



**Opac Pty. Ltd.**  
A.C.N 003 648 240  
24 Rosci Road  
Ingleburn NSW  
2565 Australia

Tel: 61 2 9618 5777  
Fax: 61 2 9618 5077  
opac@bigpond.com

## **Submission to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Technology and the Arts.**

### **Inquiry into the uptake of digital television May 2005**

#### **Summary**

In Australia Digital TV via Satellite started in 1995 with the changeover of the analogue service known as "Home Stead and Community Broadcast" [HCBS] to the digital "Remote Area Broadcast Service" [RABS]

In 1998/1999 Australia made the transition from analogue to digital mobile phones.

Terrestrial Digital Broadcast [DVB-T] started in 2000. It offers benefits to the viewing public such as:

- Crystal clear pictures subject to reception and proper antenna setup
- Dolby Digital surround sound
- Additional channels like ABC-2 and Ch44 and possible other multi channels
- Program guides, event information and news.
- Parental control allowing M, MA or AV rated programming to be password locked.

- Closed captioning and teletext
- MHP interactive expected.

As of May 2005, prices of Set Top Boxes (STB) have plummeted to as low as \$79 (Woolworth Kross brand), ranging up to \$1300 for High Definition set top boxes with hard drive recorder.

Given that all Terrestrial STB's are imported, the Statistics department of the Australian Customs Service is able to provide the number of STB's imported since 2000 and entered under the following customs tariff classification.

Tariff Classification 8528 1200  
Statistical code 36  
Instrument TC1 = 9902505

## Introduction

Opac Pty Ltd is a supplier of satellite reception equipment since 1986 and Mediastar branded Digital STB's since 2001. Our STB's are sold through major retailers.

Thus far the uptake and sales of Set-Tops have been disappointing.

Main Reasons :

1. Lack of awareness of the benefits of using a digital STB
2. Lack of Multi-channel programming
3. Public perception and complacency that analogue broadcasting will continue well beyond 2008
4. Public awareness that the longer the wait, the cheaper the STB will be when the time comes to buy.
5. Poor digital coverage in rural and some urban areas

The advert created by Free TV Australia fail to emphasise all of the benefits. It merely indicates that the picture is crystal clear. For the great majority the technology is overwhelming and confusing. They will probably stay with the analogue for as long as possible.

It is our view that extending the analogue broadcast beyond 2008 will have no benefit to the public or to the industry. It will require additional funding in keeping both services running.

From our experience of the changeover to digital satellite broadcast, most viewers waited until the analogue broadcast ceased before buying a digital receiver. The same scenario took place during the transition from analogue to digital mobile phones. The great majority waited until the analogue phone stopped working before moving on to digital even though the shutdown date was extended by 6 months.

It is noted that except for Channel 9 all other broadcasters have multi channels in their stream which are repeats of the same program.

[06 0007] 7 Digital  
[06 0070] 7 HD digital  
[06 0071] 7 Digital 1  
[06 0072] 7 Digital 2  
[06 0073] 7 Digital 3  
[06 0077] 7 digital guide  
[08 0009] Nine Digital  
[08 0090] Nine HD  
[08 0099] Nine guide  
[11 0001] Ten Digital  
[11 0010] Ten Digital  
[11 0011] Ten Guide  
[11 0012] Ten HD  
[11 0013] Ten Digital 1  
[11 0014] Ten Digital 2  
[11 0015] Ten Digital 3  
[11 0100] Ten Guide

Network 10 is broadcasting the same service on 6 channels, Guide on 2, and HD on 1. Seven broadcasts standard definition on 4 channels. They should follow Channel 9 and SBS and broadcast each service on 1 channel.

There's no purpose in multi channels unless the programming was different. Alternatively, the broadcasters could be consolidated into one frequency stream, which would greatly reduce operating costs, for broadcasters in regional areas especially, and for consumers as well, due to less sophisticated antennas being required.

Optus Aurora service provides Digital TV via satellite to the remote areas known as RABS. Those who reside in urban areas do not qualify for satellite access unless it is established by a process of application submission followed by site testing. If it is found that signal levels are below standard the applicant can qualify for satellite access. He or she can buy the satellite dish and receiver, have it installed and have their smart card authorized to receive free to air commercial broadcast via satellite.

## Conclusion.

- A more informative advertising campaign should be launched to properly demonstrate the advantages of owning a STB.
- Allow the commercial broadcaster multi channel programming if they wish to do so.
- Disallow the current practice of multi channels of the same program.
- Do not extend the Analogue broadcast beyond 2008.
- Remove the application process to those wishing to receive Digital broadcast via satellite, as is the case in New Zealand.

Prepared by Jacob Keness.

Opac Pty Ltd  
24 Bosci Road  
INGLEBURN NSW 2565  
02 9618 5777  
F A X 5077  
[jk@mediastar.com.au](mailto:jk@mediastar.com.au)  
[www.mediastar.com.au](http://www.mediastar.com.au)