

## GUIDE TO THE PREPARATION OF SUBMISSIONS ON BROADCASTING PLANNING PRIORITIES

### WHAT IS THE ABA?

The Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) is an independent federal statutory authority established by the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (the Act). It came into operation on 5 October 1992.

### WHAT DOES THE ABA DO?

The ABA is responsible for administration of the Act. This includes planning where licences for new services should be made available. An overview of the ABA's role in planning new radio and television services is contained in the brochure *Planning and the ABA* enclosed with this guide.

### WHAT IS BROADCASTING PLANNING?

There is a limited amount of room on the radio waves for broadcasting services. Broadcasting is only one of many uses of those radio waves - other uses include two-way radio services, telecommunications services, mobile telephones and satellite communications. The radio waves are generally referred to as the radiofrequency spectrum. Certain parts of the spectrum are allocated primarily to broadcasting uses. These are the parts that can be generally received on normal domestic radio and television receivers (AM radio, FM radio, VHF and UHF television). Broadcasting services can be established in other parts of the radiofrequency spectrum if service providers can obtain access to channels, but special receivers are usually needed for these services.

Planning attempts to ensure that the most efficient use is made of the available broadcasting channels with the introduction of new services as needed. It also aims to ensure that the services destined for a particular area are received clearly throughout the area, do not suffer interference from other broadcasting services or electrical equipment, and are of sufficient strength to be heard in most parts of the area the station is licensed to serve.

Sometimes these objectives cannot all be achieved and choices need to be made

about whether to use channels to improve the coverage of existing services or to allocate the channels to new services.

The same number of radio and television channels may not be needed in a regional area as in a capital city. Furthermore, while additional channels may be highly desirable in regional areas, there may be insufficient revenue available to support more than a few competitive commercial stations. Since the total capacity of the broadcasting bands is limited, choices also have to be made about the number of channels to assign to each region of Australia, and whether to move available channels from the less populated regions to allow more services in the densely populated regions.

These planning decisions involve judgements about the mix of national, commercial, and community broadcasting services, the demand for alternative uses of the spectrum, social and economic factors, and the public interest. Technical constraints also influence these considerations.

### WHY DOES THE ABA HAVE PLANNING PRIORITIES?

The ABA cannot complete its work in all parts of Australia at the same time. Therefore, it needs to determine which areas of Australia, and which parts of the spectrum, merit attention first. The planning priorities set the timetable for the ABA planning work and determine the schedule under which additional broadcasting services can be established. The ABA is required by s. 24 of the Act to make such a determination of priorities.

The planning priorities will cover both radio and television service planning. However, in those places where there are already three commercial television services licensed, no new television licences can be issued in the VHF and UHF television bands until after a review to be completed by the Minister for Transport and Communications by July 1997. Three commercial television services were provided in most parts of the eastern states through the television

equalisation scheme and three commercial services are already in operation in all capital cities except for Hobart and Darwin. A second commercial service is due to commence in Tasmania in 1994.

### WHAT ABOUT PAY TELEVISION?

Subscription (or pay) television services will use channels outside of the parts of the radiofrequency spectrum planned by the ABA (e.g. satellite, microwave or cable). Pay television implementation timetables will be left to the corporations which are successful in obtaining pay television licences. The ABA cannot influence the timetable of those providing pay television and will not be taking it into account in its planning priorities.

### HOW IS THE ABA GOING TO CARRY OUT ITS PLANNING WORK?

The ABA will undertake all of its planning work through a process of wide public consultation. There are various aspects of planning, commencing with the determination of priorities, through the determination of how the available channels should be allocated between parts of Australia, and concluding with the detailed examination of what services are needed and how they should be delivered in particular regions and markets.

The latter stage, known as the preparation of Licence Area Plans, will determine the number, and characteristics, of services to be made available in your region or town. It will involve consideration of both wide coverage and local, community services. The planning priorities set the timetable for the ABA's preparation of these local level plans.

Before commencing its study of a particular region of Australia, the ABA will publish a notice of its intention to commence planning the region and will make information available about the scope of the study. The notice will set out the details of the area the plan will cover and will invite the general public, aspirant broadcasters and established broadcast-

ers to make submissions to the ABA about any aspect of broadcasting in the region that they want the ABA to consider in development of its plan for the region.

During the preparation of the Licence Area Plans, officers of the ABA will visit the region to conduct public meetings to discuss concerns with local councils and other groups, to answer any questions, and to learn about the broadcasting needs of the community and the interest of entrepreneurs in providing new services or improving existing services.

Before determinations are made as a result of the ABA's consideration of submissions, it will publish a draft determination setting out its findings and inviting further submissions on the proposals set out in the draft. This will allow interested parties a second opportunity to provide further input targeted specifically at the issues that arise from the draft determination.

All of the advice the ABA receives (including ALL submissions received in response to its calls for submissions) and the assumptions that it uses to make its determinations, must be made available for public inspection. (See section 27 of the Act.)

#### **WHAT CRITERIA WILL THE ABA USE TO DETERMINE PRIORITIES?**

In carrying out its functions, the ABA has to promote the objects of the Act as set out in s. 3. It must also address other criteria set out in s. 23. The ABA is interested in your views about how it might use these criteria in setting priorities and, in particular, the relative importance you think it should give to each when considering your region.

#### **WHEN CAN I EXPECT TO SEE NEW SERVICES?**

Licence area planning for those regions given the highest priority in the ABA's planning priorities is expected to commence in about June 1993. The preparation of each plan is expected to take between four and six months as we must allow adequate time for consultation, consideration of submissions and preparation of the final plans. For the highest priority areas, new licences might be made available around October 1993.

Planning for several regions will be carried out in parallel and, after the

plans for the initial regions are completed, we expect to complete further plans every few months.

#### **CAN I INFLUENCE THE ABA'S DECISIONS ABOUT PRIORITIES?**

The ABA is interested in the views of the public, as well as those of broadcasters and aspirant broadcasters, about the need for services, the inadequacy of existing services and interest in providing new services. We also want to know about any special local factors that might suggest that your region does not need early attention, perhaps because you have recently received new services, or because of special economic circumstances in the region.

#### **WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE IN MY SUBMISSION?**

Your submission should include the name, address and telephone number of the individual or organisation making the submission and the date the submission was made. If the submission is from an organisation, the submission should include the name of the contact person in the organisation, and the authority of the person signing the submission.

You are invited to submit a short synopsis of the submission (ideally less than 100 words, but no more than 300 words). This synopsis will be recorded in the central database of submissions and will be included in the index of submissions placed on the public record.

We will have to make copies of your submissions. To make our task easier, your submission should be on A4 paper, unbound, and preferably printed on one side only. If you want to provide a bound copy, then please send us an unbound copy as well.

A submission can be as simple as a single page letter, or as complex as a detailed proposal or market analysis. During the preparation of the draft priorities, we will not address detailed technical matters concerning the delivery of services in any particular region or locality, nor will we consider proposals relating to re-designation of licence areas for individual licences. Such proposals will be canvassed and considered during the development of a Licence Area Plan for your region.

Your submissions may address the question of provision of any of the range of broadcasting services including national (ABC and SBS radio and television and Parliamentary Broadcasting), commercial radio and television, community radio and television, and other broadcasting services covered by class licences (see Part 2 of the Act).

National broadcasting services are funded by the Government, but the Minister for Transport and Communications has asked the ABA to advise him of the level of interest for the provision of additional national broadcasting services, so that the Government can consider this in formulating its priorities for expenditure on national transmitters.

#### **WHAT IS THE CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSIONS?**

Submissions on the planning priorities should be received by the ABA no later than 12 February 1993.

#### **WHERE SHOULD I SEND MY SUBMISSION?**

Your submission should be sent to :  
Director  
Planning Division  
Australian Broadcasting Authority  
PO Box 34  
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

#### **WHERE CAN I OBTAIN FURTHER INFORMATION?**

Information about the current state of radio broadcasting planning in your region and other parts of Australia is contained in a multi-volume publication of the ABA entitled *The Current State of Radio and Television Planning*. Copies of the radio volumes are being sent to local municipal councils throughout Australia and we are requesting that those documents be placed in local municipal libraries. These publications are available for purchase from the ABA Office in Canberra. They cost \$20 per volume, or \$80 for the five volume set. Volume 1 covers radio services for NSW and ACT, Volume 2 covers Victoria and Tasmania, Volume 3 covers Queensland, Volume 4 covers SA, NT and WA and Volume 5 contains maps of existing channel assignments for AM radio throughout Australia. Separate publications on television will be published in early 1993. Please telephone Freecall (008) 810241.

There are, as yet, no similar publications for television. Past planning has allowed for six television services throughout Australia - in some areas, five services are already available (three commercial, the ABC and the SBS). Section 28 of the Act limits the ABA from allocating more than three commercial television licences in any area of Australia before the Minister for Transport and Communications has completed a review of the television broad-

casting industry. The review must be completed before 1 July 1997. Despite that restriction, we are still interested in receiving your views about television services, whether they be services that you currently receive, or additional services that you may wish to receive.

The *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* is an important reference. Parts 2, 3 and 4 of this Act, which set out the categories of broadcasting services and the directions

the ABA must follow in relation to planning, are enclosed with this guide. Copies of the complete Act are available from Australian Government Bookshops.

If you need further assistance or clarification of matters concerning this guide, or other aspects of planning, you can contact the Planning Division of the ABA from anywhere in Australia by telephoning Freecall (008) 810241, or you can write to the Planning Division.



## ABA NATIONAL PLANNING SEMINARS

The ABA held national seminars on radio planning in Sydney on 17 November, Melbourne on 19 November, Brisbane on 24 November, Adelaide on 2 December and Perth on 3 December.

In addition to the seminars, the ABA held separate meetings with members of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia in the capital cities visited. If there is sufficient interest, similar radio seminars will be conducted in Hobart and Darwin early in the new year. Television seminars will be held toward the end of

the first quarter of 1993. At the seminars, ABA member Tim O'Keefe and Colin Knowles, Director, Planning Division, explained the planning principles which are set out in the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*. Under this Act, the ABA will undertake planning as a public process. The ABA will determine priorities for planning between various parts of Australia and between AM radio, FM radio and television. The ABA's first task is to sort out these priorities sensibly through frank and open debate. On 7 December, the ABA called for public submissions about

these priorities. The notice calling for submissions and the information guide on the preparation of submissions are included in this edition of *ABA Update*. The new Act has generated many requests to the ABA to release spectrum for narrowcasting services such as tourist radio. It was emphasised during the seminars that the ABA wants to encourage the use of available frequencies for the new narrowly focused services, but that service providers have limited tenure on frequencies.



## ALTERNATIVE USES OF THE BROADCASTING SERVICES BANDS

If broadcasting services bands spectrum is either reserved or available because it is not yet allocated for national, community or commercial television services, the ABA may decide to make available a part or parts of the available spectrum, for a specified period, for the purpose of temporary transmission, retransmission, open and subscription narrowcasting, subscription broadcasting or other services. This is provided for under s. 34 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*. A number of deci-

sions have been made under s. 34 to make spectrum available for allocation.

### **RADIOCOMMUNICATIONS LICENSING USING THIS SPECTRUM**

From its inception on 5 October 1992 to the period ending 30 November 1992, the ABA had issued three retransmission transmitter licences to groups to retransmit television services at Tallangatta, Howqua and Freeburgh in Victoria, six transmitter licences for the purpose of low power

tourist information services at Ingham, Babinda, Innisfail, El Arish, Daintree and Proserpine in Queensland, and 37 transmitter licences for temporary transmissions. Of the 37 temporary transmissions, 32 were issued to aspirant community broadcasters, and the remaining five issued for special event broadcasts at Canberra (ACT), Shark Bay (WA), Albury (NSW), Parramatta (NSW) and one to cover six regional locations in Victoria.

