

25 March 2009

## Regional radio broadcasters call for Government commitment to regional Australians

Regional commercial radio broadcasters from around Australia met in Sydney today and agreed unanimously that digital radio services must be made available to all Australians, not just those in metropolitan areas.

The broadcasters called on the Federal Government to make an immediate public commitment to the allocation of VHF Band III spectrum to regional broadcasters for the rollout of digital radio services across Australia.

Regional operators attending today's historic meeting included Fairfax, ACE Radio, Grant Broadcasting, Resonate Broadcasting, Bathurst Broadcasters, Hot Tomato, Macquarie Southern Cross Media, Capital Radio, Prime Radio, 2SM/Supernetwork, Red FM, Radio Outback, West Coast Radio, Smart Radio, Hot Hits 99, Flow FM, ARN, Austereo, Tab Corp (2KY-Racng Radio), North East Broadcasters, Rich Rivers Radio and Radio Outback.

Chief executive officer of Commercial Radio Australia (CRA), Joan Warner said, "The broadcasters agreed that the provision of digital radio services across the whole of Australia is key to the principle of social inclusion for all Australians. A vital element in ensuring the planning and provision of digital radio services in a timely manner is an assurance from Government of access to spectrum."

"Regional broadcasters believe there is no impediment to the Government immediately making a strong policy commitment to regional commercial radio operators and their listeners that appropriate spectrum will be allocated in the future to regional broadcasters for digital radio services," she said

Discussion at the meeting focused on spectrum needs and policy essentials, plus planning, timing and funding proposals for further development and presentation to the Federal Government that will ensure equity of access for all Australians to new and improved radio services via digital radio.

Regional broadcasters also discussed digital radio trials with, ideally, trials to begin in September 2009 following the digital radio switch on in the mainland capitals.

Expressions of interest in a regional DAB+ trial have been made to CRA by a large number of commercial radio broadcasters including Bathurst Broadcasters, Macquarie Southern Cross Broadcasters, Prime Radio, Hot Tomato, Supernetwork, Flow FM, Coastal Broadcasters, Austereo/ARN (Canberra FM), West Coast Radio Pty Ltd, North East Broadcaster Ltd Rich Rivers Radio and Tab Corp – 2KY.

Commercial Radio Australia has already had advice from ACMA on where suitable spectrum is available for a trial. Current areas of investigation are Hobart, Townsville and Canberra. Broadcasters also discussed the possibility of a trial in a smaller regional area.

"An announcement of future spectrum priority plus facilitation of a regional DAB+ trial will provide regional broadcasters and regional listeners, plus the automotive and retail sectors, with confidence that the Federal Government, in collaboration with the radio industry, is committed to making digital radio available throughout Australia," said Ms Warner

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For more information about digital radio, visit [www.digitalradioplus.com.au](http://www.digitalradioplus.com.au).