

Better Homes and Gardens®



THE MARKET

Australians read more magazines per capita than any other nation in the world. Since 1990 alone, more than 315 new titles have appeared in newsagents and supermarkets. As almost nine in every 10 Australians regularly read one or more titles, it's not surprising that sales of magazines climbed steadily over the past decade, with magazine publishing one of the country's boom retail industries.

Perhaps the strongest growth area in Australian publishing has been the homemaker market with the number of homemaker titles more than doubling in the past ten years alone. Much of the credit for this boom must go to *Better Homes and Gardens*, leader of the homemaker magazine pack since launching in Australia in 1978. Successfully transferring the homemaker ingredients which made it a publishing star in the US, *Better Homes and Gardens* is today part of the Australian landscape.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Better Homes and Gardens enjoyed success with Australians from its inception, ranking among Australia's top 10 selling magazines since making its Down Under debut. In February 1995, the magazine made worldwide news when it launched its own

national 30-minute show on prime-time television. Astonishingly, the show was produced by a magazine publishing company with no previous experience in television production!

The credibility of the magazine content translated well to the small screen. Viewers tuned in to watch original hosts John Jarratt and Noni Hazlehurst (a real-life married couple and pair of well-loved actors) show and tell how they got the most out of hearth and home. More recently, Noni Hazlehurst has held the hosting role and is joined by various editorial experts from the magazine who present specific specialist segments.

The show, aired on commercial television on Tuesday nights at 7.30pm, was an instant success, enjoying the kind of ratings that make network executives preen. It was no surprise, therefore, when the show walked off with the Logie Award for Best Lifestyle Program of 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998 and again in 1999. For 2000 and 2001, the show continued its popular run.

Sales of the magazine, meanwhile, soared by nearly 60 per cent as *Better Homes and Gardens* went down in history as the most successful masthead publishing venture in the world. Today, more than 1.8 million Australians participate in the *Better Homes and Gardens* experience every week by watching the television show, nearly 300,000 purchase the magazine and 40,000 visit the website each month, making it Australia's most successful multimedia brand.

The magazine and television staff continue to sit side by side in their cross-media teams. In every

sense, the *Better Homes and Gardens* multimedia experience has been a watershed event in television, both locally and worldwide. "Having a prime-time television show is evidence of how hot *Better Homes and Gardens* is," declared Murdoch Magazines' managing director, Matt Handbury.

HISTORY

In spite of a lack of celebrity gossip, fashion features, the perennial "Seven Ways to Spice Up Your Sex Life" and the absence of bodice-ripping fiction, *Better Homes and Gardens* is a mainstream magazine that continues to steadily flourish in the new millennium.

The magazine made its debut in the US shortly after WWI as *Fruit, Garden and Home*. Founder and publisher E T Meredith, who served in US President Woodrow Wilson's cabinet, had a clear vision for the magazine focused on creating the ideal home environment for one's family.

Meredith's magazine changed its name two years later to the *Better Homes and Gardens* we know today. The magazine went on to make history with several publishing milestones: 1923 saw the magazine's first recipe contest; 1925 its first DIY project; 1929 the launch of 'taste-test' kitchens; 1930 the title's first article on cooking for men (yes, men!); 1941 the magazine's first barbecue feature, and so on.

In Australia, *Better Homes and Gardens* has enjoyed 24 years of successful operation with an unstinting focus on home, gardening, decorating, craft, food and DIY.

In 1991, after witnessing the success of service journalism in the United States, Matt Handbury bought the Australian publishing rights to two of the most successful publications of this ilk, namely *Better Homes and Gardens* and *family circle*, from Rupert Murdoch.

By the early '90s – as word of 'cyberspace' and 'information technology' began to spread – Handbury's multimedia dream for his successful homemaker titles began to take shape. "Australians throughout the '90s focused on the home, and service providers like *Better Homes and Gardens* have never been more relevant," he noted. Most importantly, publishers on both sides of the Pacific have never underestimated the intelligence of *Better Homes and Gardens* readers,



