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## TELEVISION AND RADIO COMPLAINTS

**T**he procedure for making complaints about radio and television programs has changed.

Until October this year, if you wanted to complain you contacted the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT). The ABT referred these complaints to television and radio stations to let them know what audiences thought of their programs.

However, on 5 October, a new era of broadcasting regulation was created and broadcasters now have primary responsibility for resolving complaints.

The ABA is not the first port of call when you want to complain about television or radio. Instead, you must first complain directly to the broadcaster who upset you.

They should explain how your complaint will be handled, and what opportunities are available to take the matter further if you're not satisfied with their response.

If you haven't received a reply within 60 days, or you're not happy with the response, you can complain to the ABA which will investigate and let you know the result.

This will apply to complaints about program content and compliance with codes of practice by commercial and community broadcasters.

Broadcasters are now expected to develop self-regulatory codes of practice on program content issues and complaints.

The codes will replace ABT program standards which the ABA has preserved to give industry time to develop codes. While the standards still exist, the ABA will continue to accept complaints.

Commercial and community broadcasters will report to the ABA about complaints they have received and how they have been handled.

Complaints about program content on our national broadcasters, the ABC and the SBS, should also be directed straight to them. If you've heard nothing within 60 days, or are not happy with the response, you can then complain to the ABA.

If you'd like more information, call Nick Herd at the ABA on (02) 959 7813.



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## PBAA CONFERENCE

**A REPORT ON THE CONFERENCE HELD BY THE PUBLIC BROADCASTERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA, IN ALBURY NSW, 13-15 NOVEMBER 1992**

**T**he main issues raised at the conference related to the categorisation of licenses, the sponsorship code and community television. Of particular interest was the new broadcasting legislation and the role of the ABA.

The Minister for Transport and Communications, Senator the Hon. Bob Collins, announced at the conference that the Government had made an in principle decision to reserve the sixth television channel for non-commercial interests.

Members and staff of the ABA attended and participated in the conference, with representatives from both the Sydney office and the Canberra-based Planning Division.

ABA Member Tim O'Keefe and ABA staff Ed Jonker and Barry Melville, all from Sydney, addressed a plenary on Codes of Practice, whilst Bob Greeney and Mike Salloom from Canberra presented papers on planning processes and the technical aspects of broadcasting.

They combined to field questions on the ABA in two question and answer sessions. The focus was on the new legislation at the sessions as well as in separate private discussions. Information about the ABA was made available at the accompanying Expo.

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## NEW IN THE LIBRARY

**THE ABA LIBRARY ALLOWS PUBLIC ACCESS TO ITS COLLECTION DURING NORMAL WORKING HOURS, HOWEVER BORROWING IS NOT PERMITTED. TO INDICATE THE RANGE AND DIVERSITY OF THE COLLECTION, THE FOLLOWING TITLES HAVE BEEN SELECTED FROM RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY:**

**ONE NATION UNDER TELEVISION: THE RISE AND DECLINE OF NETWORK TV**

**J. Fred MacDonald. - New York: Pantheon, 1990.**

*One Nation Under Television* is a timely history of network television and of the decisions taken by ABC/CBS/NBC to create an America forever safe for national broadcasting. It is the long and controversial story of broadcast empires in conflict - from David Sarnoff's manoeuvrings to obtain the most advantageous broadcast regulations for RCA/NBC, to William S. Paley's efforts

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at CBS to outprogram his rivals, to the belated but influential strategies of ABC to find its place in the television sun. The book also deals with the way the three major networks operated in unison to co-opt local programming stations. Equally important, Fred MacDonald shows how all three networks managed, despite the rhetoric of commissioner after commissioner, to keep the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) at bay as well. The result of these victories was the creation of limited and rigidly standardized television fare consisting of little more than cycle after cycle of crime shows, doctor shows, situation comedies, and television news made up of micro-minute sound bites. In a final section, MacDonald shows what happened when the house of cards built by the networks finally collapsed. He discusses the impact on the old monopoly of cable, pay television, interactive television, and VCRs. But more important, he discusses the fact that the long-range threat to television is likely to come not from these alternative electronic forms but from transnational multimedia conglomerates.

#### **COMMUNICATING FOR MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS**

**Phillip G. Clampitt. - Newbury Park: Sage, 1991.**

Managers desiring effective communication should look no further than *Communicating for Managerial Effectiveness*. Rather than simply offering a skill-building approach to communication, this original volume analyzes the challenges facing managers and suggests creative action plans to resolve critical corporate dilemmas. Based on research gathered from within organizations, actual case studies bring organizational problems to light and present new issues, such as interdepartmental communication and communication ethics. Clampitt's expertise and insight provide a sound understanding of communication problems as well as the practical means to resolve them. Chapters discuss the communication process and then explore the relationship of communication to everyday managerial concerns, such as how to communicate change, give useful feedback, manage new information tech-

nologies, communicate across departmental boundaries, create an innovative spirit, and cope with ethical issues.

#### **EMPIRE OF THE AIR: THE MEN WHO MADE RADIO**

**Tom Lewis. - New York: Edward Burlingame, 1991.**

*Empire of the Air* tells the almost unknown story of three American visionaries whose imagination and dreams turned a hobbyists' toy into radio, launching the modern communications age. Tom Lewis traces the lives of:

- Lee de Forest, a poor clergyman's flamboyant son and the self-styled 'Father of Radio'. He held more than two hundred electronics patents, but his enemies said he had appropriated most of his discoveries from the work of others.

- Edwin Howard Armstrong, a reclusive genius with a passion for fast cars and great heights. He discovered the way to send clear signals around the world but would spend a lifetime defending his discoveries against the false claims of others.

- David Sarnoff, a hard-driving immigrant from Russia who rose from telegram delivery boy to the first global communications czar as head of RCA, the most powerful communications company in the world. Tom Lewis weaves the story of these men and their achievements into a richly detailed and moving narrative that spans more than half a century: 1899-1954, years when the American romance with science and technology was at its peak. The story is punctuated by acts of idealism and imagination, greed and envy, ambition and determination - and genius.

#### **PRIME-TIME TELEVISION: CONTENT AND CONTROL - 2ND ED.**

**Muriel G. Cantor and Joel M. Cantor. - Newbury Park: Sage, 1992.**

'The Cosby Show', 'L.A. Law', 'Family Ties', 'Married with Children'. Who decides what we watch on television? Cantor and Cantor examine the selection, creation, and distribution of stories - linking the process of production to the political and social circumstances in which television occurs. The authors suggest that television dramas are, in fact, economic commodities and cultural constructs. Completely revised,

*Prime-time television* emphasises how producers and networks adapted to the demographic, economic, and political shifts that occurred in the U.S. viewing audiences and how they selected program content to meet those changes. The book considers and discusses such issues as: the effects of deregulation; how cable systems and independent stations have changed the marketplace; the way that companies produce programs to sell to the networks; and how programs are marketed overseas, speculating on the influence, if any, that these programs have on the societies in which they are seen.

#### **LIBERATING COMMUNICATIONS: POLICY-MAKING IN FRANCE AND BRITAIN**

**Michael Palmer and Jeremy Tunstall. - Oxford: NCC Blackwell, 1990.**

During the 1980s communications policy became increasingly important in France and Britain, as in other industrial nations. This book spans a broad range from telecommunications and information technology to broadcasting and the press; it also gives a historical perspective to many current issues. In some fields, notably space, France has been much more successful than Britain, both nationally and in the context of Europe. The French telecommunications industry is a classic example of state enterprise. By contrast, Britain has pursued a more American path, notably in the emergence of a 'privatised' British Telecom. Mrs Thatcher's media policy has been more carefully considered than the commercialization of broadcasting under Mitterrand, especially during the Chirac premiership (1986-8). Palmer and Tunstall conclude, however, that the many differences in policy detail and in the style of policy-making in France and Britain mask more important strategic similarities. Both countries, while contending for position in Europe, may have underestimated the policy challenge and trading strength of the US and Japan. In both France and Britain communications policy-making is fragmented between a number of civilian and military agencies, whose responsibilities and power alter over time. French and British politicians frequently switch posts and policies; but in both states

military and hardware engineering considerations remain salient, while civil servants and leading industrial companies provide policy continuity.

**THE BAREFOOT CHANNEL:  
COMMUNITY TELEVISION AS A TOOL  
FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

**Kim Goldberg** - Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990.

There are 300 community TV sta-

tions in cities and towns across Canada. But in spite of the medium's experimental beginnings, most of today's community channel programming follows the well-worn path of mainstream commercial television. It doesn't have to be that way. In *The Barefoot Channel*, Kim Goldberg reminds the reader that the community television station is there for the viewer - not just for their viewing, but for their use. She tells why it's impor-

tant to get inside television sets as well as in front of them, and she explains the politics of the community channel - why it exists, how the North American cable giants have managed to control it, and why it's important that the viewer reclaim it. The book gives examples of community TV programs that have been successful and popular, and how groups can use their local community TV station to get their message out.



**THE ABA HAS COMMENCED A SERIES OF RADIO PLANNING SEMINARS TO EXPLAIN HOW THE BROADCAST PLANNING PROCESS WILL WORK. SEMINARS HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED IN SYDNEY, MELBOURNE AND BRISBANE. SEMINARS WILL BE HELD IN ADELAIDE ON 2 DECEMBER AND PERTH ON 3 DECEMBER. TELEVISION SEMINARS WILL BE HELD IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1993. REPRODUCED ARE THE ADDRESSES BY BRIAN JOHNS, ABA CHAIRMAN, TIM O'KEEFE, ABA MEMBER AND COLIN KNOWLES, DIRECTOR, ABA PLANNING DIVISION.**

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## **PLANNING NEW RADIO SERVICES UNDER THE BROADCASTING SERVICES ACT**

**T**oday's seminar is the start of what will be a frank and open debate on planning issues. Gone are the days when planning decisions were made behind closed doors and the first news of a new licence invitation was the Minister's notice and press release. The Act requires us to undertake our work in a very public way. Decisions have to be made to allow progress, but these decisions should be self evident conclusions of the consultation process, not a surprise.

If you leave this seminar with only one message, that message should be that 'the ABA wants to hear your views'. You can talk to us. You can write to us. We will listen to you.

The members and officers of the ABA are available to listen to your proposals to discuss how they might fit within the new Act, and to provide guidance about how and when might be the most appropriate time and method to present your particular case so that it is included in the formal decision process that will be outlined today.

The *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* is direct. It establishes principles for the ABA to follow. We are looking forward to your suggestions about how these principles should be made to work. We natu-

rally have proposals, which we will put forward today. Our purpose in exposing them is to stimulate discussion not to close off the debate.

We are required to decide on the priorities for planning between different parts of Australia, between television and radio, between AM and FM radio and between parts of the AM and FM bands. We can't do everything at once and to do the job properly will take time.

This seminar will address only radio. We will conduct further seminars in 1993 when we reach the point of looking at television planning.

I expect we will be faced with many conflicting priorities: between commercial capital city markets and regional commercial markets; between AM and FM services; between community and commercial services; between national and commercial services; and between commercial, national and community services and narrowcast services.

Our first task is to sort out these priorities in a sensible way that considers the circumstances prevailing in particular areas and between areas. Until we do this, we cannot proceed with preparation of frequency allotment and licence area plans. The only way the ABA can accomplish this task is through constructive com-

ment and soundly based submissions from you arguing your case for priority against the specific criteria set out in the Act and against any other criteria you think important for us to consider.

We are looking for submissions on these things by the middle of February and a notice inviting submissions will be published in the *Australian* and other newspapers in early December. This seminar will explain the type of information we are looking to receive at this stage and point out in more general terms the information we will need later when we consider other aspects of the planning process.

Because of the great interest that has been expressed about narrowcast services, and the apparent high degree of confusion in peoples' minds about where narrowcast services lie in the scheme of things, we will also devote time to discussion of that issue.

We have before us a number of requests to release broadcasting spectrum for narrowcast use. These seek channels ranging from high power wide coverage to low power limited coverage. During the next twelve to eighteen months or so, while the planning process is still in train, the ABA is going to make a measured response to these requests. We are not