



The ABA has released for public comment a second discussion paper on planning for radio and television services in the Riverland region of South Australia.

Revised proposals for radio and TV services in the Riverland

The ABA released an initial draft licence area plan (LAP) and discussion paper for Riverland were released in August 1994.

'We have decided to release a second discussion paper for two reasons,' said Mr Peter Webb, ABA Chairman. 'Firstly, since we put out the first draft LAP, new players have said they are interested in providing local commercial and community radio services. Secondly, the entrepreneurial interest previously expressed in providing a second commercial television service in the area has been withdrawn.'

So far, Melbourne based Central Zone FM Services Pty Ltd has expressed interest in operating a commercial radio service in the Riverland, while 5AA Festival City Broadcasters Ltd in Adelaide and Sydney based Tourist Radio Pty Ltd

are both interested in providing open narrowcasting radio services (for racing and tourist radio respectively). There has also been some local in-

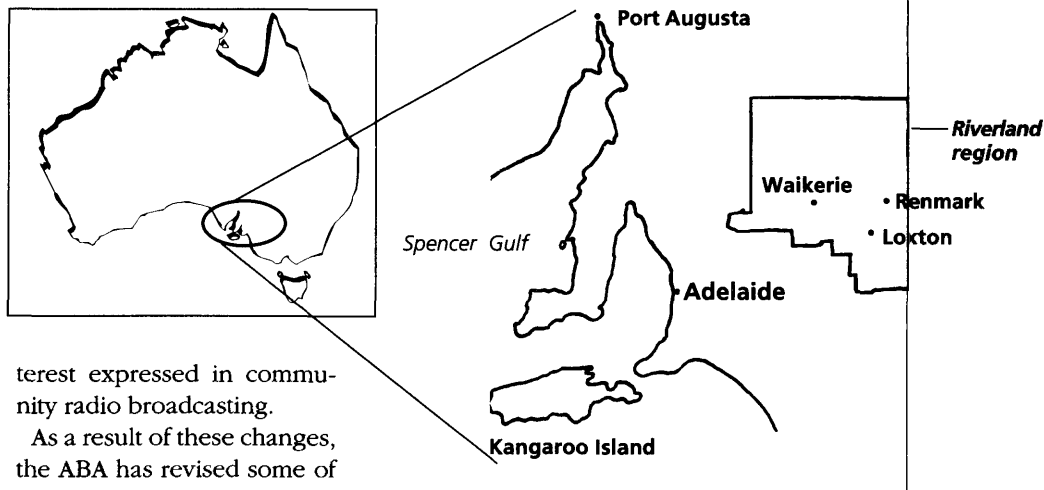
terest expressed in community radio broadcasting.

As a result of these changes, the ABA has revised some of its preliminary views and would now like public and industry comments on its second discussion paper.

'Having listened to the public and industry the first time

around, we're keen to hear their views on the second paper. The ABA is particularly interested in what existing and potential service providers in Riverland think,' Mr Webb said.

- making one AM and one FM frequency available instead of two FM frequencies available for the proposed national radio services;
- considering whether to



'If the lack of interest in providing a second commercial television service continues during the public comment period, the ABA will consider what other options may be available to improve services in the region,' he said.

The most significant changes from the ABA's initial draft licence area plan include:

- no longer planning for a second commercial television service;
- reconsidering options for the existing television services operating on VHF channels 3 and 5A;

make one or two additional frequencies available for commercial radio;

- whether to make a community service available for allocation immediately, or for a specified time in the future; and

■ looking at whether capacity should be made available for one or two low powered open narrowcasting services.

Mr Webb said it was important to understand the ABA's role.

'The ABA's job is to identify vacant radio and television channels and decide the

For copies of the LAP:

The discussion paper and microfiche copies of submissions are available at public libraries in Berri, Renmark/Paringa, Waikerie and Loxton or by calling freecall 1800 810 241.

Submissions

Written submissions should be sent to
Planning Officer for Riverland,
ABA
PO Box 34
Belconnen, ACT 2616
by 17 November 1995.



number and type of new channels and licences. Then it's for business and the community to take up these opportunities,' he said.

'Also, we cannot fund or make others fund extra services. Nor can we demand improved reception for existing services.'

Final licence area plans for the Riverland region are likely to be announced in the first half of 1996. Once this occurs, commercial licences will be auctioned via a price-based allocation process now being finalised by the ABA. New community licences will be allocated via a merit-based process.

'The ABA may decide to auction commercial licences from more than one area at the same time. This suggests we will start auctioning the first commercial licences in early 1996,' said Mr Webb.

These groups were Telecasters Australia Limited, Sunshine Broadcasting Network Limited, Southern Television Corporation Pty Limited, WIN TV Network and Regional Television Corporation Pty Ltd.

The licensee of the existing commercial television service, RTS, is also not interested in providing a second television service.

Sufficient vacant channels exist to accommodate one or more additional commercial television broadcasting services in the Riverland region immediately. However, in the absence of strong entrepreneurial or audience demand for such a service, it is the ABA's view that it would not be an economic or efficient use of spectrum to plan for a service that is unlikely to eventuate, nor would it further the objects of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

Planning

The draft licence area plan for Riverland shows the number and characteristics of all national (SBS and ABC), commercial, community and open narrowcasting radio and television broadcasting services to be made available on the broadcasting services bands of the radiofrequency spectrum. These are the part of the spectrum used by AM and FM radio services and VHF and UHF television services.

Main issues:

Television

The ABA's latest proposal not to plan for a second commercial television service is a result of interested groups withdrawing previous expressions of interest in providing a second commercial television service in the Riverland region.

Main issues:

Radio

The revised preliminary views for radio in the Riverland have been formed in response to expressions of interest the ABA has received from groups wanting to establish commercial, community and open narrowcasting radio services in the Riverland.

The ABA also received submissions from the National Transmission Agency expressing its dissatisfaction with the technical operating conditions of frequencies proposed for its ABC radio services.

The ABA has since reassessed its first plans for radio services in the Riverland and has found additional capacity. The latest discussion paper presents a number of options about the way the available spectrum might be allocated to best meet the entrepreneurial interest in the area.

ABA's EEO Achievements Recognised

The ABA's Equal Employment Opportunity achievements have been recognised with a nomination for the Prime Minister's Employer of the Year Award, with special recognition of Graeme Haigh, Manager, Financial Resources.

The Prime Minister's Awards recognise the initiatives of employers who employ people with disabilities. The ABA was nominated by Jobsupport Incorporated, an agency which provides on-the-job support to staff.

The Prime Minister's Awards were announced on 18 October, and the ABA was represented by Graeme Haigh. Mr Haigh played a major role in the employment and development of staff in the ABA, specifically supporting the Intellectual Disability Access Program.

Congratulations Graeme - well done!

Although the ABA did not win an award, the nomination came at an significant time, as the ABA developing its new EEO program for the period 1995-98, and is proof that even small agencies like the ABA can achieve success through EEO initiatives.

Other issues

The current discussion paper also canvasses in some detail the options concerning whether or not to move the existing television services operating on VHF channels 3 and 5A to different channels.

The major factors in considering clearance of these VHF channels are the demand for channel 5A in Riverland for use by low earth orbit (LEO) satellite system services and that six FM frequencies could become available if channel 3 was cleared.

The ABA planning process

The release of draft licence area plans (LAPs) is part of stage three of the planning process. The first stage was

completed in September 1993 with the release of the ABA's priorities for planning services across Australia. Stage two is also complete with the publication of the frequency allotment plan (FAP), setting out the number of radio and television channels in particular areas of Australia. ☐

The booklet, *Allocation of Community Broadcasting Licences (Broadcasting Services Bands)* contains ABA Form 32 and the Guide to allocation of community broadcasting licences. For copies of the booklet or for information about how to apply for a community broadcasting licence, call the Allocation and Renewal Section on (02) 334 7879 or (02) 334 7875.