



Digital TV regulatory reviews to commence



Daryl Williams

The Hon. Daryl Williams, Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts announced on 10 May 2004 that,

'The Australian Government will conduct a number of reviews to help evaluate progress in implementing digital television and the effectiveness of the current regulatory framework. The specific statutory reviews will be grouped into four broad thematic reviews, with these reviews to be rolled out over the remainder of 2004.

The first thematic review will examine additional programming provided by free-to-air broadcasters, including multichannelling. It will examine whether the prohibition on free-to-air broadcasters offering other types of services, such as pay TV channels, should be modified.

The second review will cover matters relating to the end of the moratorium on the issue of new commercial television broadcasting licences, which concludes on 31 December 2006.

The issuing of commercial television licences has historically been a matter for Government. Given that this is an important question of public policy, the Government intends to amend the current legislative arrangements which give the ABA the power to allocate new commercial television broadcasting licences so that the power is vested in the Government. This review will provide an opportunity to consider how the

change should be implemented.

While current arrangements for the three existing commercial licences appear to be working well in providing free-to-air television, the question of issuing any further licences after 2006 will be a question for the government of the day.

The second review will also focus on arrangements for conversion of any datacasting licences to other broadcasting types and consideration of the licence conditions that should apply to any new commercial television licences.

A third review will examine the efficient allocation of spectrum for digital television.

And the fourth thematic review will examine parts of the legislation related to under-served markets. At present, special provisions and exemptions in relation matters such as commercial television broadcasting licences and HDTV requirements apply to markets with only one or two commercial television broadcasters.

In addition, reviews of high definition digital television requirements and a review of the duration of the digital simulcast period will be conducted by mid-2005 and the beginning of 2006 respectively.

A stand-alone review into the viability of creating an indigenous broadcasting service is also required and will commence on 10 May.

All of these reviews will be conducted by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and discussion papers will be released for comment for each thematic review.'



New on www.aba.gov.au

In addition to the news releases which are listed on the ABA's home page, www.aba.gov.au, the following items have been added to the site:

- variations to the television licence area plan for the Riverland & Spencer Gulf

www.aba.gov.au/radio/services/services/sa/index

- applications for community radio licence to serve Murwillumbah

www.aba.gov.au/radio/services/services/nsw/murwillumbah/index

- submissions to Australian content proposal

www.aba.gov.au/tv/content/ozcont/proposed

- statistics: complaints about Internet content

www.aba.gov.au/internet/complaints/statistics/index

- a link to the Australian Government Budget 2004-05

www.aba.gov.au

- 2003 Australian content on TV compliance results

www.aba.gov.au/tv/content/ozcont/compliance/index

- submissions to the discussion paper

Launceston Radio

www.aba.gov.au/radio/services/services/tas/launceston/index

The following pages have been updated:

- ABA conference program

www.aba.gov.au/conf04/program

- commercial radio licensees

www.aba.gov.au/broadcasters/commercial

- open narrowcasting radio licensees

www.aba.gov.au/broadcasters/narrowcasting

Temporary community broadcasting licences

Allocated in the period 28 April to 14 May 2004.

| Area served | Licensee | Frequency | Period | Date allocated |
|--------------------------|---|----------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| New South Wales | | | | |
| Gosford RA1 | Wyong Gosford Progressive Community Radio Inc. | 94.9 MHz | 1.6.2004 to 31.7.2004 | 28.4.2004 |
| Murwillumbah RA2 | North Coast Broadcasters Ltd | 101.3 MHz | 1.5.2004 to 11.6.2004 | 30.4.2004 |
| Narrandera RA1 | Narrandera District and Community Radio Inc. | 92.3 MHz | 3.5.2004 to 2.5.2005 | 28.4.2004 |
| Young RA2 | Lambing Flat Community Broadcasting Inc. | 92.3 MHz | 1.7.2004 to 30.6.2005 | 28.4.2004 |
| Western Australia | | | | |
| Cocos Islands RA1 | VKW 'Voice of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands' Inc. | 102.7 MHz & 96.0 MHz | 1.5.2004 to 31.7.2004 | 30.4.2004 |
| Murwillumbah | Heartland Opry Group Inc. | 101.3 MHz | 12.6.2004 to 24.7.2004 | 30.4.2004 |

