Explanatory Paper

Draft Variation to the Licence Area Plan for Riverland (Television and Radio) – No. 1 of 2008

April 2008
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Call for Submissions

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

By email: lapvariation@acma.gov.au

By mail: Draft LAP Variation – Riverland
ACMA
PO Box 78
BELCONNEN ACT 2617

By fax: (02) 6253 3277


Any enquiries concerning matters raised in this document should be directed to:
Christopher Roberts 02 6256 2856.

The closing date for submission is 5.00 pm, Friday 2 May 2008.

All submissions received will be made available for public inspection on the ACMA website1. (www.acma.gov.au)

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

Preliminary View – National Radio and Community radio – Renmark/Loxton

ACMA proposes to make available a new high power national radio broadcasting service (national service) and vary the technical specifications of the determined community radio broadcasting service (community service) at Renmark/Loxton, as follows:

- The national service to operate on 93.9 MHz at Broadcast Site Bookpurnong Terrace 4 km WSW of Loxton with a maximum effective radiated power (ERP) of 150 kW using a directional antenna pattern, antenna height of 156 meters and vertical polarisation;
- The community service to operate on at 100.7 MHz at Broadcast Site Bookpurnong Terrace 4 km WSW of Loxton with a maximum effective radiated power (ERP) of 5 kW using a directional antenna pattern, antenna height of 156 meters and mixed polarisation; and
- Redefine the Riverland RA1 and TV1 licence areas using 2001 census boundaries.

Background

In performing its function under section 26 of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (the Act), ACMA is required to promote the objects of 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 1996 Riverland licence area plan (LAP) made available four national, two commercial, two open narrowcasting and one community radio broadcasting services.

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.

In 2004, ACMA allocated a second commercial television licence to the existing commercial television licensee, WIN Television. This licence was allocated under s.38A of the Act, following application by the licensee. The draft LAP variation proposes to include technical specifications for that service.

2 To promote the availability to audiences throughout Australia of a diverse range of radio and television services offering entertainment, education and information.
Discussion

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

ACMA found that the frequency of 93.9 MHz, which is currently used by Riverland Christian Radio Inc. under a Temporary Community Broadcasting Licence (TCBL), is suitable for a high power ABC NewsRadio service. As a result, ACMA has identified an alternative frequency of 100.7 MHz for Riverland Christian Radio Inc.

The frequency 93.9 MHZ was determined in the LAP for a community radio broadcasting service operating at 5 kW to serve the Renmark/Loxton area. ACMA is now proposing that the frequency 93.9 MHz be made available for the national NewsRadio service at Renmark/Loxton as part of the Governments staged rollout to extend the NewsRadio services across Australia.

ACMA is also proposing to make the frequency 100.7 MHz available for a community broadcasting service at Renmark/Loxton with the technical specifications in the draft LAP variation. ACMA has identified that 100.7 MHz can operate at 5 kW maximum and will provide the same level of coverage as the existing Renmark/Loxton community radio broadcasting LAP specification and the currently-held TCBL.

Therefore, in considering the objects of the Act, including the economic and efficient use of the spectrum, ACMA proposes to make 93.9 MHz available for a national radio broadcasting service and 100.7 MHz available for a community radio broadcasting service.

Licence Areas
The licence areas for Riverland radio and television services are described against the 1992 census count. ACMA proposes to take this opportunity to redefine the Riverland radio and television licence area using 2001 census boundaries, but otherwise they shall remain the same.

Conclusion
ACMA preliminary view is that making spectrum available at 93.9 MHz for a national radio broadcasting service and 100.7 MHz for a community radio broadcasting service is an economic and efficient use of the radiofrequency spectrum, as it maximises the number of channels available within the Colac licence area.

The proposed change of frequency for the community radio broadcasting service will enable ACMA to make a high power national service available in Renmark/Loxton, where FM spectrum availability is limited and is likely to promote the availability to audiences throughout Renmark/Loxton of a diverse range of broadcasting services.