



ACMA: towards the merger

Following the Government's announcement in May of its intention to create the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), the ABA and the Australian Communications Authority (ACA) have been working together to ensure the two agencies will merge successfully in 2005.

To facilitate the merger, the acting chairs of both agencies (Lyn Maddock ABA and Bob Horton ACA) have formed a steering committee, chaired by Helen Williams, Secretary of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. The committee provides broad strategic guidance on preparation for the merger and reports regularly to the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts on progress towards the merger.

At an operational level, the ABA and the ACA are collaborating to develop a common corporate infrastructure and align the delivery of corporate

services. Key corporate functions which need to be operating effectively from the first day of ACMA include:

- communications – client contact arrangements, media management and a web site
- financial resources – financial management framework, processes and systems, budget and reporting
- human resources – employment terms and conditions, payroll and policies
- information technology and management – IT security, corporate systems, IT policies and records management.

The ABA and the ACA are also working on a series of strategic options papers to provide the incoming ACMA Board with information and options for organising the work of ACMA. The papers cover a range of topics from an exploration of regulatory models to options for organisational structure.

Both agencies are keeping all staff informed on progress to-

wards the merger through regular meetings and emails, and by making information on the merger available on a joint agency intranet site.

The substantial amount of work undertaken to date, and that planned for completion in early 2005 means both agencies are well placed to ensure a smooth merger and transition to ACMA.

The creation of ACMA will enable a coordinated regulatory response to converging technologies and services in areas as diverse as spectrum management and content regulation. Its creation recognises the changing nature of the communications environment. There will be no changes to the existing regulatory and spectrum planning frameworks for telecommunications and broadcasting, nor will the new arrangement provide immediate savings.

It is the Government's intention that ACMA will form by 1 July 2005. ☐

Day/night power switching for 4BC Brisbane

The ABA has changed the technical specifications of commercial AM radio service 4BC Brisbane, to allow it to continue to operate with day/night switching – that is, operating its service at a higher power during the day time and switching to a lower power at night.

'The change follows lengthy testing by 4BC of day/night transmitter power switching and follows a request from the licensee,' said Ms Maddock.

4BC has been testing the operation of the service using day/night transmitter power switching since late 2001.

The decision is contained in a variation to the Brisbane radio licence area plan. To see the plan, go to <http://www.aba.gov.au/radio/services/services/qld/brisbane/index.htm>. ☐

Subscription television licences

The ABA has allocated 20 subscription television broadcasting licences to TV Plus Int Pty Ltd.

Subscription television broadcasting licences are valid throughout Australia as long as the programming on that service is the same in all areas of reception. If the services differs in a location, a separate service licence is required. ☐