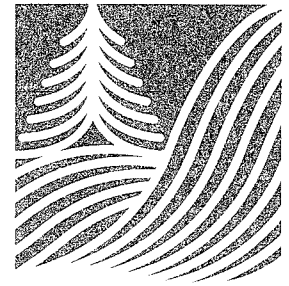


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10 August 2007

Ms Trish Barnes
General Manager
Digital Broadcasting
Department of Communications, Information Technology
and the Arts
GPO Box 2154
CANBERRA ACT 2601



Tumut Shire
COUNCIL

Dear Madam,

Digital Conversion of Self-Help Television Retransmission Sites

Tumut Shire Council takes the opportunity to make the following submission on the above matter. Council has had three sites constructed under the Blackspots Television Programme and these sites provide transmission into the following towns within the Shire.

Adelong	Estimated population 900	3 channels – ABC, Prime and SBS
Batlow	Estimated population 1,300 (Town and district 2,600)	5 channels – ABC, Prime, SBS, WIN and Capital
Talbingo	Estimated population 250	3 channels – ABC, Prime and SBS

Adelong and Talbingo are provided with WIN and Capital transmission under the original television aggregation scheme implemented from 1990 to 1992.

Council submits in relation to the issues outlined:

1. Conversion of Analogue Self-Help Television Retransmission Facilities to Digital

Individual digital transmitters compared to multiplexing equipment.

The concern is that by using the multiplexors option there is a problem that the total transmission for all channels at the site will not function and this would leave the community without any television services. If individual digital transmitters are utilized and one is subject to failure then a community still has the option of four remaining channels to view.

Council's experience is that if all of the transmission is out the whole of the community complains. If one channel is not transmitting then only 33 per cent make complaints. Individual transmission units is Council's preferred option.

It may differ in the future, depending on potential repair costs for individual transmitters compared to multiplexors, however, Council has no method to gauge this position at this time.

2. DTH Reception of Satellite Television Services

This option is not preferred unless all five channels can be offered by satellite and if this were an option it would all be by a national broadcaster. Local news and weather would not be transmitted into these communities, which would not be equitable. Rural communities rely on local news and weather reports and they would be disappointed if it were no longer available.

If direct to home satellite equipment was adopted, then who would provide and manage the units for installation into new premises for the future? For example, if Talbingo, being a small community, had fifty new houses constructed, who would then provide each new house with a direct to home satellite unit?

The direct to home satellite option appears only to be a reasonable scenario if each household has one television. A household with multiple units would require a satellite decoder for each other television unit and this would result in many complaints from householders.

3. Timing of Implementation

The timing of implementation of digital transmission should be as soon as practicable. Tumut Shire's main town is Tumut with a population in excess of 6,000 people. Tumut community was provided with digital transmission of ABC and SBS in July 2007 and the commercial channels of Prime, WIN and Capital should be commissioned by February 2008. The smaller communities of Adelong, Batlow and Talbingo will also be seeking a digital transmission at this time. Council would view it as a positive move to also provide the smaller, isolated communities with digital transmission within a reasonable timeframe.

If these small communities are required to finance their own conversion from analogue to digital, then it is a difficult concept to see that digital reception would eventuate in these towns.

4. In Conclusion

Council considers that the provision of television services throughout Australia is the responsibility of the providers, being commercial operators WIN, Prime, Capital and SBS who are motivated by providing a wide coverage for viewers and at the same time being able to sustain a viable and competitive business operation.

Similarly the ABC, being the national broadcaster, would desire to provide a service to the widest possible area and population within Australia.

Tumut Shire Council is pleased to be involved in a facilitation role for high quality television services to the majority of its community, however, finds it increasingly difficult to have the responsibility of sites for the purpose of maintaining transmission services with the cost of electricity, site maintenance and regular breakdown of equipment due to stormy weather and lightning strikes and normal equipment failure. Since the provision of television facilities under the Blackspots Television Programme, which commenced some give years ago, the cost to Council has been significant in an area that was never anticipated to be Council's responsibility.

Council is also concerned about the television services provided under the original television aggregation scheme, which are transmitted into Adelong and Talbingo by WIN and Capital. The question here is will those commercial stations accept this responsibility and provide an upgrade of these services into those small and isolated communities?

Finally, Council seeks full financial support to upgrade to digital services for its three remote and isolated communities so that the people residing in those towns receive services equivalent to larger towns and cities.

Council will be pleased to work with the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts to achieve a digital television transmission into its remote communities.

Yours faithfully,



R I McMillan
MANAGER CORPORATE SERVICES