

**IMPARJA'S PLANS FOR DIGITAL BROADCASTING****JULY 2010**

Note: The information in this briefing paper is correct to the best of our knowledge. Before taking any decision or commercial action (e.g. to supply or install reception equipment), we advise that you refer to the Digital Switchover Task Force, (DSTF) at the web-site below.

**INTRODUCTION**

Australian TV services are going digital and the government has committed to switching off the last analogue TV services in (remote areas) by the end of 2013. Unless viewers have converted their receive systems to digital by that time they will lose all access to TV. This briefing is intended specifically for use by Imparja viewers and service providers (installers). The details of the overall national plan for digital conversion are available on the government website

<http://www.digitalready.gov.au/faqs.aspx>

**BACKGROUND**

Digital TV has come a long way since its introduction in 2001. At that time it simply provided viewers a slightly wider screen version of the analogue services. In the intervening years it has become clear that simply being able to watch slightly enhanced versions of their existing analogue channels does not persuade viewers to invest in new receiving equipment. The main motivator for viewers to convert to digital is the ability to access more services.

**CONFIGURATION OF THE NEW DIGITAL SERVICES**

The new digital system will comprise no fewer than 16 free-to-air TV channels including three from each of the seven, Nine and TEN networks. All will be "widescreen" and some will be in high definition. They will include a full time sports channel, a 24 hour a day news service, a dedicated children's TV channel and much more.

To achieve this, the broadcasters are moving to a completely new digital transmission system and a new satellite platform. To receive the new digital channels viewers will need to upgrade their equipment. As a minimum this will mean a new set top box, which can be used to display the new digital services on an existing (analogue) TV. However to get the full benefit of digital TV, viewers will need a widescreen, high definition display.

While the new satellite system is currently on the air, it is only in an interim configuration so as to service the two regional areas (Mildura and regional SA) which either have or are about to go to full digital operation. Digital satellite equipment will not be available in remote areas until the full configuration is operational (by the end of 2010). The expected antenna size for satisfactory operation of the new satellite system is broadly the same as that of the existing Aurora platform. It will operate on



the same Optus C1 satellite as the Aurora platform and so should not require any re-point. There may however be a need to replace the LNB in old installations. It will not be part of any subscription TV system and there will be no charges for access to any of the services.

There are other changes you will need to know about as well.

## **SELF HELP & COMMUNITY SERVICES TO MOVE TO DTH**

Digital broadcast transmitters are complex and expensive. Government policy is that other than 28 locations with the largest populations where the transmitters are owned by the broadcasters, **all of the existing analogue remote community and self help transmitters (including those which re-broadcast NITV), will be switched off at the end of 2013, and the replacement digital services at these locations will only be available via direct-to-home (DTH) satellite.**

This means that only those viewers in the 28 broadcaster operated locations will be able to receive TV from a local transmitter. (They will also be able to use the in-built TV tuner in a new widescreen TV, rather than requiring a digital set top box). Once the analogue services are switched off, there will be **no other locations with broadcast TV services, and viewers who previously watched self help or community transmitters will need to install a satellite dish on their residence, shop or office and install a (digital) satellite decoder (Set Top Box).**

## **EXISTING SATELLITE VIEWERS**

Everyone who currently has an existing (Aurora) dish and set top box, will also need to replace their existing set top box with a new one. This includes all those viewers who currently receive Imparja and the other remote area channels "out of area" because they are unable to get adequate reception of their local TV services.

Again it will be possible to view the digital services on an existing analogue (4:3) TV sets, but to appreciate the full benefits of digital TV viewers will need a widescreen display. Note that widescreen TVs do not generally include a satellite TV tuner, so everyone accessing the satellite for their TV services will need a separate set top box.

## **TIMETABLE**

The national analogue switch off process takes place region by region over the next three years. The Mildura area has already become 'fully digital' having completed analogue switch off on 1 July 2010. Regional South Australia follows later in 2010 followed at six monthly intervals by regional Victoria, Queensland and NSW, with the remote areas "bringing up the rear" in 2013. In the meantime the remote area analogue services and the Aurora platform will remain in operation until the end of 2013.

The new satellite service is already in operation, but only in an interim configuration. For the time being therefore its reception is limited to viewers in Mildura and regional SA who do not have access to their own digital regional TV services. It will become available to remote area viewers in its final format as from December 2010. In the meantime the Aurora platform and all the remote analogue transmitters will remain operational until the end of 2013.



The digital transmitter roll-out (at the 28 broadcaster sites) is expected to start by the end of 2010.

### **SATELLITE SERVICE ENTITLEMENTS**

Just like the existing satellite service, the new system will be scrambled using a smartcard system. To gain access to the system, viewers will need to register with a central 'hotline' in order to receive all services valid for their location. Just as with the Aurora system any viewer within the remote area will have automatic rights to the new service while those who live in regional or capital city "black spots" can apply for out of area access to the system.

The satellite will carry two complete "time shifted" commercial services one for Queensland and NT, the other for NSW, Victoria, SA ACT and Tasmania. Viewers will also receive the appropriate state based ABC and SBS channels. As with the Aurora platform, viewers are entitled to ABC and SBS services anywhere in the country, whereas the commercial broadcasters are available as of right only if they are within the remote central and eastern licence areas. The commercial services will only be switched on in regional and metropolitan if they are in a "black spot". At this stage the policy for "travellers" (grey nomads) has not been formulated

### **CHOICE OF SATELLITE RECEIVERS**

While the range of receivers is currently limited to just one model, it is expected that (as with the Aurora service), market forces will result in a range of receivers with various combinations of facilities will become available. However, only those receivers which have been through a qualification process to confirm their technical compliance with the system will be allowed access to the satellite.

### **SUBSIDY PROCESS**

In recognition of the cost of installing a satellite receive system, the government propose to provide a subsidy to remote area viewers who lose their analogue TV services when the community and self help transmitters are switched off. There is also an allowance for people with special needs (carers, pensioners and the like). This scheme is not yet finalised and we understand that the process will NOT be retrospective, so anyone purchasing and installing their own receiver (s) in advance of the subsidy scheme coming into operation will not be eligible for a re-fund.

## Appendix 1 Digital Transmitter Sites

- 1 Alice Springs
- 2 Barcaldine
- 3 Blackall
- 4 Bourke/Bourke Town
- 5 Brewarrina
- 6 Ceduna/Smoky Bay
- 7 Charleville
- 8 Cloncurry
- 9 Cobar
- 10 Coober Pedy
- 11 Cooktown
- 12 Cunnamulla
- 13 Hughenden
- 14 Nhulunbuy
- 15 Katherine
- 16 Lightning Ridge
- 17 Longreach
- 18 Mitchell
- 19 Mt Isa
- 20 Roma
- 21 Roxby Downs
- 22 St George
- 23 Tennant Creek
- 24 Thursday Island
- 25 Walgett
- 26 Weipa
- 27 Wilcannia
- 28 Winton