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Media Release 3 October, 2013

Free TV calls for spectrum certainty

Free TV Australia today set out its position on the future use of spectrum in Australia at the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)'s RadComms 2013 conference in Sydney.

Free TV has called for:

- **Spectrum certainty** for broadcasters, in recognition that Australians will continue to rely on free television services for the foreseeable future;
- **Acknowledgement that broadcasting is clearly more efficient than unicast cellular delivery** for transmitting to large numbers of consumers watching linear or live programming; and
- **A clear migration pathway** for broadcasters to transition to more spectrum-efficient standards such as DVB-T2, MPEG-4 and HEVC.

Free TV CEO Julie Flynn said: "Commercial broadcasters understand the increasing demand for spectrum in a converged media world, but these demands have to be balanced against the fact that most Australians still receive the majority of their favourite programs – drama, sport, news and current affairs, light entertainment, reality, lifestyle and children's – free-to-view, on television.

"Around 70 per cent of Australians depend *exclusively* on free-to-air for their television services.

"The industry cannot sustain ongoing delivery of these services if faced with the erosion of the spectrum that is vital to deliver them."

Ms Flynn noted Australians watch just over three hours a day of television compared with 13 minutes a day of any video content on laptop/desktop computers, 3 minutes a day on mobiles and 2 minutes per day on tablets.^Δ

“Television broadcasters have released more than 40 per cent of their spectrum as part of the digital dividend, which recently raised over \$2 billion at auction,” Ms Flynn continued.

“Yet despite claims of pent-up spectrum demand in the lead-up to the auction not all the spectrum was actually sold.

“Broadcasters are currently undertaking the massive task of restacking their services across the country to free-up the digital dividend spectrum.

“We need certainty that this process will not have to be repeated in the medium term and that any future changes to spectrum access will not disadvantage viewers living in regional and remote Australia.

“The debate over spectrum access also needs to recognise that broadcasting remains the best way of delivering content to large numbers of viewers.

“When three million-plus Australians want to watch their favourite footy team’s final or Aussie drama, broadcast television is by far and away the most efficient and cost effective means for them to do so.

“We support the ACMA’s research into actual spectrum demand to 2020 and beyond, and encourage the regulator to also look at ways that the broadcast platform can adopt more efficient technologies to ensure that Australians are able to continue their love affair with both their television sets and their mobile devices.”

[^] Source: Nielsen, OzTAM, RegionalTAM Australian Multi-Screen Report, Q1 2013.

For media enquiries, please contact Free TV Australia on (02) 8968 7100

About Free TV Australia

Free TV Australia is the industry body representing all of Australia's commercial free-to-air television licensees and is the public voice of the sector on a wide range of industry issues. Our members include the Nine Network, the Seven Network, Network Ten, Southern Cross Austereo, Prime Television, WIN, NBN and Imparja. Commercial free-to-air television is the most popular source of entertainment and information, reaching 13.5 million Australians every day. Free TV provides nine channels of quality programming across a range of genres, as well as rich online and mobile offerings, free to all Australian viewers. More at www.freetv.com.au