

3 May 2026

Free TV Welcomes Further Two-Year Commercial Broadcasting Tax Suspension

Decision provides vital certainty for Australian commercial television and the communities it serves

Free TV Australia today welcomed the Albanese Government's announcement that the suspension of the Commercial Broadcasting Tax (CBT) will be extended in the forthcoming Federal Budget for a further two years until 8 June 2028, delivering \$111.3 million in savings for the commercial broadcasting sector.

The CBT, which costs the commercial television industry around \$50 million every year, has placed an unsustainable burden on a sector that is central to Australia's media landscape. The Government's decision to extend the suspension, providing a 100% rebate of CBT liabilities for commercial broadcasters until 8 June 2028, is a meaningful and welcome acknowledgement of the financial challenges facing Free TV broadcasters and the critical public interest role they play in every Australian community.

Taken together with the Government's commitment to implement the News Bargaining Incentive, the News Media Assistance Program, and a prominence framework to ensure Australians can easily access their free television services on connected TVs, today's decision reflects a deep and genuine commitment from the Albanese Government to ensuring the sustainability of local media services into the future.

The extension of the CBT suspension provides crucial certainty to broadcasters during a period of declining advertising revenue, intensifying competition from global digital platforms, and significant cost pressures.

Free television is an essential service for all Australians, a trusted source of news, live sport, and local stories. Free TV broadcasters invest \$1.6 billion every year in Australian content, more than any other media platform, and reach 19 million Australians every week, delivering 390 local news bulletins across the country. At a time when audiences are increasingly fragmented across global platforms that take far more from the Australian market than they put back, free, universally available television remains an important contributor to social cohesion in Australian life, the shared place where Australians come together around trusted news, national sporting moments, and the stories that reflect who we are.

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Bridget Fair, CEO of Free TV Australia, said:

“We thank Minister Wells and the Albanese Government for recognising the real pressures facing commercial television and taking this important step. This is money that can go directly into Australian content, trusted news, live and free sport, and the infrastructure that keeps free television available to every Australian.

Today, the Government has shown that it understands the value of commercial television services to Australian communities and has backed it with real action. We remain committed to delivering for the communities that rely on Free TV services and look forward to working with the Albanese Government to keep the policy settings right for the long term so we can do just that.”

Matt Stanton, Chief Executive Officer, Nine Entertainment Co, said:

“Trusted journalism is the lifeblood of a healthy democracy, and Australian commercial broadcasters carry an enormous share of the load, unlike the global digital platforms. The Government’s decision frees up real resources to support Australian journalism.”

Beverley McGarvey, President Network 10 & Head of Streaming, Paramount ANZ, said:

“Network 10 warmly welcomes this decision from the Albanese Government. The two year extension of the Commercial Broadcasting Tax suspension is a meaningful acknowledgement of the pressures facing our industry. We are the biggest investors in Australian content and this decision will help ensure we can continue delivering the quality entertainment programming, news and live sport that our audiences depend on. We thank Minister Wells and the Government for their commitment to the future of free-to-air television.”

Rohan Lund, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Southern Cross Media Group, said:

“This is a positive step for commercial broadcasters and for the millions of Australians who rely on us every day. The two-year extension means we can keep investing in local newsrooms, live sport and homegrown entertainment that delivers our services to every household.

A pause, however, is not the same as a permanent fix. The case for permanent abolition of the CBT has never been stronger. It is a tax with no equivalent anywhere in the world, and we look forward to working with the Government to make this relief permanent.”

Andrew Lancaster, Chief Executive Officer, WIN Television, said:

“For regional Australia, free-to-air television is the connection to local news, local communities and emergency information when bushfires or floods hit. Commercial television is the only place that delivers local television news services. Regional licensees like WIN face cost pressures, particularly for transmission, that simply do not apply to global streaming services. This extension buys regional broadcasters time to adapt, to plan, and to keep the lights on while a sustainable long-term model is worked through.”

Amy Graham, Chief Executive Officer, Imparja Television, said:

“This is a positive and timely measure that supports the sustainability of the entire free-to-air sector, and regional and remote broadcasters in particular. Imparja operates across some of Australia’s most remote communities, including many First Nations communities. This extension is a practical and forward-thinking measure that strengthens the sustainability of free television and ensures that regional and remote Australians remain at the heart of Australia’s media future.”

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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 Southern Cross Media Group, Nine Entertainment Co, Paramount Network 10, WIN Network, and Imparja Television.