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Australia is moving from analogue to digital television over the next three to five years. Already people are buying digital TV sets or equipment to secure digital TV. This changeover, whilst offering benefits for consumers, may also give rise to problems in some cases. This brochure is already

partially operational and will eventually replace traditional analogue TV in Australia.

CHOICE provides a guide to digital TV at [www.choice.com.au](http://www.choice.com.au)<sup>1</sup> which includes advice on formats, coverage, channels, as well as independent reviews of products.

Industry organisation, Digital Broadcasting Australia, also has a guide for purchasers at [www.dba.org.au](http://www.dba.org.au)<sup>2</sup> and also has a list of equipment and features for easy comparison.

## Why?

Digital TV can provide a clearer picture, improved sound, widescreen format, and additional digital services such as interactive services.

## Wh

## How do consumers get Digital TV?

Digital TV programming can be accessed in one of two ways:

- 1 Through a specifically designed TV set or display screen, or
- 2 Through a standard TV set coupled with a set-top box.

The set-top box can be bought separately, or may come with a pay-TV service such as Foxtel Digital.

Prices for set-top boxes range from \$70 to \$1,200 depending upon functionality. Prices of integrated digital TVs start at around \$900.

The technical details of the switchover are covered by Commonwealth broadcasting industry-specific regulation. However, this legislation does not cover consumer protection matters.

General consumer protection legislation in the Trade Practices Act and State Fair Trading Acts apply to the sale of digital TV equipment to consumers.

## Blackspots

There will likely be communities and areas of Australia, or 'blackspots', that will not have adequate digital reception. This is an issue that is being handled by the Australian Communications and Media Authority. However, consumers will have some expectation that the equipment they are sold can be used. Consumers' implied statutory warranties covering purchases may be breached if consumers buy equipment that cannot be used due to blackspots. There are some similarities regarding this issue to mobile phone network coverage and consumers being sold a service they cannot access.

## Picture quality

The quality of digital TV reception, like analogue TV reception, still depends on the quality of the consumer's antenna and associated cabling. Poor reception with digital transmissions can result in no picture being received at all, compared to a "noisy" picture with analogue TV. Consumers should consult a qualified installer. There is also an industry guide for troubleshooting digital TV reception issues at [www.dba.org.au/newsletter/troubleshooting.asp](http://www.dba.org.au/newsletter/troubleshooting.asp). This guide also has details of qualified installers in Victoria.

The Digital TV Switchover is not solely an Australian phenomenon, with similar transitions taking place in Europe, Asia and North America.

In the United States, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is overseeing the transition to digital TV by February 2009. The FCC has a consumer-oriented site at [www.dtv.gov](http://www.dtv.gov) and a regulator

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