



## PRIME MINISTER

### STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP

#### MEETING WITH TV NETWORK CHIEFS

This afternoon I met the heads of the three commercial television networks, Bob Campbell of the 7 Network, Gary Rice of 10 and David Leckie of 9, and Tony Branigan the general manager of the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations to discuss the question of violence in films shown on television.

I put to them my concern that the present system of broadcasting violent, AO rated films at 8.30 exposed too many children to unsuitable material. Since I raised this issue in the Parliament several weeks ago, I have received hundreds of letters from equally concerned parents who are worried about the impact of violent films on their children.

The networks informed me they will incorporate the following changes to their self-regulatory code:

- mandatory standardised indications of the levels of violence, sex and coarse language in AO films to be broadcast before films in both audio and visual form
- a clear visual indication at the start of each segment of the film's classification
- restrict the early evening promotion of AO films.
- broadcast regular announcements explaining the meaning of classification symbols and content descriptions, increasing the frequency of such announcements during school holidays.
- urge newspapers and magazines to display and explain the symbols and content descriptions when listing television programs.

The networks have also agreed to run a high visibility press advertising campaign during December to support their on-air announcements.

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I welcomed these improvements to present program descriptions but argued they did not go far enough to meet the concerns of parents and others about the content of programs broadcast while substantial numbers of children are watching. As a result of our discussions two further steps were agreed. The networks have undertaken to work towards agreement on a common classification system so that television films are rated by the same system that applies to movies screened in cinemas and to videos.

As previously announced, I intend to propose to the Council of Australian Governments meeting in Perth on December 7 that the States and Territories agree to split the present "M" classification into two, segregating the more violent and sexually explicit films and videos. If we can secure agreement for this, Australia will then enjoy a more rational and sensible uniform classification system.

In addition, in response to my concerns about children being exposed to violent films, the networks have undertaken to prepare a detailed briefing for me on the economic and other consequences of changing the times at which movies are presently screened. I look forward to assessing this advice early next week and taking account of, among other things, the proposed creation of a "softer" "M" classification through splitting the present "M" category.

**CANBERRA**

**20 November, 1992**