



FBI 94.5FM, PO Box 1962, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012

Submission 20

Committee Secretary, Standing Committee on Communications,
Information Technology and the Arts
PO Box 6021
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Thursday, 16 March 2006

Dear Committee members,

FBI seeks to make a submission to your inquiry into Community Broadcasting as we believe our successes and ongoing challenges are a useful example of broader challenges and opportunities in the sector.

FBI is the result of unique journey in community broadcasting. We are the first station to be licensed at full power parity with the commercial networks and we broadcast local and Australian music and culture all over metropolitan and Greater Sydney, Blue Mountains, Newcastle, and Wollongong. We are the first station to attempt such a large scale broadcasting service without the institutional support of a university,

church or established community group. With annual costs of more than \$650,000 and over 200 volunteers working making programs here, the size of our task requires we generate audiences and incomes in excess of any other public access station in Australia's history.

Our success demonstrates community broadcasting is an under-developed media sector operating well below its potential. The image and public expectation of the sector as a marginal or niche service falls well below what we believe can be accomplished. No doubt other participants will demonstrate the vast increases in listenership and participation over the last decade. That growth deserves recognition and the recent commonwealth funded community radio listenership survey was a vital tool for gaining that recognition. Sponsorship is the key to ensure financial self sufficiency and fbi has successfully marketed itself to a number of sponsors that are ideally suited to our demographic – such as the Motor Accident Authority's *Arrive Alive* campaign. Critical to this marketing is fbi's ability to demonstrate a listenership. A formal recognition of listenership – a project which is beyond our financial capability - would enable us to demonstrate our industry ratings and is the best assistance the government can provide. On the basis of verifiable market share we can continue to raise sponsorship and ensure our financial sustainability..

Our sector is growing stronger every day and deserves to participate in future policy development including the transition to digital. The sector is gaining recognition but at FBi, we believe even more can be done because we see so many Australians, in a wide range of cultural pursuits, creating cultural product that deserves a greater range of outlets.

It's our view that the best way to reflect "the character of Australia and its cultural diversity" is to let Australians speak for themselves. FBi's foundation principle is to introduce Sydney to itself by showcasing the widest range of local culture we can. When we first started campaigning

for a licence to broadcast Australian music people would constantly ask - but how will you fill 24 hours a day of airtime with Australian music? That never concerned us and indeed the music has rolled in our doors ever since they opened in 2003. Our mantra of 50% Australian content, with half of that from Sydney, is unmatched by any other station and continues to define us as a standout supporter of Australian music.

Recently we released *Kill Your Idols*, a CD of some of our favourite local produce. Many of these artists came to Music Open Day - our monthly free-for-all where dozens of artists arrive to introduce themselves to our playlist director and receive advice, support and, most importantly, access to the airwaves. Several tracks on the record were demos, some so good they went straight to air the day they came in. Our music open day has become a critical access point for Sydney bands and our ability to identify and support new Sydney music is one of our greatest contributions to the community.

Low production costs and self distribution via the internet mean a greater variety of music is available by and to the entire world. This year's NOISE festival of youth art showcased hundreds of musicians, digital artists, kitchen philosophers, poets, designers and rappers all producing great art right now. Most of the featured artists are independently produced. Young people across the country are making their own 'zines, producing their own music, making films, making art and putting it onto the web, into local markets, direct selling, creating their own structures for support and exposure.

The DIY, cheap tech revolution is afoot in film as well. The Apple Mac and \$500 camcorders are putting filmmaking into the same amazing hands that are revolutionising music and art. This year Tropfest attracted over 100,000 people into the Domain plus distribution via DVD in the next morning's paper.

The Australians producing this fantastic cultural revolution deserve both radio and TV exposure. They are producing listenable, watchable material which is generating audiences and can underwrite the expenses associated with servicing licences without further government support beyond the allocation of the spectrum. FBi is trying to do its bit by providing exposure to established institutions such as the Powerhouse Museum and the Studio at the Opera House, supporting mainstream events like the Sydney Film Festival and the Sydney Festival and providing media support to new entrants like the Sydney Film School.

FBi would be delighted to host a visit from the committee to show you our vision for participatory culture.

Best regards,

Cassandra Wilkinson

President

FBi Radio 94.5 FM Sydney

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