

# Digital transmission becomes a reality for community television broadcasters

On 1 March 2010, the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, welcomed the launch of digital broadcasting by TVS, Sydney's community television (CTV) station. TVS is the first CTV station to make the switch to digital.

The move to digital for CTV stations follows recent steps by the ACMA to issue digital licences to existing CTV broadcasters in metropolitan areas.

Following the government's announcement of a digital pathway for CTV in November 2009, the ACMA has developed technical specifications and created the necessary regulatory framework to enable the recent allocation of digital licences for CTV services in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. At press time, the ACMA expected to allocate a further digital licence for the CTV trial service in Adelaide.

TVS Chief Executive and Secretary of the Australian Community Television Alliance (ACTA), Laurie Patton, described the move to digital as the most important step in the sector's history.

'For the first time community TV has a guaranteed place in the television broadcasting landscape. ACTA members are committed to providing a platform for local programs and a place where new talent and new program ideas can emerge,' said Mr Patton.

These new licences allow for current analog CTV services to be simulcast in digital mode using vacant spectrum known previously as 'Channel A'. The only exception will be in Perth, where no analog CTV service is provided—that is, the CTV trial service in Perth will be broadcast solely in digital mode.

The 'Channel A' spectrum has been allocated to CTV broadcasters on a temporary basis until the switch to digital-only television in capital cities occurs in 2013.

Following on from the March launch of TVS in digital, the ACMA expects the remaining four metropolitan CTV broadcasters (West TV Perth, C31 Melbourne, QCTV Brisbane and C31 Adelaide) to commence their digital services within the next few months.

The community television sector is a vital part of Australia's media environment. The work performed by the ACMA will help to ensure that CTV services are available to viewers that have already made the switch to digital. ☎



## Setting up your digital receiver for community television

To watch CTV programs in digital you will need to make sure that digital CTV services have commenced in your area and that your digital television reception equipment (your integrated digital television or digital set-top box) has been set up correctly.

If CTV commences in your area before you set up your reception equipment, you will be able to access CTV, as well as the other digital television channels available in your area, after performing the 'channel scan' required as part of the set-up process for your equipment.

If CTV commences in your area after you have set up your reception equipment, you may need to take action to ensure that CTV is available on your equipment and is assigned to the correct channel number. Channel 44 has been designated for CTV services.

The action required in such cases is known as a 'channel rescan'. The rescan process will register additional channels that have appeared since you first set up your television. If this is not successful you may need to conduct a full rescan which deletes all channel information previously stored in your equipment and replaces it with current information about all channels available in your area, including any new channels introduced since the last time you performed a scan.

The steps involved in the rescan process vary significantly between different models of equipment. Detailed instructions are available in the instruction manual that came with your equipment or through onscreen guides provided by your set. In most cases, the process is performed by:

1. Pressing the menu button on your equipment's remote control.
2. Selecting the appropriate option (depending on the model of equipment you use, this may appear under a range of names, including 'channel rescan', 'store digital channels' or 'automatic tuning').
3. Following the prompts.

When performing a channel rescan, it is important to note:

- > Some models of equipment contain both digital and analog receivers—you should therefore be careful to ensure that you are scanning for digital, rather than analog, channels.
- > The rescan may delete the 'favourite channel' settings stored in your equipment or reset the personal identification number set for parental lock. If these features are important to you, you should check them after completing the rescan and reset them if required.

If you live in an apartment complex or block of units you may have a shared antenna system that needs to be adjusted to receive additional services. You should check with your building manager prior to conducting a rescan to ensure your shared antenna system is set up appropriately.

If you have difficulty getting a new digital TV or set-top box to receive the channels available in your area, you should check to see that you have an adequate external antenna and that you have the proper cabling between the wall mounted antenna outlet and your receiver.