



Australian Communications and Media Authority

The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts announced on 11 May 2004, that the Australian Government will merge the ABA and the Australian Communications Authority (ACA) to establish a new media and communications regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

In announcing the merger, the Minister said,

ACMA will be responsible for regulating telecommunications, broadcasting, radiocommunications and online content.

The establishment of ACMA will enable a coordinated regulatory response to converging technologies and services and to the long-term management of spectrum.

As a single regulatory body, ACMA will also be better placed to respond to the outcomes of the statutory reviews of the digital television framework required

in 2004 and 2005 under the Broadcasting Services Act.

The establishment of ACMA will not be accompanied by changes to the existing regulatory and spectrum planning frameworks for telecommunications and broadcasting. The distinct skill bases and functions required will not disappear after the merger and there will be no change to the underlying regulatory framework.

ACMA will maintain the existing offices of the ABA and ACA throughout Australia, although, over time, some functions may co-locate where practical.

ACMA will be established by 1 July 2005, subject to the passage of enabling legislation through the Federal Parliament. Transitional arrangements will be put in place to enable the existing authorities to plan for the transition to a single communications regulator.

The structure and functions of the new authority will be similar to the existing regulators.



Professor Flint steps down as ABA chairman

Professor David Flint announced on 7 June that he would step down as Chairman of the ABA.

'With the imminent introduction of legislation to merge the ABA and the Australian Communications Authority, which seems to have bipartisan support, and the public interest in that merger proceeding seamlessly with a minimum of controversy, there would be an advantage in having both the chairmanship of the ABA and the ACA vacant.

'It is fortunate that both the ABA and the ACA are endowed with highly professional staff and strong boards which will ensure the merger is a success.

'Notwithstanding the recent controversy, I am encouraged by the observation of my colleagues that they cannot recall an occasion when I have demonstrated actual bias in any decision I have taken. This mirrors the comments I have received from those who have, over two decades, worked with me in encouraging the responsible self regulation of the media.'

Professor Flint's resignation took effect on 1 July 2004. 