



**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM SENATOR MCKENZIE  
IN RELATION TO THE PACKAGE OF MEDIA REFORM BILLS**

1. In your submission to the Joint Select Committee on Broadcasting Legislation you state:

*PRIME produces local half-hour news bulletins 5 days a week, and news and weather updates throughout the day and evenings in each of its regional and rural markets of Western Australia, Albury/Wodonga, Wagga Wagga, Orange/Bathurst, Tamworth/New England region, and the mid North Coast of New South Wales.*

Your submission states that the obligation to broadcast material of local significance can be protected far more effectively by regulation and licence conditions, notwithstanding the removal of the 75% reach rule.

Can you provide in detail how you came to this view point when other submissions and comments to this committee are of the opposite view?

PRIME's view is that the removal of the 75% reach rule should be treated as a separate policy issue to the licence obligation we currently have in place to broadcast material of local significance.

In certain regional television licence areas of regional Queensland, northern NSW, southern NSW, regional Victoria and Tasmania, broadcasters have a regulatory requirement to broadcast material of local significance, which can relate to a local area or the licence area.

Regional licensees, such as PRIME, will continue to adhere to its licence conditions notwithstanding the removal of the reach rule.

When the Minister announced on 30 November 2012 that the 75% reach rule would be removed, he stated that "this will be subject to adherence to existing local content obligations in regional areas and written undertakings in respect of those obligations".

In the case of potential consolidations that may come to fruition as a consequence of the removal of the reach rule, any purchaser of a business that holds a regional television licence will acquire it subject to adherence to local content obligations that may be attached to that licence and licence area. In terms of regulation, the ACMA has the discretion under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* to accept enforceable undertakings and, as a guiding principle, the ACMA states it considers acceptance of such undertakings where it provides an effective regulatory outcome. This regulatory tool could be used to preserve the provision of material of local significance in licence areas where such a condition presently exist.

2. ***Is this the comprehensive response to the issues raised in the Finkelstein Report and Convergence Review that you expected?***

PRIME did not comment on the Finkelstein Report as the primary focus of that report was on the print media sector. However, as a member of Free TV, it expressed opposition to a public interest test.

PRIME did not respond directly to the Convergence Review, but as a member of Free TV, we engaged in lengthy discussions with the Government and made two submissions. We are satisfied that the *Television Licence Fees Amendment Bill 2013* and the *Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Convergence Review and Other Measures) Bill 2013* adequately reflect the industry's concerns as articulated to the Convergence Review in our submissions.

**3. *The department told the Joint Select Committee on Broadcasting Legislation yesterday that it canvassed the Bills with television networks in November 2012. Was that the case then? Is it still the case now?***

The department has not at any time directly canvassed the Bills with PRIME. PRIME is aware, however, that the department has had discussions about the Bills with Free TV on behalf of the television industry. PRIME is not aware if the department has canvassed the Bills with other television networks.

**4. *If regional news services were diminished, how many jobs - both journalistic and production based, would go?***

As stated in our submission to the Joint Select Committee on Broadcasting Legislation, PRIME is a committed regional broadcaster producing local news and content in excess of our material of local significance licence obligations.

PRIME cannot speak generally to the proposition of possible diminution of news services by other regional broadcasters or future owners of regional television licences, but PRIME has no plans to change its delivery of or commitment to local news services and as such, anticipates that it will continue to employ local news editors, journalists, reporters, camera crews and studio production personnel across our regional network.