

Major changes for Seven's newsroom

ATN-7 HAS spent almost half a million dollars in a massive re-vamp of its newsroom.

The change begins on Monday, October 5 and coincides with the departure of stalwart Roger Climpson as dual newsreader. Current co-reader Ross Symonds will take over as chief presenter.

No fewer than 10 new journalists will appear along with a new studio set and various technical advances. The change is part of Seven's plan to overtake Channel Nine in the news rating stakes.

Among the new faces to arrive are former 4-Corners journalist Kerry O'Brien, Perth man Jim Cannon, ABC journalist Michelle Schofield and TEN-10's Kay Stammers.

For news director Vincent Smith, the newsroom re-vamp is a major step and will bring about a dramatic change of image.

"We want to develop a concept of authoritative, mature news," Smith said. "I've tried to recruit a team of mature on-air journalists. TV news today seems orientated toward youth which can give a naive image.

"Our new look will be unlike anything seen before on Australian television. We'll reinforce a business-like authority so viewers can look toward us as an authoritative news coverage.

Seven has also installed a new visual computer to provide, as Smith describes them, "stunning" pictures. "It will make our pictures look even better," he said. "Exactly how is still a bit of a secret." The computer cost the station a cool \$250,000.

Other changes in equipment include new electronic cameras for the on-the-road crews and a possible video art system to allow computer-drawn pictures on-air

(Channel Nine's promotional logo is an example of the almost three-dimensional video art).

Smith also said changes would be in store for the station's late-night news service, Newsnight. "It will be tightened," he said.

"But that's not a priority right now. We will make subtle changes to turn it into the best late-night news service on Sydney television. W

— CLAY ADAMS



Vincent Smith

WILLESEE SHOCK

SEVEN NETWORK executives were caught unawares by Mike Willesee's decision to step down as anchorman of his Willesee '81 current affairs programme.

"I found out about Mike's decision at the same time you did," said Channel Seven Sydney programme manager Glen Kinging, commenting on Willesee being replaced by Derryn Hinch.

He declined to say that the reason behind Willesee's decision was poor ratings.

Willesee's move, to bow

out of camera range but remain as executive producer, came after Hinch improved the programme ratings when he did a stint while Mike was on holiday.

Channel Seven sources said it was Willesee's decision alone to leave the compere's chair.

Willesee '81's Sydney producer Phil Davis said he and the programme's Melbourne producer, John Kyle, would "run the show."

Hinch will work out of both Sydney and Melbourne.



Mike Willesee steps down for Derryn Hinch.



SURVEY BOOST TO SPORT

AUSTRALIANS ARE taking a greater interest in sport today, but from the comfort of their own living room.

Despite what some ratings figures may tell us sport on television is popular, with tennis and cricket the front-runners in the viewing stakes.

In a survey conducted by Sydney company Beacon Research early this year, figures show that 74.0 percent of viewers in Sydney and Melbourne (the survey was only conducted in the two cities) watch tennis at some stage of the sporting season.

The results, commissioned by PBL Marketing (who control the Nine Network's World Series Cricket), also raised eyebrows by indicating Australian rules and soccer were more popular TV sports than rugby league.

Australian rules found a meagre 8.2 percent of viewers in Sydney (Australia's major rugby league city) but an overwhelming response of 54.1 percent in Melbourne (its home city) boosted it to third place.

Soccer was rated fourth by viewers with an overall figure of 26.5 percent while rugby league had a large viewing audience of 48.5 in Sydney but only 2.4 in Melbourne.

These sports rated significantly above others such as golf, televised snooker and motor racing. The proud game of rugby union could

find only 6.5 percent of the viewing market.

Soccer however shares a consistent viewing market in both cities, finding 28.0 percent in Sydney and 25.0 percent in Melbourne.

That gives it as steady a following as tennis and cricket — the two most popular TV sports.

The survey figures are not to be mistaken, or compared, to television ratings.

The PBL survey accounts for people who watch televised sport at any time. Unlike ratings it does not mean 74.0 percent of people watch tennis during specified hours or constantly.

It means 74.0 percent of people have been known to watch tennis at some stage during the past 12 months.

On that basis, the sports receiving the greatest coverage — as in tennis and cricket — are likely to be the most popular.

Considering soccer's limited coverage (not more than around seven hours per week during peak season), it has gained the most notable result from the survey.

Table breakdown is:

	Sydney %	Melb. %	Total %
Tennis	73.2	74.8	74.0
Cricket	53.0	65.2	64.1
Aust. Rules	8.2	54.1	31.1
Soccer	28.0	25.0	26.5
Rugby Lge.	48.5	2.4	25.4
Golf	14.7	13.5	14.1
Snooker	8.0	10.2	9.1
Motor Sport	8.9	8.5	8.7
Horse Racing	7.8	9.2	8.5
Rugby Union	10.7	2.3	6.5
Swimming	5.2	6.0	5.6