

All correspondence to:
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90.7 AND 105.5 ON YOUR FM DIAL
THE VOICE OF EAST GIPPSLAND

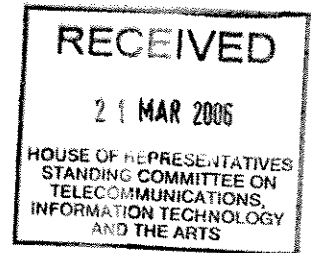
Submission No. 29

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16 March, 2006

Committee Secretary

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION AND THE ARTS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA



Dear sir/madam,

I respectfully submit some comment on community radio for the information of your committee and in the hope Government may decide to make available more resources to my industry and station to further assist the development of this valuable community asset.

My station has been presenting varied programmes to a community from Nowa Nowa to east of Sale, in Victoria, which includes the towns of Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Metung, Paynesville and quite a few other very small townships, for approximately 18 years.

The population and hence the potential listening audience is not big and would probably be in the vicinity of 30,000 persons. In addition there are two commercial networks and the ABC operating plus a religious network.

It has been an ongoing struggle to maintain my station on air through two studios, one in Bairnsdale and one in Lakes Entrance on two separate FM bands 90.7 and 105.5.

Due to a significant grant from the Community Broadcasting Fund we are at this time installing microwave transmission and a full stereo sound which will allow us to move on from land line transmission and to save a significant monthly amount of working funds.

We are proud of this improvement and grateful for the support we have received to be able to progress and to be eventually offer an improved sound to our listeners.

However one such grant as mentioned above is not the be all and end all of running the station and we are always mindful of the tight situation we are in to stay on air.

Just recently we have the serious situation of having to relocate our transmission mast due to a change by the owners of the existing mast in Lakes Entrance. We have had to find a new location, purchase a new mast and relocate our equipment and the strain this is putting on our finances is of great concern.

As a new president I have been mindful of consolidating the performance of the station together with a drive for new members and new sponsors and to secure good quality new presenters who are trained extensively together with older presenters being nurtured to present more interesting and well thought out shows.

New members are to be targeted in the very near future with a new campaign being approved and ready to go out in the market place early April. We are hopeful that with an inclusive member bonus

system we can enhance our member base both in the type of member and particularly the financial aspect.

We encourage members from the widest range possible and do not apply any restrictions to any group at any time.

Radio East Gippsland seeks community input in promoting the many and varied events held throughout East Gippsland, free of charge, and strongly promote the many events organised by service clubs, schools, religious organizations, indigenous organizations and so many other clubs and charities.

We allow exposure to any event be it musical or arts, young or old, and we look for diversity and participation but do take the high ground on any indication of deterioration in moral standards and questionable bad language.

We have actively encouraged quite a few of our younger presenters to look at radio as a future career and only this year two presenters, one male and one female, entered university in Melbourne to develop a radio career.

In summary we are desperate for some additional Government assistance and in particular assisting with the employment of a full time office and field person to assist with the running of the station and we need assistance with the coming digital radio.

We are important to our local community and will continue to be so and we do provide a good vehicle for residents in East Gippsland, which, in my opinion, is not provided by our competitors.

THE SCOPE AND ROLE OF AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY BROADCASTING ACROSS RADIO, TELEVISION, THE INTERNET AND OTHER BROADCASTING TECHNOLOGIES.

Radio East Gippsland provides a very broad base of interest, twenty-four hours a day every day of the year, to all residents in our area.

We have fifty members and approximately thirty-five dedicated volunteer/presenters. They range in age and gender but few ethnic persons because this area is not one with a big ethnic base.

We do not have any paid staff but we do have some very keen and hard working volunteers and the future ability to acquire a permanent employee is high on my personal agenda.

We actively encourage now and for many years the presentation of religious programmes, both midweek and on Sundays.

I believe we are strong supporters of different clubs and charities and we have a strong relationship with our local shire council, which will be improved by a development in coming weeks. We are listed with emergency services and in the event of an emergency each studio is able to contact applicable organizations to seek information able to be broadcast.

We would have trained hundreds of people in radio presentation but not such a record on the technical side or straight journalism.

CONTENT AND PROGRAMMING REQUIREMENTS THAT REFLECT THE CHARACTER OF AUSTRALIA AND ITS CULTURAL DIVERSITY.

We do present an hourly news service, which comes to us via satellite, and we present a live news half hour on Monday afternoon. I would suggest that most of our presenters would be mindful of local events and the need of promoting them.

March 16, 2006

We do not provide any ethnic local programming but we do go to air with 81 hours of live produced shows per week. There are other stations broadcasting news in our listening area. We are very supportive of Australian music and artists providing the standard is reasonable.

TECHNICAL OPPORTUNITIES, INCLUDING DIGITAL, TO EXPAND COMMUNITY BROADCASTING NETWORKS; AND

Radio East Gippsland operates on a very thin technical basis and we need all the assistance that can be mustered to ensure we continue to provide that alternative which is so community inclusive.

I believe we want to capitalise on all technical developments including digital.

OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS TO ACHIEVING A DIVERSE AND ROBUST NETWORK OF COMMUNITY BROADCASTERS.

Our annual budget at this time is \$60,000.00

Main source of income is from selling sponsorships and member subscriptions.

If we had additional funding I believe we would employ one permanent staff member. We would also try to update our broadcasting equipment. We would also install a time delay device for incoming calls.

We would like to update our transmitters and provide an emergency power facility due to the many electricity breakdowns we are subjected to. Improved training would be high on our expenditure list.

We always focus our management minds to providing the best possible radio to our many listeners and we would hope Government would take our situation by the throat and provide more funds to ensure our survival.

To sum up Mr Secretary we do not seek handouts just to see rooms filled with the best equipment money can buy but we are committed to good community radio with confidence and not seem to be the poor relation in the market place.

I thank you for this opportunity in presenting some comment on behalf of my radio station and our industry.

Yours faithfully



Bruce Livingstone OAM,JP
PRESIDENT