



A right to be different

A DRAFT Australian children's charter - released by the National Children's and Youth Law Centre and the Australian Youth Foundation this month - calls for a move away from narrow portrayals of young people in the media. It states that the media do not recognise the individuality and diversity of young people and in many cases, only the negative aspects of young people's lives are reported. It adds that when positive images of young people are shown, usually in advertising, they are often unrealistic making many young people feel inadequate. The draft charter, which is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, has been drawn up as draft legislation containing 61 provisions under ten broad areas including fundamental rights and culture, language and religion. □

Cash rich TV industry

THE COMMERCIAL TV industry reported record profits last year according to figures released by the Australian Broadcasting Authority this month. The ABA's *Broadcasting Financial Results* for 1993-94 showed up a \$342.7 million profit for commercial TV - a threefold increase on the previous year. The profit before interest and tax was the largest recorded profit for the industry in the last ten years. However, commercial radio has not fared so well. Its mere \$50.2 million profit was 4 per cent down on the previous year. The drop in profits was due mainly to increased interest expenses - the brunt of this being felt by capital city services. □

A slice of the sky

THE ON-LINE community in the US is joining forces to lobby Congress and the Federal Communications Commission to gain access to the radio spectrum, which, if approved, would allow wire-free voice and data communications to users within metropolitan area range. Apple Computer has already jumped on the idea with a petition to the FCC. What they're seeking, according to the American on-line publication 'Interactive Age' is: '300 megahertz of prime real estate up at 5 gigahertz, enough to accommodate high density 24-megabit-per-second connections in a fluid mix of local and wide area networking'. Get it? Apple wants this frequency spectrum made available free to all comers - no auctions, no licence fees, no regulations on what it's used for and no airtime charges. Meanwhile the big US telcos are lobbying for the same spectrum for telephony purposes with a rival petition to the FCC. Many in the Net community think the telcos have had it their way for too long. For example: 'Haven't they hogged enough bandwidth? They call their system SUPERNET. I think SUCKERNet fits a lot better,' said one concerned correspondent. □

Olympic couch sitting

MONASH UNIVERSITY research has found a healthy number of couch potatoes prepared to subscribe to pay TV just to watch the Sydney 2000 Olympics. A survey of 1,500 Melbourne households showed that the Olympics could prompt Australians to take up pay TV at twice the rate at which they went for video-cassette recorders. Dr David Bednall, who carried out the research, said the current anti-siphoning rules which restrict major sporting events being broadcast exclusively on pay TV, may well change after the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Some 27 per cent of Australians watched the Barcelona Olympics, according to the research, compared to just 9 per cent for Wimbledon. Don't expect much activity on the streets in that September fortnight in the year 2000! □

Securing credit on the Net

VISA AND Mastercard, the world's largest credit card companies, have stitched up a deal to develop a secure payment system for transactions over the Internet. They expect to release specifications for a common standard by September 1995. Visa has already been working with Microsoft on such a system while Mastercard has been working with the web browser company, Netscape. Rest assured, your payments will be debited safely from your back pocket and held securely somewhere else. Meanwhile, a virtual shopping mall has appeared on the World Wide Web with eight initial retailers including: Toys R Us and Sainsbury's supermarket. Operated by the UK bank, Barclay's, it allows purchases to be made by typing in credit card details. □