



News Update

A working group of ABA staff and representatives of pay TV drama channels and ASTRA is guiding the ABA's development of new annual returns and reporting processes.

Minimum licence fee investigation

Commercial broadcasters, independent production companies and government film funding organisations have provided information to the ABA investigation into the minimum licence fee requirement for Australian children's drama.

Initiated in late December 1999, the investigation is seeking information about the operation and impact of the minimum licence fee requirement of \$45 000 per half hour for Australian children's drama, introduced in the new Australian Content Standard in March 1999.

Key parties provided responses by the end of March. The ABA is now considering whether any action is warranted ahead of the planned 2000 review of the Australian content standard.

Small Screen Big Picture

ScreenWest's annual television conference, Small Screen Big Picture examined opportunities offered to program makers by digital and convergent technologies. 'Through the Looking Glass: Television 2000', held in Fremantle WA from 2 to 4 March, provided national and international perspectives on television production within two major strands of drama and factual programming.

Developments within the BBC and ABC provided a focus for considering the technical and creative possibilities of multi-level delivery. This reinforced the view that the jump from linear broadcasting to interactive programming is not at all simple. Issues include identifying standard audience interfaces for navigating interactive television, the cost of developing appropriate digital content, and the upskilling needed to be part of a digital broadcasting production team.

ABA Standards Manager Lesley Osborne and Nadia Mencinsky, Assistant Manager, Children's Television, represented the ABA at the conference. Ms Osborne participated in the panel, 'A madhatter's menu: children's drama', which looked at the way children's drama producers and broadcasters could use

Temporary community broadcasting licences

Allocated in February 2000

<i>Licence area</i>	<i>Licensee</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Date allocated</i>
New South Wales				
Blacktown	Blacktown City Community Radio SWR-FM Association Inc.	99.9	1-3-2000 to 31-3-2000	18-2-2000
Campbelltown	Macarthur Community Radio Association Inc.	100.3	1-3-2000 to 31-7-2000	22-2-2000
Gosford	Five-O-Plus Public Radio Association Inc.	95.3	1-3-2000 to 30-11-2000	21-2-2000
Gosford	Radio Yesteryear Inc.	104.5	1-3-2000 to 30-11-2000	21-2-2000
Hornsby	North F.M. - Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Community Radio Inc.	100.1	1-3-2000 to 31-3-2000	21-2-2000
Narrabri	Narrabri Shire Community Radio Inc.	91.3	1-3-2000 to 31-3-2000	21-2-2000
Penrith	Nepean Riverlands Community Radio Association Inc.	100.7	1-3-2000 to 30-4-2000	18-2-2000
Sydney	Out FM Sydney Ltd	94.5	12-2-2000 to 10-3-2000	1-2-2000
Sydney	Sydney Gay & Lesbian Broadcasters Inc.	96.9	2-3-2000 to 31-3-2000	22-2-2000
Victoria				
Colac	Colac Public Radio Inc.	99.1 & 104.7	18-2-2000 to 30-6-2000	3-2-2000
Melbourne	Hitz FM Broadcasters Inc.	89.9	7-2-2000 to 12-3-2000	1-2-2000
Melbourne	La Trobe Union Radio Inc.	91.5	28-2-2000 to 23-4-2000	23-2-2000
Melbourne	Monash Univeristy Union Radio Inc.	95.7	21-2-2000 to 30-6-2000	8-2-2000
Melbourne	RMIT Student Union Student Radio Association Inc.	94.9	28-2-2000 to 26-3-2000	15-2-2000
Sunbury	Radio Station 3TD Association Inc.	99.5	6-3-2000 to 23-6-2000	25-2-2000
Queensland				
Charleville	Bidjara Media & Broadcasting Company Ltd	105.7	28-2-2000 to 27-2-2001	11-2-2000
Gold Coast	Hott FM Ltd	94.9	1-3-2000 to 30-4-2000	22-2-2000



interactive technology to offer more to the child audience and so enhance programming appeal or channel positioning. Ms Osborne commented on problems producers could encounter in linking children's programs to web sites.

Internet hotlines as evaluation institutions

Mr Gareth Grainger presented Australia's methods of evaluating Internet content at an international workshop, Internet Hotlines as Evaluation Institutions. The Bertelsmann Foundation, in cooperation with the INHOPE Association (Internet Hotline Providers of Europe), hosted the workshop in February.

Mr Grainger presented the procedures for evaluating prohibited and potential prohibited Internet content under the Australian co-regulatory scheme.

The workshop provided those involved in Internet hotlines the opportunity to meet and share their knowledge and expertise, particularly in relation to evaluating content subject to complaint. As more countries consider their options for responding to concerns about Internet content including the operation of Internet hotlines, the development of standards for best practice assumes an increasing importance.

The ABA will continue to liaise with other hotline providers, both formally and informally, as part of its international liaison function under the co-regulatory scheme.

Information online

For more information about the ABA's online-hotline for complaints about Internet content, go to <www.aba.gov.au/what/online/complaints.htm>. There is an online complaint form at this address.



Members of a delegation from the German broadcasting industry met ABA members (Gareth Grainger, fourth from left; Ian Robertson, second from right, Michael Gordon-Smith, far right) at the Sydney offices of the ABA recently, to discuss matters of mutual interest. The leader of the German delegation, Frau Roth, is second from left.

Digital news — a monthly update

Conversion to digital television

The broadcasting industry has moved one step closer to digital television.

Nine Network Australia Pty Ltd is the first broadcaster to submit digital television implementation plans to the ABA. The ABA will assess the plans for the main transmitters in the Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane markets within the next few months, to ensure that the Nine network is meeting the policy objectives set out under the Commercial Television Conversion (CTC) Scheme.

Implementation plans require broadcasters to specify commencement dates, transmission sites and coverage areas. This will ensure that the transmission in digital achieves same coverage and potential reception quality as the analog services as soon as practicable from the start of the eight-year simulcast period.

The plans are a key step in the digital conversion process. Each plan represents a binding commitment by broadcasters to provide a digital television service, and requires licensees to provide information on important technical and administrative aspects of conversion to digital transmission in the area.

Implementation plans fall under one of the two digital television conversion schemes:

- the CTC scheme, determined by the ABA, which commenced on 9 June 1999. This scheme requires the ABA to approve implementation plans submitted by commercial television broadcasters;
- the National Television Conversion scheme, approved by the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts on 2 February 2000. This scheme requires the Minister to approve implementation plans submitted by the ABC and SBS.

Under both schemes, broadcasters can submit implementation plans in one of two ways: a single, comprehensive plan for the licence or coverage area; or a series of plans that develop the broadcaster's digital transmission arrangements for the area in stages. However the broadcaster must gain approval to submit a series of plans.

The implementation plan is activated once it receives the appropriate approval. The ABA will maintain a register of approved implementation plans, and this will be made available for public inspection.

For more information: go to the ABA web site:

<www.aba.gov.au/what/digital/index.htm>

