



The ABA has announced it will make new television and radio licences available in the Darwin and Katherine areas.

New TV and radio licences for Darwin and Katherine

Business and industry will be able to consider taking up a commercial television and a commercial radio licence for the Darwin area, while local community groups will be able to begin organising to apply for new community radio licences (one in Katherine and two in Darwin), the ABA has announced.

'This is the third commercial television licence to be made available as a result of the ABA's national planning process. The first two licences were in Mildura/Sunraysia and in the Griffith/Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. We've consulted extensively with broadcasting industry service providers and the Darwin public in making this decision,' said Mr Peter Webb, ABA Chairman.

The ABA has also made channel capacity available for:

- ABC and SBS radio and television services in the region,
- national/community television services in Darwin and Batchelor,
- retransmission of national and commercial television services in Batchelor,
- one local coverage open narrowcasting television service in Darwin,
- one high power FM open narrowcasting radio service in Darwin, and
- several limited power FM channels for open narrowcasting radio services in Darwin and Katherine.

Licence allocation

New commercial radio and television licences will be auctioned via a price-based allocation process now being finalised by the ABA. New community licences will be allocated via a merit-based process.

'The ABA may decide to auction commercial licences from more than one area at the same time. This suggests we'll start auctioning the first commercial licences in early 1996,' Mr Webb said.

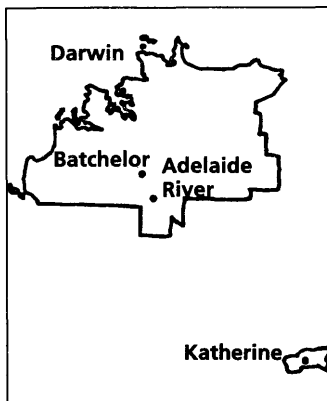
Alternatively, when a licence area plan (LAP) is completed, sole operators in a market such as local commercial television operator NTD, may apply to the ABA to run the second commercial television service.

'Under section 73 of the Broadcasting Services Act, the ABA would allow NTD to provide an extra service only if it is satisfied no other person is likely to be interested in, and likely to be in a position to operate the second commercial television licence,' said Mr Webb.

The Act does not allow the ABA to grant this type of request automatically because of the 'one station to a market rule' for television.

New services

Mr Webb said it was important for people to understand



location process currently under development by the ABA and the Spectrum Management Agency.

Licence area plan

The ABA's decisions are detailed in the LAP for

the emergence of new services depends on the market.

'New services will only appear if a business operator decides to make a go of it. New community services will exist only if there is sufficient community interest. The ABA cannot fund or compel others to fund new broadcasting services,' he said.

After the draft LAP for Darwin and Katherine was released in December 1994, Sunshine Broadcasting Network, Imparja and the Seven Network advised the ABA they might be interested in operating the second commercial television service.

If there is no future interest in the new commercial licences or any one of the community licences, the spectrum reserved for that licence could be used for other purposes, including narrowcasting.

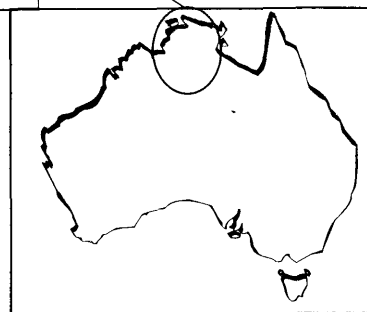
Spectrum reserved for narrowcasting would be made available via a price-based al-

location process currently under development by the ABA and the Spectrum Management Agency.

The LAP does not include television services in the Katherine area, as the area covered by Katherine's television service, IMP, will be included in the LAP for Remote Central and Eastern Australia. A draft of this LAP is due for release shortly.

The licence area plan (LAP) for Darwin/Katherine shows the number and characteristics of all national, commercial, community and open narrowcasting television and radio services to be made available using the broadcasting services bands of the radiofrequency spectrum.

These are the parts of the





spectrum used by AM and FM radio services and VHF and UHF television services.

The characteristics of each service include the service's licence area, carrier frequency, nominal transmitter site and technical conditions, including maximum effective radiated power in all directions.

National broadcasting services refers to free-to-air ABC or SBS services or to Parliamentary broadcasts. Commercial broadcasting services are privately owned free-to-air services operated for a profit. Community broadcasting services are free-to-air services provided for community purposes by non-profit groups. Open narrowcasting broadcasting services are free-to-air services whose reception is limited in some way.

The release of the LAP follows extensive public consultation including a public meeting in Darwin in November 1993, as well as release of a draft licence area plan and a discussion paper explaining the ABA's reasons for its proposals.

A call for written comment on the draft LAP resulted in around forty submissions, which the ABA has taken into account in preparing the plan.

The planning process

The finalisation of a licence area plan completes stage three of the planning process.

The first stage was completed in September 1993 with the release of the ABA's priorities for planning services across Australia.

Stage two was completed with the publication of the frequency allotment plan, setting out the number of radio and television channels in particular areas of Australia.

Decisions

Television

1. Any new commercial television service would be on UHF channel 34 with a nominal transmitter site at Deloraine Road and would have the same coverage area as NTD.

2. The licence area of the existing commercial television service (NTD) in Darwin will be redefined using 1991 Census boundaries but will otherwise remain unchanged.

3. Channel capacity has been reserved in Batchelor for the retransmission of both NTD (UHF channel 60) and any additional commercial service (UHF channel 63).

4. Channel capacity for a community television service will not be made available for allocation in Darwin. The decision to reserve channel 40 at Deloraine Road and channel 67 at Northern Territory House for national/community television services, and the ABA's readiness to make those channels available for temporary use by community and educational television, should adequately address popular demand and any interest by potential community television operators in Darwin.

5. Channel capacity for a community television service will not be made available at Batchelor. The decision to reserve channel 57 at Batchelor for a national/community television service should adequately address interest in the provision of a community television broadcasting service at Batchelor.

6. Channel capacity will be made available for a local coverage open narrowcasting television service in Darwin on UHF channel 64 with a nominal transmitter site at Northern Territory House.

Radio

1. The ABA has extended the licence area of existing Darwin community radio service, 8TOP, to cover the townships of Batchelor, Lake Bennett, Adelaide River and Jabiru. Generally, the ABA does not increase the licence area of existing community radio services as new groups should be given the chance to start local services wherever possible. However, in this case, 8TOP was particularly keen to serve these townships and it was unlikely such small communities could support individual community radio services.

2. Any new commercial and community radio services would use the FM band.

3. Channel capacity will be made available for two national radio services at Batchelor. The services would operate from Batchelor on 91.3MHz and 92.1MHz.

4. Channel capacity for one additional commercial FM radio broadcasting service will be made available in the Darwin/Katherine licence area. The service would operate in Darwin on 104.9MHz from a nominal transmitter site at Deloraine Road.

5. Channel capacity for retransmission of this service will be made available at Katherine. The service would operate on frequency 106.9MHz from a site 3km ESE of Katherine.

Channel capacity for two additional community FM radio services will be made available in Darwin. The services would operate on frequencies 94.5MHz and 97.7MHz from a nominal site at the Darwin Institute of Technology.

6. Channel capacity for an additional community FM radio service will be made available in Katherine. The service would operate from a site 3km ESE of Katherine on 102.9MHz.

7. Channel capacity will continue to be made available in Darwin for the existing wide coverage open narrowcasting service (8TAB) on AM frequency 1242kHz. In the absence of other identified demand for this channel, following expiration of the current transmitter licence on 2 October 1997, the channel will be made available under s.34 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

8. Channel capacity will be made available for one additional high power FM channel for an extended period for an open narrowcasting radio service in Darwin. The service would operate from Deloraine Road on frequency 102.5MHz.

9. Channel capacity will be made available for three limited coverage FM channels for an extended period for open narrowcasting services to serve Darwin City, Darwin East and Darwin North. These services would operate from nominal transmission sites at Blake Street, Palmerston Water Tower and the Darwin Institute of Technology, respectively, on frequencies 92.3, 90.7 and 91.5MHz, respectively.

10. Channel capacity will continue to be made available in Katherine for the existing limited coverage open narrowcasting service (8TAB) on FM frequency 103.7 MHz. Following expiration of the current transmitter licence on 2 October 1997, the channel will be made available under s.34 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

11. Channel capacity will be made available for one additional limited coverage FM channel for an extended period for an open narrowcasting service in Katherine. The service will operate from a site 3km ESE of Katherine on frequency 96.5MHz.



Allocation of broadcasting services bands licences

With the exception of the channel capacity reserved for national and community broadcasters, other capacity set out in a LAP will be made available for commercial licences under a price-based allocation scheme.

Open narrowcasting licences

Frequencies for new open narrowcasting licences will be made available under section 34 of the Act, and providers will be determined by use of a price-based allocation system in conjunction with the Spectrum Management Agency.

National services

Extension of national services is primarily funded by the Australian Government. In areas where the Government has no immediate plans to extend a national service, the ABA will consider applications for re-transmission by local communities. ☐

Copies of the plan (which includes decisions, reasons and records of advice received) can be viewed at the Northern Territory Library Service, Batchelor College Library and Katherine Public Library, or can be obtained from the ABA on 1 800 810 241.

The ABA has recently completed television planning in the Griffith/MIA area and made a second commercial television channel available.

MTN Griffith applies for second television service

The ABA has received an application for permission to operate a second commercial television broadcasting service in the Griffith and MIA area from MTN Television Pty Ltd, licensee of local commercial television service, MTN.

"MTN television is entitled to apply because it is the sole commercial television licensee in the area," said Mr Bob Scott, Acting ABA Chairman.

The *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* does not allow the ABA to grant MTN's request automatically because of the 'one station to a market rule' for television.

Under section 73 of the Act, the ABA will allow MTN to provide an extra service only if it is satisfied 'that it is unlikely that another person would be interested in, and likely to be in a position to operate another commercial

television broadcasting service in the licence area'.

The ABA must make a decision about whether or not to give MTN permission within 45 days after receiving the application. This date will be 13 November 1995.

In order to meet this deadline, persons other than MTN who are interested in operating a commercial television broadcasting service in the area, should contact the ABA as soon as possible.

What happens if the ABA does not grant permission to MTN under s.73?

The licence will be offered for allocation under the price-based allocation system currently being finalised by the ABA.

When would licence allocation begin?

The ABA may decide to auction commercial licences from more than one area at the same time. This suggests the Authority will start auctioning the first commercial licences in early 1996.

Where would the new television service be on the dial?

The additional service would operate on UHF channel 31 in Griffith and

on UHF channel 63 in Hay. It will have the same licence area as the existing commercial television service MTN.

Which markets could be involved in section 73 applications?

Section 73 applies to solus markets, where there is only one commercial television operator.

There are 14 solus television markets within Australia, each of which is potentially subject to s. 73 of the Act, in cases where the ABA makes one or more new commercial television services available in a LAP.

The first two licence area plans released by the ABA, Mildura/Sunraysia and Griffith and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, are both areas to which s.73 applies.

How is the ABA advising potential television operators about s.73 applications?

The ABA has prepared an information package for companies participating in the s.73 process, including legislative and administrative frameworks, and is disseminating this to interested parties in the Mildura and Griffith licence areas.

To speed the process, the ABA has written to parties who indicated an interest in an additional commercial television service during the LAP planning process. A notice inviting expressions of interest has been published in relevant newspapers. ☐

