



ABA RELEASES SPECTRUM FOR SIXTH CHANNEL

The ABA has opened the door for community and educational use of the sixth high power television channel.

The sixth channel is the last high power, free-to-air television channel available in many parts of Australia where other channels are taken up with the ABC, SBS and the three commercial services.

The ABA has made UHF Channel 31 available in Sydney and Melbourne, to providers of open narrowcasting services for community and educational non-profit use, on a temporary basis for one year until 28 February 1994 when the decision will be re-examined by the Authority.

No permanent community licences for the sixth channel can be allocated under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*, before a ministerial review of the television broadcasting industry, which must be conducted before 1 July 1997 (see below).

Consequently, the ABA has released the sixth channel for open narrowcasting purposes, which can be licensed on a temporary basis.

ABA Chairman, Mr Brian Johns, said the decision was the ABA's first response to Government recommendations for the sixth channel to be used for community access television on a continuing trial basis.

'In the next few months the ABA expects to make the sixth channel more widely available in other parts of Australia as demand arises,' he said.

Groups wishing to use the sixth channel must apply to the ABA for a radio-communications (transmitter) licence. Some applications have been received and the ABA is handling these on a confidential basis.

In deciding whether to grant a transmitter licence, the ABA will assess applications to ensure consistency with community and educational non-profit purposes.

This assessment will include considering whether the applicant would ensure the service is accessible to community and educational groups within the area being served.

The ABA will allocate transmitter licences for community television use in Sydney and Melbourne during the next few weeks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

When the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* took effect on 5 October 1992, a new service category - community television - was defined for the first time.

Community television groups have long expressed a desire to use the sixth channel for community access television services.

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- **ABA Research on Television**
- **New ABA Deputy Chairman**
- **Class Licences - Narrowcasting**
- **The Changing Context of Broadcasting**
- **New Perth Aboriginal Radio Licence**
- **ABA Amends Ad Time Standard**
- **Guide to Subscription Television Broadcasting Services**
- **Indigenous Australians and the Melda**
- **ABA Forms**
- **New In the Library**

ABA DEFERS PAY TV APPLICATIONS

The ABA has deferred consideration of applications from Capacity Pty Ltd for pay TV licences delivered using MDS technology.

Capacity Pty Ltd is 100 per cent owned by Australis Media Holdings Ltd, which is associated with Mr Steve Cosser.

The ABA's decision follows recent legal action by Capacity regarding the ministerial direction of 29 January 1993 in which the ABA was instructed not to issue pay TV licences which predominantly use MDS as the means of delivery at this stage.

On 11 February 1993, the ABA was advised that Capacity Pty Ltd had begun legal action in the Federal Court, seeking orders on the ABA to consider applications from Capacity under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* and without regard to the ministerial direction.

A directions hearing has been set down for 26 February 1993 at the Federal Court in Sydney.

The Minister for Transport and Communications has been named as the first respondent in this action.

