



MEDIA RELEASE – James Harker-Mortlock – Independent for Hume – Wednesday 27th March 2013

UPDATE ON FREE TO AIR DIGITAL TELEVISION RECEPTION IN CROOKWELL

James Harker-Mortlock, independent candidate for the seat of Hume, commented today upon the need for improved access for residents to free to air commercial digital television reception in Crookwell :

“Over the last few months I have been investigating the issue of the availability of free to air digital television reception in Crookwell. As with many aspects of the communications and broadcasting arrangements pertaining in Australia today this apparently simple problem inevitably has somewhat complex solutions.

Following discussions with both the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (DBCDE) and the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), I have ascertained the following :

1. It is not necessary for Crookwell to have its zoning changed from being a remote area – ACMA advises that this would take some time and would make no difference to Crookwell’s current situation ;
2. The ABC transmits currently its full range of free to air digital television services from its tower at Wade’s Hill, Crookwell ;
3. In order for Crookwell residents to be provided with free to air commercial digital television services, then an application under s. 212 and 212A of the Broadcasting Services Act can be made for re-transmission of services from a nearby location, such as Goulburn or Canberra. I understand from ACMA that Upper Lachlan Council has made such an application;
4. The issue then arises of the need for a transmission point in the Crookwell area. This could perhaps be achieved by using the ABC tower (I am awaiting feedback from the ABC on this possibility). Alternatively, the community, presumably via the Council, would need to invest in a transmission tower.
5. For those residents who were still unable to access the free to air digital transmission, the only option would be to access the Federal Government’s Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) system - designed to provide access to digital television via a satellite signal. However, without a subsidy, the minimum cost of installing a VAST receiver is estimated to

be about \$650, with a separate receiver being required for every television or recorder in a house.

With digital television being rolled out across Australia, making digital television readily available to the residents of Crookwell, and other residents of Hume, at a reasonable price is a matter of priority.

As the federal government is compelling viewers to take-up digital television, it has a responsibility to subsidise the equipment needed to receive the signal. It should be noted that commercial broadcasters are under no obligation to do anything at all to enable residents to receive their signal.

If elected to represent Hume, and in the event that the ABC tower is not able to be used for re-transmission of signal, I will make representations to the relevant Minister to seek funding for the costs of building the re-transmission tower including re-imburement of any costs incurred by Upper Lachlan Council in regard to building the tower. Second, I will seek to broaden the criteria for those eligible to receive a subsidy for the supply and installation of the equipment necessary to receive a digital television signal via the VAST system.”

For more information, please contact :

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