



RAOUL CRUZ DIRECTOR OF DRAGNET INTERNET SERVICES RECEIVES THE 200TH CARRIER LICENCE AT ACMA'S MELBOURNE OFFICE FROM JONQUIL RITTER, EXECUTIVE MANAGER ALLOCATIONS, AND ROBERT JOHNSTON, MANAGER, TELECOMMUNICATIONS LICENSING AND NUMBERING ALLOCATION

200th carrier licence issued

The number of telecommunications carrier licences issued has risen from three to 200 in the period since the introduction of full and open competition in July 1997.

ACMA issued the 200th licence on 9 March 2006 to Dragnet Internet Service Pty Ltd, an internet service provider operating from Albury that provides services throughout Victoria and New South Wales to rural areas and some major inland cities. It proposes to expand its operations by building its own infrastructure to provide wireless internet services in rural Victoria and New South Wales.

The majority of new carrier licences have been issued to operators providing wireless broadband services in regional and rural areas. Cheap wireless technology, government subsidies to operators providing services in the regional and rural areas and a growing economy have driven the increase in the number of carriers.

Another factor has been a reduction in carrier licence charges. From 1 July 2004, ACMA reduced the carrier licence application fee from \$10,000 to \$2,200 and the minimum annual charge from \$10,000 to less than \$1,000. Up to that date, ACMA had issued 134 carrier licences, with 66 licences issued in the period since.

A list of licensed carriers is on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au (go to Licences > Telecomms > List of licensed carriers).

New community radio licence for Upper Murray

ACMA has allocated a new community radio licence in the Upper Murray region of New South Wales and Victoria to Upper Murray Community Radio Inc. (UMCR), which will add to the range and diversity of services in the area.

The service will broadcast on 88.7 MHz, 98.7 MHz and 107.7 MHz on the FM band. UMCR is currently broadcasting on 88.7 MHz and 107 MHz under a temporary community broadcasting licence that began in 1994 and expires on 30 April 2006. The permanent licence will commence on 1 May 2006.

Applications for two Upper Murray licences were invited in 2005 and UMCR was the only applicant for this licence. Its application was assessed with particular regard to whether the proposed general interest service would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the community in the Upper Murray area. UMCR currently operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The proposed service will provide programs that will cover a wide range of local issues to appeal to the general community in the Upper Murray.

The Upper Murray area is currently served by four national radio services (3ABCFM, 3ABCRN, 3MRR and 3JJJ), one commercial radio service

(2AAY) and one community broadcasting service (2BDR – Corryong only). The area is also served by two national television services (ABC and SBS) and three commercial television services (Prime TV, Southern Cross Ten Victoria, and WIN TV).

Part 6 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* provides for the allocation of community broadcasting licences. Applicants are required to compete for licences on the basis of merit. The process includes opportunity for the public to comment on applications received.

In considering applications, ACMA must have regard to:

- the extent to which the proposed service would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the community within the licence area of the proposed service
- the nature and diversity of the interests of that community
- the nature and diversity of other broadcasting services (including national broadcasting services) available within that licence area
- the capacity of the applicant to provide the proposed service
- the undesirability of one person being in a position to exercise control of more than one

community broadcasting licence that is a broadcasting services bands licence in the same licence area and

- the undesirability of the Commonwealth, a state or territory or a political party being in a position to exercise control of a community broadcasting licence.

Under section 85 of the Broadcasting Services Act, ACMA is not required to allocate a community broadcasting licence to any applicant.

