



## Community television: options for digital broadcasting

Options for digital broadcasting for community television are discussed in a new report released today, Monday 12 February 2006 by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

Currently, community television broadcasts in analogue only and does not have secure access to digital broadcasting options for the future. The committee considers that without the capacity to simulcast in digital the community television sector will rapidly lose its audience.

This report has examined the options for ensuring the transition to digital for community television in Australia, including the opportunity to simulcast. The report also takes into account the financial burden of conversion and simulcast for community television broadcasters.

Committee Chair, Jackie Kelly MP, discussed the value of the community television sector “There is no doubt that the community television sector is extremely valuable in our media landscape. The sector is the incubator of diverse and innovative programming, and is essentially the training ground for the commercial and national broadcasters”.

“The Australian Government intends to sell the remaining spectrum soon, with no provision for community television. We believe that the sector’s future should be made secure. The report’s recommendations summarize the only way community television will survive the transition to digital without having to grow from scratch all over again after analogue has been switched off” Mrs Kelly added.

The report, *Community Television: Options For Digital Broadcasting*, makes a total of five recommendations, on key issues such as access to digital spectrum in the long term and during the analogue-digital simulcast period.

The key recommendations to the Australian Government are:

- sell the unreserved digital channel known as Licence A, with an obligation to carry community television during the simulcast period;
- at analogue switch-off, convert Channel 31 to digital and permanently allocate it to current and future community broadcasters; and
- provide funding of \$6 million to the community television sector for the conversion of broadcast equipment to digital, and provide funding of \$1.7 million per year to the community television sector for each year of simulcast.

The inquiry into community broadcasting was announced in January 2006. The Committee received 130 submissions and public hearings were conducted across Australia. A second report covering broader community broadcasting issues will be released later this year.

Copies of the report can be obtained by contacting the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4601, emailing [cita.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:cita.reps@aph.gov.au), or on the Committee’s website at: [http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/cita/community\\_broadcasting/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/cita/community_broadcasting/index.htm).

**For media comment:**

Please contact the Committee Chair, Jackie Kelly MP, on (02) 6277 2369

**For information:**

Contact the Committee Secretary on (02) 6277 4601