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COMMERCIAL TELEVISION INDUSTRY CODE OF PRACTICE

Free TV Australia today welcomed the registration of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice by the Australian Communications and Media Authority. The ACMA registered the Code with effect from 1 January 2010.

“Commercial television broadcasters take their responsibilities under the Code very seriously including the public consultation process by which we ensure the Code reflects community standards”, said Free TV Australia Chief Executive Officer, Julie Flynn.

“We thank the ACMA for taking an active role in the registration process and their guidance in creating a document that will meet the needs and expectations of Australian Free TV viewers”, Ms Flynn added.

The new Code places a number of additional requirements on broadcasters. From 1 March 2010 broadcasters will be required to accept Code complaints made through an electronic lodgement process via the Free TV website. The new Code will also provide increased protection for participants in Reality Television programs and includes amendments to strengthen the consumer advice requirements for MA15+ programs amongst a range of other protections.

The new Code includes an Appendix for the new digital Multi-Channels. There are two primary changes for the new digital multi-channels; an extension of the PG timezones in the morning and afternoons and some more flexibility in the limits for non program matter. In all other respects, the digital multi channels will be regulated in the same way as the core channels.

PG time zones for digital multi-channels will now include the hours between 6am – 8.30am and between 4pm and 7pm on weekdays and between 6am and 10am on weekends. These changes will improve choice for viewers in the mix of programming on offer on the digital multi-channels. In order to ensure that viewers are aware of the new rules Free TV has committed to a public education campaign for the new Multi-Channel Appendix. Detailed information will be posted on the Free TV website and broadcasters will run an on air information spot on the new digital channels. Furthermore, additional consumer advice will be provided for PG programs broadcast in the new time zones if the broadcasters determine that certain material may not be expected by parents or guardians of young children. Parental locks which are available on most digital set top boxes and integrated digital television are an additional tool for parents who wish to control their children’s viewing.

“The public education campaign and the parental lock option give parents information and control over their children’s viewing”, Ms Flynn explained.

“The Code aims to balance the various interests of our diverse society and ensure that commercial television services meet community standards. It is widely publicised and operates well”, Ms Flynn concluded

-ENDS-

Media enquiries and interviews:

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A copy of the new Code and Explanatory Note is available on our website www.freetv.com.au.