



# News Update

## **CBAA conference**

MELBOURNE: The ABA was strongly represented at this year's Community Broadcasting Conference, *Our Vision Our Voice*, held in Melbourne from 23-26 November. The Minister for Communications and the Arts, the Hon. Michael Lee addressed the conference on 24 November and announced that the Communications Law Centre will undertake an assessment of how community television has used the sixth



Bob Scott, ABA deputy chairman, at the CBAA conference

channel since it was made available on a continuing trial basis in April 1994. The assessment will form part of the process of considering the future of the sixth television channel.

Peter Webb, ABA Chairman, outlined the current situation with the ABA's planning and allocations processes and the likely impact on timing of the legislative amendments (since passed by Parliament) regarding the licensing of second radio licences in solus commercial radio markets. Mr Webb also announced that the last impediment to the registration of the community radio codes of practice by the ABA had now been removed following the in principle agreement to the code at the National Indigenous Media Association of Australia (NIMA) conference in November (see report on the NIMA conference for more detail).

ABA Deputy Chairman Bob Scott, General Manager Policy and Programs Gareth Grainger, Director Planning Giles Tanner, Manager Allocations and Renewals John Souter, Director Engineering Bob Greeney and Manager Services Planning Mike Salloom all participated in the conference sessions. They were also available

to answer queries by community licensees and aspirants about technical, planning and allocations matters.

Aspirant community radio broadcasters were well represented at the conference as were community television groups for whom access to cable delivery was an issue of particular concern.

Achievements awards were presented to participants in the community broadcasting industry at the conference dinner.

On 26 November, representatives of the ABA and the Spectrum Management Agency fielded questions from a large audience about various aspects of the planning and allocation processes.

## **SPAA conference**

MELBOURNE: The Screen Producers Association of Australia (SPAA) held their annual conference in Melbourne on 8 - 10 November.

The format of the conference was a series of seminars, with a small trade exhibition and, reportedly, an informal but active 'market'.

The keynote address was given by Sir David Puttnam, who reflected on the changing role of the producer in the information age. He argued that the biggest challenge facing producers outside Hollywood was not so much possessing the creativity and skill to produce compelling entertainment, but being committed to building a genuinely thriving and sustainable audio-visual industry independent of Hollywood. From a European perspective that was an enormous challenge, but one which he felt Australia had taken some first confident steps towards achieving.

The future of public broadcasting in a multi channel environment was also a dominant theme, with strong arguments being put by Australian and international speakers for the continuing role of broadcasters like the ABC, SBS and the BBC in promoting diversity and innovation in broadcasting services.

The views of the Government and the Opposition were represented in addresses by the Minister for Communications and the Arts, the Hon. Michael Lee and the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. John Howard. The Government pointed to its continuing support for the film and television industry and recent initiatives such as Creative Nation. The Opposition also renewed its commitment to the development of the industry and identified