

ABA EXTENDS THE PERIOD OF RACING NARROWCASTING LICENCES

The ABA has made arrangements to enable open narrowcasting racing services to continue in Newcastle, Wollongong and 16 towns in north and western Queensland.

On 21 December 1992, the ABA announced that it had released frequencies in the AM and FM radio bands for high power open narrowcasting racing services in Wollongong and Newcastle (New South Wales), on Thursday Island (Queensland), and in Mt Isa, Cooktown, Yeppoon, Clermont, Emerald, Collinsville, Charters Towers, Normanton, Cloncurry, Weipa, St George, Blackwater, Barcaldine, Goondiwindi, and Gladstone (Queensland). The frequencies were made available until 31 December 1993.

On 16 May 1993, the ABA announced that new procedures would apply to the allocation of high power narrowcasting services. The ABA declared a moratorium on the handling of such applications and refused 40 pending applications. At the time, the ABA said that the first-come, first-served method of issuing transmitter licences for high power services (the method by which the racing services were issued transmitter licences) worked well while demand was low, but increasing demand for scarcer frequencies required a change in procedures.

The new procedure involves publicising the availability of high power frequencies and seeking expressions of interest in them when a price-based allocation system for determining a successful applicant is developed. At that time, planned and available channels will be released on to the market in areas which are lower down in the ABA's broadcasting planning priorities list. The price-based allocation system is expected to be in place in the first half of 1994.

The hiatus between the time when the licences were due to expire and the availability of the price-based alloca-

tion system meant that listeners in Newcastle, Wollongong and the 16 towns in Queensland faced the prospect of losing these services. By the same token, the ABA had to ensure that the operators of these services were not treated in an overly favourable manner.

The ABA has, therefore, made certain arrangements for open narrowcasting racing services to continue in the 18 towns.

Thursday Island, Mt Isa, Cooktown, Normanton, Cloncurry, Weipa, St George and Barcaldine are high on the ABA's list of priorities for planning broadcasting services in Australia and are now receiving planning attention. Planning for these areas is expected to be completed by mid 1994. In these towns, the ABA decided to allow the services to continue until 31 December 1994 so that the allocation of commercial and community radio services can get well under way, if not completed. Frequencies not then required for mainstream broadcasting services would become available for other purposes, including open narrowcasting, and could be allocated using the price-based system.

The other areas - Newcastle, Wollongong, Yeppoon, Clermont, Emerald, Collinsville, Charters Towers, Blackwater, Goondiwindi and Gladstone - are lower down in the priorities and the period for which they could be used for purposes such as racing services is correspondingly longer. The ABA has decided to allow the services to continue until at least 31 March 1994, after which the frequencies are expected to be progressively offered publicly and allocated under the price-based system. The ABA will arrange for the current services to continue for up to 30 days after the resolution of the price-based allocation for that area.

PLANNING MEETINGS

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television and radio for north west Victoria and the Victorian high country.

PLANNING MEETINGS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The ABA has held public meetings in Bunbury, Busselton, Margaret River and Mandurah to canvass views on radio and television services, and in particular the development of FM radio, for central and south west Western Australia.

The meetings ran from Monday 17 January to Thursday 20 January 1994. Planning meetings had been held at Northam, Geraldton and Albany in early December 1993.

Regional issues were discussed, including the introduction of additional FM radio services in the south west is constrained because Bunbury-based television services occupy frequencies on the FM radio band. The development of FM radio and its potential impact on existing services will form an important part of the ABA's presentation at the meetings.

Closing date for submissions :

remote Queensland: 28 February 1994
They should be addressed to:

Planning Officer for Remote Queensland,

Australian Broadcasting Authority,
PO Box 34, Belconnen, ACT 2616.

central and south west Western Australia: 25 February 1994.

They should be addressed to:

Planning Officer for Central and South West Western Australia,

Australian Broadcasting Authority,
PO Box 34,
Belconnen, ACT 2616.

remote New South Wales: 28 February 1994

They should be addressed to:

Planning Officer for Remote New South Wales,

Australian Broadcasting Authority,
PO Box 34,
Belconnen, ACT 2616.

For further information or the information booklet, ring freecall 008 810 241.