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.

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>

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.