

## ABA LICENSES COMMUNITY TV IN SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE

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

The ABA has licensed the Sydney consortium Community Television Sydney Inc (CTS) and the Melbourne consortium Melbourne Community Television Consortium (MCTC) until 28 February, 1994.

Each consortium represents an array of community television and educational members and encourages new participants, whether groups or individuals, to join.

'Both consortia satisfied the ABA their activities would be accessible to individuals, community and educational groups. Also, both licensees have highlighted the importance of open access in their founding charters,' said ABA Chairman, Mr Brian Johns.

To safeguard community participation in the sixth channel, the ABA has developed an access statement which details the extent to which services should be open to individuals and groups within the area to be served (see below).

The ABA will continue to apply the terms of this statement when deciding whether to issue licences for the sixth channel in other areas of Australia as demand arises.

The ABA has also placed a condition

on the Melbourne and Sydney licences requiring them to be used only for community and educational non-profit purposes.

The announcement follows a decision by the ABA on 15 February this year to make the sixth channel (UHF Channel 31) available to providers of open narrowcasting services for community and educational non-profit purposes in Sydney and Melbourne.

The ABA cannot allocate permanent community television licences on the sixth channel before a ministerial review of the television broadcasting industry, which must be conducted by July 1997.

Groups wishing to use the sixth channel, in areas other than Sydney and Melbourne, must apply to the ABA for a radiocommunications transmitter licence.

Application forms for transmitter licences are available from Mr Mike Salloom, ABA Assistant Director/Planning, (06) 256 2821.

### ACCESS STATEMENT

The ABA is committed to making available radiofrequency spectrum (the sixth channel) for allocation to providers of open narrowcasting services for community and educational non-profit use.

In exercising its discretion to issue transmitter licences to applicants proposing to provide such services, the ABA will have regard to the extent to which the

service will be accessible to individuals and relevant groups within the area to be served.

In considering the accessibility, the ABA will give consideration to the extent to which the applicant's constituting documents safeguard:

1. the level of openness or non-exclusivity in membership and membership policy;
2. the existence and fairness of any grievance mechanisms relating to membership exclusions;
3. the equity of access for members to programming airtime and the existence of structures including a grievance mechanism, designed to allocate airtime fairly;
4. the flexibility of programming policy and format sufficient to allow new sources of programming to be incorporated, and;
5. the right of the community to take part in a range of activities involved in the operation and management of the service.

The ABA will further look to the constituting documents of the applicant (and any other material on which the applicant relies) for evidence of a consistency with the purposes for which the sixth channel has been or will be made available, that is, community and educational non-profit use.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From next issue of *ABA Update*, an open forum will be provided for readers in the form of a 'Letters to the Editor' column.

Correspondence is invited from readers, but the editor reserves the right to edit for reasons of space. A response from the editor may not necessarily be forthcoming.

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