

SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE COMMUNITY TELEVISION LICENCES RENEWED

The transmission licences to provide television services in Sydney and Melbourne using the sixth channel have been renewed for a further twelve month period, the ABA announced on 25 February.

The licences, which are to provide open narrowcasting services for community and educational non-profit purposes, were renewed by the Spectrum Management Agency (SMA).

'The SMA has decided to renew the current transmission licences for a further twelve month period in order to give the services and the current management time in which to establish the services,' said Mr Brian Johns, ABA Chairman.

The licences were initially granted to community based groups, Community Television Sydney (CTS) and the Melbourne Community Television Consortium (MCTC) by the ABA on 5 March 1993.

With the commencement of the new Radiocommunications Act in July 1993 which established the SMA, the ABA retains the power to issue such licences while the power to renew now rests with the SMA.

Both CTS and MCTC were asked to provide the ABA and the SMA with information about their progression to full time broadcasting and of their continued compliance with the ABA's access statement (see below). CTS and MCTC have recently obtained transmitters and associated equipment and plan to commence broadcasting within the next few months.

COMMUNITY TELEVISION

The ABA has reserved UHF channel 31 (the sixth channel) in Sydney and Melbourne for community and educational non-profit purposes, until 28 February 1996. This is the last available high powered television channel in these cities.

The services to be provided on the channel have been designated open narrowcasting by the ABA and only require an apparatus or transmitter licence. The apparatus licence has to be renewed every 12 months.

No permanent community television licences can be issued until the completion of the Ministerial review of the television broadcasting industry which must take place by July 1997.

CTS and MCTC represent several community television groups and encourage new participants, whether groups or individuals, to join.

CTS are currently moving to new office premises at 60-66 Sussex Street, Sydney. In the interim they may be contacted by telephoning the Chairperson, Ms Pat Eatock on 251 6552 or by forwarding correspondence to PO Box N597, Grosvenor Place, Sydney 2000.

MCTC are located at 247-251 Flinders Lane Melbourne 3000 or you may contact Mr Peter Lane, Deputy Chairman on (03) 650 5610.

ACCESS STATEMENT

The ABA is committed to making available radiofrequency spectrum (the sixth channel) for allocation to provid-

ers of open narrowcasting services for community and educational non-profit use.

In exercising its discretion to issue transmitter licences to applicants proposing to provide such services, the ABA will have regard to the extent to which the service will be accessible to individuals and relevant groups within the area to be served. In considering the accessibility, the ABA will give consideration to the extent to which the applicant's constituting documents safeguard:

1. the level of openness or non-exclusivity in membership and membership policy;
2. the existence and fairness of any grievance mechanisms relating to membership exclusions;
3. the equity of access for members to programming airtime and the existence of structures including a grievance mechanism, designed to allocate airtime fairly;
4. the flexibility of programming policy and format sufficient to allow new sources of programming to be incorporated, and;
5. the right of the community to take part in a range of activities involved in the operation and management of the service.

The ABA will further look to the constituting documents of the applicant (and any other material on which the applicant relies) for evidence of a consistency with the purposes for which the sixth channel has been made available, that is, community and educational non-profit use.

