

Meeting Rick Ellis:CEO, TVNZ

Recently, we met with the CEO of TVNZ, Rick Ellis. The questions we raised and the answers we received are set out below:

1. A more collaborative approach to the issues of concern to our members:

VoTE: Here, we would like to discuss ways to avoid a repetition of the occasion when your multi-million dollar state-funded organization sued our organization - whose annual income is a few thousand dollars - in the High Court for laying a successful complaint to the BSA under appropriate legislation. You state that you receive relatively few complaints about violence. This presumably refers to the formal process of complaints to the BSA. It will surely come as no surprise that such complaints are few since you have sent a strong message to prospective complainants that their actions may well lead to them being forced to defend themselves in court. On a more positive note, what might be done to allow VoTE - the only viewer organization in New Zealand - some greater opportunities for access to and dialogue with TVNZ producers and programme organizers, who, in the 13 years of our existence, have never expressed any interest in

meeting us, which rather suggests a contempt for us and the standards we seek to represent?

RE: *I am quite happy to facilitate dialogue in future with TVNZ's programme commissioners about*



John Terris, VoTE National President, and Jenny Jamieson of the National Council of Women with Rick Ellis.

the issues that concern your organization. I think dialogue and another perspective would be good for TVNZ people to hear.

2. The Watershed

VoTE: In our view, this should be 8.30 pm. We note that you operate under a charter which obliges you to be considerate that a lot of children are watching TV at 8.30 pm. It is silly to argue that the responsibility is a parental one when large numbers of children have single parents with little time to share television watching with their children.

RE: *TVNZ believes the current watershed is about right. It should also be noted that New Zealanders are, through other media like the*

internet and subscriber television, currently able to access all sorts of programmes 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

3. Commercials on Sunday mornings

VoTE: We oppose this proposal for a variety of reasons and would like to hear your own reasons for supporting it.

RE: *TVNZ believes that advertising on Sunday mornings should be allowed. We believe it is unfair for New Zealand free-to-air broadcasters and New Zealand businesses not to have the opportunity given newspapers, radio, the internet and subscriber television can.*

4. Use of obscene language in local programmes

VoTE: Recently, a programme called, "The Unauthorized History of New Zealand," screened on Monday, 12 February at 10.15 pm., used the four-letter word for sex with such frequency that it has to be considered deliberately offensive.

RE: *I agree that some language in some recent programming was inappropriate and have acted to change internal processes to ensure the risk is minimized. -V*