



Digital television – who's buying it?

Options to encourage greater consumer interest in the uptake of digital television are discussed in a new report released today by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

The report, *Digital Television – Who's Buying It?*, makes a total of 12 recommendations, on key issues such as analogue switch-off and multichannelling restrictions.

The Committee considers that lack of certainty regarding analogue switch-off is a key failure in the drive to DTV take-up, and recommends a nationwide analogue switch-off in 2010.

The Chair of the Committee, The Hon Jackie Kelly MP, said "A nationwide analogue switch-off will provide certainty in everyone's minds and allow manufacturers and retailers to begin awareness raising campaigns. Providing a certain date will ensure that the most competitive prices for digital equipment are offered to consumers".

To provide broadcasters with the opportunity to offer a wider range of DTV services, in particular additional content, the Committee recommended that restrictions on multichannelling for national free-to-air broadcasters be lifted as soon as possible, and that commercial free-to-air networks be permitted to multichannel if they choose from 1 January 2008.

"We believe broadcasters should be able to make commercial decisions regarding the diversity of services they wish to provide. We believe that lifting multichannelling restrictions and the subsequent provision of extra channels and services will assist in driving DTV take-up prior to the 2010 analogue switch-off" Mrs Kelly said.

The key recommendations include:

- Switch off analogue television broadcasting nationwide on 1 January 2010.
- Lift multichannelling programming restrictions for the national broadcasters as soon as possible and no later than 1 January 2007.
- Lift multichannelling restrictions for commercial broadcasters on 1 January 2008.
- The current minimum High Definition broadcasting quota for free-to-air networks will be maintained until 1 January 2011.
- The establishment of a testing and conformance centre for digital television equipment, with the provision of A\$1 million as seed funding in the first year.
- The establishment of a mandatory labelling scheme that will accurately identify television and digital reception products.

The inquiry into the uptake of digital television was announced in March 2005. The Committee received 97 submissions and public hearings were conducted across Australia. There was unanimous agreement on the 12 recommendations.

Copies of the report can be obtained by contacting the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4601, emailing cita.reps@aph.gov.au, or on the Committee's website at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/cita/digitaltv/report.htm>.

For media comment: Please contact the Committee Chair, Jackie Kelly MP, on (02) 6277 2369 or Electorate Office on (02) 4732 2844

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