



The new digital television receiver standard provides consumers with the broadest options for using their digital television sets for the full range of broadcasting and datacasting services that are expected to be available once digital television begins on 1 January 2001.

## Australia launches DVB digital TV receiver standard

Television broadcasting in Australia passed an important milestone in March with the publication by Standards Australia of a new Australian standard for digital television receivers. Receiver manufacturers now have the information they need for the design and production of digital television set-top-boxes, and standard definition and high definition integrated wide-screen digital television receivers. Readers may be aware that one of the reasons for the slow take-up of digital television in the United States of America, since it began in November 1998, is the lack of a definitive standard for television receivers. This lack has resulted in various interpretations of what is required in a digital television receiver for the US domestic market.

The new Australian Standard AS4933.1-2000 'Digital television—Requirements for Receivers: Part 1; VHF/UHF DVB-T television broadcasts' defines the technical requirements for television receivers and set-top-boxes to receive and decode digital television services, including high definition broadcasts using Digital Video Broadcasting (DVB) standards. The standard meets all the Commonwealth legislative requirements and provides for reception and decoding of high definition and standard definition television and datacasting services.

Consumers now have the broadest options for using their digital television sets for the full range of broadcasting and datacasting services that are expected to be available once digital television begins on 1 January 2001.

Viewers will have a number of options. They could buy:

- an entry level set-top-box that receives and decodes the digital broadcasts and converts them for viewing on an existing analog television set, or for connection to a standard definition or high definition wide-screen television display;
- a standard definition integrated wide-screen television set that can receive and decode both standard definition and high definition television broadcasts, but will only display the programs in standard definition; or
- a high definition integrated wide-screen television set that can receive and display high definition programs. These will receive and display standard definition programs when there is no high definition program being broadcast, and will cost more.


The Standards Australia committee, worked cooperatively to bring this Standard to fruition in a very short timeframe and in a very strong commercially competitive environment to meet the Government's 1 January 2001 date for the start of digital television broadcasting in Australia. The committee includes representatives from the national and commercial television broadcasters, pay TV broadcasters, potential datacasters and receiver manufacturers, as well as government and consumer organisations.

With a start date now less than eight months away, industry is particularly anxious to put the standard in place quickly. This will enable sufficient lead time for television receiver and set-top-box manufacturers to get their consumer prod-

ucts into the market place in time for the beginning of the transition to digital television broadcasting in Australia.

The standard is based on the European standards for digital terrestrial television broadcasting and also incorporates Dolby digital audio sound requirements, similar to the features found in DVD players available world-wide. This means receivers will be able to decode Dolby AC-3 surround sound as well as MPEG audio transmissions.

Australia is the first country in the world to implement the DVB standard for high definition terrestrial television. There are strong indications that a similar decision will soon forthcoming from other countries still to decide on their digital television standards, including China and Brazil who both appear to favour the COFDM modulation system used in the DVB terrestrial digital television standard chosen by Australia and who both want an HDTV capability for their broadcasting systems.

Australian Government decision taken in December 1999 in relation to digital television require no changes to this latest standard, but have given impetus to the need for a standard for standard definition television (SDTV) receivers as a priority for industry and for Standards Australia. 

**For copies of all Australian digital television standards go to <[www.standards.com.au](http://www.standards.com.au)> or contact Standards Australia's Customer Service Centre on 1300 654 646.**

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