

MEDIA RELEASE**Embargoed until Sunday, 23 October 2011**

NETWORKS INVEST A RECORD \$1.23 BILLION IN AUSSIE PROGRAMMING

Figures released today by peak industry body Free TV Australia show that commercial free-to-air broadcasters invested over \$1.23 billion on Australian TV productions last year – an all-time high.

The data for 2010-11 shows that the vast majority of the \$1.7 billion spent on programming by commercial television networks over the last 12 months was invested in Australian content.

Australians have had access to more Australian content than even before; 25,650 hours of Australian content was broadcast across all networks in 2010, and over 6,400 hours of Australian content has been broadcast on the digital multi-channels so far this year. Despite the increasing expense of locally-produced content, Free TV continues to over-deliver on its Australian content obligations, broadcasting an average 65 per cent of Australian programming – well in excess of the 55 per cent requirement. This included 716 hours of first run drama and documentaries, and 315 hours of news and current affairs each week.

40 out of the top 40 programs shown on Free TV in 2010 were Australian productions; dramas such as *Packed to the Rafters*, *Underbelly* and *Offspring* as well as *Australia's Got Talent*, *The Block* and *MasterChef Australia* were some of Australia's favourites. A massive 5.2 million people watched the number one program in 2010.

Commercial television networks now employ 15,000 Australians (7,500 directly and 7,500 more directly and indirectly in productions).

CEO Julie Flynn says that the new digital environment means networks are not only producing content for so-called traditional TV viewing, they are also producing content for online and mobile.

"Australians have an insatiable appetite for Free TV programming across a range of different devices. More than 14 million people are tuning into Free TV every day, but they are also catching up with their favourite programs online, or streaming content on mobiles.

Flynn says that quality programming is how commercial broadcasters continue to respond to the challenges of the converged media environment.

“The old adage *content is king* is more relevant today than ever, and delivering quality content that Australians want to watch is what commercial broadcasters do. It’s part of their DNA.”

Ms Flynn adds that in order to continue to deliver the very best quality programming in the future, a fair and balanced approach to media regulation is required.

Flynn says, "Media regulation hasn't kept up with the technological advances and the changes in viewing behaviour. Free TV broadcasters are burdened by a raft of financial and regulatory obligations under the Broadcast Services Act, which was formulated twenty years ago; obligations other media do not have. Networks need greater flexibility."

"We need a fair and balanced regulatory framework to ensure free-to-air commercial broadcasters can continue to do what they do best - delivering high quality television services to Australian audiences, for free," says Flynn.

Refer attached leaflet for more information

For media enquiries please contact Ms Julie Flynn on 0408 455 456