

2011-12 Budget Issues Briefing No. 357

DIGITAL SWITCHOVER**Why**

- In this Budget the Government is continuing to help Australians manage the switch to digital-only television, including through assisting eligible households with the cost of switching over.
 - This will enable all Australians to access the benefits and experiences of digital television.

Section 22

In the Budget

- The 2011-12 Budget includes funding of \$376.5 million over four years to continue the switchover assistance package for the remainder of Australia.
 - This includes household assistance for eligible households that have not yet converted (including remote, regional and metropolitan households).
 - Households with a person on the maximum rate of a Commonwealth pension will be eligible for provision and installation of a high definition set-top box.

- Eligible households will receive a high definition set-top box, installation by Government-endorsed installers, and a demonstration of how to use the box. If the household owns the home, any necessary upgrades to antenna and cabling systems can be arranged. Assistance is limited to one per household.
- Most elements of the measure in the 2009-10 Budget – including the communications campaign, and work with the antenna installation industry – will continue under the new measure.

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Key facts

Government assistance

- The \$376.5 million measure in the 2011-12 Budget includes:
 - \$331.9 million for the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, to:
 - : administer the household assistance package;
 - : work with industry to drive take-up (including schemes for labelling digital equipment and endorsing antenna installers); and
 - : provide an information and communications campaign (including direct liaison with consumers);
 - \$42.2 million for the Department of Human Services, as Centrelink manages the delivery of assistance to eligible households; and
 - \$2.4 million for the Australian Communications and Media Authority, to evaluate the coverage of digital transmission.
- The Government's switchover household assistance package is designed to ensure the most vulnerable Australian households are prepared for the switch-off of the analog signal. The household assistance under this new package is the same as for the areas that have already switched over.
 - Households are eligible if at least one member is on the maximum rate of the age, disability support or service pension, the carer's payment, or veterans' income support supplement. The household must have at least one functioning television, not have access to digital television, and live in an area that is in the process of switching over.

- Eligible households receive a high definition set-top box, installation by Government-endorsed installers, and a demonstration of how to use the box. If the household owns the home, any necessary upgrades to antenna and cabling systems can be arranged. Assistance is limited to one per household.

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Additional issues

Why is the Government buying television equipment for so many households?

- The Government understands that some households need help to prepare for digital television. It will therefore provide assistance to eligible households to obtain and install the equipment necessary to receive a digital television signal.
- Assistance will be limited to one set-top box per eligible household. Only those on the maximum rate of the age or disability support pensions, carer's payment, Department of Veterans' Affairs service pension or income support supplement will be eligible to apply.

Will the Government slow the pace of switchover rather than leave viewers without access to television?

- The purpose of this package is to prepare Australians for switchover when it occurs in their transmission areas.
 - The Digital Tracker survey, conducted quarterly, indicates that 95 per cent of households are aware that switchover is occurring.
 - Around four in every five households have already switched to digital, with major metropolitan centres not due to switch over until the end of 2013.
- The Government has a well publicised schedule for switchover, and is working hard to ensure people know exactly when their analog signals will be switched off.
 - This allows households to be well prepared for the switch.
- Experience from the early switchover sites – in Mildura and regional South Australia – indicates that households are generally aware of when their signal is to be switched over, and are able to prepare themselves for this.

What about households that don't qualify for assistance?

- Around 80 per cent of households have already switched over to digital television.
- The Government understands that some households need help to prepare for digital-only television, that's why we're continuing to help those households.
- This package ensures that assistance is targeted at those who are most in need.

Contact

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