



Opportunities for producers in changing broadcasting environment

PERTH: The power of forces on the loose in the broadcasting environment is certain to bring about huge change, Mr Peter Webb, ABA Chairman, said in his address to the 'Small Screen, Big Picture' conference in Fremantle on 9 March.

'The challenge is to grasp the opportunities that change will bring,' Mr Webb said.

The broadcasting landscape has already changed over the past two years with the introduction of pay TV. While pay TV has provided limited scope for producers of Australian programming to date, opportunities for Australian producers are set to increase significantly. The only Australian content requirement for pay TV operators at present is a licence condition that 10 per cent of expenditure on programming for drama channels must be for new Australian drama.

'Following a round of discussions with the pay TV operators and the production industry about this licence condition, it is clear that few, if any, of the pay TV operators will themselves expend money on programming,' Mr Webb said. 'The ABA has therefore been encouraging voluntary expenditure on new Australian programming by those companies which are packaging program streams or channels for the pay TV industry.'

'If the licence condition remains unchanged, the pay TV industry believes that while there may not be a great impact on the production industry in the short term, the long term will bring quite significant commissions for new Australian drama programs.'

In less than sixteen months satellite delivery of pay TV in Australia will be unhindered by licence limitations and the present cross media rules governing the two existing satellite operators will drop away. In the period leading up to this loosening of regulations, the Minister for Communications and the Arts must conduct a review of the level of Australian programming on all pay TV channels.

The advent of services on the Internet that will be indistinguishable from radio and television programs is also an opportunity for Australian producers, Mr Webb said. As part of its current investigation into the content on on-line services, the ABA has set out to explore possibilities that might encourage local development.

Other issues canvassed by Mr Webb in his speech included the prospects for a fourth commercial television channel, the roll out of pay TV in Western Australia and ABA progress in planning new free to air television services in regional Western Australia.

During his visit to Perth, Mr Webb met with a number of bodies and individuals who have made submissions to the ABA's on-line investigation, including the Censorship Office of Western Australia, the WA Internet Association and the Electronic Frontiers Association.

Submissions: on-line services investigation

SYDNEY: The regulation of on-line services is clearly a hot topic in Australia today. This is supported by the large number and range of individuals and organisations who have made

Programs granted C and P classification

Programs granted C and P classification between 5 February 1996 and 4 March 1996. Producers interested in submitting programs for classification should contact Liz Gilchrist on (02) 334 7840.

Title	Origin	Class.	New/ Renewal	Decision date	Applicant
HERCULES	Australia	CAD	new	23.1.1996	Burbank Animation Studios Pty Ltd
LIFT OFF	Australia	CAD	new	30.1.1996	Australian Children's Television Foundation
LIFT OFF	Australia	P	new	30.1.1996	Australian Children's Television Foundation

C - children's program CAD - C Australian drama P - Preschool program PRC - Provisional C



submissions to the ABA's Issues Paper for the *Investigation into the Content of On-line Services* which was released in December 1995.

Around two hundred submissions have been received to date. These have come from academic organisations, community groups, educational groups, Government, content and Internet service providers and users.

While some submissions have rejected the idea of any regulation of on-line services, most have offered constructive comment on the ideas presented in the *Issues Paper*. The main questions raised in the *Issues Paper* were:

- Who is responsible for the content of on-line services?
- What are the developments in technology and service trends, including the impact of broadband delivery systems and the impact of the post-1997 regulatory framework?
- What are community concerns in relation to on-line services?
- What views exist on the possibility of a introducing a code of practice for on-line services?
- What is the feasibility of a classification scheme for Australian content providers?
- How could a code be enforced?
- What is the appropriateness for developing a representative on-line industry peak body?
- What is the appropriateness of establishing an independent complaints handling body?
- What are the existing control tools and developments in the educational sector?
- How appropriate would the development of a 'refused access list' be?
- What consumer issues arise?
- How can the development of Australian content be encouraged?
- What are the most effective ways to achieve international collaboration on content issues?

As this issue of *ABA Update* goes to print the submissions are being analysed, and follow-up consultations are being organised in preparation for drafting the final report which is due to be presented to the Minister for Communications and the Arts by 30 June.

All submissions not marked as confidential are available to be viewed in hard copy in the ABA library, and are being put on the ABA's homepage located at:

<http://www.dca.gov.au/aba/hpcov>.

Community broadcasting - applications for licences

SYDNEY: The ABA has received applications from aspirant community broadcasters in Darwin and Mildura for the two community broadcasting licences available in each of those cities.

Three aspirant community broadcasters have applied for the two licences in Darwin, and two aspirant community broadcasters have applied for the two licences in Mildura. The Darwin applicants are Darwin Christian Broadcasters Assoc. Ltd; Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association; and Larrikia Association Inc.

The Mildura applicants are Association for the Blind Ltd; and CARNMA Trading (Aboriginal Corporation).

The ABA invited applications by way of newspaper notices on 12 December 1995.

These are the first new community radio broadcasting licences to be offered under the ABA's new merit based allocation system. Applications closed on 16 February 1996.

The *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* says free-to-air community broadcasting service licences must be allocated on the basis of merit. 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.

The ABA has placed copies of applications on display in local libraries and invites public comment. Interested parties have 21 days to comment, from the date of notification.

New Minister

CANBERRA: The new Minister for Communications and the Arts in the newly elected Liberal/National Party Government is Senator The Honourable Richard Alston.

His address is:

Room MG70

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600.