

Electromagnetic radiation

New health standards mandated for all transmitters

Further to last month's article in *ABA Update* on AM radio transmission sites being under pressure from urban encroachment, Update readers may be interested to hear that the Australian Communications Authority (ACA) has recently introduced new regulations setting limits for human exposure to electromagnetic radiation (EMR).

The regulations, which came into effect on 1 March 2003, cover all mobile transmitters such as remote controlled toys, walkie-talkies and hand held two-way radios as well as all radiocommunications installations, such as broadcast towers and amateur radio stations.

The previous limits for human exposure to EMR were based on an expired 1998 Australia-New Zealand interim standard and only applied to manufacturers and importers of mobile and portable transmitting equipment.

The new regulations make mandatory the limits set out in a standard developed by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA).

The standard is based on the most recent scientific research conducted in this field, and includes a number of technical improvements.

"The new EMR arrangements represent one of the most comprehensive EMR regulatory regimes in the world. The limits in the ARPANSA standard are set well below the level at which known adverse health effects can occur," said ACA Chairman Tony Shaw.

The regulations mean that all broadcasting licensees will have to comply with the ARPANSA standard. Licensees who operate high power transmitters will be required to hold records demonstrating compliance with the standard. The requirement to document compliance will commence on 1 June 2003.

The new EMR exposure limits apply to individual transmitters only, rather than the cumulative effects of services.

The licence conditions were developed, through industry consultation, in response to community interest in the possible health effects associated with the use of radiocommunications equipment and the

siting of radiocommunications infrastructure. The new EMR arrangements support and complement other initiatives of the ACA to address the possible health effects from exposure to EMR.

The ACA wrote to broadcasters in May 2002, advising that it intended to introduce new arrangements related to human exposure limits to EMR. The ACA has now written detailing the introduction of the standard as it relates to the type of apparatus licence held by the licensee. For commercial and community broadcasters the new standard will apply via a special condition and advisory note on apparatus licences.

Copies of this determination and further information on the ACA's EMR regime is available from any ACA office and may be accessed via the ACA's website at www.aca.gov.au/standards/emr/index.htm or by contacting the ACA's Standards Team on telephone (02) 6219 5552 or (02) 6219 5258.



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to do so. In spite of these problems both Seven and the pay channels said they were still interested in receiving pitches for documentaries specific to their audience.

After the Fact explored the impact of documentary film-makers on the people they film before, during and after filming. Speakers included Dennis O'Rourke (*Cunnamulla*), Barbara Chobocky (*The Waks Family*) Peter Hegedus (*The Inheritance*) and Cathy Scott (*Business Behind Bars*). The panel discussed various issues of ethics and the law and the consequences of filming peoples lives, homes and private moments. Other issues con-

cerning representation of the subject, final say or control over the editing and power relationships between the filmmaker and subject were also debated by panellists and the audience

Highlights of the conference were the master class and 'in conversation' sessions with documentary makers including Wim Wenders (*Buena Vista Social Club*), Molly Dineen (*Home from the Hill, Geri*), Bob Connolly (*Rats in the Ranks, Facing the Music*), Rob McAuley (*The Battleships*) and Dennis O'Rourke (*The Good Woman of Bangkok, Cunnamulla*).

The conference concluded with a lively plenary session in which a range of issues were debated and key resolutions passed.

These included a concern that documentary funding was not included in the ABC's new ABC-i initiative and a recommendation that in 2003, the AFC supported by other film agencies, complete a benchmark study of the Australian documentary industry. Two other resolutions from the plenary were that the Australian Government introduce a documentary expenditure requirement for pay TV and provide resources to the ABA to allow the monitoring of documentary levels on pay and free-to-air television.

The next AIDC will be held in 2004 in Perth. Further information can be found at www.aidc.com.au

