STAR BROADCASTING NETWORK PTY LTD
PO. BOX 7 IPSWICH QLD 4305

Submission to the Australian Communications and Media Authority

REFERENCE 2002/0713

Star Broadcasting Network Pty Ltd is the owner operator of;

5AU Broadcasters Pty Ltd licencee of 5AU Port Augusta
5AU Pty Ltd licencee of 5RM and 5RIV Riverland
Lanson Investments licencee of 5CC 5CCC 5AUU Port Lincoln and Spencer Gulf
Bundaberg Broadcasters Pty Ltd licencee of 4BU and 4RUM and,
Star Broadcasting Network Pty Ltd licencee of 4MIX Ipswich

On 5 September 2005, ACMA released for comment a Draft LAP Variation for Remote Central & Eastern Australia.

The draft sought numerous changes to the Technical Specifications for the Remote Area Central Zone Licence Area for the Remote Commercial Broadcaster 8SAT, and 4BRL in Queensland.

Star Broadcasting Network Pty Ltd is aware of and generally supports the comments contained in the submission tendered by Commercial Radio Australia. We are firmly of the view the request from the Remote Commercial Broadcasters is a deliberate tactic to gain strong fortuitous signals into areas that are already well served by commercial broadcasters.

South Australia is not the only area that a Remote Commercial Broadcaster has sought, and in some cases been granted excessive power close to the boundaries of existing commercial operators. The Wide Bay area of Queensland is a startling example of this.

In all cases Star Broadcasting Network submits any consideration for any variation to the Technical Specifications for any Remote Area Service wherever it may be situated should be carried out in accord with the usual practice of limited overlap into another licenced commercial operator's lawfully licenced area. That is to say that the aerial patterns should provide protection by way of suitable nulls in the direction of any overlapping service area and that the power allotted to any operator be limited to that required to provide sufficient signal strength to provide a service to the applicable service area. Our submission is that signal strength of 40dB/u is enough to adequately receive a signal.
The indiscriminate issuing of omni directional facilities at high power are in our opinion is not the intent of the BSA.

In particular we would draw your attention to the areas immediately overlapping our existing licence areas of Port Augusta, Port Pirie, the Riverland and Port Lincoln.

Freshstream FM’s Coverage Map published in June 2005 clearly indicates a coverage area that invades our licence areas and that of other commercial operators. Freshstreams service on 99.5MHz already has a stronger signal in parts of our coverage area than our existing service. Signal strength on 99.5MHz in Wakerie for instance is stronger than our AM and FM services provided on 5RM and Magic 93.1MHz. Wakerie is clearly not in the Remote Area Central Zone Licence Area.

A similar situation exists in relation to Freshstream’s proposal for 99.3MHz. The coverage area map for this service published by Freshstream clearly indicates a coverage area that overlaps with that of 5CC and 5CCC.

The proposed positioning of high powered remote area transmission facilities on the Flinders Range adjacent to Port Pirie and Port Augusta is clearly designed to provide a strong signal into those areas.

Star Broadcasting Network Pty Ltd seeks amendments to the draft variation in all instances to introduce protection from potential signal overspill from 8SAT and 4BRL into existing commercial licenced areas.

Summary

We are of the view that the remote area broadcasters 8SAT and 4BRL are jointly seeking to build services that will provide coverage to areas already licenced to commercial operators who have been servicing these communities for, in some instances, up to 70 years.

If ACMA is prepared to grant the requested variations to the Technical Specifications for the Remote Area Central & Eastern Zones we would submit that it should also consider opening the entire LAP process to allow existing commercial operators to address inefficiencies in signal strength caused by increasing interference caused by RF interference in most AM licence areas.
At the very least, existing commercial operators should be able to provide the same level of power at their boundaries as the remote service will be able to if the variations are made. If ACMA supports these variations to the remote area services, we respectfully suggest it is endorsing an ‘open skies’ policy which must in turn be offered to existing operators.

It is our contention that the maximum power for all these proposed variations should not exceed 200 watts and that all services be directional and provide protection to adjoining licensees. If this is not to be the case it may be worth providing the opportunity for existing commercial operators to provide translator services into the Remote Areas.

In its communication dated 5 September 2005 reference MR19/2005 ACMA indicates that it is proposing to make FM channel capacity available for a second commercial radio service, 4BRZ at Bourke on 107.3 MHz, Chinchilla 97.1 MHz, Weipa 97.7 MHz.

Star Broadcasting Network Pty Ltd hereby formally signals its interest in providing a regional commercial radio service for these areas.

We look forward to discussing our application in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Graham McVean
Managing Director and CEO
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