



Submission 117

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Inquiry into Community Broadcasting in Australia

Submitted by:

Radio 8CCC Community Radio Inc.

Inquiry into Community Radio

8CCC: Upfront, Outback Community Radio, 102.1FM.

1. Introduction

Local voices, local content, local views

8CCC Community Radio Station, the Northern Territory's first FM licence holder, provides a vibrant, upfront community broadcasting service to more than 12,000 listeners monthly in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek.

8CCC offers an outstanding service to its outback listeners with a personalised mix of programming, special language services, music, live event coverage and local information that closely matches its community's special needs and reflects the wide range of groups and viewpoints that make Australia's Centre unique.

Equally important, 8CCC gives the Centre both a voice and choice. It provides a much needed alternative to mainstream commercial radio and enables marginalised community groups under-represented in other media to be heard including ethnic groups, youth, women, lesbian, gay men and religious groups.

With this simple but effective mission, 8CCC has grown to become an important community catalyst, helping to link community groups closer together through the power and reach of community radio.

8CCC is an efficient and effective not for profit organisation, volunteer driven, with low overheads, good financial controls and a proactive board and management that closely monitors costs and benefits for its audience.

Effective and efficient management, however, has not been able to compensate for a change in the station's financial circumstances. Funding that had been available for 19 years through 8CCC's location on Centralian College campus was ceased when the station was required to vacate the now Charles Darwin University campus. Aside from this, very limited funding is derived from sponsorship, membership, CBF program grants, fundraising dollars and small donations from the public. A submission has been made to the NT government for continuance of on-going funding, without which, it is problematic whether 8CCC will survive.

This is mentioned only to demonstrate how precarious the environment in which community radio operates, can be, and, yet, how committed to its precepts, are its volunteers.

We currently operate from a shop front at 10 Lindsay Ave in Alice Springs. We lack a permanent home and have only one makeshift studio used for live to air broadcasting, outreach programs and training. This limits, significantly, our ability to offer, and grow, a truly responsive community and outreach service.

2. History

8CCC grew out of grassroots enthusiasm amongst the people of Alice Springs and surrounds for their own community radio station. After a series of public meetings in 1979/80, 8CCC hit the airwaves with a "c" class licence in 1981, transmitting on 102.1FM from what is now Anzac Hill High School. The service extended to Tennant Creek in 1990. With a proud 25-year history of community service, 8CCC is a great example of local spirit, volunteer passion, a can-do philosophy and Australian egalitarianism.

3. Our audience: over 12,000 listeners per month, broad demographic

8CCC estimates its current audience reach is well over 12,000 per month based on the 2004 McNair Ingenuity Community Radio Listener Survey. This survey shows that 42% of all people 15+ in the Northern Territory listen to community radio in an average week and

63% listen to community radio in an average month. With 19 764 people aged 15+ in this service area, 8CCC estimates its audience reach as 12 451 people in an average month.

Not surprisingly, 8CCC membership (paid subscribers) echoes the demographic of Alice Springs with a balance of males and females and broad representation across the different cultural groups living in the Centre.

People not only hear 8CCC via our outside speaker but they see us. People walk in to make requests, inquire about how to get involved with community radio or just to say 'giddy'.

3.1 *Tennant Creek*

8CCC began broadcasting to Tennant Creek in 1990. Though Tennant Creek has a small population (approximately 3000), 8CCC provides a valuable LOCAL service to the town. Our links with local businesses and community groups allow ready access to promotions of local businesses, promotions of community events and activities. 8CCC is one of only two radio services providing access to 'advertising' of meetings, forums and visits to Tennant Creek by professional services from Alice Springs or Darwin.

8CCC also has a studio at the Educational Facilities in Staunton Street Tennant Creek. This enables local residents to train and produce pre-recorded programs which are sent to Alice Springs for broadcasting.

These facilities are also accessed by students. The most recent example is from Tennant Creek High School, where a group of students learned the art of 'driving' a console and produced a one hour show for relay on 102.1FM.

Though the town is serviced by the ABC and CAAMA, 8CCC provides an invaluable alternative for youth in Tennant Creek. Our diverse programming includes shows presented by youth featuring hip hop, R&B and contemporary artists.

Tennant Creek listeners take the time to ring in and make requests especially on a Sunday during our Country Music hours.

Whenever a volunteer goes to Tennant Creek for work, they offer to provide training for new volunteers based in town.

4. *8CCC – providing outstanding value to the community through local voice, choice and involvement*

4.1 *Diversity in voice and message*

We pride ourselves on community access and involvement in our community radio station. Ethnic groups, women's groups, indigenous groups, disability groups, youth or students groups all access 8CCC.

4.2 *Building community: promoting multiculturalism*

Our ethnic broadcasters are part of a vibrant Australia-wide ethnic communications network that enriches Australian society as a whole. Each broadcaster acts as representatives of their cultural groups, providing important information, news and cultural services to their communities. For governments to provide these services to our ethnic communities would cost millions of dollars.

4.3 *Community Volunteering & Involvement*

Our volunteers, approximately 40, spend a minimum of 120 hours per week serving 8CCC listeners - on air, in the office or fundraising.

5. 8CCC's community services: local voices, local views, local content.

5.1 Our Programming

8CCC programming is a mirror of the diverse community it serves and the broad range of interests of the volunteers who create each program. We offer a rich and eclectic mix of news and current affairs, women's, social and environmental issues, health, spirituality and relaxation, world music, religion, sport, the arts and youth, BBC World Service and live event coverage. As well, we deliver non-English speaking programs in three languages.

8CCC adheres to the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia's Code of Practice, which includes the principle of enhancing the diversity of programming choices available to the public and presenting programs which expand the variety of viewpoints broadcast in Australia. This principle is certainly reflected in 8CCC's programming.

- ***Non-English speaking programs – news, views and music***

Currently we offer news and music programs in Latin American, French, Spanish, Filipino and Maori. Past programs have been produced in Italian, Dutch, Japanese and German. Most importantly, we have a flexible programming strategy which adjusts to the cultural mix in our transient population, and the availability and interest of volunteer ethnic broadcasters.

We know how important radio is to our ethnic communities. This is supported by research by the Victorian Department of Social Services which found that ethnic communities are increasingly reliant on radio for the distribution of information, rather than print. To stay abreast of multicultural issues, 8CCC is an active member of the Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia which provides support and encouragement to groups who use the radio for information or programming needs.

- ***Music – many tastes, many genres***

Our music diversity covers R&B, alternative, acoustic, rock, pop, blues, jazz, ambient, world, folk, country, nostalgia, reggae, hip-hop – and everything in between.

5.2 Our Community Services – adding value to our communities

8CCC provides a valuable service to the communities we serve: as a broadcaster, trainer and 'employer' of volunteers, and a supporter of community and special needs groups.

- ***Access and outreach service for people with disabilities***

8CCC provides access to our facilities for people with intellectual disabilities. With an accompanying carer, individuals and small groups from organisations such as Bindi Inc. and CASA learn how to use the equipment, listen to their favourite music and 'be a DJ'. This important service helps people develop self-esteem and self-confidence.

- ***Coverage for local events, visual and performance artists***

Whenever resources permit, 8CCC provides live to air broadcasts and interviews from major community events such as Harmony Day and the community Tsunami Appeal. By recording and broadcasting their performances from, for example, the Alice Springs Festival and Music NT, we are also supporting local musicians.

- ***Community Service Announcements***

We provide support for a wide range of community groups through our "community service announcements" which promote community events and activities as well as assist with their fundraising drives.

- **Community partnerships**

The station continues to work hard to consolidate community partnerships, links and mutual support.

A sample of our community partnerships since October 2004 include:

- ◆ National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) – audio packages were produced by 8CCC FM.
- ◆ An outside broadcast (OB) from the Alice Springs Community Tsunami Appeal.
- ◆ Harmony Day OB was organised in conjunction with the Alice Springs Town Council, The Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia and InCite Youth Arts on March 19, 2006. For the past 3 years, 8CCC has been on the Harmony Day organisational committee.
- ◆ Hepatitis C Awareness week promotions – collaboration with the Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council (Alice Springs) which included on air quizzes, interviews and giveaways.
- ◆ Support for community fundraising initiatives, with on air announcements and provision of cost saving items such as pens for quiz nights or an MC.
- ◆ Work experience for school students from a range of different schools.
- ◆ Promotion of National Science Week in conjunction with CSIRO (Alice Springs) and the Department of Employment Education and Training (Alice Springs).
- ◆ Joint Grant applications with community groups [eg: Arid Lands Environment Council and Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council (Alice Springs)]
- ◆ Alice Springs Show OB sharing a booth and promotions with Charles Darwin University.
- ◆ Latino Disco OB broadcast live on 102.1FM in conjunction with Grupo Latino Alice Springs.
- ◆ Joint fundraiser for *red shoes*, a local performance theatre group, to perform at the 2006 Adelaide Fringe Festival
- ◆ Currently in discussions with Relationships Australia to participate in the “Young Offenders Program”.

6. Training and Development – the only local provider

Though not accredited, 8CCC is the only radio station in Central Australia which provides broadcast training for anyone interested in getting involved with radio. Our initiatives include:

- ***Training our Volunteers***

8CCC provides regular training sessions for new volunteers, in both Alice Springs and Tennant Creek.

- ***Setting high standards***

8CCC is proud that many Centralians who received their first radio presentation training through 8CCC have gone on to pursue further studies in the media or have enjoyed successful careers in commercial or public broadcasting. Others have been proud recipients of media awards.

- ***Seniors workshops***

8CCC has also conducted workshops for members affiliated with the University of the Third Age (U3A), giving these seniors new skills, knowledge and much enjoyment.

- ***After School and holiday program***

Until 8CCC was forced by circumstances to move to smaller premises, the station ran both an after school program and a school holiday program for youth in Alice Springs. We also held school holiday workshops in Tennant Creek.

Some of these 'kids' continued their involvement as presenters on 8CCC. One was offered and accepted an apprenticeship with CAAMA radio after he was "heard" on 8CCC.

These wonderful initiatives will be lost to the local communities if 8CCC does not secure adequate ongoing funding.

7. Our volunteer base: our great strength

8CCC is a volunteer driven organisation. The station's committed and proud volunteers give around 120 hours per week of their time to produce and deliver a professional, high quality community radio service.

And our volunteers stick with us. One of our presenters has been on air since we began; several others have served 102.1FM for between 10 and 23 years. Our most senior presenter retired recently aged 80, after 21 years of broadcasting and our youngest presenters have been just 12 years old! Though we have presenters who have been broadcasting for years, we also have volunteers who have been with us for less than a month. 8CCC is constantly evolving.

Why do our volunteers become involved and stay involved? Because they love community radio! It provides them with opportunities unavailable anywhere else in the community. 8CCC does not constrain our presenters with 'playlists', nor impose a 'style' of broadcasting. People are free to explore what works for them.

To show its appreciation of our volunteers, 8CCC held an 'Inaugural Awards Night' to coincide with the 2005 Annual General Meeting.

8. Fundraising achievements: almost \$25,000 annually!

Over the past 25 years, 8CCC has strived to maximise its income through sponsorship, fundraising, membership and grant submissions. However, as the majority of our volunteers work fulltime, raising funds is always a challenge.

From January to March 2006, two major fundraising activities were undertaken. 8CCC also continues to actively seek financial support through grant applications. During February/March 2006, 4 grant applications were submitted.

We also continue to seek funding through the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF) for our ethnic and RPH (Reading for the Print Handicapped) programs, as well as all other CBF categories for which 8CCC is eligible.

9. Financial Imperatives

While the costs involved with managing and operating a volunteer-driven community radio station are relatively low, there are a number of fixed costs in providing a community radio service that must be met.

Examples of fixed costs include funding for staff, rent, telecommunications, transmission sites, insurance, licences, administration, technical maintenance and repairs, bookkeeping and equipment. At this time, there is no paid staff, as the scant funds received are used to operate the station.

For nearly ten years 8CCC received a Northern Territory government annual grant of \$104,500 (GST inclusive) through the VET scheme to support the station's operations. When 8CCC moved from Charles Darwin University in December 2005, this funding was no longer available to 8CCC as we were not a Recognised Training Organisation.

8CCC has recently put in an urgent submission for funding to the NT government in order to maintain and operate its wide ranging community broadcasting and outreach services.

10. Summary

8CCC is committed to the concept of community. We accept it is a key part of our community role to develop and maintain vital links within the community, to expand community partnerships, and support mutual not-for-profit volunteer organisations in their everyday struggles for promotions and fundraising.

All our volunteers and staff work hard to provide a responsive service to the Alice Springs and Tennant Creek communities, which are surely unique.

Community broadcasting sector plays a vital role in providing an alternative voice to mainstream media, a local perspective on news and current affairs, a diversity of programming as well as opportunities for training and development to members of the community.

It has the potential to reach minorities who would otherwise remain isolated and unaware, to assist in raising awareness of social and health issues, as well as providing cultural recognition and self-expression.

It is crucial that Government continues to provide support for community broadcasting and acknowledges the vital role it plays in the community.