

Submission 6

I would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into the uptake of digital television in Australia.

I understand that the Terms of Reference are fairly narrow and that a submission outside the terms would not be considered, so I will try to make my comments relevant.

As background, I am married with two primary school aged children, we have a single small television and only free-to-air TV. The TV is used for an average of two to four hours per day, generally the kids watch a bit in the morning and the adults watch a bit in the evening. I could afford to buy a new television and pay TV but choose not to. So in terms of "encouraging consumer interest" we would be consumers that you may be looking to encourage.

I have two concerns over the push to new television standards, technology, and broadcast.

My primary issue is that television is largely-speaking an entertainment source (accepting that news is not entertainment, but neither does it provide in-depth analysis) and as individuals, families and Australians we don't need to encourage more drip-fed effortless entertainment. In the years since new TV technology has been proposed I have never heard of value that it brings to the consumer that justifies the expense nor justifies watching more of it. Features such as being able to choose camera angles for sporting events, or packing more channels into the transmission space, or even better picture quality are all largely value-less, and in fact would only serve to encourage consumers to spend even more time on the couch with their eyes glued to the TV – a bizarre aim since there is every sign that we already spend too much and are suffering the health consequences. If digital TV were to bring value like "it will make you smarter and fitter", or perhaps if it was proposed that Australia were to become industry leaders in the manufacturing of product or content then I could see the value, but that is not the case.

The second issue that I have is that the technology for transmission and reception is expensive and all manufactured off-shore. In fact I would hazard a guess that the broadcasters will require all-new recording and editing facilities which would also need to be sourced off-shore. This has an obvious detrimental effect on the balance of trade and the current account deficit. Without clear value to consumers the government should in fact be discouraging any technology like this rather than mandating and enforcing its take-up.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Regards

Erik Fenna