



## Broadcasting Services (Television Captioning) Standard 2023

---

The Australian Communications and Media Authority makes the following standard under subsection 130ZZA(1) of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

Dated: 31 August 2023

Adam Suckling  
[signed]  
Member

Brendan Byrne  
[signed]  
~~Member~~/General Manager

Australian Communications and Media Authority

---

## Part 1—Preliminary

### 1 Name

This is the *Broadcasting Services (Television Captioning) Standard 2023*.

### 2 Commencement

This standard commences at the start of the day after the day it is registered on the Federal Register of Legislation.

Note: The Federal Register of Legislation may be accessed free of charge at [www.legislation.gov.au](http://www.legislation.gov.au).

### 3 Authority

This standard is made under subsection 130ZZA(1) of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

### 4 Repeal of the *Broadcasting Services (Television Captioning) Standard 2013*

The *Broadcasting Services (Television Captioning) Standard 2013* (Registration No F2013L00918) is repealed.

### 5 Object of this standard

The object of this standard is to specify mandatory requirements for broadcasters and narrowcasters that relate to the quality of captioning services, to ensure that captioning services are meaningful to deaf and hard of hearing viewers.

### 6 Definitions

In this standard:

Terms that are defined in the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* have the same meaning as in that Act, unless the contrary intention appears.

*Act* means the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

**broadcaster** means a commercial television broadcasting licensee, a national broadcaster or a subscription television broadcasting licensee.

**captioning obligations** means the legislative obligations under Part 9D of the Act that require:

- (a) commercial television broadcasting licensees and national broadcasters to provide a captioning service for programs transmitted under subsection 130ZR(1) of the Act;
- (b) commercial television broadcasting licensees and national broadcasters to provide a captioning service for programs transmitted on their respective multi-channelled commercial or national television broadcasting services under section 130ZS of the Act;
- (c) subscription television licensees to transmit a minimum percentage of hours of captioned programs per year under section 130ZV of the Act; and
- (d) subscription television licensees to provide a captioning service for programs transmitted on a subscription television service under sections 130ZZ and 130ZZAA of the Act.

**captioning service** means a service in which captions are provided for programs, that enable the viewer to follow the speakers, dialogue, action, sound effects and music of a program.

**captions** means the visual translation of the soundtrack of a program in English, in word form.

**deaf and hard of hearing** means the same as “deaf and hearing impaired” as used in Part 9D of the Act.

**distinct program segment** within a television program means a distinct segment that is unrelated to other program segments within that same television program.

**narrowcaster** means a subscription television narrowcasting licensee.

**program** includes:

- (a) a television program; and
- (b) a distinct program segment within a television program.

## 7 References to other instruments

In this standard, unless the contrary intention appears:

- (a) a reference to any other legislative instrument is a reference to that other legislative instrument as in force from time to time; and
- (b) a reference to any other kind of instrument is a reference to that other instrument as in force at the commencement of this standard.

Note 1: For references to Commonwealth Acts, see section 10 of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901*; and see also subsection 13(1) of the *Legislation Act 2003* for the application of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901* to legislative instruments.

Note 2: All Commonwealth Acts and legislative instruments are registered on the Federal Register of Legislation.

## Part 2— Requirements relating to quality of captioning

### 8 Quality of captioning services

Broadcasters and narrowcasters must, when providing a captioning service in accordance with their captioning obligations, comply with the requirements relating to quality in this standard.

*Note: In exercising its enforcement powers under the Act, the ACMA takes the position that a program that does not meet the requirements of section 8 of this standard will not be eligible to be used by a broadcaster or narrowcaster to comply with its captioning obligations.*

### 9 Determining the quality of captioning services

- (a) Subject to paragraph (b), when determining the quality of a captioning service for a program, the captioning service must be considered in the context of the program as a whole.
- (b) When determining the quality of a captioning service for a program that is a distinct program segment within a television program, the captioning service must be considered in the context of that distinct program segment on its own.
- (c) When determining the quality of a captioning service, the cumulative effect of the following factors must be considered:
  - (i) the readability of the captions;
  - (ii) the accuracy of the captions; and
  - (iii) the comprehensibility of the captions.

*Note: Whilst noting that it is not authorised to determine that a lower quality of captioning service is acceptable for a kind of program or program material (see subsection 130ZZA(2B) of the Act), in determining this standard, the ACMA has considered the differences (including time constraints for live content) between providing captioning services for live and pre-recorded television programs; and wholly live or wholly pre-recorded television programs and television programs that include both live and pre-recorded program material (see subsection 130ZZA(2A) of the Act).*

### 10 Readability of captions

- (a) When providing a captioning service for a program, broadcasters and narrowcasters must use captions that are readable.
- (b) When determining whether captions are readable, the following factors must be considered in the context of the program as a whole:
  - (i) whether colour and font is used in the captions in a way that makes them legible;
  - (ii) whether the caption lines end at natural linguistic breaks and reflect the natural flow and punctuation of a sentence, so each caption forms an understandable segment;
  - (iii) whether standard punctuation of printed English has been used in the captions to convey the way speech is delivered;
  - (iv) whether the captions are positioned so as to avoid obscuring other on-screen text, any part of a speaker's face including the mouth and any other important visuals where possible; and
  - (v) whether the captions are no more than three lines in length.

## 11 Accuracy of captions

- (a) When providing a captioning service for a program, broadcasters and narrowcasters must use captions that accurately recreate the soundtrack of a program.
- (b) When determining whether captions accurately recreate the soundtrack of a program, the following factors must be considered in the context of the program as a whole:
  - (i) whether spoken content has been captioned;
  - (ii) whether the captions of spoken content are verbatim;
  - (iii) where it is not possible for the captions of spoken content to be verbatim, whether the captions reflect the actual meaning of the spoken content;
  - (iv) where the intended target audience of a program is children and the captions are not verbatim, the extent to which the captions take into account the intended audience;
  - (v) whether the manner and tone of voice of speakers has been conveyed, where practical and material; and
  - (vi) whether sound effects and/or music, material to understanding the program and not observable from the visual action, have been accurately described.

## 12 Comprehensibility of captions

- (a) When providing a captioning service for a program, broadcasters and narrowcasters must use captions that are comprehensible.
- (b) When determining whether captions are comprehensible, the following factors must be considered in the context of the program as a whole:
  - (i) whether the captions clearly identify and distinguish individual speakers, including off-screen and off-camera voices;
  - (ii) whether the captions are displayed for a sufficient length of time to allow the viewer to read them and follow the action of the program;
  - (iii) the extent to which the appearance of the caption coincides with the onset of speech of the corresponding speaker, sound effect or music;
  - (iv) the extent to which the disappearance of the caption coincides with the end of the speech of the corresponding speaker, sound effect or music;
  - (v) whether the words used in the captions have been spelt correctly;
  - (vi) where a word is not spelt correctly, whether the spelling provided nevertheless conveys the meaning of the actual word;
  - (vii) whether explanatory captions are provided for long speechless pauses in the program;
  - (viii) the extent to which a caption over-runs a shot or scene change; and
  - (ix) the extent to which the appearance or disappearance of the caption, as the case may be, coincides with the relevant shot or scene change.