|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| |  | | --- | | BSA_LOGO_RGB  **31 July 2018**  **Time for a change? Free-to-air television timebands and classification labels under review**  New Zealanders are being urged to have their say about whether changes should be made to free-to-air television timebands and classification labels that have been used for decades to protect free-to-air television viewers from unsuitable content.  The Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) is considering whether changes should be made to the timebands, which restrict when certain programmes can be broadcast on free-to-air television, and free-to-air television classification labels, which guide audiences about the nature and suitability of certain programmes.  The BSA has today launched a public consultation to find out whether people still use timebands, including the 4-7pm G only timeslot and the Adults Only watershed at 8.30pm, on free-to-air channels and whether they think that it’s time for some change.  [An online survey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BSA18) and series of public meetings will be held to capture the views of New Zealanders before a final decision is reached on whether any changes will be made and what they might be. The BSA is keen to hear from parents and caregivers in particular.  BSA Chief Executive Belinda Moffat said: “The way we watch television has changed dramatically since the timebands and classifications were introduced in 1989. Back then we all sat down around the television and watched the same programmes at the same time.  “Now, more and more audiences view programmes on demand or online, using platforms such as SKY, Netflix and YouTube, at a time that suits us. These days free-to-air television can also now be recorded, paused and watched whenever we want. In addition, parental locks are now available on Freeview, enabling parents and caregivers to restrict what programmes children in their care can access.  “We want to understand whether New Zealanders still rely on the timebands on free-to-air television to restrict what they and their children watch. We also want to know their thoughts on classification labels and use of parental locks.”  Currently, timebands generally only apply to free-to-air television (not pay television). The most well-known timeband is the 8.30pm watershed, when Adult Only programmes can be shown. But there are others, including only showing G-rated programmes between 4-7pm and restricting PGR content to 9am-4pm and 7pm-6am.  The shift in viewing habits has prompted broadcasters to question the relevance of the timebands in light of the changes in technology and audience viewing behaviour. Research carried out by the BSA and broadcasters last year found that only 29 per cent of parents used them to restrict what their children could watch.  The BSA is also considering whether free-to-air television should adopt the same classification labels as pay television to provide consistency. It would mean switching from G (General), PGR (Parental Guidance Recommended) and AO (Adults Only) to G, PG, M (Mature), 16 and 18.  Parents can use other tools to control their children’s viewing, including filtering or parental locks to stop them from accessing unsuitable content.  The parental locks are available on Freeview as well as SKY. But last year’s research found 84 per cent of New Zealanders were unaware the locks could be used on free-to-air television.  “We want to raise awareness about them, but we’re also interested in knowing whether people will use them,” said Belinda.  Broadcasters are, and will continue to be, subject to a number of existing broadcasting standards when making programming decisions, such as the Good Taste and Decency Standard, the Children’s Interest Standard, and standards relating to Violence and Alcohol.  The BSA has come up with a series of options for change and is encouraging as many people as possible to get in touch with their thoughts. There are a range of ways to do this, and more details are available at [bsa.govt.nz](http://www.bsa.govt.nz).  An online survey, which should take 5-10 minutes to complete, can be found here: [surveymonkey.com/r/BSA18](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BSA18).  A series of public hearings will be held in August by the BSA in: Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Gisborne and South Dunedin.  Feedback and submissions can be made by email to: [info@bsa.govt.nz](mailto:info@bsa.govt.nz); or by mail to: Broadcasting Standards Authority, PO Box 9213, Wellington 6141.  Submissions close on 31 August 2018.  **Options for change**  The BSA is considering the following options and would like your views on these:  **Classification labels:**   1. No change – keep free-to-air labels (G, PGR, AO) 2. Free-to-air television to adopt pay TV classification labels (G, PG, M, 16, 18).   **Timebands (assuming a change to pay television labels):**   1. **No change:** we keep the existing timebands 2. **Adjust current PGR timeband**:  * G/PG (PGR) – screened any time (with suitable classification and warnings and ability to set parental locks for PG content); * M (PGR/AO) – screened after 7.00pm (broadcasters will adopt responsible programming principles, which means they will have regard to children’s interests and usual viewing times when scheduling PG and M content); * 16 and 18 (AO) screened after 8.30pm (broadcasters will adopt responsible programming principles, which means they will have regard to children’s interests and usual viewing times when scheduling 16 and 18 content).  1. **Transition to removal of timebands**: Option 2 for 12 months, following which there is a move to option 4. During the 12-month transition broadcasters will advertise and raise awareness about availability and use of parental locks, so that parents and caregivers are aware of and know how to use them, before the change to remove timebands takes effect. 2. **Remove all timebands**: but with principles that classifications, programme descriptions and audience advisories will be used and responsible programming (per above) will be adopted to enable parents and caregivers to restrict what their children watch and the 8.30pm watershed will apply where filtering technology/parental locks are not available (per the pay TV guidelines).   ENDS  For further information, please contact:  Adam Szentes, Porter Novelli  **M.** 021 265 1067 **E.** AdamS@porternovelli.kiwi  **ABOUT THE BROADCASTING STANDARDS AUTHORITY**  The BSA is an independent Crown entity that oversees the broadcasting standards regime in New Zealand. The BSA determines complaints that broadcasts have breached standards, undertakes research and oversees the development of broadcasting standards in consultation with broadcasters.  The Authority members are Peter Radich (Chair), Te Raumawhitu Kupenga, Paula Rose and Wendy Palmer.  **For more information see our website:** [**www.bsa.govt.nz**](http://www.bsa.govt.nz) | |
|  |