

**MEDIA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF SINGAPORE**

**PROPOSED CODE OF PRACTICE FOR TELEVISION BROADCAST STANDARDS**

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

**9 December 2013**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Media Development Authority (“MDA”) requires licensees offering television (“TV”) services, whether free-to-air, subscription or niche, to provide their services at reasonable quality that meets public expectations<sup>1</sup>. Pursuant to this requirement, the respective licences currently set out certain TV broadcast standards for licensees’ compliance. These standards cover some or all of the following performance areas: service coverage, signal strength, picture and audio quality, and service reliability.
- 1.2 In 2012/13, MDA conducted a technical review (the “Review”) of the TV broadcast standards, with the objective of ensuring their continued relevance in an evolving broadcast landscape. For example, the Review considered the increasing availability and accessibility of non-traditional TV services such as Over-The-Top TV (“OTT TV”) via different multimedia devices, and MediaCorp’s impending broadcast of its Free-To-Air TV (“FTA TV”) channels using digital TV technology DVB-T2.
- 1.3 MDA is mindful that while the TV broadcast standards are necessary to safeguard consumers’ interests, there are compliance costs for the industry. Hence, the Review was undertaken with a view to balance consumer interests against industry growth and development.
- 1.4 As part of MDA’s efforts to provide more transparency to the industry and consumers, MDA intends to publish the TV broadcast standards imposed on the different TV services in a new Code of Practice for Television Broadcast Standards (the “Proposed Code”). The existing licence conditions on TV broadcast standards will correspondingly be removed. Apart from stipulating the TV broadcast standards, the Proposed Code would include guidance notes in relation to the compliance requirements and enforcement considerations.
- 1.5 MDA is now launching this public consultation to seek comments on the Proposed Code.
- 1.6 Interested parties are invited to provide their comments to this consultation by no later than **5pm, 10 January 2014**, in the manner specified in Part 3 of this document.

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<sup>1</sup> Licence condition pertaining to service quality: *The Licensee shall provide its Service at such reasonable quality that meets public expectations and is satisfactory to the Authority. Notwithstanding, the Authority reserves the right at any time to impose broadcast standards with which the Licensee shall comply at its own costs.*

## 2. PROPOSED CODE OF PRACTICE FOR TELEVISION BROADCAST STANDARDS

2.1 The Proposed Code will be issued under Section 6 of the Broadcasting Act<sup>2</sup>.

2.2 The Proposed Code covers the following:

- (i) Broadcast standards and the TV services to which these standards would apply;
- (ii) Compliance requirements, including the reporting requirements; and
- (iii) Guidance notes on the standards and/or requirements where relevant.

2.3 The structure of the Proposed Code is as follows:

2.4 **Section 1** sets out the purpose, legal effect and application of the Proposed Code. It also defines the terms used therein. In this regard, the Code explains the distinction between managed and unmanaged transmission TV services, in terms of the extent to which an operator is able to control the end-to-end quality of the TV service offered. This distinction would be a consideration in determining the relevant standards to be imposed.

2.5 **Section 2** sets out the requirements for the service coverage standard, which would apply to FTA nationwide Analogue terrestrial TV and DTV services, and nationwide Digital cable TV<sup>3</sup> and IPTV services. While the current coverage requirement for FTA nationwide Analogue terrestrial TV service has been maintained, new requirements for FTA nationwide DTV service, including an indoor service coverage requirement, have been introduced. For nationwide Digital cable TV and IPTV services, the service coverage standard takes into consideration the relevant network roll out of the telecommunication system(s)<sup>4</sup> required for connection to the services.

2.6 **Section 3** sets out the requirements for the signal strength standard, which would apply to FTA nationwide Terrestrial broadcast TV and nationwide Cable TV services. The current signal strength requirements for FTA nationwide Analogue terrestrial TV and nationwide Cable TV services have been maintained. A new signal strength

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<sup>2</sup> Section 6(1)(b) of the Broadcasting Act states that *“The Authority may issue and from time to time review – (b) Codes of Practice relating to broadcast standards required to be maintained by licensees.”*

<sup>3</sup> The cable rollout, connection and access requirements for Analogue cable TV would remain as a licence condition.

<sup>4</sup> These include the hybrid fibre-coaxial network, the Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (“ADSL”) network, and/ or the Next Generation Nationwide Broadband Network (“NGNBN”), as appropriate.

requirement that corresponds to the indoor service coverage requirement has been added for FTA nationwide DTV services.

- 2.7 **Section 4** sets out the requirements for the picture and audio quality standard, which would apply to all managed transmission TV services. While unmanaged transmission TV services are currently subject to these requirements in their respective licences, MDA notes that these services have no control over the quality of broadband connection and the circumstances during its reception. Accordingly, MDA would no longer apply the picture and audio quality standard to unmanaged transmission TV services.
- 2.8 For the assessment of picture and audio quality, MDA would continue to take reference from the Recommendation for TV Broadcasting Service by the Radiocommunication Sector of the International Telecommunication Union ("ITU-R"), and apply the BT.500 5-Point scale. However, MDA notes that the rationale for the current differentiation in requirements for 'live' and recorded programmes has diminished with the adoption of digital recording. Accordingly, the requirements in the Proposed Code have been harmonised between 'live' and recorded programmes.
- 2.9 **Section 5** sets out the requirements for the service reliability standard, which would apply to Terrestrial broadcast TV, Cable TV, IPTV and OTT TV services. While the Outage Reliability Index ("ORI") continues to be the primary measurement, MDA would introduce greater granularity in the ORI measurement and provide clarity and transparency on its computation. To this end, this section would cover (a) the definition of an outage, (b) the distinction between channel ORI and service ORI, (c) the distinction in requirements for FTA and must-carry channels from other channels, and (d) the point of measurement for unmanaged transmission TV services.
- 2.10 Finally, **Section 6** sets out the requirements for a new loudness standard, which would apply to Terrestrial broadcast TV, Cable TV, IPTV and OTT TV services. The new standard aims to address public complaints on significant variations in loudness between advertisements and TV programmes. In this regard, MDA would follow the loudness standards established by the European Broadcasting Union ("EBU") and the Advanced Television System Committee ("ATSC") that are widely adopted internationally.

### 3. INVITATION TO COMMENT

3.1 MDA would like to seek comments from the industry and members of the public on the Proposed Code. Commenting parties should clearly identify the sections and provisions of the Proposed Code on which they are commenting. Where appropriate, commenting parties are encouraged to suggest changes to the Proposed Code. The proposals should be accompanied by reasons for the changes.

3.2 Submission of the written comments should be in the following format:

- I. Cover Page;
- II. Table of Contents;
- III. Summary of major points;
- IV. Statement of interest;
- V. Comments; and
- VI. Conclusion.

3.3 This consultation closes on **10 January 2014** and comments should be submitted to MDA **on or before 5pm on that date**. All comments must be submitted in softcopy (in Microsoft Word format compatible with Microsoft Office Version 2003). Parties submitting comments should include their personal or company particulars, their correspondence address, contact number and email address on the cover page of their comments. All comments should be addressed to:

Ms Lee Ee Jia  
Deputy Director (Competition and Consumer Policy)  
Media Development Authority of Singapore  
(Attention: Mr Twang Geng Chong, John)  
Email: [twang\\_geng\\_chong@mda.gov.sg](mailto:twang_geng_chong@mda.gov.sg)

3.4 MDA reserves the right to make public all or parts of any written comment and to disclose the identity of the source. Commenting parties may request confidential treatment for any part of the comment that the commenting party believes to be proprietary, confidential or commercially sensitive. Any such information should be clearly marked and placed in a separate annex. If the MDA grants the request for confidential treatment, it will consider, but it will not publicly disclose, the information. If MDA rejects the request for confidential treatment, it will return the information to the commenting party and will not consider the information as part of its review. As far as possible, commenting parties should limit any request for confidential treatment of information submitted. MDA will not accept any comment that requests for confidential treatment of all or a substantial part of the comment.