



Digital Radio Study Group

The formation of the Digital Radio Study Group (the DRSG) was announced by the Minister at the ABA Conference on 6 May 2003. The DRSG includes representatives from the Australian Broadcasting Authority, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA), and the Australian Communications Authority. The ABA is represented on the DRSG by Giles Tanner, General Manager, and Fred Gengaroli, Director, Engineering and Technology. Under its terms of reference the DRSG must report to the Minister by 28 November 2003 on the options and implications in implementing the various digital radio technologies in Australia.

The DRSG project plan envisages two phases, with the first phase consisting of two complementary fact gathering exercises. The first exercise, led by the ABA will provide a status report on the various digital radio technologies such as, Eureka 147, IBOC and Digital Radio Mondiale. The following issues will also be examined:

- technical capabilities, spectrum requirements and technical advantages and disadvantages of each of the relevant technologies
- current and future availability of appropriate spectrum in Australia
- cost and availability of receiver equipment
- the nature of requirements for the development or adoption of technical standards.

DCITA will lead the other component of the fact gathering exercise and review overseas approaches to implementing digital radio technologies. The following issues will also be covered:

- international government and industry approaches to implementation and status of roll-out in the major off-shore markets
- rate of, and drivers for, consumer uptake in the various markets
- the nature of the business model of the relevant technologies
- implications for the regulatory framework.

The second phase of the project, which will include consultation, will draw on the work undertaken by the ABA and DCITA in the first phase. It will present options and implications for implementing the various digital radio technologies in Australia.

Analog television services in northern NSW and regional Queensland

The Australian Broadcasting Authority has sought public comment on its draft licence area plans for analog television services in Northern New South Wales and Regional Queensland. The draft plans set out the ABA's preliminary views on the number and characteristics of television services proposed to be made available in these areas.

"Submitters were advised that the process is generally about retaining the status quo and is being completed within the confines of current policy and legislation."

Specifically the licence area plans will:

- determine the licence areas for each of the markets,
- affirm a Ministerial notification for a community television service, and
- confirm the technical parameters of each of the existing analog television services.

The draft plans for Northern New South Wales and Regional Queensland include alternative channels in a number of locations for services that may need to change channels to accommodate digital television services.

In September 1993, the ABA determined its planning priorities under s.24 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* which specified the preparation of analog television licence area plans for the east coast regional television markets to be part of Group 5 of the ABA's planning priorities. Preparation of the draft licence area plans for Northern New South Wales and Regional Queensland is part of the completion of the ABA's planning priorities. The ABA expects to release draft licence area plans for Southern New South Wales and Regional Victoria in the next few months.

Copies of the drafts and the accompanying explanatory papers are available on the ABA website at www.aba.gov.au or by calling Freecall 1800 226 667.

The closing date for submissions was 18 July 2003.

