

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 18

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: ABC AND SBS BOARD VACANCIES

Senator Birmingham asked:

How many ABC and SBS board vacancies are coming up?

What process is planned for the appointment to fill Ms Albrechtsen's vacancy on the ABC Board whose appointment ends on 23 January 2010?

Answer:

On 6 November, the Minister announced that Mr Joseph Skrzynski AO, a non-executive Director on the SBS Board, has been appointed Chairperson of SBS with effect from 17 December 2009.

There are two forthcoming vacancies on the ABC and SBS Boards:

- Director, SBS Board (vacant from 17 December 2009); and
- Director, ABC Board (vacant from 24 February 2010)

The Government is undertaking a merit-based selection process to fill these vacancies. Advertisements inviting applications for the two vacancies were published in the national, regional, multicultural and Indigenous media from 7 November. Following the closing date for applications on 30 November 2009, the independent Nomination Panel will assess the claims of all applicants against a core set of selection criteria and provide a report to the Minister with a short-list of recommended candidates.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 19

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

**Topic: DIGITAL TELEVISION SWITCHOVER IN MILDURA / SUNRAYSIA REGION
HOUSEHOLD ASSISTANCE SCHEME**

Senator Fifield asked:

- Have letters been sent to recipients of Disability Support Pension, and other eligible income support recipients, inviting them to participate in the program?
- When and who sent the letters?
- How many responses have been received?
- How many eligible households have received in-home assistance to date?
- When will the assistance package stop being available to eligible households – is there a cut off date?

Answer:

Letters have not yet been sent out. Centrelink will send out letters to potentially eligible households in the Mildura/Sunraysia TV licence area approximately six months before the region is due to switchover to digital television. No assistance to households has been provided to date.

The Household Assistance Scheme will commence approximately six months before a region is due to switchover and will close one month after switchover. Installations can still occur after this date, but households must opt into the scheme by the closing date.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 20

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: ANALOG SWITCH-OFF DIGITAL TAKE UP – BLACKSPOTS REPORT

Senator Ludlam asked:

The first and second report on Digital TV Transmission and Reception tabled in May and August respectively did not contain any information concerning areas where digital TV had been rolled out but where viewers within the expected coverage areas of those facilities were having trouble picking up all local digital channels. These are “black spots”. When will such black spot information be provided in these quarterly reports?

Answer:

Clause 5H of Schedule 4 to the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* requires the Minister to cause a report to be laid before each House of Parliament on a quarterly basis that contains, amongst other things, information on the local market areas and regions where transmission issues have been identified and how many households will be affected.

Three reports that have been tabled to date (on 12 May, 11 August and 19 October 2009).

Sections 2 and 3 of those reports provide information on the progress of digital television rollout to metropolitan, regional and remote licence areas.

Section 4 of the reports provides information on locations likely to experience deficient digital signal reception, including existing analog television self-help retransmission sites and other existing analog television reception black spots. As digital television channel planning is designed to provide digital television services that achieve the same level of coverage and potential reception quality as existing broadcaster analog television services, it is likely that many areas with deficient analog reception will also have deficient digital reception.

Appendix 2 of the reports provides a list of areas served by transmission sites that have one or more analog self-help retransmission services licensed.

All of this information is updated in successive versions of the report.

The fact that some viewers may experience difficulties accessing the digital television services that have been rolled out to their area does not necessarily mean they are located in a black spot or signal deficient area. There are a number of factors that may adversely affect reception, including the adequacy of an individual household’s reception equipment. For example, a household’s antenna may need to be reorientated if the strongest local digital signal is coming from a different direction to that from which analog signals were previously received.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 21

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: ANALOG SWITCH-OFF DIGITAL TAKE UP

Senator Ludlam asked:

At Senate Estimates in May it was reported that ACMA was carrying out a survey in Mildura covering such aspects as the preparedness of the local terrestrial aerial population for reliable reception of digital TV. What has that survey reported?

Answer:

ACMA has advised that it carried out research into technical issues as experienced by households in taking up digital television in the Mildura/Sunraysia region earlier this year. This research looked at the age and type of consumer aerials (antennas) as part of assessing the experience of consumers when switching over to digital television.

The results from this research are being finalised.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 22

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: ANALOG SWITCH-OFF DIGITAL TAKE UP - CONVERSION

Senator Ludlam asked:

Is it true that the Digital Tracker reports published by the Digital Switchover Taskforce and reporting the level of digital take up mostly measure the extent to which homes have purchased digital reception equipment and are not primarily aimed at detecting whether those homes can actually receive and watch all local digital TV services all of the time?

Answer:

The Digital Tracker is not testing coverage and reception. It is a survey, primarily aimed at measuring households' readiness for digital switchover—not only in terms of digital reception equipment—but also in terms of broader measures of readiness, as follows:

- Awareness of digital switchover (awareness)
- Understanding of how to get ready for digital television (understanding)
- Attitude to the digital switchover (attitude)
- Intention to convert main television set to digital (intention)
- Conversion of main television set to receive digital television (conversion)
- Satisfaction with Digital TV conversion (satisfaction).

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 23

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: ANALOG SWITCH-OFF DIGITAL TAKE UP - DISSATISFACTION

Senator Ludlam asked:

In respect of reception of digital TV the 2nd Digital Tracker report said that 18% of the TV homes in Australia that had converted were dissatisfied with digital TV and that the overwhelming reason for this was reception issues. What are the causes of this reception problem?

Answer:

The Digital Tracker, a telephone survey, is not designed to identify specific technical causes of reception issues in individual homes. It is only able to record information provided by the survey participants. As indicated in section 3.3.5 (pp31-34) of the Digital Tracker Quarter 2 report, the nature of the reception problems reported by dissatisfied households (18% of the total households interviewed) were variously, quality of picture, pixilation, loss of signal, and impact of bad weather on signal.

Reception problems could be caused by a number of issues besides signal availability, such as the quality of the receiver, aerial and associated cabling issues, and local terrain and vegetation.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 24

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: ANALOG SWITCH-OFF DIGITAL TAKE UP - RENTERS

Senator Ludlam asked:

In respect of terrestrial aerials the 2nd Digital Tracker report said that about 10% of TV homes use set top aerials for their “main TV set”. When it came to flat dwellers and renters the same figures were 18% and 15% respectively. Given that probably double those percentages of secondary TV sets are attached to set top aerials does the Government see this as a major problem for digital reception?

Answer:

Of the 9,769 Australian households surveyed, 9% of respondents reported having a set top aerial on their ‘main TV set’. Further, of those who reported as using a set top aerial, 81% reported having good or very good reception. The Digital Tracker focuses on the main TV set, it does not ask questions regarding the aerial connections of secondary TV sets.

In areas of high signal strength, an indoor antenna may be sufficient to receive all digital free-to-air channels. In general a properly installed and maintained external aerial will give better reception than an internal aerial, as is the case with analog television.

In some rental properties, or other apartment blocks with shared aerials and television reticulation systems, householders may be prevented from installing their own external aerials for a number of reasons. Householders may also be reliant on the building owner or manager taking the necessary steps to ensure the television reticulation system, where installed, is capable of distributing digital signals to residents throughout the building. These are matters the householder will need to take up with a person responsible for their building such as the landlord, building manager or other appropriate person.

The Digital Switchover Taskforce is consulting closely with housing and property stakeholders including strata managers, the property management sector, State and Territory governments and local authorities about a range of appropriate technical solutions to identified reception problems in an effort to ensure that antennas and antenna systems are digital-ready.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Two handbooks providing information on antennas and other issues that could affect digital reception are now available at www.digitalready.gov.au. One handbook is for viewers in apartment blocks/buildings with shared antenna system, while the other handbook is for viewers living in houses with single antenna. These manuals include Antenna TV System checklists to be used by a qualified TV antenna installer to provide householders and building owners or managers with a specific technical solution and identify the cost.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 25

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: ANALOG SWITCH-OFF DIGITAL TAKE UP – INTERNAL ANTENNA

Senator Ludlam asked:

In respect of reception from various types of terrestrial aerials the 2nd Digital Tracker report said that 18% of homes using a set top aerial on their main TV set experienced difficulty with digital reception compared with only 9% of homes using an external aerial. Does the Government think that people using set top aerials for their main or secondary TV sets are likely to have to purchase a new external aerial in order to get reliable reception of all of their local digital channels all of the time?

Answer:

In the majority of cases it is expected that digital television will be able to be received using existing aerials. In some cases, viewers may gain improved reception through the installation of new antenna equipment. In general, properly installed and maintained external aerials will provide improved reception compared to internal aerials.

The Digital Switchover Taskforce has produced two handbooks that provide more information about antennas, and other issues that could affect digital reception. There is one for people living in apartment blocks and other buildings with a shared antenna system, and one for people living in houses with a single antenna. The Handbooks can be downloaded from the digital ready website at www.digitalready.gov.au.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 26

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: ANALOG SWITCH-OFF DIGITAL TAKE UP – RENTAL PROPERTIES

Senator Ludlam asked:

Given what appears to be a significant issue relating to aerials and digital reception – particularly for renters and flat dwellers – would the Government reconsider including the cost of a new aerial for those people eligible for assistance to convert to digital and who are renters? (Currently the Mildura assistance scheme rules do not allow aerial replacement for renters but do for those owning a home)?

Answer:

The Household Assistance Scheme is being delivered on a region by region basis, which allows the Government to review the scheme's effectiveness in delivering practical and technical assistance to eligible households. Lessons learnt from switching over Mildura (and subsequent regions) will inform the broader approach for taken for the rest of Australia.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 27

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: ANTI-SIPHONING REVIEW

Senator Ludlam asked:

- 1) Given the importance of the definitions of the “simulcast or main channel” and “digital multichannels” in the workings of the anti-siphoning scheme how are these two different concepts to be defined once the analog channel is switched-off in any given area?
- 2) Does not the current functioning of the scheme rely on there being a ‘sole analog channel’ in order to definitively determine what is the ‘main’ or ‘simulcast’ digital channel?

Answer:

- 1) Part 4A of Schedule 4 to the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* provides restrictions on the televising of anti-siphoning events by commercial and national broadcasters during the simulcast period and after the end of the simulcast period in a particular area.

For a commercial television broadcasting licensee, prior to digital switchover in the licence area concerned, the commercial broadcasting service on which anti-siphoning events must be first, or simultaneously shown, is known as the ‘**core commercial television broadcasting service**’ (clauses 41A and 41C of Schedule 4 to the Act refer). A core commercial television broadcasting service is defined under paragraphs 41A(1)(b) and 41A(2)(a) of the Act and in summary, this service is the service that was provided in a licence area immediately before 1 January 2007. In effect, the core service is the commercial television broadcasting service that is simulcast in digital and analogue mode. The ABC and SBS are subject to provisions which have similar effect.

Subclause 41G(2) of Schedule 4 to the Act provides that the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) may, by legislative instrument, declare a specified standard definition multi-channelled commercial television service provided after digital switchover in a licence area to be the commercial television broadcasting licensee’s ‘**primary commercial television broadcasting service**’. After digital switchover in the licence area concerned, a commercial broadcasting licensee may not televise a part or the whole of an event on the anti-siphoning list on a ‘**secondary commercial television service**’ (standard definition or high definition), unless that event has been previously televised, or is concurrently televised, in whole or in part on the licensee’s primary commercial television broadcasting service (Subclauses 41E and 41F of Schedule 4 to the Act refer). This means that the ‘primary commercial television broadcasting service’ will effectively take the place of the ‘**core commercial television broadcasting service**’ post digital switchover in a particular area for the purposes of the multi-channelling restrictions.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) must each declare in written notice to the Minister that a specified standard definition multi-channelled national television broadcasting service, provided in a coverage area after digital switchover, is the broadcaster's '*primary national television broadcasting service*'. This declaration is provided for under subclause 41M of Schedule 4 to the Act. The same restrictions apply to televising anti-siphoning events in relation to 'core commercial television broadcasting service' and 'primary national television broadcasting service'.

- 2) Yes. See the answer to question 1.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 28

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: IMPARJA TV IN ALICE SPRINGS

Senator MacDonald asked:

Imparja TV in Alice Springs has purpose-built digital TV facilities; however these are not able to be switched on because of \$7 million funding needed for repeaters.

When will the \$7 million be made available – and from what source – to enable Imparja TV to switch over to digital TV broadcasting?

Answer:

In the 2000-01 Budget, it was announced that financial assistance would be provided under the Regional Equalisation Plan (REP) to assist regional and remote commercial television broadcasters with the introduction of digital broadcasting services in their licence areas.

The licensees in the *Remote Central and Eastern Australia* (RCE) licence area, Macquarie Southern Cross Media and Imparja, have submitted costings and plans for the conversion of their terrestrial transmission facilities. Assessment of the amount of assistance claimed, through licence fee rebate and grants, to support the digital conversion of their transmission facilities (repeaters) through the REP is being finalised.

Establishment of digital transmitters in the Imparja licence area of RCE is expected to commence this financial year. In accordance with the REP, funding assistance will be made available to Imparja on the commencement of terrestrial services operating in the digital mode.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 29

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: VIEWER ACCESS DISCUSSION PAPER

Senator MacDonald asked:

It is noted that the discussion paper canvassing options for using satellite for widespread delivery of free-to-air digital TV is still not available – despite assurances by the Minister at the February Estimates that it would be released in March 2009.

What is the hold-up in release of the discussion paper? What is the Government doing to expedite the release of this paper?

Answer:

The Government has been consulting with commercial and national free to air broadcasters on signal deficiencies issues and announced a satellite solution to address areas of television signal deficiency.

The Government has written to local councils around Australia following the Minister's announcement of the satellite service. The Government has advised that the commercial television broadcasters have agreed to convert a substantial 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 will be undertaken in the coming weeks, following finalisation of the list of sites the commercial broadcasters have agreed to convert. Local councils and community groups, some of whom currently operate self-help retransmission sites, will be fully informed of their options to receive digital television and will have the opportunity to determine, in consultation with the Taskforce and broadcasters, the most appropriate method for their community.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 30

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL TV BLACKSPOTS

Senator MacDonald asked:

The Mildura pilot program is being used as a pilot to provide a solution for other digital TV blackspots in places including North Queensland. It is due for roll-out/switch over in 2010 (including a satellite solution for residents outside the reach of transmission towers) – there has been no notice from the Government to the community about what they need to do – some 6 months out from the proposed switchover date.

With local communities losing faith in the Government's proposed "Mildura solution", how will the Government ensure all people will have access to digital TV on switchover?

Answer:

The Government will fully fund a new digital satellite broadcasting service for viewers who are unable to receive adequate reception of their local digital television terrestrial services. Further, commercial free-to-air broadcasters will upgrade a substantial number of existing regional analog 'self-help' retransmission facilities to operate in digital.

Further information on access arrangements and commencement dates of services in Mildura and other regional and metropolitan areas will be released in the coming months.

The Government is currently consulting with commercial television broadcasters to identify the list of 'self-help' sites to be upgraded to digital for announcement in the first half of 2010.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 31

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: BROADCASTING – STATUTORY REVIEWS

Senator Minchin asked:

1. Have you commenced any work in relation to the statutory review required by s61CT of the BSA into regional radio localism requirements (due before 4 April 2010)?
2. When will you commence this work?
3. Will this review involve public consultation?

Answer:

1. The Department has undertaken work in relation to the statutory review.
2. Not applicable.
3. The Government has not made a decision on the final format of the review.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 32

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL RADIO

Senator Minchin asked:

1. Has work commenced on the review of regional digital radio technologies?
2. There has been a bit of interest in this given the commencement of digital radio in metro areas – is there any consideration being given to commencing this review early?
3. What consideration is being given to assistance to extend the reach of digital radio outside of the 5 metro areas?

Answer:

1. No.
2. The timeframe for the review has not yet been determined.
3. The Government has not yet developed its position in regard to the roll out of digital radio beyond the five mainland State capitals.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 33

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: COMMUNITY TV

Senator Minchin asked:

Since Budget Estimates, has the Minister or the Department met with representatives from the Community TV sector to discuss their concerns about the transition to digital television?

Is the Government any closer to acting on these concerns in advance of switchover?

Answer:

The Minister and his advisers have had frequent communications and meetings with representatives of the community television sector.

On 4 November the Minister announced the Government would temporarily allocate vacant spectrum to the community television broadcasting sector, allowing Community TV stations C31 in Melbourne, TVS in Sydney, QCTV in Brisbane and Channel 31 Adelaide to simulcast their services until the switch to digital-only television in capital cities in 2013. A new community licensee in Perth will commence digital-only broadcasts in early 2010.

The Government has also allocated \$2.6 million to assist community television broadcasters to meet the costs of commencing digital simulcasts.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 34

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL SWITCHOVER TASKFORCE CAR PARKING COSTS

Senator Minchin asked:

Murray Motion on grants Item 184 – details the Taskforce spending over \$100,000 on car parking. Why? Who gets access to the Dept - sponsored parking?

Answer:

The amount of \$107,726.40 (GST incl.) listed in the 2008-09 Murray Motion response is the total value of the contract with Wilson Parking for the provision of six car park spaces for the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2010. Two car park spaces are allocated to SES staff, consistent with their employment contracts and the remaining four spaces are assigned for visitors conducting business with the Digital Switchover Taskforce.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 35

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL SWITCHOVER TASKFORCE MAILHOUSE SERVICES

Senator Minchin asked:

Item 157 – Salmat mail house services

What was mailed and where to?

Answer:

Salmat has sent out the following items:

- Digital TV Antenna Systems Handbooks for multi-dwelling and single dwelling units: to antenna installers around Australia and interested members of the public on request.
- Labels for electronic equipment (TVs; set-top box; PVRs): to manufacturers and retailers participating in the labelling scheme.
- Brochures: to retailers; antenna installers; members of the public on request.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 36

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL SWITCHOVER TASKFORCE - SPENDING

Senator Minchin asked:

Item 57 and 143 – explain differences. Appreciate that 57 is the Digital Tracker

Answer:

Item 57 is *Research into Australia's Digital TV Readiness*, or the Digital Tracker—a long-term, large-scale quarterly survey involving more than 9000 households in Australia per quarter. Readiness for digital TV is measured quarterly in terms of a household's awareness of the switchover program, understanding, attitude, intention to convert, conversion status, and satisfaction with digital TV.

The Digital Tracker quarterly reports provide valuable information that can be accessed by the Digital Switchover Taskforce, the Government, industry stakeholders, and households throughout the switchover process. The reports are currently available at www.digitalready.gov.au.

Item 143 is *Communication Research for the Digital Switchover Taskforce Information & Awareness Campaign*. ORIMA Research has been contracted by the Department to provide market research services to help inform the development and implementation of the Digital Switchover Campaign.

ORIMA Research undertakes all phases of qualitative and quantitative research for the campaign including: developmental (exploring awareness, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour about digital switchover); benchmark (setting baseline measures); concept testing of creative material and evaluation research (measuring the success of the campaign against objectives and key performance indicators).

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Question No: 37

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL SWITCHOVER TASKFORCE - DOOR-TO-DOOR SALES AND HOUSEHOLD ASSISTANCE

Senator Minchin asked:

Regarding the door-to-door sales people in regional Victoria selling set-top boxes

1. Are you confident there is now enough public awareness to negate the problem?
2. When considering the legislation regarding household assistance, it was mentioned that Centrelink would write to eligible households regarding conversion assistance – has this occurred in Mildura/Sunraysia?
3. What is the timeline for letters regarding eligibility to be written to eligible households in regional South Australia, Victoria and Queensland (the areas where assistance measures have been budgeted)?
4. When will other parts of Australia know whether they will also be eligible for household assistance measures?
5. What does ORIMA Research do as “Communications Research”?

Answer:

1. A number of steps have been taken to inform consumers about the potential dangers of purchasing items from traders who come to their door unsolicited. This includes:
 - Information placed on the Digital Ready website;
 - Procedures in place at the Digital Ready Information Line to assist people calling about this issue and to ensure any incidents are reported to the state and territory fair trading agencies;
 - Advice to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission of the complaints that have been received by the Taskforce and a request for their assistance in passing on the information to all state and territory fair trading agencies and including specific advice on their website;
 - Advice sent to each member of the Taskforce’s Consumer Expert Group as well as the Digital Switchover Liaison Officer in the Mildura/Sunraysia switchover area, advising of the issue and seeking help with publicising information for consumers through their networks and newsletters; and
 - Plans for promotion of the Taskforce’s labelling scheme for digital products and services, including registration and training of retail staff from participating stores, and endorsement of antenna installers who successfully complete an online assessment of their skills and knowledge, to help build consumer confidence and ensure people can get reliable advice to help them make informed decisions.

There have also been articles in the Mildura/Sunraysia press about the issue. There have been no recent reports of door to door traders in this area. However the Taskforce will continue to monitor reports of any new incidents in the Mildura/Sunraysia area or elsewhere.

2. Letters to households **potentially eligible for conversion assistance** in the Mildura/Sunraysia TV licence area were sent out on 18 January.
3. Letters will be sent to potentially eligible households in the regional South Australia, Victoria and Queensland TV licence areas approximately six months before each region is due to switchover.
4. Funding for the remaining regions and metropolitan areas is due to be considered in the context of the 2011-12 Budget.
5. ORIMA Research was contracted in July 2008 to undertake all phases of research related to the Digital Switchover campaign including: developmental research; concept testing; benchmark research, and evaluation research.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 38

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL TRACKER

Senator Minchin asked:

1. Only 1% know when the digital switch will occur in their area which was unchanged from the first quarter. Is the Government and the Task Force concerned about this?
2. Do you have any particular performance indicators tied into your communications strategy?
3. Were you planning for more than a 6% increase in conversion between surveys, particularly given your significant spending on communications strategy?
4. What is the total amount spent on communications and awareness activities for the period between the surveys?
5. Are you concerned by the number of people who are still not converted in the Mildura/Sunraysia area? (25% - table 4)
6. Are you concerned by the fall in Darwin of people who intend to convert between surveys? (figure 8)
7. How much have you spent on awareness and education campaigns in each switchover area?

Answers:

1. The Government is aware of the low awareness of the precise date of switchover. Future communication campaigns are designed to address this and the Digital Tracker will continue to monitor progress on a quarterly basis.
2. The digital switchover communication campaign has been developed using, inter alia, research undertaken by Orima. Future research to be undertaken by Orima, combined with the results of the Digital Tracker and lessons learned in Mildura will assist in developing the digital switchover communication strategy and in setting appropriate performance indicators.
3. See (2).

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

4. No advertising has occurred since the launch of the labelling scheme and associated media buy in March 2009. Advertising ran for 4 weeks and consisted of 4 weeks of national television and radio advertising. The budget to develop and implement the labelling scheme (including advertising) was \$7.1 million.

Further advertising development has been undertaken between digital tracker surveys, this has included:

Advertising services - \$22,609

Research services - \$412,640

Printing services - \$2,410

Information line - \$14,359

Total – \$452,018

5. Mildura is leading Australia in the switch to digital with 79% of households (as of September 2009) having already made the switch. The Government, through the Digital Switchover Taskforce, has put in place a package of measures to help the community plan and prepare for the switchover which will take place on 30 June 2010.
6. Darwin has a small sample size ($n_{Q2} = 200$) and a high margin of error ($\pm 5\%$). It will require a number of Tracker reports before any trends can be identified.
7. To date advertising has not been targeted at specific switchover areas.

The first round of localised advertising will begin in the first switchover region Mildura Sunraysia, in January of 2010, six months prior to switch-off.

Development of campaign materials for this financial year including materials to be used for the pilot area in Mildura Sunraysia includes \$507,399.57 excluding GST for research and \$1,670,641.71 excluding GST for development of advertising and creative materials. These costs include the upfront costs for advertisements that will be used in other switchover areas.

The Department attended the Mildura show in October 2009, spending \$934.00 on hiring a marquee and space for three days.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 39

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DELAYED RELEASE OF DISCUSSION PAPER

Senator Minchin asked:

Please provide an update on the release of the satellite discussion paper?

What are the reasons for the delay – which is now more than 8 months since the Minister advised at Additional Estimates that it would be completed by April?

Will there be further delays?

Answer:

The Government has been consulting with commercial and national free to air broadcasters on signal deficiencies issues and announced a satellite solution to address areas of television signal deficiency or ‘blackspots’. The new direct to home service will make available all commercial and national free-to-air digital television services as well as local news services through a dedicated local news channel.

The Government has written to local councils around Australia following the Minister’s announcement of the satellite service. The Government has advised that the commercial television broadcasters have agreed to convert a substantial 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 will be undertaken in the coming weeks, following finalisation of the list of sites the commercial broadcasters have agreed to convert. Local councils and community groups, some of whom currently operate self-help retransmission sites, will be fully informed of their options to receive digital television and will have the opportunity to determine, in consultation with the Taskforce and broadcasters, the most appropriate method for their community.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 40

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: LOCAL CONTENT

Senator Minchin asked:

Are you progressing the issue of local content?

Answer:

The regional commercial broadcasters will contribute local news and information content to the new satellite service announced by the Minister on 5 January 2010. It will be delivered via a dedicated news channel.

ABC news services will be provided on a state basis on the satellite and SBS will provide its national news.

Commercial broadcasters will convert a substantial number of analog self-help re-transmission sites to digital before analog television services are switched off in their licence areas.

As these sites will retransmit local regional services, viewers in these areas will continue to receive the local content on those regional services.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 41

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: VIEWER ACCESS OPTIONS

Senator Minchin asked:

Have you examined the cost comparison of a satellite solution compared to a transmission infrastructure upgrade solution for self help retransmission sites and newly identified digital black spot areas?

Answer:

The Government has considered a range of options to address signal deficiencies and considers terrestrial and satellite delivery are required to provide digital television services to the Australian public. The Government is funding the satellite component and the commercial free-to-air broadcasters are funding the conversion of a number of self help retransmission sites.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 42

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL RECEPTION ISSUES

Senator Minchin asked:

What steps are you taking to identify areas with current analog reception, but who do not have a quality digital picture?

Mr Andy Townend, – is referred to as saying in an article in the Herald Sun on 3 October that there was no evidence digital signals caused more viewer problems than analog.

There are a many areas and households who disagree with Mr Townend including residents of Lyndoch, Angaston and Gumeracha (South Australia) who are unable to get a digital signal.

What responses do Mr Townend and the Taskforce have for these residents and others like them who are unable to get a digital signal?

Answer:

As the Minister announced on 5 January 2010, the Government will implement a satellite service to provide digital television to viewers in regional blackspot areas.

In addition a number of “self-help” re-transmission sites will be upgraded to digital by regional broadcasters allowing viewers in those areas to access the relevant regional digital television services.

The Government will provide assistance to viewers in self help sites not upgraded to digital by broadcasters to assist with the cost of moving to the new satellite service.