



## Public hearing in Canberra – 15 June

# Digital television – who's buying it?

**Broadcast Australia (BA)** and the **Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA)** will debate the drivers for a greater take-up of digital television and restrictions on multichannelling at a public hearing in Canberra on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June. The hearing is the third for the inquiry into the uptake of digital television by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications Information Technology and the Arts.

The rollout of digital television in Australia began in the major metropolitan areas in 2001. Although the scheduled rollout of digital television in Australia has passed the half way mark, it is anticipated that digital television will be taken up by less than 50 per cent of Australian households by 2008.

The Federal Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator Helen Coonan, has requested the Committee to inquire into progress on the rollout process for digital television and options to encourage greater consumer interest in the uptake of digital television.

BA is Australia's leading independent broadcast transmission provider. BA owns and operates the most extensive broadcast transmission infrastructure network in Australia, providing transmission services from approximately 600 transmission sites across metropolitan, regional and rural Australia, and reaching over 99% of the country's population.

BA suggests a number of options to increase the range of services and content on offer to digital television consumers in Australia. These include the permanent allocation of the two unused national digital channels and removing the restrictions imposed on the number of multichannels provided by free to air broadcasters.

ASTRA represents the interests of subscription television platforms and channels. It argues that digital television take-up will continue to be driven by subscription television, under the existing competition regulatory framework. ASTRA also advocates a moratorium against multichanneling by the existing commercial television broadcasters until 2008. This would give time for subscription television to consolidate the investments made in new digital services and technology.

Committee Chair Jackie Kelly said digital television can deliver high quality transmission and a greater range of programming to Australian viewers.

"Currently, Australians are either unaware of the technology, or reluctant to purchase digital televisions or set-top boxes," Ms Kelly said. "Given that analogue services will be phased out from 2008 onwards – we need to ensure that the Australian public is ready to switch on to digital."

### **Public Hearing Program**

**Date:** Wednesday 15 June.

**Venue:** Committee Room 2R2, Parliament House, Canberra, (HMS 98.7)

**9:05 am** Broadcast Australia (Submission 41)

**10:00 am** Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (Submission 50)

Further details on the inquiry, including the terms of reference, membership of the Committee and advice on making submissions can be obtained on the Committee's website at [www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/cita](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/cita) or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4601 or emailing [cita.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:cita.reps@aph.gov.au).

**For media comment**, contact Emily Tinson (Ms Kelly's media officer) on (02) 6277 2369  
**For background information**, contact the Committee Secretary, on (02) 6277 4601