

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts**  
**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**  
**Additional Budget Estimates Hearings February 2010**  
**Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio**  
**Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy**

**Question No: 112**

**Program No. 1.3**

**Hansard Ref: ECA 84**

**Topic: REGIONAL ANALOGUE SELF-HELP TRANSMISSIONS AND REGIONAL VIEWERS WHO ARE UNABLE TO RECEIVE DIGITAL TELEVISION**

**Senator MacDonald asked:**

Where and who are the regional viewers unable to receive digital television from those facilities mentioned in the Minister's letter?

**Answer:**

In the *Report on Digital Television Transmission and Reception* tabled on 2 February 2010 the ACMA estimates that there are 177 sites with one or more self-help retransmission services located in metropolitan and regional licence areas. Of these sites, 37 are located in metropolitan areas; and 140 are located in regional licence areas. Metropolitan and regional self-help retransmission sites have generally been established to serve areas that the broadcasters' signals fail to cover from their transmission sites.

There are approximately 22,000 households served by self-help retransmission facilities in metropolitan areas and 48,000 households in regional areas.

Broadcasters will be seeking agreements with the operators of self-help facilities to convert a substantial number of sites in regional areas. The number of converted sites will determine the number of regional viewers unable to receive digital television from those facilities mentioned in the Minister's letter. The broadcasters candidate list of sites has been published on [www.digitalready.gov.au](http://www.digitalready.gov.au)

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**Question No: 113**

**Program No. 1.3**

**Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: Digital switchover assistance scheme – exclusions for renters**

**Senator Ludlum asked:**

- a) What proportion of otherwise eligible households in the Mildura region will be exempt from the assistance with antenna and cabling because they are renters?
- b) Will renters with inadequate antenna access digital TV services following the cessation of analog TV services in Mildura?
- c) Will the scheme be expanded to provide antenna and cabling assistance to eligible renters?

**Answer:**

All households eligible for assistance under the Household Assistance Scheme are eligible to receive a set-top box. However, households are not eligible for external antenna and cabling upgrades where the customer does not own their place of residence (i.e. they are a renter). Where a customer is not eligible for external antenna and cabling upgrades, it remains the responsibility of the landlord, body corporate or facility owner to privately arrange for this work to be undertaken if such work is required. This is because there are legal issues restricting persons, other than the legal owners of the property, authorising external works, such as antenna and cabling upgrades on a residence.

- a) Approximately 50 per cent of households potentially eligible for the Household Assistance Scheme (HAS) in the Mildura TV licence area are renters and are not eligible for external antenna and cabling upgrades. However, the great majority of these households are not expected to need to upgrade their existing external antenna and/or cabling to receive digital TV.
- b) For the minority of renters who may require, but are ineligible to receive an external antenna and/or cabling upgrade, installers will provide an internal antenna and cabling. The Service Contractor will also provide these households with a letter outlining what upgrades are required, which the renter can provide to their landlord.
- c) There are no plans to extend eligibility to external antenna and/or cabling upgrades to renters.

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**Question No: 114**

**Program No. 1.3**

**Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: Digital Switchover**

**Senator Fisher asked:**

- a) In relation to the Mildura switchover area it is reported that 79 per cent of households have made the conversion, how can you be certain that the remaining 21 per cent will also convert prior to 30 June 2010?
- b) Can you advise on how much has been spent so far in the Mildura region and what that spending has entailed; the Annual Report (p5) notes the \$13.6 million announced for the area last year?
- c) \$138.7 million had been allocated towards switch-over activities over three years, is that figure still current?
- d) In relation to the announcement of 5 January re satellite, hadn't the Government previously committed to releasing a discussion paper regarding the possible use of satellite?
- e) What is the budgeted allocation of \$40 million per year over four years to build and operate a new satellite service, based on?
- f) Will existing satellites be utilised, such as the Optus satellites or will new satellites need to be launched?
- g) Was consideration given to the conversion of all existing analog transmission sites to digital and if so what would this have cost?
- h) The broadcasters have agreed to upgrade 100 sites, what will this cost them and what benefit do they get in return for this?
- i) Via the satellite service you say that all viewers will have access to the three commercial channels, ABC and SBS as well as ABC2, ABC3, SBS Two, Go, 7TWO and One HD, will viewers be required to pay an annual subscription or will annual provision be fully subsidised by the Government?
- j) You say that local news services currently available in all regions will continue to be available via the satellite service, how will that work?
- k) Will the news services available in each region be televised at the same times that they are now?
- l) What other provisions will there be for local content, including advertising?
- m) What plans are there to ensure existing digital black-spots in metro areas or fringe metro areas will be eliminated prior to switchover?
- n) Just prior to Christmas it was noted that two large advertisements providing information about digital switchover appeared in The Australian weekend magazine. What did these two advertisements cost? Why were two advertisements, basically containing the same information placed in this particular magazine? Was this placement based on any particular demographic analysis?

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**Answer:**

- a) The Government cannot predict with certainty that all viewers in the Mildura/Sunraysia region will convert prior to 30 June 2010. However, the Government is tracking the rate of conversion to digital in the region and ensuring that the activities of the Digital Switchover Taskforce encourage and maximise conversion as far as it is possible to do so. The latest digital tracker summary report, released 23 April 2010, show that 87% of households in the Mildura-Sunraysia region have converted to digital television, an increase of 8 percentage points since the previous survey result.

The Household Assistance Scheme will, at no cost to eligible households, supply, install and demonstrate a set-top box and conduct any cabling and antenna work (including installing a satellite dish) where necessary. The Scheme commenced on the 18 January 2010, with the dispatch of over 10,000 letters to approximately 7,000 households in the Mildura region. As of 18 May, the Scheme has assisted over 2,100 households to switchover to digital TV. The uptake of the Scheme has increased the conversion rate in the Mildura TV licence area by at least four per cent.

- b) The figure of \$13.6 million represents funds appropriated for digital switchover activities involving three Commonwealth agencies; the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (DBCDE), the Australian Communications and Media Authority and Centrelink. The DBCDE spend for Mildura so far is \$1.125 million which relates to the Department's Information and Communications Campaign and funding of the Digital Switchover Liaison Officer based in Mildura.
- c) The current figure is \$141.5 million which differs from the previous figure of \$138.7 million due to standard parameter adjustments. The final figure will be settled after completion of negotiations with the broadcasters.
- d) On 30 March 2010, the Minister wrote to self-help licensees to inform them of their options in relation to conversion of their self-help sites including the availability of the new satellite service for communities that do not choose to convert their facility. Self-help licensees on the broadcasters' candidate list for conversion will need to negotiate the terms and conditions of the conversion of their sites with broadcasters.
- e) The Government announced funding of \$375.4 m in the Budget for the satellite service. This includes \$99.1 m to provide a subsidy to households in areas currently served by analog self-help sites that are not upgraded to digital. The ACMA received \$23.6 m. The balance of the funding is primarily to support the capital and operating costs of the satellite service itself, which will deliver both commercial and national free to air television services.
- f) Existing satellites will be used.

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- g) The Government considered options for the conversion of all existing analog transmission sites to digital. It concluded that satellite delivery of services represented the best way of delivering to all Australians the range of services already available in capital cities. Even if all self help sites were converted, a satellite service is needed to deliver television to people outside the reach of terrestrial transmissions, including those who already rely on the existing Aurora satellite services.
- h) In addition the Government-funded satellite service is being complemented by the conversion of a substantial number of self help retransmission sites in regional and metropolitan licence areas by the broadcasters. Broadcasters have identified a candidate list of 87 self-help sites to be converted to digital, and a further 44 areas currently served by self-help sites that will receive digital TV from alternative transmitters or new gap filler transmitters. These sites are published on the Digital Ready website.

It is a commercial decision for the broadcasters as to which sites they choose to convert and at what cost, subject to planning approval from the Australian Communications and Media Authority. The actual costs will vary widely depending on the assumptions used including the number of sites to be converted, the standard of conversion, the source of the input signals, and the state of the sites and existing infrastructure.

- i) Viewers will not be required to pay an annual subscription to access the new satellite service. In order to access this service, these households will need to install satellite reception equipment, including a dish, smart card and a set-top box. This is a one off equipment cost. Ongoing reception of free-to-air TV will remain free.
- j) The satellite service will include a channel providing aggregated local news content from all of the regional commercial broadcasting licensees. The Government is in discussions with the regional commercial free-to-air broadcasters about the exact presentation of this content.
- k) News services available via the satellite service will not be shown at the same time as those shown terrestrially but will be available as soon as possible after production of live-to-air bulletins are complete on terrestrial services. Details about the timing and presentation are still being determined.
- l) The satellite service will provide network programming in the same way as terrestrial services but broadcasters will have flexibility to provide different advertising and interstitial material.
- m) The Government is funding the satellite service to ensure that digital television is available Australia-wide.

Most metropolitan blackspots are either on the broadcasters' candidate list for conversion to digital or are anticipated to be served by alternative or new gap filler transmitters.

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People living in metropolitan blackspot areas that are not able to obtain adequate digital reception will be able to access the new satellite service.

n) The two advertisements that appeared in the Weekend Australian Magazine on December 19-20, 2009, were:

- Why is Australia moving to digital TV?; (page 9) and
- When will the analog TV signals be switched off in my area? (page 11)

The advertisements cost \$35 946.00 (excluding GST) in total to place through Universal McCann, the master media buying agency for Australian Government campaign advertising.

Communication research undertaken by ORIMA Research from July 2008 has found that exposure to information about the switchover had a positive impact on raising support and encouraging preparation for the switchover. The research suggests that people could become more supportive and encouraged to become digital-ready sooner through the provision of information and reassurance.

Research identified two key factors that had the potential to motivate support and willingness to become digital-ready: understanding the broader context of the reason for the switchover, and being provided with sufficient timeframe to become digital-ready. These two key messages are conveyed in each of the print advertisements.

The two advertisements placed in the Weekend Australian contain different messages. Developmental research found that in order to reach the audience one message alone should be communicated through each advertisement. The *Why is Australia moving to digital TV?* advertisement highlights the reasons why Australia is switching to digital television and the *When will the analog TV signals be switched off in my area?* advertisement indicates the timeframe each region can expect the switchover to occur.

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**Question No: 115**

**Program No. 1.3**

**Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: DIGITAL SWITCHOVER IN MALLEE**

**Senator Fisher asked:**

Will all arrangements be in place to prevent digital TV black spots from the Yatpool transmitter (near Mildura) by the proposed analogue signal switch off date of 30 June 2010?

What are the detailed arrangements?

Is the Department confident that viewers in Robinvale, Ouyen, Walpeup and Underbool will have access to an acceptable digital signal?

In repeated correspondence to the Minister, the Member for Mallee has suggested that the digital conversion provides an opportunity to resolve viewing problems for the community of Murrayville which is still within the Mildura Rural City Council Municipal area but cannot watch the local news out of Mildura. Why weren't these suggestions taken up? Confusion abounds as to the provision of local news services out of Mildura. The Minister has already announced that some communities like Underbool will not receive an adequate terrestrially based digital signal and that it will have to be provided by satellite. Will such communities receive the local news at the same time as those receiving the signal terrestrially?

Households in areas like Ouyen and new blackspot areas like Underbool and Robinvale, have spent thousands of dollars investing in aerials and cables to get a decent analogue television picture. What funding assistance will be provided to those who are now required to purchase new infrastructure to support a satellite service? Will recognition be given by way of financial assistance to those who've outlaid substantially to purchase now-redundant analogue equipment?

**Answer:**

The Digital Switchover Taskforce, the Australian Communications and Media Authority, the relevant commercial free-to-air broadcasters and national broadcasters are working together to ensure all arrangements are in place so that viewers in the Mildura switchover area are able to receive digital television in time for analog switch off on 30 June 2010. This includes establishment of the new satellite service announced in January 2010 and funded in the Budget, and the establishment of transmission sites to serve Ouyen, Robinvale and Underbool in the Mildura/Sunraysia region.

The Yatpool transmitter will continue to be the main transmitter serving the region.

A new transmitter commenced operation at Ouyen on 4 May 2010. A further transmitter is being established at Walpeup that will also serve Underbool and is expected to commence operation on 10 June 2010. On 30 April 2010 the broadcasters announced that they would install a new

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transmitter at Robinvale which is expected to begin operations in mid June. Together these new facilities will address a number of key digital blackspots in the Mildura region. The satellite service will be available to households who still cannot receive terrestrial television signals.

Viewers in Robinvale, Ouyen, Walpeup and Underbool who have the necessary reception equipment will be able to receive digital television signals either via terrestrial transmission, or via satellite if the terrestrial signals are inadequate.

Although Murrayville is within the Mildura Rural City Council Municipal area, it is outside the Mildura/Sunraysia commercial television licence area. Broadcasters licensed to serve the Mildura/Sunraysia licence area are not permitted to provide their services outside of the licence area.

Viewers in Murrayville who are unable to receive adequate terrestrial television reception will be able to receive digital television services from the new satellite service announced by the Minister on 5 January 2010. The residents of Murrayville will be eligible for the Satellite Subsidy Scheme which will assist those households to access the new satellite service. The new satellite service will provide access to a local news channel featuring the news content of not only Mildura but of other regional Victorian news services as well. Currently residents in Murrayville are provided commercial news services from the local self help facility which consists of remote area broadcasters Imparja and Southern Cross Central.

The satellite service will include a channel that, when fully implemented, will provide all of the local news content from all of the regional commercial broadcasting licensees. It will include local news content from the Mildura/Sunraysia region, which will be available before switchover. The Government is still negotiating the full details of the news service with regional broadcasters.

ABC news services will be provided on a state basis in standard definition. The ABC has also announced it will provide a 24 hour news channel which will be available on this satellite once established.

Digital transmitters will be established by the local broadcasters to serve the areas around Ouyen, Robinvale and Underbool. Viewers in these areas will receive the local Mildura news services terrestrially.

With the establishment of new digital transmitters at Ouyen, Walpeup and Robinvale viewers in these areas, including Underbool will continue to receive television from a terrestrial source. Viewers may need to make some adjustments to aerials to receive these new services, for example if they have previously been receiving analog services from Yatpool. The satellite subsidy announced in the Budget will be available to households in analog self help area where the self help is not converted to digital. The self help community at Underbool will therefore not be eligible for the subsidy.

The Household Assistance Scheme will also provide in-home assistance to eligible households in towns like Ouyen. A household is eligible under the Household Assistance Scheme where at least one resident is receiving a maximum rate: Age Pension; Disability Support Pension; Carer



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payment; Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) service pension; or the DVA income support supplement payment.

The Household Assistance Scheme will, at no cost to eligible households, supply, install and demonstrate a set-top box and conduct any necessary cabling and antenna work (including installing a satellite dish) for eligible households.

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**Question No: 116**

**Program No. 1.3**

**Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: DIGITAL TV**

**Senator Fisher asked:**

- a) Why has the Minister reached an agreement with broadcasters to only upgrade around 100 of the 600 towers?
- b) Why has the Minister not agreed to upgrade more of the towers?
- c) What advice was the Minister given about only upgrading 100 towers?
- d) Will affected local communities be consulted about the upgrade process?
- e) Why is the Government not upgrading any towers itself?
- f) How did the Minister arrive at the \$300 subsidy figure for satellite access?
- g) What does the reported \$600 cost of a satellite dish include? Will it include the tuner, cabling and installation?
- h) What if the costs are more than expected, particularly for those in more remote areas?
- i) If installation costs are higher for certain households will the subsidy provision be bigger?
- j) Will the Government pay the extra costs or will the individual be forced to pay the difference?
- k) What is the Minister's definition of 'local' news content? Does this include local sport and community information?
- l) How will the promised "local channel" work?
- m) Will people still be able to view local news and sport at the normal times?
- n) Will other local content be protected?
- o) Will people still receive commercials from local advertisers?

**Answer:**

- a) The Government reached an agreement with broadcasters whereby it would fund a satellite service to solve television signal deficiencies for Australian viewers. As part of this commercial broadcasters undertook to convert a number of existing 'self-help' retransmission sites and provide "gap-filler" transmission facilities at other locations. The number of sites to be converted is a matter for the broadcasters and the local councils and communities involved.

The decision by the Government to fund a new satellite service instead of the upgrade of towers will deliver a vastly improved content and localism outcome for of self help communities in remote areas of Australia. Communities will have access to a modern and adaptable delivery platform with virtually universal coverage, supported by the Government. Not only will this provide a solution for today's self help communities and

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relieve them of the cost of maintaining terrestrial facilities, it also allows for future expansion of communities around Australia, avoiding the need for multiple new transmission facilities to be installed at local community expense.

The use of satellite also achieves an increased level of access and content without the use of scarce broadcast spectrum and so has no impact on the digital dividend which flows from the switch off of the analog signals. The proposed sale and subsequent use of the digital dividend for new wireless and other services will have an ongoing positive impact on the entire Australian community into the future, which is a key consideration to be considered against any proposed expansion of current terrestrial television.

- b) The identification of sites for upgrade is a matter for the broadcasters. It should be noted that, of the self help sites not included on the published list of candidate sites for upgrade to digital, there are over 480 which currently re-transmit the remote area broadcasting services, meaning those communities only receive the four analog services provided to remote areas, and news, advertising and other local material relevant to remote parts of Australia. Moving to the satellite service will, for the first time, provide these communities with the same level of services as are currently provided in metropolitan areas. In addition, some of these communities are actually in regional licence areas, but are too isolated to re-transmit their local services. The availability of local news on the satellite service will provide local regional news for the first time to these communities.
- c) The Government consulted with regional, remote and metropolitan commercial free-to-air broadcasters to identify the list of 'self-help' sites to be upgraded to digital. This list was published on 15 April 2010.
- d) The Government has written to local councils around Australia following the Minister's announcement of the satellite service. The Government has also advised Councils that the commercial television broadcasters have agreed to convert a significant number of self help retransmission sites, which together with the satellite service will provide digital television access to all households who currently live in signal deficient or self-help areas.

Further communications with local councils on switchover arrangements will be undertaken once the commercial broadcasters and councils have agreed to convert a specific site. Local councils and community groups have been informed of their options to receive digital television and have the opportunity to determine, in consultation with the broadcasters, the most appropriate solution for their community.

- e) The Government is funding a satellite solution for television black spots and the regional and metropolitan commercial free-to-air broadcasters are funding the conversion of self-help retransmission sites.
- f) The subsidy represents the difference between the estimated average cost to install direct to home satellite equipment and the estimated average cost of converting to digital

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terrestrial television. The Government will provide a satellite conversion subsidy of \$400 to eligible households in regional areas currently served by self-help facilities that are not upgraded to digital by the broadcasters, with higher amounts of \$550 for defined very remote area households and \$700 for defined far north tropical households. Households in identified remote indigenous communities may be eligible for an additional \$280 worth of assistance. This additional assistance is in recognition of remoteness and unique circumstances in these areas. Details of the subsidy program are still being determined.

- g) \$650 is an approximate average cost for the purchase and installation of household direct to home satellite reception equipment including the set-top box, smart card and dish. The final cost of installation at a residence is dependant on a number of factors including the location of the household and the current condition of cabling, existing equipment and other components.
- h) The location of the household in a remote area may impact on the cost. The scaled amounts of assistance (see answer to (f) above) recognise that larger dishes may be required in some areas. Any costs over and above the subsidy will be the responsibility of the home owner.
- i) See answer to (f).
- j) The government will not pay any additional costs above the applicable subsidy amount. Any cost difference will be the responsibility of the householder.
- k) The satellite service will include a news channel which involves aggregation of all of the local news content from all of the regional commercial television broadcasting licensees. The commercial news programs broadcast terrestrially in each licence area including any sport or community components of the news will be broadcast on the satellite. The operators of the new satellite service are free to insert local advertising and other interstitial content in this channel if they choose, this is a commercial decision for the operator.
- l) Details of the service are still being finalised by broadcasters in consultation with the Government. Also see answer to (k).
- m) See answer to (k) and (l) above. News services available via the satellite service will not be shown at the same time as those shown terrestrially but will be available as soon as possible after production of live-to-air bulletins are complete on terrestrial services. Details about the timing and presentation are still being determined.
- n) The regional commercial free-to-air broadcasters will contribute all local news content to the new satellite service.
- o) Advertising content is a matter for the commercial television broadcasters who operate the satellite services.

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**Question No: 117**

**Program No. 1.3**

**Hansard Ref: Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: DIGITAL SWITCHOVER**

**Senator Fisher asked:**

- a) Given only 1 per cent of people are aware of when the analog TV signal will be switched off in their area, are there any plans to change the campaign? If so how?
- b) How much more money is planned to be spent on the public information campaign?
- c) In an article in the Sun Herald on January 31<sup>st</sup> 2010 a Government source said it was “aware of the low awareness of the precise date of the switch-over” and that “future communications campaigns are designed to address this.”
- d) Can you elaborate on what the “future communications campaigns” will involve and how these campaigns will address the staggering failure of the current campaigns?
- e) Who is responsible for these campaigns? Who has final say on the content of the advertisements etc?
- f) Can you elaborate on the strategy that has been used so far?

**Answer:**

(a) The Digital Switchover campaign approach is educative in nature and is undertaken in a phased region by region approach—as developed through campaign research and overseas experience. This educative approach introduces the concept of switchover, the timetable and what people need to do in a gradual way which builds up to switchover in each region.

Future phases of the campaign are aimed at informing people about when they are switching over. This includes intensified placement of specific targeted ads beginning nine months prior to that area switching over.

(b) The 2009-10 Digital Switchover campaign budget is \$23,140,000 excluding GST. This includes creative development, advertising placement costs, an evaluation and developmental research program, public relations activities, and the running of a campaign information line, and mailing house. This budget includes communication activity on a national level as well as localised activity in Mildura Sunraysia, regional South Australia and Broken Hill.

(c-d) Future communication activities will continue to follow the campaign approach involving multi-regional communication targeting the broader Australian population, combined with intensive, localised communication in each switchover area prior to analog signals being switched off. Communication materials will be fine-tuned according to evaluation research results being undertaken by ORIMA Research. The Government-contracted media buying agency, Universal McCann, is also undertaking ongoing analysis of the media buys to ensure we continue to achieve maximum results.

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(e) The Digital Switchover Taskforce within the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy is responsible for the development and implementation of the campaign. The campaign is subject to the *Guidelines on Campaign Advertising by Australian Government Departments and Agencies* administered by the Department of Finance and Deregulation. Campaign material is considered by the Interdepartmental Committee on Communications and informed by research undertaken by ORIMA Research.

(f) The campaign approach involves multi-regional (national) and targeted (local) advertising in each switchover region. Multiregional advertising ceases once the local advertising commences in each switchover region. Intensive localised advertising commences nine months out (Mildura—six months out) from switchover, and continues at three months out, three weeks, two weeks, and one week out and from switchover to two weeks post. Advertising includes: television, radio, print advertising and internet search. Public relations activities support the advertising program and the Digital Switchover Liaison Officers provide information to local groups and organisations.

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**Question No: 118**

**Program No. 1.3**

**Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: Imparja TV in Alice Springs**

**Senator MacDonald asked:**

Thank you for your response to supplementary budget estimates qon 28 about the \$7 million funding need for repeaters.

Is the assessment of Imparja's application for funding to support the digital conversion of their transmission facilities now finalised?

If not, why not? – when can we expect it to be finalised?

Will establishment of digital transmitters in the Imparja licence area commence this Financial Year?

If not, why not? – when can we expect it to commence?

**Answer:**

Assessment of funding under Regional Equalisation Plan (REP) for Imparja has yet to be finalised.

Discussions are ongoing with Imparja concerning the level of funding and a terrestrial transmission model that is consistent with its plans to migrate its satellite services to the new digital satellite platform announced by the Minister on 5 January.

Terrestrial transmission in digital mode is unlikely to occur in this financial year. For services to commence and assistance to be provided, REP funding must be finalised and Imparja will need to acquire and install the necessary transmission infrastructure.

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**Question No: 119**

**Program No. 1.3**

**Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: ABC News Channel**

**Senator Fisher asked:**

- a) High Definition TV spectrum was given by the Government to the ABC to "highlight the benefits of HD and drive digital take-up" - how is this achieved by the ABC broadcasting news in HD on its proposed 24-hour news channel?
- b) What is the department's view about the fact that when the ABC launches its 24-hour news channel, ABC1 will no longer be broadcast in HD and viewers who have invested in HD receivers to watch high quality documentaries and dramas on the ABC will lose that HD service?
- c) Was the Department consulted by the ABC prior to the announcement of the ABC News Channel? What did you say to the ABC about the loss of HD on ABC1?

**Answer:**

- a) The *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* places a number of obligations on the ABC with respect to its provision of high definition services and content. Provided that the ABC continues to meet these obligations, decisions as to the nature of the programming broadcast are an internal matter for the ABC Board and Executive.
- b) See (a) above.
- c) The ABC sought the views of the Department prior to the announcement of the news channel and was provided with advice consistent with that outlined in (a) above.



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**Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy**

**Question No: 120**

**Program No. 1.3**

**Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: National Indigenous TV (NITV)**

**Senator Ludlum asked:**

- a) Given the recent ACMA decision to discontinue the Broadcast Australia trial digital datacasting service in Sydney on 30 April 2010; and given that National Indigenous TV (NITV) is carried on that service; and given that the Sydney area features the largest single concentration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who have come to rely on NITV's availability, what are the government's intentions to help NITV continue to be available as a free to air service in Sydney after 30 April 2010?
- b) Is it true that the frequency on which TVS will operate in the Sydney market is capable of also transmitting NITV as a discrete 24 hour free-to-air digital terrestrial standard definition TV service?
- c) Would the Minister allow NITV to broadcast in Sydney if spectrum were available?
- d) Given that NITV was created as a national service and to benefit Indigenous Australians wherever they live, does the Government have a digital terrestrial migration plan for NITV, and when will it announce one?

**Answer:**

- a) NITV lies within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts. The future of NITV is a matter for consideration in the context of the 2010-11 budget.
- b) A broadcasting spectrum channel is capable of accommodating more than one digital service. However, TVS is being funded by Government and licensed to only provide one digital channel prior to the end of 2013.
- c) See (a) above.
- d) See (a) above.