

## The state of the community broadcasting sector

- 3.1 This chapter discusses the value of the community broadcasting sector to Australian media. In particular, the chapter outlines recent studies demonstrating the importance of the sector.
- 3.2 The chapter includes an examination of the sector's ethos and an outline of the services provided by community broadcasters. More detail is provided on the three categories of broadcaster identified as having special needs or cultural sensitivities.
- 3.3 The chapter also discusses the sector's contribution to the economy, and the importance of the community broadcasting sector as a training ground for the wider media industry including the national and commercial broadcasters.

### Recent studies

- 3.4 A considerable amount of research and survey work has been conducted to establish the significance of the community broadcasting sector in Australia's broader media sector.
- 3.5 Several comprehensive studies of the community broadcasting sector have been completed in recent years. The studies are:
  - Culture Commitment Community – The Australian Community Radio Sector
  - Survey Of The Community Radio Broadcasting Sector 2002-03

- Community Broadcast Database: Survey Of The Community Radio Sector 2003-04 Financial Period
- Community Radio National Listener Surveys (2004 and 2006)
- Community Media Matters: An Audience Study Of The Australian Community Broadcasting Sector.

3.6 Each of these studies and their findings is described below.

### Culture Commitment Community – The Australian Community Radio Sector<sup>1</sup>

3.7 This study was conducted between 1999 and 2001, by Susan Forde, Michael Meadows, Kerrie Foxwell from Griffith University.

3.8 CBF discussed the research:

This seminal work studies the current issues, structure and value of the community radio sector from the perspective of those working within it as volunteers and staff. It provides an overview of the community radio sector and a framework for understanding its role as a cultural resource. In particular it explores the value of localism, ethnic and Indigenous community radio programming, news and current affairs services, the sector's training role and funding issues.<sup>2</sup>

3.9 The research was funded and supported by the Australian Research Council, CBAA, CBF and DCITA.<sup>3</sup>

3.10 Meadows et al. outlined the scope of the study:

- This initial three-year study surveyed station managers, general volunteers and news and current affairs worker. In total more than 350 surveys were conducted. The surveys were designed to gather information on a range of issues. Station Managers were surveyed about subscription levels, volunteer participation, their perceived contribution to their local community, training offered, news services and some basic demographics concerning income, age, education, etc ...

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1 Forde, S., Meadows, M. and Foxwell, K. (2002) *Culture Commitment Community – The Australian Community Radio Sector*.

2 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 5.

3 Forde, S., Meadows, M. and Foxwell, K. (2002) *Culture Commitment Community – The Australian Community Radio Sector*, pp. 1-2.

- A separate survey of general volunteers sought information about 'everyday volunteers' involved in on-air presentation and program production, asking questions about their programs, aims, audiences and their reasons for involvement in community radio. News and current affairs workers were surveyed about their 'journalistic practices', station policies on news and current affairs, editorial autonomy and if they saw themselves as 'journalists'. All three surveys shared some questions on the respondents' general views on community radio and demographics.<sup>4</sup>

3.11 Meadows et al. explained their use of focus groups in the study:

In order to gather more substantive and qualitative commentary on themes that emerged during the survey results and to pursue areas of interest to ourselves and our industry partners, we conducted focus group discussion in the following centres: Brisbane; Townsville; Canberra; Sydney; Bathurst; Darwin; Hobart; Melbourne; Warrnambool; Adelaide; Port Augusta; Perth; and Albany. In each focus group, we posed general areas for discussion which were:

- The role of community radio
- Funding and resources
- The use of new technologies in the sector
- Training
- Representation by key peak bodies and sector representatives
- The future of community radio.<sup>5</sup>

3.12 Meadows et al. discussed some of the key findings from their research;

- In our final report, we conservatively estimated more than 20,000 volunteers in the community broadcasting sector contributing more than \$145 million in unpaid labour.
- One of the most significant findings was the extraordinary role community broadcasting is performing as a community cultural resource. As some indication of the level of local content and programming produced by these stations, more than two-thirds of station managers across Australia reported 100 or more hours of locally produced content each week ... the role community radio performs as a cultural resource is multifaceted and varies from

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4 Meadows, Forde, Ewart & Foxwell, *submission no. 89*, p. 4.

5 Meadows, Forde, Ewart & Foxwell, *submission no. 89*, p. 4.

context to context ... community radio represents, services and importantly enables the participation of a multitude of Australian communities in their local media.<sup>6</sup>

3.13 Meadows et al. summarised their other key findings:

- The community radio sector is fulfilling a broad but largely unacknowledged role in the Australian mediascape, particularly as a source of local content.
- The sector is under increasing pressure from policy-making bodies to increase sponsorship and income levels, which is affecting the content and operations of many stations.
- More than 60 percent of community radio is broadcasting to regional areas – in light of the increasing withdrawal of commercial radio from the regions, the sector is proving the only source of local news and information for many towns.
- Experienced workers in the community radio sector are training work experience students and unskilled community members on a daily basis. We estimate approximately 4000-5000 Australians are trained annually in the sector in mostly unaccredited training programs.
- Around 70 percent of the sector are engaged in training programs involving external organisations, usually universities.
- Almost all of the 23 journalism programs around Australia use community radio as a site of work experience for their students.
- Indigenous radio stations in particular have forged close links with journalism programs and are providing a key indicator of ‘reconciliation in action’ – practical reconciliation.
- Sector representatives feel strongly that they have become a significant de facto trainer for the Australian media industry, which remains largely unacknowledged and unrewarded.
- More than 20,000 Australians are involved as volunteers in the community radio sector on a regular basis.
- Volunteers contribute about \$2.79 million in unpaid work hours to the Australian community each week. This equates to more than \$145 million in unpaid work each year.
- 80 percent of stations broadcast a news service, although this is usually a syndicated service. The most used news

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6 Meadows, Forde, Ewart & Foxwell, *submission no. 89*, p. 4.

services are National Radio News service, followed by the Macquarie and Southern Cross networks.

- Indigenous community radio is growing and continues to provide communities with a first level of service, as well as acting as a bridge between cultures.
- Ethnic community radio stations are providing an essential service to the new wave of migrants to Australia. Anecdotes from the ethnic radio sector provided some of the most moving comments to this project.
- As a result of funding decreases, stations are finding it increasingly difficult to remain afloat without significantly adjusting content to attract a larger audience. Some stations feel this is forcing them to adopt more commercial formats, which is against the principles of community radio as outlined in the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* [the BSA].
- The government advertising agency, OGIA, should be encouraged to investigate sponsorship of community radio and its national satellite networks to make more effective use of the sector to disseminate information.
- Based on the results of the surveys and focus groups, we find that the community radio sector as a whole is an important cultural resource for the Australian community. While some stations may need to connect more directly with their communities, most in the sector are closely integrated and entwined with their local community or their community of interest.<sup>7</sup>

## Survey Of The Community Radio Broadcasting Sector 2002-03<sup>8</sup>

3.14 This report was completed by the Communications Research Unit for ACMA.

3.15 The report:

... provides a descriptive analysis of data collected by the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) from community radio broadcasting licensees. The data was collected in mid-2004 using an online survey under the CBOOnline Database Project. That project was conducted on behalf of the Community Broadcasting Foundation and funded by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. ACMA provided financial

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7 Meadows, Forde, Ewart & Foxwell, *submission no. 89*, pp. 5-6.

8 ACMA (2005) *Survey Of The Community Radio Broadcasting Sector 2002-03*, ACMA.

assistance to the CBAA in order to increase the survey response rate and sample size.<sup>9</sup>

3.16 The report highlights:

... key aspects of the community radio broadcasting sector, and includes details about programming, program sources, finances, staffing, volunteers and subscribers for the 2002-2003 financial year.<sup>10</sup>

3.17 The report provides:

... a description of the CBOOnline Database Project, the survey methodology and how the data were analysed. Detailed statistical tables and figures are provided with breakdowns by sub-sector and geographic location.<sup>11</sup>

3.18 The report stated:

The data was collected by the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) as part of its CBOOnline Database Project. An online survey form was used by the CBAA to collect the data from community radio licensees in 2004. The project was conducted on behalf of the Community Broadcasting Foundation and funded by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (the Department). The Australian Communications and Media Authority ... provided financial assistance to the CBAA in order to increase the survey response rate and sample size.<sup>12</sup>

3.19 The report's summary provides survey results and information under the following main finding headings:

- almost all community radio services broadcast 24/7
- music is the most prominent program format
- the sector meets the Australian music requirements
- community stations offer a range of music styles
- most content is locally-produced
- audience research is undertaken by some services
- many community radio stations do not employ staff
- the sector relies heavily on volunteers

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9 ACMA (2005) *Survey Of The Community Radio Broadcasting Sector 2002-03*, ACMA, p. 12.

10 ACMA (2005) *Survey Of The Community Radio Broadcasting Sector 2002-03*, ACMA, p. 12.

11 ACMA (2005) *Survey Of The Community Radio Broadcasting Sector 2002-03*, ACMA, p. 12.

12 ACMA (2005) *Survey Of The Community Radio Broadcasting Sector 2002-03*, ACMA, p. 1.

- fine music, ethnic, youth and seniors stations have more subscribers
- community radio represents a substantial sector of the broadcasting industry
- the sector spends most of what it makes on station operations.<sup>13</sup>

## Community Broadcast Database: Survey Of The Community Radio Sector 2003-04 Financial Period<sup>14</sup>

3.20 This study provides an analysis of data collected by CBAA from community radio broadcasting licensees:

The data was collected in May-June 2005 using an online survey under the CBOOnline Community Broadcast Database Project (CBD), [a project] funded by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.<sup>15</sup>

3.21 The report provides:

... detailed information on key aspects of the community radio broadcasting sector, and includes details about programming, program sources, finances, staffing, volunteers and subscribers for the 2003-2004 financial year and some comparisons with data from the previous collection. It also provides a description of the CBOOnline Database Project, the survey methodology and how the data were analysed. Detailed statistical tables and figures are provided with breakdowns by sub-sector and geographic location.<sup>16</sup>

3.22 The report also:

... follows the format of the Australian Communication Media Authority (ACMA) report prepared in 2005 by the Communication Research Unit to allow easy comparisons with previous collection statistics.<sup>17</sup>

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13 ACMA (2005) *Survey Of The Community Radio Broadcasting Sector 2002-03*, ACMA, pp. 2-11.

14 CBAA (2006) *Community Broadcast Database: Survey Of The Community Radio Sector 2003-04 Financial Period*, CBAA.

15 CBAA (2006) *Community Broadcast Database: Survey Of The Community Radio Sector 2003-04 Financial Period*, CBAA, p. 1.

16 CBAA (2006) *Community Broadcast Database: Survey Of The Community Radio Sector 2003-04 Financial Period*, CBAA, p. 1.

17 CBAA (2006) *Community Broadcast Database: Survey Of The Community Radio Sector 2003-04 Financial Period*, CBAA, p. 1.

3.23 The report's summary provides survey results and information under the following main finding headings:

- most community broadcasters are on-air 24/7
- community radio is the solo source of local content in many rural and regional communities
- most community broadcasters provide a mix of music and information for the communities they reach
- Australian music content on community radio has increased
- community radio provides a diverse range of music genres
- community broadcasters cater to the special interest programming needs in the community
- most programming is locally produced
- volunteers are the backbone of community broadcasting
- rise in the number of staff employed by community broadcasters in 2003-04
- volunteers are more likely to be male
- a significant amount of young people are involved in the sector
- staff were more likely to be male but the proportion of female staff is increasing
- female volunteers are most frequently involved in on-air presentation while female staff commonly fill an administrative role
- the community broadcasting sector plays a very important role in media training in Australia
- accredited training in the sector nearly doubled
- subscribers and donors broaden the degree of community participation beyond the walls of the station itself, and provide a vital source of revenue
- rise in the number of donations for stations
- stations embrace technology, but resource issues restrict expansion
- the majority of stations still depended on third party for transmission site and/or facility and access costs rose significantly
- there was revenue growth in 2003-04, with certain station types benefiting more than others
- sponsorship is the largest income item, accounting for more than a third of the total income for the sector
- the sector spends most of its income on station operations



- transmission cost rise.<sup>18</sup>

## Community Radio National Listener Surveys

3.24 McNair Ingenuity Research Pty Ltd conducted community radio national listener surveys in 2004 and 2006. Both surveys were coordinated by CBAA and funded by DCITA.<sup>19</sup>

3.25 McNair Ingenuity explained:

In 2004, the first large-scale survey of the Australian population was conducted in order to measure the size of the audience of community radio throughout Australia ... [the 2006 study is the] second such large-scale survey and care was taken to replicate the research methodology and sample characteristics.<sup>20</sup>

3.26 The report revealed that:

[in the 2004 survey] more than seven million Australians – or 45% of people aged 15 and over - listen to community radio in an average month ... the results from [the 2006 survey] are typically stronger in most segments of the audience ...<sup>21</sup>

3.27 The key findings from the 2006 survey include:

- Overall, 86% of Australians aged 15+ listen to some radio in the course of a typical week. 25% of Australians aged 15+, or 4,034,000 people, listen to community radio in a typical week.
- People who tune in to community radio in an average week tend to have a portfolio of radio listening, with 66% listening to both community radio and commercial radio, and 54% listening to both community radio and ABC/SBS radio.
- Conversely, 34% of community radio listeners in an average week do not listen to commercial radio and 46% do not listen to ABC/SBS radio. 17% of community radio listeners do not listen to either commercial radio or

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18 CBAA (2006) *Community Broadcast Database: Survey Of The Community Radio Sector 2003-04 Financial Period*, CBAA, pp. 1-14.

19 McNair Ingenuity Research (2006) *Community Radio National Listener Survey – Summary Report of Findings*, CBAA, p. 4.

20 McNair Ingenuity Research (2006) *Community Radio National Listener Survey – Summary Report of Findings*, CBAA, p. 4.

21 McNair Ingenuity Research (2006) *Community Radio National Listener Survey – Summary Report of Findings*, CBAA, p. 5.

ABC/SBS radio. In other words, about 1 in 6 community radio listeners are exclusive listeners.

- The key reason for listening to community radio is that they have 'local information/local news'. This is the main reason given by women, people in the 25-54 age group and most occupation categories.
- For non-metro listeners, 'local information/local news' is easily the most cited reason, followed by other statements with a 'local' emphasis. For metropolitan listeners and men, 'specialist music or information programs' and 'they play Australian music/support local artists' are the most frequent reasons.
- People aged 15-24 listen to community radio most frequently for 'Australian music/local artists and people aged 55+ for 'specialist music or information programs'.
- Listeners to community radio in an average week spend 7.5 hours listening to community radio per week. Older people aged 55+ listen the most to community radio, averaging 10.4 hours per week. People aged 15-24 average 5.3 hours per week, and people aged 25-54 average almost 7 hours per week.
- Community radio draws its audience from a wide cross section of the community with at least 20% of most demographic groups tuning in to community radio during a typical week. For example, 27% of employed people and of students, and 27% of people whose annual gross income is over \$40,000, listen to community radio during a typical week. 28% of people who regularly speak a language other than English in their household, listen to community radio during a typical week.
- Looking at the demographic composition of the weekly community radio audience, 55% are men and 45% are women, 19% are aged 15-24, 28% aged 25-39 and 54% aged 40 or over. 42% are engaged in full-time work and 21% in part-time work. Comparisons of these percentages with the population are shown in the Fact Sheets later in this report, by States, cities and non-metro areas.
- The number of Australians aged 15+ listening to community radio in an average week has risen from 3,767,000 people (24%) in 2004 to 4,034,000 people (25%) in 2006 - an increase of 7% in the total number of people listening.
- The number of Australians aged 15+ listening to community radio in an average month has risen from 7,054,000 people (45%) in 2004 to 7,515,000 people (47%) in

2006 – an increase of 7% in the total number of people listening.<sup>22</sup>

## Community Media Matters: An Audience Study Of The Australian Community Broadcasting Sector<sup>23</sup>

3.28 This study is the second completed by the team of Associate Professor Michael Meadows, Dr Susan Forde, Dr Jacqui Ewart and Dr Kerrie Foxwell from Griffith University.

3.29 Meadows et al. stated that the study is:

... an audience-based study which has gathered qualitative data on community broadcasting audiences ... [and] is designed to complement the quantitative study of community broadcasting audiences completed by McNair Ingenuity (2004) and also to complete the circle of community radio stations and their audiences initiated by the first Griffith University study.<sup>24</sup>

3.30 The report explores:

... why a significant and increasing number of Australians listen to community radio and/or watch community television, what they value about it, and how it meets their needs.<sup>25</sup>

3.31 The report outlined the methodology used for the study:

The data on which our findings are based has emerged from a series of audience focus groups, interviews with individual listeners/viewers and station managers, and representatives of community groups accessing community radio and television.<sup>26</sup>

3.32 The report's summary outlined some of the study's key findings:

- For metropolitan and regional radio stations, audience members primarily 'tune in' for these principal reasons:

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22 McNair Ingenuity Research (2006) *Community Radio National Listener Survey – Summary Report of Findings*, CBAA, pp. 8-9.

23 Meadows, M., Forde, S., Ewart, J. & Foxwell, K. (2007) *Community Media Matters: An Audience Study Of The Australian Community Broadcasting Sector*, Griffith University.

24 Meadows, Forde, Ewart & Foxwell, *submission no. 89*, p. 3.

25 Meadows, M., Forde, S., Ewart, J. & Foxwell, K. (2007) *Community Media Matters: An Audience Study Of The Australian Community Broadcasting Sector*, Griffith University, p. [5].

26 Meadows, M., Forde, S., Ewart, J. & Foxwell, K. (2007) *Community Media Matters: An Audience Study Of The Australian Community Broadcasting Sector*, Griffith University, p. [5].

- ⇒ They perceive community radio to be accessible and approachable
- ⇒ They like the laid back, 'ordinary person' station presentation style
- ⇒ They want to access local news and information
- ⇒ They want access to specialist and diverse music formats
- ⇒ They appreciate the diversity represented in station programming.
- A wide range of audiences access Indigenous radio and television across Australia with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous listeners and viewers identifying the following as key attractions:
  - ⇒ They feel Indigenous media offer an essential service to communities and play a central organising role in community life
  - ⇒ Indigenous media help people to maintain social networks
  - ⇒ Indigenous media are playing a strong educative role in communities, particularly for young people
  - ⇒ They offer an alternative source of news and information about the community which avoids stereotyping of Indigenous people and issues
  - ⇒ They are helping to break down stereotypes about Indigenous people for the non-Indigenous community, thus playing an important role in cross-cultural dialogue
  - ⇒ The stations offer a crucial medium for specialist music and dance.
- Audiences listening to specialist ethnic programming on generalist community radio stations or full-time ethnic community radio stations are tuning in because:
  - ⇒ Station programming plays a central role in maintaining culture and language
  - ⇒ Programs help them to maintain community connections and networks
  - ⇒ Stations enable them to hear specialist ethnic music unavailable through other media
  - ⇒ They want to hear local community news and gossip
  - ⇒ They want to hear news and information relevant to their lives in Australia, from their home countries, and from neighbouring countries/regions.

- Audiences for community television watch because:
  - ⇒ They want to access alternative programming than that offered by commercial and national public television stations (ABC and SBS)
  - ⇒ They want to access information that they feel is unavailable anywhere else
  - ⇒ They want to receive this information in non-traditional formats
  - ⇒ They like the diversity of programming, particularly from niche interest groups
  - ⇒ A significant number of viewers of community television are frustrated by poor or unreliable broadcast signal reception.<sup>27</sup>

## Community broadcasting ethos

- 3.33 The inquiry was told of a particular community broadcasting ethos that unites the diversity of broadcasters. CBF and other submissions described the role of community broadcasting and its key features.
- 3.34 CBF stated that community broadcasting is a very different kind of media:

It is a diverse media sector comprised of hundreds of independent media organisations united by a common philosophy. The essential principles of the community broadcasting creed are Access, Diversity, Independence and Localism. In recent years they have been expressed and clarified in the community radio and television Codes of Practice. These principles and their practical expression in the daily operation of community broadcasting organisations distinguish the community broadcasting sector from other broadcast media and highlight many aspects of community broadcasting's value to our society.<sup>28</sup>

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27 Meadows, M., Forde, S., Ewart, J. & Foxwell, K. (2007) *Community Media Matters: An Audience Study Of The Australian Community Broadcasting Sector*, Griffith University, pp. [5-6].

28 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 6.

3.35 CBF discussed access to community broadcasting:

Community broadcasting provides all Australians with the opportunity to access the airwaves. It has a particular commitment and responsibility to providing access to minority groups that are unable to effectively access other media. Active participation in media production, and in the governance of independent, community owned and operated media organisations, is a necessary corollary of being an accessible media ... the degree of access offered contrasts the community broadcasting sector strongly against most other Australian media where program content, production and presentation are comparatively tightly controlled.<sup>29</sup>

3.36 CBF added:

The community broadcasting sector's level of access for all Australians makes it unique within our media. It adds an extra dimension of Australian identity and culture that would otherwise not exist simply by involving ordinary Australians from all walks of life in the operation of broadcast media.<sup>30</sup>

3.37 CBF discussed diversity, a key feature of community broadcasting:

Community broadcasting is committed to the principle of Diversity in many manifestations. The sector itself is highly heterogenous in its structure, comprised of many hundreds of individual media organisations. Services are either generalist in nature - committed to meeting the diverse programming needs of a specific geographic area, or specialist in their focus - committed to the diverse programming needs of a particular community of interest. Adherence to diversity as a programming principle necessarily turns the central commercial media programming strategy on its head.<sup>31</sup>

3.38 CBF added:

Community broadcasting does not seek to aggregate and hold mass audiences with particular demographic and socio-economic profiles for delivery to advertisers. It seeks to meet the needs of minority audiences not adequately catered for by other media and accordingly builds its audience from many

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29 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 6.

30 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 7.

31 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 7.

smaller niche audiences ... a further manifestation of Diversity is the sector's strong commitment to tolerance, greater understanding and acceptance of difference, and the promotion of harmony within Australian society.<sup>32</sup>

3.39 CBF discussed the importance of independence in community broadcasting:

... the community broadcasting sector is comprised of hundreds of independent community-owned media organisations. Each station is a voice for its community. Each service provides another source of information and opinion for its community. Each service is a means of stimulating community engagement in the debates and dialogues that allow that community to define itself as a community.<sup>33</sup>

3.40 CBF elaborated, discussing the issue of media ownership:

Australia has one of the highest concentrations of media ownership and control in the world. That trend seems likely to continue. By the number of separate services operating, community broadcasting now forms Australia's largest media sector. Through its sheer size and independent structure the community broadcasting sector makes a significant contribution to the level of diversity in ownership and control of Australian media.<sup>34</sup>

3.41 CBF discussed the significance of community broadcasters contributing to local communities:

Community broadcasting organisations, both general and specialist in nature, serve the needs of local audiences. They are local media closely bound to the communities in which they operate. While the sector promotes the free exchange of specialist programs as the most cost-effective means of augmenting local programming, the great majority of all community broadcasting programming is produced within the communities to which it is broadcast.<sup>35</sup>

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32 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 7.

33 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 8.

34 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 8.

35 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 8.

3.42 CBF elaborated on localism:

At a time when commercial media is rapidly being globalised, community media is moving in the opposite direction. As greater networking draws media resources away from rural and regional areas across our country, community broadcasting's role within those local communities is broadening and increasing in value. Many non-metropolitan community radio services are already the only local media outlet in their area ... recent national audience research suggests that community broadcasters are playing an increasingly important cultural role within their communities both in maintaining and developing both a sense of local identity, and Australian identity and character, in media.<sup>36</sup>

3.43 Mr Vincent O'Donnell MA, a community broadcaster associated with Independent Media Foundation Inc. and the radio program Arts Alive also discussed independence and localism:

... while retail sources of news and information, especially from overseas, have diversified, reliable wholesale sources of Australian news and information, capable of authentication, have not increased. If anything, with the mergers and take-overs of the past two decades, the numbers of competing news and information sources has contracted ... increasingly too, the retail news and information sources are networked: be it radio or television ...<sup>37</sup>

3.44 Mr O'Donnell added:

Community owned and controlled media will assume a more crucial role as a source of news and information for the community as Australia's commercial media amalgamate and globalise ... in such a circumstance, community media and, in particular, the national community satellite radio service, assumes a social and political importance as a diversified, authentic and independent source for Australian citizens.<sup>38</sup>

3.45 Sunraysia Community Radio Association, operating as 3HOT FM in Mildura, Victoria, emphasised the importance of local community broadcasters:

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36 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 8.

37 Vincent O'Donnell, *submission no. 34*, p. 2.

38 Vincent O'Donnell, *submission no. 34*, pp. 1-2.



Regardless of what commercial radio says and what the ABC say they do, the only broadcasting sector which provides LIVE, LOCAL programs seven days a week in most regional centres is the COMMUNITY BROADCASTING SECTOR ... commercial radio and the ABC can use all the fancy language it can think of and twist words to suit, but when it comes to live presenters at ground level – where the storms are, where the action is outside 9 to 5 and at weekends, COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS are there.<sup>39</sup>

3.46 Sunraysia Community Radio Association added:

They might be staffed by volunteers, but they are on the job (unpaid) seven days a week and able to respond immediately to a call for localism, whether it is a lost dog or cat, or a cancellation of a sporting event because of rain.

3.47 Community Radio Coraki discussed localism and its opposition to networking:

[networking] excludes local access ... witness the JJJ network. It is devoid of local input ... emergencies such as flooding exposes the inadequacies of networks. The two local commercial stations are reluctant, especially on weekends and overnight, to broadcast emergency information. Emergency services, such as the SES, are forced to ring 2SM Sydney and beg for coverage of an emergency ... networking in the above sense flies in the face of the spirit of community broadcasting because it significantly reduces local focus and access.<sup>40</sup>

## Volunteers

3.48 A key feature of community broadcasting ethos is the commitment of volunteers.

3.49 CBAA discussed the number of volunteers in the sector and the contribution they make:

The community broadcasting sector is sustained by the unpaid labour of more than 20,500 volunteers annually. In fact, 99 percent of stations have at least one volunteer and a small number have in excess of 400. Research conducted by

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39 Sunraysia Community Radio Association, *submission no. 96*, p. 8.

40 Community Radio Coraki, *submission no. 22*, pp. 5-6.

Griffith University indicates that people volunteering at community stations work at least two and half times as many hours as volunteers in other areas and contribute more than \$145 million in unpaid work each year ... volunteers are involved in every aspect of station operations, from management and on-air presentation, to administration and technical support.<sup>41</sup>

3.50 Many submissions to the inquiry indicated that their stations relied heavily on volunteers. Some stations have no paid staff but do pay particular contractors for professional technical services, or pay a commission to staff responsible for securing sponsorship.

3.51 4BAY FM stated that it has:

... no paid staff and all operational tasks are carried out by a broadcast team of volunteers who accept annual contracts to perform jobs of greater responsibility, e.g. Program Manager, Production Coordinator, Administrator, Admin Assistant, Skills Trainers.<sup>42</sup>

3.52 Rainbow FM stated that:

No full time paid staff are employed at the station, however the Sponsorship Manager and 2 of his assistants are paid a commission on sales.<sup>43</sup>

3.53 Yarra Valley FM stated:

All our presenters and support people are volunteers. We have no paid staff. We do engage contractors from time to time for maintenance and specialised tasks. Our sponsorship co-ordinator receives a commission on receipt of sponsorship income. However, all our programs, management and administration is performed by volunteers. Our volunteers come from a diverse background with an age range from mid teens to the 80s. Nearly half our volunteers are women.<sup>44</sup>

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41 CBAA, *submission no. 61*, p. 10.

42 4BAY FM, *submission no. 11*, p. 1.

43 Rainbow FM, *submission no. 18*, p. 2.

44 Yarra Valley FM, *submission no. 55*, p. 1.

3.54 Vincent O'Donnell suggested that volunteer workers in the community sector have time to offer for at least these reasons:

- They are retired and have much discretionary time in addition to recreational time, and have some security of income.
- They are unemployed and have much discretionary time in addition to recreational time, and may be in receipt of benefits. One might include 'work for the dole' recipients here.
- They are students or others building entry level experience and skills with the hope of forging a professional career in the media. For them, volunteering often comes at the cost of forgone income but, for some, it is an investment in their future career'.
- They are employed in the media generally or the community sector in particular and volunteer either some of their paid time and/or recreational time to serve the sector outside the specific remit of their employment.<sup>45</sup>

## Peak bodies

3.55 CBAA is the peak body for community radio and television stations and provides:

... leadership, advocacy and support for our members to actively provide independent broadcasting services and to build and strengthen local communities. Together with other sector organisations, we make representations to the Government and the regulators on behalf of our membership.

3.56 CBAA also stated that there are six key community broadcasting membership organisations, including:

- Australian Indigenous Communications Association (AICA)
- National Ethnic & Multicultural Broadcasters Council (NEMBC)
- RPH Australia (RPHA)
- Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA)
- Association of Christian Broadcasters (ACB).

3.57 CBF discussed its role in the sector:

[CBF] is the community broadcasting sector's independent non-profit funding agency. Its core purpose is to solicit funds

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45 Vincent O'Donnell, *submission no. 34*, p. 3.

and to disburse such funds for the maintenance and development of the community broadcasting sector in an ethical and transparent manner.<sup>46</sup>

## Programming

3.58 Many submissions to the inquiry discussed the widely varied station programming that meets the needs of particular communities.

3.59 A wealth of information regarding content and programming that reflect the character of Australia and its cultural diversity was provided in the submissions. Some examples from those submissions are detailed below.

3.60 The ACT Government stated:

Community radio complements commercial radio by broadcasting specialist music genres, spoken word programs relating to the arts, and by consciously aiming to showcase and promote local talent.<sup>47</sup>

3.61 Lismore's 2NCR discussed its range of programming:

We offer a diverse range of musical genres and formats including country, jazz, blues, heavy metal, punk, golden memories, indigenous, world music, rock music, pop music, community issues, political issues, religious programming and ethnic language shows, much of which is not available on any other local radio station.<sup>48</sup>

3.62 Melbourne's 3CR discussed some of its special programming events, including:

- Live broadcasts from Victorian prisons during NAIDOC week which focus on bringing the voices of indigenous prison inmates to the broader community ...
- Live broadcasts for events such as Survival Day (January 26), International Women's Day (March 8), May Day (May 1), Hiroshima Day (August 6) and Refugee Week (October).<sup>49</sup>

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46 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 4.

47 ACT Government, *submission no. 122*, p. 1.

48 2NCR, *submission no. 127*, p. 2.

49 3CR, *submission no. 26*, pp. 2-3.

3.63 Melbourne's 3CR also provided some examples of programs that serve a particular community of interest:

- Radio Mama – focus on issues facing mothers from all walks of life
- Marngrook Aboriginal Football Show – Australian rules focusing on Indigenous players and issues
- Let the Bands Play – military, brass and concert band music from around the world.<sup>50</sup>

3.64 Melbourne's Student Youth Network (SYN) discussed the importance of youth programming and stated that it has become:

... a dynamic radio station providing unparalleled access for young people to participate in creating their own media ... The core innovation is youth participation where the station is operated by young people for the youth community/communities.<sup>51</sup>

3.65 Melbourne's 3RRR discussed some of its programming:

Specialist music shows run the gamut of all forms of contemporary music with 5 specialist Australian music shows and everything from folk, metal, blues, hip hop, reggae, country, beats, funk, jazz, electronic and rock.<sup>52</sup>

3.66 PMBA discussed the music programs it features and their promotion of local music:

We have specialist programs that focus on specific genres (hip hop, hardcore, reggae, folk, blues, jazz, metal, punk, rock & roll, hillbilly, yodel etc), often presented by musicians ... we have provided a place where local musicians can come to speak about and play their music. Many have been able to play live to air, providing the opportunity to have a recording in our library and to have a copy for themselves.<sup>53</sup>

3.67 The Phonographic Performance Company of Australia discussed the contribution of community broadcasting to the development and promotion of Australian music:

Many community radio broadcasters play a much wider variety of Australian music than is typically heard on

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50 3CR, *submission no. 26*, p. 3.

51 SYN, *submission no. 126*, p. 3.

52 3RRR, *submission no. 110*, p. 7.

53 PMBA, *submission no. 121*, p. 2.

mainstream commercial radio networks. As such, for many Australian recording artists, the community radio sector is an extremely important medium for the exposure of their music to the general public. As an example of the importance of the sector to Australian music industry, we are aware that the Sydney community broadcaster FBi has a policy of playing at least 50% Australian music (with half of that amount being recordings by artists from the greater Sydney area).<sup>54</sup>

3.68 Melbourne's 3GDR discussed its audience and programming:

3GDR was formed with the intention of providing the ageing population with the style of radio programming that was familiar to them during their prime years when they were living more functional lives in the community. 3GDR combines information, health and other community awareness programs, with a music and radio style that is reminiscent of the earlier years of radio in Australia and one that the elderly can relate to. The on-air slogan "music and radio as it used to be" sums up the genre that 3GDR presents to its target audience.<sup>55</sup>

3.69 ACB stated that Christian stations have the following common elements in their content and programming:

- positive family values
- programming serving the Christian community which also can be listened to by non-Christians
- alternative opinions reflecting a Christian world view
- an emphasis on programming for the whole person, including spiritual values
- campaigns to assist and address recognised social problems such as drug and substance abuse, breakdown of the family unity and promotion of social justice.<sup>56</sup>

3.70 ACB added that Christian programming also promotes and fosters the development of the Christian music industry, the fastest growing genre of music in the world.<sup>57</sup>

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54 PPCA, *submission no. 91*, pp. 1-2.

55 3GDR, *submission no. 68*, p. 4.

56 ACB, *submission no. 106*, p. 12.

57 ACB, *submission no. 106*, p. 12.

3.71 AFMN discussed its programming of Australian music:

Stations in the fine music network broadcast a minimum of 10% of local (Australian) classical music content by performer, or composer. They encourage and emphasise the importance of local talent and launch new local CDs on air and interview participating artists. Most stations exceed the requirement and regularly exceed the 25% quota established for other music genres.<sup>58</sup>

3.72 Brisbane's 4MBS is a classical music and jazz community broadcaster that has:

... actively sought new and innovative ways to engage the community and support Australian but more particularly Queensland classical and jazz musicians – as part of our commitment to our local community. This strong focus on our local fine music scene is not possible for the national ABC fine music service.<sup>59</sup>

## Identified groups

3.73 There are some groups in the community broadcasting sector that have special needs and cultural sensitivities. These groups, Ethnic, Indigenous and RPH, have been identified by the Australian Government as a priority for specific funding.<sup>60</sup>

3.74 The following sections provide details on the character, content, audience, staff and funding for these groups.

## Indigenous

3.75 The Australian Indigenous Communication Association (AICA) described the importance of Indigenous community broadcasting:

For many Indigenous communities, the Indigenous community radio station is the primary broadcasting services, as it is through their local community station that they receive most of their news and information. In Northern Australia, Indigenous community radio provides a vital service to the communities they serve. In times of natural disasters they are

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58 AFMN, *submission no. 40*, p. 4.

59 4MBS, *submission no. 84*, p. 1.

60 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 22.

most likely the only local information provider. Indigenous media is indeed an “essential service”.<sup>61</sup>

- 3.76 AICA suggested that Indigenous community radio stations are:
- ... a very cost-effective tool for self-management, capacity-building, and ... a very strong partner in their local community’s economic development.<sup>62</sup>
- 3.77 The Productivity Commission Inquiry into Broadcasting in 1999 recognised that broadcasting is important for Indigenous communities in that it provides ‘a primary level of service in remote areas and in local languages’. CBAA suggested that this acknowledged the unique role of Indigenous media in Australia and its primary objective to provide a first level of service for Indigenous people.<sup>63</sup>

#### Audience

- 3.78 AICA discussed Indigenous broadcasting and the audience it reaches:
- Indigenous community broadcasting enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have access to culturally appropriate and regionally relevant broadcasting services in the same way the broader Australian public does. It also takes Indigenous voices, stories, music, viewpoints and information into communities throughout Australia.<sup>64</sup>
- 3.79 In addition, AICA suggested that Indigenous broadcasting also reaches non-Indigenous audiences.<sup>65</sup>
- 3.80 While conducting research into the community broadcasting sector, Associate Professor Michael Meadows and his colleagues from Griffith University found that:
- For many non-Indigenous listeners, Indigenous broadcasting is providing a window to a culture and a part of the community that they previously could not or did not have access to.<sup>66</sup>

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61 AICA, *submission no. 72*, p. 2.

62 AICA, *submission no. 72*, p. 3.

63 CBAA, *submission no. 61*, p. 23.

64 AICA, *submission no. 72*, p. 4.

65 AICA, *submission no. 72*, p. 4.

66 Meadows, Forde, Ewart & Foxwell, *submission no. 89*, p. 20.



3.81 The South East Indigenous Media Association (SEIMA/3KND) suggested that stations like 3KND aim to teach and learn from the wider non-Indigenous community by providing

... a broadcasting service of deep and abiding interest to the wider non Indigenous community, with the goal of increasing mutual respect, learning and reconciliation between all Australians.<sup>67</sup>

### Stations

3.82 DCITA stated that there are:

... 106 Indigenous community radio stations, including 22 full-time, three aspirant and more than 80 remote Indigenous radio services.<sup>68</sup>

3.83 AICA provided details of Indigenous community broadcasters. They comprise:

- over 153 Indigenous community radio/television stations in remote areas, self-organised into eight regional networks, now known as Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services (RIBS)
- five capital city community radio stations – Sydney, Brisbane, Darwin, Melbourne and Perth
- twenty Indigenous community radio stations based in regional centres such as Cairns, Alice Springs, Broome and Port Augusta to name a few.<sup>69</sup>

### Staff

3.84 AICA considers that there is an important distinction between Indigenous community broadcasters and 'mainstream' community broadcasters in that:

... for most Indigenous broadcasters, the income they derive from broadcasting is their only income, whereas, most other community broadcasters have other paid employment.<sup>70</sup>

3.85 CBAA explained further explained the distinction:

Non-Indigenous community broadcasting is sustained by more than 20,000 volunteers and grant funding is just part of

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67 SEIMA/3KND, *submission no. 113*, p. 2.

68 DCITA, *submission no. 75*, p. 2.

69 AICA, *submission no. 72*, p. 2.

70 AICA, *submission no. 72*, p. 2.

the mix with membership donations and sponsorship being key sources of revenue. For the Indigenous broadcasting sector the requirement is more for a fully professionalised service providing training and paid employment.<sup>71</sup>

3.86 AICA explained that Indigenous community broadcasters:

... provide many Indigenous people with part-time or full-time employment. These broadcasters have the potential to even further the line to do both social and economic development within any of our Indigenous communities where there are few or no employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.<sup>72</sup>

3.87 AICA added that the stations:

... provide training in the range of broadcasting skills. They are an important element of the economic structure of Indigenous communities. The majority of Indigenous broadcasters are paid through the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP).<sup>73</sup>

3.88 SEIMA/3KND suggested that some stations such as 3KND do have a large volunteer component:

Our volunteers in the main are not the CDEP supported broadcasters. They are normally either working or receiving their own income from other sources. We do not have a CDEP program.<sup>74</sup>

## Content

3.89 AICA discussed the value of broadcasting in local languages:

... in traditional communities, where written English is sometimes a third or fourth language ... face-to-face communication in the local languages is most effective, and local radio broadcasts in local languages, containing relevant Indigenous news and music is most cost-effective.<sup>75</sup>

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71 CBAA, *submission no. 61*, p. 23.

72 AICA, *submission no. 72*, p. 2.

73 AICA, *submission no. 72*, p. 2.

74 SEIMA/3KND, *transcript of evidence 20 July 2006*, p. 80.

75 AICA, *submission no. 72*, p. 3.

3.90 SEIMA/3KND described program content at 3KND:

Indigenous programmers broadcast a variety of shows including specialist music programs, community issues and current affairs, political opinion, sports, health and arts programs ... the music broadcast on 3KND is predominantly by Indigenous artists.<sup>76</sup>

3.91 SEIMA/3KND added:

In the time we have been on the air 3knd has made a rich contribution to the community broadcasting sector in Melbourne. Our programs are produced and presented by community members and therefore provide an accurate reflection of the character and diversity within that community and the wider community.<sup>77</sup>

3.92 SEIMA/3KND also discussed its role in networking particular programs:

We have also produced and broadcast our own national talkback show, *Talkabout*, and music show *Songlines National*. We join the broadcast stations of 4K1G in Townsville, Radio Larrakia in Darwin, PK Media in Halls Creek, Koori Radio in Sydney, Radio Goolari in Western Australia and PY Media in South Australia, when they broadcast in their own language. While servicing our Melbourne based community is our priority, these 3KND initiated linkages forge communication and contact previously unavailable to the Melbourne Indigenous community.<sup>78</sup>

3.93 CAAMA discussed its station's programming:

Our radio station broadcasts 24 hours with Indigenous radio broadcasters, and we have a number of programs for all ages, ranging from the very young to the older generation. We do news on the hour every hour, so they know what Indigenous news is happening out there. We do a current affairs series and we also do a talkback series where we are dealing with politicians on a daily basis. That goes for one hour every day, so that people in the communities know what is going on.

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76 SEIMA/3KND, *submission no. 113*, p. 3.

77 SEIMA/3KND, *submission no. 113*, p. 3.

78 SEIMA/3KND, *transcript of evidence 20 July 2006*, p. 69.

They also have the opportunity to go on air and speak about the issues they have got.<sup>79</sup>

3.94 CAAMA added:

We play a number of different genres of music – country and western, blues, hip-hop. We also have a number of language programs. At the moment, we are broadcasting in about nine different languages.<sup>80</sup>

3.95 CAAMA discussed its health programs:

We have two [health] programs a day. One is the *Livewire* program in which we interview people from all around Australia on what is happening with regard to health, petrol sniffing or alcohol ... every day that goes to air. We also have talkback, so everyone knows what is going on within politics and how that is being addressed. Every Friday we have *A Current Affair*, which deals with all the social problems. On Friday nights, Saturdays and Sundays we broadcast the football live. We are trying to promote healthy sport. It is just local.<sup>81</sup>

3.96 CAAMA explained how it operates as a hub, providing programming to other stations:

... we are a hub that provides technical and training support, but also a hub that provides a lot of programming to other radio stations throughout Australia so they can operate longer hours. Not all of them are funded to employ a large number of staff, so they take a lot of our programming – our talkback programs, our *Livewire* program, our news and current affairs.<sup>82</sup>

3.97 CAAMA further explained:

We give people out in the communities – there are about six who participate – an opportunity to broadcast live on CAAMA Radio from 2 pm to 4 pm every day. We switch straight to a community that has a RIBS unit, and they go live from their studios on to CAAMA Radio.<sup>83</sup>

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79 CAAMA, *transcript of evidence 21 July 2006*, p. 2.

80 CAAMA, *transcript of evidence 21 July 2006*, p. 2.

81 CAAMA, *transcript of evidence 21 July 2006*, p. 11.

82 CAAMA, *transcript of evidence 21 July 2006*, p. 3.

83 CAAMA, *transcript of evidence 21 July 2006*, p. 2.

3.98 The National Indigenous Radio Service Limited (NIRS) is a national service provided from a hub station in Brisbane. NIRS explained its operations:

It primarily provides a bed program to Indigenous media organisations that don't have the staffing or capital requirements to provide 24-hour high quality broadcasting to their audience. NIRS supplies high quality entertainment and important information to all members who then retransmit the service when relevant.<sup>84</sup>

3.99 NIRS explained how its service is utilised by different stations:

At one end of this scale NIRS enables aspirant and remote area broadcasters to provide relevant Indigenous broadcasting 24 hours a day to their community, with the opportunity to "window" local programming as each community desires ... for broadcasters who meet the licensing and equipment requirements for a full time service, but lack the funds or resources to provide a full 24-hour service, NIRS will enable them to fill any holes with its continuous programming.<sup>85</sup>

3.100 NIRS explained that its service:

... is received by over 100 Broadcasting to Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services, (RIBS), 50 Indigenous Radio Stations and 40 Community Radio Stations.<sup>86</sup>

3.101 NIRS added that it has a unique ability to reach a potential audience of almost four million people nationwide.<sup>87</sup>

3.102 NIRS discussed the importance of local stations and explained how its service contributes to the programming of those stations:

NIRS is not to be seen as an alternative to regional broadcasting, but rather as a supplement. While NIRS can provide high quality relevant programs, especially on a National perspective, it can never provide the service supplied by local broadcasters who know their local audience best. With this in mind, NIRS is importantly a tool for which

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84 NIRS, *submission no. 19*, p. 1.

85 NIRS, *submission no. 19*, p. 1.

86 NIRS, *submission no. 19*, p. 2.

87 NIRS, *submission no. 19*, p. 2.

local broadcasters can tap into and utilise to compliment their existing service.<sup>88</sup>

3.103 NIRS outlined its programming content:

NIRS is primarily a bed program with a large percentage entertainment content in the form of music. At any specified time (depending on current affairs and information programs) you can access the largest range of indigenous Australian music, both traditional and contemporary, as well as the best in Australian contemporary music. The music philosophy behind the NIRS concentrates solely on Australian content.

...

Around this music bed are based national programming in areas such as health, education, talkback, special event of Indigenous importance, various governmental department updates, and issues relevant to Indigenous Australians.

...

Other programming includes regional roundups from all over the country, sporting events and special music and festival events. A monthly program guide is supplied to members for their information.<sup>89</sup>

3.104 CBAA discussed Indigenous content produced by community radio stations:

In 2002-2003, 37 per cent of all community broadcasting stations aired programs aimed at an Indigenous audience, broadcasting a total of 1,602 hours of Indigenous programming. This is in addition to the programming provided by the 76 Indigenous Remote licensees.<sup>90</sup>

## Funding

3.105 DCITA stated that Indigenous community radio broadcasting received the following core funding:

- \$655 254 (plus \$65 525 GST) in 2005-06<sup>91</sup>

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88 NIRS, *submission no. 19*, p. 2.

89 NIRS, *submission no. 19*, p. 2.

90 CBAA, *submission no. 61*, p. 23.

91 DCITA, *submission no. 75*, p. 4.

- \$670 722 (plus \$67 072 GST) in 2006-07.<sup>92</sup>

3.106 DCITA also discussed other funding for Indigenous community broadcasting:

From time to time the Government provides funding for one-off projects. For example, on 5 April 2004 the Minister announced \$2 million in funding to provide additional television transmitters at Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services (RIBS) sites across remote Australia. This funding was provided to the CBF to administer the project.<sup>93</sup>

3.107 DCITA explained that it provides separate funding under the Indigenous Broadcasting Program:

The Government also provides \$13.3 million through direct grants to Indigenous broadcasting organisations under the Indigenous Broadcasting Program (IBP). This funding was transferred from ATSIIS to DCITA in July 2004. The IBP provides funding support for Indigenous organisations that hold a community broadcasting licence under the Broadcasting Services Act 1992. It also contributes towards the ongoing operations of peak Indigenous media bodies, the satellite delivery of networked Indigenous radio programming, and some Indigenous radio content producers.<sup>94</sup>

3.108 DCITA added that the budget for 2006-07 is \$13.7 million, and outlined the breakdown of funding for the Indigenous Broadcasting Program:

24 radio stations are funded directly through IBP, 20 of which are regionally based and receive over 80% of IBP funding that goes directly to Indigenous stations. The remaining IBP funds are allocated to Imparja; [seven] Remote Indigenous Media Organisations (RIMOS), who provide coordination, technical assistance and training services to Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services (RIBS); [two] Peak Bodies, who provide representation for Indigenous Media and Broadcasting organisations and [one] organisation providing accredited training in broadcasting.<sup>95</sup>

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92 DCITA, *submission no. 75.3*, p. 1.

93 DCITA, *submission no. 75*, p. 5.

94 DCITA, *submission no. 75*, p. 5.

95 DCITA, *submission no. 75.1*, p. 10.

## Ethnic and multicultural

### 3.109 NEMBC discussed the beginnings of ethnic broadcasting in Australia:

From its beginnings in the 1970s the ethnic community radio sector has given a voice to marginalized groups in the Australian community. For ethnic radio, this meant a large and diverse European community that had arrived after World War II. It also included the beginnings of large scale Asian migration in aftermath of the Vietnam War. In doing that ethnic community radio became the public manifestation of the social policy of multiculturalism. It demonstrated that recognizing a diversity of cultures is not necessarily synonymous with ghettoization. Inclusiveness and tolerance allowed all members of society access to opportunity.<sup>96</sup>

### 3.110 The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) stated that:

... community ethnic broadcasting has an important role in building social cohesion through linking Australians to local and national news, perspectives and events through Australia-focused non-English broadcasting.<sup>97</sup>

## Audience

### 3.111 The Multicultural Community Radio Association (MCRA), broadcasting as Radio2000 in Sydney, stated that the target audience for ethnic broadcasters is:

... both the old, new and emerging ethnic communities who speak languages other than English (16.3% of NSW population 1996 Census).<sup>98</sup>

### 3.112 NEMBC stated that the ethnic radio sector now broadcasts over 95 languages from 125 stations throughout Australia.<sup>99</sup>

### 3.113 NEMBC added that the capital city full-time ethnic stations are successful in servicing large diverse audiences.<sup>100</sup>

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96 NEMBC, *submission no. 108*, p. 8.

97 DIMA, *submission no. 93*, p. 2.

98 MRCA/Radio2000, *submission no. 64*, p. 2.

99 NEMBC, *submission no. 108*, p. 8.

100 NEMBC, *submission no. 108*, p. 12.



- 3.114 The Ethnic Broadcasters' Council (EBC), broadcasting as 1CMS in Canberra, discussed differences in its audience:

We reach both longer established and emerging communities in the ACT and region. Each ethnic community has its own listeners profile, depending on the levels of English spoken in the particular community; the length of residence in Australia; the general age structure; and access to alternative sources of information.<sup>101</sup>

### Stations

- 3.115 NEMBC provided an overview of ethnic stations:

Currently there are seven major fulltime stations broadcasting exclusively in languages other than English ... another 88 stations carry a diverse mix of ethnic language as well as English language programming.<sup>102</sup>

- 3.116 CBAA provided details on ethnic stations:

Stations that hold full-time ethnic/multicultural broadcasting licences are 2000 Sydney, 3ZZZ Melbourne, 4EB Brisbane, 5EBI Adelaide, 6EBA Perth and 1CMS Canberra. However, a station does not have to have a dedicated ethnic focus to broadcast ethnic programming. In fact, 47 percent of [community] stations broadcast 2,125 hours weekly of programming aimed at people from non-English speaking backgrounds every week.<sup>103</sup>

### Staff

- 3.117 As with many community broadcasters, ethnic stations rely heavily on volunteers.

- 3.118 The Ethnic Public Broadcasting Association of Victoria (EPBAV), broadcasting as 3ZZZ in Melbourne discussed its volunteer base:

more than 400 volunteers freely giving time to research, prepare and deliver radio programs ... community radio volunteers are passionate about their stations. It is difficult to estimate the number of volunteer hours and to put a dollar figure on the worth of salary that volunteers forgo. For the

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101 EBC/1CMS, *submission no. 83*, p. 1.

102 NEMBC, *submission no. 108*, p. 8.

103 CBAA, *submission no. 61*, p. 24.

150 hours of locally produced programming each week at 3ZZZ there are an average of 3 volunteers putting together the program, each spending on average 4 hours per broadcast hour - this would equal 1800 hours each week, or 93 600 hours each year.<sup>104</sup>

3.119 MCRA/Radio2000 has a similar volunteer base:

More than 300 volunteer broadcasters have dedicated their time to produce and broadcast programs to their respective communities throughout the year ... a significant portion of the volunteer broadcasters is from the general youth population of the community.<sup>105</sup>

3.120 EBC/1CMS stated that:

Programs are typically produced and presented by volunteers who are required to demonstrate that they are responsive to their respective listening audiences.<sup>106</sup>

3.121 The Multicultural Radio And Television Association of WA (MRTAWA), broadcasting as 6EBA in Perth, acknowledged the contribution of its volunteers:

There are approximately 300 volunteers who assist with the numerous radio programmes broadcast daily from 6EBA, and represent all ages, both genders, and who broadcast their own language programmes. 6EBA recognises and appreciates the work volunteers do, not only in terms of programming, formatting and presentation of programmes, but also with regards to the tremendous cost saving to the station if they were paid.<sup>107</sup>

## Content

3.122 NEMBC provided an overview of ethnic broadcasting content:

There are around 4000 broadcasters involved in the delivery of settlement information, news, entertainment, music, language and cultural maintenance to their audiences. They

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104 EPBAV/3ZZZ, *submission no. 105*, pp. 6-7.

105 MRCA/Radio2000, *submission no. 64*, p. 2.

106 EBC/1CMS, *submission no. 83*, p. 1.

107 MRTAWA/6EBA, *submission no. 86*, p. 3.

continue to be one of the largest language workshops in Australia.<sup>108</sup>

3.123 CBF summarised ethnic program production in Australia:

... the community radio sector in 2004-05 produced 66,480 hours of locally relevant ethnic language programs in 97 languages used by 124 distinct ethnic/cultural groups located in over 750 distinct local ethnic communities in over seventy locations across Australia.<sup>109</sup>

3.124 CBAA discussed the role of community broadcasters for ethnic communities:

Ethnic community broadcasting stations and the NEMBC have also played a leading role in assisting new, emerging and refugee communities make the transition to Australian life – providing news, information and assistance by and for these communities in their own languages.<sup>110</sup>

3.125 DIMA added that:

Community broadcasting provides a valuable source of information for people settling in Australia. This can include information about services, Australian ways, and local migrant communities' experiences. It also provides a valuable link to existing community networks.<sup>111</sup>

3.126 EPBAV/3ZZZ explained that, in addition to providing essential services, its programs help the community to maintain cultures through:

- Music
- Stories
- Children's entertainment
- Language maintenance
- Folklore
- Oral History
- Literature & Poetry
- The Arts
- Festivals and community gatherings.<sup>112</sup>

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108 NEMBC, *submission no. 108*, p. 8.

109 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 30.

110 CBAA, *submission no. 61*, p. 24.

111 DIMA, *submission no. 93*, p. 3.

112 EPBAV/3ZZZ, *submission no. 105*, p. 11.

- 3.127 MRTAWA/6EBA features special programmes on:  
 ... youth, seniors and sport, including community organisations ... local news regarding community events, forthcoming elections, information about Australia's security ...<sup>113</sup>
- 3.128 Ethnic Broadcasting Association of Queensland, broadcasting as 4EB FM in Brisbane, stated that its programmes consist of:  
 ... local and international news, community announcements, settlement information, presentation of government and aid organisation information, music and cultural information, and interviews with government employees, experts and community leaders ... all programmes are produced locally and provide a service that contains specific local information that is very different from SBS, other local ethnic commercial media services, satellite services or internet services in people's first language.<sup>114</sup>
- 3.129 A substantial number of general community broadcasting stations broadcast a considerable amount of ethnic programming. Some examples are described below.
- 3.130 Radio 8CCC in Alice Springs outlined the programs it provides:  
 Currently we offer news and music programs in Latin American, French, Spanish, Filipino and Maori. Past programs have been produced in Italian, Dutch, Japanese and German. Most importantly, we have a flexible programming strategy which adjusts to the cultural mix in our transient population, and the availability and interest of volunteer ethnic broadcasters.<sup>115</sup>
- 3.131 Western Radio Broadcasters, broadcasting as Stereo 974 in Melbourne's western suburbs, discussed its ethnic programming:  
 ... we carry out a considerable aggregate of Vietnamese programs ... brought about by recognising an emerging community in the western suburbs of Melbourne. The Vietnamese community are great supporters of this radio

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113 MRTAWA/6EBA, *submission no. 86*, p. 4.

114 EBAQ/4EB, *submission no. 54*, p. 1.

115 Radio 8CCC, *submission no. 117*, p. 4.

station, and we believed are starved for information and entertainment.<sup>116</sup>

3.132 Western Radio Broadcasters added:

We are doing about 56 hours of ethnic broadcasting per week, predominantly between the hours of 8.30 in the morning through until six at night.<sup>117</sup>

3.133 Eastside Radio in inner Sydney has programs in the following languages:

Thai, Macedonian, Indian, Bengali, Vietnamese, Chinese, Mandarin and German.<sup>118</sup>

3.134 Voice FM in Ballarat discussed its ethnic programming:

We ... currently have 7 ethnic programs (Dutch, Filipino, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian and Japanese). We have had Chinese and French programs but the presenters for these programs recently moved from Ballarat. These programs will be filled as soon as new presenters become available. We have a Russian presenter currently training and have been approached by a potential Spanish presenter.<sup>119</sup>

3.135 World Music Radio suggested that some ethnic programming should reach a wider audience:

... although ethnic programs are much appreciated by the individual communities concerned, they are not able, by their very nature, to include the mainstream community ... what are urgently needed are community stations that will present popular music, folk music, as well as information from all cultures, **but in the English language**, much like SBS TV is doing. This would not only serve the people of the particular language/ethnic group from which the news/music comes, but would also cater to the English speaking population, as well [as] allowing all the other listeners from various cultural backgrounds to become familiar with each others music.<sup>120</sup>

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116 WRB/Stereo 974, *submission no. 21*, p. 3.

117 WRB/Stereo 974, *transcript of evidence 20 July 2006*, p. 56.

118 Eastside Radio, *submission no. 9*, p. 2.

119 Voice FM, *submission no. 78*, p. 1.

120 World Music radio, *submission no. 41*, p. 1.

## Funding

- 3.136 DCITA stated that ethnic community radio broadcasting received the following Australian Government funding for 2005-06:
- Core funding of \$1 552 550 (plus \$155 255 GST)
  - Targeted funding of \$1 133 347 (plus \$113 335 GST).<sup>121</sup>
- 3.137 For 2006-07, ethnic community radio broadcasting received the following Australian Government funding:
- Core funding of \$1 589 139 (plus \$158 914 GST)
  - Targeted funding of \$1 154 761 (plus \$115 476 GST).<sup>122</sup>
- 3.138 Income from different sources varies from station to station. EPBAV/3ZZZ described its major sources of income:
- membership fees and community donations (30% in 2004-2005)
  - sponsorship and production (on air announcements) (27% in 2004-2005)
  - grants from the Community Broadcasting Foundation (32% in 2004-2005).<sup>123</sup>

## Radio for the print handicapped

- 3.139 A unique service provided by community radio stations is a reading service for Australians with a print handicap.
- 3.140 RPH services are operated by dedicated RPH stations, and also provided to a lesser extent by other community stations.
- 3.141 CBAA discussed RPH services:

RPH fulfils an undeniably essential role for many in the community, not only for people with a print disability. People with arthritis, the elderly and people with mobility disabilities also use RPH. Additionally, some non-English speaking migrants use the service to practise their English.<sup>124</sup>

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121 DCITA, *submission no. 75*, p. 4.

122 DCITA, *submission no. 75.3*, p. 1.

123 EPBAV/3ZZZ, *submission no. 105*, p. 17.

124 CBAA, *submission no. 61*, p. 24.

3.142 CBAA also stated that:

RPH also contributes to the ability of visually impaired community members to take part in their local community, by offering volunteer opportunities and providing information about local events and news.<sup>125</sup>

### Audience

3.143 Vision Australia discussed the target audience for RPH services:

The community of interest for our radio service are people with a print disability. That is those people who for reasons such as vision loss, a physical disability inhibiting handling of the printed page or because a learning or language difficulty are unable to adequately access print. It is estimated that in the order of 17 % of the population have a print disability ... many others tune to RPH because it is convenient and its readings and other specialised information content are of interest.<sup>126</sup>

3.144 Sydney's Radio Reading Service (2RPH) also discussed the RPH audience:

The term print handicapped applies broadly to people who can't see, hold, or understand the printed word. The most obvious group is people who are blind or vision impaired. Others are people who are arthritic or quadriplegic (can't hold newspapers). Still others are people who are dyslexic, illiterate, or whose first language is not English. This list is not exhaustive.<sup>127</sup>

### Stations

3.145 There are 15 RPH stations in Australia. Eight of those stations, based in Victoria and southern NSW, are operated by Vision Australia.<sup>128</sup>

3.146 Sydney's 2RPH discussed the operation of the RPH peak body, RPH Australia:

We are a legal entity in our own right while at the same time being a member of the RPH Australia (RPHA) group. RPHA

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125 CBAA, *submission no. 61*, p. 24.

126 Vision Australia, *submission no. 107*, p. 7.

127 Sydney's Radio Reading Service – 2RPH, *submission no. 101*, p. 3.

128 Vision Australia, *submission no. 107*, p. 7.

is the national peak organisation of licensed RPH broadcasters and provides support to members through policy development and implementation, Government liaison and development and management of a range of national projects that benefit member organisations.<sup>129</sup>

- 3.147 A full account of the development of RPH services in Australia can be found on the RPHA website.<sup>130</sup>

### Staff

- 3.148 RPH services rely heavily on volunteers:

Vision Australia RPH is resourced by 800 volunteers comprising 450 for the Melbourne operation and around 50 at each of the seven regional stations. A staff team of five, and others from the organisation, provide infrastructure support in areas such as volunteer coordination, marketing and finance and administration.<sup>131</sup>

- 3.149 Sydney's 2RPH has only one full-time paid employee, the station manager. The station relies on a group about 250 volunteers to present on-air programming. The station also relies on a very small group of specialist volunteers that work on an almost full-time basis to train staff.<sup>132</sup>

### Content

- 3.150 Vision Australia discussed the content that its services provide to listeners:

Our role is to convey to our audience the content of the print media. We endeavour to communicate the character of Australia and cultural diversity as portrayed in newspapers, magazines, and other printed content to which other people have direct access.<sup>133</sup>

- 3.151 Vision Australia outlined RPH programming:

- readings from newspapers and other printed publications
- information from Government, disability and other community organisations of special relevance to various

129 Sydney's Radio Reading Service – 2RPH, *submission no. 101*, p. 3.

130 <http://www.rph.org.au/html/development.html>, accessed 23 March 2007.

131 Vision Australia, *submission no. 107*, p. 7.

132 Sydney's Radio Reading Service – 2RPH, *submission no. 101*, p. 10.

133 Vision Australia, *submission no. 107*, p. 8.



listener groups and not available through alternative electronic media

- other content of special interest to listener groups, such as audio description of events otherwise only available on television, including Wimbledon Tennis and Vision Australia Carols By Candlelight.<sup>134</sup>

3.152 Vision Australia provided a breakdown of programming from a typical day:

During the first part of the day there is concentration on in-depth readings of the news items of the day's newspapers. In the afternoon there is more attention given to feature items from newspapers and magazines. The evening programs give attention to comment and opinion from the papers as well as extensive book readings. Throughout the day and evening there are special interest information programs from Government, disability and other community organisations.<sup>135</sup>

3.153 Vision Australia also discussed regional station programming:

For up to three hours each day the regional stations break away from the network to broadcast local content. This includes extensive reading from the local publication such as The Border Mail through Albury RPH or Sunraysia Daily in Mildura. Attention is also given to local community information through reading and interviews with key individuals. During week day afternoons listeners in Melbourne can hear extensive readings from the suburban publications.<sup>136</sup>

## Funding

3.154 The annual operating cost of Vision Australia's RPH services is around \$500 000.<sup>137</sup>

3.155 Vision Australia explained that its major spending areas are:

- salaries
- communications links
- transmitter maintenance, operation and site rental

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134 Vision Australia, *submission no. 107*, p. 8.

135 Vision Australia, *submission no. 107*, p. 8.

136 Vision Australia, *submission no. 107*, p. 8.

137 Vision Australia, *submission no. 107*, p. 7.

- subscriptions to newspapers and other publications
  - printing.<sup>138</sup>
- 3.156 Vision Australia outlined its sources of revenue:
- program sponsorship – 40 per cent
  - individual and other donations – 35 per cent
  - Australian Government – 20 per cent
  - other Vision Australia sources – 5 per cent.<sup>139</sup>
- 3.157 Sydney’s 2RPH outlined its primary sources of funding:
- the Australian Government, through CBF, which provides an annual programming support grant and meets some electricity and program line costs
  - DCITA, which provides funding for Sydney transmitter costs
  - NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care for most operating costs
  - sponsorship
  - donations, bequests and fund raising activities.<sup>140</sup>

## Contribution to the economy

- 3.158 CBF suggested that the community broadcasting sector contributes significantly to the Australian economy. Based on the CBD survey data, the community broadcasting sector has an annual turnover in excess of \$69 million.<sup>141</sup>
- 3.159 CBF suggested that, according to ACMA, CBAA and CBF data, the sector is:
- ... driven by the collective energy and enthusiasm of over 23,000 volunteers and it employs more than 960 staff (both full-time and part-time).<sup>142</sup>

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138 Vision Australia, *submission no. 107*, p. 7.

139 Vision Australia, *submission no. 107*, p. 7.

140 Sydney’s Radio Reading Service – 2RPH, *submission no. 101*, p. 3.

141 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 10.

142 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 10.

- 3.160 Meadows et al. stated that community broadcasting volunteers are strongly committed, donating on average 10 hours of their time per week.<sup>143</sup>
- 3.161 CBF explained that the economic value of volunteer contribution is conservatively estimated at over \$4 million each week – almost \$212 million per annum.<sup>144</sup>
- 3.162 CBF stated that a more accurate estimate of the community broadcasting sector's economic value is in excess of \$280 million per annum. However, CBF added that financial measures cannot adequately indicate the sector's value to Australian society.<sup>145</sup>

## A training ground for the commercial sector

- 3.163 In addition to the services provided to local communities, the community broadcasting sector informally fills another highly role for Australian media.
- 3.164 CBAA stated that the community broadcasting sector must be acknowledged as a training ground for successive generations of media professionals.<sup>146</sup>
- 3.165 CBAA provided a list of people who have achieved recognition in national and commercial media sectors, and who began their media careers in the community broadcasting sector. This list is summarised in Table 3.1.
- 3.166 CBAA added:
- The national and commercial sectors have benefited from the sector's provision of an entry level training facility at no direct cost for many years.<sup>147</sup>

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143 Forde, S., Meadows, M. and Foxwell, K. (2002) *Culture Commitment Community – The Australian Community Radio Sector*, p. 28.

144 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 10.

145 CBF, *submission no. 114*, p. 10.

146 CBAA, *submission no. 61*, p. 28.

147 CBAA, *submission no. 61*, p. 29.

- 3.167 Open Spectrum Australia stated that community broadcasters have prepared talent and production crew for the commercial and national broadcasters:

Community broadcasting is the engine-house of the broadcasting industries. It is the major training ground for radio and television in Australia, teaching and nurturing new talent and production crew both informally and via its University partners. The sector has long been a content proving ground, nurturing programs and talent, including some of Australia's most recognisable names in entertainment and news.<sup>148</sup>

- 3.168 CBAA also stated that CTV is an important training ground for careers in the media industry and that many volunteers have gone on to work for the commercial and national networks.<sup>149</sup>

- 3.169 C31 Melbourne added:

Many people associate Rove McManus with community television, but the breadth of people trained in the sector is not widely recognized by the public. While there are a number of notable personalities on mainstream television and radio who have a background in the community sector, there are far more people behind the scenes who have also developed and honed their skills through their association with community television.<sup>150</sup>

- 3.170 Huon FM emphasised the sector's contribution:

I am aware that there have been suggestions of a cross-subsidy from commercial stations and the ABC to recognise the substantial contribution made by community radio stations to training people who are later employed by other broadcasting sectors. While such training may be regarded as an intangible it is nonetheless [a] significant contribution made by community broadcasters.<sup>151</sup>

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148 Open Spectrum Australia, *submission no. 56*, p. 5.

149 CBAA, *submission no. 61.1*, p. 9.

150 C31 Melbourne, *submission no. 102*, p. 10.

151 Huon FM, *submission no. 17*, p. 5.

Table 3.1 A training ground for the national and commercial sectors

Name	Position	Started at
<b>Journalism</b>		
Andrew Denton	Host, <i>Enough Rope</i>	2MCE
Liz Jackson	Host, <i>Four Corners</i>	2MCE, 2SER
Jessica Rowe	Host, <i>Today Show</i> , Nine	2MCE
Natasha Belling	Newsreader, Ten	2MCE
Fran Kelly	<i>Foreign Correspondent</i> , ABC	2XX
Ramona Koval	ABC Radio	3RRR
Sian Prior	ABC Radio	3RRR
Marian Wilkinson	Fairfax	4ZZZ
<b>Comedy</b>		
James O'Loghlin	Presenter, <i>Evenings</i> , ABC Radio	FBi
Brian Dawe	<i>7.30 Report</i> , ABC	3RRR
Grieg Pickhaver (HG Nelson)	Presenter, <i>The Dream</i>	3RRR
Coodabeen Champions	ABC Radio	3RRR
Merrick & Rosso	Nova breakfast, <i>Unplanned with Merrick &amp; Rosso</i> , Nine	3RRR
Santo Cilauro	Working Dog Productions	3RRR
Richard Fidler	Ex-DAAS, ABC Head of Comedy	3WAY
Hamish & Andy	Fox FM	SYN
Rove McManus	Host, <i>Rove</i>	6RTR
<b>Television</b>		
Catriona Rowntree	Presenter, <i>Getaway</i> , Nine	2NSB
Fenella Kernebone	Presenter, <i>The Movie Show</i> , SBS	2SER
Jamie Leonarder	Presenter, <i>The Movie Show</i> , SBS	FBi
Kate Langbroek	Host, <i>The Panel</i> , Ten	3RRR
<b>Other radio</b>		
Robbie Buck	Presenter, <i>Home &amp; Hosed</i> , Triple J	2NCR, 2SER
Julie McCrossin	Presenter, <i>Life Matters</i> , Radio National	2SER
Richard Kingsmill	Presenter/Music Director, Triple J	2NUR, 2SER
Caroline Tran	Presenter, Triple J	2RES
Mick O'Regan	Presenter, <i>Media Report</i> , Radio National	2SER
<b>Writers</b>		
Helen Razer	Freelance journalist	2XX, 2SER
Sarah McDonald	Author, <i>Holy Cow</i>	2SER

Source CBA, submission no. 61, pp. 28-29.

3.171 Melbourne's 3CR, discussed its contribution to training in community broadcasting:

3CR has a strong history of accessible and professional radio training with approximately 80 people trained annually in:

- Specialist current affairs
- Digital audio production
- Outside broadcasting
- Sound engineering including a specialist program that trains young women.

In addition to the general radio training, over 30 people are annually trained in management and administration including reception skills, event management and volunteer coordination. In the station's 30-year history this equates to over 3000 volunteers being provided with training expertise and its affordability ensures accessibility to people on low-incomes.<sup>152</sup>

3.172 Gippsland FM looked for recognition for the training role undertaken by the community broadcasting sector:

The sector is also a training ground for national and commercial broadcasters. Whilst this may be recognised informally, there is no national recognition for the important role played by community media in developing the current and next generation of journalists for the electronic media.<sup>153</sup>

3.173 The ABC also acknowledged the important role that the community broadcasting sector plays:

... as an opportunity for individuals to test their interest in radio and/or television. Over the years, a significant number of talented people have come to the ABC from community broadcasting.<sup>154</sup>

3.174 AFMN recommended that:

... Government recognise the role played by community radio as a quality training ground for the industry in general and allocate funding to support day to day operations and

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152 3CR, *submission no. 26*, p. 2.

153 Gippsland FM, *submission no. 76*, p. 5.

154 ABC, *submission no. 7*, p. 1.

strengthen the professional management base of community radio.<sup>155</sup>

## Committee comment

- 3.175 The Committee recognises the breadth of the community broadcasting sector. The sector serves a vast number of local communities and provides services to people with special needs.
- 3.176 The Committee also acknowledges the incredible contribution made to local communities by more than 20 000 volunteers in the sector.
- 3.177 The Committee also recognises that the sector is a significant training ground for the national and commercial broadcasting sectors and feels that this role deserves much more recognition in Australia's wider media sector.

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155 AFMN, *submission no. 40*, p. 7.

