



News Update

ABA welcomes additional funding for digital and online work

Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman, has welcomed the additional funding from the Government in the recent budget.

The ABA will receive additional funding of \$10.5 million over three years. This includes \$3.4 million over three years for the ABA to develop and determine conversion schemes and digital channel and implementation plans towards the conversion of television broadcasting to digital transmission throughout Australia.



Seven million of the additional funding will be provided over four years for the implementation of a regulatory framework for online content. The ABA will oversee the development of industry codes of practice and determine standards where there are no codes or where codes are deficient or fail. It will also investigate complaints from the public about online content.

The Government also announced the setting up a community advisory body to monitor material, operate a hotline for complaints, and advise the public about filtering software for online content.

A further \$150 000 will be provided to the ABA to assist in administering a proposed regime to address community concerns that telephone sex lines are too easily accessed by children.

Sorry seems to be the hardest word

The first duty of the media, as described eloquently and succinctly by the *Times* a century and a half ago, is to obtain the earliest and most correct intelligence of the time, and instantly, by disclosing it, to make it the common property of the nation, Professor David Flint, Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Authority said today.

'The "most correct intelligence" means a commitment to the truth. Now that is fundamental,' Professor Flint said, in an address to the Sydney Institute on 25 May.

'Why should the media say sorry? Saying sorry is implicit in the first duty—obtaining the earliest and most correct intelligence. If it is wrong, correct it. Promptly. And where those who read the error, heard the error or saw the error are most likely to receive it.'

'In the last few months the ABA has called on broadcasters to do precisely this. These were not aberrations on the part of the ABA. We have decided as a general policy that more often than not the best remedy for a breach of a code of practice is immediate action,' he said.

'In this way, errors can be corrected in the market place of ideas. And we will certainly take this into account when we are reviewing complaints which incidentally only come to us after the complainant has been unable to find satisfaction with the broadcaster.'

A copy of Professor Flint's speech is available on the ABA web site at www.aba.gov.au/what's_new/index.htm

UNESCO appointment

Gareth Grainger, ABA Deputy Chairman, has been appointed to the Australian National Commission for UNESCO for a three year term.

The National Commission advises the Government on all matters relating to UNESCO. The Hon. Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, appointed Mr Grainger on 4 May 1999.

Mr Grainger will be appointed to be chairman of the Communications Network of the Australian National Commission of UNESCO which will have its first meeting on 22 July.

Anyone interested in discussing the work of the Communications Network is invited to call Mr Grainger on 02 9334 7802.