

**Submission to the Australian House of Representatives
House Standing Committee on Communications, Information, Technology and the
Arts.**

Inquiry into Community Broadcasting.

**Submitted by Lea Budge (Manager of 101fm Radio Logan Inc.) & Jim O'Brien
(Announcer 101FM Radio Logan Inc.).**

Main Points:

- 1. Overall view of Community Radio**
- 2. Sponsorship Time Allowed;**
- 3. Differentiating programming from advertising;**
- 4. Government Sponsors;**
- 5. Local Organisations coverage.**

1/ Overall view of Community Radio:

Community Radio provides:

- An identity – a centre piece for a specific community to relate to and learn from.
- Training – practical hands-on experience for Journalism students who participate in compiling and presenting the local news.
- Provides networking opportunities within the community.
- Training – practical training in and hands-on experience for those participants who desire to move into the ‘commercial’ broadcasting field.
- Mentoring – current volunteers provide mentoring to newer participants.
- Entertainment and information which is relevant to the lifestyle of the listening audience.
- An arena to present ideas, information, and causes - to an audience which normally may not have been exposed to this.
- Counter Disaster relief – should a natural disaster occur within our community, a community radio station would be able to keep its audience informed of emergency relief work, dangerous areas etc. Commercial stations cover too vast an area and are unable to highlight specific problems in specific areas.
- Community radio keeps it LOCAL – because of financial restraints, the commercial radio network feeds the one program to a number of radio

stations around Australia. Not only is this stunting the growth of the industry by minimizing employment opportunities, it is feeding only 'one point of view' across a nation. It also cuts out any LOCAL information that needs to be disseminated.

- Diverse program emphasis.
- Local News
- Community organizations use community radio to get their message out into the community in which they operate
- Small Businesses use community radio to promote their business/service to the community in which they service. Their dollar is better spent broadcasting to the audience which will purchase their goods/services.
- 7 million people across Australia listen to community radio each month. (McNair)

2/ Sponsorship Time allowed:

Currently the time allowed for sponsorships for community radio in Australia is 5 minutes per hour. Even though community radio caters for the local community, the amount of funds needed to run a radio station is very similar to that of commercial radio and community radio needs to sound as professional as the commercial stations. Being only allowed 5 minutes of sponsorships per hour is very prohibitive when it comes to raising much needed funds. Recent surveys have found that 25% of Australians listen to a community radio station at least once a week, so there is obviously a need for these types of radio stations in the community.

We feel that more sponsorship time should be allowed so that community radio stations have more funds, not to compete with other stations, but to have the funds to provide a better service to listeners in the local community.

3/ Differentiating programming from advertising:

One of the main issues experienced by community radio stations is differentiating programming from advertising. Many stations have been taken to task by the ACMA or had "Show Cause" notices because something said in a program has been interpreted as advertising. Because of the nature of community radio this is very difficult to overcome. On our station, 101FM (Radio Logan) we have a regular Morning Magazine show running for 3 hours Monday to Friday. An important part of this show is interviews with various organisations in the local community. Some of these interviews are with local artists, or local book authors or even a local business that may have important information for the community. As soon as the whereabouts of the business is mentioned, or the availability of a cd or book, this then becomes an advertisement. There does not seem to be any leeway. We feel there should be more latitude when it comes to differentiating programming to advertising.

4/ Government Sponsors:

Currently the Federal Government rarely, if at all, sponsors community radio stations. With many government initiatives focusing on local aspects of the Australian community, and the fact that community radio reaches that community, it seems logical that the government should get their message across by sponsored announcements on community radio stations. This would not only benefit the community, but would be a way for stations to raise much needed funds for the day to day running of the station.

5/ Local Organisations coverage:

Community radio is the voice of local organisations that are unable to get exposure on commercial radio stations. Many community stations have a specific format aimed at specific audiences e.g. classical music, country music, ethnic stations etc. These types of stations have audiences that are often catered for in various regional areas bordering our capital cities. If a community stations format is easy listening music for an age group of 35+, catering for a much wider audience than the stations previously mentioned, it is important that it reaches the largest audience possible, including these regional areas so that their community organisations can get their message across to that wider audience. An ethnic station may have an audience of 10,000 listeners, while an easy listening station may have an audience of 30,000. If an organisation wants to get their message across and the only community station in their area is the ethnic one, they are limited in the exposure they are able to obtain from their community station.

The wider audience type stations should be able to have a higher transmission output so that these regional areas can receive their signals as well as the immediate area local to the station. This would mean these organisations would have a wider coverage.

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