

Children's Television Standards varied

Minor technical changes have been made to the Children's Television Standards (CTS), which came into effect on 1 July 2005. In some areas, the CTS were poorly drafted and ambiguous, which led to difficulties in interpretation for broadcasters.

The variations clarify the operation of the CTS and ensure that the wording aligns with the policy intent of the standards – they do not set a new policy direction for children's programming. There are no changes to broadcasters' quota figures for children's programs, advertising limits or the criteria used to classify children's programs.

As a result of the variations, minor technical variations were also made to the Australian Content Standard.

ACMA has the power to make and vary standards for children's programs on commercial free-to-air television under the

Broadcasting Services Act. The objective of the CTS is to ensure that the child audience has access to quality Australian children's programming on free-to-air commercial television.

Under the CTS, commercial free-to-air television licensees must broadcast at least 390 hours of children's programming. This includes 260 hours of Children's (C) programs and 130 hours of Australian preschool (P) programs per year. There are separate sub-quotas for first release Australian C drama. The CTS also deal with promotions, announcements, advertisements and other issues relevant to broadcasts during children's viewing times.

The standards and their explanatory statements are on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au (go to Radio&TV > Content Regulation > Television > Codes and Standards).

THE VARIATIONS TO THE CHILDREN'S TELEVISION STANDARDS:

- define key terms such as 'C period', 'C material', 'P period', 'P material', 'live coverage', and 'community service announcement'
- adopt consistent terminology and
- ensure that the CTS are consistent with recent variations to the Australian Content Standard in relation to Australian C drama quotas.

THE VARIATIONS ALSO CLARIFY THAT LICENSEES CAN:

- claim the whole of a C or P period towards their quota requirements – the C and P periods are made up of C or P programs and additional non-program C or P material allowed under the CTS
- displace some C periods to allow 'plausible live' coverage of major events, which are suitable for viewing by children – 'plausible live' broadcasts are those, such as sports events broadcasts, that have been delayed in certain places for time zone reasons
- broadcast G classified promotions for sports events coverage suitable for viewing by children, during breaks immediately before, during, or immediately after, C or P periods
- broadcast voice-over promotions for C programs during the end credits of other C programs
- broadcast up to seven minutes of non-program material per 30 minutes, where non-drama C programs are broadcast – the non-program material can include G classified community service announcements, up to one minute of station identifications and program promotions and up to five minutes of advertisements and
- broadcast up to 13 minutes per hour of non-program material during Australian C drama programs – the non-program material can include advertisements, program promotions, community service announcements and station identifications.

CHILDREN'S AND PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

The Children's Television Standards (CTS) require commercial television licensees to broadcast minimum annual quotas of children's programming. All C (children's) and P (preschool) programs must be classified by ACMA before being broadcast on

free-to-air commercial television. Program classification is based on criteria contained in the CTS and the Australian Content Standard. These standards are available on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au (go to Radio&TV > Content

regulation > Television > Codes & Standards).

The objective of the CTS is that 'children should have access to a variety of quality television programs made specifically for them, including Australian drama and non-drama programs.'

Classification categories include Provisional P and C, full P and C, and Australian C Drama at both pre-production and completed stages.

The table provides information about the programs granted classification in July.

PROGRAMS GRANTED CLASSIFICATION, JULY 2005

PROGRAM TITLE	SERIES	EPISODE NUMBERS	PROGRAM STYLE	PROGRAM TYPE	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	NEW/RENEWAL	CLASS	DECISION DATE	APPLICANT
<i>Here's Humphrey</i>	5	1-26	Live action/puppetry	Light entertainment – variety	Australia	Renewal	P	15 Jul	Banksia Productions Pty Ltd
<i>FARMKids</i>	1	1-26	Animation	Drama – series	Australia	New	PRC	21 Jul	FARMKids Pty Ltd
<i>Swamp</i>	1	1-52	Animation	Drama – series	Australia	New	PRC	29 Jul	Upstage Productions Pty Ltd
<i>Wormwood</i>	1	1-26	Live action	Drama – series	Australia	New	PRC	29 Jul	AIP Entertainment Pty Ltd
<i>Seaside Hotel</i>	2	1-26	Animation	Drama – series	Australia	New	PRC	27 Jul	Yoram Gross EM TV Pty Ltd
<i>Mortified</i>	1	1-13	Live action	Drama – series	Australia	New	CD	15 Jul	Australian Children's Television Foundation
<i>Faireez</i>	2	40-52	Animation	Drama – series	Australia	New	CD	29 Jul	Moody Street Kids Pty Ltd

C – children's program, P – preschool, CD – C drama, PRC – provisional C, Class – classification