

# Canberra and Darwin digital radio trials extended

25 Jul 2012



The ACMA has extended the DAB+ digital radio trial licences in Canberra and Darwin for a further 12 months.

Both regional trials have so far provided valuable information for digital broadcasters, particularly understanding the tradeoff between signal robustness and improved capacity which would allow the commercial stations to share a multiplex with the public broadcasters for the most cost effective and efficient roll out to regional Australia.

The scientific licences first issued in 2010 and further extended in 2011, have been extended once again to allow; for further field testing and continued coverage modelling to be used by the industry and ACMA in the planning of the DAB+ rollout to other regional areas.

Commercial Radio Australia's **Joan Warner** has welcomed the decision: "*The DAB+ trials in Canberra and Darwin have been led by Commercial Radio Australia with staff from the Australian Communications and Media Authority working closely and co-operatively for the ongoing development and improvement of the DAB+ technology. In Canberra, commercial broadcasters are also working closely with the public sector broadcasters.*"

"Another area we have been testing on the Canberra trial is the use of the DAB+ screen and text based features for the distribution of emergency information during critical events such as flooding, cyclones, fires or traffic incidents," says Warner. "This type of testing will also be carried out in Darwin in the next 12 months."

An area of on going investigation is gauging the impact on the digital signal of extreme weather and ground water and importantly to develop more information about the use of a single high powered site with some repeaters, similar to the current FM model, in the rollout of DAB+ digital radio to regional Australia.

The Darwin trial has attracted interest from international broadcasters considering the DAB+ technology, including Indonesia and Thailand both with similar climatic conditions. It also uses a multiplex not previously tested in Australia so it is important to understand the interoperability of these digital systems for future roll out.

Commercial radio stations 2CA, 2CC, Mix 106.3, 104.7, Classic Hits Plus, My Canberra, Hot Country and Radar, plus multicultural and multilingual stations SBS Radio 1 and SBS Radio 2, SBS Pop Asia and SBS Chill continue to broadcast on the low power DAB+ trial.

ABC stations 666 ABC Canberra, ABC Jazz, Radio National, triple j Unearthed and ABC Grandstand joined the trial in 2011 and these are all adding to the choice of services available to regional audiences.

Hot 100 and Mix 104.9 and digital only services, Top Country Digital, Classic Rock and Radio TAB will continue DAB+ trial services in Darwin.

Canberra and Darwin DAB+ trials have been the first outside the metropolitan capitals of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide.

The DAB+ trial signal in both cities is at low power, but tests have indicated coverage at low power has been able to extend to a large part of the Canberra and Darwin areas. A boost was required to retransmit the trial signal into Parliament House. This has provided additional testing opportunities for in-building coverage in a challenging structure.

The trial services continue to be subject to occasional interruptions and changes in power for ongoing technical testing.