



Public hearing in Canberra – 7 September

Digital television – who's buying it?

Two opposing views on the role of Government in the take-up of digital television in Australia will be the focus of discussions at a public hearing in Canberra on Wednesday 7 September. The hearing is the 10th 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.

Sony Australia Ltd is a major supplier of consumer electronics and broadcasting equipment for television production and transmission in Australia. Through Sony Pictures Entertainment business, Sony is the owner of one of the largest programming libraries in the world and a major provider of content for television in many formats.

Sony's submission identifies issues which it believes should be addressed to increase levels of consumer take-up of digital television and allow the Government to meet the digital conversion timetable. The submission provides a number of recommendations to encourage the take-up of digital television, including a short-term target for analogue shutdown, more Government and industry resources for marketing and promotion, and mandating of digital tuners being integrated into all new televisions.

The **Australian Consumers' Association (ACA)** is a not-for-profit, non-party political organisation providing consumers with information and advice on goods, services, health and personal finances. Independent from government and industry, it lobbies and campaigns on behalf of consumers to advance their needs.

ACA's submission argues against Government intervention in the take-up of digital television and emphasises the importance of analogue switch-off being determined by customer behaviour, rather than by commercial considerations.

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. Issues under consideration by the Committee include:

- the rollout process for digital television, including progress to date and future plans;
- options for further encouraging consumer interest in the uptake of digital television;
- technological issues relevant to the uptake of digital television; and future options.

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."

Public Hearing Program – Wednesday 7 September

Venue: Committee Room 2R2, Parliament House, Canberra

(HMS 98.7)

9.05am **Sony Australia Ltd**
10.00am **Australian Consumers' Association**

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

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