

# Blast over set-top box 'blowout'

Entrepreneur Ruslan Kogan, of Kogan Technologies, has criticised the perceived spiralling cost of the federal government's set-top box scheme designed to help the elderly and needy switch from analog to digital television transmission.

A Digital Switchover Task Force, part of Senator Stephen Conroy's Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, is paying for selected fitting of set-top boxes to enable old analog sets to display digital material. The scheme also covers some problem areas in satellite broadcasting, some help with selected communal reception facilities and some ancillary issues stemming from the change-over.

But according to Kogan, who mass merchandises televisions and other electronic items over the internet, it would be possible to deliver a new 55 inch (140 cm) LED television with five-star energy rating, built-in set-top box and personal video recorder for the same cost as the government-funded fitting of digital set-top boxes to full rate pensioners' and veterans' obsolete analog sets.

"When they initially costed this scheme at over \$350 per set-top box, we thought it was one of the worst examples of waste we had ever heard," Mr Kogan said. "The news that the cost has blown out to around \$700 per box is just incomprehensible.

"The government needs to recognise that it isn't an expert at everything. On some things, like technology products, it's often best to leave the job to technology experts rather than going it alone."

On the present timetable, the federal government should complete the switch-over by the end of 2013.

**Christopher Jay**