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Celebrating digital and ensuring a strong Australian voice

Free TV Australia joined Freeview and network CEOs tonight in bringing more than 300 colleagues across industry and government together in the Great Hall at Parliament House Canberra to celebrate digital free-to-air television.

Free TV Chairman Harold Mitchell said: "Digital television is a great success. It is bringing all Australians, wherever they are, access to more great Australian programming for free.

"Our iconic television brands and the fantastic Australian programming they provide are the first choice for Australian viewers, even though we all have the world at our fingertips today.

"But there is a new threat to our vibrant, home-grown industry and broadcasters' ability to deliver the news, drama, entertainment and sport viewers expect - live and free for everyone to see.

"We are competing with other companies which are not subject to broadcasting regulations and in some cases pay virtually no tax in Australia, while Free TV networks' regulations were set more than 20 years ago."

Mr Mitchell noted the event coincides with the day Parliament has started the process of cutting industry red tape and working towards a more level regulatory playing field.

"We back ourselves 100 per cent to compete for Australian audiences with our global competitors as long as our hands are not tied behind our backs.

"The problem with excessive regulation is that every dollar we spend on red tape and licence fees is a dollar less we have to spend on making great Australian programs.

"We want to continue to deliver outstanding local content along with innovations such as FreeviewPlus, and the vast array of options it enables.

"We agree with the government that there should be less red tape so business can focus on what it does best.

“And in our case that means keeping the great Australian production engine going and delivering quality Australian programs to all Australians, wherever they are, for free,” Mr Mitchell concluded.

For media enquiries contact 02 8968 7100

Australians love and rely on Free TV:

- People watch 3+ hours of TV every day – the vast majority of time is spent watching commercial free-to-air television.
- More than 13.5 million Australians watch commercial free-to-air television every day.
- In 2013, every one of the top 50 shows on TV were Australian and on Free TV.
- Commercial free-to-air broadcasters have invested more than \$6 billion in original Australian programming over the last five years.
- Network catch-up TV and tablet apps – Fango, Jump in and tenplay – deliver millions of video streams each week, and create entirely new ways for viewers to engage with their favourite programs.
- 40 per cent of tweets are about what people are watching on TV.
- Free TV broadcasters deliver 21 hours of national and local news and current affairs in each market, every day, reaching millions of homes.
- 91 per cent of regional Australians approve of their access to local free television services.
- Free TV digital channels mean there is more sport live and free than ever before.
- Free TV broadcasters employ over 15,000 Australians (both directly and indirectly).
- FreeviewPlus, launching in the coming months, is the latest innovation from free-to-air broadcasters and brings the best of broadcast and the web together on a single TV screen, offering:
 - the most advanced, user-friendly electronic program guide (EPG);
 - catch-up services on TV screens for the first time;
 - a range of new broadcaster-delivered broadband services.

Sources: OzTAM/RegionalTAM; the ACMA; Twitter; Free TV Australia; Freeview.