



11 new radio services for the Hunter

The ABA has made channels available for 11 new radio services in the Hunter region of NSW. The region comprises the radio markets of Newcastle, Muswellbrook and Taree.

In addition, licences for open narrowcasting services will be made available for allocation in each of Newcastle, Murrurundi, Muswellbrook, Taree and Gloucester.

The community radio licences will be allocated by means of a merit-based allocation process. The licences for the open narrowcasting services will be allocated by auction.

The ABA's decisions are contained in its final licence area plans for radio in the Hunter region.

Commercial radio

There are currently four commercial radio services operating in Newcastle. R G Capital Radio expressed interest in providing additional commercial radio services to Newcastle. However there are severe technical limitations on finding additional radio channels in Newcastle due to the operation of the NBN television operating on channel 3. The ABA has chosen to make the one available high power FM

channel available for an additional community radio service.

No interest has been expressed in providing additional commercial radio services in Muswellbrook and Taree. There are two commercial radio services licensed to serve each of these two areas.

No new commercial radio services have been planned for the Hunter region.

Community radio

As a result of this interest, the ABA has decided to make channels for one new community radio service available in each of these locations.

The ABA will make licences for new community radio services available in each of Newcastle, Cessnock/Maitland, Port Stephens, Lake Macquarie, Murrurundi/Muswellbrook and Taree.

The following groups expressed interest in providing new community radio services: Newcastle Christian Broadcasters Trading as Radio Rhema (Newcastle); Central Hunter Community Broadcasters Incorporated (Cessnock/Maitland); Lake Macquarie FM (Lake Macquarie); Port Stephens FM Radio (Port Stephens/Nelson

Bay); Mt Helen FM & TV (Murrurundi) and Manning Great Lakes Christian Broadcasters Inc (Taree).

Open narrowcasting radio

Following interest expressed by NSW Race Narrowcasters in providing open narrowcasting radio services to the Hunter region, channel capacity for one high power open narrowcasting service will be made available for each of Newcastle, Muswellbrook and Taree; and one medium power open narrowcasting service for each of Murrurundi and Gloucester.

NSW Race Narrowcasters also expressed interest in providing an open narrowcasting radio service at Forster, and Information Radio Services expressed interest in providing an open narrowcasting radio service at Port Stephens/Nelson Bay.

The ABA has decided to delay consideration of making channels available for an open narrowcasting service at each of Port Stephens/Nelson Bay and Forster. This follows advice from the Department of Communications and the Arts that the Minister for Communications, the Information Economy and the Arts may

want to reserve radio channels for local retransmission of national radio services at Port Stephens/Nelson Bay.

National radio

The licence area plan reserves channel capacity for existing and planned national radio services. Apart from the existing national radio services throughout the region, an alternative channel has been planned for one of the Murrurundi ABC services. FM 96.9 MHz may be used instead of FM 102.5 MHz by the ABC to overcome a longstanding intermodulation problem.

Radio licence area plans

Copies of the radio licence area plans for the Hunter region will be available for viewing at the Newcastle Region Public Library and the Greater Taree City Library, or can be obtained from the ABA by calling Freecall 1800 810 241.

The radio licence area plans are also available on the ABA web site, <www.aba.gov.au>.

