



Media Release  
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## **REGIONAL AUSTRALIA CANNOT BE LEFT BEHIND IN THE STREAMING TV ERA**

### **Research reveals concerns over TV delivered by internet in regional and rural Australia**

Communities in regional and rural Australia deserve assurances that their TV services will have a sustainable future, with 78% of survey respondents from those areas saying that Free TV broadcast services are crucial, particularly in communities that might not have a strong internet connection, industry body Free TV Australia said today.

Free TV Australia chief executive Bridget Fair said that with the TV sector evolving rapidly, it was critical to ensure broadcasting policy supports dependable and free access to news and sport for all Australians.

“Events at home and abroad over recent years have underlined how important it is for regional and rural communities to be well served with reliable local commercial TV services,” Ms Fair said.

“We are living through an age of great innovation in the delivery of TV services, especially through the new streaming platforms. Clarity from government is essential to ensure the people of regional and rural Australia continue to be able to access their free-to-air TV services far into the future.”

Commercial television networks serving regional communities face a range of uncertainties, including on the status of unfair spectrum taxes that far exceed those in other countries around the world.

“The government introduced a \$40 million broadcasting spectrum tax in 2017 that disproportionately affects regional broadcasters,” Ms Fair said.

“Instead of meeting their commitment to review the level of the tax, the Government has only offered a two-year band-aid extension of the regional support payment. These payments must be made permanent, and the level of the tax brought back into line with international best practice. The current uncertainty is untenable.”

Recent research for Free TV by C|T Group found that:

- 81% of regional and rural voters value Free TV;
- 64% of voters would be concerned if free-to-air television was only available over the internet, and
- 67% of voters agree that free sport is in the public interest.



People in regional and rural Australia are also disproportionately affected by patchy internet services and cost of living pressures. An Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) study released in December showed that NBN’s service in regional Australia achieved only 44.8% of advertised speeds. Users in metro areas achieved 84.9% of advertised speeds.

“Equal access to news and sport for all Australians is something we can all say we support, but that needs to be backed up by government action,” Ms Fair said. “The needs of people in regional and rural Australia must be addressed in our broadcasting legislation – we cannot keep kicking the can down the road.”

As part of its [Free. For Everyone.](#) campaign Free TV Australia is also seeking an urgent review of the sports anti-siphoning list, and new regulations to force TV manufacturers ensure that Australian media services are easy to find on smart TVs that are controlled by global operating systems.

“This is about access to the news and sport services that people deserve, and about guaranteeing a sustainable future for the commercial broadcasters that work tirelessly to serve their local communities. TV delivers moments of national unity like no other medium, and the legislative framework for broadcasting should reflect Australian values by offering fair and equitable access to Free TV services for everyone,” Ms Fair said.

Free TV’s Free. For Everyone. is today launching its regional television campaign that will be broadcast across Australia in the coming weeks. For a sneak peek see [link](#) here.

**ENDS**

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**ABOUT FREE TV AUSTRALIA**

Free TV Australia is a leading media industry organisation. It represents all of Australia’s commercial television licensees through advocacy, innovation and strategic advice. The members of Free TV Australia are Seven West Media, Nine Entertainment Co, Network 10, Southern Cross Austereo, WIN Network and Imparja Television.