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Are your rental properties ready for digital television?

During 2013, analogue free-to-air TV signals will be switched off across Australia and replaced with digital-only signals.

On **16 April 2013**, more than 722,000 Perth households had their analogue TV signals turned off and were switched to digital-only TV. On **25 June 2013**, most regional and remote areas in Western Australia will follow. The digital switchover timetable is available from the digital ready [website](#).

Property managers need to ensure the owners they act for are aware of their obligations arising from the digital transition. Section 42 of the Residential Tenancies Act states that an owner is responsible for providing and maintaining the premises (including any furnishings and fittings) in a reasonable state of repair having regard to its age, character and prospective life

It is the Department's view the owner should ensure the rental property's antenna system continues to provide the tenant with television services once the analogue signal is switched off. For example, if a rental property had an external TV antenna when the tenant moved in, then the owner is responsible for ensuring it is in working condition.

In most cases, as long as the antenna is capable of receiving digital services the owner should not have to take any other action. However, if the antenna is not capable of receiving digital services, the owner would generally be responsible for arranging any necessary upgrade or replacement to ensure good digital TV reception.

A summary of the Department's view is as follows:

- If a tenant has their own analogue TV and the property's antenna receives the digital signal, the tenant is responsible for purchasing and installing a set-top box or buying a new digital TV (a set-top box enables analogue TVs to receive the digital signal).

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- If a tenant has their own analogue TV but the property's antenna will not pick up the digital signal, the property owner is responsible for assessing the antenna set-up (an antenna 'trouble-shooting' guide is available from the digital ready [website](#)), which may lead to purchasing and installing a new antenna.
- If a furnished rental property includes an analogue TV, the owner is responsible for ensuring it works by installing a set-top box. Alternatively the owner could replace the old analogue TV with a new digital TV. If however the antenna will not pick up a digital signal, the owner will have to arrange for an antennae upgrade or replacement.
- In strata buildings, the strata company (all owners), are responsible for maintaining and repairing common property, including a shared antenna system if it exists. In order to meet their responsibilities, owners and/or property managers will need to consult with the strata or building manager.

If a rental property's antenna needs upgrading, property managers should use accredited installers. A list of endorsed antenna installers can be found on the digital ready [website](#) or by calling the Digital Ready Information Line on **1800 20 10 13**.

Downloadable info sheets for property managers and owners can be found [here](#).

Property owners may be able to claim a tax deduction for part or all of the cost of the purchase or upgrade of rental property antennas. To find out whether they are eligible, owners will need to contact the Australian Tax Office.