



The ABA has registered two new codes of practice covering online gambling and response procedures to be followed by commercial radio stations in the event of an emergency.

New codes of practice for...

Emergency response procedures for commercial radio

The ABA has registered a new code of practice that covers response procedures to be followed by commercial radio stations in the event of an emergency. The code came into effect immediately on its registration on 6 December 2001.

This concludes an extensive consultation process between the ABA and the Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters Limited (FARB). Public input was also an important aspect of the code's development. During the code's development both the ABA and FARB contacted the various State Emergency Services and the Bureau of Meteorology and encouraged their input.

'The ABA has long regarded the introduction of a code of practice dealing with emergency response procedures as a matter of priority and has been negotiating with FARB for some time regarding the matter,' said Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman. 'Commercial radio broadcasters now have clear guidelines on the minimum standards expected of them in responding to emergencies,

thus establishing 'industry best practice' in this regard. These minimum standards should ensure that commercial radio service providers can be contacted at all times with a view to broadcasting important information should the need arise'.

While many individual stations have implemented their own procedures the ABA has been concerned that there have been no agreed minimum requirements in place to assist commercial radio broadcasters in fulfilling their responsibilities to the community in times of emergency or disaster recovery. In these situations, when other means of communication may be unavailable or impractical, the ABA believes that commercial radio stations offer a vital means of providing information quickly and effectively to the community at large, particularly in regional and remote areas. The recent House of Representatives Committee on Communications' Inquiry into the Radio Industry also raised concerns regarding the adequate and uniform coverage of emergency situations by the electronic media, recommending that

stations be more formally accessible to emergency services in times of crises and disasters.

The ABA considered the new code against the requirements set out at section 123 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*. The ABA is satisfied that the code provides appropriate community safeguards, has been endorsed by a majority of licensees and that members of the public have been given an adequate opportunity to comment.

The new code will be subject to review when FARB undertakes its next full review of the Commercial Radio Codes of Practice. Such a review is due to commence in October 2002.

Interactive gambling


The ABA has also registered a code of practice for the Internet industry dealing with designated Internet gambling matters.

The Internet Industry Association (IIA) drafted the code in consultation with the Internet industry and the community, in response to the *Interactive Gambling Act 2001*

Professor Flint welcomed the IIA's decision to develop a code

to assist the industry in complying with requirements of the legislation. 'Industry codes are central components of co-regulatory schemes and this code builds on the IIA's excellent work in developing codes of practice to deal with other types of online content,' he said.

The code underpins the ABA's complaint handling arrangements which will commence operation on 11 January 2002. A core provision of the code is the requirement for all Internet service providers (ISPs) to provide their subscribers with a 'scheduled filter'. The ABA will notify the details of prohibited Internet gambling content hosted outside Australia to the makers of each scheduled filter, who have agreed to update their products to give effect to the ABA's notifications.

The code applies to all ISPs, and the ABA may direct an ISP to comply with it. 

Copies of the codes

Copies of both codes of practice are available on the ABA's website at www.aba.gov.au.