

FREQUENCY ALLOTMENT PLAN RELEASED

The ABA has released its frequency allotment plan (FAP) which sets out the number of radio and television channels in particular areas of Australia.

'The frequency allotment plan completes stage two of the planning process. The framework is now in place for the detailed planning of future radio and television services throughout Australia,' said ABA Chairman, Mr Brian Johns.

'The plan accommodates existing radio and television services and future services. We have a framework which ensures planning in one area takes into account the channels allotted to other parts of Australia,' said Mr Johns.

The first stage of the planning process was completed in September 1993 with the release of the ABA's priorities for planning services across Australia. With priorities set and the frequency allotment plan in place, the ABA can now complete licence area plans, setting out the number and characteristics of services to be available in particular areas.

This third and final stage of the planning process is being carried out over the next two years.

After the release of an initial draft frequency allotment plan in May 1993, nearly two hundred written submissions were received which raised a number of significant matters. These included the ABA's position on the use of VHF television channels 3, 4 and 5 (located in the FM radio band) and the issue of channel spacing for FM services. Such issues required careful consideration and further public consultation.

Accordingly, in December 1993, the ABA released a second exposure draft for further comment and received nearly one hundred written submissions. Comments from both rounds of submissions were taken into account in the final plan.

Copies of the frequency allotment plan (free) and complete set of microfiche, with submissions to the drafts (cost \$30), are available by phoning 008 810 241 (free call).



ABA ALLOCATES PAY TV LICENCES TO OBERON BROADCASTERS

The ABA has allocated ten licences for non-satellite pay TV broadcasting services to Oberon Broadcasters Pty Ltd.

Oberon has indicated it intends to deliver pay TV services via cable to Wollongong (including Shellharbour and Kiama), Newcastle (including Lake Macquarie) and Canberra.

Oberon has received ten licences from the ABA, as the Broadcasting Services Act requires a separate licence for each service. The ABA takes a service to be The ABA has issued 353 subscription television broadcasting services pursuant to section 96 of the Broadcasting Services Act. The other licence holders are Access Cable Television Ltd (110 licences), Access Cable Television (Northern Rivers) Pty Ltd (4), Cable Television Services Pty Ltd (20), Dergat Pty Ltd (4), Home Show Cable Australia Pty Ltd (20), Multicom Australia Pty Ltd (35), NRS Group Pty Ltd (13), Pacific Media Telecommunications Pty Ltd (18), Paynet Telecommunications Pty Ltd (8), Premier Cable Australia Pty Ltd (43), Rowcom Holdings Pty Ltd (28), Star Vision Pty Ltd (30) and Wright Weller Rosenblum Pty Ltd (10).



NETWORKING

Networking Australia's Future, the interim report of the Broadband Services Expert Group, was released on 2 August.

The BSEG, headed by Mr Brian Johns, Chairman of the ABA, is examining the technical, economic and commercial preconditions for the widespread delivery of broadband services (see below) to homes, businesses and schools in Australia.

'The BSEG believes the most exciting aspect of the convergence of computing, broadcasting and telecommunications is the opportunity to create 'content'—the information carried by broadband networks,' Mr Johns said. 'This content stands to change our private lives, our education, how we do business and the delivery of government services. It will also generate considerable wealth.'

The report was launched by the Minister for Communications and the Arts, the Hon. Michael Lee, at an Arts Law Centre of Australia/Gilbert and Tobin conference on Multimedia and the Law at Sydney's Powerhouse Museum.

'There are considerable opportunities for Australian industry in developing leading edge applications and content for broadband networks,' Mr Johns said. 'There is also scope for companies to be involved in the building and running of these networks.'

'However, the BSEG believes the content of communications services is a fundamentally more important issue than the means of delivering them,' he added. 'The creative infrastructure required for these services will be the source of commercial opportunities for Australia, which has the talents to stake a claim on world markets for new multimedia content. There have already been some striking successes in this area.'

The BSEG believes the government sector has the potential and the obligation to play a leadership role in developing broadband services. Government services, especially those with a mass customer base such as social welfare, could be delivered more efficiently with the help of the new communications

ABA  Update

ISSN No. 1039-2750

EDITOR: ANNE HEWER

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$36

FREQUENCY: 12 ISSUES PER ANNUM

Illustrations by Greg Smith

AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE—BROADBAND REPORT

services. Access by citizens to the vast amounts of information held by governments also has great social and economic benefits.

The BSEG has identified the delivery of health and education services on broadband networks as a significant social issue for future study.

'*Networking Australia's Future* is very much a work-in-progress report,' Mr Johns said. 'Its purpose is to identify issues and stimulate debate in the community on the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.'

BROADBAND SERVICES

If you add vision to sound, text and data you create an information package which needs a broad band of electromagnetic frequencies to carry it. The telephone, which only uses audio signals, requires only a narrow band of frequencies.

Broadband services are those which will enable people to communicate with each other in a number of ways, visually, orally, textually and numerically, at the same time.

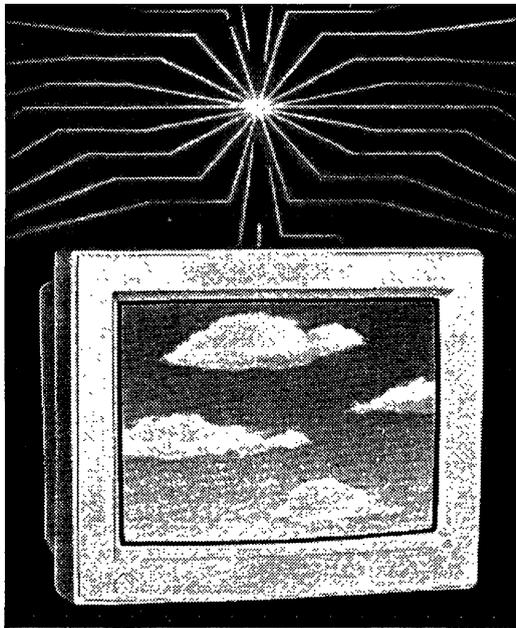
Broadband networks give access to and personal control of information. For example, video conferencing technology could change education and health services forever. Pupils could have access to the most appropriate teachers, wherever they were located, and exchange work and ideas electronically. Doctors could check x-rays or other medical images from patients in another town, or even another country. Manufacturers could apply computer assisted design and manufacturing techniques to problems occurring thousands of kilometres away. Electronic commerce could revolutionise product distribution and ordering. New avenues could be created for public access to government-held information and services.

In simple terms, the home or work computer could also be a television set and video recorder, a telephone and a connection to every data bank 'on line' and to 'electronic neighbours' around the world.

BROADBAND SERVICES EXPERT GROUP

The BSEG's members are drawn from telecommunications carriers and users, the broadcasting industry, Commonwealth and State and Territory governments, the academic community, trade unions and business.

The BSEG has consulted widely with



people and interest groups in developing its interim report and is seeking views on the issues raised in it.

The interim report is about what broadband services are and could be. BSEG's final report, due by the end of the year, will address the issue of how they can be introduced.

HEADLAND ISSUES

The BSEG has identified six 'headland' issues in the report. It believes they hold the key to successful participation by the community in the new Information Age.

The BSEG believes:

- broadband services have the potential to transform the way we live, work and play, but the process will require careful planning and management;

- development of broadband services and networks needs to be encouraged if we are to remain internationally competitive;
- ensuring access for all Australians will be a key challenge for the implementation of broadband networks;
- providing content for the new broadband services represents a major opportunity for Australia;
- the Commonwealth Government should exercise leadership in broadband services, especially as a 'leading-edge user'; and
- a number of very different delivery technologies are likely to compete for the broadband market. We do not think it is appropriate for us to try to identify the 'best' delivery technology for the new services.

AN AUSTRALIAN VISION

The BSEG believes Australia must find its own vision for broadband services. That vision will involve striking our own pace of development according to our circumstances.

Making the most of our opportunities will mean designing networks so that they work for us, the BSEG says.

It believes that interactivity is the key to this. As someone said at one of the workshop sessions the group has held: 'Interactive, communicative services are necessary to build the clever country. Being satisfied with one-way or distributive services is a recipe for the stupid country'.

The BSEG is seeking views on the issues raised in the report. Copies can be obtained from Mr Geoff Luther by phoning (06) 274 6486.

Submissions on the report should be directed to

Manager,
BSEG Secretariat,
GPO Box 2154,
Canberra ACT 2601
by 23 September.

[See page 8 for a 'Q&A' with Patricia Gillard, a member of the Broadband Services Expert Group.]

