



The ABA has released its Commercial Television Conversion Scheme which sets out the legal framework under which commercial television broadcasters can convert television transmissions from analog to digital.

Digital conversion scheme for commercial television

The ABA has released its Commercial Television Conversion Scheme (the CTC Scheme).

The CTC Scheme sets out the legal framework under which commercial television broadcasters will be able to achieve conversion of their television transmissions from analog mode to digital mode.

'Television transmissions in digital mode must commence in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth on 1 January 2001,' said Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman. 'A number of regional broadcasters have also indicated to the ABA that they wish to commence digital television transmissions on 1 January 2001.'

The Commercial Television Conversion Scheme has legislative status and empowers the ABA to develop digital channel plans for the allotment of the additional channels broadcasters will need to achieve the conversion process. All broadcasters must broadcast in both analog and digit.

The National Television Conversion Scheme, dealing with the conversion of ABC and

SBS television services, will be published as soon as practicable. However, certain features of the CTC Scheme will be common to both schemes, including the digital channel plans.

The CTC Scheme is divided into Parts A and B. Part A deals with digital conversion for metropolitan and regional licence areas. Part B deals with digital conversion for remote licence areas and requires the ABA to undertake further consultation once it has determined which areas of Australia will fall within Part B.

The Commercial Television Conversion Scheme is available on the ABA web site <www.aba.gov.au>.

Background to the scheme

The ABA is to develop legislative schemes for the conversion of commercial and national television broadcasting services from analog to digital mode over time—a Commercial Television Conversion Scheme and a National Television Conversion Scheme (for the ABC and SBS).

The schemes must be tabled in Parliament and are subject to Parliamentary disallowance. The CTC Scheme represents delegated, or subordinate, legislation.

Digital channel plan

The ABA is empowered under the conversion schemes to develop a digital channel plan (DCP). The DCP will determine which channels are to be allotted to each broadcaster and the technical characteristics of those channels.

The ABA is developing the DCP for all licence areas of Australia as soon as practicable. It is being assisted by the Digital Television Channel Planning Consultative Group, a wide range of industry representatives, including the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations, metropolitan and regional commercial broadcasters, the ABC, SBS, community television broadcasters, the Australian Communications Authority, the Communications Laboratory, the National Transmission Agency, the Australian Subscription Television

Broadcasting Association and News Broadcasting Australia.

General technical assumptions

In preparing the DCP, the ABA must make technical assumptions in relation to planning parameters, measurement methods and best practice. It will be mandatory for the ABA to publish a definition of what constitutes, 'the same level of coverage and potential reception quality as is achieved by the transmission of that service in analog mode in that area'. The ABA may also make publicly available any other technical assumptions, to be known as the general technical assumptions.

Implementation plans

An implementation plan is a binding commitment by a licensee to provide digital services from specified sites to cover specified areas by specified dates so as to achieve the same coverage as the analog service as soon as practicable after the simulcast period begins. It is subject to ABA approval.

