

services. We'll hold public meetings and discussions with local government bodies, existing stations and potential new service providers. Our aim is to involve all interested persons in the planning process. Their participation, ideas and views will be crucial to its success. We'll then draw up an exposure draft licence area plan for each area in the top priority group, and invite comments. Our intention is to publish the exposure drafts in March next year. Once people have had an opportunity to look over the draft and make any submissions we will publish the final licence area plans.

When will we see or hear new stations?

Applications for new licences in the top priority areas will be invited after licence area plans for those areas have been published. The commencement of new services will depend on how quickly successful applicants can build their studios and transmitting facilities. The Act places a time limit of one year to start broadcasting, although the ABA can extend the start date.

Which towns will you be visiting first?

Planning teams will be visiting towns in the top priority group shortly. We plan to hold meetings in Darwin, Griffith, Mildura and Renmark during November, and in the central and south west Western Australia zone and regional South Australia in early December. Most visits will take place early in the new year.

Is it too late to have a say about planning?

Certainly not. The journey is just beginning. The planning priorities have now been set, but public participation is again vital in the next stage, the preparation of licence area plans. We'll advertise our public meetings on radio and television and in newspapers well in advance of our arrival in a town. We need to know what people want. It is crucial to drawing up a successful licence area plan for their area.



ABA TO HOLD PLANNING MEETINGS AROUND AUSTRALIA

The ABA will hold public meetings over the coming months at a number of centres around Australia to canvass community views about television and radio services.

This follows the release of the priorities for planning broadcasting services throughout Australia over the next three years. The priorities established the order in which different parts of Australia would be planned.

Meetings will be held in Darwin, Griffith, Mildura and Renmark in November. These will be followed in December by meetings in Geraldton, Northam and Albany in the south west corner of Western Australia as well as Mt Gambier and towns in the Spencer Gulf region of South Australia. In the new year there will be meetings in Bunbury, Busselton and Mandurah in Western Australia and Alice Springs.

Further details of times and venues will be published in local newspapers and announced on radio.

These meetings are part of the ABA's commitment to the new planning process for television and radio services which involves wide public consultation. The ABA wants to hear from all members of these communities with an interest in shaping the mix of services to

be available in their area.

'The planning of radio or television services in these areas was considered a top priority for the ABA and the public meetings aim to ensure the plans we draw up reflect what people actually want,' said ABA member Mr Tim O'Keefe.

'We want to hear from a wide cross-section of the community - people in the broadcasting industry, representatives of community groups, anyone who watches television or listens to the radio,' said Mr O'Keefe. 'These meetings are opportunities for people to have their say about the number and type of television and radio services currently available to them and to influence the mix of services that may be available in the future.'

Public meetings are one of a number of ways groups and individuals can participate in the planning process. ABA staff will also be meeting with other interested organisations.

Written submissions will also be invited. They should be addressed to the Planning Officer, ABA, PO Box 34, Belconnen, ACT 2616.

For further information contact Ian Laird on (02) 334 7883.



NEW FM RADIO SERVICE FOR WAGGA

The Wagga Wagga region of New South Wales is to get a new FM radio service.

The ABA has granted a supplementary FM radio licence for five years to Riverina Broadcasters (Holdings) Pty Ltd, licensee of the local AM radio station, 2WG.

The new FM service will cater for a core youth audience of 15 to 24 years. Its program format includes classic rock music, news and sports coverage. 2WG's existing AM service will feature news, talk and information, as well as a new music mix of hits and memories for older listeners.

'This new licence will expand the choice of radio services available to local listeners,' said Mr Tim O'Keefe, ABA Member.

The decision is the conclusion to the ABA's joined inquiry as to whether to grant a commercial FM radio licence and whether to grant a supplementary FM radio licence for Wagga Wagga.

There was one applicant for the supplementary licence and one for the independent commercial licence, Wagga and Riverina FM Stereo Broadcasters Pty Ltd. The inquiry was considered by the ABA under the *Broadcasting Act 1942*.

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The ABA decided not to grant an independent commercial FM licence in Wagga Wagga. The ABA carried out a careful analysis of the prospects for radio revenue in the market, including a consideration of a range of social and economic factors affecting the Wagga Wagga area.

'A thorough analysis of the market's ability to generate radio revenue showed 2WG's viability would be jeopardised if an independent commercial licence was granted,' Mr O'Keefe said.

'Although further population trends were encouraging, our projections of 2WG's revenue and expenditure levels indicated the station would not be commercially viable if a competing service was established in the same area,' he added.

The new service will start broadcasting when Riverina Broadcasters has installed the necessary FM station equipment.

The ABA's decision is explained in greater detail in its Wagga Wagga report price \$30 and available from Belinda Spouncer on (02) 334 7881.

HISTORY OF THE INQUIRY

This latest decision is the second of the Wagga Wagga FM licence grant inquiry.

The Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT) granted an independent commercial FM licence to Wagga & Riverina FM Stereo Broadcasters Pty Ltd ('Wagga FM') on 14 November 1991. This decision was set aside by the Federal Court in September 1992 on appeal from the

licensee of 2WG Wagga, Riverina Broadcasters (Holdings) Pty Ltd ('Riverina Broadcasters'). The decision was referred back to the ABT for reconsideration.

Under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*, the ABA replaced the ABT on 5 October 1992. The licence grant inquiry was preserved, under the *Broadcasting Services (Transitional Provisions and Consequential Amendments) Act 1992* and was considered by the ABA under the former *Broadcasting Act 1942*.

The inquiry re-commenced in October 1992 with Mr Tim O'Keefe, ABA Member, presiding. At that time the ABA was considering competing applications for a commercial FM radio licence from Wagga FM and South West Media Ltd. However, on 22 December 1992, South West Media Ltd advised the ABA it was withdrawing its application.

On 18 December 1992, the Minister for Transport and Communications referred an application from Riverina Broadcasters for the grant of a supplementary FM radio licence to the ABA. On 20 January 1993, the ABA decided to jointly consider the respective applications for the commercial and supplementary licences.

The terms of reference of the inquiry were expanded to include whether to grant a commercial FM radio licence and whether to grant a supplementary radio licence to serve the Wagga Wagga area.

The length of time since the previous inquiry and the expansion of the terms of reference produced a complex situation in which each application was

considered against legislation in force at different periods of time.

As the ABT's decision was referred back to the ABT for determination, all aspects of that decision were subject to review. Allowance was made for the update of submissions, including financial projections and other material presented to the ABT in the earlier inquiry. Each party had the opportunity to make submissions on any developments relevant to the inquiry since the first decision and challenge the case put by the other party.

A public hearing was held in Wagga Wagga on 19-21 May 1993. The parties were invited to make further submissions on matters from the evidence presented at the hearing. This further process concluded in September 1993.

The criteria against which the ABA considered each applicant included whether the applicant was a fit and proper person to hold the licence, had the necessary technical, financial and management capabilities necessary to provide an adequate and comprehensive service and was capable of complying with the conditions of the licence. The ABA also considered the effect of the licence grant on the commercial viability of overlapping services.

The ABA concluded that both applicants were suitable persons to be granted a licence. However, an independent commercial FM licence was not granted as the ABA projected that the existing 2WG service would not be commercially viable if such a licence were granted.



COMMUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL TV LICENCE IN BRISBANE

The ABA has licensed a community-based group in Brisbane to provide a television service using the sixth channel - the last available high power free-to-air television channel.

The group, Brisbane Community Access Television Group Inc., represents an array of community members and encourages new participants, whether groups or individuals, to join.

The organisation has satisfied the

ABA its activities would be accessible to individuals, community and educational groups. Also, the licensee has highlighted the importance of open access in its founding charter,' said ABA Chairman, Mr Brian Johns.

To safeguard community participation, the ABA has developed an access statement which details the extent to which a sixth channel service should be open to individuals and groups within

the area to be served (see below).

The ABA has also placed a condition on the licence requiring it to be used for community and educational non-profit purposes.

Because the ABA cannot presently allocate permanent licences for the sixth channel, community and educational television will be provided as an open narrowcasting service on UHF channel 31 in Brisbane.

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