Explanatory Paper

Draft Variation to Licence Area Plan for Rockhampton - Gladstone, QLD
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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: lais@acma.gov.au

By mail:  
Draft LAP Variation – Rockhampton - Gladstone Radio 
ACMA 
PO Box 78 
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

By fax: (02) 6253 3277

Please quote file reference 2008/289 in your reply.

Any enquiries concerning matters raised in this document should be directed to Megan Wynnik on (02) 6256 2827.

The closing date for submissions is 5.00pm, Friday, 9 January 2009.

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 View – Commercial Radio 4CC – Rockhampton

ACMA proposes to make channel capacity available for a transmitter for commercial radio service 4CC at Rockhampton to operate on 90.5 MHz from Mt Meikleville with a maximum ERP of 250 W (Directional).

In May 2007, Prime Television Pty Ltd (Prime), the licensee of 4CC requested that ACMA allocate an FM translator to replace its AM translator located at Pink Lily near Rockhampton. Prime stated the AM translator failed to adequately cover the region of its licence area to the east of Rockhampton, in the Livingstone Shire along the coast from Yeppoon to Keppel Stands.

The 4CC radio service is divided into three sub-markets, providing localised radio coverage to the areas surrounding Rockhampton, Gladstone and Biloela. While parts of the affected area do receive 4CC radio coverage, this signal is broadcast from the Gladstone based transmitter and is not targeted at residents of the Livingstone Shire.

When considering requests from AM services for FM conversion, ACMA recognises the cheapness and practicability of FM to solve coverage problems where the operator would be unlikely to countenance the expense of an alternative AM transmitter. However, ACMA also recognises the strong concerns of FM incumbents about ‘free’ conversion of AM competitors into FM competitors, recognising that FM radio is the more profitable and higher quality.

It is therefore ACMA’s practice to seek solutions using AM spectrum in the first instance when AM services request changes to their licence conditions to rectify reception deficiencies. If no viable AM solution is available, ACMA will then look at FM options, with the aim of minimising interference with other existing services and impact on available radiofrequency spectrum.

A change to the technical specification of the Pink Lilly translator is not feasible in this case as its frequency, 1584 kHz has been designated a low power frequency under the terms of the internationally agreed Geneva Plan. Prime also stated the local council opposes the establishment of new AM transmitters in the area. It is unlikely that 4CC would be able to negotiate a suitable broadcast site for an AM translator if allocated one.

ACMA rejected the translator suggested by Prime as an unnecessary use of radiofrequency spectrum. This translator, at 10kW effective radiated power (ERP) is far in excess what is required to rectify the area of deficient coverage. A translator service operating with this amount of power would provide coverage similar to the other FM commercial services in the licence area which are able to broadcast to the entire licence area from the same location with similar power.

ACMA have instead planned an FM translator, broadcasting on 90.5 MHz with a maximum ERP of 250W from a broadcast site at Meikleville Hill. This would provide an adequate coverage of signal to the areas where the AM signal is currently deficient. The translator has been planned to minimise any overlap between the existing AM translator.

It is considered that the FM translator is the best option for 4CC. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that providing 4CC with an FM translator will not lead to an unplanned and
unintentional AM to FM conversion and that planning such a translator will be in the overall public interest.