio should be clearly distinguished from programmes, SAFRA Radio Power 98FM was of the view that there is a need for creativity in radio presentations and assured the Committee that the station's deejays would provide a disclaimer to differentiate each advertorial from the regular radio programmes.

V. SPH UnionWorks Radio 91.3FM

SPH UnionWorks felt that the report was a fair reflection of the current state of radio in Singapore.

In response to PACE's concerns regarding the *Kena Pluck* segment on Radio 91.3FM's programme, SPHU UnionWorks assured the Committee that its deejays always obtained the permission of the parties concerned before putting calls on air.

With regard to the Committee's call for more child- and family-friendly programming on radio, SPH UnionWorks was of the view that listening to the radio is different from watching television because the former is not by appointment. Therefore, a radio "children's timebelt" during which the programmes are noticeably different from the rest of the radio station's regular programming is not feasible on commercial radio as it could drive away the station's core audience and its supporting advertisers. As such, SPH UnionWorks recommended that a more practical solution would be to have a dedicated "family friendly" station in terms of its format, content, discussions, and music.

MDA'S RESPONSE TO REPORT**Content Standards & Guidelines**

MDA has taken into consideration PACE's concerns and recommendations on issues relating to the protection of children and helping parents prevent their children from accessing content that is deemed unsuitable for them. The Committee's recommendation that all terms and conditions for mobile phone downloads should be provided clearly and visibly, in a form that children can understand, has been included in the review of the TV Advertising Code.

With regard to MDA's plans to harmonize the content standards for TV with that of films, MDA is heartened that PACE was supportive of the initiative. The Committee's views on the implementation of this plan, such as the need for a programme's rating and content advisory to be prominently displayed, were taken into account by MDA. Following the implementation of the new "PG13" rating in July 2011, the MDA has also put in place the requirement for TV broadcasters to display the classification rating on screen for a longer duration. MediaCorp is now required to display the rating for one minute at the start of the programme as well as after each commercial break. The implementation of this guideline took into consideration feedback from both the advisory committees and the industry.

MDA will continue to work with advisory committees such as PACE and the public at large, to ensure that content offered on TV and radio is acceptable to the community. At the same time, MDA will also continue to engage and consult the broadcasters in the review of content standards that they are required to comply with. Members of the public are therefore encouraged to provide their feedback to MDA should they come across any content deemed objectionable, so that MDA can look into these cases and is made more aware of the community's concerns.

Range and Quality of Programmes

MDA shares PACE's concerns on the need to have more quality local content to engage viewers and to ensure that the interests of all segments of the society are catered for in the mainstream media, especially on FTA TV.

To cater to the public's viewing interest, MDA works with the local FTA TV broadcaster MediaCorp to commission the production of local programmes that carry Public Service Broadcast (PSB) values. On average, about 2,000 hours of locally produced PSB programmes are commissioned and broadcast across the seven MediaCorp FTA TV channels each year. These programmes are either produced in-house by the broadcaster or outsourced to independent production companies to ensure a wealth of quality, creative ideas.

Specifically on English programmes, MDA has been working with the English language channels to provide PSB programmes that are engaging and relevant to viewers across different demographic groups. These include programmes such as the popular drama *Point of Entry*, multi-platform talk-show *BlogTV.sg* and children's comedy *Zero Hero* on Channel 5, CNA and okto respectively. With MDA's overall efforts to provide more local PSB content, the volume of English PSB programmes has increased by more than 30% over the past five years, reaching close to 500 hours this year.

In addition to boosting the volume of local content on FTA TV, PSB programmes are also a means to help ensure that FTA TV caters to the needs of under-served demographic groups, such as pre-school children, the youth and the elderly, and areas that may require greater public funding support like the coverage of local arts and sports events and talents. We are heartened that many of these PSB programmes have been commended by PACE, including *Club Magic* and *Witz!* on okto, *Silver Lining* and *Sports@SG* on Channel 5.

However, there is a limit to which audience's interests can be segmented, especially on the FTA TV channels which generally cater to a mass audience. Therefore, apart from taking a targeted programming approach to address the needs of specific demographic groups as mentioned above, MDA also commissions programmes with more broad-based appeal. For example, the Channel 5 game show *We Are Singaporeans* dishes out interesting and important facts about Singapore in an entertaining manner which targets a mass audience, including school-going children. Another instance is the CNA technology info-ed series *Clickability*, which seeks to inform viewers, regardless of their age, about the pervasiveness of info-comm technology in modern lives.

MDA will continue with our efforts to work with the industry and other stakeholders, including the Programme Advisory Committees, to identify programming gaps to ensure that the public's viewing needs are being adequately met. For example, in line with PACE's observations, MDA will explore with MediaCorp ways to enhance the provision of programmes that would help the elderly community cope with their evolving needs and promote inter-generational understanding.

Outreach efforts

MDA agrees with PACE's views that young audience should be protected from content that is unsuitable for them and that parents need to be well-informed so as to guide their children's choices. With the introduction of the new PG13 rating, MDA has launched a nationwide outreach campaign from 15 July 2011 in collaboration with industry partners.

Efforts include a 30-second educational clip that has been shown on both FTA TV and pay-TV channels in the four official languages, to inform and educate parents about the new media classification system.

At the same time, an online Parents Portal which serves as a one-stop resource portal for parents was introduced. This offers information on media classification tools, content ratings, cyber wellness, classification workshops as well as a hotline 1800 377 2252, with experts on call for advice on how to keep children safe on the Internet. To make information on how to guide children towards responsible media use more readily available to parents, a Parental Handbook was also introduced and has also been made available online. The Parents Portal can be accessed at <http://www.mda.gov.sg/Public/Parents/Pages/Parents.aspx>.

MDA has also worked with industry players to publicise the parental lock systems available for pay-TV services through its major outreach event Media Fiesta which was held in March 2011. During the Media Fiesta, the Media Transformer mobile exhibition showcase was held at various locations in the heartland to reach out to as many consumers as possible. As part of this event, staff from pay-TV operators StarHub and SingTel was present to guide parents on the use of the parental lock systems currently available on their respective services. With the rapid evolution of technology and the popularity of Connected TV, which gives users easy access to even more media content choices, it is imperative that parents understand the tools available to keep their children safe. MDA will therefore continue to publicise these tools.

MDA is committed to keep the media environment in Singapore vibrant, creative, and at the same time, safe for our young to consume media content in a wholesome and enriching manner. MDA will continue to work with the community and industry players to roll out more outreach events, activities and tools to empower parents to help their children make media consumption choices.