

Office of Telecommunications**MEMORANDUM**

TO: MANAGING DIRECTOR, ICTA

COPY: HEAD OF LICENSING AND COMPLIANCE, ICTA

FROM: TELECOMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

DATE: 23 MAY 2005

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO REPORT BY DAVID MAXSON, BROADCAST
SIGNAL LABS – FM INTERFERENCE ISSUES IN GRAND CAYMAN

The Office of Telecommunications is pleased to provide its response to the report made by David Maxson of Broadcast Signal Labs in respect of FM interference issues in Grand Cayman.

As a licensed provider of infrastructure to other ICT licensees, including DMS Broadcasting, the Office of Telecommunications supports the best solution to alleviate the problems being experienced by the listening public when trying to receive Radio Cayman 2, that is 105.3-FM. In the report, Maxson's "best solution" is to relocate the DMS transmission facility to another location. Under the section of the report on page 17 entitled "Design Opportunity", Maxson describes a solution that offers maximum spectrum efficiency with minimal interference. This involves the co-location of multiple stations at a central tower site that is tall enough to provide island-wide coverage whilst reducing blanketing interference and power requirements.

OFTEL fully supports the co-location solution. It should be noted that as Telecommunications Officer, I suggested a similar solution that utilized the Government owned tower at Northward during a meeting with the ICTA, Maxson and local broadcasters on Friday 29 April 2005. This tower and associated bunker would be ideal as a co-location solution since the facility meets the criteria as outlined in Maxson's report. To proceed with the implementation of this "best practice" solution, it would require the collaboration of the FM broadcasting licensees. I would truly hope that in the best interest of the listening public, the licensees would give serious consideration to a co-location solution.

As to the other aspects of Maxson's report, the Office of Telecommunications notes the section entitled "Mitigating Radio Cayman Problem Only". One of the alternatives mentions a change of frequencies between the DMS station on 107.1 and the NHC Weather Radio Station on 107.9. It is OFTEL's view that a change of frequency could be considered as a secondary option. It would be far more practical to address the wider scope of issues now, with the view to implement a more effective overall solution to the interference issue before considering a change of frequency.

Additionally, it is important to note that the existing FM broadcast band in the Cayman Islands has grown considerably in recent years with a number of new stations on the dial. Regrettably, it appears that recent frequency assignments for some of these stations have been made without regard to engineering standards for radio spectrum management. Although it seems unlikely that a small market such as ours can support additional new stations on the dial, proper management of the radio spectrum will enable the transition to digital radio broadcasting in the future. This will enable incumbent station owners to provide new digital services alongside traditional analogue services if and when such technology is deployed. Although there are currently some "in-band" solutions that provide both analogue and digital simultaneously, these stations are very limited in number on a global scale as the technology to receive digital terrestrial broadcasts is still very much in its infancy.

In closing, it has been my personal view for some time now that given the number of licensed FM stations currently in operation, there should be a broadcast users group formed to deal with issues of mutual interest. Ideally, the meetings would be facilitated by the ICTA with station representatives and engineers collaborating to discuss various technical issues. Certainly, there are some new opportunities that can be explored which could result in improvements in transmission facilities for those broadcasters who value the benefits of co-location. In addition to the possibility of establishing a "master antenna" serving broadcasters in Grand Cayman, there is also the same issue in the Sister Islands as there are very few tower sites currently available in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

Sincerely,

Michael Kiron
Telecommunications Officer