

House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Communications,
Transport and the Arts

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TOTAL RADIO **5tcb.FM**

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Adequacy of Radio Services in Non-Metropolitan Australia

Background

5tcb.FM operates a geographic (broad-based) community broadcasting licence out of Bordertown on 106.1MHz (1Kw ERP) with a translator at Keith on 104.5MHz. In 15 years of operation, 5tcb.FM has established itself as the major source of local information and together with ABC Radio, the only local daily source of information and entertainment in the Upper South East of SA. 5tcb.FM has a cumulative weekly listenership of 91%* of available audience.

**Source McGregor Jan Research Oct 1999*

Community of Interest

The Tatiara, whose administrative centre is based in Bordertown, services an area that incorporates the towns of Bordertown, Keith, Tintinara, Padthaway, Mundulla and Wolseley. The radio station is unable to provide programming to all of these towns due to license restrictions and equipment limitations although all the towns mentioned as well as others within close proximity of each other are desperate for their own local based and representative radio station. The only other information medium is The Bordertown's weekly newspaper "The Border Chronicle" and the twice-weekly Naracoorte "Herald". Anecdotal evidence suggests there is a genuine need for other towns of close proximity (Naracoorte, Kingston, Robe, Lucindale etc) to obtain the service to support their local needs and also be informed. At the moment, no such service exists.

Relevant Programming

5tcb.FM already produces local programming, especially in relation to local news and to agriculture (Farmtalk–daily), which directly effect or relate to people living in the Tatiara area and essentially following similar pursuits. Local information such as fire restrictions is also given. The District Council, State and Federal MP's all use 5tcb.FM as an information source. The station also produces a weekly rural program titled Landlink and this is broadcast locally and on rural based community radio stations throughout the country. A local Nunga radio program, essentially for the local listenership, is also part of the programming. The station has the ability and expertise to produce programming of a very high standard and ensuring compliance with the Broadcasting Services Act.

Local Interest in 5tcb.FM

The Station is well supported by Service Clubs, Sporting Bodies, Senior Citizens, Primary and High Schools, the Country Fire Service, State Emergency Services and organisations from within the area of influence where information needs to be down loaded. The Tatiara Council uses the station weekly to keep the local people informed on what is happening in their electorate and this facility can be broadened to reach more people and also support other councils where the station can be heard. Employer Groups use local broadcasts to advise labour forces of shift changes and working conditions. The Station is an integral source of information and has the ability to react to situations where the passing of information is urgent or critical to meet the requirements of the issuer.

Local Participation

Community members within the service area are encouraged to participate in the decision making of the station. Although the distance from Bordertown could be significant, people have always been involved in the station as Announcers and Committee Members and do not find the distances prohibitive. This ensures a flow of information to enable the interests of all parties to be met and also protected. Being a non-profit organisation, local participation in fund raising and also other areas to ensure the station's viability is mandatory to survival.

Likelihood of Local Licensee

There is no likelihood of a commercial licensee due to small population. Nearest commercial operators are located at Murray Bridge (5MU), Mount Gambier (5SE) and Horsham (3WM)- 280Kms, 148Kms and 173Kms away respectively.

Impact of Technology

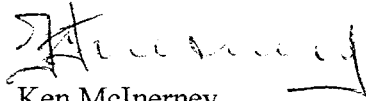
Although 5tcb.FM has embraced technology inside the studio with extensive use of digital storage and retrieval, it is anticipated that DRB will not be embraced quickly and when implemented, will be augmented by analogue broadcasting for as long as necessary to allow take up of the technology amongst farmers. 5tcb.FM understands the expectation of the service continuing with new technology and will continue to address these requirements in the interests of all concerned.

General

This Radio Station has the ability to embrace technology and provide far reaching services in the Upper South East of South Australia provided adequate funding can be obtained and the availability of licenses can be met without the strangled bureaucracy that presently exists. It is almost impossible to obtain a license without submissions that are considered and decided by public servants who do not understand the area of influence or have the time to visit and appreciate the limitations that rural based community radio stations have to deal with. 5tcb.FM has embarked on purchasing its own building and is in the course of modifying this building into a radio station that the Tatiara can be proud of.

The Board and Executive of Tatiara Community FM Broadcasters would like the opportunity to address the House Communications Committee on the adequacy of radio services in non-metropolitan Australia. We can be contacted on the above number regarding this matter.

Yours sincerely



Ken McInerney
Chairman
Board of Management