



ACMAsphere

IPTV or pods for blogs? ACMA Broadcasting Conference 2005

Lyn Maddock, ACMA Acting Chair, opened the conference with an address that looked closely at the new agency and its new role in the broadcasting world. This is an edited extract from her speech.

This is the first ACMA broadcasting conference, and the first large public event of the new organisation.

When we changed the focus of the Australian Broadcasting Authority conference several years ago, we did so because we felt there was a need for public discourse around the emerging issues of the day. We wanted to listen to you—practitioners, policy makers, commentators—and we wanted to listen at all levels of our organisation.

So as well as people from the organisation, we have here all members of the Authority itself to listen and learn.

When ACMA was established on 1 July, we made a decision to retain the focus at this conference on broadcasting and content because we considered that is still the area of need in the public debate.

The Australian Broadcasting Authority conference started out as a technical conference largely for broadcasting engineers. Over the years it has gradually evolved from that into a conference focusing on

content and delivery issues.

It hasn't completely put aside its technical origins, but it has broadened into a conference in which we aim to explore the way the industry is changing and the implications of those changes for its regulation.

You will see that by concentrating on content and the pipes and highways used to deliver that content, the conference is moving beyond its previous confines to reflect the broader interests of the new regulator.

And this broadening of the conference focus is likely to continue as the industry itself changes and moves into new areas.

For this seems to me to be how convergence works—by the gradual accretion of new products, new delivery mechanisms and new business models underpinning those—with the occasional more spectacular change, be that mobile television, IPTV, digital radio or something else.

That understanding of the path of convergence was



LYN MADDOCK, ACMA ACTING CHAIR, OPENING THE CONFERENCE

behind the government taking the next step in institutional arrangements to establish ACMA.

It is often overlooked in the concentration on the immediate that the Australian regulatory system has undergone very significant but gradual evolution over the past 15 years:

- from the transformation in both institutional arrangements and regulatory philosophy from the

- Australian Broadcasting Tribunal to the ABA in 1992
- the merger of Austel and the Spectrum Management Agency to form the Australian Communications Authority with a new regulatory approach in 1997
- to the merger of the Australian Communications Authority and the ABA this July into ACMA.

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In the face of such significant change, that regulatory framework has proven remarkably robust, although of course it has needed amendment from time to time to address new issues.

The establishment of ACMA to work within the existing regulations has been an important next step in the progression.

ACMA ACTIVITY

The remit for us now is to use that framework in a way which recognises and adapts to the changes taking place in the marketplace—to get every benefit we can out of the advantage of having one organisation responsible for all of broadcasting and telecommunications as those activities converge in the commercial area for which they compete.

We have been very active trying to position ourselves to do that. Inevitably we have been somewhat inwardly focused, but there has been much to do.

We are restructuring the organisation—we will move to a structure which is much more functionally based.

We will upgrade both the analysis we undertake and the coordination of thinking and activities across the agency.

We will establish two operational divisions:

- one dealing with the inputs we provide for industry such as telephone numbering systems, spectrum, and standards and licensing and
- the other dealing with the outputs of industry—content, telco performance, consumer issues.

We expect to have it in place by 1 January or thereabouts. We will of course make sure that there is plenty

of timely information provided so that you don't get confused about who to talk to on your particular issues.

CORPORATE PLAN

I am very pleased to announce that ACMA is releasing its first corporate plan. I encourage you to review our high-level goals and strategies for the next three years.

At the broadest level, ACMA wants to be an integrated, forward-looking, proactive and flexible organisation and to be recognised as a leading communications regulator that supports an innovative communications sector.

Our primary goal is an effective regulatory environment that supports a dynamic communications sector while also enabling the industry to meet the communications needs of the community.

This goal, and its related strategies, are aimed at maximising the synergies and common themes that run across our organisation.

This is a deliberate approach and is in direct response to one of the key reasons that ACMA was created by the government—to enable the regulator to respond quickly and effectively to a rapidly converging communications environment.

DIGITAL BAND SPECTRUM

We have decided our policy on spectrum restrictions for digital band.

Broadcasting services band spectrum that is suitable for DAB and DRM is relatively scarce in Australia. The issue for ACMA will be whether remaining vacant frequencies should be held back in order not to compromise the expected introduction of digital radio.

In considering whether to make spectrum available for other uses, ACMA intends, while considering each situation on its merits, to take into account the utility of spectrum for future introduction of digital radio services. This policy may have the effect of restricting the availability of additional analog AM radio services as well as reducing the reliance on VHF spectrum for additional digital television services.

ACMA considers its policy supports the government's recent announcement on the framework for the introduction of digital radio. It also provides us with the best option for handling effectively the developments that will be taking place in radio.

Through such a policy we hope to make good our aim of fashioning a regulatory environment that supports a dynamic communications sector while also enabling the industry to meet the communications needs of the community.

We hope we are creating a regulator and a regulatory environment that can cope with change.

For copies of the *Corporate Plan 2005–2008*, email candinfo@acma.gov.au or visit www.acma.gov.au (and go to **ACMA > Publications > Authority > Corporate Plan)**



DISCUSSION TIME