



Submission 103

Hon Jackie Kelly MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Communications,
Information Technology and the Arts

Email: cita.reps@aph.gov.au

Re: House of Representatives Inquiry into Community Broadcasting

Dear Ms Kelly,

Thank you for providing FECCA with the opportunity to provide a submission to the House of Representatives inquiry into community broadcasting. FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Our role is to advocate, lobby and promote issues on behalf of our constituency to government, business and the broader community. Our charter includes promoting full access and equity, advocating community harmony and the celebration of diversity, championing human rights and arguing that Multiculturalism is central to the social, economic and cultural health of Australia. In relation to your inquiry we would like to raise a number of issues that are of concern to people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. These are listed below in point form.

- The media is critical to the success of Australian Multiculturalism, particularly engendering community harmony and building understanding and appreciation of Australia's diversity. Community broadcasting is an indispensable part of the Australians media landscape.
- FECCA believes that the media must reflect the social diversity of multicultural Australia. Vital to this aim is a media policy that adequately addresses the communications needs of Australia's multicultural society. Multilingual community broadcasting services have a proven track record in meeting the needs of our diverse population. They have contributed in profound ways to the lives of

immigrant families, often providing a cultural bridge to a new way of life in a new country.

- FECCA would like to highlight the importance of multilingual broadcasting in building a cohesive society. Multilingual broadcasters are one of the closest point of contact with their constituency and therefore serve well for exchanging information necessary for the survival of many CLDB communities.
- The work of volunteers has been fundamental for the survival of multilingual community broadcasting. Yet, it has been brought to FECCA's attention that volunteers are becoming a scarce resource for communities. One of the major concerns for volunteers has been working under difficult circumstances due to lack of funding. One of the worst affected areas in multilingual community broadcasting has been training. The substantial reduction in training funds, for instance, has caused the demise of Australian Ethnic Radio Training Program (AERTP). Given that ethnic community broadcasting require some specific training skills, AERTP's demise is deeply concerning. Adequate and timely access to training in the delivery of community radio services, and airtime, has been shown to improve settlement outcomes for new migrants. Given the government's emphasis on building and capitalising on the productive diversity of Australia's multicultural and multilingual workforce, we question why this important program has not been adequately funded.
- FECCA strongly supports the call that community broadcasting needs and deserves more government funding. The Federal Government currently allocates just \$5.4 million to community radio, and yet is expected to receive over \$260 million in revenue from the sale of commercial radio licences over the 2003/04 and 04/05 financial years. This discrepancy between the revenue and the expenditure must be revisited to provide better financial support for community broadcasting.
- FECCA also believes that commercial funding options for community broadcasters, such as advertising, do not serve the core principle of public broadcasting, which aim to inform for the benefit of entire community rather than particular interest groups. Community broadcasting, therefore, should be able to remain independent of pressures stemming from the private interests of different stakeholders in community. Forcing community broadcasters to create funding sources from private organisations would certainly jeopardise their capacity for independent monitoring and reporting and limit valuable on air program time FECCA joins the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasting Council in calling for more effective political and financial support for ethnic community broadcasting.
We believe that ethnic community broadcasting is vital to building an

inclusive, accepting and harmonious society, which values people
Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
Community radio is a very significant voice for Australian
multiculturalism. We cannot afford for it to be silenced.

We would be happy to discuss any of the issues raised in this submission.
Please do not hesitate to contact me on 0414 532 529, or the FECCA
Director, Ms Sharon Ride on (02)6282 5755 should you wish to do so.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Messimeri'.

Voula Messimeri
FECCA Chairperson

29 March 2006