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~~The General Manager
Digital Broadcasting
DCITA
GPO Box 2154
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DIGITAL CONVERSION OF SELF HELP TV TRANSMISSION SITES

Dear Sir or Madam,

I wish to present these comments for your consideration and reply on the general questions with specific comments regarding the Healesville and surrounding TV reception areas which are part of the areas that I install antenna systems within, and thus are aware of specific analogue and digital reception issues affecting those residents.

Comment on the use of individual digital transmitter for each service or the use of multiplexers:

The answer I believe lies with the use of SFN networks, and the re-use of channels within the area of coverage from each site. Careful use of channel allocations needs to be made particularly when co-channel digital and analogue reception is available to the same geographic area or consumer address, and the timing of analogue cut-off, together with channel re-allocations if SFN is the preferred solution. In some cases I would suggest that a turn off with analogue be done earlier to release spectrum, where no re-transmitted analogue signals are used to activate the present translator. In the area that I service, I suggest a SFN solution for Mt. St. Leonard and Mt. Victoria sites with appropriate channel re allocations, and prompt analogue turn off.

The idea of multiplexing channels is not within the scope or on going funding of self help sites, as this suggests specialised technical help for installation and maintenance that would not be readily available at remote sites. I think it is imperative that nearby sites be looked at not individually, but as a total reception solution to cover areas served by more than Translator or Metro/Regional transmitters. The Yarra Valley region is covered by Melbourne (Mt Dandenong), Healesville and Warburton Translators, and fortuitous reception of Gippsland and Bendigo signals when nothing else is suitable. The most common problem facing customers in some areas of the Yarra Valley is digital echoes from large surrounding hills or mountains, of which is a major problem in the Healesville and Warburton areas served by Digital transmitters. The problem is not with all received channels and can be individual or multiple according to location of the customer.

The costings, whilst important to the overall cost of analogue switch off, needs to be considered in the future operating costs and the cheapest installation solution may

well prove to be wrong, and require more engineering costs including channel re-allocations, power output changes, antenna directivity alterations. Better to do it right the first time, not like the Gold Coast situation.

Comment on the DTH solution for TV reception

The switch off of Analogue signals will impact on small pockets of residents in the Yarra Valley, where reception varies greatly between individual houses. In areas such as East Warburton, Reefton, McMahon's Creek, Three Bridges, Chum Creek, Toolangi and Castella for example, whilst some form of analogue reception can be had, digital testing for existing service providers has shown that very poor and spasmodic digital reception is available. There needs to be a simple DTH solution without the onerous requirements of the current Aurora system (e.g. full site tests for each application). I have found that the commercial providers i.e. C7 and Imparja will needlessly query and deny requests for activation because the geographic location or name does not appear on their overlay maps, and some refusals are within their current licence area.

Of course the DTH solution will only work with line of site to satellite availability, and should be made available to any customer affected after analogue cut-off, who does not have viable digital signals.

The idea of the number of affected customers in a given area is erroneous, as distance from nearest transmission site needs to be co-considered with the geographical terrain that affects the signal reception.

Comment on Remote self- help retransmission sites

I wish to raise the matter of the Mt. St. Leonard site in particular. With a height of approx. 3300 feet ASL, and close to Melbourne and nearby translators, the present analogue transmissions have affected digital reception of Warburton signals in areas such as Seville East and Woori Yallock, which cannot receive Mt. Dandenong digital signals correctly. The distance to the horizon would include Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsular making the correct selection of channel sets, or SFN's critical. There is at least one Warburton channel for digital that has been severely compromised by a Healesville analogue, and of no use in the Seville east and Woori Yallock districts. Reception of the SBS sound carrier on a radio system at the Rialto Tower in the CBD, until the frequency was changed marginally, proves that signals can travel further than predicted in computer modelling.

I believe that any customer within the Healesville re-transmission area that does not have viable digital after change over, be allowed a DTH solution.

Whilst some forethought was given to digital reception of Melbourne signals for analogue transmission at Healesville, and thus the need to convert is not as great in the immediate future as sites dependant on analogue reception, it is still an urgent requirement, as the take up of new technology in the form of Plasma and LCD televisions is high, and customers are not satisfied with the quality of the re-transmitted analogue signals. These customers are being denied access to digital directly from Melbourne, due to digital echoes from large nearby mountains.

The quality of the present Healesville transmissions within the town has been compromised due to the requirement of viable signals to feed customers on the other side of Mt. Dandenong who rely on Healesville as well as Warburton and Gippsland TV signal reception. A customer needing a reception solution at say Lilydale (poor digital signal from Melbourne) some 12 kilometres away cannot receive sufficient signal strength without boosting and even then, the picture is ghosting and grainy, a digital solution from Healesville would solve the problem.

Whist each site needs to be individually looked at, there is a need to look at the bigger picture of all sites that can interfere with, or compromise reception with each other.

The cost to achieve immediate, worthwhile and viable results should be meted against a cheap solution that requires re-working. The backlash at the ballot box can not be disregarded if we get it wrong.

Thank you for your time in considering my thoughts and suggestions,



Brian Andrews

Bestek TV Antennas & Home Theatre Installations