

ACMA helps solve air traffic control interference mystery

ACMA's Southern Australia Regional Office was called in recently to help prevent deliberate interference to the approach and departure frequencies used by air traffic control at Melbourne International Airport.

Much of the work of ACMA's regional offices is behind the scenes, investigating, finding and eliminating radiocommunications interference. Most interference is unintentional and is frequently caused by faulty, overpowered or non-compliant equipment imported from overseas. Interference may, for example, affect radio or television reception, or prevent mobile phone calls within a particular coverage area.

Radiocommunications interference can also be deliberate and malicious, with significant public risk and potentially serious consequences if the interference is not acted on immediately. In such cases, ACMA works closely with other government agencies, including law enforcement agencies.

In the recent case of illegal transmissions made on air traffic control frequencies, bogus instructions were issued that the airport was closed and all approaching aircraft were redirected to Sydney and Perth. On hearing this, air traffic control at Melbourne Airport quickly issued counter-

instructions to all aircraft.

Air Services Australia and the Joint Aviation Investigation Task Force of the Australian Federal Police and Victoria Police called in the services of ACMA's Southern Australia Region to locate the source of the transmissions. Using ACMA's local and remote monitoring facilities, the transmissions were soon identified as originating from one of the many aircraft observation car parks located around the airport.

With this information, Task Force police tracked down a person in a vehicle with a hand-held air band transceiver. A warrant was issued and, accompanied by ACMA staff,

police visited a residence and took a person into custody. An air band hand-held transceiver and other items were also seized.

ACMA has since assisted the Task Force with information about possible breaches of the *Radiocommunications Act 1992*, as well as providing supporting statements and testing seized equipment.

The person was charged and later appeared in the Heidelberg Magistrates Court, where he pleaded guilty to offences under sections 192 and 46 of the Radiocommunications Act and received a \$1,000 fine and a suspended sentence of three months.

ACMA program attracts regulators from 25 countries

ACMA recently presented its 2007 International Training Program, with 99 participants from 25 countries. The aim of the program is to provide an insight into the Australian communications sector and regulatory mechanisms in the competitive environment.

Held from 22 October to 2 November in Melbourne and Canberra, this year's program comprised two modules—spectrum management and the regulation of telecommunications, broadcasting and the internet.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission provided strong support with several sessions about competition issues. The program also included presentations by Sylvia Superina of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's office, Peter Hilly from Spectrum Engineering Australia and Professor Franco Papandrea from the Communications and Media Policy Institute, University of Canberra and Dr Bob Horton, Chairman of the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity Standardisation Program.

This year's program was supported by the International Telecommunication Union, which provided funding for accommodation and travelling expenses to enable a number of participants from developing nations to attend, as well as the cost of training venues.



ASTAP CHAIRMAN DR BOB HORTON WITH ASHISH NARAYAN, ITU PROJECT OFFICER

PARTICIPANTS IN MELBOURNE WITH ACMA PRESENTER KEVIN SUTHERLAND

ITP PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS IN CANBERRA

