

Digital television rolls out in regional Australia

Sales of digital television set top receivers and integrated digital television sets had reached 530,000 units by the end of September 2004, and averaged 40,000 in each of the preceding three months.¹ On the basis of these figures, more than 700,000 homes (or eight per cent of the population) are expected to be digital by the end of 2004.

Wide screen television sets are also proving popular: Digital Broadcasting Australia estimates sales of more than 640,000 sets in Australia since digital television services started in 2001.

Commercial broadcasters have confirmed that they are committed to a common platform for digital terrestrial services based on open standards with a minimum standard for set top boxes. Broadcasters have agreed that interactive set top boxes for the Australian market should be able to receive all interactive applications from all commercial broadcasters. They also advocate that boxes should be forward compatible, so that applications for first generation interactive boxes should work with later versions. This agreement may also encourage more sales.

The ABC has announced that it will launch a second digital channel, containing a mix of programming for children, documentaries, arts, international and regional new programming. The channel will be available both by free-to-air and subscription television. According to the ABC, its main target is providing family entertainment, and this may also encourage further take up of digital equipment.

¹ www.dba.org.au/newsletter/IB-SepOct04-full.asp

Broadcasters have continued to roll out services: the biggest recent regional introduction was on the Gold Coast on 13 September.

Digital transmissions significantly improve the coverage of the broadcasters' signals over their analog signals, so areas which previously had very weak television signals will also benefit. There have

been some reports of interference to weaker analog services to the telephone hotline (operated by broadcasters as part of their obligations under the interference management scheme). Technical staff have conducted home visits in the Mount Tamborine region, where interference has been a problem, to investigate reception issues and to resolve difficulties.

<i>Broadcaster</i>	<i>Regional areas where digital television broadcasting has started</i>	
ABC	NSW	Babinda, Bathurst, Bowral/Mittagong, Goulburn, Lithgow, Lithgow East, Portland/Wallerawang, Upper Namoi
	Qld	Boyne Island, Cairns East and North, Emerald, Gladstone East and West, Gordonvale, Townsville North
	SA	Mt Barker
	WA	Albany, Broome, Bunbury, Carnarvon, Central Agricultural, Esperance, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Manjimup, Narrogin, Port Hedland
	Tas	Hobart NE, Launceston, Taroona
SBS	NSW	Grafton/Kempsey, Manning River, Upper Murray
	Vic	Goulburn Valley, Warburton
	Qld	Cairns East and North, Bunbury, Darling Downs, Townsville
	WA	Geraldton and Kalgoorlie, Southern Agricultural
	Tas	NE Tasmania
Southern Cross Broadcasting	ACT	Tuggeranong
	NSW	Bowral/Mittagong, Kotara, Wollongong
	Qld	Gold Coast and Currumbin Townsville, Wide Bay
	Tas	NE Tasmania
Prime	Qld	Gold Coast and Currumbin
Seven	Vic	Warburton
	Qld	Cairns East and North, Townsville, Wide Bay, Gold Coast and Currumbin
WIN	Vic	Latrobe Valley
	Qld	Cairns, Cairns East and North, Gympie, Gympie Town, Nambour, Noosa, Townsville North, Townsville, Wide Bay
	Tas	NE Tasmania

Digital broadcasting goes regional

The ABC has started 31 services in regional areas, SBS 14, Southern Cross Broadcasting 10, Prime 2, Seven 7 and WIN 12 (see table on page 17).

Information about the technical aspects of digital television services, including implementation plans, are on the ABA web site: www.aba.gov.au/tv/digitaltv/index.htm.

For information about what digital television services are available in your area, go to the Digital Broadcasting Australia web site: www.dba.org.au.

What's next?

A large roll out of services is expected for the remainder of this year, and in the first quarter of next year (see table at right). The following table is a 'snap shot' of areas where either the first digital services or further digital services are expected to rollout during the remainder of this year and the first quarter of 2005.

Broadcasters	Areas where new or expanded digital services will soon roll out
ABC	NSW Murwillumbah, Narooma
	Vic Bairnsdale, Bega, Bombala, Cooma, Cooma Town, Eden, Lakes Entrance, Nowa Nowa, Orbost, Portland, Warrnambool
	Qld Blackwater, Capella
	WA Karratha, Roebourne, Wagin
SBS	NSW Batemans Bay, Bega, Central Western Slopes, Cooma Town, Dubbo, Eden, Goulburn, Narooma, Nowra North, Southern Downs, SW Slopes, Tamworth, Taroona, Ulladulla, Upper Namoi,
	Qld Blackwater, Capella, Gladstone East, Toowoomba, Townsville North,
	WA Broome, Carnarvon, Port Hedland,
	Tas Hobart NE, Launceston, Taroona
Prime	NSW Bega, Dubbo, Goulburn, Upper Murray,
	Vic Latrobe Valley
Southern Cross Broadcasting	NSW Batemans Bay/Moruya, Bathurst, Dubbo, Dungog, Eden, Goulburn, Grafton/Kempsey, Lithgow, Lithgow East, Murwillumbah, Merewether, Portland/Wallerawang, Richmond/Tweed, Upper Murray
	Vic Goulburn Valley
	Qld Cairns, Cairns East and North, Darling Downs, Gladstone East and West, Mackay, Townsville North
	Tas Launceston, Taroona
Seven	Qld Boyne Island, Cairns, Gladstone East and West, Townsville North
NBN	NSW Coffs Harbour, Dungog, Richmond/Tweed, Upper Hunter
TDI	Tas Hobart NE, Launceston, Taroona
WIN	NSW Batemans Bay, Bathurst, Dubbo, Eden, Goulburn, Lithgow, Lithgow East, Narooma, Nowra North, Portland/Wallerawang, Ulladulla, Upper Murray
	Qld Gladstone East and West, Mackay
	Tas Launceston, Taroona

