

Guide to increase safety in mobile chat rooms

ACMA has published a guide to increase the safety of users of mobile phone chat services. The guide is intended to assist chat service providers in implementing measures that minimise the risk of illegal contact between children and adults using these services.

Chat services allow users to chat anonymously with other users. Types of services include general chat, dating, and games that include an interactive chat element. Mobile chat services are not yet widely used by consumers. ACMA is the first communications regulator to proactively establish a framework to promote the safety of young people.

The ACMA guide applies to chat services provided on mobile premium rate numbers and mobile operator portals, not to chat services on the internet. It identifies possible risks in using mobile chat services and contains information about measures that mobile chat service providers can implement to most effectively minimise the small but real risk of illegal contact between adults and children.

The measures set out in the guide are intended to enhance young people's enjoyment of these new communications services by providing an environment that maximises their safety. The approach taken by ACMA also enables providers of mobile chat services to promote their services by highlighting the safety features that have been implemented in them.

The measures outlined in the guide include:

- increasing awareness for children, their parents and their teachers of risks associated with mobile chat services
- implementing electronic filtering of messages
- monitoring of chat and
- restricting access to users over 18 years of age for services containing content that is not intended to be accessed by children.

The ACMA *Guide to the Implementation of Safety Measures in Mobile Chat Services* is on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au.



Digital TV service proposed for Darwin

Darwin Digital Television Pty Ltd has expressed interest to ACMA in providing a third, digital only, commercial television service in the Darwin licence area.

The joint-venture company is owned by the existing commercial television licensees in Darwin, Regional Television Pty Ltd (Southern Cross Darwin) and Territory Television Pty Ltd (Nine Network). It now has until 31 December 2006 to apply for the additional commercial television licence.

If ACMA allocates the additional commercial television broadcasting licence, it would be the third digital-only commercial television broadcasting licence to be allocated. The two previous licences were allocated to joint-venture companies to serve Mildura and Tasmania.

The new service would cover the same area as the services provided by the existing licensees in Darwin. The new licensee would have 12 months from the date of allocation to commence its service.

Amendments to the Broadcasting Services Act (section 38B) streamlined the process for the allocation of an additional digital only commercial television licence to licensees in markets where there are two commercial television licences in force, as long as neither of the existing licences were allocated under section 38A of the Act. The existing licensees may either apply for a licence as a joint venture company or apply separately.

There are two steps involved in applying for a section 38B licence:

1. the existing licensees may give ACMA a single or joint written notice, within 90 days after the designated time for the licence area, stating that they will apply for an additional licence in the licence area and
2. the applicant may apply in writing to ACMA for an additional licence within 12 months after the designated time for the licence area.

In accordance with the legislation, ACMA must allocate an additional licence to a joint venture company under section 38B if ACMA is satisfied that the company is jointly owned by the existing licensees. If applications are received from both of the existing licensees, ACMA must allocate the licence under a price-based allocation system determined by ACMA. If only one application from an existing licensee is received, ACMA must allocate the additional licence to that licensee.