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Australia set to launch new satellite to plug digital blackspots

Satellite operator lines up to provide services, Govt tender possible

Darren Pauli (Computerworld) | 07 January, 2010 17:02 | Comments (9)

Tags | digital tv | satellite | satellite communication | New Sat



Australia could see a new satellite launched to help deliver digital TV to remote blackspots

Satellite provider NewSat has welcomed a \$160 million federal cash injection to supply remote areas with digital television and highlighted its plans to launch Australia's first locally-owned satellite as a possible solution.

The project, dubbed Jabiru, has been in development since 2007 and is spearheading the company's move to cash-in on the government initiative.

Company CEO Adrian Ballintine said the satellite will be able to serve the 247,000 homes identified by the government as located in digital TV blackspots.

"The satellite designed to provide 'Ka band' coverage across Australia will have a payload that accommodates the distribution of live broadcasting to the [blackspots]," Ballintine said in a written statement.

Under the plans, blackspot areas will be served via improvements to existing terrestrial broadcasting facilities, installation of repeaters to extend signals, and the addition of satellite services.

Broadcasters will spend some \$18 million to upgrade 100 analogue transmission relay towers to digital.

Consumers receiving digital television signals will need to shell out about \$300 for new satellite dishes, alongside a \$300 government subsidy.

Layer 10 analyst Paul Brooks said the provision of satellite services is an issue of footprint, rather than capacity to supply digital television, and suggested the government may consider launching a new satellite to serve blackspot areas.

Telsyte analyst Greg Tsang said it may be more economically feasible to launch a dedicated satellite to supply broadband and digital TV, than to install terrestrial repeaters to geographically-dispersed areas.

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"[The government] might find it cheaper to launch a satellite to supply a footprint to these areas rather than installing repeaters," Tsang said.

Tsang said it is "not unreasonable" to expect a government tender for the supply of new satellite services, adding IPStar, AusSatCom, ITC Global Orion.

A spokesman for the communications department had not responded at the time of writing.

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Comments

1 Graeme
Thu 07/01/2010 - 20:10

About time!We can watch on our mobiles,but our TV reception is as good as it was in the 60,s.

2 Joseph
Fri 08/01/2010 - 08:02

In St. Clair our reception is variable even with a brand new digital aerial and booster. If the government is willing to spend \$43 Billion on Broadband why not spend some of that money on 10 satellites at a cost of \$1.6 Billion. This will serve for everything you can imagine and can service overseas countries which will increase Australian sales due to advertisements etc. Imagine what you could teach foreign students on the periferal of this continent. Europe is full of these satellites and their technologies are far superior to Australia. So gear up and ride the pony Mr Rudd, maybe one day we can see the tail of the European horse.

3 Winston Smith
Fri 08/01/2010 - 12:07

The big, friendly, daddy - government is spending all of this money and planning as far back as '97 to give complete blanket coverage of the continent for the changeover to digital just so we can all have a better picture....nope, this all equals control. The digital signal is far better suited for the purpose of carrying other subliminal messages without alerting the viewer as is the case with analogue which gives the game away. Laugh if you want to.

4 Laughing man
Fri 08/01/2010 - 12:45

Ha!

5 Another laughing man
Fri 08/01/2010 - 13:22

Dear Winston Smith... please send me your address so I can post you a roll of AL Foil to wrap around you head.....That will stop the signals messing with your brain.

6 Andy
Fri 08/01/2010 - 14:20

Actually it wouldnt be Australia first "locally owned" satellite. Apart from Australia owning its own earlier communication satellites (long gone now) Australia was the fourth country IN THE WORLD to have its own satellite in orbit, wayback in the early 1960's. Whatever happened to that lead? Anyway I don't understand why the taxpayer has to fork out so much just for the free to air channels to be broadcast into remote areas. These are private companies, why is it up to us to finance their

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