

# Digital television Australia-wide

The Rudd Government will implement a satellite service to provide digital television to viewers in regional blackspot areas.

"All regional Australians will now receive the same television services as people in the cities," said the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy.

"This is a fantastic outcome for people in regional Australia, many of whom have received limited television services for many years."

"This historic decision will dramatically improve the choice and quality of television services for regional Australia as we move towards digital switchover."

"For the first time all free-to-air digital television services, including the original three commercial and two national channels, as well as new digital services such as ABC2, ABC3, SBS TWO, GO!, 7TWO and ONE HD, will be available to all Australians, no matter where they live."

"The satellite service will provide regional viewers with access to the local news currently broadcast in their TV licence area via a dedicated local news channel."

While the final cost of the digital satellite broadcasting service will be determined following negotiations between broadcasters and satellite service providers, the Government is committing \$40 million per year over the four-year forward estimates to build and operate the service, for the potential benefit of up to 247,000 households across Australia. This is an ongoing Government commitment.

Under an agreement reached with all television broadcasters across Australia, broadcasters will upgrade more than 100 existing regional analog 'self-help' transmission facilities to operate in digital, while the Government will fully fund and build a new digital satellite broadcasting service for regional viewers who are unable to receive digital television from those facilities.

The measures are part of Australia's ongoing switchover to digital-only television and will be in place before analog services are switched off in each regional broadcast license area.

Viewers who currently rely on 'self-help' sites that will be upgraded by broadcasters under this agreement will simply need to install a high definition set-top-box to access a full suite of digital television channels.

Any regional households not able to receive digital television from the upgraded 'self-help' sites will be served by the new satellite, which will also carry the full suite of digital channels. In order to access the new satellite service, these households will need to install a satellite dish.

"The Government will provide a satellite conversion subsidy to eligible households currently served by 'self-help' transmission sites which are not upgraded to digital by the broadcasters," Senator Conroy said.

"This landmark agreement would not be possible without the cooperation of Australia's free-to-air broadcasters and I would like to acknowledge their constructive approach to digital switchover."

Senator Conroy said that the Government will be writing to 'self-help' transmission licensees detailing the new measures as well as providing further information to local communities.

The Government is currently consulting with broadcasters to identify the list of 'self-help' sites to be upgraded to digital for announcement in the first half of 2010.

The list will include new digital terrestrial transmitters at Underbool and Ouyen in the Sunraysia/Mildura region, the first license area to switch to digital-only television. The satellite service for the Sunraysia/Mildura region is expected to commence prior to 30 June 2010, when analog television services are due to be switched off in that licence area.