



7th Asia-Pacific Regulatory Roundtable

The ABA hosted the 7th Asia-Pacific Regulatory Roundtable, which was held in Sydney from 28–30 October. The meeting was attended by representatives from Hong Kong SAR China, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Australia.

Senator the Hon. Richard Alston, Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, addressed the delegates on digital developments in Australia and the proposal in the Media Ownership Bill that would remove foreign ownership requirements in the Broadcasting Services Act.

Delegates presented papers on the themes:

- managing industry performance in the public interest
- implications of globalised communications and
- perspectives on the effects of digitisation.

Differing perspectives included that of the regulator, industry or consumer. Lively

discussion covered matters concerning regulatory balance, industry development and consumer access.

Mr Colin Griffith of TONIC media, and Ms Andree Wright, ABA Director Industry Performance and Review, made key presentations on the following topics, respectively:

- audiovisual streaming: technology, industry developments, consumer use and regulatory implications and
- internet content regulation in Australia: an international co-operative approach.

Many of the countries are undergoing changes that would have an impact on regulatory frameworks, including current discussion in Australia to merge the ABA and the Australian Communications Authority.

Professor Flint chaired the Roundtable and the ABA delegation was led by Deputy Chair, Lyn Maddock and included Giles Tanner, General Manager.

ABA investigations: Ownership and control of 2GB and 2CH Sydney

The ABA announced on 1 November that in accordance with its statutory role to monitor the broadcasting industry, and in order to be properly informed, it will investigate the relevant aspects of the ownership and control of 2GB and 2CH.

On 29 and 31 October 2002, the ABA received notifications that Mr Alan Jones was, from 24 October 2002, in a position to exercise control of the licences for commercial radio services 2GB and 2CH Sydney in accordance with the Broadcasting Services Act.

The ABA must be notified of changes in control of a commercial broadcasting licence within seven days.

Macquarie Radio Network has previously assured the ABA that there was no change to report in relation to the ownership or control of 2GB.

The change notified is a result of an agreement under which Hadiac Pty Ltd, trustee of the Jones Family Trust, becomes entitled to be paid a dividend interest exceeding fifteen per cent in Macquarie Radio Network Pty Ltd.

Harbour Radio Pty Ltd (the licensee company of 2GB Sydney) and Radio 2CH Pty Ltd (licensee of 2CH Sydney) are both wholly owned subsidiar-

ies of Macquarie Radio Network Pty Ltd.

Complaints about 2GB and 2UE

The ABA is also investigating allegations that 2GB Sydney and 2UE Sydney have breached:

- a) the licence condition that requires identification of certain political matter and
- b) a licence condition requiring compliance with the Broadcasting Services Standards (commonly known as the commercial radio standards).

The allegations relate to broadcasts concerning Telstra by Mr John Laws on 2UE and Mr Alan Jones on 2GB. Mr Laws has a sponsorship agreement with Telstra and Telstra has an agreement with 2GB to sponsor the breakfast program presented by Mr Jones.

The complaint received by the ABA claims that both 2GB and 2UE broadcast political matter at the request of another person, without announcing the required particulars (commonly known as 'the tag') immediately afterwards.



Delegates to the Roundtable

To view the commercial radio standards, go to www.aba.gov.au/radio/content/standards/index.htm