

# EPG monitoring ramps up in preparation for parental lock

The ACMA has expanded its monitoring and reporting of free-to-air television network electronic program guides (EPGs) as the start date for compulsory parental lock approaches. Accurate EPG data is vital in order for the parental lock feature to operate effectively.

'Under the parental lock standard, which was determined by the ACMA in July 2010, parental lock will be a required feature of all new model digital television receivers sold in Australia from 4 February 2011,' said Chris Chapman, Chairman of the ACMA. 'The decision to mandate parental lock as a standard feature of all digital television receivers means audiences will have all the more reason to expect a fully functional EPG to support this new feature.'

EPGs provide details on channel content as well as valuable information like program names, classification and synopsis of content. Parental lock allows parents and guardians to exercise control over children's viewing to limit access to inappropriate content.

In June 2009, the ACMA published a series of EPG principles to improve the availability and accuracy of EPG services. Since that time, the ACMA has monitored broadcaster's performance against the principles and reported publicly on the results each quarter.

'Monitoring to date has indicated that all television networks are meeting three out of the four criteria contained in the EPG principles, but some are not yet meeting the criterion of accurate present/following data,' said Mr Chapman.

The 'present/following' (or 'now/next') section of the EPG contains key information about the program on air and the program scheduled to follow. The ACMA has expanded its monitoring and reporting arrangements to specifically focus on present/following accuracy as it is a key contributor to the effective operation of parental lock in consumer equipment. These new reports are compiled monthly and published on the ACMA website.

Mr Chapman has also acknowledged the work carried out by the television industry to meet its obligations under the EPG principles and the importance to consumers of an accurate EPG.

In summary, under the ACMA's EPG principles, broadcasters should provide EPG information that:

- > is free of charge and in a format that can be accessed by all free-to-air digital TV reception equipment
- > includes program schedule information for a minimum of seven days
- > includes program classification information
- > includes accurate information about the present and following programs being aired, including their start times. 📺

Further information about the EPG principles, including all EPG performance reports published by the ACMA to date, is available on the ACMA website at [www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au) (go to: For licensees and industry: Service and technical requirements > Broadcasting: Digital TV > Electronic program guide principles).

More information on the parental lock standard is also available on the ACMA website (go to: For licensees and industry: Licensing and regulation > Broadcasting: Digital broadcasting codes and standards > Parental lock in domestic digital television reception equipment).

