

ACMA releases its first major communications industry report

The *ACMA Communications Report 2005–06* is the first whole-of-industry report published by ACMA since it was formed in July last year. The report was released following its tabling in parliament by the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator Helen Coonan, in November 2006.

The wide-ranging report is designed to reflect ACMA's broadening regulatory responsibilities, as well as its enhanced research and reporting capabilities, providing a comprehensive survey of the Australian communications landscape for the 2005–06 year and covering all aspects of the communications, internet and broadcasting industries. It provides an assessment of performance, product and service innovation, self-regulation and customer service and identifies emerging challenges for consumers, industry and government.

In the report, industry performance in providing consumer, environmental and social benefits to the community,

as well as cultural and economic benefits to the nation, is assessed. The report found that the impact of government reforms to liberalise the telecommunications industry was that the Australian economy was \$15.2 billion larger than it would otherwise have been.

From a consumer perspective, the report examines the different types of products and services and the factors that influence the adoption of new technologies, including profiles of consumer segments and industry participants. It also includes insights into the geographic diversity of ACMA's regulated communications activities—from service availability in the most remote Indigenous communities to the protection of the nation's undersea communications cables in the waters off the Australian coast.

The ACMA Communications Report builds on the previously published telecommunications performance reports, fulfilling ACMA's reporting requirements under section 105 of the *Telecommunications Act 1997*. Under this section, ACMA

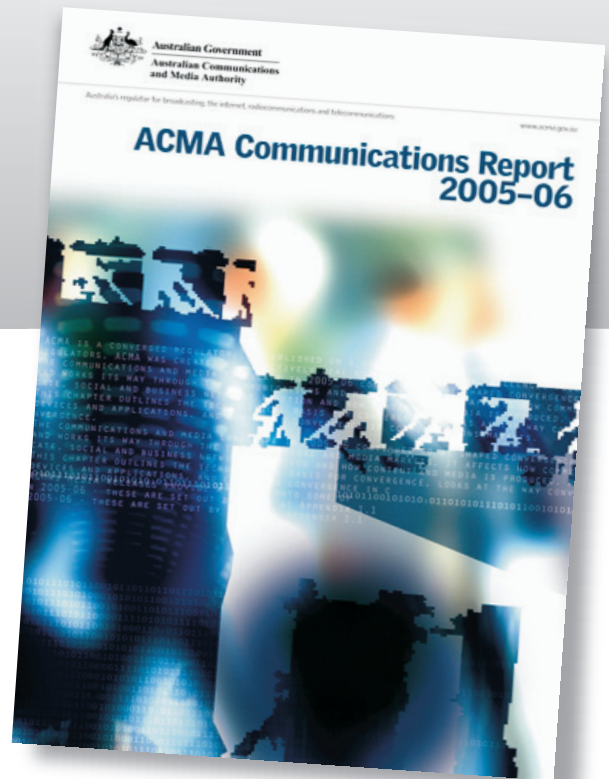
monitors and reports annually on the telecommunications industry's performance, including consumer satisfaction, consumer benefits and quality of service.

A recommendation of the January 2006 *Rethinking Regulation* report of the government's Taskforce on Reducing the Regulatory Burden on Business, was that the reporting requirements placed on industry under section 105 of the Telecommunications Act should be reviewed to ensure their continued relevance. Requests for data for 2005–06 were reviewed and substantially

rationalised as part of ACMA's response to the government's regulation reform agenda.

Data in the report is drawn from a range of sources including ACMA's own databases, information reported by industry, ACMA's research using third-party public sources and commissioned surveys and analysis. Appendixes to the report include detailed data tables as a resource for industry analysts.

The report is on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au/CommsReport.



ACMA to review local content obligations for regional radio

The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator Helen Coonan, has directed ACMA to review the local content requirements in the government's media reforms and report by 30 June 2007. The obligation to broadcast a certain amount of local content per day will not take effect until after the completion of the review into the requirement.

The proposed new local content quotas for regional radio are aimed at

balancing the desire of the local community to listen to live local content with the need to ensure any mandatory requirement is not too onerous for regional radio operators.

ACMA will investigate whether the requirement to broadcast local content for 4.5 hours per business day between 6.00 am and 6.00 pm is appropriate and, if not, whether it should be adjusted or applied differently for different classes of licensees. The review will also

consider whether the requirement should include a minimum of 12.5 minutes of local news per business day.

Other obligations, such as those relating to specific numbers of local news and weather bulletins, or local presence requirements, will only come into effect following a 'trigger event' such as a merger or transfer of control. ACMA will investigate whether the definition of a trigger event may lead to unintended

consequences for regional commercial radio licensees and in particular, small or family-owned regional commercial radio licensees.

The intention of the legislation is to ensure that local content and presence requirements are imposed on licensees where there is a change or transfer of control or the formation of a new media group.