



District Council of Streaky Bay

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10 July 2007

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

Dear General Manager

RE: DIGITAL CONVERSION OF SELF-HELP TELEVISION RETRANSMISSION SITES

I write on behalf of the District Council of Streaky Bay which is situated on Western Eyre Peninsula, South Australia, 720 kms from Adelaide.

Council operates 4 Self-Help Television Retransmission Sites (Streaky Bay, Mount Hall, Poochera and Wirrulla), retransmitting Imparja, Southern Cross and SBS. Streaky Bay is the main town in the district with approximately 1400 viewers. Wirrulla sites serves around 300, Poochera 100 and Mount Hall 300.

Each of the sites is very different. Streaky Bay operates from a building, owned by Council but also used as an Emergency Service Centre (CFS & SES). Mount Hall is remote from the town, situated in a rural area and operates from a small hut on a farmer's property. Wirrulla is a share situation where Council uses the same building and tower as ABC television. Poochera is also shared but with Telstra (microwave tower) where Council uses the tower but has its own hut.

As a small Council (population 2100, area 6500 sq kms – large for SA, \$1.75m rate revenue, 1720 kms roads) we find it difficult to maintain 12 transmitters, decoders etc, let alone replace the equipment. We were certainly very appreciative of grants from the Black Spot program to install Central 7 and SBS and also to replace obsolete Imparja equipment. Without the assistance our community would not have the services we have today.

You asked for comments on the use of individual digital transmitters for each service or the use of multiplexers:

- Difficult to access technicians promptly in remote areas
- Costs prohibitive if they have to come from Adelaide (720 kms) Whyalla (400 kms) Port Lincoln (300 kms)
- Heat and dust are issues in our district

Comments on the DTH option for viewers in remote areas where the population is less than 500:

- Operational costs for our sites remote from Streaky Bay (Mount Hall 60 kms, Wirrulla 70 kms, Poochera 65 kms) are obviously higher than at Streaky Bay and serve smaller populations, many of which are people who live on farms.
- Costs to Council would be reduced by having DTH for viewers outside of Streaky Bay

Comments on the timing of digital conversion of self-help retransmission sites:

- If analogue is an inferior service to digital then conversion shouldn't be delayed for too long after the rest of Australia
- Costs of the conversion should be borne by the Government so that those in remote areas are not being made to pay any more than those in areas served by free to air television (eg: cities, regions etc)

People living in remote areas already "pay the price" through higher living costs, including fuel and other essential items. Many of these people produce export wealth and food/goods for the "city tables" and are important to Australia's economic fortunes – don't make them pay any more for digital television than people who are not recipients of the self-help retransmission services (or have an inferior signal).

I urge the Department to continue supporting people in remote areas, as has been the case with previous Black Spot funding.

Yours faithfully



JOHN RUMBELOW
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

JR:JC

Cc: by email to selfhelpcomments@dcita.gov.au