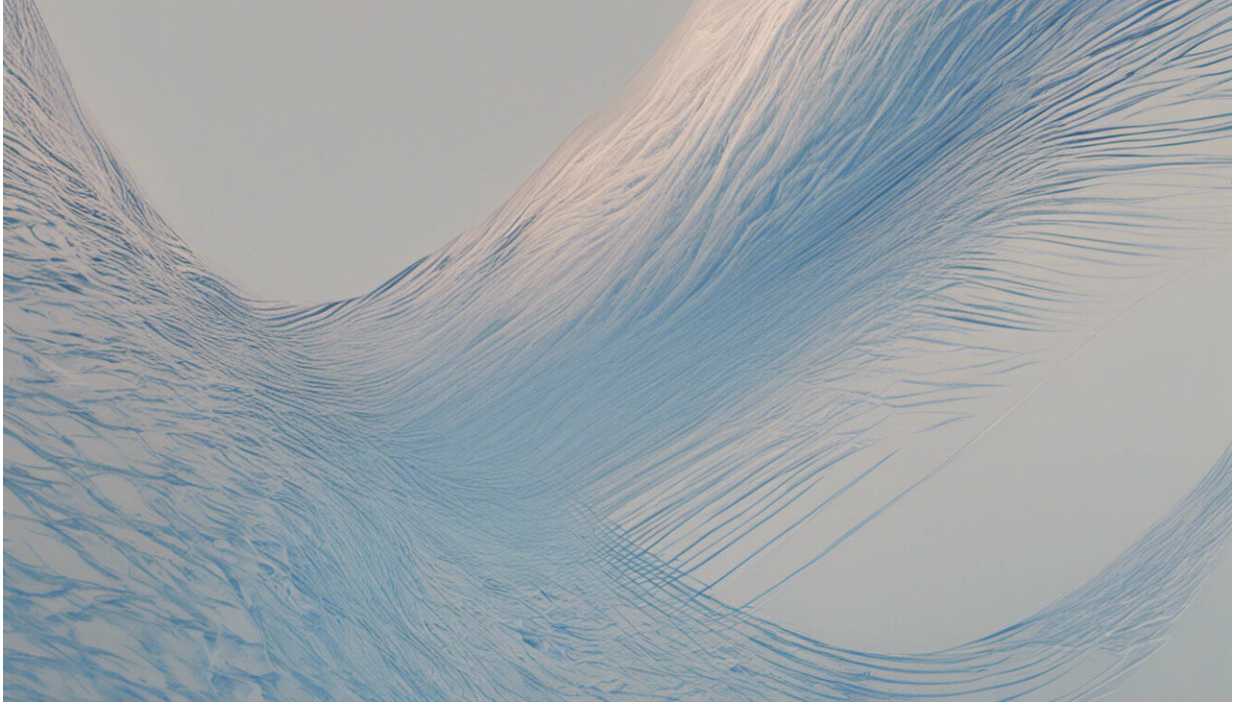


## 3-D television is dead... so what next?

February 8 2017, by Marc C-Scott

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Back in 2010 Sony Australia's Paul Colley [forecasted](#) that a large percentage of Australian viewers would have 3-D televisions by 2014.

In the same year, industry pundits such as [Simon Murray](#) predicted that [sales of 3-D TVs](#) were set to increase in the years to come.

But others were [heralding the death of 3-D TVs](#) and this year the

remaining major manufacturers, LG and Sony, have said they will [no longer produce 3-D-capable televisions](#).

So despite all the repeated push and positive predictions, what went wrong with 3-D TV?

Tim Alessi, LG's director of new product development, [acknowledged this year](#) that:

*[...] 3-D capability was never really universally embraced in the industry for home use, and it's just not a key buying factor when selecting a new TV.*

Sales of 3-D TVs have been in decline for several years, according to [data from analysts NPD](#). In 2013, 3-D TVs accounted for 23% of TV purchases in the United States, but this dropped to just 8% in 2016.

The lack of interest in 3-D TV is also evident on the websites of retail stores in Australia. For example, two years ago Harvey Norman had 92 televisions on its website, of which 53 were 3-D capable. Today, of the 100 [televisions listed](#), only 11 are 3-D ready or capable.

But were Australians ever interested in 3-D TV in the home?

### **Australians snub 3-D TV**

Australia's commercial and pay [television broadcasters](#) made attempts to trial 3-D television broadcasts during 2010-12.

The trials were [claimed](#) to be the "first free-to-air terrestrial 3-D TV broadcast anywhere in the world" and included the NRL's State of Origin.

Despite the limited trials, 3-D TV was then shelved by Australian broadcasters. This may have been due in part to focus on the [digital television transition](#), which had started in some regions during the same year.

On a consumer level, 3-D technology has not gained traction at home. A 2012 [report](#) from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) found that 3-D was never a key factor in Australians purchasing a new television.

The main factors that drove viewers to buy a new model were: picture quality and viewing experience; a flat or bigger screen; and access to more channels. Of viewers surveyed in the ACMA report, 78% said that high definition was very or extremely important in their purchase. Only 16% said 3-D capability was a key reason for their purchase.

So with manufacturers withdrawing from 3-D TV, is 3-D itself dead too?

## **Will 3-D still exist?**

3-D has had a long and arguably more successful [history](#) in cinema. It's been a [go-to for the industry](#) when faced with uncertainties with the introduction of other media, including television and the internet.

As shown in a [chart](#), developed by Sony Professional Education and Knowledge (SPEAK), the first immense 3-D film period was during the 1950s when television was being introduced to many countries around the world.

The most recent phase of 3-D films dawned in 2009, a trend that [some attribute](#) solely to the release of James Cameron's science-fiction film [Avatar](#).

Despite the success of some 3-D films, even Cameron has [argued](#) that Hollywood has overused 3-D. It has been criticised as little more as a gimmick and a money-making exercise, as 3-D tickets are more expensive than those for 2-D screenings.

This period of 3-D cinema is also [beginning to slow](#) as the percentage of films released is 3-D declines.

Still, 3-D appears to suit a cinema audience more than the home TV, so what could be the next add-on for TV at home?

## **Could VR and 360-video be the big thing?**

The latest technology being discussed in media production is virtual reality (VR) and 360-video.

The highly regarded documentary-maker Sir David Attenborough created a virtual reality experience that was shown at the [Australian Museum](#) in Sydney last year, and at the [National Museum of Australia](#) this month in Canberra.

But an experience where everyone is wearing headsets is not the best use of a cinema space.

This is just one reason why VR could be an interesting space in which television broadcasters can experiment – perhaps using it as additional content rather than as competition.

The NBA has already trailed [360-video](#), including games and the recent documentary [Follow my Lead](#).

In Australia, Fox Sports began to experiment last year with the release of [Fox Vision](#). The initial launch was focused on the peak race of the V8

Supercars season.

It allowed the viewer a range of "second screen experiences" via their smartphone, including 360 video hot laps. Fox Sports will expand to [other sporting events](#) during the year.

The Seven network also [partnered](#) with Samsung to provide VR and 360-video experiences from the Rio Olympics.

But broadcasters should look beyond sport when experimenting with VR and 360-video. It could be added to many other types of TV program in Australia.

A key benefit is that it does not require you to buy a new TV. Instead, you can use a smartphone, which [84% of Australians](#) already have.

It would further engage with the audience rather than completely take them away from the television screen. Reality programs particularly come to mind, a key battle ground for commercial broadcasters in Australia.

For example, Ten could allow its audience 360 access to the [I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here](#) jungle. Sit in the lounge room with Wayne and Tom on [GoggleBox](#), or be in the centre of the trials for [Survivor](#).

Maybe Seven could allow a 360 view of the [My Kitchen Rules](#) table or Nine could allow the audience to be one of the guests at a [Married at First Sight](#) wedding.

So during a year where the battle for ratings is focused upon a sports and reality program lineup, 360 video maybe a go-to for Australian broadcasters.

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