



The ABA is calling for submissions on proposals on the merits of placing restrictions on the planning and allocation of broadcasting services in certain frequency bands that may be suitable for digital radio.

Spectrum for digital radio?

The ABA has released a discussion paper inviting submissions on the merits of placing restrictions on the planning and allocation of broadcasting services in certain frequency bands that may be suitable for digital radio.

'With the policy and regulatory framework for the introduction of digital radio in Australia under active consideration by the Government, it is timely to seek views on the related spectrum issues,' said Ms Maddock.

For digital radio to be introduced, a prerequisite is available suitable spectrum. Different digital radio technologies require different frequency bands and the candidate bands are already extensively used. In most cases, they are also under continuing demand for other services, especially analog radio and digital television.

In contrast to the situation with the digital conversion of free-to-air television, shortage of suitable spectrum is likely to be a significant constraint on the development of digital radio in Australia. The issue before the ABA, as the body currently responsible for planning the broadcasting services bands of the radiofrequency

spectrum, is whether to withhold remaining spectrum that may be needed for digital radio. Restrictions on the planning and allocation of broadcasting services in certain digital radio candidate bands could prevent or limit the introduction of additional analog radio in some areas and could also affect future digital television services.

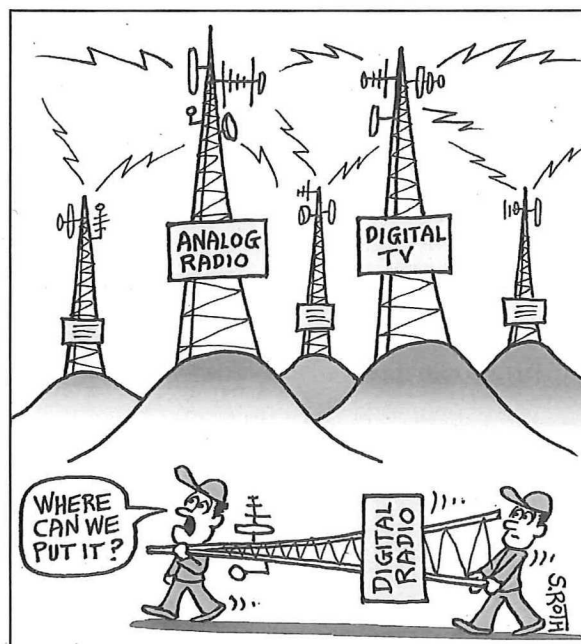
Given the timing, it will be for ACMA to consider the submissions before making any decisions on this issue.

Digital radio candidate bands

Digital radio candidate bands in the ABA's discussion paper include:

- VHF Band III (174–230 MHz)
- the medium frequency (MF) band (526.5–1606.5 kHz) and
- VHF Band I (45–52 MHz and 56–70 MHz).

If digital radio services are to be introduced in the short term it appears likely that, due to availability of affordable receivers, the Eureka 147 standard will be adopted. However, it is unlikely that Eureka 147 services will be able to match the coverage achieved by existing analog radio services, especially in some regional areas. Eureka



uses VHF Band III spectrum or L-Band (non-BSB) spectrum. VHF Band III spectrum is suitable for relatively wide coverage but is already heavily used for television, meaning that in some areas it will be scarce or unavailable until after analog television is switched off. L-Band spectrum is less suited for wide coverage.

Neither VHF Band III nor L-Band Eureka services are able to match the very wide coverage of some existing MF-AM radio services. A possible solution in the medium term would be to also deploy services using the more recent Digital Radio

Mondiale (DRM) standard. DRM is better suited to covering wide areas due to its ability to use the MF Band (526.5–1606.5 kHz) and it is likely that dual standard DRM/Eureka 147 receivers will become available. A prototype of such a receiver was demonstrated at the IBC 2004 conference and trade show in Amsterdam. ☐

Submissions

Closing date: 27 June 2005

Discussion paper

Copies of the discussion paper are available from the ABA's website at www.aba.gov.au or tel: 1800 226 667.