

Parental lock takes effect

Parents will be able to more effectively monitor their children's television viewing habits, with the parental lock now a compulsory feature on all new digital television receivers sold in Australia.

Parental lock allows controlled access to programs based on their classification; for example, G, PG, M or MA. While this setting is currently available on many existing televisions, set-top boxes and personal video recorders, all new digital television receivers introduced to the market after 4 February 2011 must have the parental lock feature.

'The ACMA has introduced the parental lock standard, after consultation with industry and consumers, to support parents and guardians in protecting their children from content on television which they might consider inappropriate or harmful,' said ACMA Chairman Chris Chapman.

When activating parental lock in their equipment, users are prompted to select a program classification level above which they wish programs to be blocked (for example, 'PG and above') and a personal identification number (PIN). The parental lock feature then prevents any program classified at or above the selected level from being shown on the equipment unless the PIN number is entered.

Parental lock can be disabled permanently at any time through the menu but will require PIN entry to be changed. Viewers should record and store this PIN when first setting parental lock.

If viewers do not choose to activate the feature it will not have any effect on their digital television equipment.

Parental lock will not block programs that are not subject to classification, such as news, current affairs and sports programs. Parents who are concerned that these types of programs may contain inappropriate content for their children cannot rely on parental lock.

Some digital television receivers currently for sale may have been supplied before the standard took effect, and so may not include the parental lock feature. Retailers will be able to advise consumers if a particular model has parental lock and demonstrate how it works. ☎

For further consumer information on parental lock, visit the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au (go to For the public: Consumer & community advice > Broadcasting: Digital television > Digital television – viewers and consumers > Parental lock).



Information for industry

Industry requirements are set out in the *Broadcasting and Datacasting Services (Parental Lock) Technical Standard 2010*. From 4 February 2011, it became an offence to supply new equipment to the Australian market that does not have the parental lock feature. However, manufacturers, importers and retailers can continue to supply equipment that does not have the lock if the brand and model of the equipment was first offered for sale prior to 4 February 2011.

There are no labelling or record-keeping requirements currently in force for the parental lock standard. The ACMA will investigate reports of the supply of new equipment without the parental lock function after 4 February 2011, to ascertain whether there has been any contravention of requirements under the parental lock standard. Offence and civil penalty provisions for the parental lock standard are set out in subsections 130b(2) and 130b(3) of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*. Contraventions of these provisions may incur pecuniary penalties of up to \$165,000. ☎

For further information on industry requirements, or for a copy of the standard and associated documents, visit the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au (go to For licensees & industry: Licensing & regulation > Broadcasting: Digital broadcasting codes and standards > Parental lock in domestic digital television reception equipment).