

News

Television

The Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) collected commercial broadcasting licence fees of \$181.5 million during FY 1996-97. Fees are based on revenue earned by commercial television and radio industries and the money collected goes into the Commonwealth's consolidated revenue. The ABA collected \$170.7 million from 44 commercial television services (compared to \$154.4 million in the previous year) and \$10.8 million from 180 commercial radio services (compared to \$10.6 million from 165 services in the previous year).

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The government has decided to allow the community broadcasting sector to continue to utilise the existing sixth television channel until at least 2000. Current funding arrangements continue. This means that community groups can continue to complement

programming provided by other free-to-air broadcasters and provide diverse programming which promotes cultural diversity in local areas. News Ltd is rumoured to be pursuing the channel in order to launch a fourth commercial free-to-air service in Australia.

Radio

The Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) is to make available a third commercial radio broadcasting licence for Emerald in Queensland. Interest in providing the service has already been expressed by SUN FM Stereo. Radio licence plans for the central coast of Queensland, including Emerald, will be finalised shortly.

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The ABA is proposing to make licences available for at least 15 new radio services for allocation in the New England region of New South Wales. The region includes the radio

markets of Armidale, Gunnedah, Inverell, Moree and Tamworth. Licences would be made available for one new commercial radio service, eight new community radio services and six new open narrowcasting radio services.

Cinema

New Scientist magazine reports that cinema audiences in London are taking part in an experiment to see if they can tell the difference between regular 35-millimetre film or video pumped into the theatre via optical cables. If they can't, then telecommunications giant British Telecom could start delivering movies to cinema by cable.

Telecommunications

The launch of Telstra's new "smart" payphones and Smart Phonecards in Melbourne in January marked the start of the company's rollout of new technology payphone terminals

throughout Victoria. The new phones will replace Telstra's existing payphone network across Australia. By mid-1998, there will be almost 30,000 of the new payphones in operation.

Internet

Information from the 1996 Census can now be accessed from a new map-based Internet site established by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The web site can be found at <http://www.abs.gov.au>

Appointments

Esther Alter is the latest full-time member of the Australian Communications Authority (ACA), bringing to four the number of ACA members. Ms Alter is a legal practitioner and has been a member of the Victorian Small Claims Tribunal and Residential Tenancies Tribunal. She is a member of the National Council of Women of Victoria.

From the archives...

Communications Update, December 1987/January 1988

Alan Bond's second pay TV network

Bond Media's Satellite Leisure Services subsidiary has taken the first step towards launching a second private pay TV network.

Bond has made a bid for Movie-link Corporation, a small company supplying videotape entertainment to hotels and motels. The bid is linked to Bond Media's plans to use vacant satellite capacity. Bond executives are tight-lipped on the details.

Last year, Bond took over the pay TV network interests of

his two major competitors – Messrs Holmes a Court and Packer – to secure a monopoly over the non-domestic pay TV market.

Bond's Sky Channel now narrowcasts commercials and sports – including the horse races – to 3,000 subscribing hotels, motels, clubs, TABs and racecourses...

Murdoch monitor

December 1987

- The Australian government gave permission for News Corp.'s foreign takeover of AAP and Australian

Newsprint Mills but refused the takeover of AAP Information Services.

- The Trade Practices Commission blocked News Corp.'s proposed acquisition of AAP, AAP Information Services and Australian Newsprint Mills.
- US Congress passed legislation forbidding the Federal Communications Commission from granting cross-media waivers, directed at forcing Murdoch to sell either his TV stations or newspapers in New York and Boston.

January 1988

- News Corp. lifted its share in the Pearson Group to just over 20 per cent. Pearson is one of the bidders for the Fairfax-owned Australian Financial Review.
- President Reagan described the Congressional move to force Murdoch to sell his newspapers or TV holdings as a "blow to free speech".
- Sky Channel Satellite TV, News Corp.'s pan-European TV service, is studying the feasibility of a satellite TV news channel for Europe to compete with Ted Turner's Cable News Network (CNN).