



Digital - the biggest advance in TV since colour in the 70s?

SYDNEY: The ABA has released a report on the next generation of television broadcast technology.

The technology is known as digital terrestrial television broadcasting (DTTB) and has the potential to eventually replace the present analog transmission systems that have been in service since the first introduction of television into Australia.

In launching the report, ABA Chairman Mr Peter Webb said, 'This technology will provide Australian audiences with cinema quality picture and sound, interference free reception and the capacity to receive significantly enhanced programming. It is, potentially, the

considerable time so as to allow viewers and broadcasters time to move to the new system.

'Consumers will only take up the new options if they consider there are attractive benefits to them through new program choices,' Mr Webb said. 'It will be up to broadcasters to be innovative and provide these choices if they wish to see viewers move rapidly to the new system.'

But these technological advances are not here yet and the key Australian decisions lie ahead of us. The community debate about these matters will be very important to broadcasters and investors as they assess the options for Australia.'

Even though cable and satellite services can transmit digital television pictures, viewers are still unable to fully exploit the potential benefits of the digital systems which include wide screen cinema-like picture formats, interactive programming, high definition pictures, and multi-programming capabilities.

A move of over-the-air broadcasting to digital and the introduction of television receivers specially designed for digital television reception will open the way for consumers to access these facilities. In short, the digital television receiver in the home will be the gateway to the 'information superhighway' of tomorrow.

The development of this technology is mostly taking place in the USA and in Europe, where the first services are expected to commence by 1997-98.

The Expert Group

ABA's studies into this technology have been conducted by a joint ABA Industry Expert Group, which has been in close contact with the system developers, broadcasters, international organisations and other regulators. The group also took submissions from the Australian public, and has been looking at how digital terrestrial services might be introduced into Australia without serious disruption to existing television services.

Copies of the report are available free of charge from the ABA (02) 334 7700 and comments should be lodged with the ABA no later than 31 July 1995. Submissions should be addressed to

The Convenor
DTTB Specialist Group
Australian Broadcasting Authority
PO Box 34
Belconnen ACT 2616.



Peter Webb and Colin Knowles at the launch of *Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting in Australia*

biggest advance in free-to-air broadcasting since the introduction of colour television in the 1970s.'

The report, *Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting in Australia* contains preliminary conclusions of an expert industry group assembled by the ABA which has been studying issues surrounding the introduction of DTTB to Australia. The ABA is now inviting submissions from the industry and the public on the issues raised in the report.

If DTTB was introduced, viewers would eventually need to replace their television receivers to take advantage of all the benefits of the new digital technology. Existing services would however continue to operate for a

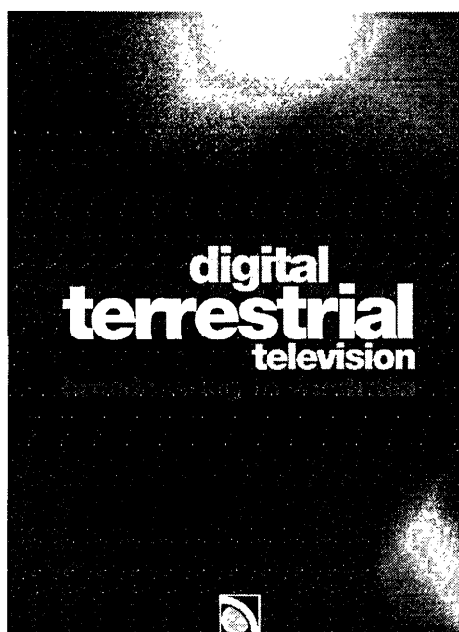


ABA Specialist Group

A specialist group of experts was established, drawing resources from within the ABA, the Department of Transport and Communications, broadcasters, carriers and manufacturing interests in 1993 to bring together studies then taking place in several different Australian forums.

The specialist group set out some details of its preliminary consideration of the issues in a discussion paper *Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting in Australia - Issues and Options*. The specialist group has now considered the public contributions, completed further studies including monitoring of international developments and these have been submitted to the ABA for consideration. The ABA's

Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting in Australia, available free from the ABA, ph (02) 334 7881



preliminary views based on this advice are documented in the report on DTTB in Australia.

While many questions as to the best choices for Australia remain unanswered, there is now sufficient information to engage a wider debate on policy issues that need to be settled so that the opportunities presented by DTTB technology can be fully exploited to benefit all Australians.

The report of the specialist group is intended to stimulate further debate on these issues it has identified which are summarised in eight Preliminary Views.

For more information about DTTB, see *Innovations*, p. 17

ABA establishes formal ties with Singapore regulator

SYDNEY: The ABA has established formal ties and closer co-operation with the Singapore Broadcasting Authority.

The ABA's Chairman, Mr Peter Webb signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chief Executive Officer of the Singapore Broadcasting Authority, Colonel Ho Meng Kit, during a series of meetings in Sydney on 20 June.

Mr Webb said the Memorandum would formalise relations between two organisations that had similar regulatory responsibilities, interests and concerns.

'The agreement will facilitate the exchange of information between the two parties on issues such as program standards, pay TV, commercial relationships, satellite broadcasting and research into children and television. Emerging issues such as the implications of content on the Internet will also be examined,' Mr Webb said.

Colonel Ho said: 'Regulators today face unlimited challenges and opportunities brought about by the technological revolution in the broadcasting industry. The Memorandum of Understanding between the SBA and the ABA is a process of learning together to face these challenges.'

'As a young Authority, the SBA hopes to contribute as much as we hope to learn from the more established regulators of the broadcasting industry worldwide,' Colonel Ho said.

The Memorandum aims to facilitate channels of communication between the ABA and the SBA and to increase the understanding of each others operations and functions. This will enable both organisations to be in a better position to meet the challenges and demands of a changing broadcasting environment.

The ABA is working to establish closer ties with broadcasting regulators in the Asia Pacific as well as with regulators in Europe and North America. The ABA signed a similar Memorandum with the US Federal Communications Commission in March and the South African Independent Broadcasting Authority in June.

Memoranda of understanding

The ABA, along with other independent communications regulators, recognises that the technological, commercial and market forces now shaping the communications sector