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MEDIA RELEASE

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Labor's ignorance on children's content is a risk to Australian families

The Albanese Labor Government's ignorance about children's television risks harming Australian families, Shadow Minister for the Arts, Paul Fletcher and Shadow Minister for Communications, Senator Sarah Henderson said today.

"Australian families rightly count on there being a wide range of children's programming across different broadcasting platforms available for their children and it's disturbing that Labor Ministers Tony Burke and Michelle Rowland seem unable to understand this fact," Mr Fletcher and Senator Henderson said.

"Labor this week claimed that the *Commercial Television 2021 Compliance Report* shows a reduction in content broadcast for Australian children, but astoundingly failed to notice that Australian children's television programming is being produced and shown across ABC, SBS and the many streaming services such as Netflix, Stan and Disney.

"Evidently Ministers Burke and Rowland were not paying attention when the Coalition Government in 2020 updated the outdated existing quota framework for drama, children's programs and documentaries on commercial television, replacing it with a combined quota across all three categories.

"And there was a good reason for this change, namely that the evidence showed very few children were watching children's television on the commercial free to air television networks. Instead they were watching children's TV on the ABC and streaming services.

That change was part of a coordinated suite of measures including:

- \$20 million extra funding to the Australian Children's Television Foundation, allowing more children's content to be produced;
- \$30 million extra funding for Screen Australia;
- An increase in the Producer offset for television from 20 per cent to 30 per cent, improving the economics for producers of Australian television including children's television;
- Large streaming video services in Australia reporting to the ACMA on their level of investment in Australia content.

“Following further policy work, while in Government we also announced that we would legislate a Ministerial power to impose an Australian content spend requirement for streaming video on demand services, and a requirement for the ABC and SBS to report on their Australian content in the same manner as commercial networks are required to.

“It is very odd that at the moment there is no such requirement for the national broadcasters. Of course if the ABC and SBS data were available it would allow sensible, fact-based conclusions to be drawn in place of Labor's ignorant claims.

“If Labor's so called national cultural policy is going to reinstate a requirement on commercial free to air television networks to carry a specified number of hours of children's television, even though very few children watch it, Mr Burke should come out and clearly say so.

“The key policy objective is to maximise the amount of high quality Australian children's television content on platforms Australian children and their parents choose to watch - an objective which would be put at risk by such a measure,” Mr Fletcher and Senator Henderson said.

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