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AUSTRALIA NEEDS FREE TV Free TV Australia Celebrates 60 Years Of Television

Free TV Australia today unveiled a campaign to celebrate 60 years of the best free to air television in the world.

Free TV Australia Chairman, Harold Mitchell AC, launched the television commercial at an event at Parliament House, Canberra, attended by the Prime Minister, the Minister for Communications, Parliamentarians, senior government staff and senior representatives of the television industry, including CEOs of the commercial free-to-air networks.

The event was hosted by Sandra Sully (Network Ten), Mel Doyle (Seven Network) and Karl Stefanovic (Nine Network).

Mr Mitchell said: "We are launching this commercial to celebrate the economic and cultural contribution that free to air television has been making for 60 years, and the unique and special place that it continues to hold in the lives of all Australians.

"Sixty years after it started, commercial free to air television is still going strong, with 13 million Australians tuning in every day to be informed, entertained and inspired."

The campaign, which commences on all commercial free to air networks from this week, captures unforgettable television moments such as the moon landing, the tragedy of 9/11, outstanding local dramas and iconic Australian sporting events.

In its 60th year, free to air television remains *the* home of Australian content. With an annual investment of more than \$1.5 billion in local content, the industry funds 60% of all local television production and employs 15,000 people directly and indirectly.

Given this level of investment, it is no surprise that all of the top 40 most-watched television programs are Australian and a majority of Australians believe commercial free to air television is the most trusted source of news and current affairs.

However, in the face of increasing competition from unregulated companies and a regulatory framework that has not kept pace with changing market dynamics, this investment is under serious threat.

Speaking at the Canberra event, Mr Mitchell said: "The licence fees paid by the commercial free to air networks are completely inconsistent with international best practice.

"They must be urgently addressed so that we can continue to innovate and invest in broadcasting great Australian content for free.

"Australian licence fees are about three and a half times greater than in the next highest market, which is Singapore, and more than 115 times greater than in the United States," he said.

“Australia needs free to air television and on this milestone diamond anniversary, it is imperative we ensure that we can continue to provide the free service that Australians value so highly.”

The establishment of a Parliamentary Friends of commercial free to air television Group, co-chaired by Melissa Price MP and Tim Watts MP, was also announced at the event. This is an apolitical group whose objective is to promote and support a strong, competitive and vibrant commercial free-to-air television industry in Australia, recognising the cultural and economic importance of the industry and the services it provides to all Australians free of charge.

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