

Temporary transmissions foster the development of community radio by allowing aspirant community broadcasting groups to develop their radio operating skills and programming schedules and encourage support for a permanent community radio broadcasting licence in an area. Aspirant Christian broadcasters have raised some interesting policy issues for the ABA in the lead up to the allocation of new community broadcasting licences. The ABA is seeking to consult widely on these questions.

Temporary transmissions by Christian aspirant community broadcasters - ABA invites consultation

Last year, the ABA introduced a revised policy on temporary transmissions by aspirant community broadcasters which took effect from 30 November 1994. This policy has now been operating successfully for some seven months.

For aspirant Christian broadcasters the ABA's assessment of applications to date has raised a number of issues. These include the implications of the ABA's open membership requirements, the possible effects of too narrowly defining a community interest to be served and the use of statements of faith as membership criteria. These issues are briefly discussed below.

The ABA has written to all Christian aspirant community broadcasters known to it informing them of its thinking on these issues and has invited their comment. Similarly, the ABA has sought the views of relevant representative bodies and welcomes comment from any interested parties.

Open membership requirements

The ABA's temporary transmissions policy is designed to allow groups who intend and would be eligible to apply for a permanent community licence to have access to radio spectrum to conduct temporary transmissions.

The ABA's policy for determining eligibility for temporary transmissions reflects permanent licensing requirements and conditions. In particular, the ABA requires that aspirant broadcasters guarantee open membership through appropriate provisions in their rules or articles of association. This is consistent with

the permanent licence condition set out in the Act requiring that a community broadcaster encourage members of the community served to participate in all aspects of the operations of the service.

Thus, the ABA requires that aspirant community broadcasters adopt membership rules embodying criteria that are unambiguously inclusive of anyone who can reasonably be regarded as a member of the community which an aspirant broadcaster seeks to represent.

As a corollary, a service provided must be tailored to its community of interest. For example, if membership of a broadcasting group is restricted to committed Christians then the ABA would expect the service that group provides to be tailored primarily to committed Christians rather than being, for example, an evangelical service targeted to the wider community.

Community interest served: implications for permanent licensing

A Christian aspirant community broadcaster may seek to represent all Christians in a local community or a subset of this group, for example, committed or practising Christians. The breadth or narrowness of any community interest which an aspirant community broadcaster proposes to serve will have important implications for the allocation of permanent community licences.

A narrow focus could result in an aspirant not being competitive with broader based groups or not being able to represent a broad community need

identified by the ABA in its planning process.

Finally, an interest may be so narrowly defined as to not be properly termed a community interest at all.

The *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (the Act) provides for other categories of service that may be more appropriate for more narrowly defined services. For example, a 'narrowcasting' service is defined by limitations on its reception arising from factors such as a focus on special interest groups or the limited appeal of the programs provided. Another option for services which may not meet the tests for a community licence include commercial broadcasting licences, allocated under a price-based system.

The ABA's position on statements of faith

Many aspirant Christian broadcasters include doctrinal statements (statements of faith) in their articles or rules in such a way that they operate as a set of membership criteria.

The ABA is concerned that statements of faith have the potential to exclude members of the Christian community interest. Hence, the use of statements of faith is an issue about which the ABA is seeking to consult more widely within the wider Christian community.

In general, statements of faith are being used by aspirant Christian groups in two different ways:

1. prospective members must sign that they personally believe all aspects of a statement of faith before being eligible for membership; or

2. prospective members must sign an acknowledgment that the group will be governed in accordance with a statement of faith.

The ABA examined both these uses of statements of faith in considering a number of applications from Christian aspirant broadcasters for temporary transmissions in the first half of this year.

The ABA determined that, pending the results of wider consultation, the second use is acceptable but that the first is not. This is because of concerns that some Christians may not, in all good con-

science, be able to personally subscribe to all the elements of a particular statement of faith. The alternative use avoids this requirement and thus provides more scope for prospective members.

The ABA considered submissions from various Christian aspirant broadcasting groups that the 'statement of faith' is a widely used creed of committed Christians with some cross-denominational acceptance. Consequently it accepted that statements of faith could be used in the less restrictive manner set out at point 2 above.

However, the ABA retains a concern with this construction because the definition is a circular one. In theory, it could be used by any group wishing to restrict control of a broadcasting organisation to a sub-set of the community interest it claimed to represent where members of the wider interest did not necessarily share its views.

The ABA looks forward to responses from the wider Christian community and the community broadcasting sector on these matters. ☒

Temporary Transmissions

Below is a list of all temporary transmissions for aspirant community radio groups issued between 22 May and 10 June 1995.

Licensee	Area Served	Frequency	Period	Date Signed
Casino's Own Wireless Assoc.	Casino, NSW	107.9 MHz	25/5/95 - 26/5/95	25/5/95
Port Stephens FM Radio Inc	Nelson Bay, NSW	99.7 MHz	5/6/95 - 11/6/95	1/6/95
Ballarat Gospel Radio Inc.	Mount Warrenheip, Vic	103.9 MHz	3/6/95 - 23/6/95	1/6/95
Encounter FM Community Broadcasters	Victor Harbor, SA	89.3 MHz	5/6/95 - 11/6/95	1/6/95
Nepean Riverlands Community Radio	Werrington, Uni of Western Sydney	100.7 MHz	3/6/95 - 25/6/95	1/6/95
York Community Radio	York, WA	96.5 MHz	3/6/95 - 25/6/95	2/6/95
West Gippsland Community Radio	Drouin, Vic	99.5 MHz	3/6/95 - 4/6/95	1/6/95
Coffs Harbour Christian Broadcasters	Bruxner Park, NSW	106.9 MHz	6/6/95 - 2/7/95	5/6/95
Casino Beef Capital Radio	South Casino Water Tower, NSW	107.9 MHz	12/6/95 - 27/6/95	6/6/95
Wide Bay Christian Broadcasters	Ghost Hill, Qld	101.9 MHz	12/6/95 - 9/7/95	7/6/95
Family Radio Ltd	Brisbane	92.1 MHz	19/6/95 - 9/7/95	7/6/95
Southern Victoria Community Radio		89.1 MHz	23/6/95 - 9/7/95	7/6/95
Radio Five-O-Plus	Gosford, NSW	95.3 MHz	1/7/95 - 30/9/95	8/6/95
Canberra Stereo Public Radio Inc	Canberra, NSW	103.1 MHz	1/7/95 - 30/9/95	8/6/95
Kandos Rylestone Community Radio	Kandos, NSW	95.5 MHz	17/6/95 - 3/7/95	8/6/95

Programs granted C or P classification

Programs granted a C or P classification by the ABA between 15 May 1995 and 8 June 1995. Producers interested in submitting programs for classification should contact Liz Gilchrist on (02) 334 7840.

Title	Origin	Clas.	New/ renewal	Decision date	Applicant
OUT OF BOUNDS	Australia	CAD	new	1.6.1995	f-Reel Pty Ltd.
CAD - C Australian drama		Clas. Classification			