



AUSTRALIA

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Outdated Election Blackout Rules Must Be Scrapped

Free TV Australia is calling for urgent reform of Australia’s election advertising blackout rules, labelling them outdated, anti-competitive, and no longer fit for purpose in a digital age.

“The election advertising blackout is a relic of the 1980s – and it’s completely out of step with today’s media landscape,” said Free TV CEO, Bridget Fair. “It’s absurd that broadcasters are banned from airing political ads in the final days before an election, while unregulated digital platforms are free to flood voters with content right up to – and including – polling day.”

The current rules prohibit commercial and national broadcasters from airing political advertising from midnight on the Wednesday before election day. However, these rules do not apply to online platforms, social media, or print – leaving a significant regulatory gap.

“By election day, close to half of all Australians will have already voted – many after seeing political ads online and on TV. Yet, come polling day, the only place you won’t find a political ad is on television or radio. That’s not just outdated – it’s illogical.”

Free TV also raised concerns about the anti-competitive impact of the blackout. As regulated broadcasters are forced to go dark during the most crucial days of a campaign, advertising dollars flow instead to global digital platforms that face no equivalent obligations.

“This is a clear case of regulation failing to keep up with technology,” Bridget Fair said. “It creates an uneven playing field that harms Australian media businesses who spend more than \$400 million a year on news and current affairs funded by advertising.”

Free TV supports consistent, platform-neutral rules that reflect the reality of a converged media environment. The organisation is calling for the blackout rules to be either removed entirely or applied equally across all platforms.

“Multiple government reviews over the past decade have recommended reform – it’s time to act. The blackout no longer serves its original purpose and only penalises the most transparent and accountable media providers in the country.”

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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, WIN Network and Imparja Television.