

Submission 7

Hello

The main impediment to the uptake of digital TV in Australia is the failure of the consumer electronics industry to release consumer products such as TV's and DVD recorders with digital tuners. As a consumer, I have very few choices if I want to uptake the new technology. Some examples:

Televisions:

the models and brands I would like to buy are not available with digital tuners. My choice is to either buy a TV which will become obsolete in 3 years, or spend an additional several hundred dollars to get a digital set top box. My old TV recently died, and instead of buying a large screen TV of choice (it is only available with an analog tuner), I spent a minimal amount of money on an analog replacement and will wait until the TV I want is available with a digital tuner before I purchase it.

DVD recorders:

I would like to buy a DVD recorder, principally because VHS is being phased out and I would like to copy all my old VHS tapes to DVD. As with TVs, it is not possible to buy the DVD recorder of choice with a digital tuner. Again, I would be spending hundreds (or thousands) of dollars on equipment which will become obsolete in several years. It is of particular concern that many of these devices will not accept a timed signal from a digital set top box, making them totally obsolete when analog signals are no longer available.

The other issue with DVD recorders is their capacity. They are not yet capable of recording a high definition program without loss of detail via compression. These devices will be available perhaps this year, but at a very high cost (for 1st generation devices).

My VCR is starting to play up after 10 years of faithful use. If I buy a replacement then the problem I have is that both VHS and analog will be phased out in the foreseeable future and I have wasted my money. If I buy a DVD recorder, then the problem I have is that when analog signals are phased out, it will no longer serve the purpose I purchased it for. If I buy a set top box with a HDD, then I am unable to make permanent recordings for later enjoyment. Question - what would you do???

Comments:

Consumer products with digital tuners are available overseas. There is no reason why the manufacturers cannot release these products in Australia, except for commercial reasons:

1. Australia is a very small market globally, and the investment required for Australianisation of these products may not be a business priority.
2. If the release is delayed, manufacturers get two bites of the cherry. Those persons needing to upgrade now, will buy products which will become obsolete when analog is no longer available, and will repurchase at this time.

Globally, Australia is an early adopter of digital TV. Considering the critical mass required to make digital products available and affordable, and considering the size of the Australian market, this is not a wise place to be. We should wait until the technology is more available and affordable. By not waiting you are forcing consumers into making some very difficult decisions about current purchases (as stated above).

Suggestions:

1. Legislate to force manufacturers to release digital compatible TVs, DVD recorders, and other products available across the range.
2. Revise the cut off date for analog to 24 months after the legislation has taken effect.

This would give Australian consumers the ability to make planning decisions about the uptake of the technology, knowing that the technology is both available and hopefully affordable. A household could budget to uptake the technology in the two year crossover period when required products are available, and not be forced into making difficult and costly purchasing decisions which have a planned obsolescence of 3 years.

Regards
Derek Louey-Gung