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Press statement by the Minister for Health: Films and drug education

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PRESS STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, DR D.N. EVERINGHAM

FILMS AND DRUG EDUCATION

A 12 minute animated film which has just been completed for use in the Federal Government's National Drug Education program is among the entrants in the Second World Festival of Animated Films in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, this week.

The film, entitled "The Road to Charlie", has been produced by Hanna Barbera, one of the world's leading animated film makers, under the supervision of Film Australia.

"The Road to Charlie" is one of two new Federal Department of Health films which were given their premiere before an audience of Sydney critics tonight.

The film's central character is a cartoon character called Charlie, a teenage boy facing the problems of growing up under the pressures brought to bear on him by his parents and his peers.

The Minister for Health, Dr D.N. Everingham, who attended tonight's premiere of the film, said that "The Road to Charlie" was primarily aimed at teenage audiences.

Dr Everingham said young people would have no trouble in identifying with the cartoon character because most of Charlie's problems were universal.

Involvement with drugs was an important facet of Charlie's life although it could be described as incidental in the film.

As with all of the films made for the Department of Health for the National Drug Education Program, "The Road to Charlie" will not be for general exhibition but will be used as the basis for discussion groups.

The Department now has five dramatised films for this purpose.

The second film given its premiere in Sydney tonight is called "Maybe Tomorrow" and deals with an entirely different kind of drug problem - the problem of middle-aged women using excessive amounts of prescribed sedative-type drugs.

The 27 minute film recently won a 1974 Australian Cinematographers Award in the category for experimental and specialised films. The award went to Film Australia cameraman Mick Bornemann.

"Maybe Tomorrow" is a case history of a woman who is addicted to hypnotics and sedatives.

The lead parts are played by Sydney actress Carole Skinner and actor Barry Lovett.

Apart from the problems of the woman in the film, "Maybe Tomorrow" also touches on a number of related issues such as prescribing habits of medical practitioners and the marital and family problems created by this kind of drug abuse.

Commenting on the film, Dr Everingham said that Australia's biggest drug abuse problem was clearly not with illicit drugs but with legally obtained therapeutic substances.

"Drug educators will lose credibility with teenagers if films on drug abuse do not portray middle-aged drug abuse", Dr Everingham said.

"Kids know the problem is not only with their generation's use of illicit drugs. They are aware of the problems of their parents with tranquillisers, sedatives and alcohol.

"Films like this aim to show parents a potential drug abuse problem as serious as that of their children".

Dr Everingham said that the films now in use in the National Drug Education program would be available for organisations wishing to take part in an organised discussion of drug problems.

Under the National Drug Education Program trained educators and group discussion leaders are available for this purpose.

Dr Everingham said that his Department had now established itself as a major user of dramatised films for health education purposes.

He said that films such as "The Road to Charlie", "Maybe Tomorrow", "Drugs and the Law", "Where Are We Heading" and "The Choice" (the latter three have been in use for some time), were valuable discussion stimulators.

Canberra, June 13, 1974.