



## Public hearing in Sydney – 28 June

# Digital television – who's buying it?

Network broadcasters and electronics manufacturers will debate options for encouraging consumer interest in digital television and expanding content at a public hearing in Sydney on Tuesday 28 June. The hearing is the fifth 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 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.

**LG Electronics Australia Pty Ltd (LGEAP)** is one of the world's largest manufacturers of consumer electronics. LGEAP claim that a lack of planning and standards for digital broadcasting and receivers, including datacasting and re-broadcasting, is creating confusion amongst manufacturers and difficulties in accommodating all states' transmissions.

**Panasonic AVC Networks Australia Pty Ltd (Panasonic)** is a leading supplier of visual and audio equipment in Australia. Panasonic have made a number of recommendations to promote the uptake of digital television, including mandating the inclusion of digital tuners in large screen televisions. They also recommend that the Government, in partnership with industry, fund the establishment of an independent Test and Conformance Centre for digital television to test the compatibility between broadcast streams and digital television receivers, and to establish a mechanism for over-the-air downloads.

**The Ten Group Pty Ltd (Ten)** owns and operates Network Ten's five capital city television stations. Ten considers that a mandate on the inclusion of digital tuners in television sets would accelerate take-up of digital television. **The Nine Network (Nine)** is Australia's highest-rating television network. It broadcasts directly into Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, and Brisbane, and, through affiliates, into most of Australia's populated areas. Nine suggest that the superior quality of digital television is acting as a driver for digital take-up. With high definition programs becoming increasingly available and consumer equipment prices continuing to fall, this will continue to encourage take-up.

Currently more than 78 per cent of Australians rely solely on free-to-air for their television viewing. Both Nine and Ten networks oppose lifting the current restrictions on free-to-air multi-channelling, suggesting that free-to-air multi-channelling would provide viewers with less, rather than more, diversity and choice.

Committee Chair Jackie Kelly said digital television can deliver high quality transmission. "Currently, Australians are either unaware of the technology, or reluctant to purchase digital televisions or set-top boxes," Mrs 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."

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.

## **Public Hearing Program - Tuesday 28 June**

**Venue:** Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices, Level 8, 70 Phillip St, Sydney

**2.00pm**            **Network Ten** (Submission 60)  
**2.45pm**            **Nine Network** (Submission 59)  
**3.30pm**            **Panasonic Australia and Panasonic AVC Networks** (Submission 30 and 42)  
**4.15pm**            **LG Electronics Australia** (Submission 44)

Further details on the inquiry, including the terms of reference, membership of the Committee and advice on making submissions can be obtained 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).

**Media comment**, please contact Emily Tinson (Jackie Kelly's media officer) on (02) 4732 2844  
**Background information**, please contact the Committee Secretary on (02) 6277 4601 or 0413 085 765