

SKYBRIDGE - INSTALLING CONFIDENCE

Case Study - DBCDE Digital Switchover Household Assistance Scheme and Satellite Subsidy



Skybridge has been contracted by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (DBCDE) since the commencement of the program in 2010 to roll out the Digital Switchover Household Assistance Scheme (HAS) and Digital Switchover Satellite Subsidy Scheme (SSS). Skybridge won contracts across:

- Regional and Remote South Australia
- Regional and Remote Queensland (incorporating Torres Strait Islands)
- Regional and Remote New South Wales
- Regional and Remote Western Australia
- Regional and Remote Northern Territory, and
- Regional and Remote Victoria, and
- Metropolitan Melbourne

During this time, we have serviced over 150,000 customers, representing at least two-thirds of the volumes delivered by all contractors appointed by the Government.

- **The Digital Switchover Household Assistance Scheme (HAS)** helps full-rate pensioners to make the switch to digital television. In this fully government-subsidised program, Skybridge is contracted to provide the set-top box, antenna, ancillary equipment, and all installation and

maintenance including customer appointment scheduling and After-Care. The HAS program represents by far the largest volumes of installations under both Digital Switchover programs - approximately 80% - and provides evidence of Skybridge's ability to manage end-to-end customer installations at a very high level of quality on a large scale.

- **Digital Switchover Satellite Subsidy Scheme (SSS)** helps customers in rural and remote locations to access digital television services via satellite. Unlike HAS, this is not a fully-subsidised service, and the customer contributes a portion of the cost taking into account the size of the equipment used and the remoteness of the location. Skybridge is contracted to provide all hardware, including the satellite dishes and mounts, and all installation and maintenance required for the Scheme including customer scheduling and After-Care. The SSS program represents a very similar service scenario to the NBN Co satellite requirement, although it is less technically complex. Skybridge has completed 30,000 plus satellite digital television installations for the DBCDE.

Skybridge's delivery performance for DBCDE Digital Switchover programs has been summarised in the table hereunder:

Program		Volume Delivered to	Switchover Complete
Regional and Remote South Australia	Aug-10	6219	Y
Regional and Remote Queensland (Incorporating Torres Strait Islands)	May-11	23462	Y
Regional and Remote New South Wales	Nov-10	52341	Y
Regional and Remote Western Australia	Oct-12	14847	Y
Regional and Remote Northern Territory	Nov-12	1706	N
Regional and Remote Victoria	Nov-12	12850	Y
Metropolitan Melbourne	Jun-13	18200	N

Figure 1
Installation Volumes (service assurance not included)

The Work Health and Safety (WHS) requirements under the Digital Switchover programs are stringent. The investment made by Skybridge in WHS management can be transferred to other programs, thus reducing the risk and need for further investment in time or cost.

Skybridge's significant investment in WHS systems has exceeded the requirements of the Federal Government. These standards validate our ability to lead and manage the requirements of clients. Some example of the controls in place are:

- Skyportal requires a technician to complete a Site Safety Analysis (start-up checklist) prior to each installation. This data is submitted with each completed job and is critical to ensure they follow onsite safety procedures
- Certain outcomes (potential ACM management) managed within Skyportal require a technician to obtain a Permit to Work authorisation to continue through the installation. This process was implemented to give clients comfort technicians are controlled whilst working with asbestos.
- The Permit to Work is issued by qualified staff following discussions with the on-site technician. This lock-step technology has been successful in managing the risks associated with these types of installations.

The Digital Switchover programs provide further evidence of Skybridge's ability to flex up quickly to meet spikes in order volumes.

The Digital Switchover rollout is reliant on customers opting into the program. Reminder letters are issued to customers in a staged process producing spikes in opt-in volumes over the course of the program.

Since June 2013 Skybridge increased technician numbers and completed 17,000 installations in the first 8 weeks of the Melbourne metropolitan program. Approximately 60-70,000 installations are forecast for completion by the switchover date of 10 December 2013.

Skybridge is experienced in managing the fluctuations in opt-in volumes. In the digital programs large volumes may be received at the commencement of a program, after the client issues reminder letters to customers in 3 staged phases, and historically 4 weeks prior to the switchover date. The accumulated program knowledge provides Skybridge with the skills to tactically manage the correct number of technicians are located in the regions to meet these opt-in patterns.

Another example to show our ability to meet hard deadlines - on 24 June 2013 regional Western Australia switched to digital only signals. Skybridge had serviced 100% of these customers before the switchover date providing a seamless access to digital television services.

Skybridge has recruited and trained over 600 technicians for the Digital Programs across Australia (with 300 currently active). These technicians vary on current status; some are working for Skybridge on other projects, and others who have been kept on a register ready to be re-engaged for the next program in their area.

Further to this, due to the close relationship Skybridge maintains with technicians, they can be engaged on short notice (training requirements dependant). Skybridge believes technicians are the lifeblood of our business and as such they are treated in high regard, allowing Skybridge to scale to meet the needs of our clients.

The Household Assistance Scheme contract has enabled technicians to obtain experience in understanding television line of sight issues; roofing and housing structures; and safe access to roof work.

Successful digital television and wireless broadband technology installations both require line of sight back to the base station (or TV transmitter). Technicians need to know how to assess and manage intervening terrain, and to take specific readings to confirm line of sight.

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Technicians working on digital television installations have increased their knowledge of working in houses and roofs and become proficient in managing cable runs in customer premises. Our technicians are required to follow safe work procedures for entering roof cavities and external roof areas similar to wireless installations.

The Digital Switchover programs have required Skybridge to complete installations offshore and in very remote locations such as Thursday Island, Badu Island, Tiwi and Arnhem Land.

Approximately 15,000 installations have been completed in regional and very remote areas of Western Australia, including 71 regional indigenous communities. A further 7,500 installations are currently being installed in regional indigenous communities in Northern Territory and adjacent islands.

Lessons learned to apply to future rollouts:

i. Specialised approach to Remote Communities and Islands

It takes a completely different approach and project plan to complete installations in these types of areas than it does in standard regional areas. The attributes of each technician being sent to these areas is important to minimise issues once onsite.

ii. Automated job Routing vs. Manual Job Routing

Skybridge utilise both automated job routing and manual job routing and understand the benefits for different program scenarios. We understand the weakness and strengths of both options and the key is to know when each type should be used.

iii. Technician Attrition

No matter how well a company treats its technicians, there will always be technicians who do not work out. Understanding attrition rates and knowing how long to continue training for after the project “seems” like it is running smoothly is critical to the project’s success.

iv. Technician Selection

A selection criteria and robust selection process prior to commencing training is the best way of ensuring the right technicians are being trained and subsequently utilised.

v. Understanding the Client Needs

The client’s needs can change constantly throughout the life of a project. For example, the needs could change based on the region. In Western Australia there was a high emphasise on utilising local indigenous helpers wherever possible to ensure that the locals were given a chance to up skill. Working together with the client to understand the specific needs at the time is another great learning developed over the past 4 years of the digital program.

The skills and learnings acquired through working with the Federal Government over the past 4 years on this project are an asset to the program and our commitment to excellence and high customer service is reflected through our continued support from the Federal Government to deliver these programs as their preferred partners.

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