



Sid Sidebottom MP ... for a fair go in Braddon

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Breakthrough for digital television blackspots

The Rudd Government's plan to provide digital television to regional areas and blackspots will mean major benefits for the North-West and West Coast says the Federal Member for Braddon Sid Sidebottom.

Mr Sidebottom said this was fantastic news for people in regional areas like this, many of whom had received limited television services for many years.

"For the first time all free-to-air digital television services, including the original three commercial and two national channels, as well as new digital services such as ABC 2, ABC 3, SBS TWO, GO!, 7TWO and ONE HD, will be available to all Australians, no matter where they live," Mr Sidebottom said.

Under an agreement reached with all television broadcasters across Australia, broadcasters will upgrade more than 100 existing regional analog 'self-help' transmission facilities to operate in digital.

"This is great news for communities like Sisters Beach, Forth, Melrose and Gunns Plains, who are among those on self-help programs," he said.

The Government will fully fund and build a new digital satellite broadcasting service for regional viewers who are unable to receive digital television from other facilities.

Mr Sidebottom said this would mean a major improvement for many areas, particularly places like the West Coast which had suffered for many years with second-rate television.

"This is the sort of service I have been talking to Minister Stephen Conroy about for some time, when I regularly update him on the problems of the region with television broadcasts," he said.

"Our commercial broadcasters have been working hard to upgrade services to many areas, but this will help give certainty to those who were at risk of missing out."

The final cost of the project is yet to be determined through negotiations with broadcasters and satellite service providers, but the Rudd Government is committing \$40 million a year over the four-year forward estimates to build and operate the service.

Viewers who currently rely on 'self-help' sites that will be upgraded by broadcasters under this agreement will simply need to install a high definition set-top-box to access a full suite of digital television channels.

Regional households unable to receive digital television from the upgraded 'self-help' sites will be served by the new satellite, which will also carry the full suite of digital channels. In order to access the new satellite service, these households will need to install a satellite dish.

Mr Sidebottom said the Government would provide a satellite conversion subsidy to eligible households currently served by 'self-help' transmission sites which are not upgraded to digital by the broadcasters.

He said the timing of the delivery of the digital services is yet to be finalised, but would happen before the final switch-off of analog services in 2013.

For more information - Luke Sayer on 0458 311 355