



SENATOR THE HON STEPHEN CONROY

MINISTER FOR BROADBAND, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY  
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE

Ms Julia Irwin MP  
Member for Fowler  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

26 MAY 2010

Dear Ms Irwin *Julia*

### **Television reception in Turkey Beach and Rodds Bay, Queensland**

Thank you for your letter dated 18 March 2010 in your capacity as Chair of the Standing Committee on Petitions. In your letter you referred a petition to me from the citizens of, and visitors to, Turkey Beach and Rodds Bay, Queensland, about the inadequate quality of television reception in those areas, and you sought my response to the petition by way of a written response to the Committee.

The petition asked the House to 'make an urgent request to the appropriate authority for erection of a black spot tower to allow residents of Turkey Beach and Rodds Bay to receive good quality television reception.'

The Television Black Spots Program, which provided funding for analog retransmission solutions, closed on 30 June 2005. However, the Australian Government understands the importance of free-to-air television to regional and rural Australians and has introduced policy and legislative measures to maximise the access of viewers in these areas to digital television services.

On 5 January 2010, I announced that the Government will implement a new digital television satellite service which will be available to people who are unable to receive adequate terrestrial television reception from the transmitters that serve the area in which they live.

The new satellite service will, for the first time, allow people living in regional areas to receive the same number of television services as people living in metropolitan areas. Legislation to support the implementation of the new satellite service was introduced into Parliament on 18 March 2010.

The new satellite service will feature channels carrying programs from the Seven, Nine and Ten networks and the national broadcasters' main channels, ABC1 and SBS ONE, along with digital channels ABC2, ABC3, ABCHD, SBS TWO, 7TWO, GO! and ONE HD. A new Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) 24 hour news channel is expected to replace the current ABCHD service later this year.

The satellite service will also provide viewers in regional Australia with access to the local news services currently broadcast by the commercial broadcasters in their relevant terrestrial licence areas. These services will be provided through a dedicated news channel. In addition, the news services of the national broadcasters, the ABC and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), will also be provided. ABC news will be provided on a state basis.

On 14 April 2010 I announced that the Government had finalised a funding agreement with broadcasters to provide the service in Eastern Australia. Further information about the operation of the satellite service, including the availability and cost of the new satellite set-top boxes is available at the broadcasters' website at [www.mysattv.com.au](http://www.mysattv.com.au).

Turkey Beach and Rodds Bay are in the Capricornia switchover area which will switch to digital-only broadcasting in the second half of 2011. The actual date at which switchover will occur within the six-month switchover period will depend on factors such as local conditions and community feedback.

To access the new satellite service, households will need to install satellite reception equipment, including a dish and a digital set-top box. The costs of installation will vary depending on the location, the size of the satellite receiving dish required and characteristics of the viewer's home.

The new satellite service provides a viable alternative solution to community funded 'self-help' retransmission facility for people in areas like Turkey Beach and Rodds Bay. Following a household's initial expenditure for satellite reception equipment, there will be no ongoing financial and resource commitments required, unlike the ongoing maintenance and operational costs of the self-help facility. Furthermore, the satellite service will be better able to serve people within the area as the population distribution changes over time.

Thank you for bringing the concerns of the residents of Turkey Beach and Rodds Bay to my attention. I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Conroy  
Minister for Broadband,  
Communications and the Digital Economy

