

AUSTRALIA COULD BECOME A MEDIA SLAVE TO AMERICA,
SAYS U.S. NEW MEDIA COMMENTATOR

Australia could become little more than a American cultural outpost if Australia acquiesces to US demands in a Free Trade Agreement, according to a leading US new media commentator, Mark Pesce, speaking today at the Screen Producers Association of Australia annual conference in Melbourne.

“Under the guise of free trade, my government is asking Australia to become little more than the passive receptacle for content produced in a foreign nation...

America will only be satisfied with an Australia that has become the obedient media slave, a colony. And why? Not because they value a market that's only about the same size as Southern California –they could write that off with a laugh. It's because this agreement will become the template for future agreements with China and the European Union – markets larger than America's, and very much worth having. That's what Jack Valenti and George W. Bush have their eyes set on. Australia is just a stepping stone, a test case, for what they can get away with,” he said.

Mark Pesce is internationally renowned as a writer, educator and as the man who brought virtual reality into the World Wide Web as co-inventor of VRML (which adds the interactive ingredient to the MPEG-4 specification). He has been exploring the frontiers of the future for over two decades. The author of five books, including 'The Playful World: How Technology is Transforming Our Imagination' Pesce is widely respected as for his views on the interactive era. Mainstream publications such as Forbes ASAP, TIME Digital, WIRED and The New York Times have profiled him and his views on the future.

Also at today's SPAA Conference, the new Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Daryl Williams, attempted to allay industry concerns that Australian content on new media will be traded away in the Australia – US Free Trade negotiations.

“While it may seem reassuring to hear Mr Williams state that the Government will not jeopardise its investment in the Australian film and television industry, the fact remains that the Government still will not rule out concessions to the Americans in the area of regulation for new media. We are very concerned that the Government will agree to restrict future regulation in the area, locking Australia into a position which may be completely inappropriate in the years to come,” said Richard Harris, Executive Director of the Australian Screen Directors Association (ASDA).

ASDA, the Australian Writers Guild, the Australian Screen Producers Association and the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance are saying “Australian Identity – It's Not For Sale”.

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