



AUSTRALIA

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Not all they were cracked up to be: new TV laws fail to deliver for all Australians

Free TV Australia today expressed its disappointment that the Prominence and Anti-Siphoning legislation passed by the Senate today does not deliver for all Australians.

Anti-siphoning and prominence laws that were supposed to guarantee free sports and easy access to local TV have passed—but the laws presented to the Parliament by Minister Rowland have failed to ensure that every Australian can share the unforgettable sporting moments that unite us. And only those who can afford a new TV set will get the benefit of prominence rules designed to make it easy to find local news and Australian stories on our screens.

“Free to Air broadcasting is meant to be the universally accessible destination that binds all Australians together. Sadly, with the passing of this bill we will now see a nation of the haves and have-nots when it comes to accessing the broadcasts and online services of our beloved commercial and national networks. How could this be allowed to happen in a country that has always celebrated the fair go for all?”

“We know that increasing numbers of Australians are watching their free TV services online but these laws leave those people with no guarantee of free sport. Research shows that 69 per cent of Australians access their TV via the internet, so it’s hard to understand why these laws do not look after their interests and guarantee free sport for the millions who watch TV online,” said Free TV CEO Bridget Fair.

“The laws contain significant gaps that will ultimately undermine the whole anti-siphoning framework and force Australians to pay thousands of dollars to streaming services to access the sporting events that Australians expect to watch for free”.

The prominence regime was meant to ensure that free local TV services are available and easy to find on connected TVs, not just the global streaming services who pay for prime real estate on viewers’ screens. But the new laws will only apply to new TVs supplied in 18 months’ time. So if you’ve already got a connected TV it will be the paid apps you’ll continue to see at the top of your screen.

“The prominence rules should apply to both new and existing connected TVs. We all know that not everyone can afford a new TV - especially at the moment - when people are already struggling to balance weekly grocery budgets and pay energy bills. Even the Government’s own research shows that less than 1 in 10 people buy a new TV set each year.

And just like with our smart phones, our connected TVs get automatic software updates on a very regular basis. There is simply no reason to limit these new requirements to new TVs. Similar laws that passed in the UK only weeks ago do not include this inexplicable limitation and apply to all sets not just new ones”.

The laws are subject to mandatory legislative review and Free TV has vowed to work actively to improve them for the benefit of all Australians.

“Whether it’s the debate about these laws, policies to support public interest journalism in the face of rising mis- and disinformation, and Meta’s refusal to pay for news, or prohibitive spectrum taxes, Free TV will continue to stand up for Australian audiences, local news and local stories”.

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For media enquiries, please contact:

Bridget Fair
Chief Executive Officer
Free TV Australia
M: 0417 260 478
E: bfair@freetv.com.au

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.