

**For discussion  
on 27 May 2013**

**Legislative Council  
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting**

**Issues Relating to the Arrangement for Collecting Public Views  
on the Quality and Variety of Programmes Provided by  
the Two Domestic Free Television Programme Service Licensees**

**PURPOSE**

This paper briefs Members on the public engagement exercise conducted by the Communications Authority (“CA”) to collect public views on the quality and variety of programmes provided by the two domestic free television programme service licensees and the updates of the exercise.

**BACKGROUND**

2. During the mid-term review of the licences of the two domestic free television programme service licensees in 2010, the Chief Executive in Council approved the recommendations made by the former Broadcasting Authority (“BA”) which included the conduct of public engagement exercises on a regular basis by the former BA to collect public views on the quality and variety of the programmes provided by the two free television broadcasters. This would help the broadcasters to take into account public views and recommendations in producing programmes and formulating programming strategies.

3. The first public engagement exercise was conducted in late 2010/early 2011. Through various channels, the former BA invited organisations and individuals from different sectors of the community to give their views on the quality and variety of free television programmes. Over 150 submissions had been received. The former BA also conducted focus group discussions, inviting participation of professionals, representatives of concern groups and members of the public of different age groups, so as to collect their views on the quality and variety of free television programmes. The representatives of the two free television broadcasters had participated in the discussions to directly listen to the public views. The former BA then forwarded all the views collected in the public engagement exercise to the two free television broadcasters for

responses and follow up. Both have responded to the views and taken follow-up actions. Upon completion of the exercise, the views collected and the responses from the two broadcasters were summarised in a report issued by the former BA in mid 2011.

## **2013 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE**

4. Drawing reference from the 2010/2011 exercise, the CA is conducting the 2013 public engagement exercise. As in the last exercise, the exercise has adopted a two-stage format. During stage one, members of the public were invited to submit their written views on the quality and variety of free television programmes. In stage two, members of the public, including academics, television production veterans and representatives from concern groups, etc. were invited to participate in focus group discussions.

5. Stage one of the 2013 public engagement exercise, which lasted for six weeks, was conducted from 18 February 2013 to 2 April 2013. The invitation of written views from members of the public was widely publicised through press release, print advertisements and banners on various websites. The CA received a total of about 7 600 submissions in stage one. According to preliminary compilation and analysis, the main suggestions include –

- (a) both broadcasters should broadcast a greater variety of programme genres;
- (b) both broadcasters should enhance creativity in programmes, avoiding repetitious themes and similar productions;
- (c) one of the broadcasters should reduce the broadcast of repeated programmes and acquired programmes, and increase locally/station-produced programmes;
- (d) one of the broadcasters should reduce the broadcast of dramas, and improve creativity of dramas to avoid repetitious themes; and
- (e) news reports and personal view programmes of both broadcasters should avoid being partial, unfair, misleading and the exercise of self-censorship.

The focus group discussions in stage two would be held in late May to allow the representatives of the two free television broadcasters to directly listen to the further views of members of the public.

6. The whole public engagement exercise, which will last for more than three months, should provide ample opportunity to members of the public to express their views. The two-stage format of the current public engagement exercise does not only gauge views from different sectors of the community, but also allow for in-depth discussions so that the two free television broadcasters would have the opportunity to receive direct feedback from the public on the quality and variety of their programmes. As in the 2010/2011 public engagement exercise, the CA would publish the views collected and the broadcasters' responses following completion of the exercise.

### **PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS CONDUCTED BY THE CA FOR RENEWAL OR MID-TERM REVIEW OF DOMESTIC FREE TELEVISION PROGRAMME SERVICE LICENCES**

7. It should be noted that the current public engagement exercise is different from the public consultations conducted by the CA for the renewal or mid-term review of domestic free television programme service licences. In general, when processing applications for licence renewal or mid-term review, the CA would conduct larger scale and comprehensive public consultations in accordance with established procedures, including the conduct of a public opinion survey and public hearings.

8. The licences of the two existing domestic free television programme service licensees will expire on 30 November 2015. Under the Broadcasting Ordinance (Cap. 562), the licensees are required to submit to the CA applications for renewal of their licences not less than 24 months before their licences expire, viz. on or before 30 November 2013. The CA will start processing such applications upon receipt. In this regard, the CA plans to conduct a large-scale public consultation, including holding public hearings, in the first quarter of 2014 to collect public views on the performance of the two licensees.

### **ADVICE SOUGHT**

9. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.