

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**

**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**

**Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2016**

**Communications Portfolio**

**Australian Communications and Media Authority**

**Question No: 72**

**Australian Communications and Media Authority**

**Hansard Ref: Page 27, 18/10/2016**

**Topic: Lion FM**

**Senator Abetz, Eric asked:**

**Senator ABETZ:** All right. If there is nobody here to help, I will go through some questions for you to take on notice. In relation to Lion FM, when did it go off air? Has its spectrum or dial—96.1—been allocated to anybody else and, if so, to whom? If it has not been allocated to another community organisation, why has the J-AIR request been rejected now I think on three or four separate occasions after three or four separate requests have been made? J-AIR has been denied its applications for a temporary community broadcasting licence. It has put in three applications over the past four years. They advised me that they were all in conformity with the act. I would ask: has the rejection ever referred to unavailability of spectrum, because I understand that is the case. But, of course, 96.1 remains lying idle and is available. It has the potential of serving a community within the Melbourne area of at least 50,000 people and the general public at large. It does in fact broadcast over the internet and through another mechanism which allows it to operate 24 hours per day, seven days a week. It provides 42 shows on topics of news, business, community information, lifestyle, sport et cetera. So, as far as community organisations go, it is pretty dynamic and yet it has continually been frustrated in its request for licence. Can you provide a good brief on all of that and we might revisit this topic at the next estimates. Of course, you can avoid all of that by simply allowing J-AIR to use 96.1.

**Mr Bean:** Yes, Senator.

**Answer:**

1. Melbourne Jewish Radio Inc (Lion FM) went off air on 14 June 2011 after its twelve month temporary community broadcasting licence expired. The 96.1 MHz frequency used by Lion FM has not been made available to anybody else since then. This is because when the 96.1 MHz frequency was used by Lion FM, it caused interference to other established broadcasting services.
2. Jewish Community Radio Vic Inc (J-AIR) made two applications for temporary community broadcasting licences in Melbourne to use the frequencies 96.1 MHz (first application) and 96.9 MHz (second application). Both frequencies are interference-limited in Melbourne and are not suitable for community broadcasting purposes.
3. Information has been provided to J-AIR, about the significant spectrum congestion in Melbourne, with no frequencies remaining available for the wide coverage service proposed.

As indicated above, 96.1 MHz is interference-limited and not suitable for such a service. In the circumstances, we have encouraged J-AIR to approach long term community broadcasting licensees in Melbourne, with a view to securing airtime and /or providing programming on established community broadcasting services.