

## The Logies: a yearly advertisement for Australian TV

Written by The Conversation USA

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In the age of boutique TV, binge watching, and data drops of entire series, it is easy to forget the dominant function of television: the broadcasting of a stream of advertisements directly into the living room of the consumer. This stream is, of course, intermittently interrupted by content, otherwise known as “shows.”

Thankfully, we still have Channel Nine to remind us. Programs like *The Voice* have developed commercial integration so effectively that the distinction between content (ie, advertisements) and filler (ie, singing people) becomes at times almost unrecognisable.

Television has always been fuelled by advertising, and the Logies are the yearly advertisement for Australian TV – they are called, after all, the “TV Week Logies”. The writers of “Sydney Confidential” aside, it is difficult to imagine anyone getting too excited about this event, even if it has in the past offered up ample material for Australian comedians.

So how did this year’s broadcast fare?

Richard Wilkins, as usual, featured prominently. This is a good thing – it’s important to remember that people like Wilkins actually exist. Dave Hughes made some comical digs at media celebrities like Shane Warne and Kyle Sandilands and Kitty Flanagan appropriately ripped into cooking shows. Tim Minchin offered a heartfelt speech about Australia’s genocidal past, accepting his award of Most Outstanding Supporting Actor (*The Secret River*).

At the end of the night Waleed Aly won the Gold Logie. His acceptance speech began by drawing attention to the dominance of white faces on Australian TV. “Do not adjust your set ... This is happening! It’s true – finally a male presenter on commercial TV has won the Gold Logie.” He celebrated Australian multiculturalism drawing attention to the award as proof of his acceptance by the Australian public. He also focused on the significance of the award for minority voices in Australia, alluding to the Islamophobia at the core of the Australian television industry.

It was a simple speech in which Aly appeared to demonstrate significant humility. At the same time, it was lightly humorous and non-confrontational and, essentially, apolitical – grist to the

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mill for the televisual medium.

This contrasted starkly with the highlight of the night, Noni Hazelhurst's earlier, explicitly political acceptance speech following her induction into the Logies Hall of Fame (surely a dubious honour?). Hazelhurst reflected on changes in the media-technological landscape over the past 40 years, and the necessity for empathy and love in the face of the current trend towards brutality in broadcasting practices. It was a speech full of warmth and intelligence, buoyed by a genuinely egalitarian spirit – bravo!

Some criticisms were raised by Rachael Jacobs in [The Conversation last week](#) regarding the lack of diversity on Australian television. The points Jacobs raises are valid and true, within a limited scope.

All advertising holds up a broad mirror reflecting the ugliness of its culture, whether that be through gender, sexuality, race, ability, body or age profiling. The experiences Jacobs describes simply demonstrate the racism that undergirds Australian culture. With an eye to Australian history, one might think this is to be expected.

“Diversity” on Australian TV, given the limited scope of the nature of commercial “broadcasting,” seems like something of an oxymoronic subject.

This kind of identity politics, furthermore, often assuages the need for genuine political engagement on a universal level.

To worry about “diversity” on TV rather than to worry about the actual power structures and media corporations that control and frame our tele/vision, is a bit like a passenger on the Titanic worrying about a bruised elbow from the ship's collision with the iceberg.

What is in fact a far more interesting area for thought is the nature of television itself, and how the medium is radically changing with the proliferation of narrowcasting.

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Will the transformation from “entertaining” programming like Magnum P.I. into the production of more cinematic works like Breaking Bad murder commercial broadcasting?

If you're interested in the subject, some of the best works on Old Television include [Television](#) , by Raymond Williams, and [Echographies of Television](#) , adapted from the transcript of a televised discussion between Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler. Marshall McLuhan's chapter in [Understanding Media](#) is indispensable, and Niklas Luhmann offers a piercing analysis of the industrialisation of media in [The Reality of the Mass Media](#)

The canon on New Television is yet to materialise. But can one really be bothered writing books anymore? The pharmacological effects of The Voice and its ilk are, after all, remarkably potent.

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