

Submission 2

To the Secretary of the Committee Response to Inquiry into Community Broadcasting

Response to Federal government inquiry into community broadcasting
by Linda Campbell

Terms of Reference

The scope and role of Australian community broadcasting across radio, television, the internet and other broadcasting technologies:

Community radio, television, internet and other broadcasting technologies should be just that – media for all members of the community. People with differing views and ideologies on life and politics from the mainstream have nowhere else to have their say. Particularly in the current political climate, a democratic country like Australia desperately needs outlets for alternative voices to be heard. This is not only an important role, but I would strongly argue a vital role for community broadcasting.

In addition, and with certain social tensions in the community, community media can help play its part to glue relationships between diverse subcultures within the community – and hence play a role in building community. But this can only occur if proactive strategies are devised and implemented. There must be opportunities, encouragement and promotion if voices from the fringe are to be successfully seen, read and heard.

Finally, community broadcasting has a fantastic opportunity to promote Australian music and arts. There is so much talent out there that because of commercial interests never gets seen or heard.

Content and programming requirements that reflect the character of Australia and its cultural diversity:

If they do not exist already, perhaps there needs to be regulations on the amount of air time made available to each individual / group – and regulations to make certain that members of any committees or boards pertaining to community broadcasting truly come from a cross-section of different interest groups – and that no one group dominates. At least, analysis needs to be made on how to keep community radio open to the fringe and not dominated by mainstream groups.

Again, Australia desperately needs outlets for alternative voices to be heard and cultural diversity has to be defined beyond the cliché* meaning of simply having people from different countries of origin broadcasting. Opportunities should be there for all people of Oz to be heard and seen in their fullest complexity and diversity. Those from the fringe should be enticed by strategic planning to get involved!

Technological opportunities, including digital, to expand community broadcasting networks:

Community broadcasting, with political good will and spirit, could move beyond being that 'quaint' little radio station that only broadcasts to a few streets away. It could become a 'real' alternative (like public broadcasting) that rivals and provides a refreshing alternative to all-the-very-same commercial outlets. The technological opportunities, including digital and internet, are mind boggling.

Opportunities and threats to achieving a diverse and robust network of community broadcasters:

It would be depressing if community broadcasting should become dominated by any religious groups - no matter how much lobbying or financial power they have.

Thank you, Linda Campbell.