

Working together to improve captioning on Australian TV

The ACMA held a captioning workshop in Sydney on 16 September to facilitate discussion and collectively explore practical solutions with relevant stakeholders.

There are currently many unresolved issues surrounding the quality and consistency of captions on Australian television. From a consumer perspective, these issues extend to effectiveness of the complaints process and overall accountability of the present captioning framework.

The ACMA has a role under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*, the Commercial Industry Television Code of Practice and both the SBS and ABC codes of practice, regarding the provision of captioning on television for the deaf and hearing-impaired community.

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In spite of this, the ACMA has limited capacity to assess the overall quality of program captions, which results in many consumer complaints about them.

Chaired by former Authority member Johanna Plante, a total of 40 representatives from the consumer, industry and regulatory sectors attended the workshop, which covered:

- > quality, delivery, and regulatory captioning issues experienced by stakeholders
- > practical and technical considerations for captioning, both live and pre-recorded
- > what outcome consumers, industry and the ACMA would like to see
- > audio description developments
- > the regulatory options for addressing relevant issues.

It is thought that this forum was the first time such a wide range of stakeholders had come together to discuss these issues. During the workshop, it was agreed that it would be beneficial to continue discussions and establish a process by which these issues could be further explored, with a view to developing provisions and benchmarks into how caption quality can be improved.

As a result of the workshop, a captioning committee has been formed. Made up of broadcasters, caption service providers, consumers, and the ACMA, the committee will work towards establishing flexible, measurable and deliverable quality indicators.

The committee will convene its first meeting this month. 🗓️