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Regulatory policy roundup – international developments

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Digital broadcasting

Digital TV: Policy Implementation – UK

On 25 January 2002, the E-Commerce Minister, Douglas Alexander, and Broadcasting Minister, Kim Howells, announced the independent appointments to the industry's Digital Television Stakeholders' Group and to the four Task Groups created to look at specific areas of the Digital Action Plan.

Membership of the Digital Television Stakeholders' Group includes representatives from consumers, broadcasters, manufacturers, retailers, content providers and transmission network operators. The appointments are for one year.

The Digital Television Steering Board will be responsible for the strategic delivery of the Digital TV Action Plan and will be jointly chaired by Douglas Alexander and Kim Howells. Membership will also include the chair and deputy chair of the Digital TV Stakeholders' Group; a representative each from the manufacturers, retailers and consumer groups; and the joint chairmen of the Government Digital Television Group.

www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/textonly/press_notices/P2002_048_text.html

Retransmission/copyright issues

Amendment Retransmission Rules – Canada

On December 12 2001, the Minister of Industry Brian Tobin and Minister of Canadian Heritage Sheila Copps tabled amendments to Section 31 of the Copyright Act. The amendments aim to create a level playing field for current as well as future players in the broadcasting system and to support content creators. Existing distribution systems, such as cable and satellite, may continue to rebroadcast over-the-air radio and television signals by paying royalties set by the Copyright Board and respecting other conditions set out in the Copyright Act. The bill also establishes a new regulation making power that will allow new types of distribution systems, including the Internet, to be used to retransmit broadcast signals if they meet appropriate conditions set out in the regulations.

www.ic.gc.ca/cmb/welcomeic.nsf/

Audience and consumer issues

Broadcasting Content Review – South Africa

The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) launched its Position Paper and Regulations on South African Content for Television and Radio in February 2002.

In 2001, the Authority called for submissions to the discussion paper on *The Review of Local Content Quotas*. The purpose of this discussion paper was to

solicit responses on how to review the current quotas. ICASA received 52 written submissions and 34 of these were orally presented to highlight key points in the written submissions.

The consultation process and the policy process have been completed. New regulations will be effective 18 months after they have been gazetted.

iba.org.za/11Feb2002.html

Internet Content – Singapore

On 5 February 2002 the National Internet Advisory Committee (NIAC) announced two major industry initiatives for the Internet that will promote the development of a robust industry self-regulation framework in Singapore and spur greater confidence in the use of the Internet.

At a news conference chaired by its Chairman, Professor Bernard Tan, the NIAC released its latest Annual Report containing details of two major voluntary codes - a Model Data Protection Code for the Private Sector and an Industry Content Code - which the NIAC hopes will eventually be widely adopted by the industry

www.sba.gov.sg/sba/

Audience Research – UK

On 28 November 2001, the Independent Television Commission and Broadcasting Standards Commission published research on viewers' attitudes to alternative beliefs on television. The research identified a shift in society's attitudes towards alternative beliefs and practices.

Features

Beyond Entertainment? shows that on the whole viewers regard many alternative practices such as yoga and homeopathy as familiar and mainstream and are happy to see them covered on television. The research identified a clear division between attitudes to these kinds of 'psychic practices', and 'the occult'. Viewer attitudes to the two differed significantly, with the latter often considered unsuitable for broadcast at any time, or not until after the watershed and only on specialist channels.

www.itc.org.uk/news/news_releases/show_release.asp?article_id=534

Community media policy

Regulation and community electronic multimedia services - South Africa

In November 2001, a speech by Nkateko "Snakes" Nyoka, Chief Executive Officer, Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa), set out the regulatory approach to the development of community electronic multimedia services.

Mr Nyoka traced at three different concepts of multimedia. Firstly, the statutory definition of multimedia service in the Telecommunications Amendment Act. These include Internet through television, pay-per-view, video on demand, electronic transactions (including e-commerce), text, data, graphics, animation, audio, visual content, but exclude mobile cellular telecommunication services and public switched telecommunication services.

Secondly, software-based interactivity through games, graphics, DVD and

Internet driven media. This concept of multimedia generally means a PC-based form or type of media that can be accessed through computer software.

Thirdly, the concepts of access, resources and community. Those unable to afford the expensive digital satellite services as well as the high cost of Internet access, are seeking a more accessible route to the world of multimedia

iba.org.za/iba_nov2001_news.htm

Integrated policy framework for community-based media - Canada

On 21 December 2001, the Canadian Radio Television Commission released a public notice (CRTC 2001-129) proposing an integrated policy framework for community-based media. The notice includes proposed revisions to the 1991 community channel policy, and a proposed policy and licensing framework for a new class of licence, namely a community-based television programming undertaking. The Commission also proposes some revisions to the licensing policy for low-power radio.

The Commission intends to issue its determinations regarding the establishment of the policy framework in the spring (NH) of 2002, following receipt of submissions in February.

www.crtc.gc.ca/archive/ENG/Notices/2001/pb2001-129.htm

