Explanatory Paper

Draft Variation to Licence Area Plan for Townsville Radio - No. 1 of 2008
and
Draft Variation to Licence Area Plan for Charters Towers Radio - No. 1 of 2008
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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:  aas@acma.gov.au
By mail:  Draft Licence Area Plan Variation – Townsville Radio and Charters Towers Radio
ACMA
PO Box 78
BELCONNEN  ACT  2616

By fax:  (02) 6253 3277

Please quote file reference 97/5510 in your reply.

Any enquiries concerning matters raised in this document should be directed to Mr Christopher Roberts on (02) 6256 2856.

The closing date for submissions is 5.00pm, 19 September 2008.

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, Community and Open Narrowcasting service - Townsville, Townsville North, Bowen and Charters Towers

National

ACMA proposes to identify channel capacity for a national ABC NewsRadio services to operate in Bowen on 96.7 MHz from Southern Cross Broadcasting Site Bowen, with a maximum effective radiated power (ERP) of 100 W omni-directional radiation pattern.

ACMA is proposing testing of the frequencies 94.3 MHz and 93.5 MHz in Townsville and Townsville North, respectively, to determine their suitability for two additional national services.

Community

ACMA proposes to vary the technical specifications of the existing community radio broadcasting service transmitter at Bowen to operate on 95.9 MHz from Southern Cross Broadcasting Site Bowen Hill Bowen, with a maximum effective radiated power (ERP) of 100 W omni-directional radiation pattern.

Open Narrowcasting Service (ONC)

ACMA proposes to vary the technical specifications of the radio open narrowcasting service (ONC) transmitter in Charters Towers to operate on 98.3 MHz from Broadcast Site Towers Hill Charters Towers, with a maximum effective radiated power (ERP) of 50 W omni-directional radiation pattern.

Licence Areas

ACMA also proposes to:

- redefine the Townsville RA1, RA2 and RA3 licence areas using 2001 census boundaries; and
- redefine the Charters Towers RA1 licence area using 2001 census boundaries.

Background

In performing its function under section 26 of the Act, ACMA is required to promote the objects of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (the Act), including the economic and efficient use of the spectrum.

ACMA promotes the object at section 3 (1) (a) of the Act by making available a mix of different types of broadcasting services in an area. The 1997 Townsville licence area plan (LAP) made available four commercial radio broadcasting, five community radio broadcasting and five open narrowcasting and eight national radio broadcasting services. The 1997 Charters Towers LAP made available two commercial radio broadcasting, two open narrowcasting and three national radio broadcasting services.

2 To promote the availability to audiences throughout Australia of a diverse range of radio and television services offering entertainment, education and information.
In 2004, the Government made a commitment to fund the extension of ABC NewsRadio to all transmission areas around Australia with populations of 10,000 and above, subject to the availability of spectrum in those areas.

On 5 November 2004, the Minister advised the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) of her intention to reserve channel capacity under section 31 of the Act and committed to fund the extension of ABC radio services to all transmission areas around Australia with a population of 10,000 people and above, subject to spectrum availability.

**Discussion**

**Channel Capacity**

ACMA has had regard to whether channel capacity exists in the Townsville market for the provision of additional high powered national radio broadcasting services. In performing its functions under Part 3 of the Act, ACMA is required to have regard to existing services, the demand for new broadcasting services within a licence area, and to technical restraints relating to the delivery and reception of broadcasting services in Townsville (s.23 (c) and (e)).

**Townsville and Townsville North**

ACMA has identified only one FM channel available for use in Townsville, with a main service covering Townsville and a supplementary translator at Townsville North. The main service could operate at FM frequency 94.3 MHz and the supplementary service could operate at FM frequency 93.5 MHz.

ACMA has further identified the possibility of intermediate frequency (IF) beat interference with the use of these frequencies. When a wanted FM signal is being received by an FM radio receiver, in the presence of an unwanted FM frequency separated by 10.7 MHz or near 10.7 MHz, some radio receivers may suffer IF beat interference due to the influence of the unwanted signal on the receiver.

The usability of the frequencies 94.3 MHz and 93.5 MHz in Townsville and Townsville North would be subject to on-air tests to determine the extent of IF beat interference with the existing national ABCRN radio broadcasting service on 104.7 MHz, and the 4TTT Townsville community radio broadcasting service operating on 103.9 MHz. ACMA will develop technical specifications for the PNN service on completion of the proposed on-air tests.

The use of the identified frequencies requires frequency relocation of two other services operating in the area. The services affected are an open narrowcasting service in Charters Towers and the 4KIG community radio broadcasting service for Bowen.

**Bowen**

ACMA has identified the frequency 96.7 MHz, at 100 W omni-directional pattern to be suitable and available for use in Bowen.

ACMA has identified the frequency 95.9 MHz is suitable and available for the 4KIG community radio broadcasting service in Bowen. The proposed frequency will provide the same level of service as a service operated in accordance with the current technical specifications.
**Charters Towers**

ACMA has identified the frequency 98.3 MHz is suitable and available for the ONC in Charters Towers. The proposed frequency will provide the same level of service as the current frequency on which the ONC operates.

Therefore, in considering the objects of the Act and the matters mentioned in s.23, including the economic and efficient use of the spectrum, ACMA proposes to make 94.3 MHz, 93.5 MHz and 96.7 MHz available for national radio broadcasting services in Townsville, Townsville North and Bowen, 95.9 MHz for the community radio broadcasting service in Bowen and 98.3 MHz available for the existing ONC service in Charters Towers.

**Licence Areas**

The licence area of the Townsville commercial and community radio services and the Charters Towers commercial radio service are described against the 1991 census count. ACMA proposes to take this opportunity to redefine the Townsville radio and Charters Towers radio licence areas using 2001 census boundaries, but otherwise they shall remain the same.

**Conclusion**

ACMA believes that making spectrum available at 94.3 MHz, 93.5 MHz and 96.7 MHz available for national radio broadcasting services in Townsville, Townsville North and Bowen, 95.9 MHz for the community radio broadcasting service in Bowen and 98.3 MHz available for the existing ONC service in Charters Towers is an economic and efficient use of the radiofrequency spectrum, as it maximises the number of channels available within the Townsville and Charters Towers licence areas.

The proposed change of frequencies will enable ACMA to make a high power national radio broadcasting service available in Townsville, where FM spectrum availability is limited and to promote the availability to audiences throughout Townsville of a diverse range of broadcasting services.