



The ABA is seeking comment from groups interested in resolving television reception problems in Perth, Western Australia.

ABA reviews TV reception problems in Perth

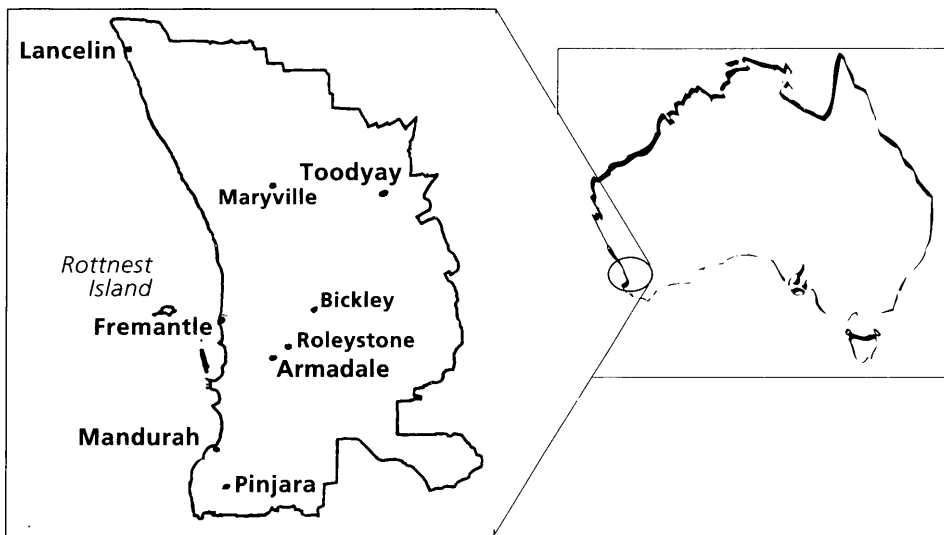
The ABA is seeking comment from groups interested in resolving television reception problems in Perth, Western Australia. These problems are detailed in a draft plan released by the ABA, focusing on television services in Perth.

Although the ABA is not able to plan additional free-to-air television services in Perth at present, the draft licence area plan (LAP) looks at ways to improve reception of existing services.

'The ABA has looked at the ways reception can be improved in Perth. We have arrived at several immediate and long term solutions,' said Mr Peter Webb, ABA Chairman.

'In the short term people could contact a reputable local antenna installer to see if there is any way of improving their antenna installation. We have advice that many antennas are incorrectly aligned. They could also consider setting up community funded re-transmission towers to boost the signal. In the future, new technologies such as 'ghost cancelling' and digital terrestrial broadcasting are likely to give Perth residents a clearer picture,' he said.

The public are now invited to comment on the sugges-



tions made in the draft LAP, both in relation to new channel capacity and reception.

'The proposals will now undergo public comment. The ABA hopes to receive some helpful opinions, particularly from the existing service providers or community groups interested in establishing self help services to improve reception,' Mr Webb said.

Planning television services in the Perth area has been given a high priority by the ABA because of the reception problems in the area. Planning radio services in the Perth area was given a lower priority and is scheduled to take place in 1996. This is part of a national planning process which will result in detailed

blueprints for radio and television services Australia-wide.

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 number and type of new channels and licences. Then it's for business and the community to take up these opportunities. We cannot fund or make others fund extra services. We can't demand improved reception for existing services,' he said.

The release of the draft licence area plan follows public consultation by the ABA which held meetings with the existing service providers, aspirant groups and other industry bodies in Perth in March 1995. Nearly sixty written submissions were

received about planning for television services in the Perth area.

Reception

The main planning issue disclosed by the ABA's consultation process is the reception problems in the Perth licence area. The draft LAP does not include proposals to plan for any additional re-transmission facilities (other than at Maryville and Lancelin, where community groups have already established facilities on a self-help basis) to resolve reception difficulties in Perth. This is because the ABA, to date, has not received any expressions of



interest from industry or community groups wishing to establish additional re-transmission facilities to improve reception.

The ABA is willing to consider making further capacity available for re-transmission facilities and/or community-funded re-transmission services to improve reception problems in Perth, but this is dependent on the existing licensees or the communities themselves expressing interest in establishing such services.

In the discussion paper accompanying the LAP, the ABA examines other options for improving reception. These include improved antenna installation, ghost cancelling technology, re-transmission facilities and community-funded re-transmission facilities.

When carrying out field measurements the Spectrum Management Agency (SMA) found that most antennas were pointed into the sides of hills, resulting in poor signals and ghosted reception. The ABA found some residents could improve reception by better antenna installation.

Ghost cancelling technology may resolve reception problems for television reception in the future where ghosting is the major problem. While the technology is not commercially available at the present time it may become a viable option within two years.

To plan for additional re-transmission services that are unlikely to be taken up by either the existing licensees or community groups would not be an economic or efficient use of spectrum, nor would it promote the objects of the Act, the draft plan says.

The ABA's proposals include:

- reservation of channels for re-transmission of national and national/community television services at Bickley, Roleystone, Toodyay, Lancelin and Maryville;
- making channel capacity permanently available for re-transmission facilities at Lancelin and Maryville;
- continuing to make the channel reserved for a national/community television

service available on a temporary basis for community and educational non-profit purposes.

Perth currently has six television services: two national services (ABC and SBS), three commercial services (NEW, STW, TVW) and an open narrowcasting service for community and education non-profit purposes.

In Perth, the ABA is unable to plan for any new commercial television services, or allocate a national/community television service permanently until a Ministerial review of the television broadcasting industry, scheduled to take place before 1 July 1997.

Other issues

The ABA proposes to redefine the licence areas of NEW, STW and TVW, using 1991 Census descriptions rather than the present 1981 descriptions but to otherwise leave the licence areas unchanged.

The ABA's planning process

A draft licence area plan (LAP) for television describes the number and characteristics of television services to be made available in an area. It contains details of all national (SBS and ABC), national/community and commercial television broadcasting services to be available in the broadcasting services bands of the radiofrequency spectrum (part of the spectrum used by VHF and UHF television services) in the region.

The release of draft licence area plans (LAPs)

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 (FAP), setting out the number of radio and television channels in particular areas of Australia. With priorities set and complete this third and final stage of the planning process.

The discussion document provides background and detailed explanation of the plans.

For copies of the LAP

The plan, a discussion document and microfiche copies of submissions is available at the following libraries:

Library and Information Service of WA,

Murdoch University Library,

Deakin University of Technology, and

Edith Cowan University (including Mt Lawley Campus);

or on freecall 1 800 810 241.

Submissions

Written submissions, quoting file number 95/6152 should be addressed to:

Planning Officer for Perth, Australian Broadcasting Authority

PO Box 34
Belconnen, ACT 2616

The closing date for submissions is
10 January 1996.

