



Hot issues

More captioning needed on Australian TV

Accurate and comprehensible captions on broadcast television provide a better viewing experience for many people.

Captions are an essential service for people who are Deaf or hearing-impaired. They also assist young children and people learning English, provide additional information for people with cognitive impairments and allow many people who are in noisy environments to know what is being said on TV.

Captions on Australian television are required under the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) 1992. There are a number of variables which outline the requirements for different services. This means that not all television broadcasts have to provide the same level of captioning, although all captions are required to meet basic 'quality' standards which are set out in the [Captioning Quality Standard](#) and are monitored by the Australian media and Communications Authority (ACMA).

In recent years there have been a number of Government reviews of these captioning requirements beginning with the Broadcasting and Other Legislation Amendment (Deregulation) Bill 2015 and most recently, the [ACMA's Review](#) of the captioning obligations in the Broadcasting Services Act 1992. ACCAN [made a submission](#) to the review.

ACCAN represents many consumers who rely on captions when watching TV. ACCAN has long held the view that captions are an essential service and provide access to what is our foremost medium for news, information and entertainment.

ACCAN maintains that captions are a human right for people with hearing-impairments because they provide access to information and in turn, greater access to economic, social and community participation. When all Australians have equal access to information the whole community benefits.

In our submissions and work in this area we have worked constructively with the broadcast industry, the ACMA and the Government to promote greater provision of accurate and comprehensible captions. We have made a number of considered recommendations in our submissions which we believe will not only benefit caption users but also benefit the whole community.

These recommendations include:

- Expand free-to-air television captions to full broadcast day- up from the current 6am to midnight requirement.
- Include captioning quotas on free-to-air multi channels – currently they are only required to caption repeat programming.
- Investigate proposals from the Australian Subscription Television Industry Association to provide better captioning outcomes for consumers.

- Require all emergency warning broadcasts to provide captions.
- Require emergency warning broadcasts to include the Auslan interpreter in the broadcast whenever an interpreter is present at an emergency warning media announcement.

ACCAN's submission to the ACMA review of captioning obligations in the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 can be accessed on [our website](#).