

## Introduction

- 1.1 In 2005, the Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts conducted an inquiry into the uptake of digital television in Australia. The inquiry report was tabled in February 2006.
- 1.2 During this inquiry, the Committee became aware of the community television sector's plight to gain access to digital spectrum, as promised to the community broadcasting sector by the Australian Government.
- 1.3 In January 2006 the Committee resolved to conduct a wide-ranging inquiry into community broadcasting which would encompass the community television issues.
- 1.4 A first report for the inquiry was tabled on 12 February 2007. This report recommended that the Australian Government make arrangements for community television to gain access to digital spectrum and financially support the move to digital.
- 1.5 This second report examines the broader community broadcasting sector, encompassing issues such as funding, governance and regulation.

### **Background to the inquiry**

- 1.6 The Committee agreed on 19 January 2006 to conduct an inquiry into community broadcasting in Australia. The inquiry was referred by

Senator the Hon Helen Coonan, Australian Government Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

- 1.7 The terms of reference for the inquiry called for the Committee to inquire into and report on:
- the scope and role of Australian community broadcasting across radio, television, the internet and other broadcasting technologies
  - content and programming requirements that reflect the character of Australia and its cultural diversity
  - technological opportunities, including digital, to expand community broadcasting networks
  - opportunities and threats to achieving a diverse and robust network of community broadcasters.
- 1.8 The inquiry was advertised in *The Australian* on 28 and 31 January 2006 and the *Australian Financial Review* on 31 January 2006.
- 1.9 The Committee sought submissions from relevant Australian Government Departments and from state and territory governments. In addition, the Committee sought submissions from community broadcasting sector representative bodies, the many broadcasters in the sector, academics, media organisations and commercial and national broadcasters.
- 1.10 The Committee received 131 submissions and 20 supplementary submissions. These submissions are listed in Appendix A.
- 1.11 Submissions were received from many community radio and television stations, community broadcasting representative bodies, and content producers. In addition, a great number of individuals recorded their personal views and experiences in relation to community broadcasting.
- 1.12 The Committee received 11 exhibits to the inquiry, which were provided in addition to written submissions, either accepted during public hearings or sent to the Committee by other parties. These are listed in Appendix B.
- 1.13 The Committee held 13 public hearings across Australia in Canberra, Melbourne and Alice Springs. The Committee called 19 witnesses. These witnesses are listed in Appendix C.

- 1.14 The Committee carried out a number of inspections of community broadcasters in Melbourne and Alice Springs. A list of the inspections undertaken by the Committee is found in Appendix D.

## **Structure of the report**

- 1.15 Chapter 2 of the report provides a snapshot of the community broadcasting sector, considers governance issues for the sector and examines the major funding issues for the sector.
- 1.16 Chapter 3 outlines the state of the community broadcasting sector and includes sections on recent studies, programming and the significance of the sector in Australian media.
- 1.17 Chapter 4 examines the significant regulation issues for the sector including sponsorship regulations and guidelines and the regulator's decision making processes.
- 1.18 Chapter 5 considers a number of other issues for the sector including the move to digital, the use of new technologies and increases in transmission fees.
- 1.19 Chapter 6 provides a conclusion to the report and the inquiry.

