



# News Update

Copies of the ABA's submission and its opening statement are available from the ABA: call (02) 9334 7700.

information about ABA research into community attitudes to television, on-line services, codes of practice, the complaints process, and ABA investigations into unresolved complaints.

The main focus of the Committee's questions to the ABA was privacy and media intrusion; the complaints process and the time taken to resolve complaints; and illegal material available through on-line services. The ABA undertook to provide the Committee with information about the time taken by the ABA to complete investigations into unresolved complaints.

## **Court upholds ABA CanWest decision**

The Full Federal Court has dismissed an appeal by CanWest Global Communications Corp. against the August 1997 judgement by Justice Hill of the Federal Court. This judgement upheld the ABA's original decision that CanWest Global was illegally in control of the Ten television network.

The deadline for CanWest to rectify its breaches of the Broadcasting Services Act is 4 April 1998.

## **ABA decisions**

At its meeting in Sydney on 27 November 1997, the ABA made the following decisions:

1. determined the licence area plans for radio services in the Atherton region of northern Queensland;
2. approved the revised policy guidelines for issuing transmitter licences for special events;
3. subject to comments by the industry, approved the policy for considering applications for the retransmission of programs transmitted by a commercial or community broadcasting licensee within or outside the licence area of that licence; and
4. endorsed the establishment of a national ABA Children On-line Taskforce.

At its meeting in Sydney on 12 December 1997, the ABA made the following decisions:

1. approved the drop-through of parts of the radiofrequency spectrum for temporary community broadcasting licences;
2. allocated temporary community broadcasting licences for radio services in various parts of Australia;
3. decided that applications for retransmission of television services in remote areas will be considered only where an 'applicant area' is not receiving the number of services licensed to service that area, or where reception of

services is of poor quality. This policy became effective immediately and will be reviewed after three years in light of technological developments; and

4. allocated subscription television broadcasting licences to Foxtel Cable Television Pty Ltd and Selectra Pty Ltd.

## **Globalisation of broadcasting and on-line services**

*The following is the synopsis of a report by Pat Manser, Director Policy and Communications. The report was prepared after Ms Manser's Senior Executive Fellowship during which she visited France, the United Kingdom and Singapore. The full text of the report is available on the PSMPC Web site at: <<http://www.psmpc.gov.au>>.*

The terms 'convergence' and 'information superhighway' in relation to the broadcasting and on-line services industries are becoming so overused as to be almost meaningless. They are, nonetheless, the tips of the icebergs of some serious issues for Australia, its government, their regulators and the community generally. These issues range from the protection of children from material that might be harmful to them, to national sovereignty and the globalisation of the industries involved. They span questions of economic growth in the 'information age' to the social values and mores of the societies involved.

The report discusses the current state of play on these matters the United Kingdom, France, and Singapore. These countries were chosen because of their international input into the issues and their similarity with Australia in their attempts to ensure good public policy outcomes in both broadcasting and on-line services.

All three have distanced their broadcasting and on-line regulation from direct government involvement to the extent that they all have independent statutory authorities, accountable to their parliaments, to manage these issues. All three are multicultural communities with interests in social cohesion and a focused role for government intervention in industry with specific social goals in mind. All three regulate the content of the broadcasting and on-line industries to some extent.

The pressures to change this latter approach are canvassed:

- the nature of the industries involved and their desire for economies of scale;