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Children's Television Standards: a missed opportunity

The release of the revised Children's Television Standards (CTS) by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) represents a missed opportunity, Free TV Australia said today.

The new CTS is effectively out of date before it begins as it fails to take into account the changing media landscape or the imminent launch of a dedicated free-to-air children's channel on the ABC.

Free TV is disappointed that the ACMA has not conducted a wholesale review of the provision of children's programming across all platforms. The environment for children's screen time activities has changed significantly since the CTS was first introduced in the 1980s. The relative community benefit of the CTS is declining as child audiences fragment and move to unregulated media environments.

No other media platform here in Australia, or in overseas jurisdictions, is subject to the same level of regulation with regards to children's and preschool programming as are the Free TV broadcasters.

The CTS has not kept pace with children's screen time choices and imposes a high burden on broadcasters. It is disappointing that the ACMA has not seen fit to amend the CTS further to ensure their relevance to the Australian child audience in the 21st century.

Free TV acknowledged that some progress was made as a result of the lengthy review and consultation period by the ACMA, welcoming some of the amendments which will allow broadcasters increased flexibility in the provision on children's programming. Free TV also welcomed the regulator's finding that bans on the advertising of food to children are not warranted.

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For media enquiries contact Free TV Australia on (02) 8968 7100