



The ABA has delayed the release of its draft licence area plans for the Spencer Gulf and Broken Hill regions.

TV planning in Spencer Gulf/Broken Hill

The ABA will release final licence area plans (LAPs) for Spencer Gulf television services and Broken Hill television and radio services in February 1996.

'The ABA had aimed to release the licence area plans for Spencer Gulf and Broken Hill before Christmas,' said Mr Peter Webb, ABA Chairman.

'However, because the existing television operator in each region, GTS and BKN, withdrew their interest in providing a second commercial television service last week, our final LAP decisions have been held up.'

Also, when the final LAPs for both regions are released in February, they will not contain planning for commercial television as a result of other groups withdrawing previous expressions of interest in providing second services in the two markets.

For both regions, those withdrawing were Telecasters Australia Limited (TEN Queensland), Sunshine Broadcasting Network Limited, Southern TV Corporation Pty Limited, WIN TV Network and Regional TV Corporation Pty Ltd. For Broken Hill, Imparja Television Pty Ltd also withdrew its interest in providing a second television service.

'We believe that sufficient vacant channels exist to accommodate one or more ad-

ditional commercial television services in both regions. However, unless strong entrepreneurial interest in these services is expressed in the next few weeks, there will be no point planning extra commercial television services as we proposed in the draft LAPs for both regions, released last January,' Mr Webb said.

'The ABA's role is to identify vacant radio and television channels and decide the number and type of new channels and licences. We cannot fund or make others fund extra services.'

While the plans to be released in February will not include planning for commercial television, they will cover television planning for national/community and national (ABC/SBS) services. The LAP for Spencer Gulf will not include radio services because radio planning in this region was given a lower priority and is scheduled to take place in early 1997.

Main issues

Spencer Gulf/Broken Hill 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 Spencer Gulf and Broken Hill regions.

The ABA has received an expression of interest from Far West Radio Pty Ltd (the licensee of the existing commercial radio stations 2BH and 2HIL) in providing a second commercial television service in Broken Hill.

The ABA is unable to consider this proposal as s.60(a) of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* says a person must not be in a position to exercise control of a commercial television broadcasting licence and a commercial radio broadcasting licence that have the same licence area.

Broken Hill radio

Through its public consultation process to date the ABA has received expressions of interest from four groups wanting to provide additional radio services to the Broken Hill region.

The groups include Central Zone FM Services Pty Ltd, who is interested in providing an additional commercial radio service; 2KY (Racing Radio), Far West Radio Pty Ltd and Tourist Radio Pty Ltd, who are interested in providing open narrowcasting services.

With regard to public demand for radio services in Broken Hill, the majority of the submissions the ABA received following its visit to Broken Hill in February 1994, were from private citizens.

Many of the submissions raised multiple issues, and 34.6

per cent requested the introduction of a 2KY open narrowcasting radio service. Following the release of the 1995 draft LAP, 77.8 per cent of the submissions received supported the introduction of 2KY racing in Broken Hill. One of these submissions was from the Broken Hill TAB, attaching a petition with 76 signatories.

Allocation of licences

With the exception of the capacity reserved for national broadcasters and channel capacity made available for allocation to community broadcasters, other capacity set out in the LAP will generally be available for commercial licences and open narrowcasting services, under a price-based allocation scheme.

Capacity set out for community licences will be made available by means of a merit-based system. The ABA will generally begin the allocation process after a final LAP for each area has been determined.

Channels not immediately required for broadcasting services may be allocated for other purposes (such as open narrowcasting) for a fixed period determined by the ABA.

At the end of that period, the spectrum will once again become available for mainstream broadcasting. ☐