



ABA response to FACTS on TV ad time

SYDNEY: The ABA has asked the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) to undertake public consultation on proposed changes to advertising time on television.

FACTS wants changes to the commercial television industry code of practice to meet expected demand for advertising time from political parties during election campaigns.

'Before we consider any change to the code, the ABA must be satisfied appropriate community safeguards are in place, any change is endorsed by a majority of commercial television stations and political parties, and thirdly that members of the public have been given an adequate opportunity to comment on the proposed change,' said Mr Nick Herd, ABA Director of Program Services.

He said the ABA would be particularly keen to see the results of public consultation by FACTS on its proposed change to advertising time. FACTS has called for comment on the change in newspaper advertisements on 20 January.

FACTS has asked the ABA to register a change to the code which would allow up to one extra minute of advertising in any prime time hour (between 6.00 p.m. and midnight) to allow for political advertisements.

This would not increase the total amount of advertising now shown on television during prime time (78 minutes in six hours) but may mean viewers see more advertisements (up to 16 minutes an hour) when high rating programs are shown during prime-time in election periods.

Currently, an average of 13 minutes per hour of non-program matter is allowed in prime-time (with a maximum of 15 minutes in any one hour and no more than 14 minutes scheduled in any four of those hours).

FACTS has not proposed changes to advertising allowed outside of prime time. This is currently an average of 15 minutes per hour (with a maximum of 16 minutes in any one hour).

The commercial television industry code of practice took effect on 5 September 1993 when it was registered by the ABA. It will be subject to review later in 1996.

ABA collects \$148.8m in TV and radio licence fees

SYDNEY: The ABA has collected commercial broadcasting licence fees of over \$148.8m based on revenue earned by the industry during the 1994-95 financial year.

'Broadcasting spectrum is a scarce public resource and licence fees are paid by the industry for using this resource. The money collected goes to consolidated revenue,' said Mr Peter Webb, ABA Chairman.

The ABA collected \$139m from 44 commercial television services (compared to \$124.7m from 44 services in the previous year) and \$9.8m was collected from 165 commercial radio services (compared to \$9.1m from 164 services in the previous year).

'This is an 11.2 per cent increase on last year's figure of \$133.8m. It reflects the healthier state of the broadcasting industry in 1994-95 and the lower rebates claimed by non-metropolitan regional television services,' said Mr Peter Webb, ABA Chairman.

Most non-metropolitan licensees in NSW, ACT, Queensland and Victoria and both licensees in Tasmania have been allowed to claim a rebate on all or some of their licence fees. This recognises the expenses incurred by them in expanding their service areas under the Government's equalisation policy.

Rebates for this year totalled \$17.7m (compared to \$20m in the previous year). The reduction is due to the fact that services in markets which first benefited from this policy in 1988-89 have now exhausted their right to a rebate.

A small number of services are yet to pay their fees or have not paid the correct fee.

Annual licence fees are calculated on a percentage of gross earnings by the licensee for the previous financial year. In order to preserve confidentiality, fees for individual operators are not available.