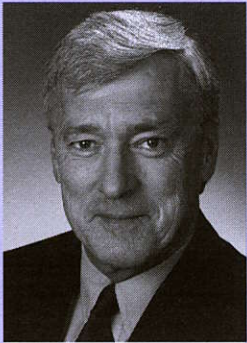




10 August 2007

The General Manager
Digital Broadcasting
Department of Communications, Information Technology & the Arts
GPO Box 2154
CANBERRA ACT 2601



Peter Andren M.P.
Federal Member for Calare

To Whom It May Concern

**RE: DIGITAL CONVERSION OF SELF-HELP TELEVISION
RETRANSMISSION SITES**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the digital conversion of analogue self-help television retransmission sites.

Seven communities in my rural electorate of Calare have benefited from the Black Spot TV Program, which has funded the installation of seven analogue retransmission television towers.

Another two communities utilise *Direct to Home* satellites provided under the *Alternative Technical Solutions* program.

The retransmission facilities are owned by smaller local councils or community groups, who must already pay for maintenance of the equipment and can ill afford the cost of converting the analogue receivers into digital.

Costs & benefits of digital multiplexing equipment v. individual digital transmitters

I have been advised that individual transmitters and associated equipment for each of the television channels is the preferred technical option.

This is because greater technical demands of a multiplex unit, with the greater potential for maintenance problems will translate into higher ongoing maintenance costs. Further, a multiplex unit increases the possibility of all television services being disrupted if a problem occurs.

It has been noted in other enquiries that an essential requirement for a successful transition to digital services is a stable and robust terrestrial transmission platform. The use of individual digital transmitters would seem to be essential in fulfilling this requirement.

Costs and benefits of converting self-help retransmission sites to digital v. installation of *Direct To Home* (DTH) satellite and equipment.

I do not support the use of *Direct To Home* (DTH) satellite where the option of digital reception exists.

Please address
correspondence to:

P.O. Box 181
BATHURST NSW 2795
(Suite 2, The Reliance Centre
203-209 Russell Street)
Tel: (02) 6332 6229
Fax: (02) 6332 6240
Toll Free 1300 301 762

Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Tel: (02) 6277 2341
Fax: (02) 6277 8471

60 Main Street,
LITHGOW NSW 2790
Ph/Fax: (02) 6351 3838

email:
Peter.Andren.MP@aph.gov.au
Website:
www.peterandren.com

Printed in Calare

Whilst both ABC and SBS are available using this option, the two available commercial stations, Channel 7 and Imparja TV, are broadcast from Central Australia and thus have no local content.

Those living in rural and regional areas often rely on local television content to keep abreast of what's happening in their surrounding areas. It is inequitable that those living in isolated areas should not have access to information considered as standard.

Should the DTH option be adopted for populations less than 500

I refer to the above question.

Comment on the timing of digital conversion of self-help retransmission sites

The timing of converting analogue self-help retransmission sites is problematic given that precise coverage of digital television may not coincide with black spots in analogue coverage.

However I would urge the Department to undertake assessments in areas covered by current retransmission sites and where the roll out of digital services has already been completed.

It is my belief that if we are to be serious about consumer uptake of digital television we must ensure that *all* Australians have access to free-to-air digital television broadcasts.

This certainly requires government funding the conversion of analogue receivers where needed.

I also urge government to fund the ongoing maintenance of these facilities.

This will not only ensure those living in rural and regional areas continue to have access to free-to-air digital television in the future, but will protect government's original expenditure, as well as the substantial investment by broadcasters converting to digital broadcast.

Yours sincerely



PETER ANDREN
Federal Member for Calare