

Committee Inquiries Question on Notice

Environment and Communications

Communications Legislation Amendment (Regional Broadcasting Continuity) Bill 2024

IQ24-000055

**Division/Agency:** DIV - Online Safety Media and Platforms

**Hansard Reference:** Written (23 July 2024)

**Topic:** Access to VAST across Australia

**Karen Grogan asked:**

Noting evidence from the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (Submission 3, pp. 1–3), would there be risks or obstacles to allowing users to access VAST from anywhere in Australia, irrespective of whether they are in a service-deficient area?

**Answer:**

The measures contained in Part 1 of Schedule to the Communications Legislation Amendment (Regional Broadcasting Continuity) Bill 2024 (the Bill) are designed to address a specific regulatory anomaly regarding consumer access to commercial television broadcasting services provided via the Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) service. These proposed changes would permit viewers to access VAST when a commercial television broadcaster ceases to provide services terrestrially in a given licence area.

The Bill doesn't contemplate broader changes to the access arrangements for VAST, including any proposals to effectively remove the conditional access schemes that have been registered under Part 9C of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* in relation to each of the 3 VAST licences (allocated under section 38C of the Act).

A change of this nature would represent a significant departure from the current arrangements for VAST, and would require further analysis and consultation with affected parties, including other broadcasters, transmission and infrastructure providers and consumers.