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Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Environment,  
Communications and the Arts

eca.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary

### **Inquiry into the provisions of the Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Digital Television) Bill 2010**

SBS appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to this inquiry.

As Australia's multilingual and multicultural national public broadcaster, SBS is a highly valued media service, particularly for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. SBS currently provides two national television services: SBS ONE – in analogue and digital (SD and HD); and SBS TWO – SBS's digital (SD) multi-channel. Both services provide a balance of programming – commissioned and acquired – in English and languages other than English.

SBS welcomes the proposed satellite solution to facilitate the delivery of commercial and national digital television services to households that cannot receive an adequate terrestrial signal for the digital services available in their area. Enabling under-served communities to access more services is crucial to achieving the objectives of Australia's broadcasting policy.

However SBS has identified at least 88 sites (see attachment) where the ABC and commercial broadcasters will be available as a digital terrestrial service but SBS will not be. Approximately 44 of these sites currently have self-help facilities which provide an analogue retransmission of SBS but for which there is no plan for a digital upgrade. Areas affected include Balranald and Brewarrina (NSW), Coober Pedy (SA), St Helens (Tas), Lorne (Vic), Cloncurry, Weipa and Thursday Island (Qld), and

**Our story:** When we began in 1975, there were only a handful of languages broadcast on Australian media. Now there are more than 68 languages broadcast by SBS, which makes us the world's most multicultural broadcaster.

*Six Billion Stories and counting...*

Kambalda and Merredin (WA). The other 44 carry the ABC and at least two commercial broadcasting services, but have no SBS service at all. Areas affected include Kyogle (NSW), Murgon (Qld), Bordertown (SA), King Island (Tas), Orbost (Vic), and Kalbarri (WA).

In many of these locations SBS may therefore be the only service that viewers will need to access by satellite. This will have cost and logistical (e.g. two remote controls) implications for households in those locations and will be a disincentive for viewers to access SBS's services. As a national broadcasting service that operates to fulfil the important functions set out in its Charter, SBS considers that this would be inequitable and will disenfranchise many citizens. SBS estimates that around 100,000 people may be disadvantaged as a result of these circumstances.

Whatever solution is preferred for those sites it should be on the basis that all services are available to all households from the same platform, either terrestrial or satellite. The conditional access scheme set out in the Bill depends on adequate access to a digital terrestrial signal for the *commercial* broadcasting television services. Therefore SBS considers that additional transmitters, funded by the Government, will need to be rolled out to support the provision of SBS services in those areas where SBS is the only service that cannot be accessed terrestrially.

SBS also welcomes the initiative of the regional commercial television broadcasters to fund the conversion of analogue terrestrial self-help retransmission facilities to digital for some communities. However, it may be the case that other communities may wish to implement digital self-help retransmission rather than satellite services. Where this is feasible the Government should at least explore the option.

In conclusion, SBS considers that all services should be available to all households in each relevant area from the same platform, either terrestrial or satellite.

SBS would be pleased to brief the Committee should the opportunity arise.

If you require any further information please contact me (Tel: 02 9430 3812; [bruce.meagher@sbs.com.au](mailto:bruce.meagher@sbs.com.au)).

Yours sincerely

Bruce Meagher  
Director, Strategy and Communications



## Attachment

Sites\* with self-help facilities providing an analogue retransmission of SBS for which there is no plan for a digital upgrade

### NSW

Balranald  
Bourke Town  
Brewarrina  
Kandos  
Khancoban

### Northern Territory

Jabiru

### Queensland

Blackall  
Cloncurry  
Cooktown  
Cunnamulla  
Glenden  
Hughenden  
Springsure  
Thursday Island  
Weipa  
Winton

### South Australia

Burra  
Coober Pedy  
Leigh Creek South  
Quorn

### Tasmania

Derby  
Maydena  
St Helens

### Victoria

Lorne  
Tawonga South

### Western Australia

Bridgetown  
Dampier  
Fitzroy Crossing  
Halls Creek  
Kambalda  
Kojonup  
Kununurra East  
Meekatharra  
Merredin  
Moora  
Mount Magnet  
Mullewa  
Norseman  
Pannawonica  
Paraburdoo  
Pemberton  
Roebourne  
Southern Cross  
Wyndham

\* The ABC and at least two commercial television broadcasting services are available at these locations as terrestrial services.



Digital terrestrial transmission sites with ABC and at least two commercial broadcasting services, but no SBS service

**NSW**

Bombala  
Bonalbo  
Cooma/Monaro  
Jingellic/Walwa (NSW/Vic)  
Kyogle  
Lightning Ridge  
Merriwa  
Murrurundi  
Quirindi  
Walcha  
Walgett  
Wilcannia

**Queensland**

Miles  
Mitchell  
Murgon  
Tara

**South Australia**

Bordertown  
Coffin Bay  
Keith  
Lameroo  
Pinnaroo

**Tasmania**

Bicheno  
Binalong Bay  
King Island  
Rosebery  
Savage River  
St Marys  
Strahan  
Strathgordon  
Swansea  
Waratah

**Victoria**

Cann River  
Casterton  
Corryong  
Genoa  
Halls Gap  
Hopetoun  
Kiewa Valley  
Mallacoota  
Orbost  
Walwa/Jingellic (Vic/NSW)

**Western Australia**

Kalbarri  
Koolyanobbing  
Morawa  
Nannup