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Revised Children's Television Standards for Commercial Television

Background

With the commencement of the Children's Television Standards 2009 (CTS) on 1 January 2010, the standards relating to advertising and product promotion to children have been clarified and strengthened following widespread community concern over the effect of food and beverage advertising on children.

Does the CTS affect you?

The CTS applies to all holders of commercial television broadcasting licences allocated or renewed under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) (**licensee**).

Licensees were required to have nominated their children's (C) and preschool children's (P) programming schedule for 2010 to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) by 31 December 2009. Similar obligations apply in subsequent years. Within these nominated periods, the CTS is applicable and will be monitored by the ACMA.

What is the aim of the CTS?

The advertising and promotional requirements within the CTS aim to:

- ensure children have access to a variety of quality television programs made specifically for them; and
- to provide protection to children from the possible harmful effects of television.

Advertising and Promotional Requirements

The central advertising and promotional requirements under the CTS are as follows:

- **Presentation of Prizes:** Prizes are prohibited from being offered during P programs. In contrast, during C programs, a prize can be presented provided that the presenter does not encourage the sale of the prize, the value of the prize is not announced and only broad descriptions of the prize are provided. Statements, for example, such as

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“this is a fantastic prize” or “you cannot go without this prize” would likely be prohibited.

- **Unsuitable Material:** Certain advertisements are considered unsuitable for children. These include advertising alcoholic drinks, and advertisements that demean groups of people, frighten or distress children and encourage children in activities dangerous to them. The use of knives with the blade facing inwards and close to the fingers may, for example, be deemed as unsuitable material.
- **Separating Advertisements and Sponsorship Announcements:** Mingling program and commercial content within children’s television programming has been specifically addressed in the CTS. Under prescribed children’s periods, advertisements and sponsorship announcements must be clearly distinguishable. This may mean, for example, a program is prohibited where it is sponsored and shot within a theme-park and logos displaying the theme-park are visible in the background.
- **Clear Presentation:** Advertisements must accurately represent the advertised product or service and must not contain misleading or incorrect information. For example, a requirement for accessories within a toy (such as batteries) must be clearly understood by children.
- **Premium Offers:** A premium offer is anything offered with or without additional costs that is intended to induce the purchase of an advertised product or service. This may include, for example, a free action figure found within a packet of chips. Where such offers are advertised, strict requirements have been included in the CTS. These include a requirement that where an offer is merely incidental to the advertised product, the offer does not arouse any unreasonable expectation on the part of consumer from that of the main product and that clear information about the conditions of the premium offer are set out.
- **Competitions:** Any competition referred to in a C or P program or advertisement must contain a summary of the relevant basic rules and a clear, fair and accurate statement about the chance of winning. For example, where a prize is offered to a select group of people during a competition, an announcement stating “everyone has a chance to win” would likely be prohibited.
- **Promotion by Popular Characters:** Popular characters and personalities are prohibited (with some exceptions) from being used to endorse a commercial product or service during periods that C and P programs are being broadcasted. Categories of restricted popular characters include hosts or presenters from C programs, popular cartoon characters (such as Bart Simpson from *The Simpsons*) and popular personalities (such as high profile cricketers, Olympic medallists and footballers). The prohibition does not aim to restrict advertising of particular products and does have specific exceptions, including promotions relating to retail product packaging, product logos, DVDs, toys, games and non-commercial products and services.
- **Food and Beverages:** The CTS does not impose any specific requirements where an advertisement takes place promoting food or beverages.



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The ACMA has announced its intention to monitor the effectiveness of the CTS, including the provisions aimed at children's advertising.

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