

NEW PUBLIC BROADCASTING ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

The first organisation to link together, on a national basis, the burgeoning number of local groups, who are working towards establishing new public broadcasting stations, was formed at the weekend. The Public Broadcasting Association of Australia was organised at the Independent Seminar on Public Broadcasting which was held at the University of New South Wales.

The Objects of the Association are:

1. To support the establishment of public broadcasting stations in Australia. (N.B. The term "public broadcasting" is now being used to describe the new non-commercial, non-ABC radio stations which were recommended in the recent Independent Inquiry into FM Broadcasting.)
2. To support the principle that public stations should be controlled and operated at the local level by autonomous bodies.
3. To promote the principles of independence in programming, diversity of output, access to broadcasting by the community the widest representation of viewpoint, diversity in the organisation and structure of broadcasting, and cooperation between public broadcasters.
4. To provide a range of cooperative services in the interests of members, including programming and technical, legal, financial, information and staff training services.
5. To coordinate on a national level the efforts of members and other organisations having similar aims and objects.
6. To represent, as required, members to government and other bodies (including internationally).

The Association, which is non-party political and non-profit, already draws its support from all mainland capitals, Newcastle and Bathurst. All 16 groups attending the Seminar supported its formation and future operations. Widely diverse groups in the public broadcasting movement found that they all face an extensive set of common problems before they can get on the air. As a result of the formation of the Association, groups as widely distinctive as student broadcasters and university institutional broadcasters, classical music and pop music broadcasters, local suburban, regional and metropolitan-wide broadcasters, public affairs and cultural broadcasters, colleges of advanced education and adult education broadcasters, will work closely together in a united front to establish the new public broadcasting sector. This new sector will provide a wider and richer diversity of programmes than possible through the existing commercial and ABC sectors. They will use the new FM and extra AM frequencies which are now becoming available.

The Association members want priority to be given, in allocation of these frequencies, to the public broadcasting sector.

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The interim Committee of the Association draws its members from Perth, Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Bathurst. Its Convenor is the Secretary of the Sydney Public Broadcasting Association, Dr Peter Pockley*.

Delegates resolved to approach the Government urgently for developmental funds so that the Association can serve local broadcasting groups in the complex job of preparing to go on air (at least two groups, possibly four, expect they could be ready within six months, but most are looking ahead 12 months). Four areas will be given immediate priority by the Association:

- * Increasing public participation in the vital decisions affecting the future of public broadcasting at the local level and nationally (e.g. in relation to licensing, funding, frequencies and facilities)
- * Legal and industrial matters
- * Programming matters
- * Technical advice

It is not intended that this national association be a funding authority itself. The Association will approach the wide range of ministers, departments and agencies of the Australian Government who have already expressed interest in public broadcasting for these developmental funds. Working parties will then be set up in various centres to carry out the work.

On the various issues of policy and practice affecting the new public broadcasting sector, the members of the Association drafted and recommended the several specific motions passed at the Independent Seminar and at the Conference on Public Broadcasting which preceded it. The texts of these resolutions are contained in separate documents. The Association's Committee is presenting these resolutions to the Prime Minister, the Special Minister of State, the Minister for the Media and the Postmaster-General, among other ministers, parliamentarians, and government departments and authorities, and will press for their adoption as government policy.

The Chairman of the Independent Seminar was Professor Cyril Renwick of Newcastle, one of the Commissioners on the FM Inquiry. The Seminar was attended also by a number of specialists in broadcasting, television, law and audience surveys. Representatives of six Australian Government departments and authorities also attended as observers and took part freely in all the discussions.

* 'Phones: 662-3464 (work)
660-6363 (home)

INDEPENDENT SEMINAR ON PUBLIC BROADCASTING

5th, 6th July 1974

Philip Baxter College, University of New South Wales

DELEGATES

Ms Judy BATEMAN
Community Radio Association
C/- Perth Institute of Film & TV
High Street
Fremantle WA 6160

Mr John HILL
Department of Community Programmes
University of Newcastle
Newcastle NSW 2308

Mr Jim BEATSON
Students' Union Media Committee
The Union
University of Queensland
St Lucia QLD 4067

Mr Trevor JARVIE
Music Broadcasting Society (NSW)
Box 176, The Union
University of Sydney NSW 2006

Mr John BIRMAN
Director of Extension Services
University of Western Australia
Nedlands WA 6009

Mr Dick MASON
Manly Warringah Media Cooperative
68 Alfred Road
Brookvale NSW 2100

Mr Andrew BRUCE
Radio ANU
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 2600

Mr Robin MITCHELL
Mitchell College of Advanced Education
Bathurst NSW 2795

Mr Brian CABENA
Music Broadcasting Society (VIC)
146b Cotham Road
Kew VIC 3101

Mr Bob MITCHELL
Radio University
University of New South Wales
PO Box 1
Kensington NSW 2033

Mr Keith CONLON
Manager/Producer
Radio Station
University of Adelaide SA 5000

Mr Greig PICKHAVER
C/- Australian Performing Group
325 Drummond Street
Carlton VIC 3053

Mr Arthur DAVIES
ACT Council of Cultural Societies
Bunda Street
Canberra City ACT 2600

Dr Peter POCKLEY
Secretary
Public Broadcasting Association (Sydney)
C/- PO Box 1
Kensington NSW 2033

Mr Duncan GRAHAM
Western Australian Inst. of Tech.
Hayman Road
Bentley WA 6102

Mr Bevan RAMSDEN
Community Radio Federation
325 Drummond Street
Carlton VIC 3053

