

**New commercial radio licence for Murray Bridge**

The ABA has allocated a second commercial radio licence to Australian Regional Broadcasters Pty Ltd, owner of 5MU Murray Bridge. This is the fifty-third commercial radio licence allocated by the ABA to a regional operator providing the only commercial service in a market.

The new service 5EZY will cover the same area as the existing AM service and will broadcast on FM 98.7 MHz in Murray Bridge.

The fee for the licence was \$10 000. Australian Regional Broadcasters Pty Ltd now has 12 months to get the new service up and running.

The ABA has already granted second licences under section 39 to commercial radio broadcasters in Albany, Armidale, Atherton, Ballarat, Bathurst, Bega, Bridgetown, Bunbury, Carnarvon, Charleville, Charters Towers, Coffs Harbour, Colac, Cooma, Darwin, Devonport, Dubbo, Emerald, Esperance, Griffith, Goulburn, Grafton, Gunnedah, Gympie, Horsham, Innisfail, Inverell, Kalgoorlie, Katanning, Karratha, Kingaroy, Lithgow, Longreach, Mandurah, Maryborough, Merredin, Mildura, Mt Gambier, Mudgee, Nambour, Narrogin, Northam, Orange, Parkes, Port Hedland, Queenstown, Renmark, Roma, Swan Hill, Taree, Wangaratta and Young.

community to seek their views on what additional broadcasting services were needed in their area.

When the ABA invited applications for the new community radio licence on 30 July 1998, Muda Aboriginal Corporation was the only applicant. Its application was assessed, with particular regard to whether the proposed service would meet existing and future needs within the Bourke region.

The proposed service will operate full time, and will reflect the range of needs and interests of the local Aboriginal community. It will provide entertainment, news and sports programs and a range of information including matters relating to education, health issues and the preservation of local culture, with an emphasis on survival of the community language.

Bourke region

The area is currently served by the national television services, ABC and SBS, and commercial television services, IMP and QQQ. In addition to the ABC radio services 2WPR, 2ABCFM, 2JJJ and 2ABCRN, there is one community radio service, 2WEB.

In the radio licence area plan for the Bourke region, which was released on 10 December 1996, the ABA determined one new community radio service be made available.

**New community licence for Bourke**

The ABA has allocated a new community radio licence for Bourke, New South Wales.

The licence was allocated to Muda Aboriginal Corporation to operate a service on 106.5 MHz on the FM band.

The licensee has 12 months to get the new service up and running.

'The proposed service will add to the range and diversity of services in the Bourke region,' said Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman. 'The applicant satisfied the ABA that it would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the Aboriginal community within the Bourke licence area which includes Brewarrina, Lightning Ridge and Walgett.'

The ABA has allocated this licence after consultation with the people of the local

**Principles for allocating community radio licences**

The ABA has developed principles which show how it will allocate new community radio licences, Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman said. Professor Flint was addressing the annual conference of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia in Adelaide in December.

'Firstly, the ABA will focus solely on the needs of the community within the licence area—both the existing needs and the perceived future needs. Secondly, that it is in an applicant's interests to define its community interest in broader rather than narrower terms. Thirdly, the concept of a particular community interest must refer to a community interest within the licence area of the proposed service,' he said.



'Fourthly, where an applicant proposes to serve a particular community interest, for example a Christian or an Aboriginal interest, the applicant should demonstrate that the greater part of that community interest will be served. And fifthly, where there is more than one applicant competing to represent a similar community interest, the ABA would prefer them to try to find a cooperative arrangement, particularly where public resources will be required to ensure the success of the application.'

The ABA is currently engaged in allocating new community radio licences in Albury, Bathurst, Bendigo, Bourke, Cairns, Esperance, Hervey Bay, Maryborough and Shepparton. (See p.xxx for the community licence allocation workplan.)

'Allocating licences is a time consuming exercise—as it should be. It takes much more of the ABA's time and skills than, say, allocating a commercial radio licence, because allocating community radio licences is done on merit rather than price.'

'To ensure not only an efficient but especially a fair allocation of community radio licences, in 1998 the ABA held the first public hearings in its six year existence—one in Darwin and one more recently in Bathurst. As a result of the Darwin hearing the members of the ABA were much better informed in making their allocation decisions.'

The principles indicating how the ABA will allocate licences arose out of the Darwin hearing.

'The Australian media is enriched by community broadcasting. The community broadcasting sector is typically about concern for people, generosity in offering time and skills and ingenuity,' Professor Flint said.

FM licences in capital cities

'The ABA has never set a timetable under which there would be four new FM stations in Sydney and Melbourne, two or three in Brisbane and two each in Adelaide and Perth, running by now,' Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman said.

Professor Flint was responding to press articles quoting Mr Paul Thompson of UK-based DMG Radio Australia.

'The ABA has been planning the allocation of the radio spectrum for a whole continent,' Professor Flint said. 'We decided those areas with the least number of services, regional and remote Australia, deserved the highest priority. Finally we would complete those areas with the most services, the capital cities. Our engineers now also have to plan for the introduction of digital broadcasting.'

'The Government has been most sympathetic to our problem and has recently given us the necessary funds to complete both tasks.'

The result is that the draft licence area plans for radio in Sydney and Melbourne should be available in 1999. In fact, we hope to have them out closer to the middle of 1999. This would represent a slippage of just six months from what we were saying earlier this year, before digital planning began.'

More pay TV licences for Foxtel and Optus

The ABA has allocated 20 subscription television broadcasting licences to Foxtel Cable Television Pty Limited and 98 subscription television broadcasting licences to Optus Vision Media Pty Ltd.

'The ABA has become aware in recent times that some people wishing to subscribe to pay TV have not been able to do in some parts of the country,' said Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman. 'While the ABA cannot compel any subscription television broadcaster to provide its services in any place, I am pleased to be

