



The ABA has proposed a commencement date of **31 December 2003** for commercial digital TV services in the NSW licence areas of Broken Hill and Griffith/Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and the South Australian licence areas of Mount Gambier, Riverland and Spencer Gulf.

Digital TV start-up dates for regional NSW and SA

The ABA has proposed a commencement date of 31 December 2003 for commercial digital television services in the NSW licence areas of Broken Hill and Griffith/Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and the South Australian licence areas of Mount Gambier, Riverland and Spencer Gulf.

'In selecting the proposed dates, the ABA considered factors such as the impact on viewers with regard to the management of interference to analog television services and the obligations and costs on broadcasters in relation to the roll-out of digital television services,' the ABA Chairman said.

The ABA's proposals are contained in a discussion paper on the draft determination of dates upon which digital television services must commence in the above regional licence areas, released on 15 August 2002. The discussion paper also proposes that the commercial television broadcasters in these areas should submit their implementation plans by 31 July 2003.

An implementation plan specifies the date on which a broadcaster proposes to commence digital television at a particular transmission site.

In regional licence areas, digital transmissions must start before 1 January 2004 on a date determined by the ABA.

However, regional broadcasters may apply to the ABA to start on an earlier date.

Background

Commercial Television Conversion Scheme

The Commercial Television Conversion Scheme (CTC Scheme) sets out the legal framework under which commercial television broadcasters will be able to achieve conversion of their television transmissions from analog mode to digital mode.

The CTC Scheme has legislative status and empowers the ABA to develop digital channel plans for the allotment of the additional channels broadcasters will need to achieve the conversion process. All broadcasters must broadcast in both analog and digital mode for at least eight

years, during what is known as the simulcast period.

Schedule 4 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (the Act) requires that the ABA determine a simulcast date for regional licence areas. Regional licence areas are those that are not metropolitan or remote licence areas.

Determination of simulcast date

The CTC Scheme states that the start of the simulcast period for regional commercial licence areas must be during the period beginning on 1 January 2001 and ending immediately before 1 January 2004.

The ABA does not determine simulcast dates for the ABC and SBS. The simulcast period for the coverage areas of each national television service commences on the dates indicated in each broadcaster's relevant implementation plan. The ABA maintains a public register of implementation plans, which is available either in hard copy or on the ABA website at www.aba.gov.au/tv/digitaltv/legislation/impregister.htm.

Regional Equalisation Plan

In recognition of the costs associated with rolling out digital television in regional areas, the government has developed a program to assist commercial broadcasters with delivery of regional digital television services.

The Regional Equalisation Plan provides a financial assistance package to assist regional broadcasters to facilitate digital television services as quickly as possible. It also recognises that the start of the simulcast period triggers obligations and costs on the part of regional licensees in relation to the roll-out of their digital television services.



The discussion paper is available on the ABA website at www.aba.gov.au/tv/digitaltv/planning/index.htm or by calling Freecall 1800 810 241. The closing date for submissions was 5.00 p.m., Friday 6 September 2002.