**BCA Inform: Update on Audio Description on TV**

On Tuesday, 5th August, BCA Inform delved into an update on the crucial topic of Audio Description (AD) on TV.

Angela Jaeschke, BCA’s General Manager Operations, opened the session by welcoming John Simpson, Emma Bennison, and Vaughn Bennison, all active members of the AD Working Group.

Angela outlined the significance of AD on Australian television, noting that BCA and disability advocates have campaigned for over 25 years to make this service widely available. AD is currently offered by ABC and SBS but remains absent from commercial networks. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has found Australia in breach of its obligations for not mandating AD, and BCA continues to press for legislation to ensure its provision. Angela also noted that AD can benefit neurodiverse individuals and encouraged commercial broadcasters to set a gold standard for accessibility, even suggesting industry awards to recognise accessible content.

Providing an update on advocacy efforts, Angela highlighted BCA’s past achievements and ongoing strategies. John Simpson then described the formation of the AD Allies group, which collaborates with BCA to push for AD on commercial TV, saying the time had come for it to be treated as a “must-have” service. Emma Bennison stressed the importance of supporting the review of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), which has been instrumental in advancing AD progress.

Expanding the network of AD supporters was also discussed. An attendee raised concerns about the lack of live AD for significant events on ABC and SBS such as during the coverage of the recent Federal election results.

The discussion then turned to technology in AD. Participants noted the use of AI voices for documentary narration with human written scripts still being relied on mainly. Angela reminded attendees that networks welcome feedback on how to improve their AD services, with many sharing positive experiences particularly for children’s programs.

On the topic of AD standards, Emma underscored the importance of individuals providing feedback directly to broadcasters rather than relying solely on organisational advocacy. Attendees expressed concerns about quality differences between Australian and international AD.

Most agreed that national guidelines should be developed, incorporating best practices, ensuring community feedback is central, and addressing issues such as preferred Australian voice styles. The importance of providing feedback on the effectiveness and preferred genres of current AD services was emphasized. The role of AI in future AD delivery was identified as an area requiring clear quality benchmarks.

The session concluded with Angela confirming that BCA would follow up with further actions to advance audio description on broadcast TV.