

# Changes proposed to television plans for Regional Victoria, Southern NSW, Griffith and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area

In recent proposed changes to the licence area plans for analog television for Regional Victoria, Griffith and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, new channels will be added and channels no longer needed will be deleted or operated by broadcasters. In addition, the conditions of some of the technical specifications for the existing national and commercial analog television services will be varied.

ACMA released the proposed changes in April 2006 and also released a draft variation to the digital channel plan for Central Victoria and Southern New South Wales, involving the allotment and assignment of channels for digital television repeater services at Alexandra, Alexandra Environs, Balranald, Bonnie Doon, Deniliquin, Eildon, Eildon Town, Hopetoun, Howqua, Jerilderie, Mansfield and Seymour.

It is proposed to change the technical operating conditions of both the digital and analog television services at Albury North to better serve residents to the north of the licence area.

Before finalising these plans, ACMA will consider important factors including the aim of spectrum efficiency, the need to minimise any changes that viewers will have to make to

their existing reception equipment to receive digital broadcasts and the desirability of broadcasters being able to use their existing transmission facilities to broadcast digital television services.

The interests of viewers are always given a high priority. In some instances, the proposed changes to the analog services may cause minor disruption that will mean viewers need to upgrade their antenna to receive the changed analog channels.

The proposed digital channels will also require some changes to analog services and will have some impact on the use of VCRs and set-top boxes. In most cases, retuning of television sets and VCRs will be all that will be required.

Before any changes take place, public information education campaigns and telephone hotlines will be available to advise about retuning devices and alternative connection methods.

ACMA has responsibility for planning and allocating the broadcasting services bands, which are those parts of the radiofrequency spectrum used for free-to-air broadcasting services in Australia—AM and FM radio, and VHF and UHF television spectrum.

Planning is accompanied by wide public consultation and at the end of the planning process for each area, ACMA prepares a licence area plan as a comprehensive blueprint for developing all free-to-air broadcasting in that area.

Much of the detailed planning of transmission facilities will be carried out by successful licence applicants themselves, within guidelines set down by ACMA. The technical characteristics that licence area plans prescribe, together with technical planning guidelines, provide a non-negotiable 'envelope' of technical parameters and procedures within which licensees must do their detailed planning.

A licence area plan is a legal instrument setting out the number and characteristics, including the technical specifications, of all AM and FM radio, and VHF and UHF television services that are available within the licence areas covered by the licence area plan. Licence area plans specify the category (commercial, community, national and narrowcasting) of the new services to be made available and their licence area where applicable.

While the technical

specifications set out in licence area plans are not negotiable once finalised, there is flexibility in the siting of transmitters.

Digital channel plans determine which television channels are to be allotted to each area, the assignment of channels to each broadcaster and the technical characteristics of those channels. The objective in preparing the digital channel plans is to enable a broadcaster to plan its digital transmission coverage to match its analog coverage. ACMA has also identified as yet unassigned channels that may be used for other purposes, including datacasting.

Comments on the draft variation close on 19 May 2006.

The discussion paper on the proposed variation to the licence area plans for analog television for Regional Victoria, Griffith and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and the explanatory paper and draft variation to the digital channel plans for Central Victoria and Southern NSW are on the ACMA website at [www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au) (go to Latest > For Comment > Broadcasting > Draft licence area plans) or contact ACMA on telephone (free call) 1800 226 667.