

## Submission 10

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into the uptake of digital television in Australia. My submission relates to the technological issues that may have an impact on the uptake of digital television.

I reside in a beachside suburb of Adelaide and, while some distance from them, have direct line of site to the transmission towers in the Adelaide Hills.

In general the quality of the digital television picture is outstanding, however if the quality of the signal (as opposed to the level of the signal) is less than 90% or so, it can cause pixellation and sound glitches that spoil the viewing experience. This problem is particularly noticeable with SBS but can occur with other channels under some circumstances (probably associated with weather conditions). Until these problems can be resolved some consumers will be reluctant to convert to digital.

One of the benefits of digital television is the opportunity for television channels to make electronic program guides (EPG) available on air. None of the free to air channels in South Australia provide full EPG - that is, EPG with several days of programming available. EPG should provide consumers with the ability to plan future viewing and, for those with set top boxes with appropriate facilities, to preset recording times for programs. EPG is widely used overseas and there appears to be no reason why it could not be properly implemented in Australia.

Set top boxes have internal clocks that can be set by time signals sent by channels - this should be a reliable way to maintain accurate time. However some channels have a record of sending inaccurate signals setting the clock to the wrong time and occasionally to the wrong date. This is particularly a problem when the set top box has been set up to record a program and it fails to record at the desired time because the time has been wrongly set by the channel's signal. This may be seen as a minor issue but, together with the lack of quality EPG, shows the lack of commitment to digital television by the channels.

The ABC's commitment to digital television should be an example to other channels - the recent addition of ABC2 and, in particular, the ABC 'dig' music channels is to be commended. SBS' early introduction of SBS digital radio is also to be commended.

**Richard French**