



The ABA is calling for applications for four new community radio broadcasting licences.

Call for community radio licences

Four new community radio broadcasting licences are available in the Mildura and Darwin areas, two in each.

'These are the first new community radio broadcasting licences to be offered under the ABA's new merit-based allocation system,' said ABA Chairman Mr Peter Webb.

Applications for the licences close at 5.00 p.m., Friday 16 February 1996. A notice inviting applications has been published in relevant newspapers.

The *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* says allocation of broadcasting services bands (BSB) community broadcasting licences is to be merit-based. The ABA will allocate these licences on the basis of the merits of applicants and their proposed services and, where necessary, on the comparative merits of competing applications.

Under this system, in areas where there is only one applicant for a community broadcasting licence, the ABA only has to decide if the applicant merits a licence.

When there is more than one applicant, the ABA may also have to choose on the basis of comparative merit. Alternatively, applicants can combine to present a unified application.

'Allocation of new community broadcasting licences has begun in Mildura and Darwin as a result of the ABA's public planning process being finalised in these areas,' said Mr Webb.

'The planning process decides how much spectrum is available for commercial, community and national (ABC, SBS) broadcasting purposes. Licences are being offered because the planning process identified demand for new community services,' he said.

Community broadcasting

Only non-profit community broadcasting organisations which represent a community interest will be eligible for the allocation of a community broadcasting licence.

The ABA's allocation system only applies to services using radiofrequency spectrum in the

broadcasting services bands, not to community services using cable, satellite or other means of delivery.

Community licences can be allocated only if the ABA makes new community broadcasting services available in an area following its planning process and the release of a licence area plan (LAP).

The procedures the ABA will follow for allocating new licences are:

1 the ABA will advertise for applications in newspapers in the licence area. Applications must be lodged with the ABA by the date advertised. They must be made on the approved form, Form ABA 32: *Application for the Allocation of a Community Broadcasting Licence (Broadcasting Services Bands)*;

2 the ABA will publicise the details of applications received and advise when these will be available for public comment. Written comments on applications must be lodged with the ABA within 21 days from the date the ABA publicises their receipt;

3 the ABA will assess all applications on merit, having regard to the Broadcasting Services Act. The ABA will decide if a licence is to be allocated and, in the case of competing applicants, to which applicant.

The ABA is not obliged to allocate a community broadcasting licence to an applicant even though the ABA has advertised for and received applications.

In assessing applications on the basis of merit, the ABA will have regard to matters set out in the Act, which include:

- whether the proposed service meets the definition of a community broadcasting service;
- whether the applicant is a 'company' and represents a community interest;
- whether the allocation is subject to any Ministerial 'priority direction';
- the needs and interests of the community and the extent to which the applicant's proposed services would meet those needs and interests;
- the applicant's capacity to provide the proposed services; and
- matters related to the control of the licence. ☐

Applications for the licences close at 5.00 p.m., Friday 16 February 1996.

Prospective applicants should obtain a copy of a free information booklet, *Allocation of Community Broadcasting Licences (Broadcasting Services Bands)*, which contains an application form. For copies of the booklet or further information, call the Allocations and Renewals Section on (02) 334 7878 or 334 7875.