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Free TV Backs Call To Ditch Election Ad Blackout

Free TV Australia applauds the recommendation by the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee for the removal of the archaic restrictions on political advertising on television and radio.

The Committee, chaired by Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald, unanimously called on the government to give consideration to amending the provisions in the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 that prohibit broadcasters showing any election advertisements in the three days before an election. The restriction does not apply to print or online advertising.

The Committee's report noted that the current television and radio advertising blackout "does nothing to stop broader electioneering on those days. Moreover, many voters cast their votes before election day, and voters need not be shielded from electioneering in order to make well-considered votes."

Free TV Australia CEO, Bridget Fair, said: "The election advertising blackout is arcane and outdated and we fully support the committee's recommendation to get rid of it.

"The restriction was introduced more than a quarter of a century ago and has been made redundant by changes in the media industry, in particular, the rise of online media. It's farcical that broadcasters have to adhere to the three-day blackout, while the unregulated digital platforms can run ads right up to – and on – election day.

"It makes absolutely no sense that come election day, the only place you won't find a political ad is on television or radio," she said.

Ms Fair said removing the election advertising blackout was an important first step in easing the restrictions on the commercial free-to-air television industry.

"It's time to modernise the many outdated laws that disadvantage commercial free-to-air television broadcasters in competing with new media platforms. Ditching the ban on television and radio ads in the three days before an election is a logical and fair first step," she said.

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