



PRIME MINISTER

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
OPENING OF THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
SYDNEY TOWN HALL - 5 MAY 1984**

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to be with you on this special occasion - the Australian Children's International Film Festival.

As many of you will know Hazel and I are particularly interested in and concerned about entertainment for young people. Hazel eagerly accepted the nomination to become a member of the Board of the Australian Children's Television Foundation, which is doing a fine job in the television area for our children.

Many of your present here tonight are deeply involved in the education of children. You will therefore keenly appreciate the enormous influence of film and television in our children's - your students - formative years.

The facts speak for themselves. According to the Australian Children's Television Foundation:

- Throughout their schooling children complete 11,500 hours of formal education
- They will also view 15,000 hours of television
- They will witness some 18,000 murders
- They will view 500,000 advertisements
- And they will watch 7 times more films than they read books.

Nothing could more graphically illustrate the need for the community - parents, educators and the entertainment industry alike - to come to grips with the implications of this situation. Film and television are far and away the most substantive media influence on our children. The quality of the product is of critical importance.

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And that is why I am especially pleased with this initiative by the Yoram Gross Film Studio and the Australian Film Commission to continue an Australian Children's International Film Festival. It will give us all a chance to see the best in children's films from around the world and from within Australia.

The Festival will also help in developing an understanding of the standards at which we should aim. Hopefully it will as well help in spreading awareness of Australia's own film - making capabilities.

We have all taken great pride in the resurgence of the Australian Film Industry over recent years. But I suspect that the average citizen thinks only about the obvious adult box-office successes like "Picnic at Hanging Rock", "The Man from Snowy River" and "Breaker Morant".

The fact is that alongside the burgeoning and successful Australian feature film industry we also have a growing quality children's film production capability.

In the film and television animation industry alone, studios are employing hundreds of artists, writers, actors and technicians on a regular basis.

And overseas network and cable television buyers, as well as cinemas, are keen to buy our products. "Dot and the Kangaroo", for example, has now been screening in the United States for four years - a sure sign that it is greatly appreciated.

As with adult films Australia's ability to produce children's films that have style and quality goes back to the first days of cinema.

And with the Government's interest in things archival you will believe me when I say I am delighted that the National Film Archive, which we have recently taken steps to establish on a more secure basis, has made available the 1927 classic "The Kid Stakes" for this Festival.

But to return to the present what can we expect at this Festival?

I am told some of the features to be shown over the next week have won awards at other international film festivals.

During this festival, audiences will have the opportunity to see a film entitled "Ten to Survive", produced by ten countries for UNICEF. The film is about the rights of the child as outlined by the United Nations.

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The seventh "Right" involves education and it reads in part "(The Child) shall be given an education that will promote his general culture". Children's films have become part of our culture, and our culture has become an integral part of our indigenous children's films.

In short, quality productions designed for either cinema or television can be both entertaining and, at the same time, a satisfying and effective way for young Australians to learn more about life, both here and overseas. As such we cannot attach too much importance to continued Australian success in this field.

I wish you all well with this important project!and I have very great pleasure in declaring this Australian Children's International Film Festival officially open.
