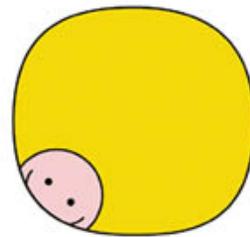


DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND TRADE
SOFT POWER REVIEW



AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S
TELEVISION FOUNDATION

“It is well recognized that the arts and culture make a notable contribution to shaping Australia’s soft power. The nation has a great story to tell via iconic children’s television programs which are widely distributed throughout the world. Australian stories featuring Australian children made in Australia show an attractive and dynamic insight into how we interpret the world more broadly that fits well with our soft power diplomacy.”

– The Hon Helen Coonan, former Minister for Communications and the Arts, current Board member Australian Children’s Television Foundation

Introduction

The Australian Children’s Television Foundation (ACTF) is delighted to contribute to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Soft Power Review in relation to Australia’s unique soft power strengths and capabilities.

The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper describes soft power as the ability to influence the behaviour or thinking of others through the power of attraction and ideas. This influence is becoming increasingly important in the face of globalisation and conflict, where building partnerships and maintaining strong international relations become paramount. Australia’s creative industries – especially film and television – perform a particularly special role in this regard. However, the influence of high profile Australian performers in Hollywood, and the occasional breakthrough of Australian adult TV dramas around the world, are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the unique role of Australian film and television as soft power assets.

The Australian children’s television industry has been making a major contribution to Australia’s soft power diplomacy for more than three decades, and it has been punching above its weight. Whilst most Australians would be aware of the international success of *Skippy* since its premiere in 1968, many may not know how that success has been followed up by programs like *Round the Twist*, *Spellbinder*, *Ocean Girl*, *The Genie From Down Under*, *Mortified*, *Lockie Leonard*, *Mako Mermaids* and *Dance Academy*, all of which have been sold and screened by major broadcasters around the world. Indeed, Australia has such a formidable reputation as an international children’s television powerhouse that when Australia’s Ambassador to Germany, Lynette Wood, visited the German public broadcaster’s children’s channel KiKa last year they were broadcasting eight different Australian children’s shows that particular week.

Ultimately it is about capturing the hearts and minds of those abroad through the presentation of Australian culture and values. The sunny Australian outlook on life. An appreciation for being active, having fun and the great outdoors. The significance of resilience and friendship. The importance of racial diversity and gender equality in an inclusive, culturally rich society. The way we put our children front and centre of these shows as the protagonist, giving them a voice.

The value of Australian children’s television cannot be underestimated. Its influence is especially strong because the programs are shown on local mainstream channels and platforms accessible and watched by international audiences as opposed to a special Australian service (such as ABC Australia in the Asia-Pacific) whose audience may predominately be expat Australians. By screening on these broadcasters in the territory, the program’s reach is significantly increased, and therefore the program’s influence and soft power potential is greatly strengthened. In addition to local mainstream broadcasters, social media and new digital platforms have also broadened the reach and therefore the influence of Australian content.

The ACTF has a storied history in not only the production of high quality iconic Australian children's content but also its distribution to broadcasters and platforms around the world. As the ACTF acts as an international distributor for many children's programs, it is well placed to present the case for Australian children's television as a soft power asset in this submission.

'Brand Australia': children's television as a soft power asset

Joseph Nye, the American political scientist who first coined the term "soft power" has noted that narratives become the currency of soft power.¹ In the Australian context, the children's television industry depicts the story of Australia through its programs and presents that story to the world.

Australian children's television shows build a distinctive 'Brand Australia', providing the world's children and their parents with a unique window into Australia. This Brand Australia operates as a form of soft power as it presents the values that reflect who we are as Australians and what we want the world to see. It also presents elements of national identity such as the Australian lifestyle and culture in a way that is relatable and appealing to children all over the world. Programs such as *Lockie Leonard*, *Mortified* and *Round the Twist* have proven hugely popular overseas whilst remaining distinctly Australian. Ultimately programs like this travel well because children all over the world love to laugh, and themes such as growing up are universal. In addition to this the programs also provide an insight into Australia. This operates as a kind of diplomacy on a very subtle level to the next generation as it provides children the world over with an insight into our lives, our world and our views whilst also maintaining familiarity through relatable themes and comedy.

A number of elements make these programs distinctly Australian however what they have in common is that they convey a wide range of Australian values. For instance the quintessential sunny outlook on life of the Twist family, taking each unexpected moment in their stride. Themes such as the importance of friendship play out in the likes of *Little Lunch*, and *Dance Academy* shows the importance of resilience when faced with adversity. Meanwhile loveable surf rat Lockie Leonard epitomises Australia's love of being active and the great outdoors.

Australian children's television programs are also a soft power asset in relation to Australia's attractiveness as a tourist destination. Many of our programs showcase Australia's stunning natural beauty, unique wildlife, widely envied lifestyle and vibrant society. This in turn builds influence by encouraging visitors.



Children all around the world are learning about Australia by growing up with Australian children's television shows, like *Double Trouble*, which introduces indigenous culture

¹ Nye, Joseph S Jr (2011) *The Future of Power* PublicAffairs

Australia's attractiveness as a tourism destination contributes to our soft power strengths, in addition to providing substantial economic benefits. Tourist destinations inspired by programs include Sea World in Queensland where *H2O: Just Add Water* and *Mako Mermaids* were filmed and the Split Point lighthouse in Victoria, a location made famous by the iconic *Round the Twist*. Meanwhile *Dance Academy*, with its shots of the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House, presents as a love letter to Sydney.

Australian children's programs also attract international acclaim, a further testament to their appeal abroad. Notable awards include an International Emmy Award, the Prix Jeunesse, a Banff Rockie Award, the Japan Prize as well as recognition at numerous international festivals including the Chicago International Children's Film Festival.

Children's television as a soft power asset in the digital world

Technological change and new forms of media consumption have and continue to shape our society. Social media and digital platforms have provided new ways to reach children all over the world – whether it be through fan engagement with ACTF social media such as Instagram or the availability of our programs on platforms such as Netflix.

A recent example of the ways in which technological advances have allowed us to harness the power of our shows has been *Little Lunch*. The critically acclaimed program has a strong following abroad with engagement via our social media coming from fans in the United Kingdom and United States who have been watching the show on Netflix. The comments express positive sentiment towards the show, which brings a distinctly Australian flavour to universal issues such as friendship and going to school. This sentiment has also been echoed by international buyers including the General Manager of Universal Kids, Deirdre Brennan who earlier this year noted:

"I never thought Little Lunch would work in the US, even though it's worked in about 130 territories around the world. It's an incredible comedy and it's the most successful live action show on the channel right now. So the audience is telling me to leave my preconceived ideas about accents at the door. Kids are increasingly global, so we need to catch up"

Recent analytics have also shown that engagement with ACTF websites and social media pages comes from all over the world, with a significant number of views on ACTF websites and YouTube channels originating from the US and UK.

Many ACTF series have found homes on the public broadcasters in various countries, such as Sveriges Television AB in Sweden who have repeatedly licensed *Mortified* since its launch. This is emblematic of a strong connection to the nation itself, as the public broadcasters, whose primary interest is public service, are often funded via their national governments. These broadcasters are also more likely to reach broad audiences in their respective territories.



Children and teens all over the world became friends with the Dance Academy characters, sending the cast video tributes and following them on social media in huge numbers

ACTF Program Case Studies

As set out earlier in this submission, the ACTF distributes Australian children's programs around the world, and has established an internationally recognised and respected brand that is synonymous with quality Australian children's content. Whilst the ACTF has a strong history in international distribution, we are not the only distributors of Australian children's content. For many years Germany's ZDF Enterprises has distributed content produced by Jonathan M Shiff (*Ocean Girl*, *H2O*, *Mako Mermaids* just to name a few), Werner Films (*Dance Academy*) and a range of other Australian producers. Many other companies, both local and international including Southern Star (now Endemol) and Beyond Distribution, have also distributed Australian children's content around the world.

The ACTF has distributed over 400 hours of Australia's best children's programming – including live action and animated series, early childhood programs, short form content, telemovies and documentaries – to a global audience.

As a distributor, the ACTF is unique in that it never bases a decision on whether or not to invest in a project for international distribution based on its potential for international sales. Our priority is to support high quality children's programs which make an important contribution to the Australian children's audience and which wouldn't be able to be made without our assistance. But our focus on quality has resulted in an extensive catalogue of well made, engaging content with remarkable longevity and global reach. Whilst some of the projects that we support have struggled to gain traction in the international market because they are particularly Australian, it is also the case that our three most successful projects on the international market have had a very distinctive Australian flavour. Indeed, the enduring success of *Round the Twist*, *Mortified* and *Lockie Leonard* is often attributed to their particularly Australian character.

The data that the ACTF is able to provide comes only from our own catalogue of content. It therefore represents a significant, but by no means exhaustive, contribution towards the export of Australian children's content. These examples provide insight into the extent of the export of Australian programs however they are merely a drop in the vast ocean.

Measuring sales by "territory" is not as significant as it once was, with Netflix now counting as one of the top five buyers based on multi territory international deals.

The global appeal of quality live action Australian children's drama appears to be evergreen. Several stand out series marketed by the ACTF have managed to continue selling internationally. Three of these will now be explored in depth.

Lockie Leonard

Lockie Leonard is a live action drama television series adapted from the *Lockie Leonard* books by Tim Winton. Two seasons of the series were produced by Goalpost Pictures, with the first series premiering on the Nine Network in June 2007.

OVER THE PERIOD FROM 1989 TO 2017, THE ACTF HAS ACHIEVED AT LEAST ONE SALE INTO ALMOST EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD.

THE COMBINED VALUE OF ALL THOSE INTERNATIONAL SALES OVER 28 YEARS IS \$93 MILLION.

THE TOP 5 TERRITORIES BETWEEN 1989 AND 2017 ARE:

- UK (110 SALES)
- CANADA (109 SALES)
- GERMANY (49 SALES)
- FRANCE (43 SALES)
- ITALY (42 SALES)

Children from across the planet have followed Lockie's adventures in Albany, Western Australia, with the series being translated into Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French and German.

Lockie Leonard has displayed enduring appeal since its premiere in 2007. While it has sold steadily in the years since its launch, remarkably it was picked up for the first time by major German public broadcaster ARD in 2016. We continually promote many titles from our back catalogue, however, it is testament to the original program quality that it continues to appeal to broadcasters and audiences ten years after its launch.

The emergence of international Video on Demand platforms has also given a new lease of life to older titles, with *Lockie Leonard* bought by Netflix Latin America in 2014 and Amazon Prime in the UK in 2013 and 2014.



Lockie Leonard has found new life in Latin America due to new content platforms

Notable sales for both series 1 and 2 include:

- Jetix in the UK (2007 presale)
- Rainbow Media Enterprises in the USA (2007)
- Netherlands Public Broadcasting in the Netherlands (2007, 2010)
- Nickelodeon MTV in Italy (2007)
- BBC in the UK (2008, 2010)
- Cartoon Network in Latin America (2008, 2010)
- Disney Channel in the United States (2013)
- Amazon Prime in the United Kingdom (2013, 2014)
- Netflix Latin America (2014)
- ARD - BR - Bayerischer Rundfunk in Germany (2016)
- AfricaXP (2018)

Lockie Leonard is very well travelled having been sold all around the world, including the following countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Finland, Georgia, Honduras, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Moldova, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA, Uzbekistan.

Mortified

Mortified is a 2006 co-production between the ACTF and Enjoy Entertainment. It premiered on the Nine Network and Disney channel in Australia, and was also jointly commissioned by the BBC in the UK.

Mortified has been a stand out success internationally, having been translated into Italian, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese and Swedish and won several prominent awards, including:

- 2007 New York Festival International TV Programming and Promotion Youth Programs (Ages 7-12): Gold Medal Winner and Grand Award: Best Youth Program
- 2007 US International Film and Video Festival First Place: Gold Camera Award
- 2006 Chris Awards (USA) Bronze Plaque (6 out of 7 points)
- 2006 Chicago International Children's Film Festival First Prize: Live Action Television

Mortified struck a chord with broadcasters around the world. Significant sales include:

- Disney Channel for South East Asia (including China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam) (2006), Latin America (including Argentina, Brazil, Chile) (2007, 2010), Italy (2007) and France (2006)
- Radio Telefis Eireann in Ireland (2007)
- NHK in Japan (2008)
- ARD - BR - Bayerischer Rundfunk in Germany (2008, 2010)
- Amazon Prime in the United Kingdom (2013, 2014)
- Netflix in Latin America (2014, 2016)
- Cartoon Network in Italy (2010)
- AfricaXP (2018)

Broadcasters are continually searching for new and fresh content, so they usually licence a series for an initial term. *Mortified* has been re-licenced several times over by several major broadcasters (Disney Channel and Netflix in Latin America, Amazon Prime in the UK, SVT in Sweden and ARD in Germany), which is testament to its enduring appeal.

Mortified has reached all corners of the globe. Its licences have included broadcasters in the following territories:

Antigua, Argentina, Aruba, Austria, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica,



Mortified aired extensively in multiple territories via the Disney Channel

Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Kosovo, Kuwait, Laos, Liberia, Luxembourg, Macau, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Seychelles, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, United States, Venezuela, Vietnam.

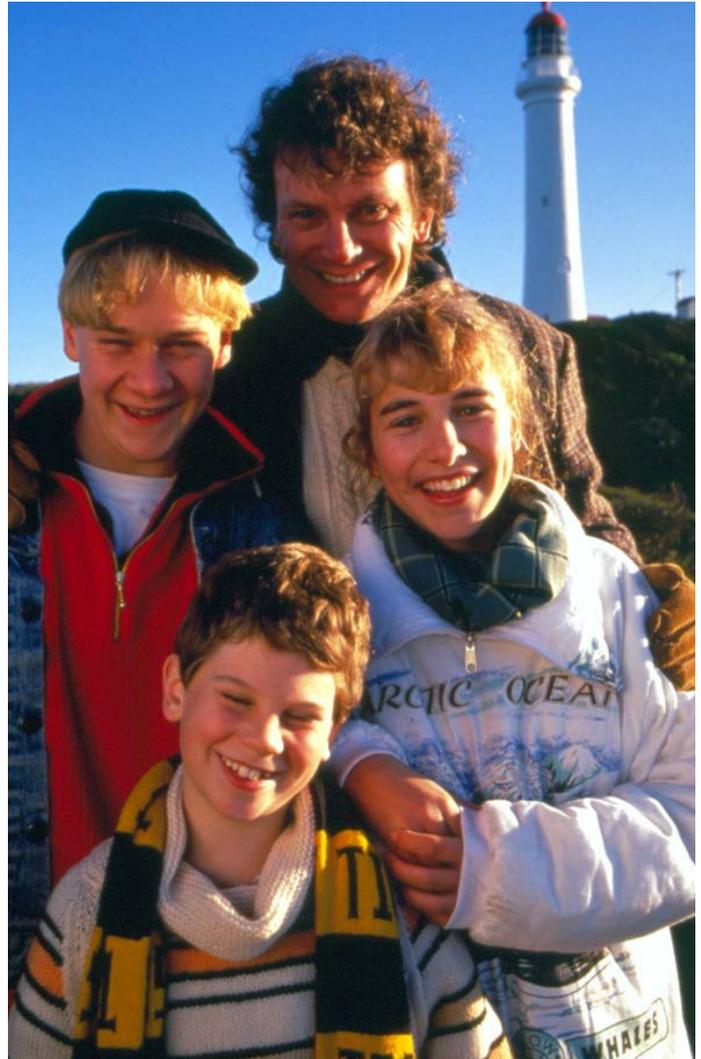
Round the Twist

Round the Twist, the ground breaking children's television series based on the stories of Paul Jennings is a cultural icon that captured the imagination of a generation of Australian children. What many people may not realise is how *Round the Twist* also entertained children all around the world, enjoying phenomenal longevity in international markets.

First broadcast in 1989 the series continues to sell domestically and overseas, some 28 years after it was first released, and without significant interruption.

Notable sales include:

- BBC Television in the UK (1990, 1992, 1997, 2000, 2001)
- Finland Broadcasting Company in Finland (1990)
- RTP - Radiotevisão Portuguesa S.A. in Portugal (1990)
- NOS Vara in the Netherlands (1990)
- Danish Broadcasting Corporation in Denmark (1991)
- TV 4 AB in Sweden (1994)
- Stream S.p.A in Italy (1996)
- Multicanal in Spain and Portugal (1997)
- Nickelodeon in the UK (1996)
- Fox in the United States (1997)
- Disney Channel in Spain (1999)
- Disney Channel in France, Italy and Germany (2000)
- Cartoon Network Asia in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (2004)
- Multithmatiques in France (2005)
- Five in the United Kingdom (2006)
- Thaole Entertainment in Vietnam (2012)
- Amazon Prime in the United Kingdom (2013, 2014)



Multiple screenings around the world have seen many fans of Round the Twist grow up and visit the Split Point Lighthouse when they visit Australia

Round the Twist has also sold into the following territories:

Angola, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Namibia, Netherlands, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America, Venezuela, Zimbabwe

Recent sales

The following table presents the most recent international sales made by the ACTF

TERRITORY	BROADCASTER	PROGRAM
WORLDWIDE – IN-FLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT RIGHTS	Global Eagle Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Balloon Barnyard</i> ○ <i>Little J & Big Cuz</i> ○ <i>Little Lunch (Special)</i> ○ <i>Little Lunch (Series)</i>
ASIA	Outdoor Channel Asia	<i>Bushwhacked (Series 1)</i>
HONG KONG	Television Broadcasts Limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Bushwhacked (Series 3)</i> ● <i>MY:24</i>
TAIWAN	Kaohsiung Film Archive	<i>Little Lunch (Special)</i>
AFRICA	AfricaXP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Double Trouble</i> ● <i>Flea-Bitten!</i> ● <i>Li'l Elvis Jones & The Truckstoppers</i> ● <i>Little J & Big Cuz</i> ● <i>Lockie Leonard (Series 1 & 2)</i> ● <i>Mal.com</i> ● <i>Mortified</i> ● <i>My Place (Series 1 & 2)</i>
SOUTH AFRICA	Daro Film Distribution	<i>Bushwhacked (Series 3)</i>
USA	FNX – First Nations Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Double Trouble</i> ● <i>Waabiny Time (Series 1 & 2)</i>
USA	Netflix	<i>Little Lunch (Special and Series)</i>
UK	Netflix	<i>Little Lunch (Special and Series)</i>
IRELAND	RTE Radio Telefis Eireann	<i>You're Skitting Me (Series 1 – 3)</i>
BENELUX	Netflix	<i>Little Lunch (Special and Series)</i>
NORDICS	Netflix	<i>Little Lunch (Special and Series)</i>
SLOVENIA	RTV SLO – Radio Television Slovenija	<i>Balloon Barnyard</i>
SWEDEN	SVT Sveriges Television AB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Mortified</i> ● <i>Worst Year of My Life Again!</i>
MIDDLE EAST	beIN Media Group	<i>Little Lunch (Series)</i>
ISRAEL	Hop Media Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Little Lunch (Series)</i> ● <i>WAC (World Animal Championships)</i>
NEW ZEALAND	Lightbox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Worst Best Friends</i> ● <i>Worst Year of My Life Again!</i>

Recommendations

Given the value of Australian children's screen content to Australia's soft power diplomacy efforts, we recommend that DFAT:

1. Engage with the current reviews into Australian and Children's Screen Content and with the Department of Communications and the Arts regularly in relation to the cultural and international value of support for Australian content.
2. Ensure that Austrade assistance (including Export Market Development Grants) continue to be accessible to the creative industries.
3. Consider ways in which Australian embassies around the world might be informed about the Australian Children's television projects that are screening in their territories.
4. Consider the ways in which Australian Ambassadors might also support Australian producers and distributors to engage with the broadcast sectors in their regions through hosted events and official visits which can strengthen and develop closer ties.