

**104.1 TOP FM  
THE TERRITORY NETWORK**

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# **House of Representatives Communications Committee**

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Submission:

## **Radio Industry Inquiry**

The Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Communications Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

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## **104.1 TOP FM and Territory Network**

Radio Industry Inquiry submission:

104.1 TOP FM and the Territory Network are pleased to present this submission to the House of Representatives Communications Committee as part of their Radio Industry Inquiry.

### **Background:**

In 1981, 104.1 TOP FM began transmission and was the first FM frequency broadcast station in the Northern Territory.

A community licensed multi cultural station, TOP FM currently broadcasts beyond the metropolitan footprint of Darwin, reaching out to regional and remote areas throughout the NT.

Demographic research into the communication needs and requirements of the rural, remote and non-metropolitan listeners of TOP FM resulted in the establishment of the Territory Network in 1996, with the assistance of the Northern Territory Government.

The Territory Network is a community broadcasting service, that links the communities and towns of Katherine, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Gove, Nhulunbuy and the often forgotten remote and isolated communities in between.

### **In brief:**

104.1 TOP FM and the Territory Network regards radio services in rural and remote areas as crucial to the Northern Territory's social and economic development.

Due to the vast distance of the NT, the topography encompasses half of the Australian continent, which is reflected in audience demographics. The quality and quantity of the broadcasting services to Territorians is pivotal to continued existence and basic quality of life.

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The communication service provided by TOP FM and the Territory Network surpasses other media genres in the NT because it is immediate. Unlike eg: a newspaper in the NT, which must wait until going to print, then must be collected and then flown out to a community which make takes days or even weeks, radio broadcasting keeps the general public informed instantly!

Radio broadcasting within the NT is extremely promising for employment and career options. The NT has shown considerable insight and a pro-active approach in establishing many radio broadcasting opportunities for those interested in entering the radio broadcasting industry. This is demonstrated with:

- the development of several BRACS (Broadcasting from Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme) radio stations on remote Aboriginal communities;
- the establishment of an Indigenous youth radio station (BRACS unit) at the Central Australian secondary school of Yirara College in Alice Springs;
- formulation and instigation of a Certificate in Broadcasting at Centralian College and in 2001 at the NT University through 104.1 TOP FM.

The effect of networking radio programming in the NT would be catastrophic. Whilst news from around the nation is important to Territorians, that link to local content is paramount to our survival in Australia's most remote territory. By networking national radio programming Territorians as individuals, family entities and as business people would be disadvantaged compared with the rest of Australia.

The Introduction of DAB Digital Audio Broadcasting technology across the Northern Territory will have a positive impact on the social and business structure of communication services within the rural and regional boundaries. The additional option to provide a wider choice of services to remote areas is also positive, however if the structure for the NT based provider was not supported, monophonic service carriers would overshadow the independent voice of Territorians.

## **Recommendations:**

- Support the role of independent communication service providers within the NT.
- Recognise the role of independent broadcast communication associations such as the Northern Territory Community Radio Association (NTCRA).
- Provide ongoing technological support for NT based service providers such as TOP FM and The Territory Network.
- Provide ongoing financial support for regional and rural based service providers such as TOP FM and The Territory Network.