Explanatory Paper

Draft Variation to Licence Area Plan
Perth Radio

Australian Broadcasting Authority
Canberra
August 2004
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Call for Submissions

Submissions on the matters raised in this Explanatory Paper may be made to the ABA as follows:

By email: lapvariation@aba.gov.au

By mail: Draft LAP Variation – Perth
Australian Broadcasting Authority
PO Box 34
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

By fax:(02) 6253 3277

Please quote file reference 2002/0272/2 in your reply.

Any enquiries concerning matters raised in this document should be directed to Stirling Finlay on (02) 6256 2874.

The closing date for submissions is 5.00pm, 1 October 2004.

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

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

Preliminary View – Commercial Radio – 6PR

The ABA proposes to amend the technical specifications for 6PR to operate as follows:

- 882 KHz from Belmont, with a maximum ERP of 12 kW Directional (CMF of 1330 V).

6PR request for power increase and directional radiation pattern

The propagation of AM signals in the Perth area is acknowledged to be comparatively poor because of soil conductivity. On 18 May 2004, the licensee of commercial AM radio service 6PR requested a power increase from 10 kW omni-directional to 12 kW directional to improve coverage to the growing population areas to the north west and south west of the Perth metropolitan area. Confirmation of the proposal is subject to international frequency co-ordination with Malaysia which is currently underway.

Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR) issues would need to be assessed at the new site. The general public safety levels for EMR are specified in a standard released by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA). On 1 March 2003 the Australian Communications Authority introduced new regulations setting limits for human exposure to EMR based on the ARPANSA standard. Broadcasting licensees are required to comply with this standard.

The ABA now seeks submissions on the 6PR proposal.
Preliminary View – New Community Radio Service

An FM frequency will continue to be made available in Perth for Temporary Community Broadcasting Licence (TCBL) services for the time being. The ABA does not propose that a new community radio service be made available to serve the Perth city area at this time:

There are two aspirant community radio groups in Perth that are currently sharing the frequency 90.5 MHz for TCBL operation under an ABA imposed time-share arrangement. These are Capital Community Radio (over 55’s format), and Western Sports Media (sports format).

There are also four other parties who have expressed an interest in providing a community radio service in Perth – the WA Portuguese Club, (Portuguese format), Hits Radio Ltd (general format), Lycourgos Inc (Greek format), and Mr Marwin Naji (Arabic format).

The number of Perth community radio licences is comparable to similar-sized cities. The ABA is concerned that it would be premature to increase further the number of permanent community broadcasting services in the licence area. The impact on community radio of the expansion in permanent service numbers that has so recently taken place is not yet clear, including whether the increased number of licences already allocated is sustainable in the long term and the capacity of those existing permanent services to meet community needs.

Meanwhile, the opportunity for a more extended period of trials by the current aspirants and any new aspirant groups that emerge, on a channel-sharing basis, should give a better indication of the extent of any unmet community needs in the Perth market and the capacity of aspirant groups to meet those needs. The ABA’s preliminary view is that it should continue to make the frequency 90.5 MHz available for TCBL services for the time being. It invites views from aspirant groups and also from incumbent community radio services on any issues that are relevant to the length of time trials and if they should be continued.

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2 Perth currently has 7 permanent community radio services, Adelaide 6 and Brisbane 7.
Preliminary View – Community Radio – 6RPH

The ABA proposes to amend the technical specifications for AM community radio service 6RPH to reflect a change of site from Applecross to Belmont and a power increase from 2 kW to 5 kW as follows:

- **990 KHz from Belmont, with a maximum ERP of 5 kW Omni directional (CMF of 705 V).**

In the Perth draft LAP, the licensees of AM community radio services 6AR and 6NR were provided the opportunity to convert to the FM band as good propagation of AM signals in the Perth area is difficult due to poor soil conductivity. The licensee of 6RPH, as the remaining community radio service on the AM band, requested that it too be offered consideration of its coverage deficiencies. 6RPH advised that it would prefer to stay on the AM band on its current frequency rather than change frequency or convert to FM. The ABA’s assessment was that a power increase for the service from the current 2 kW to 4 kW or more has the potential to cause interference, particularly to a Kalgoorlie service, and that long term test transmissions would need to be conducted to ascertain the extent of any interference.

A licence authorising test transmissions for the period 28 July 2003 to 27 January 2004 was granted to the licensee of 6RPH to conduct tests up to 5 kW from the Applecross site to determine if interference would be caused. There were no reports of interference as a result of the tests.

On 10 February 2004, the licensee of 6RPH sought a site change for its AM service from Applecross to Belmont, as Broadcast Australia Pty Limited, the manager of both sites and transmission service provider for 6RPH is undertaking a site rationalisation program. The ABA’s Technical Planning Guidelines provide flexibility for a site change if signal coverage will not be substantially changed and the potential to cause interference is not increased. Approval for the site change was granted to 6RPH on 17 March 2004.

On 18 March 2004 6RPH sought a power increase from 2 kW to 5 kW for the Belmont site. A test licence was subsequently issued for the period 18 May 2004 until 15 August 2004 to again ascertain if any interference issues arise. There have been no reports of interference as a result of the tests from the Belmont site.

The ABA now seeks submissions on the 6RPH proposal for an increase in power at the Belmont site.
The ABA proposes to amend the technical specifications for 6NR to operate as follows:

- 100.1 MHz from Walliston, with a maximum ERP of 6.5 kW Directional.

The October 2001 final LAP for Perth provided for the AM to FM conversion of community radio service 6NR. The LAP specification provided for the service to operate from the ABW 2 tower at Bickley with an antenna height of 30 metres. The maximum ERP was limited to 16 kW with a directional radiation pattern to provide adequate service to the specified licence area while protecting the Bunbury/Mandurah television services.

A request from the licensee of 6NR on 17 July 2003 sought permission to operate from the STW 9 site at Walliston. This requires a reduced maximum power of 6.5 kW directional from 16 kW directional as the higher site and in conjunction with an increased antenna height has the effect of increasing the coverage distance.
Preliminary View – Community Radio – 6AR

The ABA proposes to amend the technical specifications for 6AR to operate as follows:

- **100.9 MHz from Walliston, with a maximum ERP of 6.5 kW Directional.**

The October 2001 final LAP for Perth provided for the AM to FM conversion of community radio service 6AR. The LAP specification provided for the service to operate from the ABW 2 tower at Bickley with an antenna height of 30 metres. The maximum ERP was limited to 16 kW with a directional radiation pattern to provide adequate service to the specified licence area while protecting the Bunbury/Mandurah television services and the potentially available community service at Bruce Rock.

On 27 June 2003, the licensee of 6AR requested permission to operate its service at the STW 9 site at Walliston. This requires a reduced maximum power of 6.5 kW directional from 16 kW directional as the higher site and in conjunction with an increased antenna height has the effect of increasing the coverage distance.

The change to the higher site of Walliston with an increase in antenna height has the potential to cause interference with a planned community radio service for Bruce Rock. However, with the service transmitting at the proposed ERP, field strength measurements taken by consultants Gibson Quai Pty Ltd assessed that there is little potential for interference to a planned community radio service at Bruce Rock.
Preliminary View – Community Radio – 6YMS

The ABA proposes to amend the technical specifications for 6YMS to operate as follows:

- 101.7 MHz from Gosnells, with a maximum ERP of 16 kW Directional.

The LAP technical specifications for 6YMS reflect Bickley as the nominal site, however, at initial apparatus licence issue, an alternative site of Gosnells was specified which is within the allowance of the Technical Planning Guidelines (TPG’s). The TPG’s provide flexibility for a site change from the nominal LAP site if signal coverage either within or outside the licensees licence area is not likely to be significantly different and the potential to cause interference is not increased.

On 15 August 2003, 6YMS requested a power increase and change of radiation pattern to bring it into line with the other Perth wide-coverage community radio services. The 6YMS service was initially planned at 10 kW maximum ERP directional with a maximum of 500 W in the southern sector of 50° – 220° to avoid potential interference to reception of the Bunbury channel 5 television service, however during mid 2002 to mid 2003 6YMS was operating at between 2 kW to 3 kW in the 50° – 220° sector without any reports of interference.

The ABA now seeks submissions on the 6YMS proposal to operate with the same ERP as the other Perth wide-coverage community radio services.
Preliminary View – High Power Open Narrowcasting Radio

The ABA proposes to make available a new open narrowcasting radio service to operate as follows:

- 1170 kHz from Hamersley with a maximum ERP of 2kW (CMF of 450 V) Omni-directional.

On 11 May 2004 Gibson Quai Pty Ltd, broadcasting consultants, provided a submission on behalf of Mr Jeffrey Cha – President of the Chinese Association of WA, and Mr Simon Lee – Honorary President of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Perth. The submission stated that Mr Cha and Mr Lee are prominent in the Chinese business community in Perth and are interested in providing a Chinese language service on a vacant AM channel for the approximate 100,000 Chinese-speaking people in the Perth metropolitan area.

Of the two potentially available frequencies, 927 kHz (formerly 6NR) and 1170 kHz (formerly 6AR), Gibson Quai Pty Ltd state that 1170 kHz is preferred as it can be used with an omnidirectional radiation pattern.

The National Broadcast site at Hamersley is preferred by Gibson Quai Pty Ltd as the location for the service rather than the original 6AR site at Gnangara, as it is closer to the centre of Perth. Use of the Hamersley site will be subject to the proponent arriving at an agreement with Broadcast Australia. An alternative site may be the 6IX site at Belmont. Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR) issues would need to be assessed at either of the locations. The general public safety levels for EMR are specified in a standard released by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA). On 1 March 2003 the Australian Communications Authority introduced new regulations setting limits for human exposure to EMR based on the ARPANSA standard. Broadcasting licensees are required to comply with this standard.

The ABA takes the view that planning for open narrowcasting radio services has an important role in promoting the object at paragraph 3 (1) (a) of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (the Act). For this reason the ABA is of the view that in making channel capacity available for an open narrowcasting service in Perth is likely to promote the objects of the Act.

The ABA now seeks submissions on the proposal to make an additional high power open narrowcasting service available to serve Perth.
Preliminary View – Variation to Frequency Allotment Plan – Perth, WA

The ABA proposes to vary the frequency allotment plan (FAP) for the VHF FM radio band and MF AM band for R22 Perth as it relates to the preliminary views on community and open narrowcasting services in Perth.

In forming this view, the ABA considered and reached views about the likely effects of its proposal, having regard to the local circumstances within the market, the likely impact of other planning proposals in this draft LAP and other relevant matters under s.23(a)-(g). An account of this process of consideration follows.

The FAP and LAP for an area together constitute the ABA’s ‘blueprint’ for the development of broadcasting in that area using the broadcasting services bands. The frequency allotment plan sets out the number of channels and the licence area plan describes the characteristics of the services using, or that are proposed to use, those channels. The two documents must be consistent: s.26(1).

In preparing its initial, Australia-wide frequency allotment plan of August 1994, the ABA foreshadowed that the plan would be revised as necessary, market by market, to accommodate any additional or changed broadcasting requirements disclosed during public consultation at the licence area planning stage:

‘(The FAP’s) assumptions about demand, nominal transmitter specifications and siting will be re-examined during preparation of the LAPs for particular areas of Australia, at which time it will be subject to intensive public consultation. This may necessitate variations to this FAP... Consultation on the changes will take place within the LAP consultation process.’

‘The FAP will also be revised to reflect any additional services planned during the LAP stage (particularly low power channels). If the revised FAP results in changes in channel capacity for areas outside the area for which the licence area plan is being prepared, the changes will be subjected to public consultation in affected areas. ’ (Frequency Allotment Plan; August 1994; Pg. 9, ‘Planning Process Overview’)

The ABA proposes to add capacity to the FAP for one FM channel for a new community radio service and one AM channel for an open narrowcasting service in Perth as shown in the proposed FAP variation instrument.