

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL SENATE ESTIMATES – 9 FEBRUARY 2010 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Digital television switchover – Household Assistance Scheme

Question reference number: HS 21(b)

Senator: BOYCE

Type of question: Hansard F&PA page 100, 9 February 2010

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Question:

Senator BOYCE - Would you be able to provide me on notice the plan as it is going to be worked through, when the deadlines are for particular areas and how many eligible Centrelink recipients are in those areas.

Answer:

Australia is switching over to digital television (TV) on a region by region basis. The following timetable has been provided by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. It details when each of the 33 TV Broadcasting Licence Areas is proposed to switchover to digital TV in the eight, phased-switchover periods over four years.

Type	Switchover Area	Major Centres	Window
VIC	Mildura / Sunraysia	Mildura	1 January – 30 June 2010
SA	Broken Hill	Broken Hill	1 July – 31 December 2010
SA	Riverland	Renmark and Loxton	1 July – 31 December 2010
SA	Mt Gambier / South East South Australia	Mt Gambier, Naracoorte and Bordertown	1 July – 31 December 2010
SA	Spencer Gulf	Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Port Augusta	1 July – 31 December 2010
VIC	Gippsland	Traralgon, Bairnsdale and Mallacoota	1 January – 30 June 2011
VIC	North Central Victoria	Bendigo and Swan Hill	1 January – 30 June 2011
VIC	South West Victoria	Ballarat, Warrnambool and Horsham	1 January – 30 June 2011
VIC	Goulburn Valley / Upper Murray	Albury/Wodonga, Wangaratta and Shepparton	1 January – 30 June 2011
QLD	Wide Bay	Hervey Bay, Bundaberg and Maryborough	1 July – 31 December 2011
QLD	Capricornia	Rockhampton, Emerald and	1 July –

		Yeppoon	31 December 2011
QLD	Queensland Central Coast & Whitsundays	Mackay, Proserpine and Bowen	1 July – 31 December 2011
QLD	Darling Downs	Toowoomba, Warwick and Dalby	1 July – 31 December 2011
QLD	North Queensland	Townsville, Ayr and Charters Towers	1 July – 31 December 2011
QLD	Far North Queensland	Cairns, Port Douglas and Innisfail	1 July – 31 December 2011
NSW	Griffith / Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area	Griffith and Hay	1 January – 30 June 2012
NSW	South West Slopes & Eastern Riverina	Wagga Wagga and Gundagai	1 January – 30 June 2012
NSW	Illawarra and the South Coast	Wollongong, Ulladulla and Eden	1 January – 30 June 2012
NSW	Central Tablelands & Central Western Slopes	Dubbo, Orange and Mudgee	1 January – 30 June 2012
NSW	ACT & Southern Tablelands	Canberra, Thredbo and Cooma	1 January – 30 June 2012
NSW	North West Slopes & Plains	Tamworth, Armidale and Inverell	1 July – 31 December 2012
NSW	Richmond / Tweed	Byron Bay, Tenterfield and Lismore	1 July – 31 December 2012
NSW	Northern Rivers	Coffs Harbour, Forster and Grafton	1 July – 31 December 2012
NSW	Hunter	Newcastle, Port Stephens	1 July – 31 December 2012
Metro	Tasmania	Hobart, Launceston and King Island	1 January – 30 June 2013
Metro	Perth	Perth	1 January – 30 June 2013
Metro	Brisbane	Brisbane, Gold Coast and Noosa	1 January – 30 June 2013
Metro	Melbourne	Melbourne	1 July – 31 December 2013
Metro	Adelaide	Adelaide	1 July – 31 December 2013
Metro	Sydney	Sydney and Gosford	1 July – 31 December 2013
Metro	Darwin	Darwin	1 July – 31 December 2013
Remote	Remote Central & Eastern Australia	Alice Springs and Mt Isa	1 July – 31 December 2013
Remote	Regional & Remote Western Australia	Kalgoorlie, Broome and Bunbury	1 July – 31 December 2013

Currently, there are approximately 1.9 million maximum rate Centrelink and Department of Veterans' Affairs households across Australia that may be eligible for the Household Assistance Scheme. Centrelink is administering the Scheme on behalf of the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

As at 16 February 2010, there were approximately 7,000 eligible households for the Scheme in the Mildura TV licence area. On 19 January 2010, an invitation letter with an information pamphlet about the Household Assistance Scheme was sent to 8,485 Centrelink customers and 823 Department of Veterans' Affairs customers in the Mildura TV licence area. The letter asked customers to contact Centrelink to test their eligibility for the Scheme. This letter will be sent to eligible households in the other TV licence areas during the relevant switchover period. In the above timetable, the end date shown in the 'Window' column is the planned date for ceasing analogue transmission in each area, as advised by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

The Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, in consultation with Centrelink and the Department of Veterans' Affairs, estimates that there are another 240,000 potentially eligible households in the regional South Australia, regional Victoria and regional Queensland TV switchover areas in total. More detailed breakdowns, and figures for the remaining roll out areas, are yet to be determined.

As customers' circumstances often change, the exact numbers of potentially eligible households for the Scheme in each switchover area are not known until immediately prior to the mail out of the invitation letter.