

The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia held its annual conference on 25–28 November 2004 in Surfers Paradise. The ABA was represented at the conference by Giles Tanner, Acting Member and General Manager, Jonquil Ritter, General Counsel and Director of Policy Legal and Licensing, Fred Gengaroli, Director of Planning, and staff from the Industry Review, Investigations, Licensing and Policy sections. Sharon Trotter and Gavin Oakes prepared this report.

CBAA conference

The conference was arranged into two broad programs covering, on the one hand, large sessions about issues of general interest to the community sector, and on the other hand smaller workshop or seminar style sessions organised around a number of different streams.

Issues discussed in the general sessions included the recently completed Community Radio National Listener Survey, the ABA's new community broadcasting licence renewal process, and the community sector's involvement in the digital broadcasting future. The workshop/seminar sessions included streams devoted to youth involvement in community broadcasting, management and technical issues, academic research, programming and training.

One important aspect of the conference that was particularly noticeable was the increased level of participation over previous years by young people. This reflects an increase in the participation by young people in the community broadcasting sector more broadly, thanks at least in part to the ABA's allocation over

the last couple of years of a number of youth community broadcasting licences. The enthusiastic youth participation in the conference was both welcomed and encouraged by other conference participants.

The community sector appeared to be upbeat following recent good news on funding, listener numbers, and licensing arrangements. Pre-election lobbying resulted in the Australian Government committing an additional \$8.2 million in funding to the sector over four years. Research conducted by McNair Ingenuity on behalf of the community sector (the Community Radio National Listener Survey) revealed a very healthy listener base, with seven million listeners across the country tuning in to community radio every month. 2004 also saw the allocation of the first four permanent community television licences after a long period of operating under temporary licences. The sector expects permanent licensing will contribute to greater future stability for the services, and will pave the way for the sector's successful long term development.

Session highlights

Listen Up: Now we know we have got 7 million listeners focused on the results of the McNair Ingenuity research for community radio. Speakers challenged the sector to use the good news findings to full effect by selling the message to potential sponsors that community radio is a medium with broad based appeal and the ability to reach a variety of audiences.

Who gets their kicks from ABA 66 looked at the ABA's new licence renewal process for community broadcasters. The ABA is seeking extensive information from licensees at renewal time, which it expects will provide it with a much better understanding of the variety and scope of community broadcasters. ABA speakers emphasised the importance of community broadcasters having a good understanding of the community they have been licensed to serve, and having proper processes in place to ensure that the services are run in the best interests of those communities.

The Digital Future, Now looked at a range of issues relating to the digital radio future. Speakers from community radio,

At the CBAA conference ...



photos courtesy of the CBAA

SYN FM general manager and former CBAA youth representative Bryce Ives at one of the youth stream workshops



David Melzer, 3MBS General Manager and former CBAA National President: recipient of the Michael Law Award



Richard Allen of 6DBY, who won the Best Innovative New Program / Segment Idea award with *Stories of History and Country*.

the ABA, ABC, SBS, Broadcast Australia and Commercial Radio Australia discussed the transition from analog to digital, possible licensing arrangements, the current digital trials in Sydney and Melbourne, spectrum access and availability, the importance of ensuring sectoral diversity in the digital future, and factors that will encourage and promote the take-up of digital radio, in particular content and 'add-ons' such as rewind, downloads and audio-on-demand.

Management sessions covered a range of topics designed to provide broadcasters with information from people with first-hand experience. Adrian Basso from 3MBS discussed ideas for turning sponsors into long term business partners by looking creatively at arrangements that would work to the mutual benefit of both parties. Other related sessions involved discussions about sponsorship from the buyers point of view, marketing community broadcasting services, and strategic planning.

A community television strand looked at where to from here for the sector following permanent licence allocations for Perth, Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.

The youth stream included discussions about how to encourage and maintain youth involvement in community radio and television and problems facing young people in community broadcasting.

The academic sessions included a topical paper from Saba El Ghul from Queensland University of Technology, who put the case for ending the current five minute per hour restriction on sponsorship announcements on community radio. The paper sparked debate about how such a move might change the ethos and sound of community stations. ☞



National committee president, Paul Terdich and new vice president, Shane Elson

The 9th Asia-Pacific Regulatory Roundtable

The 9th Asia-Pacific Regulatory Roundtable was held in Seoul, Korea from 3-6 November 2004. Representatives from Australia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and the United States attended the Roundtable. Jane Marquard, ABA Member and Jonquil Ritter, General Counsel and Director, Policy Legal and Licensing represented the ABA.

The following key themes emerged from the Roundtable.

1. Whether, and if so how, to regulate new media, such as video streaming over

the net, VoIP and mobile telephony, and the difficulties posed by outdated laws.

2. Issues surrounding the unification of legislative and regulatory frameworks on broadcasting and telecommunications in the current environment of convergence.

3. How to encourage digital take-up.

4. Protecting children from harmful material received via mobiles, the Internet and other delivery forms.

All representatives endorsed the value of the Roundtables and supported their continuation. ☞



Delegates to the roundtable at the special session: left, Jonquil Ritter (far right) and Jane Marquard (second, far right)



Delegates to the roundtable ☞