



The ABA has conducted a public hearing in Darwin to assist it in allocating two new community radio licences for the Darwin area. This is the first such hearing the ABA has conducted.

Darwin community radio — ABA conducts public hearing

The ABA conducted a public hearing in Darwin on 15, 16 and 17 April 1998 to assist it in allocating two new community radio licences for the Darwin area.

The hearing, which was open to members of the public and the media, was conducted by a panel constituted by Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman, and Mr Gareth Grainger, ABA Deputy Chairman.

The decision has been reserved but is expected to be handed down in May 1998.

The ABA considered three applications for the two community radio licences. The applications, which are all for both licences, are from Darwin Christian Broadcasters Association Inc, Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (Aboriginal Corporation) (TEABBA) and Radio Larrakia Association Inc.

'The particular circumstances of this allocation process have resulted in it being a protracted one to date,' said Mr Gareth Grainger, Acting ABA Chairman. 'A public hearing provides a way for the ABA to quickly gather the information it requires to assess the relative merits of the applicants. It also offers the oppor-

tunity for each applicant to present its case to the ABA in person.'

Following the hearing, the ABA will decide whether, and to whom, to allocate community radio licences to serve Darwin. In making its decision, the ABA will consider all the information and submissions provided during the allocation process.

A public hearing file is available for public viewing at the Northern Territory Library, Parliament House, Darwin.

Darwin licences

The two new community radio licences for Darwin were determined in the radio licence area plan for Darwin and Katherine, released in October 1995.

On 11 December 1995, the ABA called for applications for the licences and received three applications. They were from Darwin Christian Broadcasters Association Inc., Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (Aboriginal Corporation) and Radio Larrakia Association Inc.

DCBA

Darwin Christian Broadcasters Association Inc. (DCBA) is

a non-denominational association comprising members of at least four different churches. It claims to represent the interests of the Christian community in Darwin (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, ethnic groups, and visually or literacy impaired persons).

DCBA aims to provide a full-time service catering to the Christian community with pre-recorded midnight to dawn Christian music (sourced by Radio Rhema). DCBA aims to broadcast a range of wholesome music, entertainment and educational materials, lifestyle tips, interviews, talk-back counselling, youth music and issues, story readings, regular news and current affairs, and community announcements.

TEABBA

Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (Aboriginal Corporation) (TEABBA) is an association of established remote community broadcasters (formerly BRACS licensees deemed to be community radio broadcasters under the Broadcasting Services Act). TEABBA provides a satellite delivered radio feed to 29 Top End Aboriginal communities in the

Northern Territory. TEABBA is essentially a program supplier, relaying programs from BRACS communities. TEABBA's current service is an open narrowcast radio broadcasting service and does not currently broadcast in Darwin, although its head office is located there. TEABBA proposes to continue to operate its open narrowcast service should it be successful in being allocated a community radio licence in Darwin.

TEABBA represents the 29 Aboriginal communities of the Top End. It claims there has been growth in resettlement of indigenous people from the 29 member communities now living in the greater Darwin area. TEABBA claims that there is more than one Aboriginal clan group living in Darwin.

TEABBA states that it will provide all indigenous programming comprising indigenous music, news and community notices and discussion of current topical issues at peak listening times. Specialist programs relating to legal issues, Larrakia, health, requests, prisoners, women and schools will be broadcast. Community information programs such as NT



Quarantine, NT Land Council will be expanded. Programming will include English as well as indigenous language programs.

Radio Larrakia

Radio Larrakia represents the Larrakia people who, it claims, are the sole traditional owners of area to be served by the licence. Radio Larrakia also claims to represent a wider cross-section of the indigenous community in Darwin through inter-marriage and proposes to broadcast cross-cultural programming catering to that wider community.

Radio Larrakia states that the needs of the community to be served include redressing the decline in the sense of iden-

As Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (Aboriginal Corporation) (TEABBA) and Radio Larrakia Association Inc. were both competing to serve the same community interest, the ABA encouraged them to merge.

In the responses to the ABA, it was clear that a merger, while arguably in the best interests of the indigenous communities of Darwin, involved complex negotiations and could not be achieved in the short term. Despite Radio Larrakia's preference to delay the allocation process until a merger could be achieved, in August 1997 both parties advised the ABA that each application should stand on its own.

ing radiofrequency spectrum in the broadcasting services bands (e.g. FM radio), not to community services using cable, satellite or other means of delivery.

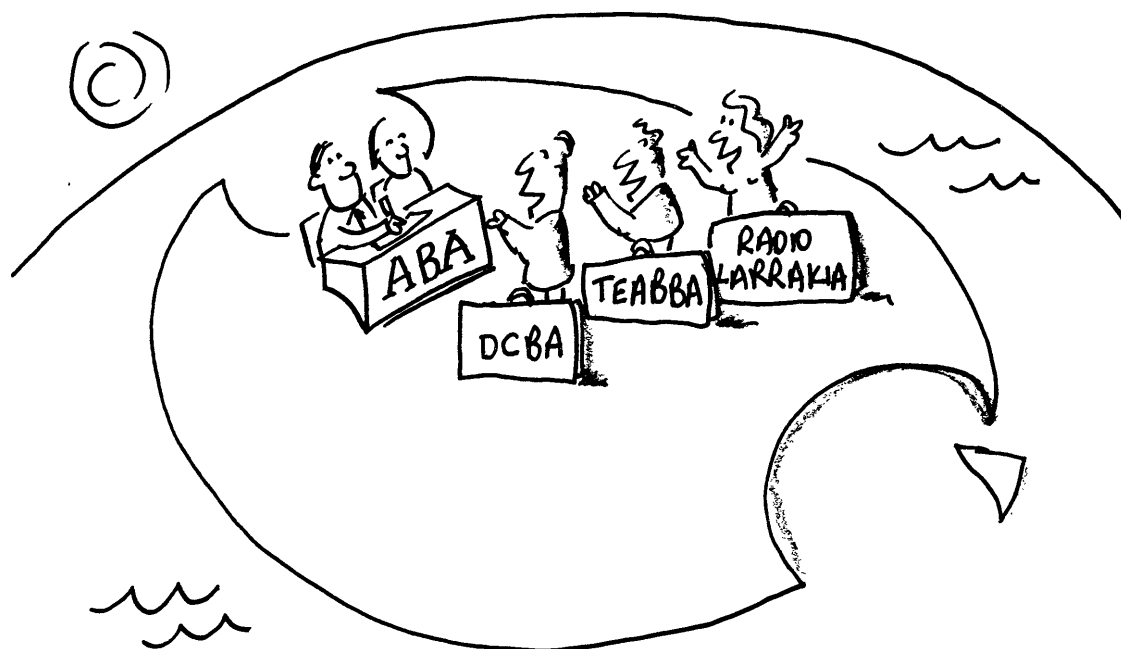
The ABA is not obliged to allocate a community broadcasting licence to an applicant even though the ABA has advertised for and received applications.

The ABA will assess all applications on the basis of the merits of the applicants and their proposed services and, where necessary, on the comparative merits of competing applications, having regard to the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

Matters which the ABA will have regard to when assess-

'company' and represents a community interest;

- whether the allocation is subject to any Ministerial 'priority direction';
- the extent to which the proposed service would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the community within the licence area of the proposed service;
- the applicant's capacity to provide the proposed service;
- the undesirability of one person being in a position to exercise control of more than one community broadcasting licence that is a broadcasting services bands licence in the same licence area; and
- the undesirability of the Commonwealth, a State or a Territory or a political party



tity of the Larrakia people, and social needs (health, women's interests, reconciliation, education about domestic violence and substance abuse issues) which would enhance social justice, equity, and access for the Larrakia people and across the wider community.

Community broadcasting

Only non-profit community broadcasting organisations which represent a community interest will be eligible for the allocation of a community broadcasting licence.

The ABA's licence allocation system applies to services us-

ing applications on merit are based on criteria set out in section 84(2) of the Act. They include:

- whether the proposed service meets the definition of a community broadcasting service;
- whether the applicant is a

being in a position to exercise control of a community broadcasting licence.

The hearing was conducted pursuant to section 182 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.