

### 3.4 Regulation of Television

Commercial television is regulated by the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT). The ABT is a quasi-legal body that administers the Broadcasting Act 1942. It conducts public hearings for the granting and renewal of broadcasting licences. Licences are subject to renewal every three years, and a public renewal inquiry may be held if the Tribunal believes it is necessary because of public complaints or other important issues.

The ABT sets standards for Australian content on commercial television. Imported advertisements are prohibited and high levels of local program content are required.

The ABC and SBS are not regulated by the ABT. These organisations are governed by specific charters though their own Acts of establishment.

VAEIS services also are not regulated by the ABT. Licences are issued by the Department of Transport and Communications under the Radiocommunications Act 1983. Licensees are required to comply with VAEIS guidelines, under which VAEIS providers are expected to observe the spirit and intent of the ABT program and advertising standards.

## 4. PAY/CABLE TELEVISION IN AUSTRALIA

### 4.1 Background

From 1980 to 1982, the ABT, under direction from the Minister for Communications, conducted an inquiry into the possible introduction of cable and subscription television services in Australia. The ABT report<sup>4</sup> recommended the introduction of cable television services and radiated subscription television services in Australia as soon as practicable. However, the ABT's recommendations were shelved following a change of government in 1983. Subsequently, in 1986, the then Minister for Communications announced a moratorium on pay television at least until September 1990 and foreshadowed that a review of pay television policy would be undertaken prior to that date. In April 1988, the then Minister for Transport and Communications announced that this review would be undertaken by a group of officials in the Department of Transport and Communications. The review was to examine options for the introduction of pay television, but was not to recommend options or argue for particular policies. The inquiry was conducted internally and without public submissions. The results of the review<sup>5</sup> were published early this year, and are discussed in the next section.