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About Free-to-View Digital TV

What is Free-to-View digital television?

In the not too distant future, all terrestrial television broadcasts will be digital. Currently, Australia is in the transition period from analogue to digital with over 75 per cent of Australian households already connected. In fact, the metropolitan television networks have been simulcasting their content in analogue and digital since 2001 and regional networks across much of the country since 2004.

Digital television overcomes one of the basic problems with analogue television reception. Digital and analogue television signals both weaken as they travel away from the television transmitter. An analogue television picture slowly degrades with a weaker signal resulting in a fuzzy picture or ghosting. However, digital television will continue to show the same high quality picture regardless of distance up until the point where the signal can no longer be received.

With digital television, all of the great programming you now enjoy – sport, movies, news, drama and comedy – is available to you but in much better picture quality, with improved sound and superior reception to your existing analogue television service.

What will happen to my existing analogue television?

Existing analogue television receivers are able to display the digital signals simply by connecting a digital set top box to your current TV set.

These televisions will continue to receive the existing analogue TV channels provided by broadcasters until analogue switchoff occurs between 2010 and 2013. For details on the timetable for switchover in your region, visit www.digitalready.gov.au.

What are the benefits of digital free-to-view television?

Better picture

Television programs broadcast in digital provide a picture quality equal to that provided by DVD. Like DVD, digital television also allows broadcasters to transmit programs in a widescreen (16:9) picture format, giving a larger and more natural viewing area. This format of digital television broadcast is called 'Standard Definition' or SD.

Digital television also allows broadcasters to transmit programs in a higher quality picture format known as 'High Definition' or HD.

Better sound

Digital television delivers viewers CD-quality stereo sound. Broadcasters may also choose to deliver Dolby Digital™ surround sound with programs such as movies, concerts or drama.

The sound quality of Dolby Digital™ when teamed with a High Definition television program offers viewers the best possible television viewing experience available today.

More content

Digital television uses less broadcast spectrum thereby creating the possibility of more channels - subject to government regulations.

Freeview is the digital free-to-air platform which currently offers up to 15 channels as well as an Electronic Program Guide (EPG). For more information about Freeview, visit www.freeview.com.au

How do I get free-to-view digital television?

Set-top-box

You can get digital television by purchasing a digital television set-top-box (STB) which connects in between your antenna and existing television.

A digital television set-top-box is simply a device that decodes digital television signals into picture and sound compatible with your existing analogue television or VCR.

Integrated television

Should you be looking at replacing or upgrading your existing analogue television, you also have the option of purchasing an integrated digital television that connects directly to your television antenna.

An integrated digital television is a television receiver with widescreen display with an in-built digital tuner that allows the television to receive digital television broadcasts without any additional equipment. You connect the television to your antenna cable and you are ready to receive digital television programming. An integrated digital television, like a set top box, can also provide additional features.

Personal Video Recorders

A set-top-box with a digital video recorder can also offer additional features such as a record function, the ability to pause and rewind live TV, an electronic program guide (EPG), and the ability to receive High Definition broadcasts and Dolby

Digital™ surround sound, dependent upon the particular manufacturer's specification. Set-top-boxes with a recording function are known as PVRs (Personal Video Recorders) or DVRs (Digital Video Recorders).

Can I use my existing antenna to receive digital TV?

Yes. You should be able to receive digital television through your existing antenna provided both it, and your antenna cabling, are in good condition.

What do I need to receive and watch High Definition?

To receive the best possible viewing experience delivered by High Definition television programming, you will need either:

- a High Definition set-top-box coupled with a High Definition display device such as a television, monitor or projector, or;
- a High Definition integrated digital television.

You can receive High Definition television programming by connecting a High Definition set top box to your existing television; however, this will only deliver a picture quality equal to the display capability of your existing television.

What does digital television cost?

Once you purchase either a digital television set top box or integrated digital television there is nothing more to pay. Free-to-View Digital Television is exactly that, free-to-view with no contracts and no ongoing monthly fees.

A range of digital television set top boxes and integrated digital televisions is now available from electrical retailers around Australia - starting from around \$50.