



2 December 2015

The Manager
Broadcasting Carriage Policy Section
Australian Communications and Media Authority

By email to bcp@acma.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Proposal to revoke the mandatory TV sound standard

Foxtel notes that the Australian Communications and Media Authority (**ACMA**) is currently consulting on a proposal to revoke the *Broadcasting Services (Digital Television Format – Audio Component – Transmissions in SDTV Digital Mode) Technical Standard 2007* (the **TV Sound Standard**).

As noted in the ACMA's consultation materials, the TV Sound Standard requires that when a television program is transmitted by a commercial television broadcasting licensee or a national broadcaster in standard definition television (**SDTV**) digital-mode, the audio component must be capable of being decoded by a television receiver that only has MPEG-1 Layer II audio decoding capability.

It is noted that the original purpose of the requirement was to ensure that cheaper digital receivers that were in the market at the commencement of digital television in 2001 would receive the audio track associated with SDTV channels. That is, those receivers needed an MPEG-1 Layer II audio stream to work properly.

The ACMA's view is that this primary policy objective has been achieved because:

- these cheaper terrestrial receivers were supported during digital switchover; and
- more advanced terrestrial reception equipment, which no longer needs this audio stream, is now widely available and inexpensive.

While this may be true for terrestrial reception equipment (leaving aside legacy equipment), the purpose of this letter is to notify the ACMA of an additional impact on a significant number of consumers, being Foxtel subscribers who receive retransmitted SDTV free-to-air (**FTA**) channels via cable networks.

While Foxtel has a range of set top boxes in the field, we note that Foxtel SDTV cable set top boxes, which are currently deployed, are limited to receiving MPEG-1 Layer II sound. If these boxes no longer receive the MPEG-1 Layer II audio stream Foxtel subscribers with these boxes will no longer receive sound on these channels.

Foxtel is consulting with relevant FTA broadcasters about this matter and we request that the ACMA consider deferring revocation of the TV Sound Standard to ensure affected subscribers continue to receive sound on these channels while these discussions are underway.

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If you would like to discuss this impact, or have any questions, please contact Michael Coonan, Foxtel's Manager of Broadcasting Policy on (02) 9813 7633 or at Michael.Coonan@foxtel.com.au.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bruce Meagher', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bruce Meagher

Group Director, Corporate Affairs