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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
TELECOMMUNICATIONS,
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AND THE ARTS

Tuning Into Community Broadcasting.

According to the Whyalla Council's statistics the Whyalla FM Public Broadcasting Association Inc. (5YYY FM) operates in a remote city of approximately 20,600 people. Whyalla is on the west coast of South Australia around four (4) hours travel by road from Adelaide and thirty five (35) minutes by air. Our closest neighbours are Port Augusta (76 Kms.) and Cowell (102 Kms.) our call sign is 5YYY FM and more details can be found on our website at 5yyy.com.

Triple Y's focus is across the whole community and we provide access to our ethnic, religious and special interest groups over a range of programs. Whyalla has, in the past, been portrayed as a 'dumping ground' for the underprivileged in the media and, while this is not the case, we do have some problems in this area. This gives our radio station opportunities to speak directly with these families and the people who support them to give them, as well as the decision-makers of this city, a voice.

We have a particularly strong relationship with the Whyalla City Council who supports what we do and use us to present an information program each week highlighting council issues and legislative changes which affect the ratepayers. Listeners are invited to call and pass questions to the council employee if they are relevant to that person's particular area of expertise.

With regard to sport 5YYY has its own sports program but the resources and facilities required to gather and process information are limited and with extra funding and space could be greatly enhanced.

Whyalla has a very diverse cultural background due to the overseas recruitment drive by BHP many years ago. Access for ethnic groups is provided and we broadcast five (5) hours of ethnic programming from the Italian, Greek, German and Austrian communities which are well received.

Our city is also well served by the local music scene. Alison Hams and Graeme Hugo and the Iron Bark Band are but two (2) who have their origins in this city. Five Triple Y has launched several albums by each but also supports emerging local groups through our association with Council's 'Out of the Shed' initiative. 'Out of the Shed' is designed to get young people out of the garage and give them practice space at a purpose built venue. We then promote and play the result.

The Whyalla FM Public broadcasting Association's annual budget for 2004/05 ran at a loss in real terms of \$26,192.00 compared to 2003/04 where a loss of \$19,066.00 was incurred. Total expenses for 2004/05 were \$50,628.00 against an income of only \$24,453.00. During 2004/05 no grant applications were written due to circumstances surrounding the person(s) responsible for this task.

Normally approximately \$10,000.00 worth of grants from the Community Broadcasting Foundation Pty. Ltd. would have been received and this problem has now been corrected. Sponsorship is our main revenue stream and accounts for approximately 58% of our budget, while Federal Government grants, at best, account for no more than 10%.

Unfortunately the sponsorship/advertising dollar is spread between four (4) radio stations (including 5YYY FM) and one television network. Selling sponsorship in Whyalla is not easy because while 5YYY FM has a reach of probably 50,000 people (Whyalla, Port Pirie and small towns near Port Pirie which is across Spencer Gulf) the other networks have a reach of hundreds of thousands of people which extends into the far north of the state.

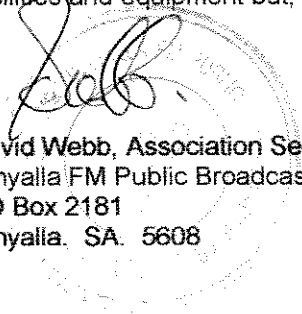
This is a problem 5YYY FM has no way of addressing and must look at other alternatives to sponsorship to survive.

In the past wages has been our main area of expenditure but, due to our financial position we are no longer able to employ a Station Co-ordinator. Utilities such as phone and power also account for approximately 25% of our expenditure with BAS/GST also a large item.

With access to more funding 5YYY FM could update equipment which is in some cases twenty five (25) years old and well past the end of its useful life. We could also acquire a backup transmitter and a reliable emergency power unit. Whyalla and the Eyre Peninsula, including Port Lincoln, are particularly vulnerable to power outages for long periods of time. This means 5YYY FM may be off air for long periods and as a consequence conveys the impression that we may be unreliable to our potential sponsors.

We do have a small second production studio where we are limited to sponsorship promotion recording and presenter training – but only one or two at a time – but no conference or meeting facilities. Funding would allow us to provide meeting and planning facilities where we could centralise the life of our community radio family and take it away from the 'kitchen table mentality' we are currently forced to employ.

These initiatives also have the added benefit of taking management and planning meetings out of the kitchen, with its constant distractions, and allow those involved to more effectively plan our way forward. Space and equipment don't come cheaply and 5YYY FM faces many decisions in the future if we are to lift morale, provide our members with state of the art facilities and equipment but, step by step, with the help of funding grants we will succeed.



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