



“WESTCOM”

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Westcom has begun moves to apply for its own 'C Class' Community Television transmission licence on a short range basis. The employment of a new centre manager this year has been the main impetus in this major change in the direction of the co-op. Already Westcom has applied for an amateur transmission licence on the Ultra High Frequency band for use through the radio amateurs transmitter at Mt Dandenong.

At present the centre is beginning to install the equipment which will be necessary to carry out any experimental broadcasting of television signals. Most of the equipment so far has been relatively inexpensive; the major cost will be for the transmitter itself. The facilities of Westcom's van have been used already in transmissions from the amateur radio operators' station at the Museum in the city.

A committee is yet to be formed to work towards the community licence submission; the committee will be three-tiered — a) technical, b) production, c) administration. At this stage, however, the main effort of the group is directed towards the initial broadcasting experiments. The community licence project is preparing a licence submission can begin seriously.

The Education Department's Western Region Office in Essendon has organised a series of preliminary discussions with the schools in the area which have television production facilities. Continued funding of these studios by the Department will depend on the willingness of each school with a studio to share its facilities with three or four other schools without studios.

It is envisaged by the Education Department that many school facilities will be made use of by community groups after school hours, including the TV studio facilities. If these plans succeed in the future, then Westcom's argument to become a transmission point for locally made programmes within the western suburbs will be greatly strengthened.

A very different kind of board would have to take responsibility for a community station's programming than the present board, which is the legal body responsible for the current access centre.

The establishment of community television broadcasting in Australia has been the long held wish of people who have been involved with the whole access programme since its inception.

One very obvious threat to a metropolitan-wide community access television station which is partially government funded is the establishment of small stations such as suggested by Westcom. However, Westcom feels that a small station would better serve community needs.

Discussions by PACT still continue, and in July this year a conference is being held in Melbourne and Western Communications will be taking part; at this stage it is not proposed by the Co-operative to present a paper on its activities, but its representatives will outline the group's efforts towards obtaining a licence to at least experiment with television transmissions on the UHF band.

Western Communications hopes to be part of any form of community television broadcasting which is adopted in the future. Certainly there is the interest and the expertise in television productions for the community available amongst its members.

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