

**12<sup>th</sup> REPORT FOR THE PROGRAMME ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
FOR ENGLISH PROGRAMMES  
(2007/2009)**

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## **SECTION 1 : INTRODUCTION**

### **a) Background**

This Report by the Programme Advisory Committee for English Programmes (PACE) covers the period of the Committee's term from 1 August 2007 to 31 July 2009. The Chairman and members of PACE are drawn from a cross section of society, comprising different ages, fields of interests and expertise, including the arts, sports, academia, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

2 They were appointed by the Minister of Information, Communication and the Arts (MICA) for a term of two years. There are 36 members in the Committee, which is chaired by Prof Leo Tan (please refer to Annex A for the list of PACE members).

### **b) Role of the Committee and Tasks Performed**

3 For the period under review, PACE held a total of nine meetings. During the course of these meetings, the Committee also took the opportunity to meet with the programming staff of the various broadcasters. These dialogues enabled the members to gain a better understanding of the challenges in programming faced by the broadcasters, as they balance the needs to remain relevant to viewers while watching their bottomline, and for the members to provide feedback and recommendations to the industry directly. PACE undertook the following tasks :

- Provided feedback and advice on the range and quality of broadcast programmes, and made recommendations for improvements;
- Provided feedback and advice on broadcasters' exercise of standards in programmes and advertisements;
- Gave advice on the validity of public complaints on programming; and
- Provided support and advice to MDA in the formulation of broadcast guidelines, gathering of programme feedback and public education.

4 In addition to the regular meetings held, the Committee also engaged in discussions via email on programming, advertising and sponsorship issues which surfaced in between meetings. Beyond giving views on specific issues, the Committee also provided feedback on content guidelines.

## **SECTION 2 : RANGE AND QUALITY OF BROADCAST PROGRAMMES AND PACE'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **a) General Issues**

5 PACE was generally pleased to observe that broadcasters have been introducing programmes with info-educational value, such as *Unexpected Access* and *Lifewatch*. Though members acknowledged that such programmes might have been controversial since they touched on issues which might have been deemed as being too explicit or gory, they were nonetheless educational and realistic.

6 The Committee expressed concern that the trailers for children's programmes appeared to be depicting more violence these days, e.g. the trailers for the programme targeted at older children, *R.E.M. – The Next Generation*, which had images of people with blood trickling down their heads or out of their noses. While members acknowledged that certain scenes in the trailer might have been useful in pre-empting viewers of what they could expect in the coming episode, these scenes were nevertheless too violent in nature to be viewed by younger viewers and hence should not have been aired during timeslots when younger viewers were likely to be watching television. Hence, members reiterated the need for broadcasters to exercise greater caution in the scheduling of trailers.

PACE raised the following issues on programming :

#### **(i) Radio programmes**

7 PACE felt that, by and large, the radio stations had tried to improve their programming and were exploring innovative approaches to attracting listeners. Many of them had continued to strengthen and develop their individual identities. In addition, members felt that the radio stations had been coming up with new programming and the selection of music aired was reflective of the changes in the social landscape, citing the example of how Lush 99.5 FM had tried to reinvent itself.

8 On the other hand, PACE observed that many programmes did not seem to have much depth in terms of content or background knowledge about the music they played, and the singers or composers behind the music. Members found this to be the case in popular English stations like Power 98, Class 95, 98.7FM, 91.3FM and 90.5FM where the deejays' main concerns seemed to lie more in trying to maintain a "cool" image to their listeners and often engaged in frivolous chatter. Deejays of music stations also appeared to be more preoccupied with filling their airtime with songs. Members were of the opinion that more effort could be made to include more informative content such as discussions about music and the different genres, interviews with song writers, talks about the process of song-writing etc. in radio programmes.

9 PACE members were pleased that there were some attempts by deejays to ensure that the language they used as well as the topics which they discussed were acceptable to the general listeners. However, members were on the whole still unhappy with the continuous use of sexually suggestive remarks by deejays during their programmes. Members quoted two examples of such programmes : Radio 91.3FM's

deejays Sheikh Haikel and Suzanne Walker who made sexually suggestive remarks like “would you like my left ball or my right ball?”, “the left side is heavier than my right side and it looks bigger too”, and “I’m so happy you grabbed my balls” within the game segment *Grab Haikel’s Balls*, and Class 95FM’s deejays FD and Glenn Ong asking listeners “should men and women make noise during sex” and “do noisy men turn women off” during the *Morning Express*. Members opined that while it was clear that the deejays were engaged in light-hearted cajoling, they should also be mindful that the listeners could find their dialogue to be in bad taste, and in addition there could be impressionable young children and teenagers listening in.

10 PACE also expressed concern over how deejays from the radio station Power 98 used Singlish in their bid to appeal to their main target audience of NS men, citing the example of the segment *Sergeant Says*, which contained excessive Singlish. Members commented that regardless of the station’s target audience, the overuse of Singlish was not only an embarrassment to the station, but it also sent the wrong message to young listeners that speaking Singlish was acceptable and cool. However, members did give credit to the attempts by some deejays to maintain a good standard of English in their programmes, like the deejays on 90.5FM such as Tim and Denise as well as Hamish and Maggie.

11 In terms of News delivery, the Committee observed that radio stations Power 98 and 98.7FM lacked consistency in terms of the quality of their presenters. Members were of the view that this did not augur well for the stations and that it was often embarrassing to hear some of the presenters from these stations, especially on Power 98, trying to read the news, as they often came across as being amateurish.

12 The Committee encouraged radio broadcasters to come up with programmes targeted at seniors and young children, as there are currently no programmes of such nature which cater to these age groups. Members proposed the idea of having a radio station for children / young listeners which could have a regular story-telling segment that could help improve children’s standard of English. Recognising that it might not be viable to have a dedicated children’s radio station, members suggested that an alternative was to have a time segment within existing radio stations for children. Members gave the example of the new fiction story-reading programme segments on BBC as an excellent means of introducing worthy national and regional writers to children. PACE would also like radio stations, especially those that target older listeners, to come up with some programmes for seniors. At present, most of the programmes offered by radio stations do not have specific programmes for seniors, for example those which provide health tips, to cater to their needs.

13 On the issues of content standards, PACE was pleased to note that there was a drop in the number of content breaches by radio during the period under review.

14 **The following are some suggestions for radio programmes :**

- Deejays should avoid speaking excessive Singlish on-air.
- Deejays should go for proper training in News delivery and pronunciation.
- To have programmes for young children, including story-telling sessions.
- To provide more programmes to cater to the interests of the elderly.

- For deejays to discuss topics more suitable for older viewers at later timeslots and not during times where children are likely to be tuning in, especially in the mornings when children are being sent to school by their parents.
- Music stations could have information segments, for e.g. inviting composers (local, regional and international) to discuss the composition process, the inspiration behind their pieces, and discussions on the life experiences that had influenced them and their works.
- For broadcasters to include a proper radio listing in their publications with comprehensive information on their programme schedules which can help listeners to better plan and select what they want to tune in to.

## (ii) Entertainment Programmes

15 With regard to the entertainment programmes available, PACE had mixed reviews on the range and quality of programmes of this genre. Members found that programmes revolving around crime and investigation, (e.g. *CSI*, *Cold Case*, *Bones*, *Without a Trace*), the legal practice (e.g. *Family Law* and *Judging Amy*), educational science programmes (e.g. *Prove It!* on okto), local singing competition-style programmes (e.g. *Singapore Idol* on Channel 5 and *One Minute of Fame* on okto) as well as acquired reality programmes (e.g. *Project Runway* and *Amazing Race*) provided good entertainment to viewers and some were also of educational value. However, programmes like *Fist of Zen* and *Senseless* on MTV S.E.A. Channel were deemed to be lacking in taste. Members also found the programmes, *S Factor* and *SingTel Grid Girls* shown on Channel 5 to be degrading to women, and observed that women professionals as well as mainstream viewers could find the programmes offensive, while not really appealing to young adults either.

16 On the improvements they would like to see in entertainment programmes, PACE expressed a desire for more programmes that promote family values and the use of proper English. The Committee also expressed an interest in seeing more quality acquired comedies on free-to-air TV such as *My Wife and Kids* and *Frasier*.

### 17 **PACE makes the following recommendations for entertainment programmes :**

- To include more entertainment programmes which focus on and promote family values, as well as the use of proper English.
- To come up with programmes which depict other cultures besides Chinese and Peranakan, without stereotyping them.
- To acquire more quality comedies including reruns of comedies from yester-years.
- To include programmes which are not only entertaining, but are intelligent and thought-provoking as well.

## (iii) Children's Programmes

18 PACE was pleased that, with the introduction of the new okto channel to replace the previous Kids' Central, the new channel will be able to accord more time to programmes catering to a wider age group of young viewers. Members found info-

educational programmes such as *Groom My School* and *Bring Your Toothbrush* to be well-produced and of high quality. They were also pleased that these programmes were scheduled at accessible timeslots on weekends.

19 Nonetheless, members expressed concern over some of the children's programmes which featured actors who had mass-appeal due to their exposure on other channels like MediaCorp TV Channel 8 but were weak in English. While the presence of these actors might help draw viewers to watch those programmes on okto, these actors did not serve as good role models due to their inability to speak proper English and could give the impression that speaking Singlish was hip and acceptable. In particular, PACE cited the case of the children's drama *My Classmate Dad* shown on okto channel which featured actor Mark Lee. PACE had highlighted in its previous report that Mark Lee, who is featured in MediaCorp TV Channel 5's sitcom *Police and Thief*, was struggling with the language, and found that his difficulty with proper pronunciation persisted in *My Classmate Dad*.

20 PACE observed that cartoons that promoted violence, such as *Power Rangers*, *Digimon*, *Pokemon*, *Bakugan Battle Brawlers* and *Ryukendo* continued to be common features on okto. They highlighted that research conducted by the American Psychological Association had shown that media violence has links with childhood aggression and urged channels like okto to refrain from scheduling so many of such programmes as young viewers can be easily influenced by what they see on television. At the same time, members also observed that there were more programmes on witchcraft and the occult being shown on Pay TV, such as *Jake the Dragon*, *Twitches*, *Halloweentown* and *American Dragon*, that were presented as comedies. Members also noted the *Freaky Fridays* programme slot on okto channel, which showcased programmes revolving around the theme of horror. *Dark Oracle* and *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* also appeared to glamourise the supernatural. Members expressed concern that such programmes could lead children to think that dabbling in the supernatural was hip and acceptable, and over time, this could develop into an attraction to the occult. In addition, members also commented that the repeat telecast of a programme like *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* at a timeslot like noon on Sundays was inappropriate as it made the programme accessible to young children.

21 The Committee noted that there were programmes which imparted the wrong values to its young viewers, such as featuring characters getting involved in love relationships with the opposite sex at a young age, citing the acquired programmes like *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* as examples. While members recognised that it would not be possible to exclude such programmes from local channels, and that the free-to-air channels do have to compete with cable channels which air such programmes, they expressed a desire for broadcasters to exercise discretion in the type of programmes they offer, especially during Family Viewing Hours and on channels like okto that target younger viewers. The Committee also recommended that programmes that profile great men and women of history (e.g. Chinese general Yue Fei, English Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Minister Mentor Mr Lee Kuan Yew) could be aired to enable young viewers to find out more about these people who played an important role in shaping civilisations. Their presence on local children's channels like okto would help to add more value to its programming.

22 Members suggested that broadcasters consider having programmes that make learning language fun, entertaining and educational. Broadcasters could also explore

having short programmes or segments which teach children mathematics or science in a fun and relevant manner by involving out-of-classroom scenarios, as well as having programmes on Singapore's history and stories relating to some of Singapore's historical sites. These would be entertaining for both adults and children while serving to educate viewers about Singapore's rich history and culture.

23 PACE opined that locally produced children's programmes appeared to be produced on a tight budget, citing the example of the local children's drama *Cosmo & George* where the script was superficial and the storyline predictable. PACE highlighted that the youngsters of today are more discerning as compared to in the past, and so they have higher expectations of the programmes they watch. Hence, programmes targeted at them would have to be relevant and have to challenge them intellectually, while still being able to entertain them.

**24 The following are PACE's suggestions for children's and youth programming :**

- For broadcasters to refrain from scheduling too many violent programmes and programmes on the supernatural / occult, especially since young viewers can be easily influenced by what they see on television
- For broadcasters to come up with programmes which are fun as well as educational and engaging to their target audiences.
- For broadcasters to be mindful of the impact of the standard of English in local children's programmes on viewers, and to work with their production teams to ensure that the actors in such programmes speak grammatically-correct English and not Singlish
- For broadcasters to consider having programmes that teach children language in a fun manner.

**(iv) Programmes for seniors**

25 PACE observed that there continues to be a lack of interesting English programmes to cater to seniors. Members suggested that the English language channels consider adopting the approach taken by Chinese channels and bring in well-known artistes from past local dramas, as well as re-screen some older English programmes such as Western movies, and Chinese dramas which come with English subtitles. Members also suggested that broadcasters consider bringing in programmes which feature more mature presenters, such as Katy Couric (a well-known American journalist who is currently the anchor and managing editor of the *CBS Evening News*, and part-time contributor to *60 Minutes* as well as anchor for prime time news specials for CBS News) or some of the familiar / established / veteran BBC presenters, such as Alan Johnston and Cilla Black, as they were of the view that when seniors see TV presenters from their age group, they can better relate to them.

26 The Committee was of the view that, though they had raised this issue with broadcasters previously and had offered various suggestions on the type of programmes which might be beneficial to seniors, there are, at present, hardly any programmes that specifically aim to meet the needs of seniors. As such, members felt that more could be done, especially in the area of info-educational programmes.

27 The Committee encouraged broadcasters to have programmes which focus on the mental and physical well-being of seniors, as well as the inter-generation bonding between seniors and their grandchildren. Members felt that broadcasters could make an effort to come up with such programmes given that this group of viewers is on the rise.

**28 The following are some of PACE's suggestions for programmes for seniors :**

- To have programmes that educate seniors on the importance of health and fitness, in order to encourage them to be more active and mindful of their overall well-being, as well as programmes that provide them with information about medical conditions and medical breakthroughs for chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, stroke and its prevention, cancer, anti-aging, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, dementia etc.
- To have programmes which feature activities that are suitable for seniors like tai-chi, ballroom and social dancing, yoga etc., to raise their awareness of these activities and on the places where they can go to participate in the activities.
- To promote family bonding through programme series that appeal to the whole family so that family members can sit down together to view the programme and to engage in discussions of the lifestyles, history, and values of the old, like the local Chinese drama *Little Nonya*.
- To enrich the minds of seniors and equip them with new skills, such as learning to use the computer, financial management etc.; as well as any other programmes which might be of interest to seniors.
- To encourage seniors to participate in activities that enrich their lives, for e.g. programmes on social activities, learning of new skills etc.
- To provide seniors with programmes on music and songs of yesteryears, i.e. the golden oldies or the swinging 60s.

**(v) Programmes on the Arts and Culture**

29 PACE was of the view that many programmes on the Arts and Culture appeared to be targeted at PMEBS, which could lead to programmes of such nature not appealing to the man in the street. As such, members were of the view that there should be programmes to generate greater public awareness in Arts and Culture, such as how to appreciate a painting or artwork, rather than focus on current followers of Arts and Culture.

30 The Committee also recommended that broadcasters, the National Heritage Board and the National Arts Council consolidate their content and resources and develop programmes which could be showcased during a period dedicated to creating greater awareness and appreciation of the Arts, such as a Special Arts Month or a National Arts and Culture Month. Television could be used as a platform through which the activities of each of the various organisations could be showcased.

31 The Committee commended the programme slot *Film Art* on Arts Central / okto for its telecast of good quality productions, such as *Les Choristes*, *The King and I*, *Half Nelson*, but also recognised that acquiring the rights to air such quality films might be costly.

32 PACE was of the view that there could be more programmes on the Arts and Culture for children on okto as such programmes are currently limited, and would be useful in encouraging children to develop an interest in this area. Members also found the local Arts programme *Livewire* to be a good programme as it encouraged youth to communicate about things they deem worthwhile.

33 However, PACE expressed disappointment over the general line-up of Arts and Culture programmes on okto, as more time seemed to be devoted to children's programmes and other programme genres rather than to the Arts. PACE expressed a desire to see more locally-produced Arts programmes or programmes focusing on the local Arts scene on the channel, such as local Arts performances by SSO, and programmes showcasing local talent.

**34 The following are PACE's recommendations for programmes on the Arts and Culture :**

- For broadcasters to provide more programmes in this genre for children, in order to cultivate their interest in the Arts and Culture.
- For okto to consider offering more Arts programmes as part of its programme line-up and to have programmes on Arts appreciation, which could include insights from the artists themselves on how they conducted their research prior to embarking on their artworks, etc.
- For broadcasters to have programmes which feature the cultural practices and beliefs of the different ethnic groups in Singapore, as this would help create greater awareness and appreciation among viewers of each others' culture.
- For broadcasters and production houses to come up with more locally-produced Arts programmes. To inspire its channels or production houses to come up with new ideas and to raise the quality of their Arts programmes, broadcasters can introduce awards such as a Top Arts Programme award.
- For the broadcasters to work with agencies like the National Heritage Board and the National Arts Council to explore the possibility of consolidating content and resources, and to develop special programmes that could culminate to a finale such as a National Arts and Culture Month, which is similar to the International Museum Day by the NHB and the Singapore Arts Festival by the NAC.
- To consider reducing the frequency of the broadcast of anime, and to air programmes of quality on Arts and Culture or documentaries instead.
- To consider having a dedicated programme belt (e.g. an hour a week) to showcase films by independent producers / groups or film makers, as this would give them an avenue for exposure and encourage creativity.
- For broadcasters also to consider showcasing content on other new media platforms such as the Internet or mobile TV.

**(vi) News, Current Affairs and Info-Educational Programmes**

35 PACE noted that, while there had been slight changes in the composition of news on CNA's News bulletins, such as the shortening of *Singapore Tonight* at 10pm and the introduction of *Asia Business Tonight*, the channel continued to provide an extensive coverage of international and regional News and Current Affairs, such as the

extensive coverage of the American Presidential elections in 2009 and regular updates on the political situations in Malaysia and Thailand. The Committee also applauded CNA for the wide variety of info-educational programmes and documentaries featuring topics ranging from travel and health, to finance, science and technology, as well as the featuring of interviews and discussions with expert panelists in programmes like *Insight* and *Money Mind*.

36 On the other hand, though some members held the view that CNA's coverage of current affairs and info-educational programmes was sufficient, others felt that the programmes lacked the "X-factor" required to garner a loyal following from viewers, especially since the channel faced stiff competition from many Pay TV channels offering quality programming. PACE felt that some programmes, such as those shown during the *Documentary of the Week* programme belt were worthy programmes to watch. However, more programmes rich in local content should be produced as local audiences would be better able to relate to them.

37 The Committee praised CNA for its efforts in trying to be opinion leaders instead of merely reporters of facts via the current affairs programme *! Say*, which aims to offer views and observations from the public on a particular topic and analyses by the presenter on the subject matter thereafter. However, despite CNA trying out a new format in their current affairs programme, PACE felt that the broadcaster was still adopting a conservative and careful approach in its reports and programmes on the whole and this has resulted in the public having the perception that CNA was the "voice" of the government. As such, it would not be able to be an effective and trusted conduit for information as well as the articulation of ideas and arguments during difficult times.

38 PACE was also pleased to see that Channel 5, which targets the mass audiences, had attempted to present information programmes using more interesting formats, such as *Unexpected Access* and *Lifewatch*, which were both educational and engaging. However, the Committee also noted that some of the images in *Lifewatch* were too graphic for Family Viewing Hours, such as some of the surgery scenes in the programme. The Committee felt that broadcasters needed to constantly be mindful of their target audiences and schedule programmes accordingly.

39 Members also commended okto for bringing in good documentaries which were previously aired on cable channels like National Geographic and Discovery, and expressed their wish for the channel to continue showcasing quality documentaries from other cable channels such as the History Channel.

40 The Committee was of the view that StarHub Cable Vision also offered quality documentaries on channels such as Discovery and National Geographic channels, and expressed appreciation over the new History Channel as the latter's programmes explore a range of topics relevant to all ages and backgrounds. Members found the programmes on the History Channel to be able to successfully educate its viewers in a fun and interesting manner.

41 On the whole, PACE felt that there was an overall improvement in the quality, range and standard of most of the info-educational and current affairs programmes on TV.

**42 PACE makes the following recommendations on news, current affairs and information programmes :**

- For CNA to produce more programmes which deal with relevant and current social, political and economic issues in the form of hard-nosed interview programmes, forums, magazine programmes, talk shows and documentaries, as these would captivate the audience.
- For CNA to employ presenters well-versed in the topics discussed, in order to be able to pose challenging and thought-provoking questions to their interviewees, so as to have a more fruitful discussion of the topics at hand.
- For broadcasters to continue exploring new ways to present information programmes on mass channels that would appeal to their viewers.

**(vii) Sports Programmes**

43 PACE observed that MediaCorp had taken note of PACE's previous recommendation to produce programmes on school sports. Members expressed appreciation that the programme, *The School Nationals*, not only served to motivate its young viewers and give young athletes recognition, but also instilled a sense of school pride in them. At the same time, the Committee expressed its wish to see more of such programmes which target young viewers on television.

44 Members also expressed their appreciation for the recent sports programme, *Sports@SG* on MediaCorp Channel 5, which showcased a combination of sports stories, round-ups of international sports news, stories about Singapore's local sporting personalities, a segment where viewers got to learn how to play a sport, news about the latest in the sporting world, etc. In addition, members also suggested that broadcasters include programmes which feature previous local sports personalities who had not only excelled in their areas of sports but who have gone on to help shape and develop the sporting scene in Singapore or to contribute to society in other ways, such as C. Kunalan who is now a coach, ex-sailor Ben Tan who is now a sports doctor, and ex-swimmer Oon Jin Teik who now serves as the CEO of SSC.

45 The Committee recognised that it would not be a fair comparison to benchmark the subscription TV channels' coverage of sports against that of free-to-air television. Nonetheless, they felt that there could be more "live" coverage on free-to-air TV of football games involving national teams. PACE felt that this could be attributed to the lack of viewership for such programmes, which would then make them not financially worthwhile for MediaCorp to acquire the rights to air them.

46 In terms of sports coverage on cable channels, with the availability of many more options on this platform, members found that the offerings were numerous on channels like Star Sports, ESPN, Super Sports, Golf and Football channels which provide extensive coverage of sporting activities such as extreme sports, wrestling, motor sports, athletics, soccer, tennis, golf, and key badminton and table tennis.

47 PACE expressed concerned over the impact on consumers as a result of the bidding war between StarHub and SingTel for the exclusive broadcast rights of the latest season of the UEFA Champions League, which had led to football fans having to subscribe to channels of both Pay TV players if they wished to continue watching the

popular English Premier League and the UEFA Champions League. This would not only lead to consumers having to install an additional set-top box in their homes but more importantly, would cost them more to enjoy the same range of sports content. While PACE recognised that little can be done for this season's UEFA Champion's League since the deal had already been inked, members strongly encouraged both Pay TV players to cooperate and come up with an arrangement that could be more beneficial to viewers for future major football events.

48 PACE was also pleased with the sports informational programmes shown on television, such as those which provide useful tips on improving one's golfing skills. As such, PACE hoped that broadcasters could include programmes on sports development in individuals, such as prevention of sports-related injuries, importance of exercise and its benefits, exercise regimes which individuals could perform on their own in their homes or elsewhere.

49 On the other hand, PACE noticed there seemed to be an increasing trend to use women celebrities as interviewers. While members understood that this could have been done to boost ratings, they pointed out that it was also important that the presenter is adequately prepared and well-versed in the subject or particular sport. Thus the Committee hoped that producers would be more mindful of the selection of celebrities to front their programmes.

50 With regard to the coverage of regional / international sports events, PACE was pleased with the coverage of the Olympic Games held in Beijing in August 2008 and the inaugural Asian Youth Games (AYG) in July 2009 on MediaCorp channels as well as on StarHub. PACE was pleased with StarHub dedicating six channels to the covering of the Olympic Games and offering them at no additional charge to its existing SCV digital cable TV subscribers, as well as four (including the Preview channel which was offered free to non-subscribers as well) of its channels at no additional charge to existing digital cable TV subscribers for the AYG. Members however, felt that more publicity could have been given to StarHub's channels offering coverage of the AYG as this paled in comparison with how it had highlighted its coverage of the Olympics. Nonetheless, they acknowledged that, being on a smaller and more regional scale than the Olympic Games, the AYG would not have garnered as much attention as the Olympic Games. PACE also applauded the MediaCorp channels for airing some historical Olympic-related documentaries during the run-up to Beijing 2008, such as facts about past Olympians, as these were timely and enlightening to viewers.

51 **PACE's recommendations for Sports Programmes are :**

- Show more programmes featuring children's sports events and games, to encourage youths to take part in sports and live active lives.
- Provide "live" coverage of local athletes in action whenever possible, as this would allow viewers to support our sportsman / woman in real time.
- For broadcasters to air programmes which feature our past and present sporting achievements, including those which feature sporting heroes (past and present) as well as lesser known individuals. These can serve to inspire youths to aspire to greater heights and to believe in themselves.
- To consider splitting the channels on cable, such that tennis and golf-related programmes are shown on channels different from the football-related ones, so that

fans of non-football sports do not bear the brunt of the high costs of football telecast rights.

- For broadcasters to provide more instructional sports programmes

#### **b) Advertising and Sponsorship on TV and Radio**

52 PACE expressed concern over how infomercials were being passed off as information programmes and aired during Family Viewing Hours, citing the programme *My Perfect Child* aired on MediaCorp TV Channel 5 as an example of a programme which sought to promote its sponsor's child teaching method as factual when it was clearly advertorial in nature. Members also felt that the programme *Mind Your Beauty* which featured different segments on how hair, skin and weight problems could be treated lacked objectivity and only served to promote the specialist services of its sponsors. PACE was therefore pleased that MDA had required the broadcasters to schedule such advertorial programmes after 10pm and have them clearly indicated as "paid presentations", as doing so would make the intentions of these programmes clear to viewers.

53 With regard to radio, PACE observed that the issue of some radio deejays endorsing products during their programmes remained despite this matter being highlighted in the Committee's previous report. Members felt that the deejays were often still misleading their listeners by not making a clear distinction between advertorial segments and their regular radio programmes, and noted that some radio presenters were reading advertisements on air before and after they read the News, which was highly confusing to listeners, and blurred the lines between factual reporting and advertisements. PACE urged broadcasters to stop this practice as listeners often did not realise that the news readers were reading an advertisement until the latter were midway through the advertisement. The Committee expressed concern over the blurring of lines between the newsreaders' role of reading the News with their roles of being ambassadors of the products or services they endorse, citing the examples of newsreaders who read the News and also serve as the "voice" of the consumer products and services.

54 **The following are some suggestions on advertising and sponsorship programmes :**

- Broadcasters should make a clearer distinction on radio programmes between what is sponsored / advertorial in nature and what is not.
- Parameters should be set for presenters in terms of the promotion of services and / or products which they are endorsing or represent.

### **SECTION 3 : PACE'S CHOICE OF PROGRAMMES**

55 As in previous reports, PACE would like to highlight some programmes which members found to be of high quality, and thereupon to encourage broadcasters to produce and schedule more of such programmes. Details are included in Annex B.

### **SECTION 4 : CONCLUSION**

56 Members have reiterated the need for broadcasters to come up with more programmes relevant to the youths and seniors. They were of the view that with the advent of technology, youths today have many more competing demands for their time and attention and are much more technology-savvy. Hence, broadcasters were encouraged to come up with wholesome and interesting programmes so that they can retain this segment of the population. As for seniors, the Committee urged broadcasters not to neglect the needs of this group which has fewer options on the mass media, and consider providing programmes which teach them about age-related illnesses and the means of overcoming such illnesses, health care, financial planning etc., as well as to meet the needs of their lifestyle.

57 The Committee was of the view that as MediaCorp Channel 5 targets a fragmented English-speaking audience, it could explore strategies such as having a late night belt which showcases programmes which are deemed to be entertaining and intelligent at the same, to appeal to the PMEB audience; reducing its reality shows; balancing the American programmes on the channels with content from other countries like the UK; and producing more wholesome locally produced content like *Fighting Spiders*.

58 PACE also wished to reiterate to the TV channels and radio stations to be mindful when it comes to having advertorials and infomercials clearly identified in order not to mislead the public since such advertorials / infomercials often feature specialists in that field, or persons whom listeners regard as information specialists in their field, e.g. health, where these same persons should not be promoting health products.

59 In addition, as members felt that with the advent of economic progress and globalisation which put Singapore's core values at risk of being eroded away, they encouraged broadcasters to use their influence and play a role in conveying and celebrating these values in the programmes they offer.

60 The broadcasters' responses to the above Report are attached at Annex C.

Chairman :

Professor Leo Tan  
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Mr Goh Chee Kong  
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Mr Vincent Hoe  
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Dr Janice Khoo  
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Mdm Kit Gek Wah  
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Ms Moonlake Lee  
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Mr Edmund Leow Zhen Wei  
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Mr Lim Poh Lye  
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Mr Lye Fei  
Chief Executive Officer, Care Corner Singapore Ltd

Mr Raymond Lye Hoong Yip  
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Muhd Fuadi Bin Rahmat  
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Ms Ng Geok Lan  
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Ms Florence Oh Bao Jin  
Director for Client Services, Consulus Pte Ltd

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Mr Kevin Sim  
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Mdm Siti Haslinda Putri Harun  
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Mr Tan Keng Joo  
Principal, Canberra Secondary School

Mr Tan Soon Lee  
Project Director, Hewlett Packard (S) Pte Ltd

Mr Viswaroopan s/o Sadasivan  
Chief Executive Officer, Strategic Moves Pte Ltd

Mr Wan Imran Bin Mohamed Woojdy  
Principal, Boon Lay Garden Primary School

Ms Zalina Gazali  
Senior Assistant Director, (Corporate Development), National Youth Council

Ms Zalina Abd Malik  
Education Officer, School Leadership Coordinator, Sembawang Primary School

## **PACE's Choice Programmes**

As highlighted in previous PACE Reports, the Committee would like to applaud programmes of notable quality, in a bid to encourage broadcasters to produce and acquire more of such programmes. The list of programmes below is for the period of assessment August 2007 to July 2009. It should be noted that the list is neither exhaustive nor listed in order of merit.

### **CHILDREN'S / YOUTH PROGRAMMES**

#### **Local productions**

*Bring Your Toothbrush* (repeat) - okto

This programme, which features cultural exchanges when two children switch families for two days, has continued to remain engaging in its new seasons by featuring lesser known cultures and including interesting challenges for the participants to go through in order to learn something new about their "adopted" family.

*Groom My School* - okto

This programme which is a spin-off of the popular children's programme, *Groom My Room*, aims to encourage children to be creative in the makeover of their schools. This weekly programme features a different school each week and shows how the students get involved and play their own parts in the makeover of their school with under the guidance of expert groomers and guest interior designers. Through this experience, the children learn creativity and cooperation.

*R.E.M. - The Next Generation* - okto

This programme is the sequel of the original *R.E.M.* which continues to feature the theme of mystery and crime. Targetted at tweens and teenage viewers, this drama also deals with issues close to their hearts, such as trust and friendships.

*Sketch 2* - okto

The local drama *Sketch 2* follows the adventures of a young boy who has been entrusted with a magic sketch book that can turn anything drawn on its pages into reality. The programme is fun-filled on one hand, and teaches children about responsibility on the other. Children also learn important lessons in life such as responsibility, importance of family and friendships from the programme.

*Moon Face 2*

The programme revolves around the theme of mystery and features a pre-adolescent child braving paranormal phenomena in search of the truth. Along the way, he realises that the cause of most of the mysteries in the world is human-made and often comes with bad intentions. This programme appeals to young viewers as it plays on their sense of curiosity.

*Art Factory* (repeat) - okto

This is a children's programme which aims to introduce art to children. Together with Julie (the protagonist), children learn a range of artistic activities which they can do on their own.

### **Acquired productions**

#### *Art Attack*

- Kids Central

This is a long-standing art and craft programme which parents enjoy as much as their children as it encourages creativity and gives useful tips to children on art by showing how every day items can be made into interesting works of art.

#### *Backyard Science*

- okto

This programme shows children applying the science lessons they have learnt in school outside of the classroom, and showing others that science is part of everyday life. In each episode, children will be presented with easy, practical experiments or activities and these are performed in whatever place the children wish to take them, such as the garden, kitchen, shed etc. Viewers learn that science is very much a part of their world, and is not just restricted to laboratories.

#### *Roary the Racing Car*

- okto

A cartoon series which targets preschoolers follows the adventures of Roary, a young racing car as he goes through life making mistakes and learning from them. The programme is popular with young children and parents as it is about adventure and is fun-filled, while at the same time teaching children how to cope with real life situations they encounter.

#### *Go, Diego, Go!*

- Kids Central

This preschool programme teaches children problem-solving skills in an interactive manner and fosters a love and respect for animals and the environment. The main character, Diego, who is the cousin of another favourite character among preschoolers Dora the Explorer, is a positive role model for children as he is caring towards animals and not discouraged in the face of adversity.

#### *Hi-5*

- okto

Hi-5 is a bright and energetic show designed for today's media-literate two to eight-year-olds. The programme which is into many seasons remains as educational, interactive and most importantly, entertaining as when it first started. It offers a world of learning based on music, movement and laughter. Parents appreciate the quality and potential for new learning while children are unable to resist the up-beat music, the dance, action and catchy 'pop ten' songs that characterise the programme.

## **ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMES**

### **Local productions**

#### *Our Makan Places Lost and Found*

- Channel 5

Hosts Gurmit Singh and Michelle Chia go all around Singapore's various hawker centres to try out the local fare and to bring the best of these to viewers. Viewers are able to find out which are the foods worth trying and at affordable prices in this programme that is pacy and fronted by two familiar hosts.

*Sayang Sayang*

- Channel 5

This drama explores the dynamics of a family, the multi-generation gaps, falling in and out of love, filial piety and most importantly, familial bonds that bind people to their families. The series which revolves around the colourful Peranakan culture offers a unique perspective of Singapore that is deeply-ingrained in our culture yet rarely seen on mainstream TV.

*Singapore Short Story Project (season 3)*

- okto

This programme showcases stories which are adapted from short stories by local writers. These stories unfold simultaneously over a period of 72 hours in this well-produced drama, with the collective aim of presenting a unique yet identifiable cross-section of Singaporean life by comparison and contrast.

*Fighting Spiders*

- Channel 5

Set in 60's Singapore in the colorful chaotic streets of Chinatown, this authentically-produced drama is a coming-of-age story of three boys. *Fighting Spiders* serves to bring older viewers on a journey down memory lane, and to give younger viewers a glimpse into the real Singapore during the 60s.

**Acquired productions**

*Desperate Housewives*

- Channel 5 & MioTV

This series continues to engage viewers through its excellent scripting and unpredictable plots as it explores such as teenage pregnancy, coping with cancer, dealing with behavioural issues in children, attaining work-life balance, etc.

*CSI*

- Channel 5

This long-running crime and investigation drama provides realistic portrayals of crime and investigative works, and is highly suspenseful.

*Project Runway*

- Channel 5

This American reality TV hosted by supermodel Heidi Klum provides a platform for its contestants who are budding designers to show viewers how they come up with their creative designs to win over the judges. In addition, the famous guest judges on the programme also provide a source of entertainment as they can be rather funny and curt, yet inspirational at the same time, when they provide the contestants with their comments.

*Amazing Race*

- Channel 5

This reality television game show which has gone on for several seasons remains engaging as its game style format , clever editing and pacing, as well as challenges posed to contestants continue to make the programme a very watchable one .

*Are you Smarter than A 5<sup>th</sup> Grader?*

- Channel 5

This television game show which is based on asking grade-school level questions to adults is not only informative, but also entertaining as viewers are drawn in to play along with the contestants to test their knowledge.

*Planet's Funniest Animals*

- Channel 5

This programme showcases the antics of animals as well as reptiles, and offers viewers the chance to see the most comical pratfalls, behaviours and activities of animals is a good stress reliever and filler to watch while viewers wait for the next programme to come on.

## **NEWS, CURRENT AFFAIRS AND INFO-EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES**

### **Local productions**

#### *Lifewatch*

- Channel 5

The programme is a reality-based series which gives viewers an insight into what happens in an operating theatre of a local hospital. While the programme does contain some graphic images, it is nonetheless well-produced and able to be informative and moving at the same time, as viewers are shown the plights of the patients and the treatments they undergo.

#### *Unexpected Access*

- Channel 5

The programme features places which many consider forbidden but are still curious to know more about what takes place there, like a funeral home, a reconstructive plastic surgery table and a forensics laboratory.. Like *Lifewatch*, *Unexpected Access* is also able to convey information in an interesting manner.

#### *Insight*

- CNA

This Current Affairs programme explores regional and highly topical issues, and being true to its name, provides viewers with interesting insights on the issues it explores.

#### *Asia's Best Kept Secrets*

- CNA

This programme features places in Asia which are uncommon, i.e. which are known only to locals, and extolled with pride from the people who are guardians of these secrets.

#### *Paradise Asia Special*

- CNA

This programme takes viewers to some of the best resort locations to uncover beyond the beach, spas and great food, to explore the locations' history, geography, culture and architecture.

#### *Amazing Asia*

- CNA

This programme presents colourful stories which illustrate the changing face of Asia, together with its rich cultural diversity, and brings viewers into places which are not often visited or are almost forgotten by the rest of the world. Viewers get to learn about the rich cultures of other countries, as well as take in the breathtaking sights of Asia.

#### *In the House of Style*

- CNA

The programme focuses on houses with rich histories and which are reflections on the influences which their own countries' cultures have on them. Viewers are taken into stylish and spacious houses in cities such as Japan, India, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia. Shot entirely on high-definition TV, the programme paid special attention to lighting, composition and contrast, to bring out the details of each house.

### **Acquired productions**

*Japan Hour*

- CNA

This is a long-running weekly programme which provides interesting insights into travel, culture, food and lifestyles of the Japanese people. The programme is able to take viewers to places in Japan not commonly visited on tours, and viewers get to catch a glimpse of the “real” Japan in the eyes of the locals through this programme.

*Documentary of the Week*

- CNA

This weekly documentary slot on Sunday evenings showcases some of the most engaging, innovative and ground-breaking documentaries from Asia and around the world. Topics covered will range aplenty - from social to economics to history to politics to science and religion.

*SuperNanny*

- Arts Central

This programme features Jo Frost, a nanny who helps a different family in each episode to discipline their children, who are uncontrollable or excessively naughty, using a variety of disciplinary methods. This programme that uses the reality format successfully to entertain viewers while staying informative and relevant to its audience.

## **ARTS AND CULTURE PROGRAMMES**

### **Local productions**

*Generation Next (Season 2) (repeat)*

- okto

*Generation Next* features outstanding young Singaporeans and tells how they overcame adversity with fortitude and made a difference by transforming and touching the lives of others. Six young Singaporeans who are bold in their thinking and passionate about the things they believe in were profiled in this inspiring series.

*Livewire (repeat)*

- okto

This programme highlights the ins and outs of the latest and best events happening in Singapore and offers a unique point-of-view, review and interpretation of events. In addition, the programme focuses on the young, discovering how they can help to promote Singapore’s Arts scene and help it to flourish.

### **Acquired productions**

*Famous Speeches*

- History channel

This informative programme captures the historic speeches and lives of famous leaders throughout the world in recent history.

*Film Art*

- Arts Central

This weekly programme slot showcases critically-acclaimed foreign language films which serve as a platform for film buffs to keep themselves abreast of the various styles and executions of film-making from various parts of the world.

*Lonely Planet Six Degrees*

- Discovery Travel & Living

This programme takes viewers around the world and introduces them to the culture, food, lifestyle of different countries. The programme serves to provide viewers with information

about the different places in the world which are unique features of the places and might not be commonly known to people.

## **SPORTS PROGRAMMES**

### **Local productions**

#### *The School Nationals*

- Channel 5

This programme which features local secondary school sports events helps to highlight the potential and give exposure to our young and upcoming athletes. It also enables families to support their children who participate in these events which are featured in the programme.

#### *Sports @SG*

- Channel 5

This programme offers good coverage of issues related to sports, including sports stories, international sports news, detailed stories about Singapore's local sporting personalities etc.

### **Acquired productions**

#### *ACE*

- Star Sports

Host Georgina Chang provides an insight into the world of tennis, including the players, the game and the latest news.

#### *Golf Focus*

- Star Sports

This programme provides good and in-depth analyses and comments about the players and the game.

## **BROADCASTERS' RESPONSES TO PACE'S FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are the responses from the broadcasters to PACE's feedback and recommendations given in this report.

### **MediaCorp**

#### **Radio**

With regard to PACE's view that the radio stations have been trying to improve their programming and were exploring innovative approaches to attracting listeners, as well as continuing to strengthen and develop their individual identities, MediaCorp thanked PACE for noticing the efforts of its radio stations to improve their programming and develop their individual identities to make an impact on their listeners, and assured PACE that it will continue to strengthen and develop its stations further.

On the Committee's comments that many radio programmes lacked depth in terms of content or background knowledge about the music they play, and the singers or composers behind the music, MediaCorp said that 987FM has a regular *HOME* segment which broadcasts four times a day, six days a week where presenters speak to budding talent about their muses. This also provides a platform for local talent to be heard on radio. 987FM also has a dedicated segment, *987 Stars* that shares information with the listeners on the artistes & their music. In line with the station's target audience, it has embraced new technology by providing updates on the latest happenings on artistes and musicians on the social networking sites, Twitter and on Facebook.

Class 95 has a monthly segment called *Artiste in the Spotlight* where the featured artiste will share about their song writing, their performance inspirations and other trivia, and a music trivia contest on Saturdays called *Face the Music*, where listeners can test their music knowledge based on a weekend special theme.

MediaCorp informed PACE that its stations try to interview the artistes of the music that is played on the stations and provides music news and information and artiste snippets whenever possible.

With regard to the continuous use of sexually suggestive remarks by deejays during their programmes, MediaCorp reassured PACE that its radio stations attempt to adhere to the Radio Programming Code in the treatment of sensitive and sex-related topics and will continue to monitor feedback from PACE, listeners and members of the public, and adjust programming and content as needed. Its presenters undergo regular training and are frequently reminded to abide by the Code.

MediaCorp thanked the Committee for acknowledging that some deejays, such as Tim and Denise, do try to maintain a good standard of English in their programmes.

In response to the view that presenters on 98.7FM lacked consistency in terms of their delivery of News, MediaCorp clarified that its deejays do not read the news on the station, and all news content comes from its central radio newsroom. Broadcast journalists / presenters are continually trained on presentation skills, pronunciation and news delivery, at least once a month.

With regard to the Committee's opinion that there are currently no radio programmes which cater to seniors, MediaCorp pointed out that Gold 90.5FM has two regular segments, - "Health Guide" which is available on podcast and targets health issues of those aged 40 and above, and "Fabulous New Age" which is a quarterly programme segment targeted at those 40 and above, to encourage them to take up new hobbies like ballroom dancing, roller blading and fishing.

## TV

### Entertainment Programmes

MediaCorp explained that *S Factor*, which members found to be degrading, was meant to be an entertaining, light-hearted and tongue-in-cheek reality TV series on the search for the "ideal" woman who seemingly has it all – personality, beauty and brains. MediaCorp recognised that not all of Channel 5's programmes would appeal to its viewers but from a programming standpoint, *S Factor* was meant to target a more discerning and mature audience who would be able to appreciate the "raw" unscripted content of this reality TV series in the spirit it was intended.

In response to PACE's recommendations on having more entertainment programmes which focus and promote family value, MediaCorp said that Channel 5's *Sayang Sayang* which has returned for another season, and a brand new drama called *Polo Boys* are examples of programmes that promote family values and traditions. Channel 5 would be taking into consideration the Committee's feedback during its next programme developmental cycle, and the broadcaster reassured the Committee that Channel 5 is always on the lookout for quality acquired comedies and had recently aired award-winners like *30 Rock*, *The Starter Wife* and *Samantha Who*. With the launch of *okto*, this channel has introduced a "live" show for children called *oktoLIVE!*. This info-entertainment series wove messages that promoted individual confidence among children, and gave them a platform to showcase their talents. With *the second season of oktoLIVE!* in the works, the channel would be able to look into incorporating the Committee's suggestions.

### Children's Programmes

In response to the Committee's concern that the trailers for children's programmes appear to be depicting more violence these days, MediaCorp assured the Committee that *okto* has been mindful not to schedule such trailers at timeslots where the younger viewers are watching TV. The broadcaster had also taken action to tone down the trailers for *R.E.M. - The Next Generation* immediately after public concerns over the dark elements in the trailers were highlighted to the channel, and subsequent trailers focused on the lighter side of the series, such as the friendship between the three girls.

With regard to PACE's observation that some children's programmes featured actors who were weak in English such as Mark Lee in *My Classmate Dad*, MediaCorp highlighted that ever since Mark Lee was confirmed as a cast member of *My Classmate Dad*, he had consistently been working hard to improve his English. MediaCorp pointed out that Mark Lee being chosen as one of the hosts speaking in English at this year's National Day Parade attested to the fact that the actor had come a long way since his *Police and Thief* days. MediaCorp assured the Committee that it would continue to ensure that the level of English used in its programmes remains high.

MediaCorp noted PACE's concerns with cartoons on witchcraft and those that promoted violence. It pointed out that the *Freaky Fridays* programme slot on okto channel showcasing programmes on the supernatural has since been discontinued and replaced with info-educational programmes like *Prove it!* and *Tricky TV*, the latter of which have been receiving healthy viewership ratings since their launch. As for the action shows on okto, while these do garner good viewership, the channel closely monitors the content for excessive violence. To balance such action genres, okto also airs dramas, comedies and info-educational programmes, many of which are scheduled during prime time.

As for the concern over the possibility of some programmes imparting the wrong values to its young viewers such as featuring characters getting involved in love relationships with the opposite sex at a young age, MediaCorp would continue to ensure that such content while reflecting the reality of issues that pre-teens are exposed to, are not overly emphasised. This will be especially in programmes aired during family viewing hours. MediaCorp would also consider PACE's recommendation for free-to-air channels to air programmes on key historical figures when it sources for info-educational programmes and documentaries that are suitable for children.

MediaCorp highlighted that on okto currently has a strong presence of local and acquired info-educational programmes which teach children about fun mathematical, science and general facts. These include titles like *Prove it!* and *Why Didn't I Think of That!*. Moving forward, okto will continue to acquire and develop such programmes. *Series 2* of the locally produced info-educational series *Why Didn't I Think of That* is set to return in August 2009.

With regard to PACE's opinion that locally produced children's programmes appeared to be produced on a tight budget and for *Cosmo and George* the script was superficial and the storyline predictable, MediaCorp said okto is working closely with the production house involved improve the second season of the series.

In response to PACE's suggestions on suitable programmes for young viewers, MediaCorp informed that Channel 5's *Live 'n' Loaded*, which ended its run in April this year, was an enriching music series targeted at the youth. The series, which was a unique showcase of local talents on all media platforms, got a thumbs-up from the local music industry and local music fans. Channel 5 also uncovered new talents from schools and local established bands were able to showcase their talent and play alongside the newer ones.

MediaCorp cited the examples of the series *The School Nationals* that showcased the best of the 2009 National School Sports Championships and Channel 5's

ongoing Sports magazine programme, *Sports@SG*, as programmes that feature sports that appeal to youths e.g. Bike trails, AYG etc.

### Programmes for Seniors

In response to PACE's request for programmes focusing on the mental and physical well-being of seniors, as well as the inter-generation bonding between seniors and their grandchildren, MediaCorp stated that a 90-minute telemovie called *This Is My Home* will be aired during the 2009 National Day Week, which explores inter-generational gap and promotes understanding between the new and the old generation. In addition, Channel 5 aired a health series *Don't Ignore Diabetes*, which although did not specifically target seniors, was an educational series that seniors would have found useful.

MediaCorp also highlighted the Channel 5 drama *Fighting Spiders* which, like Channel 8's *Little Nonya*, was a nostalgic series that promoted the lifestyles of the past and appealed to older viewers as they could relate to it. Younger viewers, on the other hand, were able to get a glimpse of life in the 60s. In addition, the series promoted family bonding and camaraderie. MediaCorp also informed PACE that Channel 5 is also currently developing a docu-drama series that focuses on two local communities, the Eurasians and the Peranakans, and their contribution and plight in the first and second World Wars.

### Arts and Culture Programmes

With regard to the various recommendations made by PACE on programmes on the arts and culture, MediaCorp shared that it developed a local series *Stranger than You* which features various cultures in Singapore and the region. MediaCorp assured that it would be incorporating the suggestions of the Committee in the titles that it is acquiring and developing. In addition, okto has been gradually increasing the arts-related content on weeknights since May 2009. The channel's performance slot, which showcases classical concerts on Saturday evenings would soon also be extended to Sunday nights where genres like music and dance performances from both Singapore and the world over would be shown.

MediaCorp also highlighted that okto had to-date aired two seasons of its anchor arts series *SCORE* which gives a weekly roundup of the Singapore arts scene. okto has also produced programmes in conjunction with major arts related events in Singapore, such as the Singapore Arts Festival, and expressed its willingness to work with various agencies to explore ways to extend this effort to other key national arts events.

### News, Current Affairs and Information Programmes

MediaCorp said that, as a regional channel, CNA believed in staying relevant to viewers. It explained that the reason behind the streamlining of news programming during prime time via the merger of *Singapore Tonight* and *Singapore Business Tonight* was to create a more focused "Singapore half hour". This was also in response to viewers who had asked for more coverage of global and regional financial news, particularly since the global financial crisis. Nonetheless, MediaCorp assured the Committee that, on the whole, reports on Singapore has not been reduced. Newsbreaks are shown at the bottom of the hour in a regular segment called *Singapore Update*,

which starts from 6.30am. The 5pm news *Asia Today* also carries news on Singapore. Prime time news programmes are packaged to cater to specific regions and focus, for example, the 7pm bulletin *Southeast Asia Tonight*.

The Committee's opinion that CNA was still adopting a conservative and careful approach in its reports and programmes has been noted by MediaCorp. According to the broadcaster, the current affairs programmes fill up much of the bottom half of each hour, after the news updates at the top, and they include flagship content shows with information and analyses, and which elicit opinions from viewers weekly. These serve to complement its News programmes which report on more current developments. As per MediaCorp, regional and world issues are discussed on *Insight* and *360*, topical political and social issues in Singapore are discussed in *Talking Point* every Sunday, and there are also programmes which target young people, such as *BlogTV.sg*, *I Journalist* and *Get Real!*.

MediaCorp further explained that much of the content shown on CNA is also being beamed up onto its international feed. Hence, while CNA programmes to serve the Singapore audience, it also has to balance this need with the fact that the channel is a regional news and information channel competing with global news players. As such, CNA is of the view that being overly Singapore-centric would not help its cause. It cited the *Saving Gaia* series in June 2009 on environmental issues as a good example of how the channel works around its channel branding and positioning, as stories on Singapore's efforts were interwoven with other features in Asia.

With regard to the various recommendations made by PACE on news, current affairs and information programmes, MediaCorp will work with MDA on more hard-nosed interview programmes, forums and magazine programmes, talk shows and documentaries, The following are some programmes which received good reviews :

- *In Conversation With*, which featured personalities well respected for their views e.g. Professor Kishore Mahbubani (Dean of Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore); Marina Mahathir (well-known Malaysian blogger, Aids activist and daughter of former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad); and Professor Muhammad Yunus (Nobel Peace Laureate and founder of micro-credit Grameen Bank).
- *The Interview*, a one-on-one interview programme with political or business leaders e.g. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (President of the Philippines) and Steve Ballmer (Chief Executive Officer of Microsoft Corp)
- *Cents and Sensibilities* on money management.
- *Asians of the Year*, which featured inspiring individuals working to improve the lives of communities in Asia.

MediaCorp also highlighted that CNA is responding to the changing media scene with new media tools. Programmes like *That's I.T.* and *BlogTV.sg* work in Facebook and Twitter accounts as part of the programme format, or to complement viewership access, and these tools enable CNA to reach those who may not want to watch the traditional medium of television.

## Sports Programmes

MediaCorp responded that Channel 5 will be exploring PACE's recommendations on sports programmes in *Sports@SG*, and okto has produced a number of sports-related programmes for children, the latest being *Little Coach and Football Galaticos*. The channel also has plans to showcase sports-related topics and personalities in its upcoming series *oktoLIVE!*, and will continue to source for suitable sports-related programmes for children.

## Advertising and Sponsorship

On PACE's observation that there is no clear distinction between programmes and advertisements, MediaCorp reported that it had taken note of the Committee's earlier feedback on this issue, and since April 2006, all of its stations clearly demarcate sponsored "live talk" segments at the beginning and at the end of each talk segment with a disclaimer that attributes the talkset to the sponsor.

## StarHub Cable Vision

StarHub said that it would continue to provide wide variety of quality content to its customers.

With regard to the lack of publicity on SCV's coverage of the Asian Youth Games (AYG), StarHub clarified that, as its arrangement for the carriage of the AYG had not been concluded until approximately one and a half weeks prior to the start of the first event, this accorded it limited time to prepare and to get in place the necessary promotional material and marketing efforts before the launch of the AYG.

## SAFRA Radio Power 98FM

On PACE's findings that many programmes on the radio lacked depth in terms of content or background knowledge about the music they play, and the singers or composers behind the music, Power 98FM said that it would be looking at improving on that aspect in the upcoming AC Nielson Survey period.

Power 98 has also reminded its deejays to be mindful of the comments they make on air and refrain from making sexually suggestive remarks.

The station has noted PACE's suggestion that deejays should speak proper English and indicated that it will endeavour to maintain a good standard of English in all its programmes, trailers as well as in other on-air elements.

The Committee's feedback on the lack of consistency in terms of news delivery has been communicated to SAFRA Radio's news department and the station has responded that appropriate rectifying measures would be taken.

Power 98FM informed that it has invited numerous artistes, both local and international, onto the station to share about their work. The station also has an info-capsule that features artistes sharing about their work and has a programme called

*Acoustic Lounge* every Saturday between 8pm and 9pm that invites both local and international artistes to share about their work and perform acoustic versions of their songs.

With regard to sports programmes, Power 98FM is in the process of procuring a syndicated sports programme to be broadcast on the station.

PACE's concerns about drawing a clear distinction between news and advertorial had been noted. Power 98FM has engaged its broadcast journalists to read the news and not the station deejays.

As for PACE's suggestion on setting parameters for presenters in terms of the promotion of services and / or products, Power 98FM has communicated this feedback to its Creative Services department and all producers to be mindful when choosing and engaging voiceover talents.

### **SPH UnionWorks 91.3FM**

SPH UnionWorks said that while it agreed in principle with the majority of the Committee's comments, it was of the opinion that many of the recommendations were not commercially sustainable in a free-to-air environment as their implementation would require government funding.

SPH UnionWorks was of the view that it was not necessary for all media outlets to be educational in nature, and commented that there should be a balance of entertainment outlets and outlets more focused on News and factual information, as well as items of a more educational nature. The broadcaster also commented that sports is a type of specialty programming, and observed that the majority of cable TV channels were representative of niche programming, with the ratings indicating the relative popularity of the different radio formats and TV channels. For each of the cable TV channels to be successful, it would have to focus on what they do best.

SPH UnionWorks said that as listeners have the option of switching stations when they do not like what they hear, station with programming deemed "unpopular" would suffer lower ratings and revenue. As such, radio stations that are targeted at specific demographic groups would appeal to fewer listeners than those targeting the masses, which would have an impact on their financials. SPH UnionWorks also highlighted cost as being another significant factor in programme development and support, particularly for educational and factual programming which is research intensive and requires large, well qualified and well-funded teams to produce on an ongoing basis. It noted that while PACE praised Lush for its programming, the station received low listenership. Therefore radio stations offering highly niche programming in a small market like Singapore would likely be unsustainable in a stand-alone commercial enterprise.

In response to PACE's suggestion for proper programme listings of radio stations to be included in publications, SPH UnionWorks commented that radio listening is generally not "appointment"-based like in the case of TV watching. Listening patterns for radio are therefore mostly based on the listener's opportunities to tune in, e.g. in the mornings when people commute, and this tallies with the average Time Spent Listening

(TSL) of 20-30 minutes a day for the average listener as evidenced in the Nielsen Ratings. As such, radio listening is rarely a primary activity as it is usually done while the listener is doing something else such as driving, eating, working, studying etc. In addition, most radio stations already have their programme line-ups on their websites.

The broadcaster concluded by explaining that, in today's media landscape, the avenues for entertainment and information are now virtually limitless, and the audience will seek out their preferred portals, local or otherwise. Broadcasters are therefore compelled to offer popular content at the lowest price possible and be mindful not to put their stations / channels at a disadvantage when many are struggling financially. They cannot be expected to expend resources on niche specialty programming which in most other commercial markets, such as the US, UK, and Australia, are carried and funded by a single, purely Government-driven broadcaster.