

The ABA participated in the recent World Radiocommunication Conference 2003 (WRC-03) held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 9 June to 4 July 2003. Ennio Ravello, Manager Engineering and Information Services at the ABA, reports.

World Radiocommunication Conference 2003

World Radiocommunication Conferences are generally held every two to three years. It is the task of each conference to review, and, if necessary, revise the *Radio Regulations* – the binding international treaty that governs the worldwide allocation and use of the radio-frequency spectrum by all radio-based services. World Radiocommunication Conferences also address radiocommunications matters of a worldwide nature and can direct the technical studies of the sector's study groups in preparation for future conferences.

Treaty obligations mean that World Radiocommunication Conference decisions have a significant impact on spectrum usage worldwide and serve to establish the broad framework for radio-frequency planning by national administrations.

The last decade has seen rapid technological development in the field of radiocommunications, resulting in the expansion of a growing range of services and applications. Such growth has increased the demand for radio frequencies and placed increasing pressure on existing services to share spectrum where this is technically feasible. This is particularly relevant to VHF and UHF broadcast allocations below 1000 MHz. The radio propagation characteristics at these frequencies make use of the bands by other terrestrial applications particularly attractive.

In preparation for this year's conference, the ABA participated in the activities of the Australian WRC Preparatory Committee (WRC-03 PC), which dealt with the formulation of Australian positions and proposals on conference agenda items and on the harmonisation of these positions within the Asia-Pacific region.

The ABA's primary objectives at both the preparatory meetings and conference were the protection of broadcasting services and to ensure options for the future planning of the broadcasting services bands are preserved.

The Australian delegation to the conference comprised some 40 delegates representing a broad range of public and private organisations with vested interests in spectrum usage. Amongst bodies represented were the telecommunications carriers, satellite operators, government regulators, individual government departments and agencies, private consultants, and both the public and commercial broadcasters.

Broadcasting issues

Amongst items of interest on the agenda were proposals for:

- the introduction of new aeronautical radionavigation systems immediately adjacent to the FM band
- the identification of harmonised spectrum for public protection and disaster relief services in various frequency bands, including those currently allocated to VHF and UHF broadcasting
- a review of regulatory arrangements associated with the operation of Highly Elliptical Orbit (HEO) satellite systems in various bands, including the band 620 – 790 MHz currently allocated to broadcasting services
- an additional frequency allocation for mobile satellite feeder links below 1000 MHz, and
- the introduction of new digital modulation techniques in the HF broadcasting bands.

The WRC reviewed:

- progress on ITU (International Telecom-

munications Union) studies relating to Terrestrial Wireless Interactive Multimedia, and

- progress of studies relating to future development of IMT-2000 (a third generation mobile telephony system), including possible spectrum requirements, which also have the potential to impact on the broadcasting services bands.

Outcomes

From a broadcasting perspective the conference was very successful with good outcomes achieved in relation to all broadcasting matters. On key issues dealing with public protection and disaster relief, HEO operation in the 620 – 790 MHz band and introduction of new aeronautical radionavigation systems immediately adjacent to the FM band, the outcomes were considerably better than initially envisaged.

The outcomes from a broadcasting perspective were good in that:

- the introduction of new aeronautical radionavigation systems in the 108 – 118 MHz band is subject to no additional constraints being imposed on the broadcasting service operating in the adjacent band. Australia was also successful in calling for compatibility studies between the existing and planned new aeronautical services and proposed new digital sound broadcasting systems (such as the US In-Band On-Channel system) designed to operate in the FM band
- identification of broadcasting spectrum for public protection and disaster relief services is restricted to the 806 – 820 MHz band with the decision on use of this and other bands identified for pub-

- lic protection and disaster relief residing with each national administration. In Australia the 806 – 820 MHz band is not currently available for public protection and disaster relief applications
- processing of satellite filings in the 620 - 790 MHz band by the ITU has been suspended until the next conference to allow for development of suitable sharing criteria for the protection of terrestrial television broadcasting services
 - no additional frequency allocation was identified for mobile satellite feeder links below 1000 MHz, and
 - amendments were approved to the *Radio Regulations* that remove the last regulatory impediments to the use of the HF broadcasting bands by systems using digital modulation techniques, such as the Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM) system.

After reviewing the progress of Terrestrial Wireless Interactive Multimedia studies, the conference concluded that the concept was still developing and that further study of the issue was required within the ITU.

No additional spectrum was identified for IMT-2000 and further studies on the matter are to be concluded in time for the next WRC conference in 2007.

Future activities

The conference agreed on a preliminary agenda covering 27 items for the next conference, in 2007 (WRC-07). The list includes a number of items with a direct impact, or the potential to impact, on broadcast spectrum usage or availability. These include sharing and regulatory provisions associated with the operation of satellite systems in the 620 – 790 MHz band (to be finalised at the 2007 conference), additional allocations to the aeronautical mobile service in parts of the bands between 108 MHz and 6 GHz, and consideration of frequency related matters, including possible additional allocations, for IMT-2000 systems.

The ABA will be participating in Australian preparatory activities for WRC-07 and has already assumed the lead role in coordinating the activities of the Special Interest Group within the Australian Radiocommunications Study Group 6 (ARSG 6) dealing with satellite and terrestrial television sharing in the UHF band.



The Office of Film and Literature Classification hosted the International Ratings Conference: Classification in a Convergent World, in Sydney from 21–24 September 2003. Sharon Trotter, Manager, Content Assessment Section at the ABA, reports.

International ratings conference

While the sessions at the Office of Film and Literature Classification's International Ratings Conference: *Classification in a Convergent World* explored a diverse range of issues, the conference theme was the challenge to traditional classification methods presented by new content, services, and mediums. Staff from the ABA assisted in organising the conference, participated in discussion panels and attended sessions.

Highlights of the conference included a colourful presentation by Bill Hastings, Chief Censor, New Zealand OFLC, in which he drew on Marshall McLuhan and Stanley Kubrick (amongst others) to argue that each medium alters the content presented on it, resulting in 'divergence' rather than 'convergence' and the ongoing need for different classification systems.

The theme of the session 'Identifying the challenges convergence poses for classifiers of film' was how far we have gone down the track towards convergence. Robin Duval, head of the British Board of Film Classification, argued that convergence is not yet upon us, pointing to the growing popularity of cinema as evidence that existing formats continue to be the

first choice for viewers. Amy Chua, head of the Media Content Division of the Media Development Authority in Singapore, disagreed. She stated that, thanks to broadband, the Internet is rapidly evolving as a broadcast medium, and that new approaches to regulation are therefore required.

What those new approaches might be was canvassed in a lively session chaired by Andree Wright from the ABA. This session brought together experts working in the Internet area. Nigel Williams, chief executive officer for Childnet International, argued that traditional approaches to classification don't work in the new media environment. Encouraging content providers to self label content is one way of providing advice to consumers. Given existing approaches to labelling are not working, new partnerships need to be developed to encourage content providers to label Internet content. Nigel Williams also pointed out that in the new media environment the focus is on contact rather than content. The experts agreed that community education is vital in ensuring consumers have positive experiences in this new environment.

