



Satellite broadcasts meeting

TOKYO: Australia was represented at a March meeting in Tokyo by John Sedgwick (Department of Communications & the Arts) and Pat Manser, Director Policy and Communications, ABA.

The meeting was hosted by the Japanese Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and attended by 21 countries from the Asia-Pacific region. The issue for discussion was the content of programs broadcast within, from, and to the region by satellite television. Countries in the region had previously expressed their concern at a meeting of the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity in Japan in mid April 1994.

Representatives from the countries concerned argued that the meeting would recommend a guideline to countries involved in transmitting or receiving satellite broadcasts. After two days of discussion, the meeting created a guideline addressing the following issues:

- respect for social, political, cultural and traditional values in receiving countries;
- the principle of the free flow of information;
- respect for national sovereignty and the rights of receiving countries to establish national laws and regulations;
- observation of intellectual property rights;
- consultation between governments and broadcasters;
- respect for religion;
- avoidance of the display of immoral material or material containing excessive or gratuitous violence;
- avoidance of material condoning or inciting crime;
- concern for the protection of the interests of children;
- accuracy, fairness and balance in news programs.

The guideline is regarded by the countries involved as voluntary and the efforts of the Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union in developing its own code for broadcasters in the region were acknowledged. The responsibility of broadcasters to understand the communities they broadcast into was affirmed.

If you are interested in this issue, please call Pat Manser on (02) 334 7833.

Community radio consultation in Melbourne

MELBOURNE: Implementing the ABA's new policy on temporary transmissions for community broadcasters and the imminent

transition to a code of practice for program content regulation were the main topics for discussion when Gareth Grainger, ABA General Manager, Policy and Programs, and Lesley Osborne, Director, Program Services, met with the Community Broadcasting Association of Victoria (CBAV) in Melbourne on 14 February.

The CBAV committee explained some of the difficulties member organisations were experiencing in attempting to meet the requirements of the temporary transmissions policy. In particular, the constituent documents of aspirant organisations must provide for an open, non-discriminatory membership policy, with grievance mechanisms for membership exclusions and provisions underpinning the non-profit nature of community radio organisations. The ABA had specified a period of four months grace for aspirant organisations to make the necessary changes to their rules. But some organisations could not meet the 3 March deadline and were concerned that they would not be granted a temporary licence. ABA representatives explained the importance of aspirant groups making genuine efforts to ensure that their documents comply with the policy, but that the ABA would not always insist on full eligibility. (*See page 19.*)

Some CBAV committee members felt that the introduction of the codes of practice in the near future would call for training of volunteers and station management about the new system, including the handling of complaints. The ABA offered to assist with training, with a preference for it to be arranged on a centralised basis, for example as a session at the CBAV's conference in May.

Gareth Grainger and Lesley Osborne also attended a large meeting of program presenters at Melbourne's multi-lingual community station 3ZZZ. Station management had invited the ABA to provide an information session on regulation of community stations and the responsibilities of program presenters to comply with current radio program standards and the CBAA code of practice due for introduction shortly. Mr Grainger and Ms Osborne stressed the importance of rules aimed at preventing the broadcast of discriminatory programs. The meeting spent some time on the implications of the CBAA draft code 2.3 which prohibits the broadcast by community radio of 'material which may stereotype, incite, vilify, or perpetuate hatred against, or attempt to demean any person or group on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual preference, religion, age or physical or mental disability'.