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Commercial free to air networks exceed content quotas

The latest compliance report from the Australian Communication and Media Authority has confirmed that commercial free to air networks remain the home of Australian content in both metropolitan and regional licence areas.

FreeTV CEO Bridget Fair said: “Commercial television broadcasters are proud of our commitment to Australian content. Our members invest over \$1.5 billion annually in making great Australian content that is loved by millions of Australians. Over 80 per cent of total program expenditure by commercial broadcasters is spent on Australian content.

“This is an unrivalled commitment to telling local stories, entertaining and informing Australians and giving them access to all the major sporting codes, live and free.

“The ACMA report shows that in 2017 all networks easily exceeded the requirement to show 55% Australian content on the primary channels between 6am and midnight—with some exceeding 75%.

“Our networks broadcast nearly 600 hours of first run Australian dramas and documentaries in 2017. In total across the primary and multi-channels, 23,000 hours of Australian content was broadcast by the commercial free to air sector.

“Contrary to incorrect claims made today, programming from New Zealand makes up a small fraction of the networks’ schedules. The ACMA has confirmed that only 409 hours of content from New Zealand was shown by FreeTV members in 2017. That is less than 2% of all Australian content and is less than the 5-year average.

“The ACMA report does highlight the issues faced by 12 smaller regional sections 38 A and 38B or remote licensees in meeting the full multi-channel quota requirements. In these small areas, operational issues have impacted the ability of these licensees to syndicate the complete suite of multi-channels provided by their metropolitan affiliate.

“This issue was anticipated and was raised with the Government last year during the review into the Australian content rules. However, even in these areas, the ACMA has confirmed that the amount of Australian content broadcast on the primary channel exceeded the minimum quota by so much that it far exceeded the multi-channel transmission shortfall for all 12 regional licensees.”

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