



The ABA is continuing to release draft licence area plans for its top priority planning zones. Proposals for radio and television broadcasting in Darwin, Spencer Gulf, Geraldton and Broken Hill are discussed below.

New radio and television licences proposed

Darwin

The ABA proposes to make a second commercial television licence available in the Darwin area.

In addition, over the next two years, the ABA proposes to make five additional radio broadcasting licences available. Two of these licences would be for wide-coverage commercial FM radio services. Existing commercial radio operator 8HOT would be entitled to one of the licences.

Two radio licences would also be made available for community broadcasting in Darwin and one for community radio in Katherine. One of the Darwin licences would be available immediately while the Katherine licence and the second Darwin licence would be made available in two years time, to give aspirant groups time to emerge and build support.

The ABA also proposes to make five radio channels and one television channel avail-

able for open narrowcasting services.

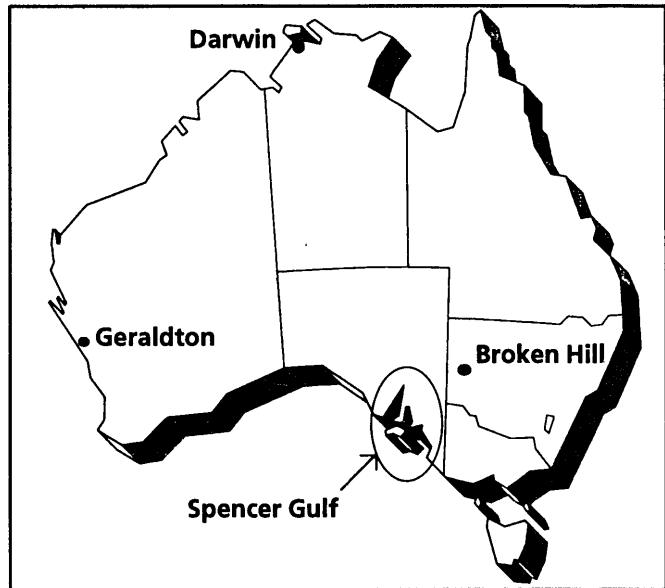
Details of the ABA's preliminary views are contained in the public planning proposals for Darwin. The proposals contain draft television and radio licence area plans (LAPs) for the Darwin and Katherine area.

The release of the proposals follows extensive public consultation including a public meeting in Darwin in November 1993. A call for written comment resulted in many submissions, which the ABA has taken into account in preparing the proposals. Copies of the planning proposals and submissions received can be read at the Northern Territory Library Service in Darwin, the Batchelor College Library and the Katherine Public Library.

Main issues

There are vacant radio and television channels sufficient to meet all immediately foreseeable demand. However, additional television services will need to be on the UHF band as there are constraints on allocating further channels in the VHF band.

The ABA proposes to make an additional commercial television licence available for allocation in Darwin. The service would use a UHF channel.



The ABA proposes to make two new commercial radio licences available for wide coverage services. In these circumstances, an existing radio operator who is the sole provider of a commercial service in a licence area (a 'solus operator') may be allocated one of those licences on request, in accordance with section 39 of the Broadcasting Services Act. The operator of 8HOT is a solus operator.

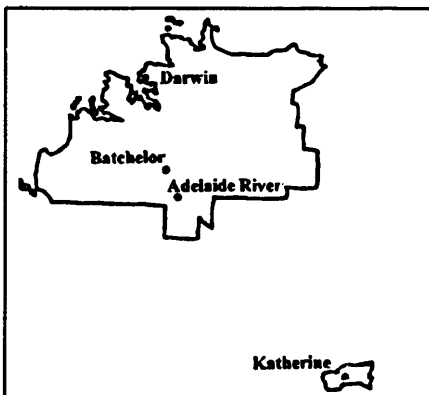
It is proposed to make two community radio licences available in Darwin, one immediately and the other in two years time. The question of whether these should be wide coverage or local coverage services has been left open and the ABA has asked for submissions on this issue.

Local coverage FM channels will be made available at Batchelor and Adelaide River for retransmission of the ex-

isting community radio service (8TOP) from Darwin.

The draft plans also deal with radio planning issues in Katherine, where one additional FM channel is planned for a new community radio service. The channel would be made available from a date two years after finalisation of the licence area plans, to allow time for aspirant groups to emerge and build support.

The ABA proposes to make five radio channels in the Darwin area available for open narrowcasting services for a period of five years. These consist of the existing high power AM radio channel currently used for racing services, a wide coverage FM channel and three local coverage FM channels. A local coverage television channel for open narrowcasting in Darwin city is also proposed to be made available.





Spencer Gulf

The ABA proposes to make a new commercial television licence available in the Spencer Gulf region of South Australia. Any new commercial service will be allocated a UHF television channel.

The ABA's preliminary view is contained in its public planning proposals for television in Spencer Gulf.

The planning of television services in Spencer Gulf was given a high priority as there is only one commercial television service in the area. The planning of radio services was given a lower priority and is scheduled to take place in 1996.

The release of the planning proposals follows extensive public consultation including public meetings in Port Lincoln, Port Pirie and Whyalla in December 1993. A call for written comment resulted in many submissions, which the ABA has taken into account in preparing the draft. Copies of the planning proposals and submissions received can be read at the following libraries: Port Augusta, Port Lincoln, Port Pirie, Alex Ramsay Library (Whyalla Stuart), Peterborough, Cummins School, Quorn School, Jamestown, Clare and Burra.

Existing services

The existing high power commercial and ABC television services in the Spencer Gulf area use channels on the VHF band (which covers channels 0 to 11). ABC is on channel 1 and GTS is on channel 4. There are also low power retransmitters (translators) using VHF channels at Cowell (ABC6 and GTS8).

SBS and a number of GTS and ABC translators operate

on the UHF band which covers channels 28 to 69.

Main issues

The main planning issue is whether additional commercial television licences should be made available in

the provider of a second commercial service under s.73.

During the ABA's public consultation, three other submitters expressed their interest in providing additional commercial television broadcasting services for Spencer Gulf.

The ABA believes the objects

tion. Any new television services will be on the UHF band. Viewers may need to purchase a UHF antenna to receive these services.

Another main issue is whether the GTS television service should remain on channel 4. Channel 4 occupies part of the radiofrequency spectrum normally used by FM radio. Moving the service from channel 4 to a channel in the UHF band would make more channels available for FM radio services.

The ABA's preferred option is to leave the GTS service where it is for the moment and review the situation at the time the ABA considers the licence area plan for radio in the Spencer Gulf region, in 1996.

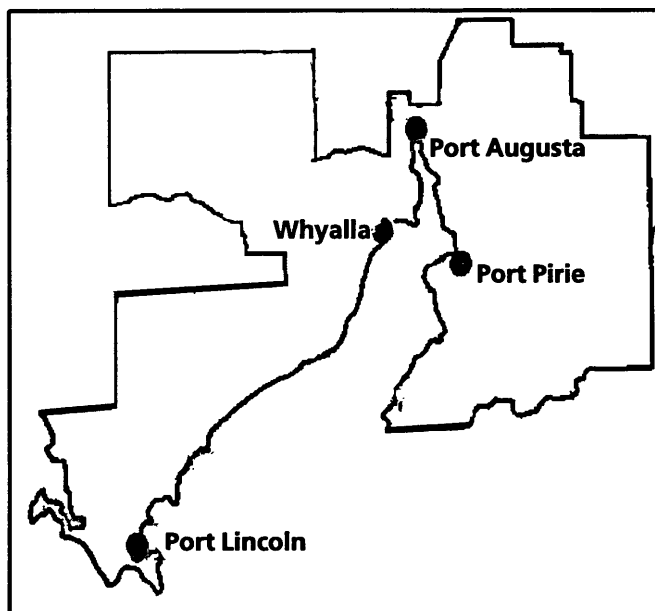
A UHF channel has been made available for use by GTS to enable it to commence simulcasting at any time should its VHF channel 4 transmitter become unreliable or unmaintainable.

Other issues

The ABA proposes to redefine the existing Spencer Gulf licence area using 1991 Census descriptions rather than the present 1981 descriptions, but to otherwise leave the licence area unchanged.

The licence area for the proposed new commercial television service will be identical to that for the existing commercial television service.

The ABA canvasses the option of relocation of the GTS and ABC transmitters at Winter Hill to North Side Hill to improve reception to the Port Lincoln township and Proper Bay Road residents and the installation of highly directive receive antennas to improve reception at Cummins.



the Spencer Gulf region, and if so, how many.

If there are one or more additional commercial television licences available for allocation, an existing television operator who is the sole provider of a commercial service in a licence area may be given permission to operate a second commercial service in the area, under the provisions of s.73 of the Broadcasting Services Act. This permission will only be given if the ABA is satisfied another person would be unlikely to be interested in, and in a position to operate another commercial television service in that market.

Spencer Gulf Telecasters Limited, the licensee of the existing commercial television service GTS, has indicated that it would be interested in applying to be

of the Act would be best served by making a single additional commercial service available in the area. These objects talk of the promotion of the availability of a diverse range of radio and television services offering entertainment, education and information (s.3 (a)) and the encouragement of providers of commercial and community broadcasting service to be responsive to the need for a fair and accurate coverage of matters of public interest and for an appropriate coverage of matters of local significance (s.3 (g)).

The ABA proposes to make television channels available for SBS translators at eight sites (Burra, Caralue Bluff, Clare, Coffin Bay, Cowell, Port Lincoln, Quorn and Tumby Bay) and for another national/community service throughout the Spencer Gulf area, pursuant to the Minister's notice of reserva-

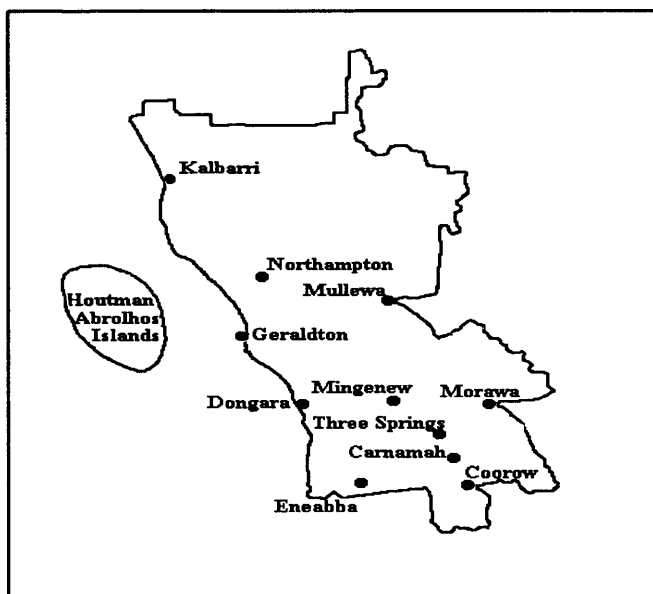


Geraldton

The ABA proposes to make a new commercial television licence available in the Geraldton and mid-west region of Western Australia. Any new commercial service will be allocated a UHF television channel.

In addition, the ABA's proposes to make available two community radio licences (one each for Geraldton and Northampton), one wide-coverage AM commercial radio licence for the mid-west shires and one medium power AM open narrowcasting radio licence for Geraldton.

Narrowcasting services typically provide programs aimed at special interest groups, or programs of limited appeal,



such as 'racing radio' or tourist information.

The draft plans follow extensive public consultation by the ABA which held a public meeting in Geraldton in No-

vember 1993. Over forty written submissions were received and then considered in preparing the ABA's new discussion document. Copies of the planning proposals and sub-

missions received can be read at the Geraldton library and Batty library, Perth.

Existing services

Two commercial FM radio services operate in Geraldton with a further three ABC radio services, two of which are on the FM band. Geraldton is the only area in Western Australia outside Perth to have more than one commercial radio service or have any on the FM band.

The existing high power commercial and ABC television services in Geraldton use channels on the VHF band (which covers channels 0 to 11). There are a number of low-power re-transmitters (translators) using VHF and UHF channels providing coverage to townships in the region.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The aim of the ABA's planning process is to identify any vacant radio and television channels, plan the availability of any new radio or television services and improve reception of existing services. It is important to note that the ABA cannot fund or compel others to fund additional broadcasting services, or improved reception of existing broadcasting services, in an area. It can only determine the number and characteristics of channels that are to be available.

Licence area plans will contain details of all national, commercial and community radio and television broadcasting services that are to be available in a particular area using the broadcasting services bands of the radiofrequency spectrum.

These are the parts of the spectrum used by AM and FM radio services and VHF and UHF television services.

The ABA may make any vacant channels available for commercial, community or national broadcasting services.

Commercial radio or television broadcasting licences shown as available in a licence area plan will generally be offered via a price-based allocation process to be determined under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

The three stages

The release of draft licence area plans begins 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, setting out the number of radio and television channels in particular areas of Australia. With priorities set and the frequency allotment plan in place, the ABA can now complete the final stage of the planning process, over the next two years.

Over the coming months public planning proposals containing draft LAPs will be circulated for public comment then released in final form.

The ABA has released draft LAPs for the Riverland (SA), Griffith and the MIA, Mildura/Sunraysia, Spencer Gulf (SA), Broken Hill and Geraldton. LAPs for South East South Australia (television only), Kalgoorlie, Central and South West Western Australia, Mt Isa and remote Australia are in preparation.

Licence allocation

Capacity set out in a LAP for commercial services will be made available under a price base allocation scheme currently being developed. Capacity set out for community services will be made available by means of a merit-based system.

Subject to consultation with the Spectrum Management Agency, allocation of spectrum for narrowcasting services would be by way of a price based allocation system.

The ABA will commence the allocation process for each area after a final LAP has been determined.

Copies of proposals

Copies of all planning proposals are available from the ABA on Freecall (008) 810 241.

They can also be viewed at local libraries.



Main Issues

The main constraint on the future development of broadcasting in the region is likely to be the expense of providing additional services to isolated and small communities. Constraints on the number of radio channels (both AM and FM) mean choices must be made between different types of services, eg., commercial, open narrowcasting.

The ABA has ensured frequencies are available for new ABC radio services, in line with Ministerial reservations. While the ABA plans the spectrum for these national services, it is the Government which decides when these services are funded and will begin.

The main planning issue disclosed by the ABA's public planning process is that the mid-west area of the region is poorly served with commercial radio that is relevant to the area. The ABA proposes to make an AM radio channel available in the vicinity of the town of Three Springs to provide a service for the underserved area.

There are sufficient vacant UHF television channels to meet expected demand for the region, so the ABA has reserved channels for an additional national and national/community television channel across the region on the UHF bands. The ABA has also recommended that any new commercial television service in the region be assigned a UHF channel.

The ABA has finalised technical specifications aimed at providing television broadcasters with the opportunity to improve reception in the mid-west.

Broken Hill

The ABA proposes to make a new commercial television licence available in the Broken Hill area. Any new commercial service will be allocated a VHF television channel.

The draft plans follow extensive public consultation by the ABA which held a public meeting in Broken Hill in February 1994. Over fifty written submissions were received and then considered in preparing the ABA's discussion document. Submissions are available for reading at Broken Hill library.

Existing services

There are two commercial, one community and three ABC radio services in Broken Hill. A fourth ABC radio service is scheduled to begin operation in 1995/96.

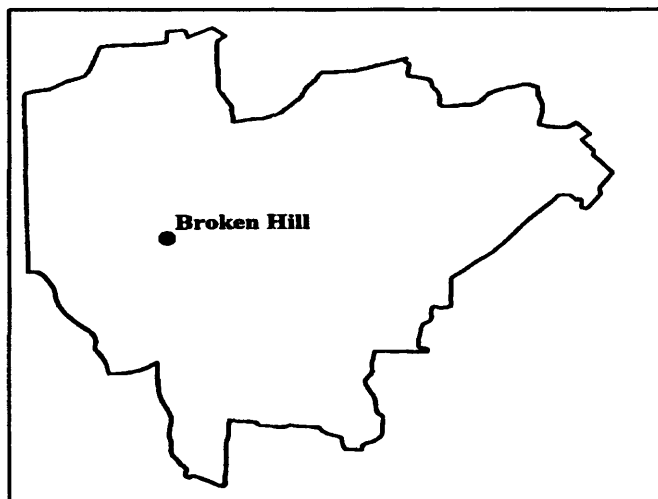
The existing high power commercial and ABC television services in Broken Hill use channels on the VHF band (which covers channels 0 to 11).

Main Issues

There are enough vacant television and radio channels to meet all immediately foreseeable demand. There is interest from various people in providing an extra commercial television service and the ABA's public consultation has shown demand for an extra service. There is strong support for the introduction of a racing service.

The ABA's preferred option is to make VHF channel 10 available for a new commercial television service.

It also proposes to reserve two UHF channels for intro-



duction of national broadcasting services some time in the future. These can be SBS television, ABC television, community television or parliamentary services. While the ABA plans the spectrum for these services, it is the Government which controls funding and decides on start-up dates.

The ABA proposes to make

a high powered FM channel available for open narrowcasting on a long term basis.

Given the very small size of the Broken Hill market and the lack of expressed demand for additional commercial or community radio services, the ABA does not propose to make any additional commercial or community radio licences available for allocation. ☐

Submissions

Written submissions on the proposals, quoting file references, should be sent to:

**Planning Officer for the area
ABA
P.O. Box 34
Belconnen ACT 2616.**

Darwin

quote file reference 94/6406,
address to: Planning Officer for
Darwin,
by **10 February 1995.**

Spencer Gulf

quote file reference 94/6820,
address to: Planning Officer for
Spencer Gulf,
by **17 February 1995.**

Geraldton

quote file reference 94/5036,
address to: Planning Officer for
Geraldton,
by **24 February 1995.**

Broken Hill

quote file ref. 94/5091,
address to: Planning Officer for
Broken Hill,
by **24 February 1995.** ☐