

News

Radio

THE Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) has identified several high power AM and FM radio channels as being potentially available in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. In NSW, these include two AM and four FM channels in the Sydney area, Katoomba and Gosford. In Victoria, the channels include three AM and four FM in the Melbourne area, Geelong and Colac. In Queensland, the six high power FM channels are in the Brisbane area, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Gympie, Lismore and Murwillumbah.

A booklet released by the ABA on the frequencies and proposed changes to existing services marks the start of the consultation process on planning for radio in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and their surrounding markets. The authority will meet with interested parties during the next two months.

In addition, the ABA has invited applications for new community, commercial and narrowcasting radio broadcasting licences in Southern

NSW and Northern Victoria, and Bundaberg and Maryborough in Queensland. Applications for the seven new community licences will serve Albury, Wangaratta, Alexandra/Eildon, Corryong, Mansfield, Shepparton and Walwa/Jingellic and must be received by Tuesday, April 14, 1998. Licences for Bundaberg's one commercial, one community and two narrowcasting services, plus Maryborough's two commercial, one community and one narrowcasting service, will be allocated by auction.

Television

THE Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) will conduct an auction on April 1, 1998 for a new commercial television broadcasting licence to serve remote and regional Western Australia, excluding Perth. Allocation of the licence will be made to one of the 10 applications already received. A condition of the licence is that at least 60 per cent of the population of the licence area must be able to receive the service within 12 months of its commencement and 85 per cent on the fourth anniversary of its commencement.

CANWEST Global Communications Corporation has lost its appeal against the August 1997 Federal Court judgement which upheld the Australian Broadcasting Authority's original decision that CanWest was illegally in control of the Ten Network. The deadline for CanWest to rectify its breaches of the Broadcasting Services Act is April 4, 1998.

Online

THE Internet Industry Association has released its third draft code of practice which it hopes will provide the basis of self-regulation for the Internet industry in Australia. The code addresses the contentious issue of the industry's role in content regulation. It also contains mechanisms for complaint handling between code subscribers and their customers, and contains secrecy and privacy provisions designed to protect the confidentiality of Internet users personal details.

Privacy

THE Federal Privacy Commissioner, Moira Scollay, has issued The National Principles for the Fair Handling

of Personal Information, a set of national standards dealing with how business collects, stores, uses and discloses personal information. The 10 principles represent the Privacy Commissioner's position after consultation with representative industries such as banking, insurance, retail, direct marketing and with consumer and privacy groups. They address the concerns of consumers who want some control over how the information they give to businesses will be used.

Appointments

DR Paul Twomey has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of the National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE). NOIE was established by the government last year to develop, coordinate and overview broad policy relating to online and related regulatory issues. Previously, Dr Twomey was Austrade's Executive General Manager, Europe after a stint as Austrade's Executive General Manager, Strategic Development from 1994-97, and five years with global management group McKinsey & Company.

From the archives...

Communications Update, February/March 1988

ABC Update

The ABC Staff Union says the Minister for Communications is using budgetary reasons to propose "radical surgery" which could remove major activities from the ABC's charter, reduce its effectiveness and undermine its independence.

The union argues that the major options outlined in the recent Review of National

Broadcasting Policy are based on the flawed assumption that the ABC cannot be properly funded to carry out all its current activities at the quality expected.

Acting on this assumption, the Review proposes that the ABC be funded only to provide "essential activities" while so-called "non-essential" activities be funded by corporate sponsorship or advertising.

The union's analysis of ABC funding trends shows that while Federal spending has increased significantly over the past 12 years, there has been no real growth in the ABC's budget.

It says it requires only a "modest" increase to correct this funding trend. It suggests the government should:

- begin a staged restitution of the ABC's operational

budget in line with Federal government outlays;

- begin a staged injection of capital funds along the lines suggested in the Dix Report;
- regard the 1987/88 budget figure of \$430.4 million (which covers both operational and capital expenditure) as a base line for operational funding over the next three years with annual indexation.