



New licences allocated:

Digital datacasting licence for the ABC

The ABA has allocated a datacasting licence to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) for the whole of Australia.

'The proposed service will add value to the digital television service provided by the ABC,' said Ms Maddock.

Datacasting services can include electronic program guides, Internet content, electronic mail, information services, educational programs, interactive computer games, text or still images, and advertising or sponsorship material.

'The ABA expects that the appeal and value of digital television services generally will be further enhanced as new datacasting services start to become available over the next year or so through digital television receivers and set-top-boxes,' Ms Maddock said.

Datacasting

A datacasting service is broadly defined as a service that delivers content in the form of text, data, speech, music or other sounds or visual images (or in any form or combination of forms) to persons with appropriate reception equipment, when the delivery of the service uses the broadcasting services bands.

Similar services delivered outside the broadcasting services bands are not regulated as datacasting services.

The definition of datacasting is wide enough to include the delivery of radio and television programs. However, datacasters face restrictions on providing the kinds, or 'genres', of programs and audio content commonly regarded as traditional television or radio programming.

Licence conditions

The types of programs caught by the genre conditions include, drama, sports, music, infotainment or lifestyle, documentary and 'reality television', Category A programs. There are also restrictions on Category B programs which include news or current affairs programs, financial, market or business information bulletins and weather bulletins. Some qualifications to the genre restrictions allow datacasters to provide short extracts of Category A and B programs.

The audio content conditions are intended to prevent datacasters from transmitting matter that would be regarded as a traditional radio program.

Provisions have been included to prevent the use of Internet carriage services as these and ordinary electronic mail are not subject to the genre or audio conditions. There are also provisions for exempting certain content copied from the Internet from the genre or audio conditions.



New community radio licence for Moranbah

The ABA has allocated a new community radio licence for Moranbah, Queensland, to Rock FM Association Inc.

The service will broadcast on 96.9 MHz on the FM band. Rock FM Association Inc. is currently broadcasting on that frequency under a temporary community broadcasting licence that expired on 30 September 2003. The permanent community radio broadcasting licence commenced on 1 October 2003.

'The new service will add to the range and diversity of services in the Moranbah area,' said Ms Lyn Maddock. 'The applicant satisfied the ABA that it would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the general community in the Moranbah area.'

The ABA made this licence available after a process of consultation with the people of the local community to seek their views on what additional broadcasting services were needed in their area.

Rock FM Association Inc. was the only applicant for the licence. Its application was as-

essed with particular regard to whether the proposed service would meet existing and perceived future community needs.

Rock FM Association Inc.'s current temporary service operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The proposed service will provide programs that will cover a wide range of local issues, news, information and music that appeals to the many different community groups across the Moranbah licence area.

Moranbah

The Moranbah area is currently served by two national radio services; 4ABCRN and 4QAA; and two commercial radio services; 4HI and 4HOT. It is also served by national television services ABC and SBS, and three commercial television services; STQ51, TNQ54 and RTQ57.

In September 2002, the ABA varied the Emerald licence area plan to include one new community radio broadcasting licence be made available for Moranbah. The plan was originally determined in March 1998.

