



News Update

New commercial radio licence for Port Lincoln

The ABA has allocated a second commercial radio licence to Lanson Investments Pty Ltd, licensee of 5CC, Port Lincoln, South Australia.

This is the 54th commercial radio licence allocated by the ABA to a regional operator providing the only commercial service in a market.

The new service, 5CCG, will cover the same area as the existing AM service and will broadcast on FM 89.9 MHz in Port Lincoln.

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

Adult verification systems for Internet content

The ABA has decided on minimum system requirements for restricted access systems for Internet content. An ABA declaration setting out the system requirements was tabled in Parliament on 7 December.

Restricted access systems are adult verification devices that allow people who are 18 years or older to access adult material on the Internet, whilst protecting children from exposure to material that may be unsuitable for them.

'The declaration provides commercial certainty for the Internet industry,' said Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman. 'The requirements set by the ABA are consistent with Internet practices used throughout the world.'

The declaration sets out the process by which a person can gain access to Internet content that is likely to be rated 'R' by the Classification Board. It relies on credit card validation as a means to check that a person is 18 years or older.

Internet content hosted in Australia that is likely to be classified 'R' and not protected by a compliant restricted access system is potentially prohibited content. It may be taken down from the Internet if the ABA receives a complaint about that content after 1 January 2000.

The declaration was based on submissions to the ABA from industry and community groups and individual users. The submissions were in response to a consultation paper that set out draft system specifications. The declaration also provides for off-line registration processes and anticipates the future use of digital signatures as an electronic means of identity authentication.

Review of time sharing policy

The ABA is reviewing the time share arrangements for temporary community broadcasting licences.

The ABA is proposing to limit time periods for new groups and provide more established groups with longer time frames.

The ABA will consult with the community sector and affected groups before implementing any such changes. The ABA is aware that a number of temporary community broadcasters have experienced financial and operational difficulties because of the requirement to share spectrum with other groups.

'The legislative provisions for temporary community licences require the ABA to licence all eligible applicants. In practice this means that if the number of applicants exceeds the number of available channels, the groups are required to share,' said Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman.

ABA General Manager, Mr Giles Tanner explained, 'The ABA's current policy is that all groups sharing a channel will be given equal time periods'.

The ABA is aware that this policy gives no incentive for groups to merge and may actually encourage groups to splinter. Moreover, established groups who may have had full use of a channel can find their access to airtime suddenly halved when a new group emerges.

Applications invited for new community radio licences

The ABA has invited applications for six new community radio broadcasting licences in the Australian Capital Territory and adjoining areas of New South Wales.

'Allocation of new community broadcasting licences has begun in Canberra, Tuggeranong, Queanbeyan and Yass as a result of the ABA's public planning process being finalised in these areas,' said Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman. 'The planning process identified a demand for community services that are operated by people living in these communities.'

Free-to-air community broadcasting service licences must be allocated on the basis of merit. Under this system, in areas where there is only one applicant for a community broadcasting licence, the ABA need only decide if the applicant merits a licence.

The Restricted Access Systems Declaration 1999 (No. 1) is on the ABA web site
<www.aba.gov.au>.