



LIFE FM GIPPSLAND  
PO Box 124  
Sale 3850

Phone: 5143 0355

Reg No. A0038679X

ABN#81 696 303 972

e-mail : [lifefm@i-o.net.au](mailto:lifefm@i-o.net.au)

[www.lifefm.com.au](http://www.lifefm.com.au)

9<sup>th</sup> November 2000

The Secretary  
House of Communications Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra  
ACT 2600

Secretary: .....  21 NOV 2000 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEES COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORT AND THE ARTS	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts
	Submission No: ..... 174
	Date Received: ..... 21/11/00
	Secretary: ..... Janet Holmes

### SUBMISSION TO REGIONAL RADIO INQUIRY

We wish to address what we see as the inability of large corporations and commercially driven enterprises to provide a distinctly LOCAL presence on radio in our region.

### SUMMARY

- There is a tangible need within the community for a radio station that provides an alternative to the networked commercial and ABC services.
- The community seeks uplifting rather than further demoralisation and commercialisation.
- Family support and encouragement is something that can be positively influenced by the medium of radio.
- Local programming is constantly being eroded within the established radio networks and Life FM can re-focus on our local community.
- Life FM in association with Adult Community Education, Sale will provide professional training for broadcasting with the potential for employment in the region.

### LOCAL MEDIA

The ABC, while delivering a very efficient, albeit lean representation of local events and news in Gippsland does what it can with limited "local" time - meaning programs generated from Gippsland. We have "local" news on the half-hour from 6:30 - 10:30am with the usual lunchtime bulletin at 12:30pm and then another "local" bulletin at 5:30pm. "Local" ABC programs are limited to breakfast from 6 till 9am and an afternoon program from 4 till 6pm. These are both excellent programs but if we have cricket or any other sporting event that needs to be "covered" statewide - we lose the "local" program and receive the network.

The commercial stations are both heavily networked and have very little "local" content except for the ads, which are very frequent. The commercial stations also have limited coverage in the area and many folk especially in East Gippsland can only receive the ABC.

### ALTERNATIVE/ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN GIPPSLAND

Gippsland Christian Broadcasters Inc. trading as LIFE FM

We believe Gippsland deserves better and so in an effort to address some of the points outlined in this Inquiry's Terms of Reference we submit what Life FM Gippsland has proposed for this region should we receive a Community Broadcasting Licence.

## **PROJECT AIMS**

- Provision of positive 'radio' that is uplifting in its content whilst addressing the needs of a fragmented rural audience.
- Provision of opportunities for training and experience in the radio industry for those seeking a career in this field.
- Provision of continuous local programming, which is not driven by either commercial interests or metropolitan programming dictates.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

We aim to bring hope to an audience that will include the inmates of two correctional facilities and people in numerous homes, cars, hospitals, the general workplace, and wherever human needs are present. Depression and suicide are significant issues within this region and Life FM seeks to confront these head-on with programs that will provide a means for education, understanding, acceptance, and the re-defining of individual worth.

Life FM is not a 'Church', nonetheless there will be an element of teaching programs that will seek to engage the community whilst tackling the issues of hopelessness that pervade our society.

- Initially our programming will be primarily music until such time as we have trained "local" presenters. Utilising a diverse mix of traditional, contemporary, country and Koori Christian music, **Life FM will provide a genre of music not generally heard on mainstream radio.** There will be an **opportunity for Australian talent to be showcased in addition to encouragement of emerging local (Gippsland) artists.** We intend to include in our broadcasts, established, Internationally recognised programs as well as programs produced locally.

**Outside broadcasts** will be an additional means of taking Life FM into the community, thus ensuring accessibility to all. As Life FM is a non-profit group we will seek to support the community groups who don't have the dollars to have the "main stream" media promote their efforts.

**We will eventually feature programs for Kooris, youth, seniors, war veterans as well as local current events and a daily magazine style program, which will reflect the myriad of arts and cultural elements in our region.**

## **SPECIFIC TARGET GROUPS**

- Families
- The unemployed
- The depressed
- Youth
- Cultural groups
- Community Organisations
- Small business
- Schools
- Correctional facilities

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN GIPPSLAND**

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- The elderly
- Church groups

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Life FM has been overwhelmed by the level of community support to date. Bairnsdale Adult Community Education Centre, which Co-ordinates the 'work for the dole' program, has provided the personnel and expertise necessary for the refurbishment of the office and studio. Local State and Federal Members of Parliament have sent letters of support. Many letters of support are listed on our web site [www.lifefm.com.au](http://www.lifefm.com.au)

All of the major Christian denominations are wholeheartedly supporting us. The Anglican Diocese of Gippsland has provided accommodation for the studio in the middle of the central business district of Sale, at a more than generous rental rate.

The steering committee comprises members of most Christian denominations in the area : Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Christian Outreach Centre, Churches of Christ and Uniting Church and our membership covers many more denominations.

## **ACCESS TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

Specific programs will be initiated for the vision impaired and for others with disability. Community input will be sought from groups representing people with disability and regular programming applicable to the needs of these groups will also be a focus of our operation. Liaison with community integration agencies will be undertaken to ensure that those with disability have access to the future planning operation of Life FM.

## **PROMOTION AND MARKETING**

Promotion of Life FM will be achieved primarily by being 'on-air'. By the very nature of its operation the radio station will promote itself. In addition newspaper advertising will be maintained to ensure that new listeners are attracted.

A range of 'billboard' advertising is also contemplated and being a 'community radio' relationships will be developed with Shire Councils and other community organisations that support our aims.

The **Internet** is already providing significant marketing and mail is already being received, including interstate correspondence. And we are not transmitting yet!

In addition, **school programs** are planned which will provide the opportunity for reciprocal contact with students and teachers.

Local **small businesses** are excited about the prospect of being able to advertise on radio without the huge overheads required by the commercial stations. **Life FM, as a non-profit group is interested in helping to keep small business viable in our region.** We are more interested in helping our community than accumulating funds.

## **SPONSORSHIP AND OTHER FUNDING**

Life FM will operate on with a volunteer base and un-paid work that is provided by the community. Staff will eventually be paid when income permits, but at this time Life FM relies on its volunteers.

Volunteers will undertake fundraising for Life FM in the initial stages, and it is 'sponsorship' that will primarily fund our operation. As a 'community radio' Life FM will not be permitted to

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advertise; however sponsorship is permitted.

As Life FM is a 'non-profit' organisation, this will allow 'sponsorships' to be accessible to a range of small businesses that could not have afforded to advertise previously. This provides immense opportunity for the potential expansion of business, particularly in the small business sector. With the constraints of a maximum of 5mins sponsorship announcement per hour for Community Broadcasting as required by the Australian Broadcasting Authority, we estimate that our monthly (30 days) maximum sponsorship contribution would be \$54,000.00. This money will be kept in Gippsland to re-cycle through our community.

We will continue to seek philanthropic funding, and whilst all forms of funding are likely to increase once we are 'on-air', in the initial stages funding from individuals and organisations is essential.

### **EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE**

Numerous managerial personnel are included in both our general membership and the steering committee. We have previously obtained the 'at no cost' services of a Broadcast Engineering specialist who is employed full-time in the industry. This specialist is providing all of the technical assistance necessary. He has been involved in such projects before and also has close liaison with the Australian Broadcasting Authority.

Our Acting Station Manager has previously established an identical style of radio station in Geelong and her husband is similarly experienced. Both provide technical and administrative expertise that is invaluable. In addition, one of our committee is professionally employed as a regional radio station manager and presenter, having also been involved in Community Radio over many years. A further non-committee member is also employed professionally as a radio Producer/Broadcaster with a national radio network.

We believe in our community and believe that we deserve the opportunity to show that as a community we can support and encourage each other - Life FM Gippsland will be a catalyst.

Yours faithfully



Peter Richter  
President,  
Life FM Gippsland