

Australian Communications and Media Authority
Consumer research to support the ACMA's Captioning Standard Review

Background.

We are consumers who are profoundly deaf, who do not use Auslan. We have limited computer skills. TV is our main source of information and entertainment. We do not access those sources which do not have captioning. Programs which utilise subtitling / closed captioning, we find generally meet the Standard's requirement to be readable, accurate and comprehensible.

The problems.

Our main issue is with free to air programs which provide live news, current affairs, emergency warnings. They were our main source of information during the COVID pandemic. Unfortunately, as identified in a recent publication, 'Stolen Focus' people talk significantly faster now than in past decades. Fast rate of speech is a daily communication challenge for us.

With TV, this is one of the issues that leads to captioning being: out of sync with content: inaccuracies : moving so quickly it is impossible to read and understand. As an example recent inaccuracies noted on channel 9 news were an item about “surge reap” and weather “etch boos”.

Whilst this is annoying, when it comes to emergency warnings, or situations related to COVID, we feel vulnerable and unsafe. We have, in the past communicated our concerns with TV stations with no improvement.

Recommendation.

That providers of these services be held to account by the ACMA to ensure the quality of their presenters and the use of improved technology, to ensure accurate, readable, comprehensive – and ultimately meaningful, enjoyable programs, for those of us who are deaf, hard of hearing viewers.

Peter & Jill Lindley
13 / 53 Windemere Rd
Alexandra Hills 4161

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