

8 December 2010

## **Regional radio broadcasters meet to discuss rollout of digital radio**

Regional commercial radio broadcasters from around Australia met in Sydney today to discuss the planning, timing and funding of the digital radio rollout in regional Australia.

The broadcasters unanimously agreed on five key areas:

- 1) regional broadcasters, as a basic entitlement, to receive the same spectrum access and minimum non-compete period as the metropolitan broadcasters;
- 2) discussions to commence in 2011 with the Federal Government on funding for regional digital radio rollout;
- 3) the technology to form the backbone of regional digital rollout to be DAB+ in all towns and regional and population centres across Australia;
- 4) as detailed planning for the digital future is now underway, the Federal Government should place a moratorium on the issue of any new analogue radio licences, at least until planning is completed;
- 5) detailed digital radio channel planning for regional Australia to be conducted in parallel with the analogue television switch off so that certainty can be provided to regional listeners and broadcasters as soon as possible.

"In relation to funding, regional commercial radio broadcasters will be seeking discussions with the Federal Government in 2011 re financial support for the regional digital radio rollout," said Joan Warner, CEO of Commercial Radio Australia. "Commercial regional television operators have enjoyed significant financial levels of support from previous and current Federal Governments for the costs of rollout of digital television; and regional commercial radio broadcasters look forward to receiving a Government commitment of support for regional radio and its millions of listeners."

Regional operators attending today's meeting included ACE Radio, Grant Broadcasting, Resonate Broadcasting, Bathurst Broadcasters, Hot Tomato, Southern Cross Media, Capital Radio, Prime Radio, 2SM/Super Radio Network, Red FM, Radio Outback, West Coast Radio, Win Radio North East Broadcasters, Rich Rivers Radio and Radio Outback

The regional broadcasters also confirmed the industry would be making a submission to the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy's *Technologies for digital radio services in regional Australia* discussion paper.

"The industry will make a formal submission to the discussion paper reaffirming the commercial radio industry's often stated position that DAB+ in Band III VHF is the industry's preferred technology for regional Australia, with technology for wide area coverage specifically in remote regional areas being considered at a later date once the planning for the DAB+ rollout is complete.

Senator Conroy announced at the National Radio Conference in October 2010 in Melbourne, that the Government has identified that 14 megahertz of spectrum in the VHF Band III will be made available to facilitate the rollout of digital radio to rural and regional Australia.

"The industry looks forward to working with the Minister, regulator (ACMA), and the department (DBCDE) to enable all Australians to experience the benefits of DAB+ digital radio," said Ms Warner. "Detailed planning and timing of the regional rollout of digital radio will also give retailers and the automotive industry surety in the future of DAB+ in regional Australia."

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