



The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP

MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS

Mr Stuart Woodley
Secretary
Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

22 DEC 2014

Government response to community broadcasting reports - 2007

Dear Mr Woodley

In 2007 the former House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts produced two reports on community broadcasting:

- *Community Television: Options for Digital Broadcasting* – tabled in February 2007
- *Tuning in to Community Broadcasting* – tabled in June 2007

Community Television: Options for Digital Broadcasting made five recommendations regarding the future use of the ‘sixth channel’ spectrum and funding community television for the transition to digital. *Tuning in to Community Broadcasting* made 14 recommendations regarding government funding of community broadcasting, management training for participants, sector guidelines and copyright matters.

To date no previous government has provided a response to either report. Since the two reports were first tabled many of the issues they raise and recommendations they contain have been addressed, implemented or superseded by the advent of new technologies and government policy.

In relation to community television (CTV), digital switchover has been completed across Australia and CTV broadcasters currently have temporary access to a broadcasting channel (referred to as the ‘sixth channel’) for digital terrestrial transmission.

On 10 September 2014, the Australian Government announced that following careful deliberation it considers that the best outcome for CTV for the long-term is for the CTV sector to utilise the internet as its distribution platform.

To allow for this transition, the Government has extended the term of the CTV broadcasters’ transmitter licence arrangements to 31 December 2015. The Government is also working with the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF) to make some funding available for CTV’s transition through the Community Broadcasting Program.

Following the transition, the Government intends to free up the sixth channel for other purposes. In the short term, this would include assisting commercial and national free-to-air television broadcasters to test and migrate to new and more efficient broadcasting technologies. The Government's current spectrum policy review will consider whether the sixth channel should be re-planned for alternative non-broadcasting uses.

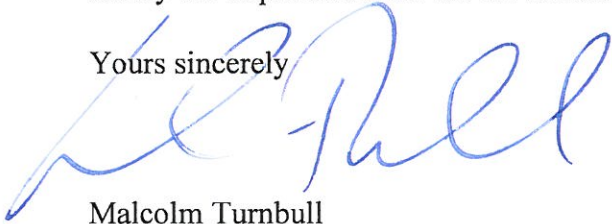
The Government will continue to support the important role that community radio broadcasting plays in providing valuable services to interest groups not specifically served by commercial, subscription or national broadcasters and contributes to the overall diversity of the broadcasting sector.

In relation to management and guidelines for the community broadcasting sector, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has worked with the sector to develop Codes of Practice for community radio and television as well as guidelines for sponsorship, participation, operating a not-for-profit service and transferring a licence. The ACMA has also included management practice, technical and financial details as a part of the requirements for the licence renewal process for community broadcasters.

In relation to funding, the Government will continue to provide support to the broader community broadcasting sector through the Community Broadcasting Program administered by the CBF.

I trust this information will be of assistance and, given the passage of time, that this letter will satisfy the requirement for the Government to respond to these two reports.

Yours sincerely



Malcolm Turnbull