

REGULATION OF PRINT HANDICAPPED STATIONS

The Government in October announced that radio for the print handicapped stations would in future be licensed under the Broadcasting Act, as special interest public radio station. There are four radio for the print handicapped stations operating in Australia, these being in Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart and Brisbane, whilst the fifth is temporarily off the air. The inclusion of the radio for the print handicapped stations on the broadcasting band will eliminate any need for modification of receivers to pick up their signals. When the new licensing arrangements come into effect holders of existing radio for the print handicapped licences will have to compete with other applicants for special interest (radio for the print handicapped) licences.

REMOTE TELEVISION COMMENCES

Golden West Satellite Communications, the RCTS licensee for the Western Zone, commenced broadcasting on 18 October, 1986. The satellite up-link facility is located at Bunbury, and is received by rebroadcasting facilities at Broome, Dampier, Derby, Carnarvon, Exmouth, Karratha, Kununurra, Port Hedland, Moora, Pannawonica, Roebourne and Wyndham.

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THE NEW INQUIRY - A PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE

On 15 May, 1986 the Broadcasting (Inquiries) Regulations came into effect.

The Regulations were heralded as the means by which Inquiries could be expedited, costs minimised and delays averted. Whilst streamlined inquiries regulations had, for some time, been seen as desirable, the Tribunal's experience with the Inquiry into a third commercial licence for Perth was the catalyst for the promulgation of the new Inquiry Regulations although the Administrative Review Council had recommended changes to the Inquiry process several years ago.

The aim of this Article is to provide a commentary on how the new regulations have been put into practice and how they were applied in the first licence grant inquiry to be held under them - the Newcastle FM Licence grant. In addition, it is intended to provide some suggestions as to how the procedures can be improved and streamlined in the light of the procedures adopted.

The Newcastle Inquiry

After a false start when invitations for licence applications were withdrawn, applications were required to be lodged by 22 July, 1986.

After some preliminary meetings with the parties, on 12 September, 1986 the Tribunal met with all the parties and submitters to the Inquiry.

Initially the new inquiry procedures were explained:

"Miss O'Connor explained that the new inquiry procedures are a vehicle to move the Tribunal into an administrative rather than a curial mode. The new procedures have more scope for co-operation between the Tribunal and parties and between parties themselves. A feature of the new procedures is the conference mode, designed to encourage discussion and identify major issues. Most issues will be approached in a