

# Narrowcasting television guidelines released

To support provision of new media services for Australian consumers through the allocation of two new licences for digital television services, ACMA has released guidelines for the types of services that may be provided as narrowcasting television services under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

ACMA has chosen not to adopt a prescriptive approach in the guidelines. As the broadcasting industry moves away from linear formats and mass appeal services that have been the norm since television was introduced, it is undesirable to determine the category a digital television service falls into without knowing the precise circumstances of that service.

Recognising these new possibilities, the guidelines aim to encourage provision of new and innovative narrowcasting television services that will help stimulate the take-up of digital television services by Australian audiences. The digital television platform allows for a wide range of potential service formats and it would be undesirable to pre-empt the category into which a proposed service falls, without knowing the precise circumstances of that service.

New legislation to support the emergence of new digital services for Australian consumers allows for the allocation of two datacasting transmitter licences (Channel A and Channel B). Datacasting services, narrowcasting television and certain other services may be provided under these licences, but not commercial broadcasting television services.

Narrowcasting services have their reception limited in some way—such as by being targeted to a special interest group. In the case of ‘open’ narrowcasting services, subsection 18(1) of the Broadcasting Services Act provides that reception may be limited:

- by being targeted to special interest groups; or
- by being intended only for limited locations, for example, arenas or business premises; or
- by being provided during a limited period or to cover a special event; or
- because they provide programs which are of limited appeal; or for some other reason.

A subscription narrowcasting service has the additional characteristic that it is made available only on payment of a subscription fee.

Current open narrowcasting television services include an Indigenous programming service based in Broome, a tourist information service based in Darwin, trial community television services based in Adelaide and Mt Gambier, and television services that broadcast on frequencies outside the broadcasting services bands. While narrowcasting television services have been possible under the existing legislative framework, increased interest in providing these types of services is anticipated.

The specific aims of the new guidelines are:

- to assist prospective providers of narrowcasting services on television to understand the types of television services that are likely to be categorised as narrowcasting under the Broadcasting Services Act and
- to explain how ACMA will approach applications under section 21 of the Broadcasting Services Act for opinions about the category a proposed service falls into under that section.

While ACMA must take into account a range of factors when forming an opinion on the category of a service, the content of the

programs is the factor most likely to determine whether or not the service is a narrowcasting service.

Prospective providers of narrowcasting television services are strongly encouraged to seek binding opinions from ACMA on the categories into which their proposed services fall. Such opinions can be sought from ACMA at any time and remain valid for a minimum of five years. Information about how to apply for a category-of-service opinion is on the ACMA website at [www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au) (go to For licensees & industry: Licensing & regulation > Broadcasting:

Broadcasting licensing > Applying for a broadcasting licence > Category-of-service opinions (section 21)).

*Narrowcasting Television Services – Guidelines and Information* is also on the ACMA website (go to For licensees & industry: Licensing & regulation > Media ownership & control > Allocation of unassigned TV channels), as well as a fact sheet, *Media reform – guidelines for narrowcasting television services* (go to For licensees & industry: Licensing & regulation > Media ownership & control > About media reform).

## Children’s and preschool programs

### PROGRAMS GRANTED CLASSIFICATION, APRIL 2007

Program title	Series	Episode description	Program style	Program type	Country of origin	New/renewal	Class	Decision date	Applicant
<i>Animalia</i>	1	2, 3, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21	Animation	Drama – Series	Australia	New	CD	18/4/07	Animalia Productions Pty Limited
<i>Sea Princesses</i>	1	1–26	Animation	Drama – Series	Australia	New	CD	12/4/07	Southern Star Entertainment Pty Ltd
<i>The Kangaroo Creek Gang</i>	1	1–26	Animation	Drama – Series	Australia	Renewal	CD	23/4/07	Southern Star Entertainment Pty Ltd
<i>The Shak</i>	4	SHAK0196–SHAK0265	Live Action	Light Entertainment – Magazine	Australia	New	C	23/4/07	Nine Network Australia Pty Ltd
<i>g2g</i>	1	1–13	Animation	Drama – Series	Australia	New	CD	2/4/07	Moody Street Kids Pty Ltd

Class – Classification, C – C Classification, CD – C Drama, P – P Classification, PRC – Provisional C, PRP – Provisional P  
A classification expires five years after the date it was granted or renewed