



The second annual ABA conference was held at the Hyatt Hotel, Canberra on 29 and 30 April 2002. Key topics included how to tempt audiences to upgrade to digital, new technology and industry regulation and the latest digital video and digital radio technologies.

ABA Conference 2002

What will Australian audiences want?

Photos by Kate Callas

The second annual ABA conference was held at the Hyatt Hotel, Canberra on 29 and 30 April 2002. What will tempt viewers and listeners to upgrade to digital, the impact of new technology on industry regulation worldwide and the latest developments in digital video broadcasting and digital radio technology were among the key topics of the conference.

The theme for the first day was *Buying Digital*. For television, the digital policy settings are in place - all that is missing are the viewers. For

radio, the challenge is to choose between a proliferation of technical standards. Day two's theme was *The New Public Interest* with an analysis of the changing role of the state and debate on the reasons why governments should (or should not) intervene to promote a 'public interest' in broadcasting and communications.

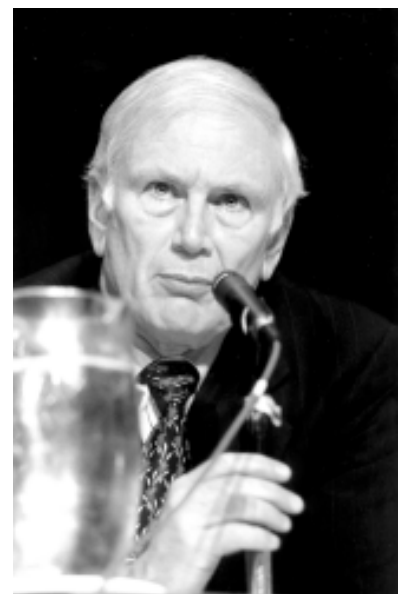
On the opening morning, ABA General Manager Giles Tanner welcomed delegates and then ABA Chairman Professor David Flint introduced the keynote speaker, Senator the Hon Richard Alston, Minister for Communications, Information

Technology and the Arts.

Noting that 2002 was shaping up as a watershed year in many respects, Senator Alston told the conference the Commonwealth Government's agenda for the coming months included 'the reform of Australia's outdated cross-media and foreign ownership restrictions and the creation of a more dynamic and internationally competitive media sector in Australia'.

He outlined his views on the challenges facing both digital free-to-air TV and digital pay TV and said a report on the Government's review of the existing datacasting regulatory arrangements would be tabled shortly in Parliament.

Flagging the roll out of broadband infrastructure to businesses and households as a central communications policy issue for governments worldwide, he said Australia is well positioned to take the next



Above: Senator Richard Alston

step into a broadband future. 'Wide-scale broadband implementation is expected to deliver significant economic and social benefits, improving efficiency in the delivery of existing services and possibly removing current bottlenecks in the delivery of information. But the efficiency benefits will not be realised unless there is real competition in the services delivered and the means by

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Above: Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman



Day 1: Buying digital



Above: Giles Tanner, ABA General Manager

which they are delivered,' he said.

In the context of the proposed Foxtel/Optus programming agreement, Senator Alston said he has written to the ACCC seeking formal advice on the implications of emerging industry structures on communications competition (including pay TV, telephony and broadband Internet).

Senator Alston reiterated the Government's commitment to a fundamental overhaul of media ownership rules. While its Bill has been referred to a Senate committee for

investigation, the Government 'welcomes sensible debate on these important media ownership issues', he said.

Speaking briefly about the anti-siphoning regime, Senator Alston said, 'The Government remains committed to the principle that viewers in all parts of Australia should continue to have access to premier sports that have traditionally been available on free-to-air television. But it recognises that times change.'

'The Government believes that any reforms to the anti-siphoning provisions will need to strike an appropriate

balance between premier sporting events, and giving the pay TV industry greater scope to buy broadcasting rights to less important events.

'The real issue is finding a balance between what broadcasters perceive as their commercial interest, and the public's expectation that high levels of free-to-air coverage should continue.

'Australians have very high expectations when it comes to the quantity and quality of levels of coverage of their favourite sports on television.

'I am aware that both the pay TV and free-to-air sectors can muster arguments to prove their respective cases. However, a debate that focuses only on percentages or numbers of hours shown is not productive.

'It is obviously unrealistic for every match in every round on the anti-siphoning list to be shown on free-to-air TV. However, there is clear public concern about the failure of free-to-air broadcasters to show key events. The ongoing concern about the AFL is just the most recent expression of

this concern.

'The Government will monitor the coverage of listed events, especially in circumstances where broadcasters have acquired the rights to a number of simultaneous events.

'There are some legitimate issues to be addressed, including whether the Government's anti-hoarding provisions should be strengthened through the addition of some events which have not received live or near live free-to-air coverage in recent years

'However, calls for excessive regulation of sports broadcasting, such as prescribing that all games must be shown live, are likely to be counter-productive and could actually result in a fall in levels of coverage.'

The full text of Senator Alston's speech is available at www.dca.gov.au/mediarel.html



Business models for a digital future

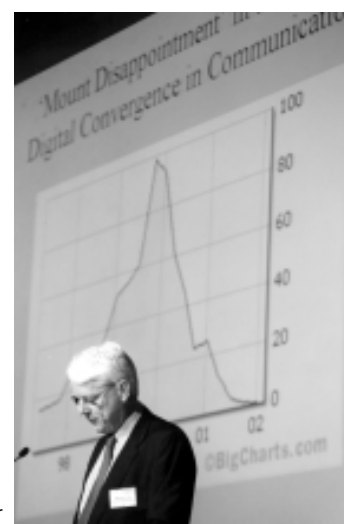
In this 'turn-the-tables' session produced by ABA member Michael Gordon Smith and convened by ABA member Malcolm Long, three equity analysts pitched business models and corporate strategies for the industry's digital future to a panel of media executives who had great fun poking holes in them.

Analysts

Warren Lee - Director, GS Technology Management Pty Ltd
Alex Pollak - Executive Director, Macquarie Research, Macquarie Bank Ltd
Finola Burke - Analyst, BNP Paribas

Industry leaders

Tony Bell - Managing Director, Southern Cross Broadcasting
Peter Harvie - Executive Chairman, Austereo Pty Ltd
Richard Hooper - Chairman, Radio Authority, UK
Kim Williams - CEO, FOXTEL



Right: Malcolm Long, ABA member

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Day 1: Buying digital



Above: Richard Hooper, Radio Authority, UK



Above: Kim Williams, FOXTEL



Above: Tony Bell, Southern Cross Broadcasting



Above: Peter Harvie, Austereo

Business models for a digital future (cont)



Above: Alex Pollak, Macquarie Bank



Above: Finola Burke, BNP Paribas



Above: Warren Lee, GS Technology Management



Day 1: Buying digital

Buying interactive TV

A survey of 90 key players in the free-to-air, pay TV and advertising industries has predicted that digital TV uptake in Australia will be 46 per cent by 2008. The figure includes both free-to-air and pay TV digital.

The survey results formed the basis of the presentation by Professor Duane Varan, Director of the Interactive Television Research Institute at Murdoch University, Western Australia.

The top benefits of digital TV to consumers according to the survey are multi-channelling and electronic program guides.

The two weakest benefits are HDTV and the Australian version of datacasting.

The survey tested attitudes for seventeen different types of programs to see which the industry thought would benefit most from the enhancements possible with digital TV. The top five were sport, games shows, children's television, reality television and music programs.

The top benefits to advertisers are improved measurement and better media targeting. The three biggest inhibitors to digital TV uptake are expense (including cost of infrastructure and set top

boxes), lack of content and complexity.

A panel that included Mark Strong, Executive Producer, Massive Television; Kim Anderson Director of Digital Services, Nine Digital; Tracey Robertson, Producer, Hoodlum

Productions; and Mandy Pattinson, Manager Multimedia Regulatory and Strategy, Optus discussed the implications of the results.



Above: Duane Varan, Murdoch University



Above: Tracey Robertson, Hoodlum Productions

Below: Mark Strong, Massive Television



Above: Mandy Pattinson, Optus

Below: Kim Anderson, Nine Digital





Day 1: Buying digital

Buying digital audio

The afternoon sessions on digital radio, hosted by ABA General Manager Giles Tanner, began with Doug Mulray (Executive Director) and Hamish Cameron (Chief Executive Officer) from thebasement.com.au (an Internet-only video station with live DJs playing music videos and webcasts) speaking about their service.

Jeff Astle, from the UK's Digital One service gave a presentation on the development of Eureka DAB in the UK, since the BBC launched its simulcast services in 1997 and commercial radio's launch of Digital One in 1999. The presentation explained Digital One's partnering approach and the necessary cornerstones for a successful launch and development of DAB digital radio.

Mark Hughes, Partner, Accenture Communication and High Technology Group presented a paper titled 'Overview of the Australian digital consumer'. The paper is available on the conference website.

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Above: Doug Mulray, thebasement.com.au



Above: Hamish Cameron, thebasement.com.au



Above: Jeff Astle, Digital One, UK



Above: (L to R) Hamish Cameron and Doug Mulray, thebasement.com.au



Above: Mark Hughes, Accenture Communication and High Technology Group

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Day 1: Buying digital

Buying digital audio (cont)

Joan Warner, Chief Executive Officer, FARB spoke about 'Exploring consumer responses to digital radio' and the session concluded with a presentation by the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia's General Manager, Barry Melville and Technical Consultant David Sice on the CBAA's Digital Delivery Network. The DDN is a new

model for digital exchange of audio and other resources across Australia. It has received funding and support from the Commonwealth Government and Microsoft Australia, and is being piloted with the community broadcasting sector in conjunction with the CBAA's satellite network.

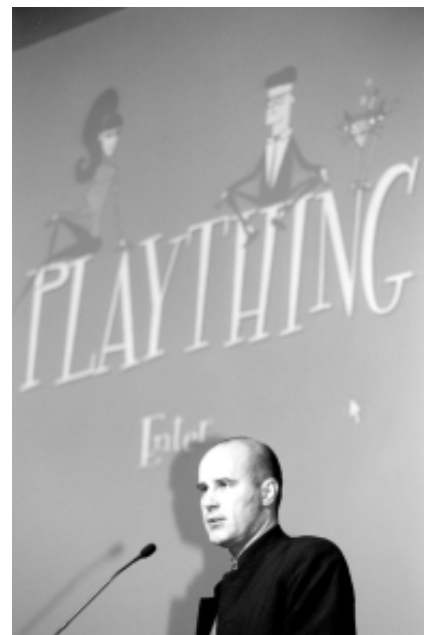


Above: Joan Warner, FARB



Above: Barry Melville, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia

Right: David Sice, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia



Digital technology

In the first digital technology break-out session, hosted by Jonquil Ritter, ABA Director Planning and Licensing, ABA Director Engineering Fred Gengaroli spoke on 'Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM)' and 'FM

In-Band On Channel (IBOC) Digital Radio'.

There was also a presentation on IBOC in the United States by Chuck Kelly, Director, International Sales, Broadcast Electronics.



The two papers on digital radio, and Mr Gengaroli's presentation, are available on the conference website at www.aba.gov.au/abanews/conf/2002/program.htm



Day 1: Buying digital

Digital technology: management of data

In the second digital technology break out session, hosted by Jonquil Ritter, ABA Director Planning and Licensing, Torsten Jaekel, Product Manager DAB Rohde & Schwarz FTK, spoke on 'Management and access of data broadcast services' and Tom Worthington Visiting Fellow, Computer Science, Australian National University; spoke about 'Metadata: the 'killer application' for digital broadcasting'.



Both papers and presentations are available on the conference website at www.aba.gov.au/abanews/conf/2002.

Below: Torsten Jaekel, DAB Rohde & Schwarz FTK



Below: (L to R) Fred Gengaroli, ABA and Tom Worthington, Australian National University



'Walking with beasts'

In the final session on day one, hosted by ABA member Robert Le Tet, the BBC producer Marc Goodchild, outlined the challenges and successes of the ground-breaking interactive TV series 'Walking with Beasts', revealing that it would not have been possible without the BBC's multi-channel coverage of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships.



Above: Marc Goodchild, BBC

Left: Robert Le Tet, ABA member



Day 2: The new public interest

The changing role of the state

Day two of the conference kicked off with a welcome address by Lyn Maddock, ABA Deputy Chair and a paper from Damian Tambini, Senior Research Fellow at the UK's Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) titled 'The New

Public Interest - The Changing Role of the State'.

The paper is available on the conference website at www.aba.gov.au/abanews/conf/2002.



Left: Lyn Maddock, ABA Deputy Chair



Above: Damian Tambini, Institute for Public Policy Research, UK

Rationales for state intervention in the new media space

Following on from Damian Tambini's paper, this panel, convened by ABA Member Michael Gordon-Smith, explored some of the reasons why governments should (or should not) intervene to promote a 'public interest'. Issues raised included privacy, access, the market and the

commons; freedom of speech and the digital divide.

Panel

Father Michael Kelly - CEO, Church Resources
Chris Warren - Federal Secretary, MEAA
Gail Hambly - Company Secretary, Fairfax
Damian Tambini - Senior

Research Fellow, IPPR, UK
Ross Jones - Commissioner, Mergers and Acquisitions, ACCC

Professor Stuart Cunningham
Senior Lecturer in Media, Qld University of Technology



Below: Chris Warren, MEAA



Below: (L to R) Fr Michael Kelly, Church Resources, Chris Warren, MEAA and Michael Gordon-Smith, ABA member



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Day 2: The new public interest

Rationales for state intervention ... (cont)

Right: Michael Gordon-Smith, ABA member



Below: (L to R) Gail Hambly, Fairfax, Fr. Michael Kelly, Church Resources, Chris Warren, MEAA and Prof. Stuart Cunningham, Qld Uni of Technology, Ross Jones, ACCC, Damian Tambini, IPPR and Michael Gordon-Smith, ABA member



Broadcast and broadband

The use of media streaming will grow rapidly over the next three to four years with the rollout of broadband services, but will then be overtaken by successor technologies that will make better use of broadband's fat pipes, according to a report by the Centre for Telecommunication Information Networking (CTIN) released by CTIN's Paul Chapman at the conference. The report, 'Media Streaming and Broadband Services in Australia', was commissioned by the ABA.

Streaming - a technique for making video and audio information available in digital form - allows the large amounts of data required for

broadcast-like images to be stored and transmitted in an efficient manner. It is primarily a means of economising on transmission and storage resources - particularly useful with narrowband connections.

The report focuses on the likely uptake of media streaming and the rollout of broadband services in the years to 2010. The report is upbeat on convergence and the future of broadband technologies, but sees a limited role for media streaming technologies in the long run.

CTIN estimates that streaming is currently growing quickly, at a rate of 30-35 per cent annually. Over the long term, however, it is broadband in



Above: Paul Chapman, CTIN

general, and not streaming in particular, that will make broadcast-type content available on a one-to-one basis with improving quality. The greater transmission and storage capacities expected to be available in future broadband technologies will mean less demand for the data

economising that is the strength of streaming.

The implications of the report were discussed by a panel comprising ABA Member Malcolm Long; Paul Chapman, Centre for Telecommunications Information Networking, University of Adelaide; John Rimmer, Chief Executive

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Day 2: The new public interest

Broadcast and broadband (cont)

Officer, NOIE; Craig Turner, Group Manager, Business Development Access and Devices, Telstra; and Robin Eckermann, Chief Architect, TransAct Communications. Andree Wright, ABA Director Industry Performance and Review hosted the session.



Paul Chapman's paper and the report itself are available on the conference website at www.aba.gov.au/abanews/conf/2002



Above Craig Turner, Telstra



Above: (L to R) Malcolm Long, ABA member and John Rimmer, NOIE



Above: Andree Wright, ABA



Left: Robin Eckermann, TransAct Communications

Australia's broadband future

John Rimmer, Chief Executive Officer, National Office for the Information Economy, gave his insight into the broadband future - a seamless, ubiquitous, and fast network characterised by end-to-end connectivity - or is it?



The presentation is available on the conference website at www.aba.gov.au/abanews/conf/2002.



Day 2: The new public interest

A view from abroad: interpreting the new media landscape

After lunch on the second day, Richard Hooper, Chairman of the UK Radio Authority, gave a stimulating and highly entertaining 'outsider's view' of the Australian media landscape.

For the full text of Mr Hooper's speech, see page 17.



Right: Richard Hooper, Radio Authority, UK



Local content: finding a workable policy mix

A number of papers were presented in this breakout session convened by ABA member Ian Robertson.

They were: 'Mobilising Australian audiences for a digital environment: from supply side to demand side policies', by Jane Roscoe, Head of Screen Studies, AFTRS and Tom O'Regan, Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy (paper and presentation available on the conference site); 'Quality and diversity: exploring Australian adult

drama financing', by Marion McCutcheon, from the ABA's Policy and Research section (presentation available on the conference site); 'Oz content and Free to Air', by Andrew McIntyre, General Manager, Program Finance and Development, Network 10; and 'Broadcasting Blues or Blue Sky? Promoting New Zealand Identity in the Digital Age', by Communications Policy Consultant Marion Jacka (paper available on the conference site).



Above: Ian Robertson, ABA member



Left: Marion McCutcheon, ABA

Right: Jane Roscoe, AFTRS

Right: Tom O'Regan, Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy





Day 2: The new public interest

Why sport should remain on free-to-air TV

A last minute addition to the program, this break out presentation from Julie Flynn, CEO of the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) and Hugh Marks, Joint

Corporate Counsel, Nine Network, convened by ABA member Jane Marquard, saw some lively exchanges between representatives of free to air and pay TV. The debate continued into the pay TV

content session hosted by Lesley Osborne, ABA Manager Policy and Research, with Debra Richards, Executive Director of the Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association exercising her right of reply.

Premium Movie Partnership ('R Rated Programming and issues for pay TV').



Above: Julie Flynn, FACTS

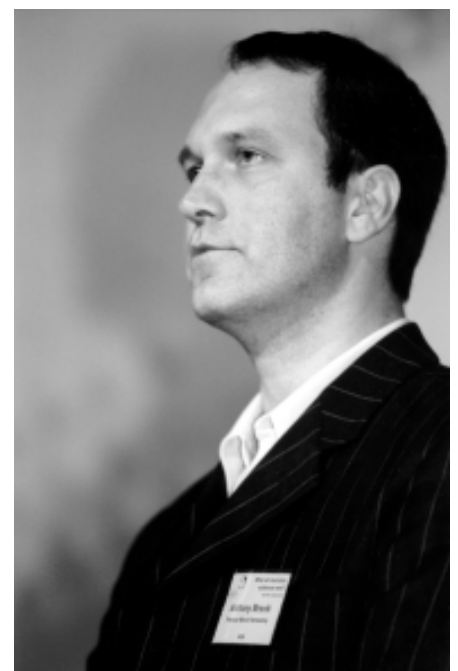
The latter session also featured presentations from Mandy Pattinson, Manager Multimedia Regulatory and Strategy, Optus, ('Interactive TV and what's happening on pay TV digital services and what are the leading applications from the audience perspective') and Anthony Mrsnik, Director of Legal, Business and Corporate Affairs,

Below: Jane Marquard, ABA member

Below: Debra Richards, Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association



Below: Anthony Mrsnik, Premium Movie Partnership





Day 2: The new public interest

Internet/TV black spots and the future of journalism

Somewhat of a mixed bag, the final session in the New Public Interest stream saw papers on 'The role of the Internet in Shaping the Public Interest', from Liz Jakubowski, Development and New Projects, News and Current Affairs, ABC; 'Implementation of the Commonwealth Government's \$35m Television Black Spots Program', from Jennifer Levy, Manager TV Fund Unit,

Department of Communications Information Technology and the Arts; and 'Securing a Safe Future for Australia's Journalists and Journalism', by Sally Begbie, Senior Lecturer Journalism, Charles Sturt University.

All three papers and presentations are available on the conference website at www.aba.gov.au/abanews/conf/2002.



Above: Sally Begbie, Charles Sturt University



Above: Jennifer Levy, Department of Communications Information Technology and the Arts



Right: Liz Jakubowski, ABC



Day 2: The new public interest

Interacting

