

Parental lock to be compulsory from February 2011

Every Australian parent will soon be able to simply and effectively control the programs their children watch when parental locks become a required feature of all digital television receivers from 4 February 2011.

The ACMA determined the new technical standard in August to allow all parents to control access to programs based on their classification: G, PG, M or MA. A substantial proportion of domestic reception equipment currently available already includes the parental lock feature, but from February 4 next year it will be a requirement for every device on the market to carry it.

'Mandating the inclusion of parental lock in digital receivers supports parents and guardians in protecting their children from content on television which they might consider inappropriate or harmful,' said Chris Chapman, Chairman of the ACMA.

Under the standard, the parental lock feature must be available in domestic reception equipment, including integrated digital televisions, set-top boxes and personal video recorders, introduced into Australia from 4 February 2011.

The parental lock feature enables parents to block programs of a particular classification unless the correct personal identification number is entered first. Anyone considering the purchase of new equipment in the period leading up to 4 February 2011 should seek advice from a retailer regarding which models currently have this feature.

Those who do not want to use the feature do not need to activate it and will not be affected.

A consultation process was undertaken by the ACMA earlier in the year to seek the views of industry and consumers.

'I thank the television supply industry for its positive engagement in the development of the standard. Solutions to a number of key issues raised during the consultation process were incorporated within the standard,' said Mr Chapman.

'The standard ensures that certain equipment supplied to the market meets consumer needs for an appropriate

Mandating the inclusion of parental lock in digital receivers supports parents and guardians in protecting their children from content on television which they might consider inappropriate or harmful.

and effective protection mechanism for children. The ACMA has worked to ensure the standard is clear and unambiguous so as to assist industry in meeting its obligations.'

The standard was determined by the ACMA in response to a direction from the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, to make parental lock a required feature in domestic digital television receivers. ☎

The standard is available on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au (go to For licensees and industry: Licensing and regulation > Broadcasting: Digital broadcasting codes and standards > Parental lock in domestic digital television reception equipment).