



Media release

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Audio description trial to commence on the ABC second half of 2012

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), Blind Citizens Australia, Media Access Australia and Vision Australia welcome the announcement by Senator Stephen Conroy of an audio description trial to commence on ABC1 television in the second half of 2011, which will provide a voice description of the visual broadcast for people who are blind or vision impaired.

Audio description provides a narrative soundtrack that runs alongside audio and describes actions and non-verbal cues that are occurring on screen so that people who are blind and vision-impaired can fully enjoy programs on television.

“Blind and vision-impaired Australians will be delighted to hear that soon they will be able to enjoy prime-time television without missing any of the action,” said ACCAN Disability Policy Adviser Wayne Hawkins.

“This audio description trial on the national broadcaster is an Australian first and one advocates have been waiting a long time for. This is really exciting news.”

“Vision Australia is excited that the trial of audio description on television will commence soon. This will bring a whole new meaning to ‘watching’ TV for people who are blind or have low vision,” said Michael Simpson, Vision Australia’s General Manager of Advocacy.

The trial will run on ABC1 for 14 hours per week over a 13-week period in the second half of 2012.

“We congratulate the alliance of consumer groups including Media Access Australia, Vision Australia and Blind Citizens Australia which has campaigned long and hard on these issues and successfully made the case that media accessibility issues are crucial quality of life factors for millions of Australians,” said Mr Hawkins.

“We see this trial as an important first step in introducing audio description across all Australian television broadcasts. We’re confident that a comprehensive trial of the technology will quickly translate into a permanent audio description service.”

Media contact

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Wayne Hawkins is available for radio interviews. Wayne is legally blind after losing his eyesight in 2005 as an adult due to retinitis pigmentosa. He is dedicated to issues concerning people with disability, especially in relation to accessibility for television, cinema and other media.

About ACCAN

ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) is Australia's peak communications consumer organisation. ACCAN's goal is available, accessible and affordable communications that enhance the lives of consumers. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Australian government.