Explanatory Paper

Draft Variation to Licence Area Plan
Wagga Wagga, NSW
Radio

Australian Broadcasting Authority
Canberra
June 2005
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Call for Submissions

Submissions on the matters raised in this Explanatory Paper may be made to the ABA as follows:

By email: lapvariation@aba.gov.au

By mail: Draft LAP Variation – Wagga Wagga
Australian Broadcasting Authority
PO Box 34
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

By fax: (02) 6253 3277

Please quote file reference 2002/0782 in your reply.

Any enquiries concerning matters raised in this document should be directed to Lachlan Habgood on (02) 6256 2872.

The closing date for submissions is 5.00pm, Friday 8 July 2005.

All submissions received will be made available for public inspection on the ABA website.¹ (www.aba.gov.au)

¹ Note that any submission marked “In Confidence”, “Confidential” or similar, cannot be considered by the ABA in finalising the LAP variation.
Preliminary View

Preliminary View – Community Radio – Wagga Wagga

The ABA proposes to make available additional FM channel capacity for FM translator services for the existing Wagga Wagga community FM service 2AA on 107.1 MHz as follows:

- From a site at Water Tower Alldis Place, Wagga Wagga on 107.9 MHz with a maximum ERP of 20 W (omnidirectional using a mixed polarisation);
- From a site at the Water Tower Wardle St, Junee on 97.9 MHz with a maximum ERP of 20 W (omnidirectional using a mixed polarisation);
- From a site at Mt Parnassus Lookout, Gundagai on 99.1 MHz, with a maximum ERP of 20 W (omnidirectional using a mixed polarisation);
- From a site at the Water Tower, Coolamon on 99.1 MHz with a maximum ERP of 20 W (omnidirectional using a mixed polarisation);

The ABA proposes to remove the technical specifications it previously made available to 2AAA to relocate its transmitter to a site at Wheel of Fortune in Wagga Wagga.

The ABA proposes to rename the 2AAA (SL3039) community licence area to Wagga Wagga RA3 and to extend the licence area to the townships of Gundagai and Coolamon.

In the Wagga Wagga licence area plan (LAP) varied on 24 February 2005, the ABA made technical specifications available to allow the licensee of community radio service 2AAA, Wagga Wagga Community Media Co-operative Society (2AAA) to relocate its transmitter site. 2AAA had indicated that its service suffered from reception problems in the southern part of the city of Wagga Wagga and in the surrounding towns of Junee, Uranquinty and The Rock.

The ABA determined that a site at Wheel of Fortune, Wagga Wagga would rectify reception difficulties to the areas claimed indicated by 2AAA. However, 2AAA has since indicated that it is not in a position to ever move its transmission facilities to the Wheel of Fortune site and have instead proposed that the ABA make channel capacity available for four new translators. The two translators proposed for Wagga Wagga south and Junee are intended to rectify reception deficiencies those parts of the existing 2AAA licence area. The proposed translators for Coolamon and Gundagai would provide coverage to the extended 2AAA licence area.

As 2AAA have indicated that it will not be in a position to move its transmission facilities to the Wheel of Fortune site, the ABA proposes to remove the technical specifications it has made available to 2AAA to broadcast from that site from the LAP.

Wagga Wagga (south)

2AAA has requested additional channel capacity in order to resolve reception deficiencies in the southern part of Wagga Wagga city, including the new suburbs of Tolland, Tatton, Bourkelands, Springvale and parts of Red Hill Road in Kooringal.
The ABA has conducted broadcast engineering assessments and is of the view that the FM reception is inadequate in that part of the 2AAA licence area. The ABA proposes to make FM channel 107.9 MHz available for a transmitter located at Willans Hill South, Wagga Wagga, to operate at a maximum ERP of 20 W with an omnidirectional radiation pattern using a mixed polarisation.

The ABA is of the view that the proposed FM service will rectify the existing FM reception deficiencies in the southern part of Wagga Wagga City. The proposed FM service is planned to provide a suburban grade of service.

Junee

2AAA has requested additional channel capacity in order to resolve reception deficiencies in the Junee area of its existing licence area. The ABA has conducted broadcast engineering assessments and is of the view that the FM reception is inadequate in that part of the 2AAA licence area.

The ABA proposes to make FM channel 97.9 MHz available for a transmitter located at Water Tower Site, Wardle Street Junee to operate at a maximum ERP of 20 W with an omnidirectional radiation pattern using a mixed polarisation. The ABA is of the view that the proposed FM service will rectify the existing FM reception deficiencies in Junee. The proposed FM service is planned to provide a suburban grade of service.

Gundagai and Coolamon

Gundagai has a population of 1,997 people and Coolamon has a population of approximately 1,350 people against 2001 census boundaries. Neither of the towns have ever had a community radio service or an aspirant community radio broadcaster.

In its proposal dated 23 February 2005, 2AAA requested that the ABA extend its licence area to include the townships of Gundagai and Coolamon and for the towns to be served by FM translators with 2AAA program content.

In submitting its proposal, 2AAA has gone some way in addressing the relevant policy guidelines relating to extension of licence areas for community radio services specified in Chapter 4 (2) of the publication *The ABA’s General Approach to Analog Planning*. This publication can be found on the ABA’s website at [http://www.aba.gov.au/newspubs/radio_TV/broadcast_planning/documents/General_approach_to_analog_planning.pdf](http://www.aba.gov.au/newspubs/radio_TV/broadcast_planning/documents/General_approach_to_analog_planning.pdf) The relevant policy guidelines state *inter alia* that:

In determining a new community service licence area, or granting an extension to an existing community radio broadcasting service licence area, the ABA will have regard to:

- Whether a community radio broadcasting service exists in the proposed licence area, and whether it serves a ‘special interest’ or geographic (‘broad-based’) community-of-interest.
- Whether a community-of-interest exists, over what geographic area, and whether that community-of-interest is currently being served.
In cases where an existing community radio broadcaster seeks to extend its licence area, and endeavours to foster an independent locally-based aspirant group have proven to be unsuccessful, whether members of the community that the aspirant or licensed community radio broadcaster aims to serve will be able to actively participate in the operation and programming of the licensee in providing the service. Where the geographic distance may seem to prohibit active participation, and the aspirant or licensed community radio broadcaster can demonstrate that initiatives to foster the establishment of locally-based community radio broadcasting service have proven to be unsuccessful, applicants will be required to outline the strategies they would adopt to overcome such problems.

In making its request, the salient points that 2AAA has addressed in relation to the relevant policy guidelines are:

A community-of-interest exists as both Gundagai and Coolamon are relatively close to Wagga Wagga. Wagga Wagga provides services for Gundagai and Coolamon such as specialist medical services, employment, major education facilities and most media. A number of residents travel to Wagga Wagga each day for business, sporting activities and for those services not provided in the towns.

Residents of both Gundagai and Coolamon are invited to actively participate in the service by either becoming a member or part owner or through radio presentation training allowing individuals to provide on-air programming.

2AAA is able to provide a number of programs not currently available from other media, including jazz, blues, multicultural, Indigenous, extensive country music and music from the 40’s, 50’s and 60’s.

Live community radio provides access for community announcements that otherwise may not exist, for example venue changes outside normal hours, urgent council information, warnings, fire calls, school bus trips late arrival and police messages.

Initial consultation - Gundagai

The ABA conducted a telephone inquiry with the Acting General Manager of the Gundagai Shire Council, Mr Paul Luff to obtain his views on the community of interest links between the inhabitants of Gundagai and the city of Wagga Wagga. Mr Luff stated that Gundagai is approximately 80 kms from Wagga Wagga and shares its western boundary with the City of Wagga Wagga. In respect of education, transport, shopping patterns, health services, banking, entertainment and sporting activities the residents of Gundagai are closely linked to Wagga Wagga.

With respect of the use of media in Gundagai, Mr Luff stated that the residents of Gundagai listen to ABC regional radio service 2RVR and the Wagga Wagga commercial radio services 2WG and 2WZD. The Wagga Wagga newspaper, The Daily Advertiser, is widely read in the Gundagai district.
2AAA provided a letter from Ms Kay Hull MP, Federal Member for Riverina, supporting the extension the 2AAA community radio service to Gundagai.

Support for the Coolamon service
2AAA provided a letter from the Coolamon Shire Council which supported its proposal to extend its coverage to Coolamon. The Council stated it would provide space on the Coolamon mobile phone tower for transmission equipment and waive the normal lease payment of $5000.00 per annum and electricity costs to assist the project. 2AAA also submitted a petition of 180 signatures from Coolamon residents and a letter of support from Ms Kay Hull MP supporting the extension of the 2AAA service to Coolamon.

ABA Engineering Assessment
The proposed FM translators for Gundagai and Coolamon will provide a maximum effective radiated power (ERP) of 20 W each and are not expected to cause interference to other services. Both translators have been planned as ‘town only’ services and have been planned to provide a suburban grade of service.

Discussion
Both Gundagai and Coolamon are closer in proximity to Wagga Wagga than to any other large regional centre such as Canberra or Albury, and it is therefore likely that greater community of interest ties exist between the towns because of this. 2AAA states it currently operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week with 18 hours a day of live to air broadcasts. 2AAA further stated that currently all radio is broadcast from Wagga Wagga on a part time basis only or is networked from capital cities. In contrast, 2AAA states that its programming will originate from the studios in Wagga Wagga.

While 2AAA have stated that completion of any site will be subject to available finance, the Coolamon Council appears supportive of 2AAA providing a local translator service and have indicated that it is prepared to provide significant financial support.

The townships of Gundagai and Coolamon are proposed to be added to the licence area following consideration of any comments on the 2AAA proposal as detailed above. The ABA will consider submissions before reaching a decision on the proposal.
In forming this view, the ABA considered and reached views about the likely effects of its proposal, having regard to the local circumstances within the market, the likely impact of other planning proposals in this draft LAP and other relevant matters under s.23(a)-(g). An account of this process of consideration follows.

The FAP and LAP for an area together constitute the ABA’s ‘blueprint’ for the development of broadcasting in that area using the broadcasting services bands. The frequency allotment plan sets out the number of channels and the licence area plan describes the characteristics of the services using, or that are proposed to use, those channels. The two documents must be consistent: s.26(1).

In preparing its initial, Australia-wide frequency allotment plan of August 1994, the ABA foreshadowed that the plan would be revised as necessary, market by market, to accommodate any additional or changed broadcasting requirements disclosed during public consultation at the licence area planning stage:

‘(The FAP’s) assumptions about demand, nominal transmitter specifications and siting will be re-examined during preparation of the LAPs for particular areas of Australia, at which time it will be subject to intensive public consultation. This may necessitate variations to this FAP... Consultation on the changes will take place within the LAP consultation process.’

‘The FAP will also be revised to reflect any additional services planned during the LAP stage (particularly low power channels). If the revised FAP results in changes in channel capacity for areas outside the area for which the licence area plan is being prepared, the changes will be subjected to public consultation in affected areas.’ (Frequency Allotment Plan; August 1994; Pg. 9, ‘Planning Process Overview’)

The ABA proposes to add capacity to the FAP for four town only channels for the existing community radio service 2AAA in Wagga Wagga City south, Junee, Gundagai and Coolamon, as shown in the proposed FAP variation instrument.