



TCN Channel Nine is conducting digital test transmissions in Sydney using channel 8 (188–195 MHz) in the VHF television bands for its transmissions. This is the channel that has been nominated for use by TCN 9 in the ABA's draft digital channel plan

# Digital TV trials commence in Sydney

The ABA has issued a transmitter licence to TCN Channel Nine to carry out digital test transmissions in Sydney. Channel Nine began its tests on 22 June and they will run until late August 1999.

TCN Channel Nine is using channel 8 (188–195 MHz) in the VHF television bands for its transmissions. This is the channel that has been nominated for use by Channel Nine in the ABA's recently released draft digital channel plan.

The ABA is aware that some medical telemetry equipment may use frequencies in the VHF television bands. Medical telemetry equipment uses radio transmission to a base unit to allow patients mobility. For example, less acute patients and expectant mothers are able to walk around while cardiac and foetal monitoring continues.

The frequency range used by some of this equipment runs from 174 to 204 MHz. This range includes television channels 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Not all brands of telemetry equipment are affected. Advice the ABA has received indicates that equipment from four of about twelve suppliers operates in frequencies to be used in the future for digital television.

Users of telemetry equip-

ment are permitted to operate in television bands at their own risk on a no protection from interference basis, providing they comply with conditions spelt out in a class licence from the Australian Communications Authority (ACA). The ACA has issued a discussion paper outlining the issues in relation to telemetry devices and digital television broadcasting and sought comment by 28 June.

The ABA has been liaising with the NSW Health Department and Channel 9 to ensure minimal interference during the Sydney trial. Medical telemetry manufacturers and suppliers have also been contacted.

The NSW Health Department has advised that all hospitals, both public and private have

been notified and extensive inventories have identified only a small number of items that operate in the relevant frequency range. Steps have been taken designed to ensure that patients are not affected during the test transmissions.

## Availability of frequencies

Once digital television starts in 2001, there may be no VHF TV Band III frequencies available for medical telemetry in some areas. Capital cities are more likely to be affected than regional areas.

The finalisation of the ABA's draft digital channel plan for Sydney, expected in mid 1999, will provide certainty on the availability of frequencies for

medical telemetry devices.

Further advice will be made available to health authorities, manufacturers and suppliers once the digital channel plan has been finalised. Users of equipment which operates in the television bands of the spectrum will have to consider modification to operate at a different frequency (if possible) or replacement of systems before 1 January 2001.

## Public comment

The ACA has sought public comment on future arrangements for wireless biomedical telemetry applications. Closing date for comment was 28 June 1999. The ACA discussion paper is on the ACA web site: [www.aca.gov.au/frequency/proposal.htm](http://www.aca.gov.au/frequency/proposal.htm).

