

## **Chapter Three:**

### **The duty of Commercial Television Stations in regard to fostering Social Capital and Responsibility to the Community and an analysis of what *Telethon* and *Appealathon* meant to those who were involved:**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the relationship of Community Responsibility and the general workings of commercial television stations. While it has been shown that local ‘live’ production was initially a necessity for the provision of program content for the first two stations in Western Australia, there was also an evident intention on the part of management to provide a local service in many areas as part of what can be termed community responsibility. This continued until the ‘family’ stations were subsumed within big corporative structures. The information contained herein has been in the main been gleaned from Annual Reports of the television stations and the collective memory of those who were interviewed or contributed to this thesis in writing. The intention of this chapter is to prove the existence of a real television directed ‘community’ in Western Australia, which in fact differs from the rest of Australia.

Once again, a different configuration of my thesis shows where the subject of this chapter stands in relation to the whole.

#### **Managerial attitudes towards expenditure on Social Capital and Community Responsibility**

**Financial returns**

**Expenditure on Local Production  
and Outsourced Programs**

**Advertising Income**

**Number and expertise of  
employees**

**Ratings**

**Quality of program produced**

**Number of viewers**

This chapter examines the philosophies of management in relation to providing service to the community beyond the actual physical transmission of a television signal and the changes in attitudes as directed by the passage of time and the Corporate World's perception of Economic Rationalism. It looks at the disappearance of altruistic expenditure whereby the public benefited without an obvious monetary return to the provider. It looks at Social Capital; what it is and its importance to society at large.

The chapter examines the types of public 'Open Days' which were used to showcase the stations and in many cases, recorded for transmission as entertainment programs, coverage of sporting events like the *Sandover Medal Count*, the institution of on-going events such as the Channel Seven Christmas Pageant, assistance to charitable organisations and of course, references to the 24 Hour fund-raising *Telethon* and *Appealathon*, which are dealt with in depth later in this chapter. The loss of many of these events have contributed to the redundancy of facilities to provide television coverage and consequently the effects on employment opportunities for those young people who are at present being university trained in the area of television production.

As with most facets of Western Australian commercial television, little has been written about the place of 'community'. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the thought that 'Notions of community are notoriously difficult to pin down, and yet the question of collective identity in the current period is a crucial one for media studies.'<sup>1</sup> Although in 1989, after a full four years of absorbing local culture, Hartley stated that Western Australia had an 'imagined community',<sup>2</sup> unfortunately he added 'Western Australia, like television itself, remains a marginal place, regarded by rearviewmirrorist observers as hardly worth bothering about'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Shaun Moores, *Satellite Television and Everyday Life Articulating Technology*, University of Luton Press, Luton, 1996, p.25

<sup>2</sup> John Hartley, 'Continuous Pleasures in Marginal Places' in *Australian Television Programs, Pleasures and Politics*, John Tulloch and Graeme Turner (eds.), Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989, p.143.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp.143-44

Hartley later qualified his reference to the ‘imagined community’<sup>4</sup> [as opposed to an imaginary community] and more correctly described it as ‘...the confidence most people had of belonging to a country, even though they had not met and never would meet more than an infinitesimal proportion of the original inhabitants, their co-citizens.’<sup>5</sup>

The above dismissal of Western Australia’s history is in accord with another statement by Hartley regarding the doubtfulness of any future for local television production as there ‘certainly’ had been no past.<sup>6</sup> If Hartley’s pronouncements are tongue-in-cheek, it is difficult to separate the irony. Hartley also observed [satirically according to Goodall] that ‘... television studies... usually have a marginal status in the academy and are not infrequently staffed by a heterogeneous assortment of people, many of whom are openly hostile to the products of the medium.’<sup>7</sup> If this is so, it goes a long way in explaining the lack of in-depth empirical study of commercial television in Western Australia. Because of some strange form of reverse cultural cringe, television was (and still is) looked upon (from certain aslant perspectives)<sup>8</sup> as a lesser art-form, hardly worth the trouble of examination. As this thesis will reveal, such is not the case.

In Western Australia where there is a strong (albeit underlying) community bond. It may be that it takes longer than four years to be recognised by those who have not had the advantage of maturing within its warmth. Turner made the point that although television, ‘...the quintessential technology of a modern, commercialised and globalised popular culture...’<sup>9</sup> is now studied in secondary schools and tertiary institutions, it has not been accorded a place of

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<sup>4</sup> John Hartley, ‘The television live event: From the ‘wandering booby’ to the ‘death of history’’, in *The Australian TV Book*, Graeme Turner and Stuart Cunningham (eds), Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 2000, p.158

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> John Hartley, *Creating a Television Discourse*, Ph.D Thesis, Murdoch University, Murdoch, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Goodall, *High Culture, Popular Culture, The Long Debate*, [Australian Cultural Studies, John Tulloch and Terry Threadgold, (eds.), Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1995, p.126

<sup>8</sup> Hartley, 1989, acknowledged this in saying ‘Theorists of culture were uniform [when examining television] in their response. They were horrified.’ P.142

<sup>9</sup> Graeme Turner, ‘Studying Television’, in *The Australian TV Book*, Graeme Turner and Stuart Cunningham (eds), Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 2000.

deserved acknowledgement. Hand in glove with the resentment of the new medium, came those who made it their dedication to bolster that animosity by a harping critique of television's progress.<sup>10</sup> Goodall framed this cultivated antipathy thus, 'A common paradigm of the visual media in which film was art and television was popular culture was established early on.'<sup>11</sup> and suggested that the fault lay with an absence of 'serious minded criticism... outside of specialist publications'<sup>12</sup>

Donald Horne commented thus:

There is also, among Australian intellectuals, a belief that the idea of talking about a nation is rather passé. This seems to require tunnel vision of the most demanding intensity. If we don't imagine various versions of an Australian nation-state, then we can't operate as a nation state. We become an offshore nation of other nations.<sup>13</sup>

There are now many others who have concerned themselves with this phenomenon. Graeme Turner said, 'While it is now widely studied in schools and universities, television – the

quintessential technology of a modernised, commercialised and globalised world culture - still finds it difficult to command respect.'<sup>14</sup> He continues by invoking Hartley,

One reason for this, as John Hartley (1992) has suggested, is that television's populism and immediacy make it an unreflective – even scandalous - medium...it is regarded as so trivial and meretricious that subjecting it to close analysis is to commit a kind of category error. Nevertheless – and while it retains the capacity to generate reactions such as these – television today is increasingly the object of academic study.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Goodall, *High Culture, Popular Culture, The Long Debate*, [Australian Cultural Studies, John Tulloch and Terry Threadgold, (eds.), Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1995, p.127

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Donald Horne, 'Culture and Quality', in *TV 2000 Choices and Challenges*, Elizabeth More, (ed), Australian Broadcasting Tribunal Conference, Sydney 1989, Commonwealth of Australia, North Sydney, 1990, p.51

<sup>14</sup> Graeme Turner, 'Studying television', in *The Australian TV Book*, Graeme Turner and Stuart Cunningham, (eds), Allen & Unwin, St. Leonard's, 2000, p.4

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, op.cit., John Hartley, (ed), *Tele-ology: Studies in Television*, Routledge, London, 1992.

Turner concludes by stating, ‘Accompanying, and to some extent complementing, this tradition was an anti-populist critique of television which represented the medium as the nadir of popular culture’s textual forms: the epitome of a trashy culture which was sweeping more valuable forms before it.’<sup>16</sup> As observed by O’Regan, ‘Television...is an important agency of ‘popular socialisation’<sup>17</sup> and Esslin concurred by stating ‘Every society has – and is shaped by – its self image. It seems to me beyond doubt that television plays a significant role in shaping that collective self-image.’<sup>18</sup>

The influence of television reinforces the existence of the *neme*, and is the highest developed and visible example of that force which binds together the collective movements in nature, such as the workings of bee hives and termite nests; the migration of whales and birds; the amalgamation of fish schools, the grouping of animals, including human beings and hundreds of other ‘communal’ understandings to be found in many areas of existence.<sup>19</sup> Television is, ‘...then in the business of fostering a sense of citizenship, social identities and creating and representing a common cultural and political core...of memories, values, customs, myths, symbols, solidarities and significant landscapes shaping ‘Australian’ identity.’<sup>20</sup> John Langer commented on this in 1998, saying, ‘White(1981) reminds us that...

Most new nations go through the formality of inventing a national identity, but Australia has long supported a whole industry of image makers to tell us what we are. Throughout its white history there have been countless attempts to get Australia down on paper [as well as on celluloid and videotape] and to catch its essence. Their aim is not merely to describe the continent, but to give an individuality, a personality. This they call Australian...<sup>21</sup>

As far back as 1956, although probably referring to higher art forms, even such a conservative thinker as Richard Boyer, then Chairman of the ABC, believed that television

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.6

<sup>17</sup> Tom O’Regan, *Australian Television Culture*, ob.cit. (Smith 1991, p.11), Allen & Unwin, St, Leonards, 1993, p.81

<sup>18</sup> Martin Esslin, *The Age of Television*, W.H. Freeman and Company, San Francisco, 1982, p. 74

<sup>19</sup> Howard Bloom, *The Lucifer Principle*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1995.

<sup>20</sup> Tom O’Regan, 1993, p.81.

<sup>21</sup> John Langer, *Tabloid Television Popular journalism and the ‘other news’*, Routledge, London, 1998, p.137 op.cit., Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1699-1980*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1981. vii

would have the power to ‘...unify and raise Australian culture...’<sup>22</sup> In 1963 a Senate Inquiry called The Vincent Committee reported that the greatest danger to be faced by the new generation of television viewers who had been born to the medium, would be an incorrect understanding of the culture of others, most particularly the inhabitants of the United States of America, with no real appreciation of what it was to be an Australian.<sup>23</sup>

Denigration of television as a medium and its consumers ‘cultural dopes’<sup>24</sup> was rejected by Fiske who said that ‘The people are not a passive, helpless mass incapable of discrimination...’<sup>25</sup> and ‘The lowest common denominator may be a useful concept in arithmetic, but in the study of popularity its only possible value is to expose the prejudices of those who use it.’<sup>26</sup> Fiske also observed that

We need to think rather of the people as a multiple concept, a huge variety of social groups accommodating themselves with, or opposing themselves to, the dominant value system in a variety of ways. In so far as ‘the people’ is a concept with any validity at all, we should be seen as an alliance of formations which are constantly shifting and relatively transient.

According to Rowse, one expression of this grouping is in the fact that the consumers of television form ‘conversational communities’<sup>27</sup> In this way, the viewing audience becomes a collective; a *neme*, which in Western Australia also incorporated the considerations of the

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Goodall, *High Culture, Popular Culture, The Long Debate*, [Australian Cultural Studies, John Tulloch and Terry Threadgold, (eds.), Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1995, p.129

<sup>23</sup> Franco Pappandrea, *Cultural Regulation of Australian Television Programs*, Bureau of Transport and Communications Economics, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 1997, op.cit. *The Vincent Committee Report*, 1963, p.160.

<sup>24</sup> John Fiske, ‘TV: re-situating the popular in the people’ in *Continuum The Australian Journal of Media & Culture*, vol.1 no 2, Philip Bell and Kari Hanet (eds), 1987. op.cit. Stuart Hall, ‘Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Popular’, in R. Samuel (ed) *People’s History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan,Paul, 1981), pp227-240.  
[http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/Reading\\_Room/1.2Fiske.html](http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/Reading_Room/1.2Fiske.html)

<sup>25</sup> John Fiske, ‘TV: re-situating the popular in the people’ in *Continuum The Australian Journal of Media & Culture*, vol.1 no 2, Philip Bell and Kari Hanet (eds), 1987.  
[http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/Reading\\_Room/1.2Fiske.html](http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/Reading_Room/1.2Fiske.html) p.1 of 6.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Rowse Tim, ‘Film, TV and the Popular’, people’ in *Continuum The Australian Journal of Media & Culture*, vol.1 no 2, Philip Bell and Kari Hanet (eds), 1987.  
[http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/Reading\\_Room/1.2Fiske.html](http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/Reading_Room/1.2Fiske.html) p.1 of 3.

controllers of the source of television. Hamilton supports this by observing that ‘...popular culture invites identification and the creation of community because this is the central element in its narrative strategies.’<sup>28</sup>

This intangible alliance was not misplaced amongst Western Australians and still exists in reality. The ‘imagined community’ is as real as ‘air’ – difficult to see unless mixed with other gases, but definitely there. Frances Bonner in paraphrasing Benedict Anderson said,

The ‘imagined communities’ that in Benedict Anderson’s famous formulation are now nations are constituted (1991) require evidence from which to be built. Television is a principle provider of this evidence in telling us what other people do in similar and different situations are like, how they live, how they act in public, what they aspire to, what they fear and how they react under unusual conditions.<sup>29</sup>

After thirty-eight years of performing for, mixing with and being one of these co-citizens, perhaps I can claim to be able to vouch for the actuality of a true community spirit. The same ‘spirit’ personally observed as a performer to the 14,000 audience who attended the 1966 ‘Carols by Candlelight’ in the Supreme Court Gardens; the packed Entertainment Centre on a Saturday night in 1984 with an audience willing to hand over their contributions to a televised ‘Cyclone Appeal’; the kids lining up at Sunday morning *Telethons* to build a wall of cardboard money-boxes; the untold number of charitable events organised by the Service Clubs that I have attended and the Australia Day public concerts supported by TVW7 in the 1980s, with tens of thousands of Western Australians exhibiting a truly ‘real’ and not ‘imaginary’ essence of community. It is paradoxical that Hartley has written, ‘The television live event was developed and used around the world as a secular ritual of community-building...into *everyone’s* home...’<sup>30</sup> as in the case of Western Australia this was true, and because of the altruistic attitudes of early television management, remains so in the case of TVW7 and to a lesser extent with STW9. Moores goes so far as to say that communities are

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<sup>28</sup> Paula Hamilton, ‘The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History’, in *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, (eds), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994. p.25.

<sup>29</sup> Frances Bonner, 2003, p.187, op.cit. Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, Vergo, London, 1991.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p.157

‘fictional realities’ – things that are experienced as real and appear to have an objective existence, but which are actually made by the mind in the workings of an ‘imaginative geography’<sup>31</sup>

One effect of television broadcasting, is to produce ‘programming orientations and imagined communities of viewers’<sup>32</sup> which engender more parochial than national reactions. A classic example of this is the sports rivalry in the fields of Australian Rules Football and International Rules Basketball played between the different States.<sup>33</sup> While it is true that commercial television is a massive montage of corporate structure, advertising and political strategy, the consumer in Western Australia constitutes a cultural amalgamation, more readily different and identifiable from the Eastern States counterpart. One example of this is the significantly higher ratio of raised funds in the annual TVW7 *Telethon*. A reason for this may lie in the fact that the largest beneficiary is the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, which, due to Perth’s physical isolation is a point of central focus for the entire community. Almost every member of local society can feel to be part of this one long-established institution and not even the winds of economic rationalism are likely to blow cold through its corridors.<sup>34</sup> The *neme* is too ingrained for toleration of removal of that which has become TVW7’s strongest pillar in their structure. This pillar is entitled ‘your local station’.

The management of Perth’s first commercial television station TVW7, did have appreciation of ‘local community’ and set out to provide a focal point for it. TVW7 was successful in establishing links with the viewing audience and continuing to do so until the present day. STW9 had little choice but to follow, but conceded the winner’s title in the early 1990’s.<sup>35</sup>

### **Economic Rationalism**

Cunningham and Jacka said,

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<sup>31</sup> Shaun Moores, 1996, p.25

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.82

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.30

<sup>34</sup> John Wright, personal communication, interview, 11 June 2003.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Until the late 1980s, there was very little public discussion of the costs of television content regulation and little disturbance to agreement on the cultural benefits of a local industry... However the winds of economic rationalism, which originated in the Thatcherite-Reaganite politics of the Northern Hemisphere began to blow strongly in Canberra.<sup>36</sup>

Whilst one of the most common catchwords of the nineteen-nineties was Economic Rationalism, this now widespread practice has always been at the very heart of entertainment industries. No matter the medium, if what was being offered did not 'put bums on seats', then its future was entirely predictable. Because the product of commercial television viewing is the creation of an intention to purchase the advertisers' goods, in this medium 'bums on seats'<sup>37</sup> have always been judged by ratings surveys, the useful tool by which managers and boards of companies could justify the protection of the shareholders' dividends which has been examined in a previous chapter. However, given that television is acknowledged as an art form, what responsibilities do the controllers of the medium have to the public at large as opposed to the retention of advertising income? As the result of examination of the many scholarly works on economic rationalism published in Australia since 1990, only one was found to place value on what can be called 'Social Capital' as explained by Rob Adams in 1999.

Social capital, on the other hand, is a whole lot of things that are difficult to measure. It is the value of a cohesive and satisfied workforce, working together cooperatively, and silently producing value for the company... It is having a community that is physically and mentally healthy, able to work productively and contribute to society, whether at the workplace or in the bringing up of the next generation.<sup>38</sup>

Social capital is all of these things and more. In television it should be that which is contributed to society gratis, without expectation of monetary return. Due to the paternalistic [not a dirty word] attitudes expressed by the management of W.A. Newspapers Pty. Ltd., certain such values were inherited by TVW Channel 7 through the persona of James Cruthers

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<sup>36</sup> Stuart Cunningham and Elizabeth Jacka, *Australian Television and International Mediascapes*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996.

<sup>37</sup> In the television context 'bums on seats' represent the viewing and buying public. Philip Adams used it in this context.

<sup>38</sup> Rob Adams, *Hunting The Woolly Mammoth How to beat economic rationalism and make society work*, Crossword Press, Prospect South Australia, 1999.

who was asked to express his 'thoughts and attitudes and philosophies towards live, local production in 1958.'<sup>39</sup>

Well we started thinking about it in 1958 and we worked out schedules of what we'd have. Children's programming first and foremost and late, not late, but an evening show; a 'Tonight' type show and of course News and documentary type programs. They were planned before the station came on the air and our attitude towards them was, we were just going to do them!

When asked whether monetary considerations were given pre-eminence, Cruthers replied, Cost factor, while I had to look at it, wasn't really an important factor because the simple fact was, that's what we were there for. To provide television and as much as anything else, local television. We covered all spheres and it was planned from the outset and it took place from the outset.<sup>40</sup>

Sir. James stated that,

live production was best in Western Australia, by the simple fact that we only had one commercial station in those early years. And then it wasn't altogether killed when we got a second station, because we still had two commercial stations here and they had three over there.'<sup>41</sup> [in the Eastern States]

In answer to questions concerning networking and satellites in regard to the eventual downturn of local production Sir James expressed these thoughts:

It was the death-knell of local programming as we knew it in Western Australia and it was very progressive in Western Australia until Network Ten came along. Very progressive, both TVW and STW with an awful lot of programming and we did many other things like *Telethon* and *Appealathon*. The Pageant, the Miss Australia things and all of those we did here, many local things that weren't done elsewhere. They had to go by the board. The Network owners didn't want them, so that was that!

Sir James Cruthers' counterpart at STW9 from 1970 until 1984 was Laurence Kiernan. He too saw responsibility to the community as being contained primarily in the provision of local

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<sup>39</sup> Sir James Cruthers, personal interview, Sunday Times Perth, 3 June 1999.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

programming. In particular he mentioned the coverage of Western Australian activities and events as ‘...documents of social significance.’<sup>42</sup>

The first mention of Community Service by either commercial station was from STW9 in their Annual Report 1968 and said,

Your Station assisted many charitable appeals during the year with both effort and air-time. In April this year the Station, in conjunction with the Australian Forces Overseas Fund, organised the first official W.A. concert group to entertain servicemen in South East Asia. A group of nine entertainers led by Mr. Ron Blaskett and including Station personalities Peter Harries and Peter Piccini, gave live performances to Australian and American servicemen in Vietnam and were very well received. Personal messages from families and friends were also communicated to and from our troops in this area.<sup>43</sup>

The reward to STW9 from such involvement came by way of the Press coverage which followed the initial announcement of the proposed involvement. Because of the high profile of the Vietnam War, the Concert Tour could not be ignored by West Australian Newspapers as was the case in most of Channel Nine’s efforts at self-promotion. *The West Australian* covered the departure of the group, bulletins from Vietnam and an extended article in their weekend production with colour photographs, although these studiously ignored Channel Nine’s on-staff personnel.<sup>44</sup> The *Sunday Times* covered the return with a story and picture of ‘Peter Harries is welcomed back from the War-Zone by young admirers.’<sup>45</sup>

### **Telethon Introduced:**

In 1969 the TVW7 Annual Report followed with the first time mention of *Telethon* and the fact that 1968 raised \$100,000 for the Princess Margaret Hospital Medical Research Foundation and the provision of Christmas hampers for West Australian serving servicemen

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<sup>42</sup> Laurie J. Kiernan, former STW9 Chief Executive, personal interview, 25 May 1999

<sup>43</sup> *Swan Television and Radio Broadcasters Limited Annual Report 1968*, Perth, 13 September 1968.

<sup>44</sup> *The West Australian*, Perth, May 1968.

<sup>45</sup> *Sunday Times*, Perth, May 1968. Two of them were my sons, but not named at my request.

overseas.<sup>46</sup> STW9 made no mention of involvement in this year. In 1970 TVW7 said that 22,000 people attended the Ampol Hole-in-One day in March which raised \$10,343 for Legacy, Silver Chain and Red Cross.<sup>47</sup> *Telethon 69* raised \$135,000 and was expected to be an ongoing annual event.<sup>48</sup> The STW9 Annual report of the same year once again ignored this facet of operations. In 1973 TVW7 introduced the first *Christmas Pageant* which was a great success both as a spectacle and a televised event later in the day.<sup>49</sup> In 1974 the STW9 Annual Report had a special section headed **Community Service** which stated ‘The policy of the past was carried on this year at an accelerated pace with greater participation by STW9 in community projects and appeals, and these will continue to receive support.’<sup>50</sup> In the 1975 TVW7 Annual Report it was reported that fund raising ventures in both States [South Australia being the other] raised a total of \$830,000 with donations to *Telethon* rising by \$530,000 to \$1.6 million. ‘...the TVW Group supports other charitable organisations, not only financially, but with free promotion and by providing staff and facilities...continue to support the arts by encouraging students with the Young Film Makers’ Award and Young Artists’ Award, which are now annual events.’<sup>51</sup> The Christmas Pageant was reported to have attracted 300,000 people, the biggest number of spectators ever assembled in Perth.<sup>52</sup> In the same year, Community Service continued to be the heading under which the good deeds of STW9 were recorded.

### ***Appealathon* Introduced:**

In 1975, *Appealathon* on behalf of the Slow Learning Children’s Group was introduced to counter *Telethon* and the 24 hour telecast raised \$414,000 which exceeded the amount

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<sup>46</sup> *TVW Enterprises Ltd. 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Report and Financial Statements 1969*, West Australian Newspapers, Perth, 15 August 1969.

<sup>47</sup> *TVW Enterprises Ltd. 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Report and Financial Statements 1970*, West Australian Newspapers, Perth, 28 August 1970, p.8

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *TVW Enterprises Ltd. 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Report and Financial Statements 1973*, West Australian Newspapers, Perth, 28 August 1973.

<sup>50</sup> *11<sup>th</sup> Swan Television and Radio Broadcasters Limited Annual Report 1968*, Perth, 2 August 1974.

<sup>51</sup> *TVW Enterprises Ltd. 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Report and Financial Statements 1975*, West Australian Newspapers, Perth, 28 August 1975, p.1.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

promised over the telephone during the time on-air.<sup>53</sup> There were more pressing worries for TVW7 in 1976 than boasting of their prowess in assisting the community but STW9's *Appealathon* raised \$583,000 and the Station was involved in other activities such as Bike Hike, Fun Run and Pet's Day.<sup>54</sup>

In 1977, TVW7 put the record straight from their point of view with,

Channel 7, with its policy of public service and community involvement, is a clear leader in Perth television and support from viewers and advertisers continues to be strong. The most recent audience survey (at the time of the printing of this report) shows that TVW7 had almost 50% of the total audience, with the other two stations [STW9 and ABW2] sharing the remaining 50%.<sup>55</sup>

It was recorded that 'the directors sincerely believe that this is an unparalleled record of community service by a public company of comparable size in Australia.'<sup>56</sup> So much so in fact, that more than a full page of text was devoted to this subject. *Telethon* had now raised \$3,079,653 since 1968. The Christmas Pageant was attracting 350,000 spectators and involved 1200 participants including 600 children.

Plans were afoot to host the *Miss Universe Pageant* during the 150<sup>th</sup> State Anniversary Celebrations, to be telecast direct by satellite to 500 million viewers worldwide. The participation in The Young Film Makers' Awards and Young Artists Awards continued with prizes to the value of \$2,000. TVW7 conducted the final of *Youth Speaks For Australia* national debating competition. They also televised the *Foundation Day Dinner and Presentation of Citizen of the Year Awards*. Charities which received support were Miss Personality, Woman 77, Miss Western Australia Quest, and sponsorship was endorsed for the Channel 7 Brass Band, The Mikado stage presentation, the State Youth Orchestra, the arts publication *Artlook*, the York Fair, art shows, film festivals amongst others. TVW7 had senior representation on the Drug Advisory Council, Western Australia Week Council, the Queen Elizabeth Silver Jubilee Appeal, The Film and Television School, The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

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<sup>53</sup> *Swan Television and Radio Broadcasters Limited Annual Report 1975*, Perth, 20 November 1975, p.3.

<sup>54</sup> *Swan Television and Radio Broadcasters Limited Annual Report 1976*, Tuart Hill,, 2 September 1976, p.4.

<sup>55</sup> *TVW Enterprises Ltd. 19th Annual Report and Financial Statements 1977*, West Australian Newspapers, Perth. 28 August 1977, p.1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p.20.

Celebrations, the W.A. Women's Fellowship Award, The Whiteman Park Economics and Land Use Working Committee, and others. The investigation of shipwrecks and outback expeditions also drew sponsorship. TVW7 produced 100 half-hour educational programs.<sup>57</sup> 'The group's assistance to the community it serves is not without cost, but your directors consider that the company has a responsibility to help where possible.'<sup>58</sup> STW9 reported in 1977 *Appealathon* raised \$763,000 taking the total to \$1,800,000.<sup>59</sup> At TVW7 a full page was devoted the activities in this sphere with *Telethon* now having amassed \$4 million. A Grant of \$507,041 was made for the study of children's diseases. 400,000 spectators turned out for the *Christmas Pageant*. 16,000 attended the televised *Birdman Rally* at Yanchep. The prize for a 50 meter man-powered flight was not claimed. *The W.A. Fashion Awards* was also telecast. Production of historical features to be aired during 1979 was under way.<sup>60</sup> The STW9 Annual Report for 1978 showed that *Appealathon* raised \$865,135 taking the total to \$2,650,000 in four years. It also held an on-air appeal for the victims of Cyclone Alby, only two weeks before *Appealathon*. The nominal value of airtime provided for various fund-raising activities by numerous charities was estimated to be \$5,000,000. Other community directed initiatives during the year included Fun Run, Avon Descent, Trash and Treasure [operated by the Floreat Lions Club and managed by Frank Mansfield] Appealathon Rodeo, World of Craft, and Off-Road Expo. The practice of training six young men each year for the industry was continuing.<sup>61</sup> The first page of the 1979 TVW7 Annual Report highlighted The Objectives of the Company which included,

The company also aims to involve itself with its community and provide services aimed at improving their enjoyment and life-style. For this reason the company assists numerous charitable organisations, conducts appeals for medical research, provides awards for young people in many spheres, and assists in numerous community endeavours.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p.21.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> *Swan Television and Radio Broadcasters Limited Annual Report 1977*, Perth, 2 September 1977.

<sup>60</sup> *TVW Enterprises Ltd. 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Report and Financial Statements 1978*, Tuart Hill, 5 October 1978.

<sup>61</sup> *Swan Television and Radio Broadcasters Limited Annual Report 1978 6KY- 9*, Tuart Hill, 19 November 1978.

<sup>62</sup> *TVW Enterprises Ltd. 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Report and Financial Statements 1979*, Tuart Hill, p.2.

*Telethon* raised \$887,376 and grants were made to Princess Margaret Hospital Medical Research Foundation, the Asthma Foundation of W.A., and the Muscular Dystrophy Research Foundation. While foregoing activities certainly comprised public relations exercises, the ensuing benefits accruing to society cannot lightly be dismissed. Over these periods there was an enormous amount of social capital invested in the community and the returns, in the main, were retained and enjoyed by the community.

### **W.A. State 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:**

The contributions of TVW7 to the sesquicentenary celebrations of 1979 included the production of the opening concert on the Perth Esplanade; the Royal Visits by Prince Charles and Princess Anne; The Festival of Perth (with sponsorship of the Scots Festival of Perth and a visit by the Scots Guards); Expo 79; the re-enactment of the landing of Captain Stirling; the Air Pageant and WA Week, with a telecast of *Citizen of The Year*.<sup>63</sup> A figure of 400,000 spectators was given for the 1978 Christmas Pageant. Special telecasts included *Miss Western Australia* in aid of the Spastic Welfare Association and *Miss Personality* supporting the Lions Save Sight Campaign. The *Birdman Rally* was held again to raise funds for *Telethon* and attracted 16,000 people. On-air programs in support of the United Nations International Year of the Child were produced. Other activities were sponsorship and support of yachting, polo, veteran swimming, football, cricket, the first People's Marathon, a bathtub and dinghy race to Rottnest, the Channel 7 Brass Band, the WA Fashion Awards, the Gilbert and Sullivan Society and the Playhouse and Hole-in-the-Wall Theatres. In particular *The Sandover Medal Count*, *The Channel 7 Australian Derby* and *The WA Pacing Derby*. TVW7 organised a special dental health campaign and in all 55 charitable organizations received on-air support. 100 cash donations were made to separate charities.<sup>64</sup>

During the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations, STW9 and Radio 6KY paid for a statue of the first Governor of Western Australia, Sir James Stirling, which was unveiled by Prince Charles on 10 March 1989.<sup>65</sup> Fifty-two one minute segments on the State's history were produced and

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p.24.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> The statue is in Barrack Street near the Town Hall.

aired, one each Sunday night. Assistance was given in the restoration of the 'Batavia' and the instigation of the Fremantle Maritime Museum. *Captain Clean-Up* was an on-going project; W.A. Week, The Festival of Perth, the Great Australian Paintings Appeal, the A.N.Z.A.A.S. Conference, a publication *A History of Law in Western Australia* was sponsored, World Youth Sailing Championships, National Bands Championships and the National Eisteddfod. *The Colonial Ball* was televised and other forthcoming events were anticipated.<sup>66</sup>

### **Value of 'donated' air-time:**

In 1979, the management at STW9 decided to place a nominal value of \$1,021,000 on the airtime granted to charitable purposes and this was recorded in their Annual Report.<sup>67</sup> *Appealathon* raised another \$1,043,739 and 1200 volunteers helped to make this possible. The costs of postage and installation of telephone lines which amounted to \$16,785 being part of a total of \$29,249 for two years were the only deductions from funds raised. STW9 bore all other costs.

Acknowledgement of their contribution to the community by way of social capital continued in 1980. TVW7 said that to further its awards systems for young artists, dancers, writers and speakers, it had introduced a Young Photographers' Award in conjunction with the *Daily News*. Developing from the success of the Channel 7 Young Film-Makers' Award introduced in 1972, the station combined with the Australian Film Commission, The Western Australian Institute of Technology [as Curtin University was then known], the Perth Institute of Film and Technology to put on the premier major student film festival in Australia. In conjunction with *The West Australian* the Baron Von Thyssen art exhibition was sponsored and cash donations were given to '...cultural, educational, sporting, religious and other activities...'. As well there were 4,350 announcements given free air-time and the value of such was estimated at \$1,177,000.<sup>68</sup> Among the highlights of the year was the *RSL Remembrance Day Concert* at the Perth Entertainment Centre with special guest, the World War II legless pilot, Sir Douglas

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<sup>66</sup> *Swan Television and Radio Broadcasters Limited Annual Report 1979 6KY- 9*, Tuart Hill, 14 November 1979.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p.24.

Bader.<sup>69</sup> Not to be outdone, STW9 claimed that 150-200 minutes of announcements were broadcast each month being a total of 2,400 items for the year. Nominally, these would be worth \$750,000. STW9 produced a series of award winning animated educational ‘shorts’ aimed at children, dealing with such things as nutrition, safety in the home, playground, dental care and cleanliness. The catch phrase ‘Who knows? Mum knows!’ became popular. Other areas of juvenile development included The Child Accident Prevention Foundation, the 6KY Brass Band, The Graham Marsh Junior Golf Foundation, The Wanneroo T-Ball, The Channel 9 Soccer Coaching Clinic, The Channel 9 Cricket Coaching Clinic and The Youth Concert of W.A. Week.<sup>70</sup>

### **Holmes a’ Court’s Commitment:**

In its 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report the new Chairman Robert Holmes a’ Court stated that ‘TVW Enterprises has a long and proud history...it has a record of serving the communities in which it has operated...I am committed to continuing this record and to building on it.’<sup>71</sup> The first indications that the station’s activities might not be as important as before came with a reduction of the text to half a page. Involvement was listed as Fat Cat’s Birthday, The Teddy Bear’s Picnic, Milk Carton Regatta, Celebrity Challenge and Birdman Rally. The Young Ballet Dancers’ Awards was added to the list and help to educational projects was instigated including Math-O-Quest and Science Talent Search. TVW7 staff produced the Concert/ Official Opening of the International Year of Disabled Persons and telecast a special concerning employment opportunities for Society’s handicapped persons. *Telethon* delivered \$1,071,829 whilst those supported in previous years were once again helped. A Hole-in-One day for Legacy was supported by 25,000 people in the TVW7 grounds.<sup>72</sup>

In their annual report for 1981 STW9 said that the stations [TV and radio] provided free air-time to the value of \$1,000,000 this year. In conjunction with P.B.S., STW9 sponsored the *Pompeii AD Exhibition* at the W.A. Art Gallery and 90,000 people including school-children

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<sup>69</sup> *TVW Enterprises Ltd. 22nd Annual Report and Financial Statements 1980*, Tuart Hill, 16 October 1980, p.6 [One of the acts on this program was ‘Peter Harries and Kelly Green’.]

<sup>70</sup> *Swan Television and Radio Broadcasters Limited Annual Report 1980 6KY- 9*, Tuart Hill, 24 November 1980.

<sup>71</sup> *TVW Enterprises Ltd. 22nd Annual Report and Financial Statements 1981*, Tuart Hill, 1981, p.4.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p.22.

attended. This year STW9 organised and telecast Foundation Day Dinner during Western Australia Week and the W.A. Week Youth Concert. City to Surf and Fremantle Fun Runs and the Avon Descent were supported, as well as The Graham Marsh Junior Golf Day, W.A. Basketball Association, the T-Ball Association of W.A., Y.M.C.A. Indoor Soccer and the West Australian Hockey Association and Tennis Coaching Clinics.<sup>73</sup> 76 students were given the opportunity of work-experience in various departments during the school year.<sup>74</sup>

In 1982 the Annual Report page on Community Service was almost a reprint of the previous year with a few extra media campaigns being Keep Australia Beautiful, National Safety Council, The Red Cross and the National Heart Foundation. TVW7 supported 86 projects with a cost of \$1.3 million being donated. Apart from a reference to the *Today* program, no mention was made of local 'live' production.<sup>75</sup> For STW9 in 1982 there was direct involvement in a Back to School Day at Channel 9, a Free Christmas Concert at the Concert Hall, The Hyde Park Festival and a free day at the Zoo, Fun Run, the Avon Descent, Garden Week, the Boat Show, the Flower Show, the electronic Exhibition, the Italian SAGRA, Murdoch University Open Day and the Graham Marsh Junior Golf Foundation. Outside telecasts included *The Foundation Day Dinner* and the *W.A. Week Youth Concert*. Children from 35 schools participated in work experience and groups of people who toured the station numbered in the thousands.<sup>76</sup> *Appealathon* raised more than a million dollars again taking the total to \$7,877,696 for the beneficiaries The Slow Learning Children's Group of W.A., The Civilian Maimed and Limbless Association of W.A. (Inc.), The Paraplegic Quadriplegic Association of W.A. (Inc.) and The W.A. Society for Crippled Children. \$1,529,293 in free air-time was contributed to society at large.

The Channel 7 section of the Bell Group Report of 1983 showed a small picture of the closing of *Telethon*.<sup>77</sup> At STW9 the company supported more than 320 charities during the

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<sup>73</sup> *Swan Television and Radio Broadcasters Limited Annual Report 1981 6KY- 9*, Tuart Hill, 1981, p.5.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *TVW Enterprises Ltd. 24th Annual Report and Financial Statements 1981*, Tuart Hill, 1982, p.4.

<sup>76</sup> *Swan Television and Radio Broadcasters Limited Annual Report 1982 6KY- 9*, Tuart Hill, 1982, p.5.

<sup>77</sup> *The Bell Group Ltd. 61st Annual Report, 1983.*

year with \$1,083,657 worth of air-time. Further to active participation in the same events as last year, there were the Italian Spring Festival, the Kanyana Festival, the Homes Exhibition, the Veteran Car Rally, Tagged Fish Competition, Kings Park School Holidays Activities and the ANZAAS Conference. *Appealathon* raised \$1.5 million and the company contributed to 79 major charitable groups.<sup>78</sup> The Bell Group 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report showed a small picture of Sammy Davis Jnr., with Holmes a Court and mentioned *Telethon* which ‘...raised the record sum of \$1,711,456 for local charities.’<sup>79</sup> At STW9 The text was almost a duplicate of the previous year with *Appealathon* starring and another \$1 million dollars of free air-time being provided.<sup>80</sup> In 1985 most of the activities of TVW7 were ignored. In 1986 the Bell Group Community Service Report was reduced to,

both stations [TVW7 and SAS10] continued to provide significant benefits to their communities, through promotion of charitable organisations and events and in particular the raising of funds for local charities. The annual “Telethon” fund raising event in Perth raised a record \$2.8 million during the year, bringing the combined funds raised for the benefit of charities since Telethon’s inception in 1968 to a total of \$17 million.<sup>81</sup>

It was not until 1987 that charitable works were mentioned again as, ‘Channel 9 – Perth continued to be community-oriented, both through its promotional activities and charity support, the latter led by the record-breaking 24-hour Appealathon telecast.’<sup>82</sup> The Channel 7 report for 1987 contained no mention of community service. The final Bond Corporation report recorded the amount of \$2.5 million as being raised by *Appealathon*.<sup>83</sup> There were four lines of text congratulating themselves once again on their community involvement with the 13 years of Appealathon which had raised \$16 million.<sup>84</sup> In 1989 *Appealathon* had its 15<sup>th</sup> outing and was supported by National Nine stars Daryl Somers, Ray Martin, George Negus,

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<sup>78</sup> *Swan Television and Radio Broadcasters Limited Annual Report 1983 6KY- 9*, Tuart Hill, 1983

<sup>79</sup> *The Bell Group Ltd. 62nd Annual Report, 1984, p.14.*

<sup>80</sup> *Swan Television and Radio Broadcasters Limited The Year in Review 1983/84 6KY- 9*, Tuart Hill, October 1984

<sup>81</sup> *The Bell Group Ltd, Annual Report 1986, p.12.*

<sup>82</sup> *Bond Corporation Holdings Limited Annual Report 1987*, Perth, 18 September 1987, p.20

<sup>83</sup> *Bond Corporation Holdings Limited Annual Report 1988*, Perth, 22 September 1988, p.21

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

the Flying Doctors Team, Sale of the Century's Tony Barber and Alyce Platt, Don Burke *and an array of Perth's top local talent* [my italics].<sup>85</sup> 1990 concluded these community service reports, by saying that the year was highlighted by another successful "Appealathon" which in May 1990 raised over two million dollars. It allowed Perth viewers to see Network personalities in close-up and, most importantly, gave local performers the chance to display their talents.<sup>86</sup>

*Telethon* and *Appealathon* were the two most outstanding examples of the Stations making 'good-fellows' of themselves. The former was both a good ratings vehicle and a community service [it did not have advertising content for its first fourteen productions] which still goes to air in October while the latter, (which now does not have a televised conclusion), donates air-time to advertise the various activities of fund-raising bodies.

The establishment of *Telethon* and *Appealathon* was not entirely the result of altruistic attitudes but part of the ongoing rivalry and one-upmanship that existed between the two commercial stations. This is what long-time on-air presenter Lloyd Lawson had to say on the commencement of *Telethon*, at TVW7.

...and even before I joined Nine the information they got about what Channel Nine was going to do was absolutely unbelievable. There would be notices on our notice-board under the steps which lead up to the top floor of activities down at, or what was being proposed at Channel Nine and so-forth. Now they had a good leak down there somewhere to such an extent for example - I'm just changing the subject - that when I went down to Nine, Bob talked about 'Ring and Gives' as we used to call them on radio. And he decided that we would have a Telethon. Before he could even get anything under way, Treasure had put um, Farr, what's his name, David Farr into a taxi into town the name Telethon and it shot - they just had to cancel it down at Channel Nine, then of course Channel Seven picked it up and ran with it and that. So this was how the information got around...So this was one of the big faults in the early days at Nine. They wouldn't keep their mouths shut.<sup>87</sup>

When asked for his thoughts on *Telethon* Darcy Farrell recalled,

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<sup>85</sup> *Channel 9 Perth Sunraysia Television Limited Annual Report 1989*, Dianella, 1989, p.5.

<sup>86</sup> *Channel 9 Perth Sunraysia Television Limited Annual Report 1990*, Dianella, 1990, p.3.

<sup>87</sup> Lloyd Lawson, former TVW7 and STW9 Presenter, personal interview, 27 July 1999.

DF: ... Although of course you know that *Telethon* started as a fluke. Did he tell you that? [Sir James Cruthers] I'll tell you. Once at a staff meeting Jim said to us, "We'll have to do a Telethon because Channel Nine's hinted, Bob, not, Bob, Laurie Kiernan's indicated to someone he's going to do a Telethon and we've got to beat him to it."

And there wasn't even a cause.

PH: It was Bob Mercer by the way.

DF: Was it Bob?

PH: Yes, because you had the first one in '68 and Laurie didn't come till 1970.

DF: O.K. Well it was Bob that was going to do one and Jim said, "We're got to beat him! And that's what happened."<sup>88</sup>

While this roughly confirms the comments of Lawson, Gordon Leed remembered,

Four or five weeks after I joined STW9 [early 1968] I was sent for by the General Manager, Bob Mercer, and on entering his office found the company Chairman (Mr Cullity) was present.

They asked for any ideas I might have as to why the station's public image was low while Channel Seven was regarded so highly. (I hasten to say that I might not have been alone in being asked. Other senior people may also have been consulted). I said I did not feel that we were doing anything – outside our normal programming – to be accepted as part of the community... I suggested we mount a Telethon with the local children's hospital as the beneficiary.

Bob Mercer would have none of it saying he was approaching the opposition and Perth's radio stations with the proposition that we jointly run with a programme he had seen in the U.S.A., a Community Charity Chest. A Telethon, he said, would be too costly and time consuming to run. Later that year TVW7 ran its first Telethon. Channel Nine was forced to follow some years later.<sup>89</sup>

Sir James Cruthers did not recall much of the above, saying that being familiar with such fund-raising ventures interstate and overseas, he decided to instigate *Telethon* of his own volition. However, he did not refute what others said on the subject.<sup>90</sup>

Without doubt, Sir James Cruthers fostered community responsibility and this was in part responsible for TVW7 having a very high profile in the community due to having always used their television platform as a public forum. When asked who it was that instituted *Telethon* he answered,

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<sup>88</sup> Darcy Farrell, former TVW7 News Director, personal interview 28 July 1999.

<sup>89</sup> Gordon Leed, former STW9 News Director, written communication, 28 October 2003.

<sup>90</sup> Sir James Cruthers, telephone communication, 12 December 2003.

Me! I looked at the Telethons from overseas and of course particularly the ones in the Eastern States. Particularly the Melbourne one and I just felt that we ought to do something similar here. I thought about it. I talked about it with my Board. I talked about it with my senior executives including Treasure. Treasure was totally opposed. 100% opposed. He said it was a waste of time, he didn't want to do it!<sup>91</sup>

Sir James went on to explain how he approached the Directors of Princess Margaret Hospital and gained their ready acceptance to be the main beneficiary. The first *Telethon* in 1968 raised an amount of approximately ninety thousand dollars and the 24 hour presentation was '...a wonderful success.'<sup>92</sup> Brian Treasure refused to participate in the opening of the *Telethon* but attended late on the second day. In later years he 'became very attached to it.'<sup>93</sup>

Former TVW7 Secretary (1958-1979) Frank Moss was asked to comment on the fact that Channel 7 has always enjoyed a very good reputation as being community minded. He said,

That was uppermost in our minds right from the start. And was one of the reasons we decided to form a Telethon, a Telethon Foundation. At that stage it was our aim to raise about \$10million and to use that as – the interest for charity reasons. So we were well on our way to doing that when Robert [Holmes-a-Court] came on the scene and the policy changed.<sup>94</sup>

Gary Carvolth was the first producer of *Telethon* and particularly remembers the help that he received from such people as Graham Kennedy, Bobby Limb and Johnny O'Keefe.

I was also Publicity and Promotions Manager of Channel 7, so the *Telethon* really came under that umbrella. Firstly being a Publicity and Promotions type of thing. Straight fund-raiser and then, because it wasn't as big in those days, I mean we'd only just starting with the variety program and the fund-raising events grew around it. So later on it needed like a twelve months full on Manager and associated staff. But in the early days it was small bickies I suppose, but early days were fun days and that's really where the whole thing started. But everything that we did was really based on the best in Australia at that time which was Channel Nine's *Telethon* in Adelaide.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Sir James Cruthers, former TVW7 Managing Director and Chief Executive, personal interview, 3 June 1999.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Frank Moss, personal communication, interview, 1999.

<sup>95</sup> Gary Carvolth, interview, 2000.

Kevin Campbell who started at TVW7 as a technician and rose to head the Seven Network was high in his praise of *Telethon*,

Seven have built on community responsibility and also took the initiatives, things like our forefathers *Telethon* and subsequently Nine's sort-of success in building *Appealathon*...but *Telethon* was a very good model. But it was also; you could hold your head up high. *Telethon* used to be bank-rolled by Seven without taking anything off the top. I question that now; in fact I don't; I didn't; I don't particularly like that... There answer is that is; we give all the air-time, then we give the space and all that kind of thing. Cruthers and Bostock who were the architects of this, never looked on it in that way. They actually bank-rolled everything in there, and it was when, when it sort of started through Holmes a Court days, when we started screwing them down on bloody budgets and whatever, if you want to keep it going, because it still raises two million bucks.

PH: It's still a great event.

KC: Great event. It's a great event. It's the only showcase for young talent.<sup>96</sup>

Former TVW7 presenter Peter Dean was known as *Mr Telethon* for many years and in 1989 was honoured by having a Pediatrics Fellowship named for him. However, he recalls that this was soured when he was summarily dismissed after 23 years of service in 1996.<sup>97</sup>

With the success of *Telethon*, both by way of station self-promotion and ratings success, it is remarkable that STW9 did not conduct a similar enterprise until 1975. Long time STW9 Chief Executive Laurie Kiernan said, 'I think Channel Nine really arrived when we started *Appealathon*.'<sup>98</sup> He credited then Station Manager Eric Fisher with its introduction.

Advertising Executive John Foote's said that the name *Appealathon* was his idea.

My most important claim to fame was coining the name "Appealathon". As Publicity & PR [Public Relations] Manager I was on a committee chaired by Gordon Leed, one of the many wonderful people who were not fully appreciated by top management. We were given the task of coming up with an alternative to "Telethon". I felt the name should reflect the purpose of the activity rather than its function as a programme type. Everyone agreed that "Appealathon" was perfect. I left the station before the first Appealathon went to air.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Kevin Campbell, former TVW7 Chief Executive, personal interview, 3 July 2001.

<sup>97</sup> Peter Dean, former STW9 and TVW7 Presenter, personal interview, 21 January 2001.

<sup>98</sup> Laurie Kiernan, personal communication, interview, 25 May 1999.

<sup>99</sup> John Foote, former STW9 Sales Manager, written communication, 8 February 2002.

As with all other aspects of his association with commercial television, local ‘live’ production and STW9 in particular, Bill Bowen recalled that STW9 was ‘So very keen to do something and to do it on a permanent and fixed basis.’

STW9 General Manager (2003) Paul Bowen had different views on *Appealathon*,

PB: Very much so...*Appealathon* now in its thirtieth year or whatever, has raised something in the vicinity of forty-six million dollars. I could be more precise and I will, I’ll send you the information. That is a considerable amount of money but like everything, everything’s changed. *Appealathon* has changed. The day of the twenty-four hour telecast is gone. As far as we’re concerned.

Paul Bowen explained that the 24 hour telecast was not economically viable in its latter years and that the amount of money raised on the day did not justify the expenditure. *Appealathon* had become an all year money raising institution, with functions occurring every week of the year. Although acknowledging that *Appealathon* was a wonderful showcase for the station, Bowen also stated that the ratings indicated that the viewing public had ‘...started to tire of it.’<sup>100</sup> He said that in the early years the 24 hour event dominated the ratings but ‘It’s changed, we’ve moved...our market has moved. The world is a lot closer, we see these thing all the time now.’<sup>101</sup>

Current (2003) TVW7 and former STW9 Production Manager John Crilly remembers *Appealathon* best for the relaxed style of television with which it was associated.<sup>102</sup> Former news-reader Peter Waltham said this on the demise of *Appealathon*.

PW: There was no atmosphere. It became, to me it became apparent that the bottom line was what mattered. *Appealathon* went...I was still there and I said to her, [owner Eva Presser] “You know you are making a mistake”, but there

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<sup>92</sup> Bill Bowen, interview, 1999.

<sup>100</sup> Paul Bowen, current STW9 General Manager, personal interview, 18 September 2001.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> John Crilly, former STW9 Executive Producer, current TVW7 Production Manager, 28 May 2001.

was no interest in doing anything locally.<sup>103</sup>

Former STW9 Publicity person and later Program Manager June Holmes [formerly Filmer] was present at the start of *Appealathon* and was posed the question in these terms, ‘The people at Channel Seven have intimated to me that they have always had the interests of the community at heart, right from the start and that some of this still prevails today. What do you think about that, in terms of Channel Nine? As a community entity?’ and she replied, ‘I think they have a very much, a community connection with Appealathon and raising funds for charity. [from the start of *Appealathon*]...and right through till it finished its on air twenty-four hours telecast.’<sup>104</sup>.

Former TVW7 Executive producer Brian K. Williams was scathing in his comments on how he viewed the changes over the years,

...community responsibility demonstrated by Television stations is a fragile and somewhat hollow window dressing exercise compared to earlier decades. Unless I’m communicating with aliens it seems that Telethon and Appealathon are shadows of their former selves, with stations putting a reducing amount of time, effort and coverage into appeals. From the original TVW Telethon to raise money for the 1962 Commonwealth Games, through 20-odd succeeding years, management, staff and artists freely gave of their time and talent to encourage a very willing public to assist the causes. As with most other areas of community responsibility today we see a series of token gestures. And bandwagons jumped on for long enough to gain kudos – then take off to another near costless charade. I believe that an almost impersonal society has lost the interest that was once stimulated by creative thinking at the stations. With pitifully few exceptions globalisation, cheap overseas material, cost-cutting, creative emasculation – and lack of will, have killed resistance to the fight for local production. We are unfortunately subject to a relentless indoctrination of American thought, word and deed; and the media industry has to carry some heavy responsibility for an Australian society vivaciously apathetic towards what Australia was once. But maybe we are still the Lucky Country. – we could be saluting the Rising Sun – and in the future, perhaps the star and crescent of Islam. At least the BBC holds out a ray of hope and the Yanks still speak a crude form of English. However, this societal submersion into a morass of mediocrity is certainly not being helped by television managements seemingly agog with indifference to anything but the “bottom line”.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Peter Waltham, former TVW7 and STW9 Newsreader, personal interview, 10 August 1999.

<sup>104</sup> June Holmes, Personal Communication, Interview, 1999.

<sup>105</sup> Brian Williams, Written Communication, 2001.

Television Newsreader [request for anonymity]

I have to say Channel 7 Perth has always maintained community profile through Telethon, Christmas Pageants etc., and the glory days of Perth TV have mostly been on 7 – the oldest station with the most community feeling. Pleased programs like *It's Academic* are back, showcasing local talent in front of and behind the camera – more please!<sup>106</sup>

Former STW9 News Director Terry Spence on Community relationships answered the question,

Yes, particularly moving forward to Laurie Kiernan's days and I think I might have mentioned to you on the phone, it was very competitive in fact to be involved with the community, to get involved in support facilities for charitable organisations and sporting organisations. To provide a vehicle for people to publicise their community based sort of efforts and I clearly recall Laurie Kiernan whipping us into line now and then and saying 'Come on you guys, come up with some ideas!'. Leaping well forward to 1979 and the 150th Celebrations, we were flogged to be seen to be helping the community, it reached a peak with things like *Appealathon*, like Seven's *Telethon*. Sadly it's gone into rapid decline since those days...<sup>107</sup>

Former ATN7 Sydney office boy, equipment duster, copper pipe cleaner, Telecine, Studios as cameraman (snr crew cameraman in Sydney – rode the big camera crane ex Hollywood, very flashy), and lighting assistant. TVW7 floor manager, senior studio cameraman, station co-ordinator, Program Director, New Program Director and Cine-cameraman Gordon McColl

The TV stations at this stage introduced Telethons so they could say 'Hey we are doing our bit to support the community' and so one day of the year they have a telethon and raise "n" million dollars. It is 1/365<sup>th</sup> of a year. So a 0.25% of the station's time goes into charity. It could be a larger amount. ,<sup>108</sup>

Original TVW7 Lighting Director Steve Lumsdaine,

The nearest thing to community responsibility by TV stations was the Telethons. We had a couple (in which the staff worked free). Then they proposed one for the Voyager disaster and I was personally responsible for it not happening. I insisted [he was the first and possibly only union representative at TVW7 except for journalist possibly]

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<sup>106</sup> Male News Presenter, written communication, request for anonymity, 2001.

<sup>107</sup> Terry Spence, Interview, Maylands, 27 April 1999.

<sup>108</sup> Gordon McColl, written communication, 15 June 2001.

that the staff should be paid and free to donate that they chose or, we would work for nothing if the station dropped all ads for the duration. They issued a press release saying the staff wouldn't participate...I don't think TV stations have much real interest in Community Responsibility unless it improves ratings.<sup>109</sup>

Television Producer Liz Kirkham,

Community responsibility...Apart from Telethon and Appealathon....all Channels have lost the community spirit. I think this all goes back to the "centralisation" to the East and I don't think any of them gives a damn about what happens here. The first Telethon was, in fact, in February 1961 to raise money for the victims of the Dwellingup Bushfires. This was organized at about 4.30 in the afternoon. We had 4 phones....and every personality in Perth turned up ... people walked in from off the street to money clothes and food....And wanted nothing in return.<sup>110</sup>

A current male News Presenter who requested anonymity said,

I have to say Channel 7 Perth has always maintained community profile through Telethons, Christmas Pageants etc., and the glory days of Perth TV have mostly been on 7 – the oldest station with the most community feeling...programs like *It's Academic* are back, showcasing local talent in front of and behind the cameras – more please!<sup>111</sup>

Current (2003) NEW10 C.E.O. David Fare said that while the station has no local 'live' production facilities, it does contribute to the wider community and that the value of free-to-air promotion that is given to various organisations would be between 3-5 million dollars per year. Among the main beneficiaries are the South Perth Zoo, Neighbourhood Watch and Sci-Tec.<sup>112</sup>

However, the diminution of responsibility to the Community in the area of local 'live' production by television management is symptomatic of the materialistic changes within our society since the commencement of Western Australian television in 1959. Christopher Snell's comment in 2000 is relevant. 'Just as the progress of a disease shows the doctor the

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<sup>109</sup> Steve Lumsdaine, written communication 2001.

<sup>110</sup> Liz Kirkham, Commercial Librarian TVW7 1960, personal assistant to Production Manager STW9 1966, Taimac, Barron Films Producer, written communication, July 2001.

<sup>111</sup> TVW7 Presenter, request for anonymity, 14 June 2001.

<sup>112</sup> David Fare, C.E.O. NEW10, personal communication, interview, Dianella, 23 September 2003.

secret life of a body, so to the historian the progress of a great calamity yields valuable information about the nature of the society so stricken.<sup>113</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, it has been shown that in the early days of commercial television in Western Australia, investment in Social Capital and Community Responsibility was an accepted and demonstrated part of operations. This can be attributed to the 'we are your local newspaper' policy of the Board and Management of West Australian Newspapers Limited, which was recreated at TVW7 through the persona of James W. Cruthers. There were many areas which the stations supported by way of actual finance, provision of personalities to attract crowds, special events on it and advertising for charitable fund-raising organisations. The expenditure on social capital produced a real experience of shared community in Western Australia through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s which has persisted, arguably to a lesser extent through to 2003.

Fiscal strictures resulting from economic rationalism have curtailed much of these contributions, although TVW7 still puts the annual *Telethon* to air. Since 1990, STW9 has conducted a year-round *Appealathon* by way of station sponsored advertising, without conducting a 24 hour telecast. If the collective memories of the respondents are to be believed, the station showcases have suffered badly with the passage of time. That is of course, unless (in the main) the person providing the information is still associated with the medium. This phenomenon is again observable in Appendix 2, which comprises more personal aspect recollections of community responsibility, as provided by the people who were party to the processes of commercial television evolution in Western Australia.

Peter Harries March 2004

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<sup>113</sup> Christopher Snell, *Water's Fall Running the risks with economic rationalism*, op.cit Black Marc, (1962), p. 53.  
Pluto Press Australia Limited, Annandale, 2000, p.87