

UNASSIGNED DIGITAL TELEVISION CHANNELS MAY BE ALLOCATED

The government is examining the possible allocation of two 7 MHz digital television channels across Australia. Originally planned for datacasting services and limited to providing content such as information-only programs, from 1 January 2007 the channels can be used for an expanding range of services, including subscription broadcasting, open or subscription narrowcasting and mobile television.

In her address to the ACMA Broadcasting Conference in November 2005, the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator Helen Coonan, said, 'The use of the

datacasting spectrum provides the opportunity for some interesting new services for consumers and, in my view, it is a key element of any media reform package.'

The channels cannot be used for a new free-to-air commercial network. The government set out options for media reform, including options for driving the take-up of free-to-air digital television, in its March 2006 discussion paper, *Meeting the digital challenge: Reforming Australia's media in the digital age*. The preferred option was to allocate the channels as soon as practical in 2007 to allow new and innovative digital services. The paper is on the

Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts website at www.dcita.gov.au.

As part of its work on the possible allocation of these channels, ACMA released a discussion paper, *Future use of unassigned television channels*, in March 2006. Submissions were received from potential buyers, manufacturers, vendors, content providers, broadcasters, community groups, state governments, research organisations and telecommunications companies. ACMA also met with interested organisations, including potential buyers, incumbent broadcasters, content providers and manufacturers.

Comments received supplemented ACMA's detailed work on technical and regulatory issues to form the basis of its advice to government in June 2006. The advice was provided as part of the government's development of policy on the use of these channels and media reform generally.

The ACMA discussion paper and public submissions are on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au or contact Brendan Vernon on telephone 02 6219 5262, email spectrum.allocations@acma.gov.au.

New class licence to cover aviation radio needs

ACMA proposes to revoke the *Radiocommunications (Aircraft Station) Class Licence 2001* and issue a new licence, to be called the Radiocommunications (Aircraft and Aeronautical Mobile Stations) Class Licence, to allow for the full range of radiocommunications required by the aviation industry.

It is proposed that the new class licence will contain the licence conditions, operating requirements and technical parameters associated with radiocommunications within the aeronautical segments of the radiofrequency spectrum. This licence will authorise both aircraft stations and certain aeronautical mobiles, whether ground-based or carried in aircraft.

The initial notice of the proposed revocation was published in December 2005. As a result of comments received in response to that notice, further changes have been made. These include widening the scope of section 4 of the licence to accommodate new navigation technology and of section 9 to facilitate communications for CASA and AirservicesAustralia, and adding frequencies for search and rescue operations to section 11.

Comments were sought recently about these additional changes to the new licence and revocation of the Aircraft Station Class Licence. Comments closed on 3 July 2006. For more information about the changes, contact ACMA's Regulatory Development Section by email to radiocommunications.licensing.policy@acma.gov.au, telephone 02 6219 5279 or fax 02 6219 5231.

Changes to licensing of emergency beacons

ACMA is developing a new licensing regime to accommodate emergency position indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs), 406 MHz EPIRBs, personal locator beacons (PLBs), 406 MHz PLBs and the maritime survivor locating system. It is also proposed to remove reference to emergency locating beacon devices in the *Radiocommunications Miscellaneous Devices Class Licence 1999*.

The proposed licensing changes were recently published by ACMA for comment, with comments closing on 3 July 2006. For more information about the proposed changes, contact ACMA's Regulatory Development Section by email to radiocommunications.licensing.policy@acma.gov.au, or telephone 02 6219 5578, fax 02 6219 5231.

TEMPORARY COMMUNITY BROADCASTING LICENCES ALLOCATED 24 MAY-16 JUNE 2006

State	Licence area	Licensee	Community served	Frequency	Start
Qld	Cairns RA3	Smithfield Community Radio Association Inc.	Youth	101.9 MHz	1/6/06
Qld	Cunnamulla RA1	Bidjara Media & Broadcasting Company Ltd	Aboriginal	99.7 MHz	29/5/06
NT	Arnhem Land RA1	Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Inc.	Aboriginal	1530 kHz 1503 kHz 1593 kHz 1566 kHz 1476 kHz	27/7/06
Vic/NSW	Upper Murray RA1	High Country Christian Broadcasters Association Inc.	Christian	94.9 MHz	7/6/06
Vic	Geelong RA1	Geelong Ethnic Communities Council Inc.	General	94.7 MHz	26/6/06