



Australian Community Television Alliance

Suite 1 2-4 Douglas Street, Southbank, VIC 3006 Woi Wurrung Country

23 May 2024

The Manager
Broadcasting Carriage Policy Section
Australian Communications and Media Authority
PO Box 78
Belconnen ACT 2616

Email: BCP@acma.gov.au

Dear Manager,

Proposal to vary the Melbourne television licence area plan regarding community TV - Consultation paper

The Australian Community Television Alliance (ACTA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to your proposal to vary the Melbourne Television Licence Area Plan (TLAP) to remove the allotment end dates for the community television broadcasting service provided by Melbourne Community Television Consortium Ltd (C31 Melbourne).

We commend the proposed amendments that will allow C31 Melbourne to continue delivering its valuable services beyond the current end date of June 30, 2024. This proposal is a significant step towards ensuring the stability and sustainability of community television in Melbourne.

Support for the Proposal

The Broadcasting Services Amendment (Community Television) Act 2024, which took effect on April 9, 2024, brought about crucial changes by repealing the June 30, 2024, expiry date for the transmitter licences of C31 Melbourne. This legislative amendment is pivotal in allowing C31 Melbourne to operate its radiocommunications transmitters and continue providing community television broadcasting services beyond that date.

Key Provisions and Benefits

The amendment act outlines a new ACMA-led process to determine a future cessation date for apparatus licensing, ensuring a transparent and consultative approach. The power given to ACMA to declare, by notifiable instrument, when an alternative use for the spectrum used by C31 Melbourne has been identified, is a balanced and forward-thinking measure. This ensures that C31 Melbourne

can continue its operations until the spectrum is needed for another purpose, with at least two concurrent six-month notice periods post-declaration before any cessation determination takes effect.

The proposed variation to the Melbourne TLAP, which removes the end dates for C31 Melbourne, is in line with the objectives of section 3 of the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), particularly in promoting the availability of a diverse range of television services and maintaining diversity in community broadcasting during the transition to digital broadcasting.

Considerations and Recommendations

We appreciate the ACMA's recognition of the importance of community television and its role in promoting cultural diversity, local content, and community engagement. By ensuring C31 Melbourne can continue its broadcasting services, the proposal supports the economic and efficient use of spectrum, benefiting the broader community.

However, we emphasise the need for clear communication and consultative processes with C31 Melbourne and other stakeholders to ensure any transition to alternative spectrum uses is managed smoothly and without disruption to community services. The two concurrent six-month notice periods are a minimum requirement, and we advocate for longer lead times where possible to allow for adequate preparation and adjustment.

Furthermore, we encourage ongoing discussions about issues such as converting C44 Adelaide's licence from a narrowcast licence to a community television licence, inclusion for C31 Melbourne's BVOD Smart TV app under prominence protection legislation and future broadcast technologies that might accommodate community television, ensuring that C31 Melbourne can continue to serve its audience through innovative and sustainable means.

Conclusion

ACTA fully supports the proposal to vary the Melbourne TLAP to remove the allotment end dates for C31 Melbourne. This proposal not only aligns with the legislative framework provided by the Amendment Act but also reinforces the critical role of community television in Australia's media landscape. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with ACMA to ensure the long-term viability and growth of community television services.

Thank you for considering our input. We are committed to working together to support the continued success and evolution of community television in Melbourne.



Shane Dunlop

President, ACTA

The Australian Community Television Alliance (ACTA) is a not-for-profit industry association, representing free-to-air Community Television (CTV) channels licensed by the Australian Government under the Cth. Broadcasting Services Act, 1992. ACTA was established to represent existing and potential CTV licensees and to advance the interests of community television in Australia.