



Rec'd 12/7/07

Inquiries
Our References
Date

Mr Murray Brown
AT.5/MB/jh
9 July 2007

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

Dear Sir/Madam

**SUBMISSION – DIGITAL CONVERSION OF SELF-HELP TELEVISION
RETRANSMISSION SITES**

*Set out hereunder are comments the Shire of Irwin wishes to make in
response to the above Discussion Paper.*

Introduction

*The Shire of Irwin is located in the Midwest region of Western Australia
some 65kms south of Geraldton and 360kms north of Perth. The Shire
covers an area of 2,223 km² with just over 40% of that area being either
Crown land or Crown Reservation. The area enjoys some 80kms of
coastline.*

*The Shire is bordered to the north by the Shires of Greenough and
Mullewa, to the east by the Shires of Mingenew and Three Springs and
to the south by the Shire of Carnamah. The western boundary of the
Shire is the Indian Ocean.*

*The majority of our population lives in the “twin towns” of Dongara and
Port Denison. The Shire’s administration and service centre is in
Dongara.*

The major industries in the Irwin Shire are:

*Agriculture, Fishing, Forestry and Mining
Retail Trade
Construction
Manufacturing
Accommodation, Cafés and Restaurants/Tourism*

*The population of the Shire has grown in recent years because of growth
associated with resource-based projects and also growth associated with
intrastate migration (i.e. the seachange phenomenon).*

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Tourist Centre:
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Recreation Centre:
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Ranger:
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The Shire's population, as estimated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in June 2005, was 3,247. In addition to the 3,247 resident population, there is also estimated to be up to 1,000 visitors staying in various rental accommodation, e.g. motels, holiday units, caravan parks, bed and breakfasts, etc

Council notes that there are some 650 self-help retransmission facilities currently serving communities without sufficient access to free-to-air television reception.

In 2001/2002, at a cost of \$112,830, the Shire of Irwin provided its community with a Remote Area Self-Help Television Retransmission Site. Since then, Council (i.e. the ratepayers of this Shire) have had to meet the operating and maintenance costs of this facility.

Comment

It is a constant concern to many rural and remote residents that they have to pay for basic services that most Australian residents, particularly residents of major cities and large towns, take for granted, and usually at no cost.

This Council believes that substantial financial support should be provided to assist Self-Help television retransmission providers in meeting the estimated average cost of conversion of \$138,000 per site.

Comment on Issues raised in Discussion Paper

1. *Council has no technical expertise on which to comment on the issue of the use of individual digital transmitters for each service or the use of multiplexers would be the most effective option for converting existing analogue self-help retransmission sites to digital.*

Council, based on the information in the discussion paper, agrees that the use of multiplexers may be beyond the capacity of most Self-Help groups to operate and maintain, without substantial support.

2. *Based on the information in the discussion paper, the Direct to Home (DTH) option will not be applicable to this Shire. It is noted that the DTH option currently costs some \$550 to \$1,200 per household installed, however, this system does not allow access to local commercial television. Who would pay for the provision of the DTH option?*
3. *Council has no opinion relating to the timing of digital conversion of Self-Help Retransmission Sites. Perhaps timing of the conversion should be spread out over a fairly long period, so that the cost of this work does not increase substantially.*

Conclusion

The Shire of Irwin suggests:

That the use of individual digital transmitters is preferable to the use of Multiplexers in this area.

A special funding scheme be set up by the Commonwealth Government to assist in meeting the cost of digital conversion of Self-Help Television Retransmission Sites.

Please contact Council's Project Officer, Mr Murray Brown, should you require further information or clarification.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. Peddie', written over the typed name.

**Geoff M Peddie
Acting Chief Executive Officer**