Explanatory Paper

Variation to Licence Area Plan for Central Western Slopes Radio
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Call for Submissions

Submissions on the matters raised in this Explanatory Paper may be made to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) as follows:

By email: lapvariation@acma.gov.au

By mail: Draft LAP Variation – Central Western Slopes Radio
ACMA
PO Box 34
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

By fax: (02) 6253 3277

Please quote file reference 2001/5211 in your reply.

Any enquiries concerning matters raised in this document should be directed to Mr Brett McClymont on (02) 6256 2831.

The closing date for submissions is 5.00pm, 25 November 2005.

All submissions received will be made available for public inspection on the ACMA website.¹ (www.acma.gov.au)

¹ Note that any submission marked “In Confidence”, “Confidential” or similar, cannot be considered by the ACMA in finalising the LAP variation.
Preliminary Views

Preliminary View – National FM Radio – Central Western Slopes

ACMA proposes to make additional channel capacity available for five national radio services in Dubbo City to operate as follows:

- On 95.9 MHz, 96.7 MHz, 97.5 MHz, 98.3 MHz and 99.1 MHz from Dubbo City Council Hut Buninyong Hill Near Dubbo, with a maximum effective radiated power (ERP) of 1 kW using an omni-directional antenna pattern, antenna height of 25 metres and mixed polarisation.

In September 2001, Senator the Hon Richard Alston, the then Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts advised the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) of his intention to reserve capacity for services identified by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

Senator Alston advised:

“Wherever possible, capacity should be formally reserved for the possible future provision of:

a. the full range of ABC radio services (involving Regional Radio, Radio National, Classic FM, Triple J and NewsRadio) to communities or regional transmission areas with a population of 10,000 people or more;

b. Regional Radio and Radio National services to communities with a population of 200 or more; and

c. services that the ABC has indicated that it is able to fund from within its existing transmission appropriation.”

The Minister also indicated to the ABC, at that time, that these principles would be used in response to future ABC requests for the reservation of channel capacity.

In August 2002, the ABC presented a list to the Minister requesting reservation of capacity for a number of services across Australia, including Dubbo City, which met these principles.

There are currently four high powered ABC services (2JJJ, 2ABCFM, 2WPR and 2ABCRN) which operate from Mt Cenn Cruaich, approximately 100 kilometres from Dubbo City. However, these high powered services provide a less than rural grade of service to Dubbo City and therefore low powered translators are required to adequately serve the area.

ACMA has identified the frequencies of 95.9 MHz, 96.7 MHz, 97.5 MHz, 98.3 MHz and 99.1 MHz as being suitable to provide the full range of ABC services in Dubbo City. The services would operate from Buninyong Hill approximately 8 km east of Dubbo City with a maximum ERP of 1 kW. The availability of FM spectrum in the area is limited and this is demonstrated by the different technical characteristics associated with the five frequencies. With the exception of 96.7 MHz and 99.1 MHz, the identified frequencies...
will be protected from interference to a suburban grade of service (66 dBuV/m). As the frequencies 96.7 MHz and 99.1 MHz have the potential to receive co-channel interference, within the suburban grade of coverage, from national radio services at Upper Namoi these two frequencies will be protected from interference to a minimum field strength of 74 dBuV/m. As a result, the level of coverage of the proposed services on 96.7 MHz and 99.1 MHz will be smaller and different to the level of coverage from the other three channels. However, Dubbo City will receive an interference free urban grade of service from all five proposed services.

Assessment of the available frequencies also highlighted the potential for a low powered open narrowcasting (LPON) service operating on 99.0 MHz at Nyngan to receive interference from the proposed national radio service on 99.1 MHz. In the event of interference, ACMA has identified the alternative frequency of 99.3 MHz for the LPON service.

ACMA’s planning proceeds on the basis that LPON services are secondary to the provision of long term, higher power community, national and commercial or high power open narrowcasting services made available in Licence Area Plans (LAPs). LPON services that operate within the broadcasting services bands may be required to move at any time to make way for radio services planned in a LAP. LPON licences are made available on a ‘buyer beware’ basis and have no guarantee for tenure of spectrum or protection against interference from existing or planned broadcasting services.

It is not expected that the identified frequencies will cause interference to any existing or planned broadcasting services. Therefore, ACMA proposes that 95.9 MHz, 96.7 MHz, 97.5 MHz, 98.3 MHz and 99.1 MHz operate from Buninyong Hill with a maximum ERP of 1 kW for the provision of the ABC radio services at Dubbo City.
ACMA proposes to make additional channel capacity available for the 2ZOO commercial radio service at Dubbo City and Wellington to operate as follows:

- On 91.1 MHz from Radio 2DU Studios 33 Carrington Av Dubbo, with a maximum ERP of 100 W using an omni-directional antenna pattern, antenna height of 30 metres and mixed polarisation; and
- On 89.5 MHz from NSW Bush Fire Brigades 78 Warne Street Wellington, with a maximum ERP of 100 W using an omni-directional antenna pattern, antenna height of 30 metres and mixed polarisation.

ACMA also proposes that the licence areas of the Dubbo commercial and community radio services and the Cobar community radio service be redefined using 2001 Census boundaries, but otherwise remain unchanged.

Dubbo City and Wellington – 2ZOO

The licensee of the 2ZOO commercial radio service, Western Broadcasters Pty Ltd, has requested that FM channel capacity be made available for low power translators at Dubbo City and Wellington. Western Broadcasters Pty Ltd has indicated that these areas do not receive adequate coverage of the 2ZOO service.

In the draft licence area plan (LAP) for Central Western Slopes released in 1996, the ABA identified 96.1 MHz as a suitable frequency for the 2ZOO service at Wellington. However, this frequency was not included in the final LAP as the licensee, at that time, indicated a service at Wellington was not required.

ACMA has identified 91.1 MHz as being available at Dubbo City and 89.5 MHz at Wellington. The previously identified frequency of 96.1 MHz at Wellington is no longer available because of the potential for interference from 95.9 MHz which is proposed for a national service at Dubbo City (see Preliminary View for Nationals).

Assessment of 91.1 MHz at Dubbo City found that the proposed service has no potential to cause interference to or receive interference from any existing or planned broadcasting services or licensed radiocommunication services. The proposed service is planned to provide an urban grade of service in Dubbo City and should resolve the current coverage difficulties experienced by the 2ZOO service.

Assessment of 89.5 MHz at Wellington also found that the proposed service has no potential to cause interference to or receive interference from any existing or planned broadcasting services or licensed radiocommunication services. However, there is potential for interference to the reception of television services where viewers, within the Southern NSW television licence area, may be using mast-head amplifiers to receive the Central Tablelands television services. The Central Tableland television services are transmitted from Mt Canobolas which is approximately 90 km from Wellington. Such interference issues are managed under the provisions of the “Start-Up Procedures” of ACMA’s Technical Planning Guidelines (TPGs). The TPGs state that in the event of interference, a licensee must adjust, or fit devices to, the transmitter or affected receivers.
or undertake other necessary measures in order to eliminate or minimise interference to other services.

Accordingly, ACMA proposes that the 2ZOO service operate at Dubbo City on 91.1 MHz with a maximum ERP of 100 W using an omni-directional pattern and at Wellington on 89.5 MHz with a maximum ERP of 100 W using an omni-directional pattern.

**Licence Areas**

The existing Dubbo commercial and community and Cobar community licence areas are currently described using 1996 Census boundaries. As the latest census figures are available, ACMA is proposing to redefine the licence areas using 2001 Census boundaries, but otherwise remaining unchanged.
ACMA proposes to vary the FAP to include additional channel capacity for the national services at Dubbo City and for the commercial radio service, 2ZOO at Dubbo City and Wellington in accordance with the preceding preliminary views.