



Digital TV and datacasting plans

Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast

The ABA has released plans for digital television services in the Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast region. The ABA has also identified two channels in each area that may be used for other purposes, such as datacasting.

'In the Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast areas, where broadcasting spectrum is scarce, the ABA's ground-breaking use of single frequency networks has made a considerable difference,' said Professor Flint. 'Where otherwise there may have been limitations on regional services and viewers may have been required to buy new antennas, there will now be continued regional programming, more viewers will be able to use their existing antennas and there is the capacity for wide-scale delivery of datacasting services.'

'A balance has been struck between the benefits of freeing up additional spectrum and the need to minimise any changes that viewers need to make to their existing reception equipment to receive digital television.'

The ABA is satisfied that it will achieve both spectrum

productivity and public interest benefits by allotting additional channels for digital repeater services of the metropolitan and regional commercial services as well as the national ABC service at various sites in the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast region.

The ABA has made channel 36 available for the national SBS service; and channels 38 and 50 available for other purposes, such as datacasting; on the basis of single frequency networks being implemented between Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast regions.

To maximise channel capacity in neighbouring markets, the ABA has decided to remove all digital channels previously allotted to Toowoomba and re-plan the area at the same time digital channel planning is undertaken for regional Queensland as a whole. Regional broadcasters in the Toowoomba area no longer propose to commence digital transmissions in January 2001. 'This approach maintains flexibility in regional planning,' said Professor Flint.

An explanatory paper, which discusses issues raised in submissions and provides the rea-

sons for each decision, accompanies the variation to the digital channel plans for the Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast region.

Digital channel plans

The ABA determined the Queensland: Part 1 digital channel plan (Brisbane and Toowoomba) on 1 July 1999.

The ABA has prepared a variation to the digital channel plans in consultation with the Digital Television Channel Planning Consultative Group (DTCPCG). This group consists of representatives from the ABA, metropolitan and regional commercial television broadcasters, NTL Australia, the Australian Communications Authority, the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, the Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association, potential datacasters and the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations.

The ABA's channel plans for digital services in the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast regions specify the same transmission sites used by existing analog television translator

services, which are designed to assist viewers where reception from the main television transmitter sites is difficult. These are at the Gold Coast, Currumbin and Sunshine Coast (Bald Knob) for the Brisbane services; the Gold Coast and Currumbin for the Northern NSW services; and at Noosa/Tewantin, Nambour, Gympie and Gympie Town for the Wide Bay services.

The Brisbane SBS36 national service and the unassigned channels 38 and 50, which may be used for other services such as datacasting, will be able to transmit on their one respective channel for each service from each of Brisbane, Gold Coast, Currumbin, Sunshine Coast (Bald Knob), Noosa/Tewantin, Nambour, Gympie and Gympie Town.

The ABA has not at this stage allotted digital television channels at each of the Brisbane local area transmitter sites of Boonah, Esk, Kooralbyn, Numinbah Prison and Palen Creek Prison. Having regard to the efficient use of spectrum, the ABA has decided to plan for regional high-powered services in the adjacent/neighbouring licence areas before allotting channels for



the low power transmitters in Brisbane.

In the *Queensland: Part 1 – Brisbane and Toowoomba DCP*, July 1999, the ABA allotted eight UHF Band V channels (52, 55, 58, 61, 64, 66, 67 and 68) for digital television services in Toowoomba. Engineering assessment has indicated that digital planning for high powered services in regional Queensland and northern NSW (Wide Bay, Darling Downs, Southern Downs and Richmond/Tweed) may be affected by the allotment of digital television channels in Toowoomba. The ABA's initial assessment is that single frequency networks will operate efficiently between Darling Downs and Toowoomba. The ABA has decided to remove the digital channels previously allotted to Toowoomba, and consider their allotment at the same time as digital planning for the remaining parts of regional Queensland.

As knowledge of digital television technology continues to evolve, the ABA has taken a staged approach in preparing digital channel plans, with the aim of achieving maximum spectrum productivity by optimising channel usage. The Single Frequency Network Consultative Group (SFNCG — based on the Digital Television Channel Planning Consultative Group of industry stakeholder representatives) was established in August 1999, to consider and report on options for implementing single frequency networks and relevant related matters affecting digital television channel planning.

In this variation to the *Queensland Part 1 digital channel plans*, the ABA has planned both SFNs and networks using additional chan-

Area served and channel assignments

Brisbane	TVQ	ABQ	BTQ	QTQ	SBS	CTV	
Analog	10	2	7	9	28	31	Proposed unassigned
Digital	11	12	6	8	36	*	38 50

* There is no digital channel allotted for the community television service.

	TVQ	ABQ	BTQ	QTQ	SBS	TNQ	STQ	RTQ	
Sunshine Coast									
Analog	69#	40	52#	37#	34	46	43	49	Proposed unassigned
Digital	56	62	53	59	36	47	65	68	38 50

Noosa/Tewantin

Analog		32			29	41	35	44	Proposed unassigned
Digital		62			36	47	65	68	38 50

Nambour

Analog		58			55	64	61	67	Proposed unassigned
Digital		62			36	47	65	68	38 50

Gympie

Analog		45			42	48	60	51	Proposed unassigned
Digital		62			36	47	65	68	38 50

Gympie Town

Analog		57			50*	63	69	66	Proposed unassigned
Digital		62			36	47	65	68	38 50

#Service not operating

*Channel change required: move to channel 44.

	TVQ	ABQ	BTQ	QTQ	SBS	NRN	NEN	NBN	
Gold Coast									
Analog	46	49	52	58	61	55	64	67	Proposed unassigned
Digital	56	62	53	59	36	43	65	68	38 50
Currumbin									
Analog	30	33	39	45	48	42	51	54	Proposed unassigned
Digital	56	62	53	59	36	43	65	68	38 50

Some consequential changes to existing analog services are also required as a result of the variation to the digital channel plans for Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba. These changes are:

- moving the existing Tweed Heads SBS analog service from channel 62 to channel 28; and
- moving the existing Gympie Town SBS analog service from channel 50 to channel 44.

nels. The ABA is satisfied that significant numbers of viewers would indeed be affected on the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast region if pure SFN options utilising VHF channels were undertaken. The explanatory paper accompanying the DCPs indicates the number of people affected and antenna replacement cost that otherwise would eventuate.

Digital planning publications:

The ABA's General Approach to Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting Planning and the *Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting Planning Handbook* (released together with the first digital channel plans in July 1999) and all digital channel plans and their explanatory papers, including the *Digital Channel Plan Queensland: Part 1 – Brisbane and Toowoomba*, are on the ABA's web site: www.aba.gov.au. Copies can also be obtained from the ABA by calling Freecall 1800 810 241. All documents are free except the *Handbook*, price \$21.65 (incl GST).