

Formal Submission to the House of Representatives, 2006

From,

Noosa Community Radio FM 101.3

20th March, 2006

Committee Secretary,
Standing Committee on Communications,
IT and the Arts,
House of Representatives,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Request for submissions from Community Radio Stations to the House of Representatives Committee, 2006.

As a Community Radio station in the Noosa Shire, Sunshine Coast, Queensland, we seek to cover day to day activities occurring and affecting our Community.

This was recently brought to the forefront as a result of engaging in a Toot Your Own Horn competition with CBOOnline. As a result of our entry, we were privileged to be one of the 14 winning entries throughout Australia, for ways in which we link with our Community. Links to our Community have included, an Award winning Outside Broadcast for Tsunami Survivors/Victims in South East Asia, Local Outside Broadcasts at major Tourism outlets, (Eumundi Markets) who also Sponsor the Station, Awards at CBAA level for Best Sponsor Announcement, and more recently

Training, pertaining to the first Nationally Accredited Cert III Course in Radio Broadcasting by a Community Radio Station, and for the training and transition to computerized equipment in the Studios, with Presenters, of which there are approx. 70 to air each week.

We embrace all persons in our Community, wishing to be Presenters or Participants, offering their own life experiences and time, regardless of age/race/gender. We have had Presenters fully trained and on air at the age of 10, to our current elder in the station, sitting comfortably in his 82nd year.

We strive to cover a variety of interests, involvements and activities on the Coast, ranging from Human Interest stories, Environmental Information, Council information, the Arts (performing, visual and audio), programs on Small Business, Sports programs, diversity in Music, including a concentrated effort to support Local and Australian Music Artists. We regularly engage in Outside Broadcasts from the Eumundi Markets (Tourist Destination), and simulcast a local music event, 'The Peregian Originals' (supporting local music artists). We also engage in recording local items at various events, onto Mini Disc, for air play at a later date once edited. We have linked with the Local Police Station in Noosa Heads, to prerecord and put to air at fortnightly intervals, a Police Beat segment. Local News Bulletins are programmed into our air time daily. Noosa Community Radio has engaged in developing links with the University of the Sunshine Coast to providing workplace experience opportunities for students. We have also created the opportunity for persons with disabilities to volunteer at the station under a mentor system. We also have 2 unemployed persons at the station (via Employment agency) who are accruing time/points with us, in order for further training elsewhere to be partially funded by Centrelink.

We strive to link with all persons in our Community. We respect all volunteers for their unique input, for the purpose of Community Radio Broadcasting in our region.

We are predominantly a Volunteer organization, with our Sponsorship Reps (2), being paid a small commission, however, they also engage in various volunteer aspects of the station. More recently, we have engaged a paid Bookkeeper, recognizing this role as an integral part of the operations of the station. As a result of closer monitoring of operations, we have identified the necessity for the position of a paid Station Manager in the coming

months, to manage operations on a day to day basis, with some consistency and efficiency.

These are the items outlined are the main focus in our Broadcasting priorities/activities.

This brings to light, the introduction of Computers and (Adobe Audition software) to our stations Production facilities. Being able to record items on computer equipment has vastly improved Broadcasting standards. Our Production subcommittee, have embraced the 'buddy system' and each passes on knowledge to others. Funding was achieved via a Grant.

In our organization, there is no gender/racial/age, discrimination. All personnel are given the same opportunity to learn new technology and skills. As well as being a rewarding interest and opportunity to volunteer, the situation also provides hands on practical experience for persons seeking to gain employment in the Broadcasting or other relevant Industries.

Many of our Presenters endorse our local music artists, given it's hard to make ends meet, no matter what you do on the Coast, but more importantly, these Entertainers help sustain the Coast's local Tourism Industry, and deserve the recognition they would not ordinarily otherwise get, on Commercial radio stations.

We have recognized that as Youth are more involved with Computerized Technology, they tend to listen to radio that is streamed via the Internet. In this area we are disadvantaged, given that the fee from APRA is relatively high per annum to achieve same. We are a relatively small radio station in a high Tourism area. However, funding to reach this demographic comfortably is not in our budget, simply because we struggle to maintain the station for its operations.

This is, however, a trend that cannot be ignored if we are not to overlook the younger people in our Community. As we are moving in to a Youth and Entertainment Centre at Noosa Junction later this year, this is an item we would like to see addressed, in terms of funding accessibility for Community Radio Stations to stream, without the associated costs, to maintain connections with the Youth in our region.

Technically, we are challenged with our license restrictions. We have been granted a Permanent License some 4 years ago; however, it is only for 500 Watts. Given our Geographical status, (ie. hilly terrain), we are experiencing great difficulties broadcasting to our local population. The cost of retransmission equipment is expensive and the process lengthy.

Re: Digital Radio Broadcasting; I am advised by our Technician, that in this region, only 4 digital licenses will be issued, and us being a Community Radio Station, have no chance of securing at least one of those licenses against the bigger Commercial stations. There would appear to be an inequality in the distribution of same, rendering Community Radio as not even in the running, to obtaining one of these Licenses. This is aside, from the financial cost.

Income from Federal Government? I can check this further, however, to date; I do not believe we have received Federal Government assistance.

Our primary source of income is through Sponsors and Membership. Our main areas of expenditure are, covering the day to day costs of any operation/business. Maintenance, electricity, telephone, rent, general office equipment, IT, Production facilities. Publicity/promotion costs. We have even been told by Channel 7 in our area, we cannot have Community Announcements on their Community Notice board, because we are electronic media and competition to them. We experience losses with unpaid Sponsors, losing their businesses due to the regional market predominantly geared to Tourism, which is seasonal.

As mentioned, we are planning a move to Noosa Junction. The premises are being built to accommodate the need for an Auditorium in the region, as well as provide a facility for the University of the Sunshine Coast and Community Radio (which will be rented). Despite assistance from local Council, we are faced with costs in excess of \$130,000.00 to outfit same which we will somehow have to raise. We are working on Grant submissions; however, I am certain there will be rather a large shortfall. The fact that we cannot afford to pay a Project Manager, also heightens our concerns.

It is unfortunate, that no funding appears to have been allocated, on a State or Federal level to support this sector of the media, despite having proven value in local Community Radio Broadcasting. We also assist supporting the local International Tourism Industry, given our regional statistics.

In closing, despite the financial strains at times, we continue to support our local Community in Radio Broadcasting. We have a great team of people providing their energy and time into what we believe to be a necessary alternative to Commercial operations in Radio Broadcasting.

We trust our submission will be of benefit to your discussions. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further information or enquiries.

Regards,

Leonie Phillips
Vice President/Broadcasting Facilitator
Noosa Community Radio FM 101.3