

SOUND OF THE SHIRE
2SSR-FM
99.7 STEREO
Sutherland Shire Community Radio Association Inc.

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**SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS,
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS 2006**

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia.

Introduction

Our Association would like to endorse the essential value of Community Broadcasting and voluntarism to local communities at a time when there is much commercialism and self interest in society.

2SSR-FM commenced permanent broadcasting in 1992. It's workforce is 100 per cent voluntary.

2SSR is the only station in the geographical area of the Sutherland Shire providing local content to the community.

The Sutherland Shire community, (pop. approximately 215,000), is a vibrant and active one set in a large geographical area. The Shire benefits not only from a naturally beautiful environment of national parks beaches and bays, but also from a Council which supports cultural activities in the community. The Shire abounds in creative talent which has featured strongly on the local radio station over its 13 years of operation.

Areas of Involvement

Listed here are some of the areas in which 2SSR has contributed and is contributing positively to the community:

1. Special focus on Youth including training.
Close alliances formed with the following:
 - Local government
 - Cultural groups including musical societies, local musicians and Bands,
 - Ethnic groups
 - TAFE, primary and secondary schools,
 - Learning Difficulties support groups
 - National Parks and Wildlife Service
 - Boys Town
 - PCYC
 - Local ethnic communities
 - Local Police
 - Rural Fire Service, Fire Brigades and State Emergency Services
 - Department of Community Services
 - Centrelink
 - Reconciliation group (Aboriginal program 'Deadly Sounds' is taken via Satellite)
 - Church groups
 - Community Neighbourhood Centres
 - Environmental groups
 - Reading/Writing Hotline
 - Road and Transport Authority
 - Major Clubs in the Shire
 - Scouts and Guides
 - Charities
 - Historical Society
 - Emergency Services
 - Local Heritage
 - Festivals and charitable events
 - Supporting Australian music – 30% Australian content

Examples of Community Involvement:

Each year for the past five years 2SSR has conducted a live outside broadcast of the NSW Cancer

Council's 24-hour Relay for Life event, also being represented on the organizing committee.

Live outside broadcasts have also been conducted for numerous community festivals, schools and community groups.

Sutherland Shire Symphony Orchestra performances are recorded and replayed on 2SSR.

Special training courses have been conducted for Macedonian youth and senior people.

All emergency situations have been reported on, broadcasting directly from Emergency

Services
Headquarters.

Support for Employment Opportunities

2SSR has made a positive contribution to job creation through providing training and support for young people, by hosting university, TAFE, high school and journalism students on work experience placements.

Approximately 10 per cent of people trained at 2SSR have progressed to paid employment in the media. These former trainees are now working in media across the nation.

A general pattern encompasses the following:

- Year 10 student is accepted for work experience
- The student becomes a member of 2SSR.
- the student undertakes broadcast training
- After gaining experience the member applies for further training at the

Australian Film Television and Radio School or goes directly into paid employment in the media.

The station has also supported office volunteers into paid employment after providing an opportunity to gain skills and confidence under supervision.

Access for the community

Access is ensured through the democratic management structure of 2SSR. i.e. work of the station is spread across a number of key areas for each of which there is a manager and officer or officers. These positions are filled at annual elections by vote of all members. All members of the public are eligible to join as members unless there are extraordinary circumstances which would affect the welfare of the station and its members.

The Association has usually between 150 and 200 members, with a turnover of members as they achieve objectives. Approximately 80 volunteers at any time involved in the areas of broadcasting, training, marketing, technical, fundraising, administration etc.

Programming on 2SSR

The program format includes programs for seniors, programs for Youth, ethnic programs, and also programs for emergency services, TAFE, specialist music programs, religious programs, local sport including broadcast of Rugby home games, local clubs, national news, local news and current affairs.

Financial Resources

2SSR is not an affluent station, with an annual income of around \$50,000.00. Due to the terrain and a lack of resources there have been some problems in covering all areas of the Shire which is desirable in emergency situations. 2SSR has also been affected over

the years by interference from another station based in the Newcastle area. Some equipment including the two consoles is old and in need of replacement. There is no provision at present for computer based broadcasting facilities, and the station is based in temporary premises.

A building fund is gradually being added to in the hope of being able to build permanent accommodation at the Loftus Campus of TAFE on land leased to our Association by TAFE. The cost of building is prohibitive but our goals are set. There is no doubt that increased funding would greatly assist stations such as ours.

2SSR receives no regular government funding apart from small amounts in grants for ethnic programming. Currently we broadcast programs in Macedonian and Maori, as well as English and have in the past also broadcast programs in Arabic, Greek and Chinese. We hope to replace the latter in the near future.

Inadequacy of Funding for the Community Broadcasting Sector

With the increased number of licensed stations, and a disproportionate increase in funding for the total sector, it is regarded as unlikely that 2SSR would receive a general purpose grant through the Community Broadcasting Foundation. Ideally we would like to be able to obtain funding to replace major equipment and allow for saving for digital broadcasting.

The lack of funding for the sector generally is exacerbated in the case of 2SSR because commercial stations aggressively pursue advertising in the Sutherland Shire even though they are not based in the area.

There is a general perception that commercial stations have huge audiences and therefore businesses tend to favour the commercial stations.

Unique Value of Local Radio

The technology developed in the area of community broadcasting has enabled valuable diverse program content to be delivered across Australia, supplementing local content. We cannot stress strongly enough the unique value of community broadcasting in our area and the local content that we broadcast.

Many charitable groups as well as cultural groups and other local organisations are dependent on 2SSR for the free community service announcements that are broadcast in all programs and also for live outside broadcasts.

Local emergencies can only be covered accurately by the local broadcaster which has direct links to all local emergency services.

Testimonials

Written Testimonials to the role and the value of 2SSR are available from many sources in the community – from local government, emergency services, TAFE, Charities, schools and residents. As a new station 2SSR received an award from the NSW government for its role its accurate and reliable reporting on the devastating 1994

bushfires, and has received written appreciation from local government and all emergency authorities in relation to coverage of all ensuing disasters.

Conclusion

Our Association urges the Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts to support and strengthen the role and the viability of community broadcasters who are providing an invaluable service to their communities. Because the community broadcasting sector is uniting and strengthening communities, delivering diversity and local content to Australians it is deserving of very strong support from government.

*The Management Committee of
Sutherland Shire Community Radio Association Inc.
(Please note our apology for the lateness of this Submission. A copy of our financial report 2004-2005 will be forwarded separately).*

Margaret Capare
President/General Manager
17 March 2006