
CALL FOR ACTION 7

Rectifying the failure of Direct-To-Home digital TV services to remote communities

***Issue:* The digital switchover of television and radio services to direct-to-home services has resulted in large numbers of households across remote Indigenous communities losing access to TV.**

The digital switchover of 2013 in remote communities was effected through direct-to-home satellite provision delivered on the VAST satellite platform. Households were provided with a roof top satellite dish, and a set-top box/satellite receiver. All receivers were registered on the VAST system, with receivers activated by a VAST authorisation card inserted in the receiver.

Remote community members are experiencing a significant array of problems with the installed domestic receivers. The receivers are very susceptible to:

- Prolonged loss of signal under the weather conditions of remote Australia.
- Deactivation of the VAST authorisation card under random circumstances.
- Accidental damage of the receiver or roof-top satellite dish.
- Loss of the receiver.

The implementation of direct-to-home satellite TV has replaced a relatively robust system of terrestrial retransmission, with individualised systems for reception that are highly vulnerable to signal loss and damage. Remote Indigenous community members have limited opportunities to source replacement equipment, access help-lines, or reactivate the VAST receiver authorisation cards.

Remote Indigenous community members are being shut off from local, state and national television programming, including news and current affairs.

There is an urgent need to identify the scale of the problem and develop appropriate systems that provide a more robust TV solution for VAST eligible communities.

IRCA calls for:

The urgent funding of a regionally coordinated repair and maintenance program for VAST DTH with preferred service provision through locally based remote Indigenous enterprises.