The Media Development Authority of Singapore presented a forum on mobile broadcasting at Broadcast Asia 2004, on 17 June 2004.

Andree Wright, the ABA Director, Industry Performance and Review was a panelist discussing trends, new program formats and the opportunities and challenges that mobile broadcasting poses.

Mobile Broadcasting – Bane or Boon?'

The 'Mobile Broadcasting – Bane or Boon?' Forum focused on the rapidly emerging mobile wireless technologies that send and receive data, text, voice and video. These new wireless technologies will permit mobile phones, and portable or wearable computers to function as universal remote consoles for accessing information and services and controlling appliances and devices.

The forum was conducted in two parts: an industry showcase on mobile broadcasting with speakers from Singapore, Japan, South Korea and Switzerland and a panel discussion 'Regulating Mobile Content Services – Reshaping the Role of the Regulator'.

Singapore's enthusiasm for mobile broadcasting was apparent from the moment I stepped into a taxi at Changi Airport and found myself looking at a mobile broadcasting screen on the back of the front seat. Now available on 500 Singapore taxi screens, 'Mr Taxi' features interactive digital radio, wireless live video streaming, sports and online news, full television programs, television commercials, music videos, trailers, infotainment and tourism information. And all content is updated wirelessly and available 24 hours a day!

Had I gone to the Suntec or Horizon food halls I would also have seen mobile broadcasting screens that reach 338,000 people a month and another 85,000 students at Nanyang Polytechnic and 28,000 Bintan Resort Ferry passengers. As one of the industry showcase speakers, Lee Chin Siong (TV Mobile Pty Ltd), spoke about these services, proud of his company's provision of the only outdoor digital television channel in Singapore since February 2001.

With a business model based on advertising revenue, TV Mobile is marketed as a service for people on the move. It delivers 18 hours of programming each day from 6 am to midnight, including variety, comedy and live news programs. Viewers now want more than one choice and more channels, and express interest in customised programming: for example news for white collar workers on their way to work, and Japanese animation for the youth market during lunch time. Lee Chin Siong reminded us that 3G is only one of many ways of distribution. He envisages a future in which technological developments make it possible for his company to provide 30 to 80 outdoor digital television channels, and with an international rather than just country-wide coverage.

'Samurai Warriors' and 'Sumo Wrestling' are two services popular with young Japanese mobile phone users. These were demonstrated by Ikuo Wada of the Multimedia Development Department of the Japan Broadcasting Corporation. Mr Wada has played a leading role in developing content for emerging media like digital data, broadcasting, mobile phones and the Internet. He also referred to research undertaken in January this year by the Mitsubishi Research Institute which indicates that the services wanted by mobile broadcast users in Japan are news, sport, music, animation, shopping, travel, drama and business and that they will be likely to use such services for about half an hour a day.

Jin Kwon Kim (Digital Media Center) spoke of the appeal of the fast access, wearable and portable mobile technology for today's users in South Korea. Koreans have embraced a multi-tasking lifestyle: your mobile phone allows users to send messages, sell stocks and check out road maps, all on the way to work of a morning. Jin Kwon Kim said that people start with easy content like movies and games, and then move on to more innovative services. For older users these are likely to include banking and shopping, and for the younger ones, sending self-portraits and video messages to their friends.

At present in Korea many services are expensive and cannot support mass users, however there are some interesting innovations such as the use of nationwide mobile audiences for statistical surveys. Interactive programs using mobile messages are especially popular, and mobile content can now drive television shows. For example, users can send a self-portrait image or video to a particular mobile site using MMS where others will then vote for their favourite MMS clips. Amateur action finalists are then chosen for parts in a broadcast drama.

Industry showcase delegates spoke of the convergence of mobile media with conventional media and its potential to go further than all other previous media paradigm shifts. They also noted that, as mobile services will be delivered by multiple technologies, the historical division between telecommunications and broadcasting is eroding. This erosion poses regulatory challenges in the new convergence age.

These delegates were joined by panelists

with regulatory experience to discuss these challenges and Dan Kirk (Spectrum Strategy Consultants) moderated the panel. This global consultancy company focuses on the convergent industries of fixed and mobile communications, the media and the regulation of these sectors. Panelists included Ling Pek Ling, from the Media Development Authority, Singapore; Saw Ken Wye, from Microsoft, Singapore; and Hiroshi Asami, from the Japanese Ministry Of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications and myself on behalf of the ABA.

Not surprisingly, the panel session provided more questions than answers as it explored four main themes.

- Regulatory challenges and issues (how should mobile media services be treated? Are there differences in the nature of the media that suggest alternate models from other media? How can we balance regulation with promotion of new services?)

- Possible models of regulation (when would industry self-regulation, co-regulation or legislation be appropriate? How might these models work? And would they satisfy consumers?)
- The role of the customer in regulation (How should customers, especially young people, be involved in the process? How can they be empowered to take responsibility? Are there technology solutions, for example, filtering or rating systems that could help?)
- The scope for international collaboration (Is there a role for international industry bodies in helping to regulate mobile content? Are national laws adequate?)

A number of self regulatory initiatives were discussed including the work done internationally by Vodafone to put consumer safeguards in place, the development of industry self regulatory codes of practice in the UK, the parents' guide prepared by the industry in Ireland and

work commissioned by the European Union from Oxford University on self-regulatory models, (go to www.selfregulation.info).

Particular attention was paid during the panel session to Australian initiatives to develop user safeguards for mobile devices, given the Australian Government's recent decision to merge its telecommunications and broadcasting regulators into the Australian Communications and Media Authority by 1 July 2005. Interest was also shown in the Australian government's announcement of a review of possible longer term initiatives in regard to 'the regulation of content delivered to convergent mobile communications devices, such as 3G mobiles', and the commissioning of a joint research study by the ABA, the ACA and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts as an input into that review.

For more information about the review, go to www.dcita.gov.au. ⌐

Communications Research Forum

The Communications Research Forum will be held in Canberra on 29–30 September. See Conference Dairy, page 23, for more details.

The Communications Research Forum draws together researchers, key industry players and policy makers in a multi-disciplinary environment to consider communications policy and research in Australia. The CRF provides a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas and research findings and discuss recent policy developments in various aspects of communications – including broadcasting, media, online issues and telecommunications. The CRF this year will have two influential international speakers.

Dimitri Ypsilanti
Dimitri Ypsilanti heads the Telecommunications Policy Unit and is the Principal Administrator in the OECD responsible for the work on communications policy and the Working Party on Telecommunication and Information Services Policy. Mr Ypsilanti's work has included telecommunication economic and policy analysis in a range of areas including trade in

telecommunication services, international telecommunication tariff and accounting rates issues, analysis of regulatory issues and comparative analysis of telecommunication performance among the OECD member countries.
He has also been involved in the OECD's work on technical assistance in the field of telecommunication policy to the Central and Eastern European Economies and the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union.
Mr Ypsilanti is the keynote speaker at the CRF, and will discuss recent trends and emerging issues in telecommunications and the information economy.

Steven S. Wildman
Steven S. Wildman is the James H. Quello Professor of Telecommunication Studies and Director of the James H. and Mary B. Quello Center for Telecommunication Management & Law at Michigan State University. He holds

a PhD in economics from Stanford University and a BA in economics from Wabash College. In addition to numerous articles and book chapters on economics and policy for communication industries, Dr. Wildman is an author or editor for the following books: *International Trade in Films and Television Programs* (Ballinger, 1988); *Electronic Services Networks: A Business and Public Policy Challenge*, (Praeger, 1991); Video Economics (Harvard University Press, 1992); *Making Universal Service Policy: Enhancing the Process Through Multidisciplinary Evaluation* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999); and *Rethinking Rights and Regulations: Institutional Responses to New Communications Technologies* (MIT Press, 2003).
Professor Wildman will address a plenary session at CRF. His areas of interest include policy for mass media industries, and the institutional underpinnings of law and regulation for communication industries. ⌐