



AGENDA

Special Meeting

6 February 2023

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING

To: Cr Leslie Hotz (Mayor)
Cr Robert Radel (Deputy Mayor/Division 6)
Cr Melinda Jones (Division 1)
Cr Kingsley Mesner (Division 2)
Cr Susan Payne (Division 3)
Cr Dael Giddins (Division 4)
Cr Michael Dingle (Division 5)

Please be advised that the Special Meeting of the North Burnett Regional Council will be held at the Gayndah Boardroom on Monday, 6 February 2023 commencing at 3.00PM.

An agenda is attached for your information.



Margot Stork
Chief Executive Officer

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- 1 **WELCOME/HOUSEKEEPING**
- 2 **ATTENDEES**
- 3 **APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE**
- 4 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**
- 5 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

6 OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

6.1 DIGITAL TV RETRANSMISSION

Doc Id: 1135383

Author: Margot Stork, Chief Executive Officer

Authoriser: Margot Stork, Chief Executive Officer

Attachments: 1. Digital TV Retransmission Report tabled at the General Meeting held on 28 April 2021 [1033847]
2. Copy of Letter and FAQs to Residents [1043209]

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Notice of Motion received by Mayor Leslie Hotz on behalf of Cr Michael Dingle to Amend Resolution 2021/42 resolved at Councils Ordinary General Meeting held on 28 April 2021, Item 7.1 Digital TV Retransmission.

OFFICER COMMENTS/CONCLUSION

At the Ordinary General Meeting of Council held on Wednesday 28 April 2021, Council resolved the following:

Resolution 2021/42

That Council resolves to decommission all digital television retransmission equipment at the Eidsvold, Moonford and Bukali towers with a view to effecting shutdowns by the following dates:

- Moonford – 28 January 2022
- Bukali – 30 June 2022
- Eidsvold – 27 January 2023

As per Resolution 2021/42, Council staggered the shutdown dates and provided between 9 and 21 months for residents to transition away from terrestrial free-to-air TV transmitted from the 3 Council-owned towers.

The following actions were triggered in the lead up to the shutdowns:

Date	Action
28 April 2021	Shutdown plan endorsed by Council resolution
20 May 2021	Letters issued to ratepayers with property in the affected areas
Week of 24 May 2021	Social media posts and public notices issued
Late July 2021	Targeted campaign for Moonford area - six months to go
Late November 2021	Targeted campaign for Moonford area - two months to go
28 January 2022	Moonford services decommissioned
Late January 2022	Targeted campaign for Bukali/Bancroft area - six months to go
Late April 2022	Targeted campaign for Bukali/Bancroft area - two months to go
30 June 2022	Bukali/Bancroft services decommissioned
Late July 2022	Targeted campaign for Eidsvold area - six months to go
Late November 2022	Targeted campaign for Eidsvold area - two months to go
27 January 2023	Eidsvold services were to be decommissioned

To date, all bar the Eidsvold services have been successfully decommissioned. Action to decommission the Eidsvold services was ceased as the Chief Executive Officer was advised by the Mayor on 26 January 2023 that a Special Meeting request to consider the outstanding action was imminent.

Letters were issued to ratepayers with property in the estimated coverage areas of all 3 towers. Attached is a copy of the initial letter sent to residents for your information. It was not possible for Council to get pinpoint accuracy with our coverage maps to identify residents receiving coverage. The

aim of our public notices and social media campaign was to inform all residents including those that may receive coverage but were not captured in our coverage map and therefore did not receive a letter, or vice versa.

The Federal Government launched the “VAST” service in 2010 which significantly improved Satellite TV services for regions that could not receive a terrestrial signal. As part of the communication process around the decommissioning, Council recommended that affected residents and businesses contact their local antenna technician for more information on accessing the VAST service. Estimated costs are listed below:

- Installation costs (estimated at \$800 for a standard install) are borne by the resident, and additional set top boxes are needed for each TV in the residence.
- The VAST service itself is free (no monthly fee).

In the attached report, it was noted that Council would not be providing any form of funding or administrative assistance for the transition.

The report also highlights that these services are not considered part of Councils core business.

Why did Council install towers?

- Monto towers were installed before “good” satellite TV was available to give households a decent TV service (2005).
- The Eidsvold tower installation was a decision of Council during the analog to digital conversion (2011).
- Towers were installed as a public service to residents so they could receive local programs, ads, etc.
- Federal Government funding paid for a significant portion of the Monto towers and the installation of the Eidsvold tower.

Satellite Subsidy Scheme

- During the switch from analog to digital TV, the Federal Government ran the Satellite Subsidy Scheme (SSS) and Household Assistance Scheme (HAS) to assist residents to get access to digital satellite TV where no terrestrial signal could be received.
- Depending on how quick residents signed up to the scheme, households were eligible for a flat-rate installation cost of approx. \$200-\$250 under the SSS, or completely free under the HAS (depending on personal circumstances).
- These schemes finished in January 2014. There is no government funding for satellite TV installations now.

Options presented to Council

Information workshops were held with Councillors on 10 February 2021 and 21 April 2021 to provide background and information on the challenges being experienced with the retransmission services and the possible solutions, costs, and timeframes.

OFFICERS RECOMMENDATION

That Council resolves to amend the resolution 2021/42 of 28 April 2021, item 7.1, bullet point 3 – to read as follows:

1. To decommission all digital television retransmission equipment at the Eidsvold tower with a view to effecting shutdown on the following date - 30 June 2023.
2. Should retransmission equipment fail at any time prior to 30 June 2023 that renders the retransmission inoperable, then retransmission shutdown will be from the date of the failure.

7.1 DIGITAL TV RETRANSMISSION**Doc Id:** 1033847**Author:** Scott Bambrick, IT Coordinator**Authoriser:** Susie Glasson, General Manager Corporate and Community**Attachments:** Nil**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

NBRC operates three digital television retransmission towers in the Eidsvold, Moonford and Bukali areas. Equipment at these towers is regularly failing due to exceeding their expected lifespan and a decision needs to be made on the future of Council's involvement in TV broadcasting in those areas.

CORPORATE PLAN

OUR VISION: By 2030, the North Burnett will be a region of choice for people to live, work and play:

OUR ROLE:

A Provider

OUR PRIORITY AREAS:

5. Our efficient and effective council

RECOMMENDATION

That Council resolves to decommission all digital television retransmission equipment at the Eidsvold, Moonford and Bukali towers with a view to effecting shutdowns by the following dates:

- Moonford – 28 January 2022
- Bukali – 30 June 2022
- Eidsvold – 27 January 2023

REPORT**Background**

Monto Shire Council began offering analog television retransmission services from its Moonford and Bukali towers in February 2006. North Burnett Regional Council installed similar services at Reservoir Hill in Eidsvold in 2011.

All transmitters were converted to support digital television in 2011 and nine out of a total of fourteen of these transmitters are still in use today.

Issues

- Television retransmission services are not referenced in Council's Corporate Plan and therefore may not be considered within the scope of Council's "core business".
- Significant costs are incurred by all ratepayers to provide these services to a small portion of the population.
- Older transmitters may be interfering with co-located or nearby transmission equipment.
- With an expected lifespan of around five to eight years, the older transmitters are significantly beyond their end-of-life.
- Viewer complaints of poor-quality signal, pixelation, audio popping, less than expected coverage and interference can be traced directly back to the older transmitters.
- The older transmitters have been converted from analog, rather than being digital native, resulting in an extra layer of signal attenuation.

General Meeting Agenda

28 April 2021

- A lack of telemetry and remote access means that on-site visits are regularly required to restore failed services.
- Replacement parts are not available for the older equipment, so they are no longer repairable.
- Left alone, the current retransmission equipment at these towers will eventually fail at short notice and require an unplanned replacement.

Coverage

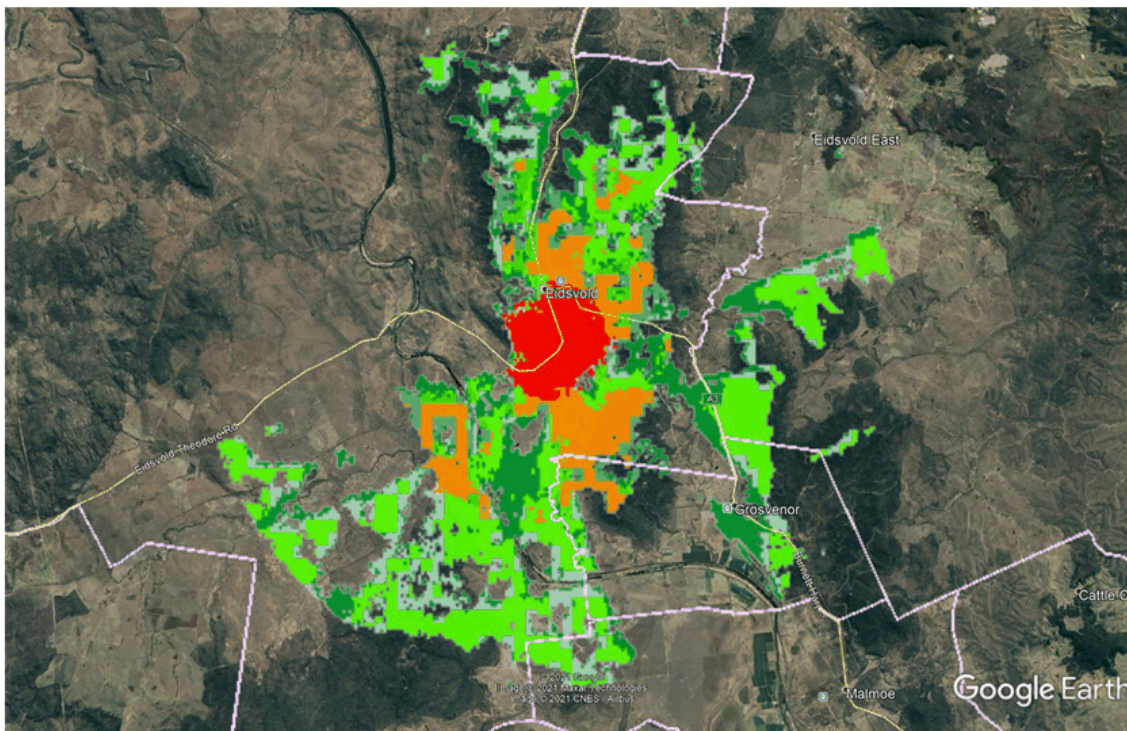
Council's TV transmission towers service the town and immediately surrounding area of Eidsvold, the parts of the Moonford area and parts of the Bukali/Bancroft area.

Due to issues with many of the transmitters, it's not possible to gain an accurate understanding of coverage areas, however the following maps provide indicative coverage under ideal circumstances.

The readings indicated here are what may be possible if current equipment is operating at peak performance under ideal atmospheric conditions.

Key

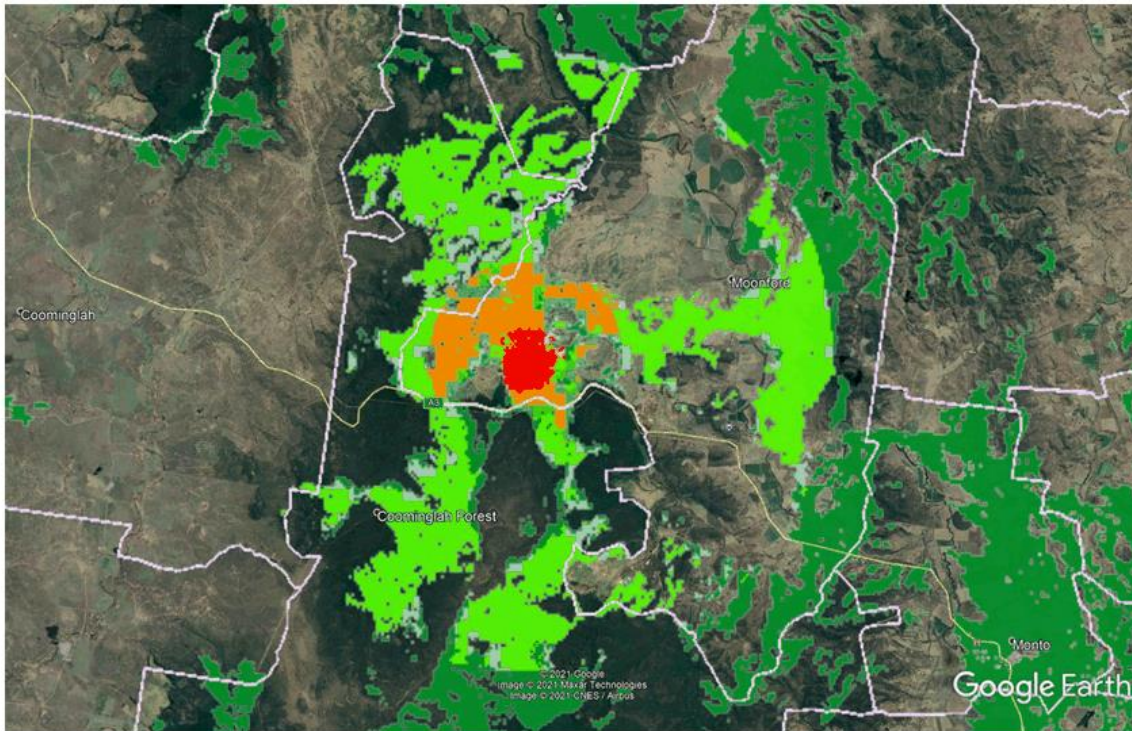
	Expected dBm	Explanation
Red	-55	Excellent service
Orange	-65	Good service
Light green	-75	Patchy service – good antenna mounted above obstructions may work well
Dark green	-85	Poor service – may be able to watch some channels with dropouts and other interruptions

Eidsvold

The 2016 Census identified 298 residential dwellings within the locality of Eidsvold. Most of the western area of the locality does not receive signal, so the actual number of dwellings covered will be lower.

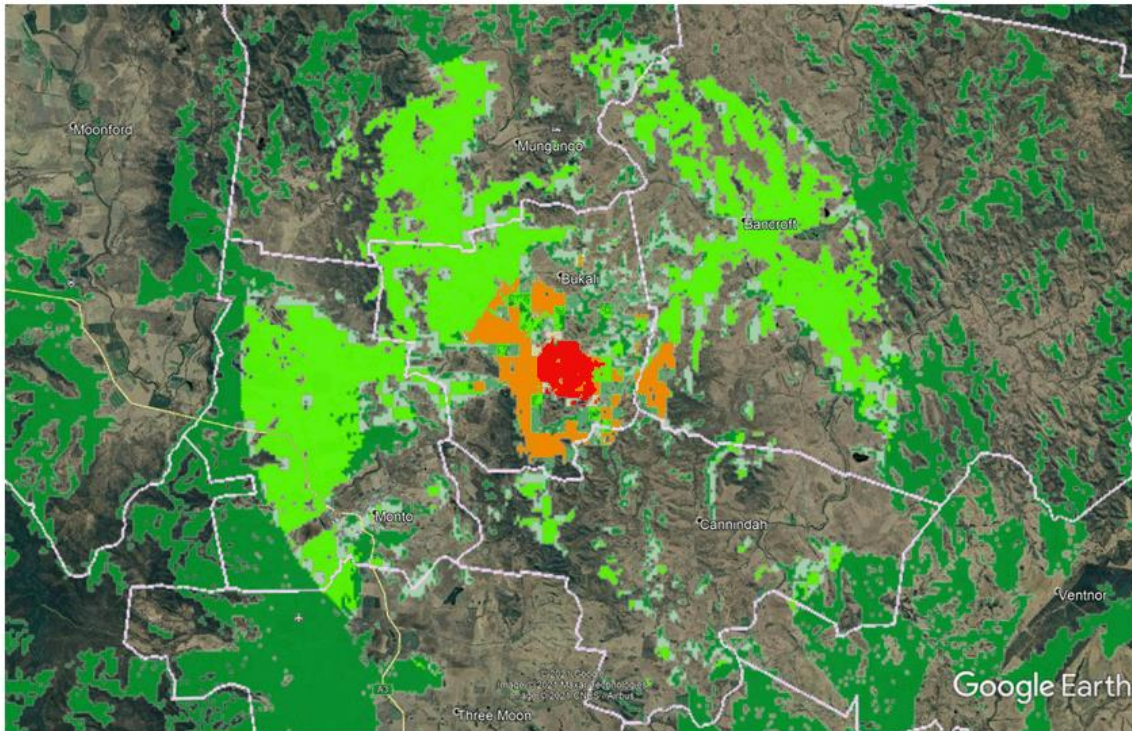
250 is the estimate of the number of households covered by this tower

Eidsvold is the only major town in the North Burnett where, except for the ABC, free-to-air terrestrial television is not supplied by the broadcasters. ABC TV service is provided by ABC (contracted to Broadcast Australia) at a transmission tower adjacent to Council's.

Moonford

The 2016 Census identified 98 dwellings in the locality of Moonford. Many of these are in areas of the locality that do not receive signal (including within the Moonford township), so the actual number of dwellings covered will be significantly less than this.

40 is the estimate of the number of households covered by this tower.

Bukali

The 2016 Census identified 21 dwellings in the locality of Bukali. Most, if not all of these will have coverage from the tower. Additionally, some properties in the Bancroft and Mungungo localities can receive signal, so the actual number of dwellings covered will be somewhat higher than 21.

40 is the estimate of the number of households covered by this tower.

Funding

All towers were jointly paid for by Council and the Federal Government as part of the Blackspot or Digital Switch programs. These programs have ceased, and no further funding is available. Council has no contractual or other arrangements that require these services to be maintained.

Satellite TV

In 2010, the Federal Government launched its "Viewer Access Satellite Television" (VAST) broadcast system. It was a major upgrade from the old system and provides regional Australia with TV services comparable to free-to-air terrestrial TV.

Until 2014, households were eligible for a substantial (sometimes total) installation subsidy as part of the Federal Government's Satellite Subsidy Scheme and Household Assistance Scheme. Households in areas covered by exiting terrestrial free-to-air service (such as Council's towers) were not eligible for the VAST service or the subsidies.

It's expected that the typical cost to install a satellite TV service is approximately \$800 plus GST, however this will vary significantly due to factors like house height, length of cable required, number of TVs to service and equipment required. No government subsidies are available.

With an estimated 330 affected households, this represents a total cost of \$264,000 plus GST based on the typical installation cost.

Options

Council may elect to upgrade or cease TV services at each retransmission site.

Estimated capital costs are current as at early February 2021, are exclusive of GST and are subject to change due to exchange rate fluctuations.

Estimated whole of life costs include charges for maintenance, estimated power, telemetry and broadcast licences. An increase of 2% per year is factored in and an eight year life is assumed.

1. Upgrade all sites

Estimated capital cost \$206,000

Estimated whole of life (8 years) cost \$171,700

Services at all sites will be upgraded with modern equipment, resulting in significantly improved service and remote monitoring capabilities.

This project would be complete by March 2022 and affected households will only experience a short outage before receiving the improved service.

2. Decommission Moonford / Upgrade Bukali and Eidsvold

Estimated capital cost \$145,000

Estimated whole of life (8 years) cost \$126,700

As the tower covering the fewest households and the lowest potential for improved transmission quality, the Moonford tower would be decommissioned and usable equipment relocated to Bukali. Eidsvold would be upgraded with newly purchased equipment.

No more than 40 households are expected to be adversely affected by this option.

Upgrades at Bukali and Eidsvold would be completed by December 2021 and the Moonford tower would be shut down by on 30 June 2022, following a transition period.

3. Decommission Moonford and Bukal / Upgrade Eidsvold

Estimated capital cost \$110,000

Estimated whole of life (8 years) cost \$78,800

The Moonford and Bukali towers offer services to significantly fewer households than the Eidsvold tower does (estimated 40, 40 and 250 respectively). This option would decommission the two lesser used towers and upgrade equipment at the Eidsvold tower.

No more than 80 households are expected to be adversely affected by this option.

The Eidsvold tower would be upgraded by December 2021. The Moonford tower would be shut down on 28 January 2022 and the Bukali tower shut down on 30 June 2022.

4. Decommission all sites

Estimated capital cost \$25,000

Estimated whole of life (2 years) cost \$45,600

Council will shut down all digital television retransmission services at all three of its towers. A lengthy transition period will be allowed prior to shutdown to ensure that affected households are able to have satellite television equipment installed.

No more than 330 households are expected to be adversely affected by this option.

Defunct equipment would remain at each site to be removed later. A small amount of the newer equipment may be able to be re-sold to other retransmitting organisations (including Councils), though much of the equipment is not sellable.

Nominated shutdown dates are as follows:

- Moonford – 28 January 2022
- Bukali – 30 June 2022
- Eidsvold – 27 January 2023

Equipment at the towers will be fully maintained in the interim and an amount for a small amount of equipment replacement (e.g. one transmitter) should be budgeted.

CONSULTATION

Satellite Television and Radio Australia (STRA)

STRA is currently contracted by Council to provide maintenance and technical support for the retransmission services. STRA's opinion is that the older retransmission equipment is the primary cause of the issues and their recommendation is that the equipment be upgraded to current industry standard.

RBA Holdings

RBA Holdings is the administrator of the VAST service. They have assured Council that the affected households are eligible to receive the VAST signal and are ready to provide any necessary support to ensure smooth processing of applications.

Internal Stakeholders

Responsibility for TV retransmission services currently lies with the ICT team, all of whom have been significantly involved in this process. No other departments currently have input to or oversight of the services.

Council

Information workshops were held with Councillors on 10/02/2021 and 21/04/2021 to provide background and information on the challenges being experienced with the retransmission services and the possible solutions, costs and timeframes.

Satellite TV Installers

No consultation has currently been undertaken with satellite TV installers to determine workloads or expected timeframes, however a brief conversation about expected installation costs has been undertaken with a local installer.

Households

No consultation has currently been undertaken with affected households, pending Council's decision.

RISK IMPLICATIONS**Reputation / Political**

There is reputational or political risk associated with this project due to the direct service and financial impact it will have on affected households should the decision be made to shut down any retransmission towers.

This risk will be reduced by a comprehensive communications plan and a significant transition period.

There is also a reputational risk associated with not proceeding with this project.

Occupational Health & Safety (WHS)

Not applicable

Financial Impact

Council currently has no budget allocation for the replacement of failed transmitters. This project will mitigate the risk of having to unexpectedly replace failed transmitters at significant cost.

Legal & Regulatory

Not applicable

Environmental

Not applicable

Property & Infrastructure

Not applicable

Human Resources

There will be additional load placed on the finance and customer service teams to service different components of this project.

The risk will be mitigated by substantial education and training through the communications plan.

Information Communications Technology

All three towers host additional Council services (e.g. FM radio, digital radio, PSBA radio, data network), so towers and associated easements, roads and access must be retained and maintained.

Service Delivery

Council currently offers digital TV retransmission services at these sites. If Council resolves to shut down one or more of these services, then households in these areas will no longer be able to receive terrestrial digital TV transmissions.

There is no other expected impact on any Council services as a result of this project.

Climate

Not applicable

KEY MESSAGE

Council operates three television retransmission sites across the region, servicing the town of Eidsvold and rural areas of Bukali and Moonford (north of Monto).

Many of the transmitters used at the towers are failing with symptoms including "dirty" signal output, resulting in a substandard service to households.

These services are not considered part of Council's core business.



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18 May 2021

Our reference: 1043209

RE: DECOMMISSION OF DIGITAL TELEVISION RETRANSMISSION SERVICES

North Burnett Regional Council has operated the Moonford and Bukali/Bancroft television broadcast towers since 2006 and the Eidsvold tower since 2011. Council previously made the decision to be a television rebroadcaster to try to increase the accessibility, quality and affordability of television reception in these areas.

During recent years, the equipment at these towers has deteriorated along with the quality of service, with many viewers having to deal with poor-quality signal, pixellation, audio popping and interference while trying to watch their favourite sport or shows. Technology has also changed significantly in this time with many community members now sourcing their entertainment and news through other means.

The equipment at these towers has now reached the end of its life and needs to be replaced. Replacement would require significant expenditure at ratepayers' expense.

At its General Meeting held on 28 April 2021, Council resolved to decommission all digital television retransmission equipment at its Moonford, Bukali/Bancroft and Eidsvold transmission towers on the following dates:

- Moonford – 28 January 2022
- Bukali/Bancroft – 30 June 2022
- Eidsvold – 27 January 2023

As Council has no way of knowing if you are still using these rebroadcasting services, you are receiving this letter as a landholder with property located within the approximate service area of one of these towers. **If you do not receive TV signal over an antenna from these towers, there will be no change to your service.**

Council recommends that affected households and businesses begin making arrangements with your local installer to switch to the Australian Government's Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) service. VAST is designed to provide metropolitan-comparable television to rural and remote Australia with no ongoing costs.

What does this mean for affected households and businesses?

- The towers will be decommissioned between January 2022 and January 2023. You will not receive a TV signal over your antenna from a Council-owned tower after the nominated date.
- To maintain access to free-to-air television services after the nominated date, affected households and businesses will need to use alternate methods such as the VAST service or Internet streaming.
- There is a significant length of time until decommissioning begins, so affected households and businesses have plenty of time to make alternate arrangements.

We understand that you may have some concerns or questions regarding this process, so we have developed a list of Frequently Asked Questions overleaf.

If you require further information regarding the installation of the satellite television service, please contact your local antenna installer or electrician.

Address all correspondence to the Chief Executive Officer

Frequently Asked Questions

What is happening?	Council has made the decision to decommission its TV retransmission services at Moonford, Bukali/Bancroft and Eidsvold between January 2022 and January 2023.
Who is affected?	Households and businesses in the Moonford, Bukali/Bancroft and Eidsvold town areas who access free-to-air (FTA) television networks through an antenna from one of Council's towers. <u>There will be no change for viewers that access FTA TV through satellite, Internet streaming or alternate means, nor for anyone in the Biggenden, Gayndah, Monto town and southern district (including Mulgildie), Mt Perry or Mundubbera areas.</u> Some Foxtel set-top boxes include the ability to receive FTA TV channels over antenna, so households and businesses in the affected areas will not receive those FTA signals after decommissioning but will continue to receive their other Foxtel channels as normal.
How do I know where my TV is transmitted from?	Look at your antenna and see if it is pointing towards one of the towers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Moonford tower is located on the Burnett Highway north of the Coomingleh rest area. • The Bukali/Bancroft tower is located on Lovedays Road. • The Eidsvold tower is located on the hill behind the hospital.
Why has Council made this decision?	TV viewing habits have changed dramatically in the years since the towers were constructed. FTA TV is no longer the primary source of entertainment for many viewers and Council does not consider TV retransmission as part of its core business. Ageing equipment at the towers is contributing to regular failures that result in extended partial or complete outages of some services. With no opportunities for external funding, replacement of this equipment would come at significant expense to Council and all ratepayers. Operating the towers also imposes a substantial cost on Council's operational budget.
How to we switch to satellite television?	VAST is a satellite television service entirely funded by the Australian Government. It is available to areas that have no suitable antenna signal, so households and businesses affected by this process are now eligible to join. VAST carries the same programming as regular FTA TV, plus more, so households won't miss their favourite shows or news. Residents who wish to have a VAST service installed are encouraged to contact their local antenna technician or electrician for advice. More information is available at mysattv.com.au . Council encourages affected households and businesses to arrange to switch well before the nominated decommissioning date to allow for any installation delays.
How much will this cost?	VAST has no monthly cost, but households and businesses wishing to access it will need to pay for the installation from their nominated installer. The cost will vary depending on the equipment required and time to install. Please discuss this with your installer.
What equipment do I need?	At a minimum, access to the satellite TV service requires a VAST-approved set-top box, satellite dish of at least 65cm diameter and an activated smartcard. An existing unused Foxtel dish and cabling may be suitable to use, however your installer will need to confirm this. Registration with the VAST service is required prior to your smartcard being activated. Your installer may arrange this on your behalf and more information is available at mysattv.com.au .
Is satellite the only option?	Accessing the VAST service is the only way to gain access to traditional FTA television services for affected households and businesses. Internet-based streaming is available via broadcasters' apps and websites for households and businesses with Internet connections that can support it.

7 CLOSURE OF MEETING