

Digital news

Consumers should be wary of 'digital TV' labels

With the advent of digital television in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, consumers looking to access the new technology should be wary about buying what are alleged to be 'digital' or 'digital ready' television sets. A number of complaints have been received by the ABA from consumers who have purchased a new 'digital' television set, only to discover that the television cannot receive the new digital signals.

Sets that are currently on sale which bill themselves as 'digital' may use digital signal processing systems to create a better picture from the analog transmissions currently broadcast by television stations, but they will not be able to receive and display the digital signals. They are in essence still analog sets and viewers will not be able to use them to enjoy the enhanced features of digital television without installing a digital receiver or set-top box. Back in 1998, the ABA and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission issued a warning to consumers about the labelling of analog televisions as digital televisions. At that time, the ACCC emphasised that any such advertising may be misleading and could be breaching Australia's trade practices law.

When purchasing new digital television equipment, consumers should be aware that there are two broad categories for digital reception equipment:

1 a digital set-top box: a modular unit that receives the digital transmissions and decodes the video, audio and data programs for output to separate display and sound reproduction

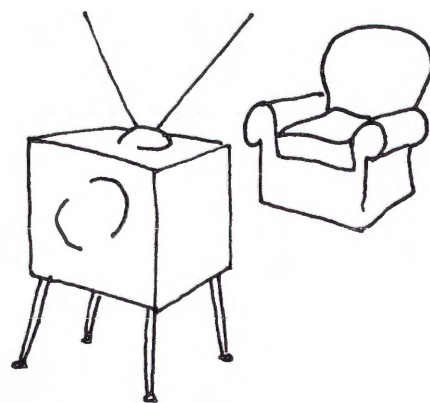
systems such as a television, hi-fi system, computer or video monitor, and
2 a digital television: an integrated receiver, decoder and display device combines the functions of a set-top box with a screen capable of displaying a digital signal.

These devices should decode either programs in standard definition (SDTV) format or programs broadcast in both SDTV and high definition (HDTV) format. When purchasing a new set, consumers should look to see whether the TV set can decode either HDTV and SDTV or SDTV only.

At this stage, consumers can either purchase or rent a digital set-top box from a number of reputable retailers/suppliers.

Consumers seeking more information on digital television reception equipment and its availability should refer to Digital Broadcasting Australia at www.dba.org.au.

For more information on digital television planning issues contact the ABA on Freecall 1800 226 667 or visit the ABA's web site at www.aba.gov.au/what/digital/index.htm.



For more information:

digital television reception equipment

- on digital television reception equipment and its availability go to **Digital Broadcasting Australia** at www.dba.org.au.

planning for digital television

- on digital television planning issues call the ABA on Freecall 1800 226 667 or go to the ABA's web site at www.aba.gov.au/what/digital/index.htm.