



## VAST SERVICE

The majority of Australians receive their television services from the network of broadcaster-owned transmission towers and will continue to do so after the switch to digital. However, for those who live outside the coverage of this terrestrial network, a new satellite television service is available to ensure that they are able to enjoy the same benefits of digital television as other Australians.

Viewers in remote Australia, or viewers who live in regional/metropolitan areas, who are unable to receive adequate terrestrial television reception from the transmitters that serve the area in which they live will be able to receive their digital television services through the new Government-funded **Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST)** service.

The VAST service will also be available to people who currently rely on a self-help transmitter that is not converted to digital by commercial broadcasters and who are not able to receive an adequate digital signal from another transmitter serving their area. **Households in these areas may be eligible for assistance in converting to VAST through the Satellite Subsidy Scheme. More information is available on the Satellite Subsidy Scheme at <http://www.digitalready.gov.au/government-assistance/satellite-subsidy-scheme.aspx>.**

### **What channels are available on VAST?**

VAST will feature the following channels:

ABC1, ABC2, ABC3, ABCNews24, SBS ONE, SBS TWO, SBS HD, Southern Cross Central Seven, 7TWO, 7mate, Imparja, GO!, Gem, Ten, OneHD, One, Eleven and Regional News.

The VAST service provides the same number of television channels that are available in capital cities. It will feature channels carrying programs sourced from Southern Cross Seven, Imparja Nine and the Ten network, and the main national broadcaster services, ABC1 and SBS ONE, together with digital SD channels; ABC2, ABC3, SBS TWO, 7TWO, GO! and Eleven, and the high definition channels; ABC News 24 HD, SBS HD, 7mate (Seven HD), GEM (Nine HD), and ONE HD (Ten HD).

The VAST service will also provide viewers with access to the local regional news services currently broadcast by the commercial broadcasters in their relevant terrestrial licence areas. These services will be provided through a dedicated news channel. In addition, the news services of the national broadcasters, the ABC and the SBS, will also be provided. ABC news will be provided on a state basis and through the ABC's 24 hour news channel, ABC News 24.

The VAST service is now available to all viewers located in remote central and eastern Australia.

It is expected that the VAST service will be available to viewers in Western Australia from early 2011.

### **VAST services**



### **More information about services available on VAST (as at March 2011)**

VAST is now available for viewers who are unable to receive adequate terrestrial reception in Mildura/Sunraysia, regional South Australia, Broken Hill and regional Victoria. VAST is also available to viewers in the remote central eastern Australia (RCEA) licence area, and to viewers who are authorised to receive the current Aurora service as an out-of-area service.

The VAST services are provided by Southern Cross Seven Central and Imparja. The Imparja and the Southern Cross Seven Central services are currently provided to viewers in remote central and eastern Australia. The Imparja service provides Nine Network programming and the Southern Cross Seven Central service provides Seven Network programming. Ten's programming is provided as a direct network feed from a metropolitan area.

The Eastern Australia VAST commercial Standard Definition (SD) channels zone are provided in a Northern zone and Southern zone. Northern zone SD programming is the same in the Northern Territory and Queensland and Southern zone SD programming is the same in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania.

The same three High Definition (HD) channels are provided as single channels throughout the whole of the Eastern Australia VAST zone. These HD channels will be the same in all the Eastern states: New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

### **Access to the VAST services**

Go to mySwitch website (<http://myswitch.digitalready.gov.au>) to find out if you are eligible for VAST. You will need to enter your full address and check the Satellite Eligibility tab for details of your eligibility.

### **Who can access the VAST service?**

The new satellite service is designed to be available to viewers in remote licence areas of Australia and for those who currently rely on the Remote Area Broadcasting Service (RABS). This satellite service is also known as Aurora.

The secondary audience for VAST services is Australians who are unable to receive an adequate digital television signal of their local commercial broadcasters from existing terrestrial transmitters in their regional or metropolitan areas.

This includes areas where a retransmission (self-help) site is not upgraded to digital; viewers reliant on the site will be eligible to receive their television services from the VAST service if they are unable to receive adequate digital TV signals from another transmitter in their area.

It is difficult to estimate exactly how many viewers will need to receive the new satellite service, but it may potentially benefit up to 247,000 households across Australia. Many of these households already rely on satellite reception for their television. The new satellite service will provide a greatly increased number of channels compared to the current satellite service, RABS, and viewers will for the first time be able to access local news content.



### **How can I apply for the VAST service?**

To determine eligibility to access the VAST service and to make an application to receive the VAST services, viewers will need to go to mySwitch website (<http://myswitch.digitalready.gov.au/>).

mySwitch is a web-based tool which has been developed by the Digital Switchover Taskforce to provide the most up-to-date information about local terrestrial and satellite television services, the frequencies they are transmitted on, the expected coverage of the transmitter serving local areas and VAST service eligibility.

Viewers who wish to apply for the VAST service will be directed from mySwitch to a broadcaster managed application procedure, which they will have to complete. Viewers can choose to make an application to access all channels, or just those of the ABC and SBS.

Assessment of applications may require investigation by the broadcasters and can take up to 15 business days before a decision is reached. The specific circumstances of each application will be assessed and if the commercial broadcasters determine that the applicant does not have adequate reception of all terrestrial commercial digital television services, they will be issued with a reception certificate authorising access to the commercial free-to-air services of VAST. Access to ABC and SBS services will be automatically authorised, regardless of the outcome of an application for access to the commercial services.

Information and applications are also available for travellers (caravans) who can apply for a Temporary Reception Certificate.

### **What equipment do I need?**

To receive the VAST service, viewers will need a VAST set-top box and, if you don't already have one, a satellite dish. The retail cost for a high definition VAST set top box is likely to be about \$280 (including GST). Viewers who already receive their television services by way of the Aurora remote area broadcasting service will be able to connect a VAST set top box to their existing satellite dish.

Access to the VAST service will be managed by the use of a smart card, which will come with the set top box. Viewers will need to activate the smart card to receive commercial television services, but the smart card will be pre-activated to receive the national (ABC and SBS) services. The set top box will have to be registered to continue to access the national services.

### VAST service specifications

- Provided on Optus C1 — same as Aurora
- DVB-S2 and 8PSK
- MPEG4 and MPEG2
- 16:9
- Minimum 65cm dish



### What will happen if I have the RABS/Aurora satellite service from central and eastern Australia?

Viewers in remote central and eastern Australia and those viewers who currently receive commercial television services from the Aurora satellite service will be able to access the new VAST service now. In the majority of cases, viewers of the existing Aurora satellite services will be able to use their existing satellite dish. However some older dish installations may require modification. A VAST set top box and a smart card will be required to receive the new satellite service.

The Aurora service will continue until the digital switchover in the second half of 2013.

The VAST service will operate side by side with the Aurora service.

Unlike the existing Aurora remote satellite service, the VAST service will carry the full suite of free-to-air television channels.

Signal deficient areas in Australia	Date of access to the satellite*
Mildura/Sunraysia	Available now
Regional SA and Broken Hill — signal deficient areas	Available now
Regional Victoria — signal deficient areas	Available now — some towns may be eligible for the Satellite Subsidy Scheme*
All remote licence areas in central and eastern Australia (not Western Australia)	Available now – some towns may be eligible for the Satellite Subsidy Scheme*
Western Australia	Available from early 2011 (to be confirmed)
Eastern QLD signal deficient areas	Available within 1st half of 2011
Southern NSW — signal deficient areas	Available within 2nd half of 2011
Northern NSW — signal deficient areas	Available within 1st half of 2012
Tasmania — signal deficient areas	Available within 2nd half of 2012
Brisbane, Perth — signal deficient areas	Available from 1 January 2013 — six months before switchover date of 30 June 2013
Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Darwin — signal deficient areas	Available from 1 July 2013 — six months before switchover date of 31 December 2013

\* Refer to mySwitch website for switchover areas and for information about predicted digital TV coverage in your area.



 Available in SD on Channel 2 & 21	 Currently the HD simulcast of ABC 1, with some unique content. To be replaced with a 24 hour news channel in 2010. Available on Channel 20	 Available in SD with both time-shifted and unique content on Channel 22	 Dedicated kids channel available in SD on Channel 23
 Available in SD on Channel 3	 HD Simulcast of SBS ONE Available on Channel 30	 Offers time-shifted & unique content. Available in SD on Channel 32	
 Available in SD on Channel 7	 HD Simulcast of Channel 7. Available on Channel 70	 Available in SD on Channel 72	
 Available in SD on Channel 9	 HD Simulcast of Channel 9. Available on Channel 90	 Available in SD on Channel 99	
 Available in SD on Channel 10	 Available in HD on Channel 1	 The SD Simulcast of ONE HD. Available on Channel 12	

## MORE INFO AND FAQ's

The Australian Government is implementing a satellite service to provide viewers with access to digital. This new Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) service will provide viewers living in regional and remote areas of Australia access to the same number of free-to-air digital television channels available to people in the cities.

Most Australians receive their television services from the network of broadcaster-owned transmission towers. They will continue to do so after the switch to digital. However, for those who live outside the coverage of their local terrestrial television services, this new satellite television service will ensure that they can enjoy the benefits of digital television just as other Australians. Satellite is the most effective way of providing a service to all those viewers who live outside the coverage of the terrestrial network.

For the first time, all free-to-air digital television services, including the original three commercial and two national channels, and the new digital services such as ABC2, ABC3, SBS TWO, GO!, 7TWO and ONE HD, will be available to all Australians, no matter where they live.



The VAST service will provide regional viewers with access to the local news currently broadcast in their TV licence area through a dedicated local news channel. It will also provide viewers with access to the ABC's new 24-hour news high definition multi-channel, which will be launched later this year.

**Local news and content on the satellite service, and how to access it.**

Because the satellite service will cover the whole of Australia, special arrangements will be needed to ensure local news and information are provided to viewers. All regional commercial broadcasters will contribute the local news content from each market they operate in to the new satellite service.

The VAST service will provide viewers in regional and remote Australia with access to the local news services, currently broadcast by the commercial broadcasters in their relevant terrestrial licence areas.

The news content will be grouped into a dedicated local news service, which will be part of the satellite service. Satellite viewers will use their remote controls to select the news service on which their local news content is broadcast. News services available through the satellite service will not be shown at the same time as those shown terrestrially, but will be available as soon as possible after production of live-to-air bulletins are complete on terrestrial services. Details about the timing and presentation are still being determined by the commercial broadcasters.

The ABC and SBS news services will be provided by the ABC and SBS on the satellite, not as part of the news channel. ABC services will be state-based, and SBS's nightly national news bulletins will be broadcast at 6.30 pm and 9.30 pm. The new ABC 24-hour news channel will also be provided when it commences.

**Will the satellite service be available for the start of the digital switchover rollout?**

The Australian Government will invest \$375.4 million over 12 years to provide transmission of digital free-to-air television services from the new satellite platform—the VAST service. The Government is funding the full cost of building and operating the service, for the potential benefit of up to 247,000 households across Australia. The satellite service commenced for viewers in the Mildura/Sunraysia licence area in early June 2010 and will be made available to viewers in other licence areas as switchover progresses across Australia.

The Government is working closely with broadcasters to make sure that the new satellite service will be available to viewers well before their area switches over to digital-only television. The Government has reached a funding agreement with broadcasters to provide the new satellite service. Further information on access arrangements for viewers can be found below.

**Who will be eligible to access the satellite service? How many viewers will access the service?**

The new satellite service will be available to viewers who are unable to receive adequate digital television services from existing terrestrial transmitters. It will also be available to viewers in remote Australia, who currently rely on the Remote Area Broadcasting Service (RABS). This satellite service is also known as Aurora. The



Government is working closely with broadcasters to finalise the details of how access to the satellite service will be managed.

Households that currently rely on self-help retransmission facilities which are unable to receive digital terrestrial television services will be able to access the new satellite service, but only if the new transmission is not adequate, or the self-help facility is not being upgraded.

It is difficult to estimate exactly how many viewers will need to receive the new satellite service, but it may potentially benefit up to 247,000 households across Australia. Many of these households already rely on satellite reception for their television. The new satellite service will provide a greatly increased number of channels compared to the current limited satellite service, RABS. And, for the first time, viewers will be able to access local news content.

**How do I get access to the satellite service? How much will it cost and will the Government provide any financial assistance to viewers?**

In order to access the new satellite service, households will need to install direct-to-home satellite reception equipment, including a satellite dish and set top box with a smart card.

The cost of installation will vary depending on the location, the size of the satellite receiving dish, and characteristics of the receiving location. The set top box and the smart card used to control access should cost less than \$280, including GST. The cost of installing satellite reception equipment will vary depending on the hourly rate charged by the installer.

Set top boxes for the new satellite service are not yet available in the Australian market. Further information on the operation of the satellite service and the availability of set top boxes will be made available on this website. Before installing a satellite dish, households will need to contact their local council to check if a planning permit is required.

Households that currently receive TV signals from analog self-help retransmission towers that aren't being upgraded to digital by the broadcasters, will be eligible for a Satellite Subsidy to install direct-to-home satellite reception equipment. The Australian Government subsidy is in recognition of the investment made by local communities in analog infrastructure, which, if not for digital switchover, would have continued to provide television services to those communities.

Households located in these areas may also be eligible for the Household Assistance Scheme (HAS). This Scheme provides practical in-home assistance to households where at least one resident is receiving a maximum-rate Age Pension, Disability Support Pension, Carer payment, Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA), Service Pension, or the DVA income support supplement payment.

Households eligible for the HAS, who are reliant on the new satellite service, will receive the necessary set top box required to access the new VAST service. Those eligible for the HAS, who also own their own homes, will also receive the necessary satellite dish and external cabling.



You can find out more about the Household assistance Scheme below.

#### **What is a self-help re-transmission site?**

Self-help re-transmission facilities have been set up, generally by councils or local community organisations, in areas where broadcasters have not established transmitters or where the signal from the broadcasters' transmitter serving the area is not adequate. Self-help re-transmitters currently broadcast in analog only. Broadcasters are not required to establish transmitters in every part of the licence area they have been licensed to serve. Whether or not a broadcaster establishes a transmitter in any particular part of their licence area is a commercial decision for them to make.

Self-help re-transmission sites receive and retransmit signals from the main television broadcaster towers or satellites to viewers in areas that cannot get any or adequate coverage from the main broadcaster towers. Located across Australia, they were established to provide analog television signals in areas that weren't serviced by the broadcasters directly, and tend to cover small population centres in remote and regional areas.

#### **Which self-help retransmission sites are on the broadcasters' candidate list for conversion to digital?**

Under an agreement reached with all television broadcasters across Australia, broadcasters will upgrade a number of self-help re-transmission facilities to operate in digital. Ultimately, it is a commercial decision for broadcasters as to which sites they choose to convert to digital, subject to planning approval from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

Free TV Australia has provided the Government with a list of candidate sites for conversion. The Government has also written to the licensees of self-help re-transmission facilities indicating whether the broadcasters propose to upgrade their facility. However, conversion of a facility is a matter of negotiation between the broadcasters and the licensee of the facility.

In the Mildura/Sunraysia region, which was the first licence area to switch to digital-only television, the broadcasters selected the self-help re-transmission site at Underbool to be replaced with a new digital facility at nearby Walpeup.

#### **What will happen to the self-help sites that aren't converted to digital?**

If a re-transmission site is not upgraded to digital, viewers who rely on the site and are unable to receive an adequate signal from another transmitter in their area will be eligible to receive their television services from the VAST service.

Local communities that rely on a self-help transmission tower that's not planning on being converted to digital by broadcasters also have a further option other than VAST. They can elect to upgrade the self-help tower at their own expense. This is subject to planning approval from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

The Government is not contributing to the upgrade of self-help re-transmission facilities.



**What will happen to the current RABS/Aurora satellite service?**

The RABS or Aurora service will continue until switchover in 2013. The VAST service will operate alongside until then. It is expected that Aurora viewers will make the switch to digital by purchasing a VAST set top box. In most instances, a new satellite dish or cabling will not be required.