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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
TELECOMMUNICATIONS,
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
AND THE ARTS

Submission No. 123

Dr Anna Dacre
Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Communications,
Information Technology and the Arts
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Dacre

RE: Community Broadcasting Inquiry

The Australia Council for the Arts welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this Inquiry.

Our submission is not detailed but provides in-principle statements that focus on the sections concerning:

- The scope and role of Australian community broadcasting across radio, television, the Internet and other broadcasting technologies; and
- Content and programming requirements that reflect the character of Australia and its cultural diversity.

Introduction

The Australia Council strongly supports the Australian community broadcasting sector which delivers a rich diversity of program content including cultural content and entertainment to communities defined by geographical location or common interest which is inadequately served by the commercial broadcasting sector.

We are also aware of the growing importance of the sector with the latest research by McNair Ingenuity revealing that more than seven million Australians— or 45 per cent of people aged over 15 years—listen to community radio every month. Recent OzTam figures also indicate that community television has established an audience reach during its current trial phase of 3.6 million people.¹

¹ www.cbonline.org.au/index.cfm?

1 The scope and role of Australian community broadcasting across radio, television, the Internet and other broadcasting technologies

The Australia Council holds the view that community broadcasting plays a critical role in providing arts programming in niche areas, particularly for regional and multicultural audiences for whom content is less diverse and limited through the commercial broadcasting sector, including pay TV.

Furthermore community broadcasting provides invaluable opportunities for community access, participation, training, experimentation and innovation in radio and television production. It is a significant platform for actors, musicians, writers, directors and producers to improve their skills and professionalism, and we believe that this experience will assist in allowing artists and others involved in the creative industries to earn an income through their chosen career.

It is important that the Inquiry consider ways to expand the scope and role of community broadcasting to supply an increasing demand for Australian cultural and creative content.

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

As Australia's peak arts body, the Australia Council recognises the enormous value of the community-broadcasting sector in promoting, and contributing to, the cultural life of the nation. This includes coverage of local arts events, new Australian music, emerging and mid-life artists, as well as broadcasting of Australian documentaries and dramas.

Community radio and television provide unique opportunities for people from diverse cultural, linguistic, geographical and life experience backgrounds to explore and present their contemporary arts and cultural practices. It provides a key production and delivery mechanism for building culturally vibrant communities and opening up broader intercultural dialogues. The Australia Council has supported a range of arts and cultural development projects, which have utilised community broadcasting services for production and distribution purposes.

We are also aware of new trends emerging where community radio in particular is attracting young and emerging audiences. For example Sydney-based youth music station FBI is targeting a young demographic through playing the music of emerging artists and bands—music that is not aired on other stations. This has been an enormously successful strategy for the station and has also provided an outlet and profile that was not available to many musicians before.²

² Popularity of alternative air waves more than spin, By Anneli Knight, Sydney Morning Herald, September 16, 2004

It is vital that the Inquiry examines ways to measure and meet unmet community demand for arts-cultural content in the community broadcasting sector.

Thank you for considering the Australia Council's submission to this Inquiry. Please do not hesitate to contact Claire Duffy, Director - Strategy, on 02 9215 9004 if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Bott', written in a cursive style.

Jennifer Bott
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

27 April 2006