

Greater access for Australia's vision and hearing impaired: Audio description and captioning to be included on major film DVDs

12 January, 2010: The Australian Visual Software Distributors Association (AVSDA), representing the home entertainment film and TV industry, has today announced that all the major film distributors, and some smaller Australian independents, have committed to make available audio description and English captioning on the majority of theatrical films when released on DVD.

The distributors making this commitment include: Disney Studios Home Entertainment, Hopscotch Entertainment, Madman Entertainment, Paramount Home Entertainment, Roadshow Entertainment, Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, Twentieth-Century Fox Home Entertainment, Universal Pictures Video and Warner Home Video.

Disability groups representing the vision and hearing impaired have been lobbying for an commitment from distributors regarding improving media access features on DVDs and follows the development of the AVSDA Accessibility Framework for the Home Entertainment Film Industry and labelling standards developed in conjunction with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) in 2007.

The announcement today means that the major home entertainment film and TV distribution companies operating in Australia have committed to ensure that in the majority of theatrical films when released to standard definition DVD will contain both audio description and English captioning or subtitles.

Significantly, this commitment also meets the Federal Government's desire to ensure that DVDs distributed in Australia *"include captions and audio description, where these are already available"*.¹

"This announcement that Australia's leading film distribution companies will make access features available on the majority of theatrical titles released on DVD in Australia is a fantastic commitment to benefit the vision and hearing impaired communities in Australia," AVSDA CEO Simon Bush said.

"This will ensure that the vast majority of Australian theatrical titles when sold on DVD format will contain media access features to benefit the vision and hearing impaired communities who have been asking AVSDA for this commitment," Mr Bush said.

The AVSDA Accessibility Framework for the Home Entertainment Film Industry and labelling standards can be viewed at www.avsda.com.au/dvdaccess.asp. This announcement does not apply to non-studio or acquired films distributed in Australia as these films and the DVD features therein are out of the control of the distributor.

ENDS.

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¹ Page 33 of the *Discussion Report: Access to Electronic Media for the Hearing and Vision Impaired – Approaches for Consideration*, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, November 2009.