

Dear Sir,

I have read the article on the proposed closure of analogue TV transmission in the recent publication of "About the House" and would like to forward you some observations.

One of the biggest drawbacks to digital TV is that it requires a separate set top box for ***EVERY*** TV receiver / VCR (or similar recording device) in the premises if they are to have the same functionality as they have now.

Analogue TV receivers come with built in tuner which enables TV reception of different channels on different sets at no additional cost.

The key questions are... How many TVs / video recording devices are there in the home and what is the cost to preserve their existing functionality?

The main viewing system may well have a digital set top box, Dolby digital sound etc, however, most people couldn't be bothered with the extra expense of a set top box etc. for the portable in the kitchen, the set in the rumpus room, the kids bedroom TVs etc. The cost of set top boxes will have to fall to extremely low levels before people fork out good money for something that is not necessary under the present dual TV transmission standard.

The alternative to the purchase of a set top box for every receiver in the house is to purchase 5 set top boxes and have each one's output tuned to a separate UHF RF channel, mix them together and then feed them via the existing aerial system throughout the premises. If one wants stereo sound on devices capable of receiving same there is the extra expense of 5 GME Kingray stereo RF modulators and their installation (at a cost of over \$2000, in addition to the cost of 5 digital set top boxes, at present prices). I know of no digital set top box with a stereo RF modulator. Stereo analogue TVs receive stereo sound "off air" at no additional cost.

Closure of the analogue TV system will do nothing for our balance of payments. The set top boxes are not made here and hence a huge amount of money will leave the country to purchase these overseas manufactured devices.

Whilst digital TV has its benefits, closure of the analogue system is not beneficial either. The two systems coexist reasonable happily. Each has its merits and problems.

Digital TV is often prone to interference which causes the image to freeze or sound to stutter. Trying to cure such interference has been the subject of a number of letters to the editor in recent issues of Australia's Silicon Chip electronics magazine. It can be extremely difficult, requiring alternate earthing strategies and or additional shielding for the coaxial download etc.

The "threshold effect" is also a negative for digital. With analogue, if the signal is poor it is still possible to receive a picture even if it contains a fair amount of noise (snow). Digital is a "go - no go" system where if the signal level falls below a certain threshold the box "blue screens" and nothing will bring the picture back.. In many situations mast head amplifiers are of no use as if the signal to noise ratio is unsatisfactory, you still don't get reception.

With the present cost to duplicate what is already inside an analogue TV "out of the box", analogue transmission should continue well into the future.

Have digital by all means, just don't turn analogue off.

Many people couldn't be bothered with high definition video / 5 channel sound to watch the news and a few other programs which hold their interest, especially whilst cooking dinner or other such activities. A 14 inch portable with "rabbits ears" on top of the fridge is fine and serves its purpose well.

One could also comment on the abysmal standard of free to air TV programming, however that is best left to another forum.

Sincerely,  
Brad Sheargold  
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