

## Submission No. 38

The Secretary  
Standing Committee on Communications  
Information Technology and the Arts  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Submission to the Inquiry – Digital Television – Who’s buying it?

In the context of the above I would like to set out my experiences with free to air digital television

- In 2002 I needed to buy a new television receiver to replace a fifteen year old set which did not have suitable connections for a DVD player. I was vaguely aware that free to air digital television (ftadv) but only when I started making enquiries at retailers did I discover that existing analogue sets could receive the digital signal through a set top box. There was then and still is very little publicity given to the availability of ftadv.
- I discovered the DBA website which gave all the information I required including the fact that high definition dtv would be available in 2003.
- I then starting looking seriously for demonstrations at retailers of ftadv and discovered the much improved picture quality available through the digital set top box. However the retail trade seemed to have very little knowledge of ftadv and were not actively selling it.
- In September 2002 I saw a demonstration of HD tv on a plasma screen showing the channel 9 demo loop. This was 1080i and the picture was so sharp and with the knowledge that such broadcasts were to start in 2003 I purchased a 106cm high resolution plasma panel and a HD set top box.
- I was really impressed with the picture and sound quality on SD broadcasts but with the few HD programmes that started to be broadcast on channel 9 and later channel 10 the picture quality was so much better. This was using the existing antenna which demonstrated the ease of use.
- However it was with disappointment that the channel 7 and SBS HD broadcasts using 576p resulted in a poorer quality picture than the 576i SD broadcasts.
- ABC unconverted 1080i HD programmes, although not native HD, were a distinct improvement on the SD channel in terms of picture quality so it was another disappointment that they too switched to 576p for their HD channel.
- To term 576p broadcasts as HD is really a misrepresentation since the picture quality is inferior to 576i SD. For those, who like me bought HD capable equipment based on a promise from the government there has been a let down. The general public are being denied the possibility of the high quality output of true HD broadcasts if 576p remains a “High Definition” standard in name only especially with prices of HD capable equipment continually falling.
- I understand that there is a broadcast bandwidth issue and competing claims of multi channel vs HD proponents but HD is a reality and promises should be fulfilled. This situation can be compared to the introduction of colour television.

- Recently I installed an SD ftdtv set top box at a holiday home where analogue reception is very poor. Although subject to breakup on certain channels at certain times the improvement in picture quality is stunning.
- Apart from the HD issue, I am extremely satisfied with the with the ftdtv experience and am mystified as to why the general public appear to be kept in the dark about its availability.

#### Conclusion:

Ftdtv is markedly superior compared to analogue broadcast tv, is available now at very reasonable cost. However the general public appear to be quite unaware of its existence. To the public, digital television means foxtel pay tv.

#### Recommendations

- Publicise the ftdtv service.
- Ban the sale of analogue receivers without digital converters or set top boxes
- Subsidise low cost set to boxes.
- Allow unrestricted multi channel broadcasts but restrict advertising time.
- Turn off analogue service as per deadline and use extra bandwidth to satisfy both HD and multi channel requirements.

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