



News Update

ABA major participant in communications research forum

CANBERRA: The ABA was a major participant in Australia's premier annual exchange of information and ideas on communications policy research – the Communications Research Forum. Organised by the Bureau of Transport and Communications Economics (BTCE), the 1997 Forum was held in Canberra on 2–3 October.

ABA involvement in the 1997 Forum included representation on the Forum Steering Committee, participation on policy panels, presentation of papers, charring sessions and assistance with a new feature of the Forum program – the Research Roundtables. Deputy Chairman, Mr Gareth Grainger was a member of the Steering Committee as well as a member of the referee panel which assessed the suitability of papers submitted for presentation.

Ms Lesley Osborne, Manager Standards, was a participant on the policy panel discussing 'Australian Content on Pay TV'. This was one of two major policy panel discussions at the Forum, the other being 'Telecommunications Deregulation and Universal Services Orders (USOs)'. Dr Nelson Vithanage, Senior Research Officer, presented a paper on financial results for the commercial broadcasting industries over the past five years, while Mr Stephen Nugent, Research Manager, presented results of the ABA's pilot comparative study of on-line services regulatory issues in four countries. Ms Osborne and Ms Debra Richards, Director Program Services, also contributed through the charring of sessions.

The research roundtables were a new feature of the Forum and enabled an exchange of ideas on research priorities and mechanisms for ongoing communication between researchers. Mr Nugent was one of the session organisers and facilitated the roundtable on on-line services. The other two roundtables discussed research issues relating to Australian content and telecommunications deregulation.

A new award to be presented at next year's Communications Research Forum was also announced. The annual award will be presented for best communications research paper presented by a postgraduate student. The ABA has agreed to sponsor this award as part of its ongoing commitment to this important annual event. Further details of the Forum program and proceedings can be obtained by contacting Brad Jennings at the BTCE on (02) 6274 7817.

ABA meetings

SYDNEY: Members of the ABA held their first meeting under the new Chair, Professor David Flint, on Friday 17 October. ABA meetings will be held on a monthly basis. Part of the meeting will be dedicated to the discussion of major issues, another part will be for the dissemination of information and yet another for decisions. A shorter second meeting each month will be convened as required for decision making. The indicative dates for monthly meetings for the remainder of 1997 and 1998 are as follows:

1997	
11-12 November	Melbourne
11-12 December	Sydney
1998	
5-6 February	Adelaide
5-6 March	Sydney
2-3 April	Perth
28-29 May	Sydney
25-26 June	Brisbane
30-31 July	Sydney
27-28 August	Hobart
1-2 October	Sydney
10-11 November	Melbourne
10-11 December	Sydney

Farewell to Peter Webb

SYDNEY: The ABA farewells Mr Peter Webb who completed his appointment as ABA Chairman on 4 October 1992. Mr Webb was appointed chairman of the ABA in April 1995. Before that he was Deputy Chairman of the ABA from its inception on 5 October 1992, and vice Chairman of the ABT from his appointment in May 1992.

While Mr Webb presided over all ABA matters in his role as Chairman, he had a particular interest in three areas: regulation of on-line services, international relations and digital broadcasting. He was instrumental in positioning Australia at the forefront of these areas.

Under his chairmanship, the ABA made significant inroads into its national public planning process. The international relations program expanded and developed; with the ABA now having signed agreements with regulators in eight countries.

The ABA investigated and reported on a number of matters of critical importance to the industry under Mr Webb. These included: the content of on-line services; digital radio and television broadcasting; Australian content on pay TV; the future use of the sixth television channel; anti-siphoning; and matters relating to