

CHAIRMAN STRESSES EXPORT ROLE FOR MULTIMEDIA INDUSTRY

The multi-media industry represents an important historical opportunity for Australia to maintain a vigorous national culture, said Mr Brian Johns, Chairman of the Federal Government's Broadband Services Expert Group (BSEG).

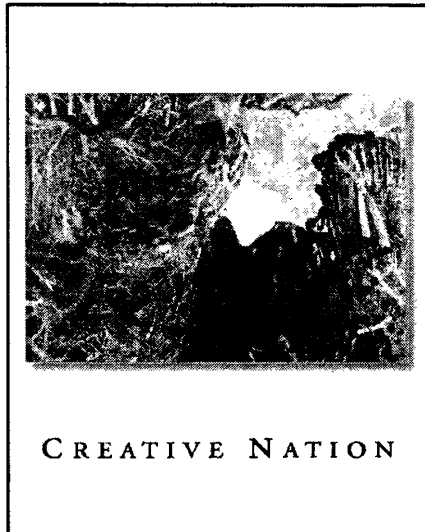
Mr Johns, who is also Chairman of the ABA, was speaking at the AIMIA Global Multimedia conference in Sydney.

'While other countries are beginning to grapple with questions of national identity in the wake of the globalisation of the broadcasting and entertainment industries, Australia has had long experience of these issues,' Mr Johns said.

'It would be a tragedy if we failed to build on our hard won position as an originator of culture,' he added.

The BSEG has repeatedly emphasised the primary importance of developing content—particularly interactive multi-media content—for the broadband services industry.

'We want to avoid again being in the position of carving out a niche in the face of a well established foreign industry,' Mr Johns stressed. 'Otherwise we will end up with the small share of profits



CREATIVE NATION

The Federal Government's national cultural policy statement Creative Nation. BSEG has repeatedly emphasised the primary importance of developing interactive multi-media content for the broadband services industry.

that usually accrue to creators in the distribution chain for cultural industries.

'I am certain that a strategic approach will need to be developed and that strategy will have to take account of the fact that our population base demands

that we join the world, through exports. We have to recognise that without exports we will simply not be able to create for our own market,' he said.

The BSEG has stressed the tremendous importance of the government playing an active role as educator, policy maker, and most importantly, as a leading edge user of broadband services. However, the development of the industry cannot be left up to the government alone, Mr Johns warned.

Other major players in the key businesses, computer hardware and software, broadcasting, telecommunications and publishing, need to be drawn into the industry.

'The challenge is to develop applications and services that answer local needs, and yet can be marketed worldwide. I believe that the multi-media industry will have a key role in this process,' Mr Johns said.

'I am confident that, given a strategic approach to the development of a creative infrastructure, the Australian multi-media industry can demonstrate that convergence is not merely a rhetorical device, but a powerful new mode of analysis and expression.' □

ABA ALLOCATES CABLE PAY TV LICENCE TO EXPLORER

Explorer Channel Pty Limited (Explorer) has been allocated a licence for a non-satellite pay TV broadcasting service by the ABA.

Explorer was allocated one licence by the ABA. It has indicated it intends to deliver its pay TV service via cable to places in Australia with access to the Telecom Fibre Optic Cable System.

'The ABA examined the shareholding structure of the company and found they complied with the foreign ownership provisions of the Broadcasting Services Act,' said Mr Brian Johns, ABA Chairman. 'In addition, the ABA found no reason to regard the company as being unsuitable to be allocated pay TV licences.'

Section 96 of the *Broadcasting Services*

Act 1992 allows the ABA to allocate subscription television broadcasting licences delivered by means other than satellite.

Unlike transmitter licences or other service delivery permits, these licences do not have geographical limitations. Therefore, a service licence is valid throughout Australia as long as the programming on that service is the same in all areas of reception. Where the service differs in a location, a separate service licence is required.

The current prohibition on licensing a pay TV broadcasting service dependent on an MDS system as its means of transmission, or as a part of its means of transmission, does not extend to services using cable as a means of delivery.

The ABA must not allocate a licence for an MDS delivered pay TV broadcasting service before the commencement of satellite broadcasting services under licence A, B or C. This prohibition ceases

to have effect on 31 December 1994.

Apart from licences A, B and C, the ABA must not allocate a licence that uses satellite as a means of service delivery before 1 July 1997.

Current holders of cable pay TV licences are: Access Cable Television Limited (110 licences); Access Cable TV (Northern Rivers) Pty Ltd (4); Cable Television Services Pty Ltd (20); Dergat Pty Ltd (4); Explorer Channel Pty Ltd (1); Home Show Cable Australia Pty Ltd (20); Multicom Australia Pty Limited (35); NRS Group Pty Ltd (13); Oberon Broadcasters Pty Ltd (10); Pacific Media Telecommunications Pty Ltd (18); Paynet Telecommunications Pty Ltd (8); Premier Cable Australia Proprietary Limited (43); Private Cable Network Pty Limited (34); Rowcom Holdings Pty Ltd (28); Star Vision Pty Limited (30); Visitor Publishing Group Pty Ltd (2); Wright Weller Rosenblum Pty Ltd (10). □