

Looking forward to ACMA

The Australian Communications and Media Authority: what changes can we expect? what will stay the same?

The ABA will cease to exist at midnight on 30 June 2005.

From 1 July, its functions (and staff) will be taken over by a new agency, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). ACMA will also take over the functions and staff of the Australian Communications Authority, Australia's regulator of telecommunications and radiocommunications.

At the time of printing, details of the new chair and members of the Authority have not been announced. However, existing staff of both agencies will become the staff of ACMA. The Acting Chairs of the ABA and the ACA, in consultation with the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, have decided on an organisational structure for the new body for 1 July: the Day 1 structure. This structure will, of course, be subject to the Chair's views, once that person is known.

Under the proposed Day 1 structure, Giles Tanner, Acting ABA Member and formerly General Manager, will become General Manager Broadcasting and Radiocommunications. In addition to managing the broadcasting functions of

ACMA, he will also manage its radiocommunications functions.

Andree Wright and Fred Gengaroli will continue to head up Industry Performance and Review and the Broadcasting Planning teams of ACMA respectively.

Jonquil Ritter will head up a larger Legal team, becoming ACMA's first General Counsel.

The contact details for Mr Tanner, Ms Ritter, Ms Wright and Mr Gengaroli will remain unchanged.

The merger of Australia's broadcasting regulator with its communications regulator was supported in submissions made by both authorities to the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts as part of an inquiry into the future of the administration of the ABA's planning function. On 11 May 2004, the then Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, the Hon. Daryl Williams announced that the Australian Government would merge the two authorities to establish a new media and communications regulator responsible for regulating broadcasting, online content, radiocommunications and telecommunications.

Its creation recognises the changing nature of the communications environment and enables a coordinated regulatory response to converging technologies and services and to the long-term management of spectrum. The Minister also stated that ACMA would maintain the existing offices of the ABA and ACA throughout Australia, although, over time, some functions may co-locate where practical.

The Senate held an inquiry into the provisions of the Australian Communications and Media Authority and related Bills and matters, and released its report on 10 March 2005. The Bill was passed without amendment and received Royal Assent on 1 April 2005.

This will be the last issue of *ABA Update* but we will continue to bring you broadcasting and Internet news in the new ACMA newsletter. Watch your mailbox!

The staff of the ABA look forward to the chance to work as part of a larger organisation with responsibility for the converging world of radiocommunications, telecommunications, the Internet, broadcasting, narrowcasting and its content.

More information about ACMA will be on the new website, which will go live on 1 July, at www.acma.gov.au. ☐