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## **Analog TV - the year in review**

### **Planning for analog TV**

Although the introduction of digital television has shifted the focus of viewers in metropolitan markets, analog television is still a hot topic for discussion in regional and remote areas.

Planning for analog television has undertaken several forms this year – the improvement of individual reception problems via the out-of area reception program, the planning of spectrum for the black spots program, and licence area plan variations in order to increase television services in single service markets.

### **Out-of-area reception**

In December 1999, an amendment to the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (the Act) gave the ABA the power to give commercial and community broadcasting licensees permission to transmit into another licence area where reception of a local service signal is not adequate. These reception problems can occur due to terrain, built structures, or interference from other signals.

From January 2001, the ABA has processed 862 applications from viewers who wish to receive the remote commercial television services, available via satellite. The ABA's approval is only necessary for commercial and community broadcasting services as any Australian with satellite receiving equipment can receive ABC/SBS services via satellite. It should be noted that the ABA does not provide financial assistance for the purchase of satellite receiver equipment

### **Black spots program**

The Commonwealth Government's \$35 million television black spots program aims to eradicate between 200 and 250 identified black spot reception areas. A black spot is an area of poor or non-existent television reception from the potentially available local commercial and national television services. The program is coordinated by the Department of Communications Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA), with the ABA providing engineering advice, ensuring spectrum availability and finalising licensing arrangements for successful applications.

The TV black spots program has been divided into two rounds:

- Round one is for black spot areas with 100 households or more; and

- Round two covers black spot areas with 50 or more households.

In addition, there is a replacement of obsolete equipment component to the program.

Under the first round of the black spots program, the ABA has agreed to the allocation of spectrum for 167 retransmission services. Other activities included issuing over 70 licences for the retransmission of services and some 199 licences under the replacement of obsolete equipment aspect of the program.

By the close of applications for round two, DCITA had received over 400 applications from communities seeking to rectify poor television reception. More than 200 of these require consideration under the program. These applications have now progressed to the planning stage, with the ABA continuing to work with consultant engineers to provide engineering advice on spectrum availability to DCITA.

### **Television licence area plans**

Amendments to the Act (s38A) have streamlined the process for the allocation of a second commercial television licence to existing licensees in television markets with a single commercial television service. If there is only one licensee in a licence area, that licensee may apply for an additional licence if additional commercial television broadcasting licences can be allocated for the licence area. The existing commercial television licensees of the single service television markets of the Riverland, Mount Gambier/South East, Spencer Gulf SA and Broken Hill NSW, have applied for second licences.

On 27 September 2001, the ABA released for comment draft variations to the television licence area areas plans (LAPs) for the Riverland, Mt Gambier / South East, Spencer Gulf SA and Broken Hill NSW to make channel capacity available for the second commercial television services.

The ABA finalised the LAP variations for the Riverland and Mt Gambier / South East SA in December 2001 and the ABA expects to finalise Spencer Gulf SA and Broken Hill NSW in the first part of 2002. Allocation of licences will follow finalisation of the LAPs.

#### **Further information**

Contact the ABA on Freecall 1800 810 241 or DCITA at [www.dcita.gov.au/tvfund](http://www.dcita.gov.au/tvfund) or Freecall 1800 680 841.

