



Digital TV adds more to the picture

It may seem that there are a lot of spare channels on your television set that are not in use. However, finding spare channels in the planning of digital television services can be a headache when you need to consider all of Australia.

To maximise spectrum efficiency, and meet the legal requirement that digital television meets the 'same level of coverage' as analog television, the ABA is employing innovative technical solutions, such as the use of single frequency networks, to stretch the use of limited radiofrequency spectrum allocated for broadcasting services that bit further.

However, digital television technology also allows the use of channels that were previously unusable due to adjacent and co-channel interference. The ABA can now use these channels to assist with the spectrum availability problem.

The use of these channels raises several issues, however, as ancillary devices (wireless microphones and VCRs) share the radiofrequency spectrum with analog and digital television. Channels that should be clear have been used by ancillary devices on an opportunistic basis within the broadcasting services bands. These devices operate under a class licence and, as such, are not afforded protection from any interference that may be caused by local television signals.

It may be difficult for these devices to continue to operate on these channels, due to interference from the primary users of the spectrum, the new digital television signals.

Now that digital television tests have started in mainland cities and digital broadcasts will

start from 1 January 2001, ancillary devices may experience interference. If this happens, the user should:

- check the ABA's web site or call the Freecall number listed below to see if interference could be arising from digital broadcasting test transmissions commencing in the area;
- investigate how the VCR (video player) is connected to the television (it should not be connected via the RF input socket). If you need advice, talk to a local retailer or antenna technician about retuning the VCR; and
- call the local area office of the Australian Communications Authority for advice on television interference (the number of your nearest office will be in your local phone book).

Budgetary provisions may need to be made for either modifying existing equipment or purchasing new equipment. The ABA advises that the user should ensure that equipment is frequency agile — not fixed to one particular frequency but able to be tuned to an available frequency on the location in which they are to be used. It is also advisable to check the ABA's web site to see whether the digital channel plan for the area is finalised before making any purchasing decisions.

The ABA will continue to work with the Australian Communications Authority and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts to identify options for dealing with these issues. To assist with this process, the ABA, in conjunction with the Department, have awarded a tender to BCL/TVNZ Australia to undertake a study on interference to ancillary devices, among other things. Information gained from the study will assist the ABA when making broadcast planning decisions.

For further information, please contact the ABA on Freecall 1800 810 241 or visit the ABA's web site at <www.aba.gov.au/what/digital/index.htm>.

C and P programs

Programs granted C and P classification between 17 June and 28 August 2000. Producers interested in submitting programs for classification should contact Children's Television on (02) 9334 7840.

Program title	Origin	Class	New/renewal	Decision date	Applicant
IN THE BOX (series 3)	Australia	P	new	11-8-00	Network Ten Limited
L'IL HORRORS	Australia	CD	new	24-7-00	December Films
L'IL HORRORS (series 2)	Australia	CD	new	4-8-00	December Films
THE ADVENTURES OF CHUCK FINN (series 3)	Australia	PRC	new	24-7-00	Barron Television Limited
THE CANTERVILLE GHOST	Australia	CD	new	28-7-00	Burbank Animation Studios
TOTALLY WILD (series 9)	Australia	C	new	4-8-00	Network Ten Pty Ltd
ZIRKOS KIDS (series 2)	Australia	P	new	9-8-00	Wave Entertainment Pty Ltd

Class: Classification C — children's program, CD — C Australian drama, P — preschool, PRC — provisional C