



I n s i d e r

Media and

Public Relations

The Media and Public Relations team:

l-r: Anne Hewer, Donald Robertson, Briget O'Brien, Katherine Beddoe, Fiona Chisholm



The Media and Public Relations Section (M&PR) is responsible for co-ordinating the media liaison and public relations needs of the ABA and co-ordinating and managing the production and marketing of ABA publications.

M&PR provides a link between the complex and technical requirements of broadcasting regulation and the many different 'publics' interested in this issue.

'In any one hour we are responding to callers with vastly different levels of knowledge about the ABA's work. Keeping them happy, while at the same time conveying the ABA's point of view is a never ending story,' said Fiona Chisholm, the section's manager.

M&PR uses a forward planning approach, in concert with senior management to ensure information is released in a co-ordinated way. 'This approach applies for news releases and publications,' explained Fiona.

'We also run a range of media training courses for staff so they are familiar with the information needs of journalists.'

M&PR convenes a publications committee comprising division heads, members and relevant staff.

'This process means that the organisation is speaking with one voice and priorities can be set effectively,' commented Donald Robertson, M&PR's publisher. 'It also ensures deadlines can be met within available resources.'

The ABA's monthly *Update* newsletter is one of these publications.

'Producing a monthly periodical is a demanding and exacting task,' explained Anne Hewer, publications officer. 'The ABA must be accountable and must provide information about its powers and decision-making processes. *Update* is one way it can do this.'

M&PR is also responsible for staffing of the ABA's reception area, operation of the switchboard and management of the ABA's mailing lists.

'These are all vital functions. Switch and reception are the first contact points for the public and industry,' continued Anne.

Briget O'Brien, public relations officer, provides support across the section. Her many duties include answering requests for information from the public and journalists, as well as assisting in production of *Update* and marketing ABA publications.

'I answer everything from basic queries to providing a more research oriented service. I also maintain up-to-date contact lists for journalists, train junior staff and run the sections databases,' said Briget.

M&PR officers handle inquiries from all over Australia.

'We get calls from everywhere, from remote WA to far North Queensland. Mostly people want to know about broadcasting services in their area. They're interested in when planning services will reach them and what they can do to see their region get a better variety of television and radio stations,' said Katherine Beddoe, assistant PR officer.

'We get asked about everything to do with the ABA, and the broadcasting industry in general. In one day we might cover the issuing of licences, media ownership, what's on the television at 4 a.m. and the difference between the ABC and the ABA. You really need to know your stuff,' she said.

M&PR section consults with ABA staff as well as external information providers in order to ensure that the information it provides is accurate.

'Many broadcasting issues change rapidly. They are an intricate mix of historical, political, technical and legal data. Communicating this mix concisely demands careful preparation. Also, answers must often be provided quickly whether this is easy or not,' concluded Fiona Chisholm.