



number of people. In the medium term (while the analog service continues to operate), greater use of single frequency networks may, by reducing the spectrum requirements of converting existing services, result in more opportunities for new digital services.

In May 1999, the ABA sought advice from the Digital Television Channel Planning Consultative Group on the advantages of using and options for implementing single frequency networks within the Australian digital television broadcasting environment.

The Single Frequency Network Consultative Group was established to consider the ABA's request, and to report to the ABA before the end of December 1999 (its membership was essentially the same as the DCPCG). The work took longer than anticipated because some members of the group needed time to coordinate the work of their consultants and to provide their reports to the consultative group.

The Single Frequency Network Consultative Group's terms of reference were, among other things, through consultation, to provide advice to the ABA on the following points:

1. The extent of the advantage to the community of single frequency networks in planning for digital terrestrial television.
2. The practicalities of single frequency networks to extend digital television coverage.
3. The technical planning options and constraints in planning single frequency networks.
4. The limitations of using off-air feed for single frequency networks.
5. The implications of operat-

ing in the 2k or the 8k mode.
6. The relative costs of implementing single frequency networks versus a multiple frequency network.

7. The implications in terms of local (break-out) programming.

On-going technical issues are still under consideration within the digital channel planning activities of the ABA, in consultation with the members of the Digital Channel Planning Consultative Group.

Following presentation of a preliminary report to the ABA, on 20 January 2000, it was decided to seek wider public consultation on the issues addressed by the single frequency network (Consultative Group).

On 22 February 2000, the ABA released a discussion paper, *Options for Implementing Single Frequency Networks for the Australian Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting Service* which was prepared in consultation with the ABA's Single Frequency Network Consultative Group. The ABA sought comments from the public by 31 March 2000, on the single frequency network (single frequency network) channel planning options outlined in that paper.

The ABA received eight submissions, from: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Australian Communications Authority, Fairfax, Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations, News Limited, Nine Network Australia, ntl Australia and the Western Australian Department of Commerce and Industry.

Digital Convergence Australia (18 May 2000), ntl Australia (18 May 2000) and FACTS (25 May 2000) provided supplementary submissions.

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New community radio licences for Canberra

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The licences were allocated to Artsound FM Inc., Canberra Christian Broadcasters Ltd and the Ethnic Broadcasting Council of the ACT and Surrounding Areas. All three licences will commence from 15 July 2000.

Artsound will broadcast its service on 92.7 MHz on the FM band. It will also retransmit the service into the Tuggeranong area on 90.3 MHz. Canberra Christian Radio will broadcast its service on 91.9 MHz, and the Ethnic Broadcasting Council of the ACT and Surrounding Areas will broadcast on 91.1 MHz.

'The proposed services will add to the range and diversity of broadcasting services in the Canberra region,' said Professor Flint. 'The applicants satisfied the ABA that they would meet the existing and perceived future needs of their respective communities in the Canberra licence area.'

The ABA has allocated these licences after consulting with the people of the local commu-

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

The ABA assessed seven applications for the new community radio licences: from Artsound (representing music and arts), Canberra Christian Radio Ltd (representing the Christian community), Canberra Community Radio (representing the Christian community), Country Music Collective (representing Australian country lifestyle), Ethnic Broadcasting Council of the ACT and Surrounding Areas (representing ethnic/multicultural communities), Radio Antenna International (representing youth and multicultural communities), and Winangana Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Vocational Training Centre (representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities).

The ABA decided to allocate the licences to the three applicants as it considered that these groups had demonstrated that they were better able to meet the needs of the Canberra community and also demonstrated a greater capacity to provide their proposed services.