

Community Broadcasting Foundation - Mr Ian Stanistreet

Supplementary Submission 114.1

The documents in question were not produced by the CBF but by the community broadcasting sector's major organisations operating collectively via the community broadcasting Funding Strategy Group (FSG).

The FSG is a working group on sector funding issues composed of the Presidents/Chairpersons and Executive Officers of the CBF and the major sector representative organisations, currently - the CBAA, AICA, RPH Australia, ACB & NEMBC. The IRCA has also been actively involved in previous years and is expected to be a participant again in the future. CBF President, John Martin, chairs the FSG and the CBF Secretariat provides administrative support for its meetings.

With so many diverse interests within the community broadcasting sector the FSG was formed in 2000 to ensure that the major sector organisations collaborated to address the very modest level of Australian Government support provided by the Australian Government via the CBF for community broadcasting maintenance and development. As such the FSG assesses sector funding needs and develops consensus on community broadcasting funding priorities. In most years it produces a funding submission for consideration by the Australian Government as part of the annual Budget process. As such submissions require the support of the relevant Minister the submission is first presented to the Minister for Communications for consideration as a New Policy Proposal. The submission is also provided to the members of the government's Expenditure Review Committee (ERC), and to other Ministers whose portfolio interests touch on particular community broadcasting interest areas, in order to gain their support. So, while the document is not formally requested by government it is made available to key members of the government and hopefully broadly considered.

The current sector funding submission was finalised in October 2006 and provided to Senator Coonan on 11 October 2006. It was also sent to all members of the ERC and the Ministers for Immigration, Indigenous Affairs and Arts in early December 2006. Meetings were subsequently held with many of the Ministers or their senior staff to support consideration of funding for digital radio and the broader submission.

The sector funding submissions developed and presented on the sector's behalf by the FSG have never received a comprehensive response from the Australian Government. When we have been successful it has generally been at a lower funding level than requested and confined to one or more areas

identified as a priority by the government. In 2004 the sector sought an increase in funding of \$10.8m. per annum and received (as the result of a pre-election commitment from the Coalition) \$1.5m. per year for Transmission Support funding and \$2.2m over four years for a national accredited training program. Our understanding is that the only element of the 2006 submission that may still be under consideration within the 2007/08 Budget process is funding support for the first phase of digital radio transition. Under the provisions of the Australian Government's Digital Radio Framework involvement is limited

to wide-area community radio stations based in six state capitals. If successful this funding will assist 40 of the sector's 359 long-term community radio services with access to digital radio infrastructure.