Explanatory Paper

Licence Area Plan for NSW Community Radio and Variation to Licence Area Plans for Sydney and Wollongong 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 – Wollongong Radio; or Draft LAP Variation – Sydney Radio; or Draft LAP – NSW Community Radio

ACMA
PO Box 78
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

By fax: (02) 6253 3277

Please quote file reference 2006/823 in your reply.

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

The closing date for submissions is 5.00pm, 22 September 2006.

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 – Community Radio – NSW Community

ACMA proposes to make channel capacity available for a NSW community radio service to operate as follows:

- 1224 kHz from Church Lane, Prospect with a maximum CMF of 1.26 kV (5 kW) (Directional); and
- 100.5 MHz from Elan Building, Kings Cross with a maximum ERP of 1 kW (Directional); and
- 100.5 MHz from Sugarloaf Range, Newcastle with a maximum ERP of 4 kW (Omni-directional); and
- 93.3 MHz from Broadcast site, 12 km South of Wollongong, Windang with a maximum ERP of 2 kW (Omni-directional).

ACMA proposes that the NSW community radio licence area be defined using 2001 Census boundaries.

ACMA proposes to remove channel capacity from the Sydney radio licence area plan (LAP) for a community radio service on 1224 kHz.

ACMA proposes to remove channel capacity from the Wollongong radio LAP for a community radio service on 93.3 MHz.

ACMA has received a proposal from the licensee of 2RPH, Radio for the Print Handicapped of NSW Co-operative Ltd (2RPH) to improve coverage of its community radio service in Sydney, especially in the Eastern Suburbs. 2RPH is also interested in extending coverage to other centres within NSW. 2RPH has applied to provide FM translators in Kings Cross, Newcastle and Wollongong. In each case making spectrum available for RPH would assist it in meeting its objectives. However, this option needs to be weighed against other potential demand for the channels.

The frequency 100.5 MHz cannot be used in Sydney as a high power wide coverage service and therefore demand might be limited. However, ACMA is interested in hearing from any other aspirant broadcasters in using this low power FM frequency to provide a local coverage service in Sydney.

2 RPH’s Proposal

As part of the Sydney radio LAP, which the former ABA determined in December 1999, a decision was made that the existing AM community radio service 2RPH would continue to operate on 1224 kHz in Sydney.

2RPH’s proposal is to extend its community radio service to regional areas of NSW outside its designated licence area. 2RPH has identified Wollongong and Newcastle as priority centres. Additionally, 2RPH has expressed interest in improving the coverage of its service in Sydney, in particular, in the Eastern Suburbs.

As part of 2RPH’s proposal it has requested a licence area that would encompass the whole of NSW.
ACMA’s Preliminary View

ACMA is proposing to create a new LAP for Community radio in NSW and designate a non-contiguous licence area to incorporate Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong.

Therefore, ACMA proposes to transfer 1224 kHz from the Sydney radio LAP to the new NSW Community radio LAP. This AM frequency will still be assigned to 2RPH for the purpose of providing a community radio service in Sydney.

Firstly, ACMA has identified additional spectrum in the FM Band to be made available for translator services in Kings Cross, Newcastle and Wollongong for 2RPH to provide adequate coverage to the proposed new licence area. The FM channel capacity for Kings Cross and Newcastle, 100.5 MHz, has not been made available previously in any determined LAP.

The use of 100.5 MHz at Kings Cross and Newcastle at 1 kW and 4 kW respectively is able to be accommodated if, as is proposed, the same licensee were to relay the same program content into each of the two areas. The two services are proposed to be co-channelled in this preliminary view in order that spectrum is used in an efficient fashion, and to prevent mutual interference the services are also protected to a higher signal strength (i.e. the re-use distance between the co-channels can be made shorter with a higher level of protection). In the event there is interference the licensee will need to deal with any “mush” zone issues that may arise.

Secondly, the FM frequency, 93.3 MHz that has been identified to be used for the translator for 2RPH in Wollongong was previously made available for a community radio service in the Wollongong LAP, determined in July 1999.

At that time the former ABA determined that two new community broadcasting licences be made available to serve the Wollongong/Nowra area.

In March 2000, the ABA allocated one community licence to Living Sound Broadcasters Ltd to operate a service on 94.1 MHz. At that time, the ABA decided not to allocate the second licence on 93.3 MHz.

In August 2002, the ABA again invited applications for the operation of a community broadcasting service on 93.3 MHz and there were two applicants for the Wollongong/Nowra licence. In March 2003, after giving consideration to the criteria in Section 84(2) of the Act and the information provided by the applicants, the ABA decided not to allocate the licence.

Therefore, ACMA proposes to remove the unallocated FM frequency, 93.3 MHz from the Wollongong radio LAP and make it available for a translator service for 2RPH in the proposed new NSW community radio LAP.

Restrictions on 100.5 MHz

Varying limitations will apply to the technical operating conditions of a local coverage broadcasting radio service using 100.5 MHz. One of the limitations is the location of the transmitter site.

A case in point is the restriction of the transmitter’s use in the southern parts of Sydney because of the potential to cause adjacent channel interference\(^2\) to existing local coverage.

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\(^2\) Adjacent channel interference refers to signal impairment to one frequency due to presence of another signal on a nearby frequency.
community radio services, 2MCR Campbelltown on 100.3 MHz and 2WOW Penrith on 100.7 MHz.

Although, 100.5 MHz has operated previously in Sydney on a temporary basis with a maximum ERP of 200 W omni-directional (OD), it is not possible to permanently allocate this frequency at that power level in Sydney.

In order to provide a service on 100.5 MHz in Sydney on a permanent basis, the service would need to operate with a directional radiation pattern and the power level towards the south in the direction of Batemans Bay being limited to 100 W to avoid mutual co-channel interference to a planned, but not yet commenced, high power (40 kW) ABC radio service at Batemans Bay/Moruya.

Siting of low power transmitting facilities

Low power radio broadcasting transmission facilities will in general not be sited in the same general area as high/medium power FM and TV transmission facilities. Therefore, particular care will need to be taken to avoid interference to and from FM and TV broadcasting services. In some cases, having regard to the intended coverage directional transmitting antennas may need to be used to provide protection to low power FM services in adjacent areas.

Effective Radiated Power

There is no specific maximum value of effective radiated power (ERP) designated for FM transmitters. The required value will depend upon the size of the licence area, the effective height of the transmitting antenna and the field strength required to provide adequate reception throughout the licence area. However, the potential interference to other services may limit the permissible ERP and the maximum height of the antenna of the proposed service.

The peak ERP of a low coverage transmitting facility will not in general be permitted to exceed 1 kW. This requirement may often mean placing the transmitter at, or close to, the centre of the licence area. However, in Sydney the maximum ERP of all but one of the existing local coverage community radio services is 200 W or below and these services are geographically separated in such a way to avoid mutual interference from one another.