

## Managing the introduction of digital television services

The start of digital television in Australia on 1 January 2001 brought with it significant levels of media coverage. Journalists and viewers were interested in what digital television would offer and when digital receivers would be available to see the new transmissions. Media reports also focused on viewers experiencing interference to analog services.

Before the start up, the ABA and the broadcasting industry worked together to try and ensure that reception of analog television services was maintained, and that the industry handled reports of interference in an efficient and timely manner. The main issue for the ABA and the broadcasting industry was the possible interference to VCRs (and to a lesser extent, pay TV services) in Brisbane and its surrounding areas from the SBS digital television service on channel 36.

On 15 December 2000, the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) launched a public education campaign to assist viewers in the Brisbane area who experienced VCR interference.

The education campaign included:

- a brochure delivered to residents in the greater

Brisbane area. The brochure outlined types of interference and retuning information

- the establishment of an Interference Hotline for all States. This toll free number provided advice to viewers on retuning arrangements, and provided access to technicians where required
- a media campaign, which included advertisements in the *Courier Mail*, national newspapers and on local television stations.

The Interference Hotline also provided viewers with advice and assistance in cases of reported adjacent channel or co-channel interference.

By the end of January, the Interference Hotline had registered more than 30 000 complaints. Complaints from viewers ranged across three main areas of concern:

- interference to VCRs
- poor reception of ABC and SBS services in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney—a result of transmission site works, not digital transmissions
- interference to commercial free-to-air services—the Nine and Seven networks.

Resolution of these interference issues is an ongoing process, and may require viewers to retune their equipment or seek technical assistance from the Interference Hotline. Viewers should report television interference to the Interference Hotline on 1800 016 009. In areas where viewers experience poor reception to ABC and SBS services, the ABA advises viewers to contact the ABC Reception Advice Line on 1300 139 994 (for the cost of a local call), or the SBS on Freecall 1800 500 727.

The ABA will continue to ensure that the broadcasting industry assists viewers with resolving interference problems. The preservation of the current analog reception environment is of paramount concern to the ABA, and to this end, the ABA has developed an Interference Management Scheme which outlines digital licensees' responsibilities regarding interference to analog television transmissions caused by digital transmissions. Further information can be found at [www.aba.gov.au/what/digital/information.htm](http://www.aba.gov.au/what/digital/information.htm).

