



Picture: Nigel Lough

Voice of reason

Popular stand-up comedian and host of television series *Gruen*, Wil Anderson, talks growing up and realising few things in life are black and white. By **SHANNON MOLLOY**

AS a young comic, Wil Anderson had staunch, fairly immovable opinions about a range of things, and he was determined to share them. But after two decades as a stand-up comedian and almost 15 years working in television, he's discovered few things in life are black and white.

"I think you go two ways as an adult," the 41-year-old explains.

"You either become hard and fast with the things you've always believed, or you start to get an appreciation that most things are a shade of grey.

"(The latter) is definitely how I've gone."

The advertising industry is a good example, he says. It's a topic he explores in the hit ABC series *Gruen*, which returns this week after a two-year hiatus.

Ads and the people who create them are things he both celebrates and eviscerates.

"I point out the bad when it's bad, the good when it's good and balance it all up," he says.

"As for an overall view on ads and advertising, I don't have one."

Critically examining how we're sold to by brands was a hit concept and viewers were shocked when Anderson and the team wrapped the last season of *Gruen* in 2013, with a clear sense the conversation was over.

Anderson took off to do something he'd been dreaming of for years.

"I wanted to have a year where I just did stand-up and nothing else," he says.

"So I did it. I did 20 US cities on tour last year. I went to London twice, Montreal twice. It was what I had to do."

Now Anderson is back, along with fellow regular panellists

Russel Howcroft and Todd Sampson, with advertising in his sights once more.

"When we first started this show we thought it'd go a year, maybe two at the most," he recalls. "It's a show about advertising on the ABC – it had no reason to work. We had no expectation that seven years later we'd still be making major life plans around this stupid idea."

Before *Gruen*, Anderson had little interest in advertising. He still doesn't. But the comedy veteran believes that's what makes the format work so well.

"If you offer me a million dollars right now to name five advertising agencies, I wouldn't be able to do it," he says.

"I take a very journalistic approach to it – I ask the questions people at home want answered."

The show's genius is analysing what is in plain sight. Anderson takes viewers on a tour of the sausage factory to see what goes in to the staple meal.

It's not always pretty, but at least people leave better informed, he says.

GRUEN
WEDNESDAY, 8.30PM, ABC



THE WORD IS OUT ON SPELLING BEE

CHANNEL Ten will consider a new timeslot for the second season of *The Great Australian Spelling Bee*.

Ahead of this week's finals, which wrap up series one, Network Ten chief programming officer Beverley McGarvey said the network was keen to keep the show accessible to families.

Her comments followed criticisms early in the series that despite the show being popular with families; it was finishing late for children watching on school nights.

"We will consider all timeslots for season two of the show, which has resonated strongly with many people, across television and

social media," McGarvey said. "We do want to play the show in an accessible slot for families, as well as the best slot for kids. Of course, we will also have to consider the competitive landscape."

Ten was so delighted with the show's launch that it renewed it for 2016 just three weeks into its run.

Meanwhile, two firm friends and spelling wizards loom as the biggest threats in the final eight, despite their tiny frames.

Pint-sized NSW duo Grace, 8, (left) and Mica, 10, (right) met late last year when they finished first and second, respectively, in the NSW Premier's Spelling Bee competition, and have cemented their friendship on the Channel Ten show.

Despite being fierce rivals, the girls

have rarely been far from each other's side, urging each other on as the competition has unfolded.

On Monday night, the pair lines up alongside Amelia (Qld), Harpita, Anirudh and Harrison (Vic), Marko (NSW) and Peyton (SA) for the final, with the top six going through to Tuesday night's grand final.

The 90-minute finale will take place over three rounds with two Spellers knocked-out in each until the final two face off in the Ultimate Spelling Bee round to crown the winner.

THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN SPELLING BEE

MONDAY (FINAL) AND TUESDAY (GRAND FINAL), 7.30PM, TEN

By Debbie Schipp

