



**Introductory remarks from C31 Melbourne made to the House of Representatives Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Committee, Inquiry into Community Broadcasting, Public Hearing, 20 July, 2006.**

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**Overview of C31 Melbourne**

- C31 Melbourne has been broadcasting to the diverse communities of Melbourne and Geelong, and surrounding areas for 11 years.
- As a community television station, C31 Melbourne operates on the principles of access, diversity, localism and community harmony.
- Some of the diverse communities represented on community television include culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD), the disabled and deaf communities, the gay and lesbian communities, local sporting communities and students and youth.
- C31 Melbourne is watched by over 1.3 million Victorians per month, reaching a larger audience in Melbourne than Foxtel—according to Oztam figures for June, 2006.
- There are currently 130 producers either in the pre-production stage or currently producing content for C31.
- There are currently as estimated 1000 volunteers engaged in community television production for C31.
- And we estimate that 100 people are trained per year that will go on to paid work in the film and television industry and related media fields.



### **Funding of C31 Melbourne**

- C31 Melbourne has an annual budget of close to \$2 million per year.
- We are currently operating with a small surplus of around \$25,000.00 per month.
- C31 relies on the sale of sponsorship announcements for funding.
- As a community station C31 can broadcast up to 7 minutes per hour of sponsorship announcements.
- Rather than targeting big business and corporates, C31 has targeted Victoria's small business sector for sponsorship, with great success.
- Our recent figures show that almost 70% of sponsorship bookings in C31's prime time (6pm to 12am) were from small businesses, with 82 small businesses running spots on the station during June 2006.
- This arrangement helps to ensure the independence of the station whilst also allowing small business access to television advertising which would ordinarily be cost prohibitive.
- C31 also receives substantial support from the Victorian State government, who purchase sponsorship time from the Station.
- Another source of income is program airtime sales which contribute an average of \$30,000.00 per month of funding.

### **Broadcast system**

- C31 broadcasts via the "Playbox" system, which is an automated and digital presentation system.
- This has enabled us to broadcast 24 hours per day. Before Playbox, C31 had a manual presentation system, and C31 would finish broadcasting at 11pm.
- C31 Melbourne was the first CTV licensee to adopt Playbox. It was an important step towards full digital transmission—Playbox actually produces a digital signal which C31 has to convert to analogue to broadcast.



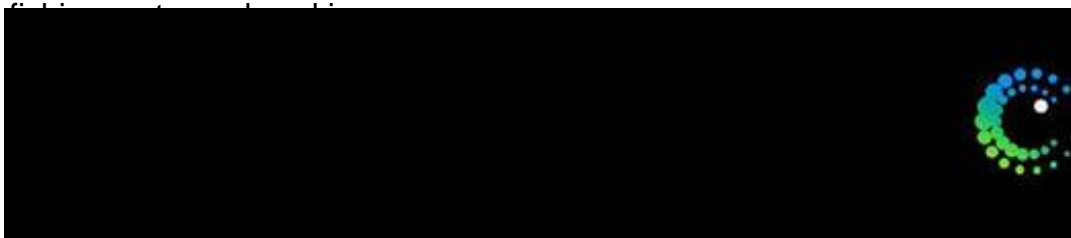
- Playbox is also important in ensuring that the community has continued access to new technology. C31 volunteers who are trained in the ingest and presentation system receive skills which are directly transferable to the broadcast systems of the commercial networks.
- C31 also plans to commence video-on-demand streaming of some programs by the end of the year. We have also been approached by large scale internet content distributors and ISP's for our content. We are currently researching new media technologies as a means of reaching community television audiences.
- Our vision for the future of C31 broadcasting is that the community has continued access to community television via a variety of mediums, including the traditional free-to-air broadcast.

### **Programming**

Refer to Season 50 Grid (April, May, June 2006) included in the information packs presented to the Committee at the public hearing.

- During Season 50, C31 broadcast 90 shows per week of first-run locally made programs
- This accounted for 55 hours per week of first run locally made programs.
- C31's programs come from a variety of sources: the majority are supplied by community producers who are auspiced by C31's Member Groups and Access Affiliates
- There are currently 27 Member Groups and 11 Access Affiliates, each not-for-profit organisations providing channels of access to the Station. The groups represent diverse cultural and geographical communities, such as:
  - Asian Television Association of Australia
  - Bent TV—representing GLBT communities
  - Eastern Regional Access – the outer suburbs of Melbourne's east.
- These groups vary in size and amount of television production: for example SYN FM (Student Youth Network) has over 1000 members and produces 5 hours per week of first run, local television; Somali TV has approximately 4 members and produces 25 minutes per week of first run, local content)
- There are also independent producers who purchase airtime from the station. There are currently 30 independent producers. Their programs are generally

magazine style and represent a particular hobby or interest such as hot-rods,



### **Programming objectives**

- C31 Programming aims to encourage diversity, local programming and innovation.
- During Season 50, C31 broadcast 31 CALD programs, plus 2 indigenous programs.

We also broadcast 7 grass-roots sports programs, including local football, soccer and hockey.

- C31 receives ideas for new programs via phone calls, emails, and face to face. For more information on C31's process for applying for airtime refer to Programs Kit in material supplied to the Committee at the Public Hearing.
- C31 actively encourages greater diversity in programs:

Salam Café—a Muslim-panel program, originally arrived at C31 as a six part series called “Ramadan TV”. The program had poor technical production values, however strong content and a lot of recognised potential. The C31 Programming team actively encouraged the team to continue their program. C31 organised their access to free studio space and access to C31 volunteers with greater technical skills. Salam Café has since produced a further two 13-part series and won the Antenna for Program of the Year in 2006.

No Limits—C31 recognised a need for a disability advocacy program on the Station, and sourced and supported the producer of No Limits, assisting them with grant applications and access to free studio space. No Limits has now been on air for 2 years.

- C31 actively encourages and supports new producers with no television experience onto the Station.

Example: “17:00” is a live-to-air program, where all of the cast and crew are under 26 and have no or very little television experience. Through “17:00” C31 has provided free access to our studio from Monday to Friday and engaged a studio technician to train the beginners in many aspects of television production. The “17:00” crew produce 5 hours of live-to-air television per week.



- Training: C31 Programming team also encouraged the creation of “Lifetime”—a program representing Senior Victorians. C31 provided meeting room space, television studio space, free use of equipment and hands on training to encourage more senior volunteers and programming for senior viewers.