



ABA seeks submissions on whether to delay commercial radio licences

The Australian Broadcasting Authority has decided to seek submissions on whether to defer the availability of spectrum for further commercial FM radio licences in Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

The ABA has planned commercial FM radio licences in the Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne

and Brisbane markets that have yet to be allocated. The timing of these allocations was set out at the time of the relevant licence area plans in order to provide certainty to the industry and the marketplace. Therefore, the ABA will only be minded to consider deferring the availability of spectrum for these commercial radio licences

if there has been a significant change in market circumstances since the determination of the relevant licence area plan.

The ABA's move follows approaches by a number of interested parties, some concerned that it proceed, others concerned that it should not proceed or that it should delay.

The crucial question, as the ABA sees it, is whether circumstances in the market (or similar markets) since the timing decision have changed in some major way such that proceeding with the allocation now would fail to promote the objects of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*, including the economic and efficient allocation of spectrum. In looking at this question, the ABA will look at each licence area as a separate and distinct market.

The ABA will decide whether or not to formally consider varying the relevant licence area plan through the normal public process, based on submissions received by Friday, 9th May.

The proposed timeframes for the allocation of these licences are only tentative. They are:

Licence area	Frequency	Date available in LAP	Proposed timing for commencement of allocation process	Proposed timing for auction
Adelaide	91.9MHz	September 2003	July 2003	October 2003
Sydney	95.3MHz	December 2003	February 2004	April 2004
Brisbane	106.9MHz	January 2004	February 2004	April 2004
Melbourne	91.5MHz	July 2004	May 2004	August 2004

Local material on regional television

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rectly to any particular local area within the licence area. This material will be treated as material of local significance to each of the local areas, even though it does not relate directly to any of them, but will be capped at 50 per cent of total points for any one area.

Other markets

At this stage, the ABA is focusing on the four aggregated markets, where public concern was greatest. Accordingly, the proposed investigations into the adequacy of local content in other parts of regional Australia and the impact of aggregation / affiliation fees on service outcomes have been postponed. The ABA will monitor these matters and investigate further if appropriate.

