



44 Avenue Road
Mosman NSW
Australia 2088

T : 61 2 8968 7100
F : 61 2 9969 3520
W : freetv.com.au

Media Release
30 November 2012

MORE AUSTRALIAN TV FOR FREE

Australian viewers are the major winners from proposed changes to broadcasting rules announced by the federal government, Free TV said today.

Permanent reductions to commercial television licence fees will be accompanied by thousands of additional hours of Australian content on Free TV channels each year – adding to the tens of thousands of annual local programming hours the broadcasters already screen.

The changes announced today ensure that broadcasters can continue to invest heavily in quality Australian content such as *Packed to the Rafters*, *Underbelly* and *Offspring*.

This means diverse and compelling local programs will remain Australians' most-watched television shows even in the face of a rapidly changing media landscape.

With new content quotas and additional flexibility to schedule Australian drama, children's TV and documentaries on the networks' digital channels, all channels will have a strong Australian flavour.

Key changes include:

- Broadcasting licence fees (which Free TV broadcasters pay on top of their normal taxes) will be permanently reduced by 50 per cent, allowing broadcasters to continue to invest heavily in quality Australian content;
- The minimum 55 per cent local content quota on the Free TV networks' primary channels will remain;
- Restrictions on screening Australian drama, children's programs and documentaries on the digital channels will be removed; and,
- From 2013 new quotas apply to the digital channels, which will see the phasing in from 1 January 2013 of an additional 1460 hours of Australian content per network per year on the digital channels.

Free TV CEO Julie Flynn said: “Today’s announcements are a welcome first step towards ensuring that all viewers can continue to see quality Australian programming for free in a rapidly changing market.”

In 2010 both the Government and Opposition recognised the ongoing structural change that the industry is experiencing and temporary broadcasting licence fee rebates were implemented.

Free TV networks invested a record \$1.35 billion in Australian programming in 2011/12. This represents an increase of \$267.6 million over the past two years, which far exceeds the value of the rebates to date as set out in the 2010/2011 federal budget.[#]

“In addition to our record expenditure on Australian content, we are also delivering a highly successful transition to digital following a multi-billion dollar investment in the digital free-to-air platform,” Ms Flynn continued.

The industry has agreed to a substantial increase in the number of hours of Australian content broadcast across the channels, representing a 40 per cent increase on the existing 55 per cent transmission quota for the main channels. Included in this is a two-for-one drama credit, to provide real incentive for more first-run drama on the digital multi-channels[^].

This commitment will see a real increase in the amount of Australian content available on free-to-air television. Commercial television remains the bedrock of the local production industry, and broadcasters remain committed to maintaining their investment in quality Australian programming, including original drama, which is culturally important and which resonates more and more with Australian audiences.

“The new local content quotas reaffirm broadcasters’ central role in maintaining a strong and vibrant Australian voice at a time when viewers increasingly seek content where and when they want, and on the device of their choice,” Ms Flynn added.

“Free TV remains the only media platform that invests in Australian stories, talent and production skills to this level while many other content providers contribute very little and operate in a regulation-free zone.

“With the end of analogue television now just twelve months away, converged media regulation is still a work in progress. We need to ensure a fair and balanced regulatory system that serves viewers’ interests.”

Free TV looks forward to working with all sides of politics in implementing these changes.

For media enquiries please call Free TV Australia on 02 8968 7100

Australian Free TV: Facts

Free TV’s annual investment in Australian content (2011/12)	\$1.35 billion
Average time Australians spend watching TV	3 hours 10 mins/day
Number of Australians that watch commercial free-to-air TV	14 million-plus every day
Percentage of Australian content broadcast on Free TV	65 per cent [^]
<i>Exceeds 55 per cent Australian content transmission quota 6am-midnight</i>	
Number of people employed directly and indirectly by broadcasters	15,000
Number of production companies supported	70+
Free TV networks’ investment in digital TV rollout and services	\$2 billion
Value added to the economy	\$1.89 billion

[#]Licence fee rebates valued at \$142 million announced in the 2010/11 federal budget.

[^]I.e.: One hour of first-run Australian drama on a digital channel broadcast between 5pm and 11.30pm will count as two hours for the purposes of the new quota.

About the data: Australian content expenditure for 2011/12 has been compiled by Free TV in line with ACMA expenditure reporting requirements. Time spent viewing total television sourced OzTAM, 5 cap cities, for the period 1 Jan to 30 Jun 2012. Average daily reach for commercial TV is a national figure sourced OzTAM, 5 cap cities, and RegionalTAM, 4 aggregated markets plus Tasmania, for the period 1 Jan to 30 Jun 2012. Hours of Australian content and percentage of Australian content broadcast on commercial free-to-air in 2011 sourced ACMA Compliance Results ([^]6am-midnight). Number of people employed in commercial free-to-air television sector, production companies supported and investment in digital are estimates sourced Free TV. Value added to the economy is for the 2009-10 period sourced *Access Economics Economic Contribution of the Film and Television Industry*, published August 2011. Figures are rounded.

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 more than 14 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