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## **COMMITTEE SUPPORTS TWO OUT OF THREE BROADCASTING REFORMS**

The Chair of the Joint Broadcasting Committee, Senator Doug Cameron, today tabled the Committee's report, which examined three broadcasting reform proposals.

The Committee supported abolishing the 75 per cent audience reach rule for television, provided there are legal protections for local content in regional Australia. This would include establishing a clear definition of local content to ensure regional viewers have access to appropriate levels of high quality, locally devised, and locally presented programming.

Senator Cameron said, "The internet and converging media are making the reach rule redundant. For example, commercial television networks are partners in two of the top three Australian news websites."

The Committee also supported giving the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) the power to require on-air reporting of corrections, clarifications and directions based on its findings.

ACMA demonstrated to the Committee that there is a gap in the sanctions it can impose on broadcasters. For example, if a broadcaster does not agree to an enforceable undertaking, then ACMA's alternative is to impose a licence condition, which is a serious matter and ultimately leads to licence suspension.

The Chair said, "A mid-level sanction for ACMA will improve the quality of broadcast material and viewers will benefit."

"The Committee appreciates that industry has some concerns about on-air reporting of regulatory findings. However, these issues can and should be addressed and doing so will mean that the measure will be fair."

The Committee does not support providing that a program supply agreement alone could indicate control of a broadcaster. There was no support for it during the inquiry. However, it may be appropriate to revisit this issue at a later date, especially given that governments and the Parliament regularly review and change broadcasting policy.

The report includes additional comments from the Coalition and the Australian Greens.

<p><b>For media comment:</b> contact the Chair's media advisor, Mark Andrews, on 0417 024 890. <b>For information on the inquiry:</b> contact the Secretariat on (02) 6277 2044, email <a href="mailto:jscbl@aph.gov.au">jscbl@aph.gov.au</a> or visit the Committee website at <a href="http://www.aph.gov.au/jscbl">http://www.aph.gov.au/jscbl</a></p>
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