

Regulation and self-regulation

Weblink

The right to broadcast TV in Australia is controlled by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), a statutory authority within the Federal Government portfolio of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. ACMA administers the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* on behalf of the Federal Government. In addition to allocating broadcast rights, this powerful government organisation regulates TV, radio, internet and mobile phone content, overseeing much of what we watch and listen to in the media.

ACMA works with commercial media organisations to determine codes of practice that are administered by these organisations under co-regulation. TV stations, for example, classify their own programs using guidelines similar to those used by the Classification Board.

- Free-to-air TV is represented by Free TV
- Pay TV is represented by the Australian Subscription Television & Radio Association (ASTRA)
- Commercial radio is represented by Commercial Radio Australia
- Music is represented by the Australian Record Industry Association (ARIA)
- The internet is represented by the Internet Industry Association

- Mobile phones are represented by the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA)

The operating guidelines under which these industry organisations work are clear. Each agency ensures that decisions are consistent and in keeping with community standards and regulations as outlined by ACMA.

In this world of media convergence, the challenge is in regulating the content of and access to online media texts, such as computer games, images and films. Does the online environment make classification redundant? Is there any way to regulate a global industry? How can we protect vulnerable audiences while allowing adults access to online material?

ACMA and the Classification Board are very aware of these issues; they have commissioned research and sought opinion from around the world to discuss the very delicate balance between protection and censorship. If you are interested, have a look at their websites.

About ACMA

ACMA was established on 1 July 2005 by the merger of the Australian Broadcasting Authority and the Australian Communications Authority. It employs approximately 700 people. ACMA works closely with relevant industries to achieve active self-regulation,

while ensuring industry compliance with licence conditions, codes and standards. ACMA monitors the effect of regulations to ensure they are responsive to the community's needs.

Broadcasting

ACMA regulates broadcasting services in Australia. This includes:

- Planning the radiofrequency spectrum that radio and TV services use
- Issuing and renewing licences to broadcasters
- Administering commercial ownership and control rules to maintain media diversity; regulating broadcasting content; developing program standards or licence conditions on specific issues
- Supporting the development of codes of practice for the industry to ensure community safeguards.

The internet

ACMA is responsible for monitoring online content, including internet and mobile phone content, and enforcing Australia's anti-spam law. Its role includes:

- Investigating complaints about online content and gambling services
- Encouraging the development of codes of practice for internet service providers and online content service providers, and monitoring compliance with these codes
- Informing the community about internet safety issues, particularly those relating to children.

Radiofrequency spectrum

ACMA plans and manages the radiofrequency spectrum in Australia. It is responsible for compliance with licensing requirements and investigating complaints of interference to services. The scope of ACMA's role includes:

- Spectrum planning
- Apparatus licensing

- Radiofrequency class licensing
- Spectrum licensing, auctions and trading
- Satellite communications and space systems regulation
- International radiocommunications activities.

Telecommunications

ACMA licenses Australia's telecommunications carriers and regulates fixed line and mobile telecommunications. ACMA's responsibilities include:

- Supporting the development of codes of practice for the

industry and monitoring compliance

- Monitoring the performance of carriage service providers
- Setting and enforcing industry and technical standards, and monitoring industry performance

activity 7.10

What does ACMA regulate in your media life?

Write a list of all the media you have consumed in the past 24 hours. Mark each media form and text over which the ACMA has control, and note how ACMA regulates this aspect of your media experience.

- Numbering
- Advising consumers on their rights and safeguards
- Managing the delivery of services to people with a communication impairment.