

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

22 June 2006

Ms THOMPSON (Reynell):

I move:

That this house commends the Attorney-General for continuing the Rann government's support for Young Media Australia and calls on the federal Liberal government to show similar support for all parents in their difficult task of guiding their children's exposure to the media.

Of recent times, Young Media Australia has simply not been getting support from the federal government, and this is truly a disgraceful situation. It is a national organisation. Media issues are federal responsibilities. The responsibility for supporting a resource, such as Young Media Australia, rests with the federal government, but this has not been happening. The state government in South Australia has stepped in and provided much of the support that is enabling Young Media Australia to survive at the moment.

For those members who do not know much about Young Media Australia, the simplest way for me to provide members with that information is to quote an extract from the message of the President of Young Media Australia in its annual report last year. In her message, the President of Young Media Australia, Jane Roberts, states:

Over 48 years ago the Australia Council on Children and the Media was established 'to stimulate and maintain public interest in the provision of suitable entertainment programs for children and young people'. Media provision back then included back and white television, radio, record players and daily newspapers. In 2005, the media environment for children and young people bears little resemblance to this, and now may include two or three televisions in the home, DVD and video recorders, computers including portable laptops, access to the internet with instant communication via

emails, electronic personal organisers, portable CD players, iPods that allow the listener to hear music everywhere and mobile telephones that can act as a small computer/camera/video recorder and still send and receive telephone calls.

For many parents and educators who are raising children in this ever-changing media environment, all of this can be overwhelming and challenging. Young Media Australia has continued to support parents and those who work with children to promote quality media environments and provide information resources and strategies that allow parents to make positive choices for their children's wellbeing.

That gives members some information about the role and history of Young Media Australia. I want to say something about its composition. It is established with a national board of directors, with representatives from all states and territories. Steve Biddulph is its patron. Its board of directors for 2004-05 include the President, Jane Roberts; Vice-President, Elizabeth Handsley; directors Jennifer Barker, Warren Cann, Rosemary Crowley, John Gard, Leneve Groves, Elizabeth Handsley and Jane Roberts. Those names might not mean much to members, but they include representatives of parents' and citizens' associations, education unions, Early Childhood Australia, lawyers and researchers and lecturers in matters relating to the media.

Regarding the issue of funding, in 2002 the federal Department of Family and Community Services provided a grant of \$207 000. This was to establish the Young Media Australia helpline and web site project for the period January 2002 to December 2003. Since then the federal government has contributed \$2 500, in July 2005. That was also from the federal Department of Family and Community Services for national child protection awards, awarded in November 2005.

So, Young Media Australia gets recognition for what it does in child protection, but the federal government has simply abrogated its responsibility to fund YMA. Where its money has been coming from in the meantime—besides those individuals and organisations who take out membership, the Premier of South Australia gave an operational grant of \$25 000 in July 2004 and a further grant of \$12 000 in December 2004. The

South Australian Film Corporation contributed \$8 000 towards its operational grant. The Office for Women contributed \$6 000 towards the Young Media Australia helpline, and this was in recognition of the fact that women have major responsibility for guiding their children's media exposure, particularly during school holidays, for instance, when they are deciding what films might be suitable. The Office for Youth provided \$4 000 in sponsorship of the helpline and the South Australian Attorney-General recently provided \$33 000 for the project 'Know Before You Go', which is about reviews of films.

The *Advertiser* and Telstra are providing support to Young Media Australia but, since January 2002, Young Media Australia has made about 15 unsuccessful applications for funding to the federal government. Something has changed since 2002. It is not Young Media Australia. There has been great continuity in the membership of the board of directors. There has been some changeover, but the general mission, philosophy and performance of Young Media Australia has continued to live up to its high reputation.

But the federal government has suddenly decided that supporting the activities of Young Media Australia is no longer appropriate. Young Media Australia covers issues such as childhood obesity and the advertising of food. It provides assistance on what to do when your child is frightened at a scary movie. It provides a huge range of services. Going through them briefly—as I am sure my colleagues will enhance these—there is a website which provides comprehensive and up-to date information relating to children and the media, including the movie review service, all solidly grounded in child development framework.

There are parent strategies, topic development and writing. This translates information that comes in to the YMA into practical, concise and relevant topics for parents and caregivers. It converts research into practice. The Helpline Call Centre provides 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week national freecall service for parents and caregivers to discuss media issues in respect of children. *Small Screen* is the monthly news digest of most recent developments in the field of children and the media. The media review service provides callers with descriptions of the content of movies and currently reviews all G and PG movies as they are released. These are

reviewed from a child's point of view, with particular attention to violent material and material that young children may find scary. This will be expanded to review television programs and computer games if funding support is available.

The promotion of the helpline and website is a campaign based approach to sectors of the parent and caregiver community because, as we all know, it is no good having these wonderful facilities if nobody knows about them and ordinary parents are not able to easily access them. There are also research projects, including the sponsorship or conduct of research in the field of media for young children.

I have mentioned the need for the valuable work of Young Media Australia to be accessible and I point out that they are well aware of the need to reach a wide variety of people within the community. They work through many of the schools. I know some of my colleagues use extracts from Young Media Australia newsletters in their newsletters. Schools also provide information in the newsletters that they send home to parents on a weekly and sometimes daily basis. Schools use YMA material to inform parents in their school community about how they can support their child's involvement with the media.

In conclusion, I would like to point out once again the range of people who are supporting Young Media Australia. I point out that while it is a national organisation with a national board of directors, one of the reasons for its support in South Australia is that, by historical accident, it is currently located in South Australia, but its website, its helpline, its movie reviews, serve the whole of Australia.

This organisation deserves national support, and it is a disgrace that the federal government continues to legislate instead of supporting our parents.

The motion was carried.