

ACMA discussion paper fails to make the case for further regulation

Free TV Australia today responded to the ACMA's Discussion Paper on Impartiality and Commercial Influence in Broadcast News, saying that commercial television news programs are overwhelmingly free from commercial influence, and viewers know it.

Free TV CEO, Bridget Fair said: "ACMA relied on inherently flawed research to determine whether viewers are concerned about impartiality in television news reporting. At the end of the day, the Discussion Paper failed to put forward any evidence of a problem."

While the Discussion Paper focused on commercial television broadcasting, the ACMA research did not clearly distinguish between different sources of news, including online.

"The research also did not distinguish between the different roles of news, current affairs and other factual programs and many questions posed to viewers could best be described as "leading" rather than in response to unprompted questions. A best practice approach to regulation demands an evidence based approach." said Ms Fair.

"In an environment where the ACCC has recently recommended a platform-neutral regulatory framework, it is perplexing that ACMA has singled out commercial broadcast news for attention. We are already subject to extensive requirements under our Code of Practice. ACMA already has the tools to deal with this issue but the fact is that commercial television news is trusted by the millions of Australians that watch it every day."

"The ACMA Research does show that Australians want trusted, impartial and factual news." Ms Fair said.

Free TV broadcasters deliver over 486 hours of news and current affairs programming to Australian households every week. Over the past four and a half years, there has been only one instance of a breach of impartiality provisions by a commercial television licensee and no instances of breaches of disclosure requirements.

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ABOUT FREE TV AUSTRALIA

Free TV Australia is a leading media industry organisation. It represents all of Australia's commercial free-to-air 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, Prime Media Group, WIN Network and Imparja Television.