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Regional television exceeds local content quotas

Regional commercial television broadcasters have all met their local content quota requirements in the first six months of the operation of the licence condition imposed by the ABA in 2003.

The licence condition requires licensees to broadcast a minimum 90 points of local content per week and at least 720 points of local content over a six-week timing period (this averages out at 120 points per week). These quota points accrue on the basis of two points per minute for local news and one point per minute for other material, excluding paid advertising.

NBN and WIN Television substantially exceeded their quota points, achieving a weekly average of over two hundred quota points in every local area served. Prime Television achieved an average of over two hundred points in five of the twelve local areas it served while Channel Seven Queensland averaged more than a hundred and eighty points in each local area it served. Southern Cross Broadcasters also achieved the quota.

'It is very pleasing to see that the regional licensees are broadcasting these levels of local content,' said Lyn Maddock, Acting ABA Chair. 'The results for the first six months of the operation of the new licence condition show that all licensees provided their audiences with local content relevant to their local areas. It is particularly gratifying to note that all licensees also exceeded the minimum quota requirements.'

The introduction of the local content licence condition has meant that many regional areas now receive a diverse range of local news and information from two or three different broadcasters.

Southern Cross Broadcasters has reintroduced news updates and introduced local community information programs across all licence areas it serves. In regional Queensland and regional Victoria, Channel Seven Queensland, Prime, Southern Cross and WIN are also providing local community information in addition to news broadcasts and updates in most local areas they serve.

Regional areas served

After an investigation into the adequacy of the broadcast of local content by regional commercial television licensees, the ABA imposed an additional licence condition on licensees in the following markets:

- Channel Seven Queensland, Southern Cross and WIN Television in Regional Queensland
- NBN, Prime Television and Southern Cross in Northern NSW
- Prime Television, Southern Cross and WIN Television in Southern NSW and
- Prime Television, Southern Cross and WIN Television in Regional Victoria.

The licence condition requires licensees to broadcast a minimum 90 points of local content per week and at least 720 points of local content over a six-week period. The reporting obligations of the licence condition came into effect on 1 February 2004. During the first three six-week time periods (1 February to 5 June 2004) broadcasters achieved the following weekly averages:

Channel Seven Queensland

- between 184 and 207 points in the five local areas served in Regional Queensland

NBN

- more than 260 points in every local area served in Northern NSW, with a high of 328 points in the Hunter

Prime

- between 130 and 250 points in the four local areas in Southern NSW
- between 134 and 235 points in the four local areas served in Northern NSW
- between 130 and 244 points in the four local areas in Regional Victoria
- Southern Cross Broadcasters
- between 123 and 124 points in each local area served in Northern NSW, Southern NSW, Regional Victoria and Regional Queensland

WIN Television

- over 285 points in the four local areas in Southern NSW, with a high of 318 points in the Illawarra & South Coast
- between 264 and 269 points



in the five local areas served in Regional Queensland

- between 130 and 244 points in the four local areas in Regional Victoria
- more than 228 points in the four local areas served in Regional Victoria and 341 points in the Upper Murray and Goulburn Valley.

The licence condition divided the four licence areas into a number of smaller local areas, reflecting the different communities of interest within those areas and also imposed a requirement that minimum amounts of local news and local content or information had to be broadcast by the licensees in those areas.

The licence condition further requires that within each licence area each regional licensee must serve a specific number of local areas.

- five out of seven local areas in Regional Queensland
- four out of five local areas in Northern NSW and
- all four local areas in Southern NSW and Regional Victoria.

Licensees' local content

NBN meets the quota obligations by broadcasting a one-hour local news bulletin and local news updates each day. The licensee also broadcasts a local magazine style show three days a week to all local areas served.

Prime provides half-hour local news bulletins on weekdays in three local areas in Northern NSW, two local areas in Southern NSW and one local area in Regional Victoria.

In the remaining local areas, Prime broadcasts daily local news updates and other specific local material including

Table 1: Average weekly points in local areas served by broadcasters

REGIONAL QUEENSLAND

Local areas (broadcasters to serve 5 of 7)	NBN	Prime	WIN	Southern Cross	Seven Qld
Capricornia			264	124	#
Central Coast & Whitsundays			#	123	184
Darling Downs			269	123	#
Far North Queensland			269	124	189
North Queensland			269	124	193
Sunshine Coast			269	#	207
Wide Bay			#	#	189

NORTHERN NSW

Local areas (broadcasters to serve 4 of 5)	NBN	Prime	WIN	Southern Cross	Seven Qld
Central Coast	261	#		#	
Hunter	328	134		123	
Northern Rivers & Mid North Coast	265	206		123	
North West Slopes & Plains	269	235		123	
Richmond/Tweed	#	161		123	

SOUTHERN NSW

Local areas	NBN	Prime	WIN	Southern Cross	Seven Qld
ACT & Southern Tablelands		130	285	123	
Central Tablelands & Central West Slopes		235	294	123	
South West Slopes & East Riverina		129	286	123	
Illawarra & South Coast		250	318	123	

REGIONAL VICTORIA

Local areas	NBN	Prime	WIN	Southern Cross	Seven Qld
Gippsland		130	238	124	
North Central Victoria		130	228	124	
South West Victoria		131	243	123	
Upper Murray & Goulburn Valley		244	341	123	

* Average weekly points over 18 week period 1.2.04 – 5.6.04

Broadcaster is not required to meet a quota for this local area

Does not broadcast to this area

non-commercial community information, a one-hour a week rural focus program and a locally produced country music program on weekends.

Channel Seven Queensland meets its quota obligation by providing half hour local news bulletins in each of the five local areas served in Regional Queensland – the only regional

licence area it holds a licence.

Southern Cross broadcasts individual news updates four times each weekday in all 17 local areas served. It also provides weekly individual community information segments in each of the local areas served, and on Saturday broadcasts a half hour current affairs program focusing on regional

issues in each licence area.

WIN Television provides a half hour news services in each local area it serves in the Regional Queensland, Southern NSW and Regional Victoria licence areas. It also provides local community information in most of the local areas it serves. 