



## AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION

### **Submission to the Queensland Review of the *Child Employment Act 2006* and *Child Employment Regulation 2006***

The Australian Children's Television Foundation ("**ACTF**") is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the Review of the *Child Employment Act 2006* (the "**Act**") and the *Child Employment Regulation 2006* (the "**Regulation**") (the "**Review**").

The ACTF is a national not-for-profit children's media production and policy hub. We perform a wide range of functions within children's media; as a voice in policy matters; as a distributor of and investor in Australian children's television series; and as an instigator of new, innovative and entertaining children's media. As such, the ACTF's response to the Review is limited to consideration of child employment in the entertainment industry.

The Review asks for consideration of whether the Act and Regulation should further restrict the employment of school-aged actors, to comply with the International Labour Organisation Convention on Minimum Age.

The ACTF believes that it is appropriate that special protections are extended to children employed in the entertainment industry. The interests and safety of child actors should be of paramount concern in the industry.

Because the ACTF believes the interests of child actors will be adequately covered by other respondents, we wish to highlight a different perspective – that of the child media audience – for consideration during the Review.

Compliance with the International Labour Organisation Convention on Minimum Age would require the introduction of an individual work permit system for actors under minimum age. It is impossible to judge, based on the text of Article 8 of the Convention alone, how burdensome this obligation would be. However, the ACTF is concerned that the imposition of any additional restrictions on the employment of children may unintentionally undermine an underlying policy objective of the *Children's Television Standards 2010* (the "**Standards**"). The Standards impose certain obligations on Australian free-to-air commercial broadcasters to program content which is made specifically for the child audience (defined as being aged up to fourteen years old) and which enhances a child's understanding and experience. To meaningfully reflect the audience's experiences, and to tell relatable stories, it is important that the characters in C-classified content are portrayed by child actors.

Television is a powerful agent of socialisation. Because television programs often depict aspirational characters and lifestyles, the stars of children's shows often become role models for their audience. Young teens, particularly, are susceptible to the mass media's messages about body image, development and identity. If young teens are identifying with characters

that are depicted by older actors, this creates a distorted – and potentially unhealthy – point of comparison.

Yet imposing additional restrictions on the employment of child actors would act as a disincentive for the casting of children. Faced with increased regulation, producers of children's content would be likely to choose older teens to depict children's characters.

Additionally, the ACTF believes it is likely that imposing additional restrictions would act as a disincentive to filming children's series in Queensland. If a producer of a children's program is committed to casting actors who are the same age as the characters they will portray, they may choose to film in jurisdictions with fewer restrictions.

The Standards reflect a governmental policy to provide tailored, relatable content for children. Conversely, the proposed changes to the Act and Regulation would make it more difficult to employ actors of an appropriate age to depict children in C-classified content.

The ACTF believes that the current Act and Regulation strike an appropriate balance between the rights of child actors and the interests of child audiences. The entertainment industry as a whole takes its responsibilities under the Act and Regulation very seriously. In these circumstances, the ACTF believes that the system in Queensland should remain unchanged.

**The ACTF**  
June 2010

For further information please contact Alex Farrar, Corporate Lawyer, at [alex.farrar@actf.com.au](mailto:alex.farrar@actf.com.au)