



# News Update

Mr Tanner and David Sice, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, conducted a panel discussion on community broadcasting which raised issues faced by the conversion to digital radio broadcasting. It also recognised that the planning has been somewhat over-shadowed by the television juggernaut.

Jonquil Ritter, ABA Director Planning and Licensing, and Fred Gengaroli, ABA Director Engineering, in 'Same coverage —mandate or mantra?' suggested that the objectives of the *Television Broadcasting Services (Digital Conversion) Act 1998* may be in practice difficult to implement, as the laws of physics seem at odds with the laws of the land.

In his keynote presentation on 'Digital television—the multi-media home platform' Malcolm Long speculated on whether digital television is likely to become the most important multimedia platform in the home. He looked at a range of factors (the saturation penetration of television, the potential of Internet-on-television technologies, the current mores of television viewing, the potential of electronic program guides, and the growing fragmentation of digital communications) and posed the question: what will determine datacasting's fate?

Jim McKay, Managing Director of Interactive Television, entertained participants with a display of interactive television and Bob Greeney, ABA Director Technology brought participants up-to-date on digital radio broadcasting.

## Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union

The ABA provided logistical support and participated in Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) meetings of the Engineering Committee, 28 October–1 November; the Programme Committee, 30–31 October, and the 36<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, 3–5 November, in Sydney.

Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman chaired the special topic session, *World Trade in Audiovisual Services*.

Professor Flint drew delegates' attention to the ABA paper on the special topic commissioned by the ABU. The paper focused on the tensions many countries face between trade and cultural objectives. It highlighted the measures several countries have adopted to safeguard their audiovisual services from being

eroded by trends in trade globalisation and liberalisation. The paper also provides comparative material for Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand. In commissioning this paper, the ABU aimed to provide its members with information that might assist them in understanding measures to support audiovisual services that have been adopted in those countries. This would facilitate the preparation of country positions for the next round of trade talks on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

The General Assembly adopted the following motion on world trade in audiovisual services:

That this General Assembly of the ABU acknowledges that individual countries take different measures to support their cultural industries. In some countries, such measures in the radio and television industries may include reserving an amount of transmission time for locally produced content or the subsidisation of the costs of producing local content.

This General Assembly acknowledges the worth of individual members of the ABU approaching the governments of their countries to ensure that their governments are aware of the possible consequences of world trade discussions in the year 2000 moving to break down measures used by individual countries to protect their cultural industries.

For more information about the seminar contact Rebecca Sullivan of the ABA Planning and Licensing Branch, on (02) 6256 2800.

Copies of the seminar papers are on the ABA web site <[www.aba.gov.au](http://www.aba.gov.au)>, or printed copies are available from the ABA, price \$20.



Robert Campbell and Lori Lemon ABA Research and Policy Section, assisting at the ABU meetings.

A copy of the discussion paper, 'Trade Liberalisation in the Audiovisual Services Sector and Safeguarding Culutral Diversity', is on the ABA web site <[www.aba.gov.au](http://www.aba.gov.au)>.