

TV PROGRAMME CLASSIFICATIONS AND TIMEBAND REVIEW

**HAVE
YOUR
SAY**

Free-to-air television timebands and programme classification labels under review

The way we watch television has changed dramatically over the past ten years: advances in technology mean we don't always watch programmes at fixed times and we don't have to sit in front of a television set to do so.

A growing number of people access programmes on demand and when it suits them, some record shows to watch at another time, or pick and choose from online content at any moment of the day or night.

Gone are the days when we all watched the same programmes, at the same time, and discussed them in the playground or at the office water cooler the next day.

These changes have prompted the free-to-air broadcasters and the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) to look at the relevance of our timebands, which guide viewing on free-to-air television, and whether they need to change. Timebands, which direct broadcasters about what they can air and when, are covered by the Broadcasting Standards Codebook in New Zealand, which has been developed jointly by broadcasters and the BSA and which governs the standards with which broadcasters must comply.

At the same time, we are looking at the classification system for free-to-air television programmes (G, PGR and AO), which differs from that used by pay television, to see whether we can avoid confusion and provide viewers with consistency by adopting the same classifications.

This booklet explains more about the two classification systems; why timebands were first introduced in 1989; the changes in technology since then and what this has meant for New Zealanders' viewing habits; and explains the other tools available to help viewers make decisions about the programmes they and their children watch.

The BSA is keen to understand the extent to which New Zealanders rely upon timebands for their children, as well as their thoughts on using parental locks instead. We would like to know whether children still watch linear television at the traditional times of day that are covered by the timebands and how often they record programmes to watch at other times.

Crucially, we would like your views on whether changes should be made to the timebands.

We hope to hear from as many New Zealanders as possible before we make any decisions. We encourage you to send us your feedback or complete our online survey here: bsa.govt.nz

Peter Radich

Chair, Broadcasting Standards Authority

RESPONSIBLE PROGRAMMING

Navigating choices and protecting viewers from content that is unsuitable or which could cause widespread offence or distress

CLASSIFICATIONS

Classification labels are used by free-to-air and pay television on all programmes except for news, current affairs, sports and live content. The labels give you an indication of a programme's likely content by indicating what age the content

is suitable for and differentiates between content suitable for children (under 14 years old) versus more mature audiences and adults. However, the labels used vary between free-to-air and pay television, which could cause confusion for viewers.

The classification system used by free-to-air television has three labels:



GENERAL, programmes which exclude material likely to be unsuitable for children. Programmes may not necessarily be designed for children but should not contain material likely to alarm or distress them. G programmes may be screened at any time.



PARENTAL GUIDANCE RECOMMENDED, programmes containing material more suited for mature audiences but not necessarily unsuitable for children, when subject to the guidance of a parent or adult. PGR programmes may be screened between 9am-4pm and from 7pm-6am.



AO – ADULTS ONLY, programmes containing adult themes and directed primarily at mature audiences. AO programmes may be screened between midday-3pm on weekdays (except during school and public holidays) and from 8.30pm-5am.

By contrast, pay television programmes can be screened at any time provided filtering technology (parental locks) is made available to customers. They have slightly different classifications with five, rather than three, labels. These are:



APPROVED FOR GENERAL VIEWING



PARENTAL GUIDANCE RECOMMENDED FOR YOUNGER VIEWERS



SUITABLE FOR MATURE AUDIENCES 16 YEARS AND OVER



PEOPLE UNDER 16 YEARS SHOULD NOT VIEW



PEOPLE UNDER 18 YEARS SHOULD NOT VIEW

The additional labels provide clearer guidance about the suitability of the programmes for different audiences, depending on their age.

BSA VIEW

The BSA and free-to-air television broadcasters believe that adopting the same programme classifications as pay television would ensure consistency and reduce confusion for audiences that now move frequently between free-to-air television and pay television channels.

TIMEBANDS

“You can shove them in front of the TV for an hour, go cook tea, do some chores...not worry about what they see.”¹

Male, 21-35 years, Wairoa

The free-to-air classifications currently link in with the timebands and both provide a way for viewers to assess whether a programme is suitable for a young audience, for example between 6am-9am and 4pm-7pm only G-rated programmes can be shown. Similarly, Adult Only programmes can only be broadcast at certain times of the day when children are unlikely to be watching, notably after the 8.30pm watershed. Currently, timebands generally only apply to free-to-air television (not pay TV provided that parental locks are available).

The timebands were introduced in 1989 when the Codes of Broadcasting Practice were developed under the Broadcasting Act, with the main aim of protecting children from seeing content that might harm them.

The tightly regulated broadcasting environment underwent radical reforms at that time, with the deregulation of broadcasting. The Broadcasting Standards Authority was given the task of ensuring that broadcasting standards were maintained, particularly around children’s interests, violence, and alcohol promotion. Timebands were one of the means of achieving this.

At that time, free-to-air television was nearly universally available and easily accessible by most New Zealanders, beaming freely into their homes without any need for audiences to make a conscious decision about viewing, other than buying

a television set and turning it on. It accounted for 100% of total television viewing and was considered a powerful and pervasive influence in people’s lives.

Contrast that with pay television today, where viewers make a choice to pay for the content they view, and on-demand content, which viewers choose to download.

The free-to-air television broadcasting standards code recognised that children had special vulnerabilities and needed additional protection from harmful content that was inappropriate for their level of maturity, as this could affect their physical, mental or social development.

Under the broadcasting standards regime, broadcasters were, and continue to be, responsible for maintaining programme standards. This includes protecting young viewers, and timebands were a simple, but important, tool to help them: parents and caregivers could rely on the timebands to let their children watch television unsupervised at certain times of the day, for example immediately before and after school.

Most people expected adult or stronger content to be broadcast later at night, after the 8.30pm watershed, and audiences were encouraged to use the timebands, classifications and advisory warnings, to decide whether a programme was suitable for themselves and their children.

¹ All quotes taken from the BSA Understanding timebands within vulnerable communities study (December, 2017). View the study in full at bsa.govt.nz

The timebands in the Broadcasting Standards Codebook have largely remained the same since then, with the most recent change in 2016 when the Adults Only – 9.30pm classification and timeband

was removed from the Programme Information standard, though it is still used informally by broadcasters as the time when particularly challenging content ought to be aired.

Now we have the following classifications/timeband combinations for free-to-air television:



MAY BE SCREENED ANY TIME



MAY BE SCREENED BETWEEN 9AM-4PM AND 7PM-6AM



MAY BE SCREENED BETWEEN MIDDAY-3PM ON WEEKDAYS (EXCEPT DURING SCHOOL AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS) AND 8:30PM-5AM.

Research² carried out by the BSA and TVNZ in 2017 found that 76% of people knew about the 8.30pm watershed, but fewer were aware of other timeband restrictions: just under half (49%) knew that only G-rated programmes were aired between 6am-9am and 4pm-7pm and that PGR-rated programmes were restricted to between 9am-4pm and 7pm-6am.

Nearly two thirds (63%) of people saw the timebands as providing a safe haven, while 49% trusted them to be accurate and were an easy way for parents to control the content their children viewed. However, fewer than a third (29%) of parents consciously used them for their children and only 18% of adults used them to choose content for themselves.

“I don’t think about it (timebands) I just know it. Everybody does. I know that if something is for adults or like adult-rated, like a horror movie or something, it is on late at nights. I know it is not going to be on during the day. If you don’t then where have you been?”

Male, 36-50-years-old, Dargaville

² TVNZ – Parental Guidance Survey (in conjunction with BSA) [September, 2017]. View the report in full at bsa.govt.nz

BSA VIEW

The principle that children must be protected from content that may harm them is still a crucial one in 2018, as is the principle that audiences must be given enough information to make informed viewing choices. However, technology has advanced dramatically, with programmes available on many platforms at any time of the day and anywhere.

Timebands work well in helping parents and caregivers to make decisions around the programmes their children watch, but are they all still relevant in their current form? We know that the 8.30pm watershed is well-known and understood but the PGR restriction is less well-known. Now we would like to hear your views on which, if any, of the timebands you rely on when making viewing decisions and whether, in the new landscape where content is available through many different platforms, at any time, and where parental locks can be set at home, all timebands are still a valued and necessary restriction. The BSA considers that the changes in technology and the way content is consumed justifies consideration of some modification to timebands, provided that the other tools will provide effective and suitable protections for children and those wishing to restrict content in their homes.

Broadcasters consider that the range of tools already available to parents and caregivers supports the argument for removing timeband restrictions. Parents and caregivers would be responsible for using parental locks, classifications and audience advisories to restrict access to content intended for mature audiences and adults. Broadcasters will also 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.

Before making a final decision on whether changes ought to be made and what they ought to be, the BSA wishes to know what the community thinks about the options for change.

OTHER TOOLS TO HELP THE AUDIENCE MANAGE TELEVISION VIEWING BY CHILDREN



AUDIENCE ADVISORIES



CLASSIFICATION LABELS



ELECTRONIC PROGRAMMING GUIDE



PARENTAL LOCKS

In addition to the timebands, there are a range of other tools parents and caregivers can use to control and restrict TV viewing, on top of setting your own expectations or guidelines about what children in your care should watch.

These include the classifications already mentioned, and parental locks (which can be set by viewers at home through Freeview or pay TV set top boxes). Broadcasters also broadcast warnings (audience advisories) before programmes with content that may offend or distress viewers or is unsuitable for some viewers. Television guides contain the classifications for programmes, as well as warnings and information

about the nature of the programme. These all provide additional mechanisms for viewers to assess content and make decisions about what they choose to watch and what they may want to restrict in their homes.

The BSA and TVNZ research found there was a high awareness of all of these, but the majority of viewers did not use them.

Of those who did, cautionary warnings and programme classifications were the most well-known and widely-used methods with more than half (53%) of parents using them.

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

“ Everything can be recorded or time-shifted using devices like MYSKY, even by young children so it (timebands) becomes of reduced value. Makes TV viewing at certain times of the day unattractive for adults.”

Male, 60, with younger kids at home

In 1989, in addition to linear television, the only way to watch video content at home was by using a video-cassette recorder to view programmes recorded from television, rented videos or pirated content.

Twenty eight years later, viewers are using a range of other devices to access video content. In 2015 New Zealanders were also watching on desktops/laptops (39%), smartphones (27%) and tablets (18%).

There are now more free-to-air television broadcasters than in 1989, but the daily reach for linear television has dropped to 73%, while online viewing, including services such as Netflix, has grown significantly from 6% in 2014 to 23% in 2016. Online is of particular appeal to younger audiences: in 2014 the most commonly used channel for children aged 6-14 was YouTube, with 35% using it to watch videos.

In addition to watching more content online, growing numbers are viewing linear content at a time that suits them: time-shifting is rising in popularity, where people record a programme to watch later. Both Freeview and SKY offer personal video technology (PVR), which allows viewers to do this.

For peak programming, 12% of viewing is time-shifted, while in homes that have SKY 20% of programmes are recorded and watched at another time. In an average week, nearly one in three (31%) people watch some linear television that has been time-shifted.

Another significant change that has come courtesy of the advances in technology, is that Freeview and pay television platforms, such as SKY, offer filtering or parental locks to help viewers control access to

programmes. Together they cover all households that watch linear television.

Instructions on how to use the locks are provided with the devices and on the manufacturers' websites.

On Freeview, parents/guardians can set a maximum rating (G, PGR, AO) and any programmes above the chosen level require a password in order to view them.

On SKY, viewers can block programmes above a specified classification or an entire channel of programming and a PIN is automatically required on all R18 content.

The locks only need to be set up once and will automatically protect children from being exposed to programmes which are unsuitable or could be harmful. They enable parents to control access in a way that is not possible through the use of timebands alone.

However, research³ by the BSA last year revealed low awareness about parental locks on free-to-air television, pay television, subscription video on demand (such as Netflix and Lightbox), web browsers generally and YouTube.

Fewer than half (46%) were aware they could use locks on platforms such as SKY and only a quarter of parents are currently using them, while 84% of New Zealanders were unaware of the availability of parental locks on free-to-air television.

Once told, only 13% of parents said they were likely to use locks in the future.

³ BSA Public Awareness Online Omnibus Research (2017). View the report in full at bsa.govt.nz

“ I would need someone to talk me through, probably (person from local electronics store). I don’t even know how to use the (remote) control properly.”

Female, 51-65 years, Wairoa

Many people were aware of the classification system and this, along with on-air pre-broadcast warnings, was one of the key ways they decided which programmes their children could watch.

BSA VIEW

Given the significant changes in the way we view content, there needs to be a substantial public awareness campaign so that as many viewers as possible know about the availability of parental locks and how to use them. This will become even more important if any changes are made to the timebands.

We want to know whether all viewers have access to and can use these tools as a substitute protection for timebands. Research tells us that using technology to restrict access to content, is not a high priority in all households. The broadcasting standards are there to protect all New Zealanders, not just some, so we want to hear the views of the wider community on whether the modernisation of viewing technology will adequately fill the gap which might be left if timebands are changed.

YOUR VIEWS

The next section sets out some options and seeks your views on them.

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

The BSA is considering the following options and would like your views on these:

FREE-TO-AIR TELEVISION CLASSIFICATION LABELS

- 1. NO CHANGE** - Keep free-to-air television classification labels (G, PGR, AO)
- 2. CHANGE** - Free-to-air television to adopt pay television classification labels (G, PG, M, 16, 18)

TIMEBANDS (Assuming a change to pay TV 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);

3. 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.

4. 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 watershed will apply where filtering technology/parental locks are not available.

HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY

The BSA is encouraging as many people as possible to comment on the options and there are a range of ways to do this.

- You may complete the online survey, which should take between 5-10 minutes and can be found here: bsa.govt.nz
- You can attend one of the public meetings: more details at bsa.govt.nz
- You can send your written feedback and submissions to the BSA by:
Email: info@bsa.govt.nz
Mail: Broadcasting Standards Authority, PO Box 9213, Wellington 6141

We ask all submissions to address the following questions:

CLASSIFICATIONS

1. **Do you agree that FTA television should now adopt the pay television classification labels?**
 - a. If **YES**, what benefit will this bring?
 - b. If **NO**, why not?

TIMEBANDS

1. **Are you aware of the FTA television timebands?**
2. **Do you use them to decide what programmes children in your care should watch?**
3. **Do you think that the timeband restrictions on FTA television ought to change?**
 - a. If **NOT**, why not?
 - b. If **YES**, then which of the three options do you consider is most appropriate and why?
4. **Are you aware of the ways in which you can restrict access to content in your home?**
 - a. If **YES**, what tools do you use?
 - b. If **NO**, what are the barriers to use, and what would enable you to use the tools?

All submissions and surveys must be received by 31 August 2018 and any written submissions will be posted on the BSA website.



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