

Communications Authority press release

The following is issued on behalf of the Communications Authority:

This press release summarises the decisions of the Communications Authority (CA) following its 100th meeting held in October 2020:

Waiver of requirement for free TV licensees to broadcast locally-produced children's programmes extended

The CA decided to extend, for a period of five months from November 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021, the waiver of compliance with the requirement relating to children's programmes broadcast on the integrated Chinese channels of domestic free television programme service (free TV) licensees being wholly of Hong Kong origin ("wholly of Hong Kong origin" requirement) (Note). The total broadcasting hours of children's programmes to be provided by a licensee will remain unchanged.

The CA previously waived, for a period of six months from May 1, 2020, to October 31, 2020, the requirement relating to children's programmes broadcast on the integrated Chinese channels of free TV licensees being wholly of Hong Kong origin, having regard to the impact of COVID-19 on the operations of the licensees. HK Television Entertainment Company Limited recently submitted an application for extending the waiver on the grounds of its difficulties in sourcing actors and venues for producing children's programmes locally because of the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CA notes the challenges faced by the broadcasters and the potential impact of the pandemic on their operations and programme productions. Taking into account the latest developments and balancing the interests of children viewers against the operational difficulties faced by free TV licensees, the CA agreed to extend the waiver of compliance with the "wholly of Hong Kong origin" requirement related to children's programmes for another five months up to March 31, 2021. The total broadcasting hours of children's programmes to be provided by a licensee remain unchanged.

Updated investment plan of Hong Kong Commercial Broadcasting Company Limited (CRHK)

Upon an application by CRHK, a sound broadcasting licensee, the CA approved CRHK's updated six-year investment plan for 2016 to 2022. Under the updated investment plan, the total investment by CRHK for the period will be adjusted to around \$703 million, comprising around \$21 million for capital investment as well as around \$682 million for programme investment.

Pursuant to the relevant licence condition in the sound broadcasting

licence of CRHK, unless otherwise approved by the CA, CRHK is required to comply with the six-year investment plan for 2016 to 2022 amounting to around \$909 million. This comprises around \$25 million of capital investment for the development, upgrading and maintenance of its infrastructure and transmission facilities as well as around \$884 million for programme investment and other operating expenditures.

To cope with the challenging business environment amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn, CRHK applied for adjusting its investment plan which had been formulated back in 2014. Under its updated investment plan, CRHK pledged to maintain the broadcasting quality and quantity of its services and invest in programming and production in the remaining two years covered by the updated plan.

CA approves termination of non-domestic television programme service licence of Health TV Company Limited (HTV)

The CA approved the application by HTV for termination of its non-domestic television programme service licence with retrospective effect from August 26, 2020. The termination of the licence was a commercial decision of the licensee.

Following the termination of HTV's licence, there are 11 non-domestic television programme service licensees in Hong Kong providing over 190 satellite television channels, targeting viewers mainly in the Asia-Pacific region.

Broadcast complaint

The CA considered a complaint case concerning the radio programme "Oppa, Sister, Night Night Friend" broadcast on September 5, 2019, on the Metro Info Channel of Metro Broadcast Corporation Limited (Metro). The CA decided that Metro should be warned to observe more closely the relevant provisions of the Radio Code of Practice on Programme Standards. Details of the case are at www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/en/content_713/appx_20201020.pdf.

Note: Pursuant to the relevant licence condition in the free TV licences, unless otherwise approved by the CA, a licensee is required to broadcast a maximum of two hours daily of children's programmes on each of the integrated Chinese and English channels, of which not less than 30 minutes daily of such programmes on the integrated Chinese channels are to be wholly of Hong Kong origin.