

ABA'S MEETINGS ENCOURAGE DEBATE ABOUT PLANNING



Some of the audience at the ABA meeting held in Mt Gambier, SA, on Monday 12 December 1993. (Photo Peter Morris)

People attending the ABA's planning meetings around Australia have expressed support for the extension of commercial television services, ABC radio services and SBS radio and television services.

The ABA is holding meetings around Australia as part of the new planning process for radio and television services. The ABA wants to hear from all members of the community with an interest in shaping the mix of broadcasting services to be available in their area as wide public consultation is an integral part of the process.

Meetings are currently being held in the top priority areas. ABA teams have held public meetings in Darwin, Griffith, Mildura and Berri, as well as Northam, Geraldton and Albany in south

west Western Australia and Mt Gambier, Port Pirie, Whyalla and Port Lincoln in South Australia.

The meetings have attracted a sizeable response from each local community typically drawing between fifty and one hundred people.

A crowd of around eight hundred turned out in Mildura and expressed its support for the extension of commercial television services to bring the area into line with its neighbours.

People at a number of meetings have asked for the extension of ABC radio to re-

gional areas. Radio National, Triple-J, Fine Music and in some cases, metropolitan radio have been mentioned.

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Bob Greeney, Director, Planning, at the Mt Gambier meeting. (Photo Peter Morris/Border/Watch)

NEW ABA STRUCTURE IN PLACE

The new structure of the ABA took effect on 6 December 1993.

The staff of the ABA are now organised into two Divisions, Policy and Program Services, headed by Mr Gareth Grainger and Planning and Corporate Services headed by Mr Colin Knowles. Mr Grainger joins the ABA from a position as Associate Professor in Law at Bond University and was previously with SBS and the NSW State Rail Authority.

Mr Knowles was formerly Director,

Planning Division (now Planning Branch) in the ABA.

The Policy and Program Services Division comprises two Branches, Policy and Communications headed by Ms Pat Manser and Program Services Branch currently headed by Ms Debra Richards.

The Planning and Corporate Services Division comprises two Branches, Planning currently headed by Mr Bob Greeney and Corporate Services headed by Mr Jon Torpy who has joined the ABA from the Federal Court.



ABA REFERS PAY TV LICENCE A TO TPC

The ABA has asked the Trade Practices Commission (TPC) to provide a report into the allocation of satellite pay TV licence A to UCOM Pay TV Pty Ltd.

This follows notification to the ABA by the Department of Transport and Communications that UCOM had paid a deposit of \$3 850 050, being five per cent of the price bid for licence A.

The TPC has 45 days from the date of the request (8 December) within which to report to the ABA. The TPC is required to report on whether the allo-

cation of the licence would lead to a 'substantial lessening of competition' in the market.

Meanwhile, the ABA is considering the suitability of UCOM to be allocated a pay TV licence. Its assessment will take into account any share holding changes in UCOM.

An applicant is unsuitable if the ABA decides allocation of the licence would lead to a significant risk of an offence against the Broadcasting Services Act or a breach of the conditions of the licence.



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There has also been vocal support for the expansion of SBS services, both radio and television.

The people of Griffith are keen for extra commercial television services, while in Darwin locals were interested in the introduction of new radio and television services.

The Albany community is particularly keen for the early introduction of the ABC's Radio National service. The local commercial radio licensee, 6VA, chose the occasion of the ABA's meeting to announce its intention of providing a second service, on FM, as soon as the planning process allows.

The ABA's program of community consultation will continue for the duration of the planning process over the next couple of years. Meetings planned early in 1994 include a second round of visits to south west Western Australia (Bunbury, Busselton, Mandurah and Margaret River). Meetings will also be held in a number of other centres: Alice Springs (NT), Esperence, Leonora, Broome, Carnarvon, Exmouth and Meekatharra (WA), Weipa, Longreach, Charleville, Roma, St George, Mt Isa, Cloncurry and Hughenden (Qld) and Thursday Island.



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