



**Submission to the House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Communications,  
Information Technology and the Arts**

**INQUIRY INTO COMMUNITY  
BROADCASTING**

***CBAA Submission 1.***

**Community Broadcasting Association of Australia  
Level 3  
44-54 Botany Road  
Alexandria NSW 2015  
Phone (03) 9310 2999  
Fax: (02) 9319 4545**

**Contact: Barry Melville  
Email: [bmelville@cbaa.org.au](mailto:bmelville@cbaa.org.au)**

**17 March 2006**

## Executive Summary

### *The scope and role of Australian community broadcasting across radio, television, the internet and other broadcasting technologies*

As at June 2005 there were 442 fully-licensed community radio stations (including remote Indigenous services) and 7 licensed community television services.

Total aggregate income for stations in the community radio sector (not including Remote Indigenous Broadcasting services which are yet to be surveyed for the Community Broadcasting Database) in the most recent survey period 2003/04 was \$50.7m.

In aggregate sources of stations' income divide up as follows:

- Sponsorship – 35%
- Donations – 12%
- Subscriptions/membership – 7.4%
- CBF Grants – 6.4%
- State Government – 2.7%

More than 20,000 volunteers contribute to community broadcasting on an ongoing basis. 70% of our services are in rural and regional areas. Nationally more than 7 million Australians (or 45% of people over 15) listen to community radio in each month (*source: McNair Ingenuity*). The community television sector has a cumulative monthly audience reach of more than 3 million viewers (*source: OzTam*).

The role of community broadcasting is to provide a diverse range of services meeting community needs in ways that are not met by other sectors. Community broadcasting is sustained by the principles of access and participation, volunteerism, diversity, independence and localism.

Although stations raise much of their resources through their own means, Government funding in the past ten years has greatly assisted stations in key areas such as transmission infrastructure, program development/distribution, online development and training.

Innovative use of online technologies is well-established in the sector and the internet is well-used both as a resource base for information and programming but increasingly as an alternative or supplementary delivery platform via streaming and/or downloads (podcasting).

The CBAA in its satellite transmission of programs to supplement locally originated programming has proven to be a leader in innovative technology through the Digital Delivery Network (DDN) which has facilitated automated program distribution, digital storage and playout facilities at many stations.

53% of community radio stations serve an array of different communities of interest including: Indigenous and Ethnic, people with a print disability, young people, older people, arts/fine music, religious, gay and lesbian.

The remaining stations provide service which may be described as generalist, which address the interests of communities in particular geographic locations but will still address a range of diverse specialty interests.

***Content and programming requirements that reflect the character of Australia and its cultural diversity***

Community broadcasting more than any other form of media in this country shapes and reflects the national character in all its diversity. The sector is unique in its capacity to provide fresh programming by and for Indigenous, Ethnic and RPH communities. Community broadcasting stations also have a strong commitment to local news, information; the promotion of local and Australian music, arts and culture; and to providing training in media skills.

When a not-for-profit community group applies to the regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority, for a community broadcasting licence they specify what community interest they intend to serve. Licensees are selected by the regulator on the basis of suitability and on the merits of the licence application and the capacity to serve identified community interests. Upon grant of a 5 year renewable licence each station is then required to continue to serve the community interest for which the licence was granted.

Another key statutory requirement (in the Broadcasting Services Act) requires each and every licensee to encourage members of the community served to participate in both operations and selection of programming. In addition all licensees are bound to comply with Community Broadcasting Codes of Practice (one for radio, another for television) which encapsulate guiding principles such as:

- Harmony, diversity and social cohesion
- Pursuit of democracy, access and equity and giving a voice to those underrepresented in other media
- Greater programming choice
- Localism
- Editorial independence
- Support for Australian arts and culture.

### ***Technological opportunities, including digital, to expand community broadcasting networks***

The CBAA has recently identified opportunities to sustain and expand community broadcasting services using digital platforms in two significant submissions to the Government:

*‘Adding Digital Value’*, CBAA 13 January 2006 – Addressing initial resource needs for digital community radio; and

*‘Driving Digital’*, CBAA 23 December 2005 – Identifying the need to take up simulcasting and opportunities for digital access for community television.

In ‘Adding Digital Value’, the CBAA cites the Government’s commitment to including the community radio sector as an integral part of digital radio on an affordable basis. The Government’s digital radio framework guarantees digital capacity for community broadcasting and requires a joint approach to management and content provision.

New content, management and technical structures are required and detailed. Many of the extra costs of digital content generation will be met by the community sector. New infrastructure is required for digital content aggregation, contribution and transmission carriage via digital radio technology.

In ‘Driving Digital’ the CBAA identifies that community television needs to be transmitting on the digital platform within 12-24 months or the sector will face serious financial hardship due to the steady erosion of its potential audience. A range of options are identified for the digital transmission of community television including ‘must carry’ provisions to apply to existing or new digital providers.

### ***Opportunities and threats to achieving a diverse and robust network of community broadcasters***

There are a range of opportunities and threats affecting the overall future prospects for the community broadcasting sector, including:

#### ***Opportunities:-***

- The national roll-out of accredited training
- Ongoing support for infrastructure and technology innovation
- Growth and diversification through digital technologies and content sharing
- Revenue growth in sponsorship from Government Information Activities
- A growing research base of audience data and industry profile data
- Engagement with regional neighbours and other countries through the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC)
- Ongoing support for cultural industries collaboration through targeted support for the Australian Music Radio Airplay Project (Amrap)

***Threats:-***

- Stagnation or diminution of Government support for important initiatives and ongoing programs
- Further pressure on viability through marked increases in transmission site access fees charged by commercial providers that are arguably outpacing underlying costs
- Further segmentation of audiences and community support through proliferation of alternatives to community broadcasting.
- Incremental undermining of the audience base and the viability of community television whilst digital uptake grows and access to digital platforms remains unavailable.

# The scope and role of Australian community broadcasting

## 1. About the CBAA

- 1.1 The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia is the national representative organisation for community broadcasters, both fully licensed stations and groups aspiring to hold a permanent licence. We welcome the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of our members. Unless otherwise stated, use of the 'community broadcasting' in this submission refers to both community radio and television. There are a number of distinct issues affecting the community television sector which have been addressed by the CBAA in a separate submission to this Inquiry.
- 1.2 As the peak body for community radio and television stations the CBAA provides leadership, advocacy and support for our members to actively provide independent broadcasting services and to build and strengthen local communities. Together with other sector organisations, we make representations to the Government and the regulators on behalf of our membership. There are six key community broadcasting membership organisations, including the Australian Indigenous Communications Association (**AICA**); National Ethnic & Multicultural Broadcasters Council (**NEMBC**); RPH Australia (**RPHA**); Indigenous Remote Communications Association (**IRCA**) and the Association of Christian Broadcasters (**ACB**). These organisations are preparing their own submissions to the Inquiry addressing matters of specific concern to the interests they represent, as well as to all community broadcasters. Those submissions have the endorsement and support of the CBAA, which recognises their greater capacity to speak on behalf of their communities of interest. The CBAA also endorses and supports the submission of the Community Broadcasting Foundation (**CBF**), an independent non-profit funding agency that solicits and distributes funds for the maintenance and development of community broadcasting in Australia
- 1.3 The CBAA operates a National Secretariat, a National Satellite and Program Exchange Service (the Community Radio Network), a National Training Project, an annual National Conference and two Commonwealth-funded projects, Community Broadcasting Online (CBOonline, circa 1997) and the Australian Music Radio Airplay Project (AMRAP, circa 2000). The CBAA's Technical Development Unit is outsourced to the company *Intermedia*.
- 1.4 The CBAA is governed by its National Committee, made up of the President, two Vice Presidents, at least four ordinary members and a staff-elected director. In addition to these Directors, the National Committee has two (non-voting) representatives for youth and women respectively. All Directors function in an honorary capacity. The officers and ordinary members are elected by a ballot of CBAA members which occurs at each year's CBAA Conference.

## 2. Regulation of the Community Broadcasting Sector

2.1 Community radio and television stations are licensed under Part 6 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (Cth)* (BSA). The stations are subject to licence conditions pursuant to Part 5 of Schedule 2 to the BSA, including, inter alia:

- 9(2) (c) *the licensee will encourage members of the community that it serves to participate in:*
- (i) the operations of the licensee in providing the service; and*
  - (ii) the selection and provision of programs under the licence;*
- (d) *the licensee will provide the service for community purposes;*
- (e) *the licensee will not operate the service for profit or as part of a profit-making enterprise.*

2.2 In deciding whether to allocate a community broadcasting licence, ACMA must have regard to a number of elements including the extent to which the proposed service would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the community within the service area, the nature and diversity of interests of that community and the nature and diversity of other broadcasting services. By definition, then, community broadcasting licensees are required to meet the needs and diverse interests of those not adequately served by, or given access to, other media.

2.3 The community sector is also regulated by the Community Broadcasting Codes of Practice. Both the Community Radio Code and the Community Television Code are developed by the CBAA in consultation with the respective sectors and the wider community and registered with ACMA. The CBAA believes these Codes to be thorough in the parameters they set for the operation and good governance of community broadcasting stations. Their guiding principles require community radio and television stations to endeavour to:

- promote harmony and diversity in contributing to a cohesive, inclusive and culturally diverse Australian community;
- pursue the principles of democracy, access and equity, especially to people and issues under-represented in other media;
- enhance the diversity of programming choices available to the public and present programs which expand the variety of viewpoints broadcast in Australia;
- demonstrate independence in their programming as well as in their editorial and management decisions;

- support and develop local and Australian arts, music and culture in the station’s programming, to reflect a sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity; and
  - widen the community’s involvement in broadcasting.
- 2.4 The Community Television Code also includes a requirement to “demonstrate a commitment to participate in the development of the community broadcasting sector at a state and national level in order to support continuous improvement across all community television service providers.”
- 3. Types of Community Broadcasting Services**
- 3.1 Community broadcasting is fundamentally different from the commercial and national broadcasting sectors. It is media produced by communities, for communities. It promotes the principles of access and participation, volunteerism, diversity, independence and localism. The sector caters to a diverse range of communities of interest, from core Ethnic, Indigenous and RPH communities, to youth, religious, senior citizens, arts, fine music, Australian music and other specialist interest cohorts.
- 3.2 As at June 2005, Australia had around 442 fully-licensed community radio stations, 37 temporary and aspirant broadcasters and around 160 Indigenous community radio and television stations serving regional and remote communities.<sup>1</sup> There are also seven fully-licensed community television services, about which further information is provided in a separate submission to this Inquiry.
- 3.3 The CBOonline project, managed by the CBAA and funded by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (**DCITA**) through the Community Broadcasting Foundation (**CBF**), has collected annual data on community radio station activities for a number of years, compiling a valuable Community Broadcasting Database. The 2004 Database reveals that fifty three per cent of long-term licensed stations serve an array of different communities of interest, including: people from Indigenous and Ethnic backgrounds; those who have a print disability; religious communities; young people or those over 50; people who have a particular interest in the arts or classical music; and in one instance the gay, lesbian or transgender community.<sup>2</sup>
- 3.4 Further, 47 per cent of current long-term licensed stations serve the many and varied interests of a defined geographical community – such ‘generalist’ broadcasters typically provide a music format incorporating popular and specialist

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Meadows, Susan Forde, Jacqui Ewart, and Kerrie Foxwell, “Creating an Australian Community Public Sphere: the Role of Community Radio” (2005).

<sup>2</sup> All 2004 Database figures are available at CBOonline at <http://www.cbonline.org.au/index.cfm?pageId=37,0,1,0>



styles, access to airtime for a wide variety of community groups and some specialist services relevant to their service area and its particular demographics (e.g. local news & current affairs, local arts, Ethnic, Indigenous or RPH programming). More than 60 per cent of fully-licensed stations are located in rural, regional and remote communities, making community broadcasting the voice of regional Australia.

- 3.5 The characteristics of stations can vary according to which community they serve. Location can also be a determining factor in how stations operate. There are stations all over the country, some with metropolitan wide licences (20%), others which service particular areas of a city that hold sub-metro or suburban licences (16%), and those in regional (36%) and rural (28%) areas. The common factor is that every station is owned and operated by the community it serves, providing much-needed community-control and diversity of ownership to the airwaves.

#### **4. Financial Resources of the Sector**

- 4.1 The community broadcasting sector operates on extremely modest financial resources. Total aggregate income for stations in the community radio sector (not including Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services) in the most recent survey period 2003/04 was \$50.7m.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.2 Community radio stations operate on tight budgets, with income generally meeting expenditure. For example, during the 2002-2003 financial year, the combined income of all fully licensed community radio stations was \$46,584,808 and total station expenditure was \$45,013,842. The average station income was \$177,805, and the average expenditure was \$171,809 per station.
- 4.3 The average station income figure can be quite misleading as the income of stations varies markedly across the sector. During the 2002-2003 financial year, some stations earned as little as \$5,000. The average income of stations in rural and regional areas, which comprise more than 60% of the sector, is also significantly smaller at \$96,536 per annum.
- 4.4 Community radio stations earn income through a variety of sources, including sponsorship, donations, listener subscriptions, government grants, fundraising activities and user access fees. Advertising per se is prohibited by the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) but the statute does provide for 5 minutes per hour of sponsorship announcements for which the licensee or the program maker has received payment in cash or kind and which contains an explicit acknowledgement of the sponsor's support (i.e. a 'tag'). In 2003-2004,<sup>4</sup> In aggregate, community radio stations' income divides up as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that the 2003-2004 figures quoted from the "2005 Community Broadcasting Database" have not yet been publicly released and the comprehensive figures are not yet available to the CBAA. Therefore, the 2003-2004 figures have only been quoted in this submission on a few occasions. Elsewhere, the 2002-2003 figures (from the "2004 Community Broadcasting Database") have been quoted.

<sup>4</sup> 2005 Community Broadcasting Database, publication pending.

|                                 |        |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Sponsorship                     | 35.29% |
| Income Other (incl ATSI grants) | 20.59% |
| Donations                       | 10.34% |
| Subscriptions                   | 7.74%  |
| CBF Grants                      | 6.43%  |
| Access Fees                     | 5.51%  |
| Fundraising                     | 4.09%  |
| Education                       | 2.78%  |
| Grants - State                  | 2.77%  |
| Grants - Fed                    | 2.75%  |
| Prod. / Studio Fees             | 0.60%  |
| Training Fees                   | 0.46%  |
| Philanthropic                   | 0.44%  |
| Grants - Local                  | 0.23%  |

4.5 The Australian Government provides some funding support to the sector through the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA), distributed through the Community Broadcasting Foundation. In 2005/06 the Foundation received a total of \$7.623 million in funding for the community broadcasting sector including:

- \$3.767 million for core funding;
- \$1.699 million for targeted funding; and
- \$2.157 million for project funding.

4.6 With government assistance per station very low, comprising less than 7% of station's income on average, community broadcasting stations face constant financial pressure. Forty-five per cent of stations do not have any paid staff, a situation which makes it very difficult for stations to concentrate on fundraising and development activities.<sup>5</sup>

4.7 The community broadcasting sector is sustained by the unpaid labour of more than 20,500 volunteers annually. In fact, 99 percent of stations have at least one volunteer and a small number have in excess of 400.<sup>6</sup> Research conducted by Griffith University indicates that people volunteering at community stations work at least two and half times as many hours as volunteers in other areas and contribute more than \$145 million in unpaid work each year.<sup>7</sup> As stated, only 55 percent of stations have any staff at all and the numbers of staff vary widely from station to station.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, volunteers are involved in every aspect of station operations,

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Susan Forde, Michael Meadows & Kerry Foxwell, *Culture, Commitment, Community: The Australian Community Radio Sector* (2002) 121.

<sup>8</sup> 2004 Community Broadcasting Database, op cit.

from management and on-air presentation, to administration and technical support.

- 4.8 To maintain both their integrity and viability, community broadcasting services must grapple with the tension between the requirement for community participation and the commercial imperatives of staying afloat. This always requires a delicate balancing act on the part of station management because as government assistance falls away commercial sponsorship inevitably comprises a larger and larger proportion of stations' incomes. Community stations are obliged to enter the commercial market place and to compete there, but if they allow commercial considerations to become paramount, and program their airtime accordingly, they risk abandoning the purpose for which they were licensed.
- 4.9 Economic pressures are particularly acute in rural centres already affected by reduced government and private infrastructure and a falling population. The community is then in danger of losing an established radio service built by dedicated volunteers over a long period. Many community stations outside of the major capitals have told the CBAA of their increasing struggle to remain viable in the face of a static local economy and an increase in competition from new radio services.
- 4.10 The CBAA urges the Committee to consider ways in which these ongoing financial pressures on stations can be alleviated, without jeopardising the participatory and non-commercial model which has served the community so well.

## **5. Technological Innovation in the Community Broadcasting Sector**

- 5.1 During its thirty year history, the community broadcasting sector has earned a reputation as an innovative and influential leader in the harnessing and development of new technologies. Since the birth of community broadcasting in the mid-1970s, it has served as a test-bed for new and original approaches to broadcasting. Community broadcasters pioneered the FM band in the late 1970s and early 1980s at a time when commercial stations were unwilling to risk exchanging their AM frequencies for the untried FM band. In 1991 with Government assistance, the sector established a national satellite program distribution system which in 1998 migrated onto a fully digital satellite platform.

### *National program distribution and exchange*

- 5.2 The delivery of continuous and comprehensive services at the local level necessarily involves local programming being supplemented by outside programming where the expertise and resources required to produce such content are not available locally. The community radio sector's response to this need has been typically innovative – it has reversed the commercial model of using satellite services as a method of distributing homogenous services nationally by using this technology to support greater program choice through program exchange. The satellite service, the Community Radio Network, is managed by the CBAA and is

used by more than 180 stations.

- 5.4 Stations with particular expertise produce specialist programs on art, science, the environment, information technology, rural issues, current affairs and national news and have them distributed nationally by the Community Radio Network. These programs are available for local rebroadcast, allowing stations to provide their audiences with a much broader choice in programs. Fifteen per cent of program content in the community broadcasting sector is accessed through satellite program exchange.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Digital Delivery Network*

- 5.5 The Digital Delivery Network (DDN), designed by the CBAA's Technical Consultant, David Sice, uses a data stream linked to the Community Radio Network satellite channel to deliver data directly to station-based computer equipment via the station's satellite receiver.
- 5.6 Development and implementation of the Digital Delivery Network is a key success of the targeted funding provided to the community broadcast sector to date. An independent evaluation of the service found that it is "viewed by most stations as one of the most significant achievements in the history of the sector", particularly "amongst small and geographically isolated radio stations, who viewed it as a God-send for their operations."<sup>10</sup>
- 5.7 The DDN project enables community station use of computers in association with the satellite network and the internet for the capture of audio and other data files for later use. The DDN provides many direct and indirect benefits at both sector and station level. The Digital Delivery Network:
- enhances the utility of the satellite network's main audio channel as a distribution system;
  - creates a parallel digital distribution system via datacasting on the satellite network data channel;
  - increases the use of satellite programming by providing automatic audio capture;
  - promotes greater program and small audio item exchange;
  - assists the realisation of the Australian Music Radio Airplay Project (AMRAP);

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Didasko Technologies, *Review of the Community Broadcasting Sector's CBOonline Project Initiatives and Satellite Services* (2004) 38, available at [http://www.cbf.com.au/Content/articlefiles/CBOonline\\_Review\\_-\\_Didasko\\_Report.pdf](http://www.cbf.com.au/Content/articlefiles/CBOonline_Review_-_Didasko_Report.pdf).

- advances the introduction of digital audio production and storage technology throughout the sector.
- 5.8 The DDN project further improves the utility of the satellite network by providing a computer (system) at each receive site able to automatically capture and store:
- audio items distributed on the satellite audio feed for later replay;
  - audio items distributed in a file format for later replay;
  - other files, such as those used with database systems, web browsers, and so on.
- 5.9 The DDN system includes an online ordering system, which also has the capacity to track what programs are being captured for broadcast by which stations. This provides valuable feedback for stations providing programs to the satellite system, as well as being a useful tool for assessing program demand.
- 5.10 At this time, around 150 stations are equipped with DDN facilities. The satellite and DDN work together to provide community stations with:
- 125 separate programs per week (250 editions);
  - typically 25 per weekday (40 editions);
  - plus specials, extras, inserts;
  - Amrap music items and tracks - sorted by genre; and
  - associated text, images, and video clips

*Use of internet and other technologies*

- 5.11 Innovative use of online technologies is well-established in the sector and the internet is well-used both as a resource base for information and programming but increasingly as an alternative or supplementary delivery platform via streaming and/or downloads (podcasting).
- 5.12 Community broadcasting stations were amongst the first to take up internet streaming. More recently, stations such as 2FBi have made free podcasts available to listeners and subscribers. These services complement analogue technologies and expose community radio to an international audience.

## **6. Training in the community broadcasting sector**

- 6.1 The provision of training is a fundamental service provided by almost every community broadcasting station. Eighty-five per cent of stations offer formal training every year, and all stations provide ongoing informal training and skills development for all volunteers.<sup>11</sup> Research also shows that 70 per cent of stations are involved in training programs with external organisations (usually secondary schools, TAFE colleges or universities) and almost all of the 23 journalism programs around Australia use community radio to provide work experience for their students.<sup>12</sup>
- 6.2 Training at community broadcasting stations is not limited to areas directly related to broadcasting. It also covers other relevant skills such as station management, conflict resolution, computer skills, sales and reception.
- 6.3 During 2002-2003, 8,258 people received training through a community radio station. In any given week, 2,227 hours of formal training were undertaken at stations across Australia. Furthermore, 16 percent of stations offered accredited (nationally recognised) training, with 660 people taking part in certificate level training during the period, accounting for 317 hours per week of overall training undertaken.
- 6.4 In 2004, following lobbying from the community broadcasting sector, the Australian Government committed \$2.2 million over four years to establish a National Community Broadcasting Training Fund. The government recognised the need for the community broadcasting sector to have the resources to deliver nationally accredited training in broadcast skills and station management, particularly in rural and regional areas, and with consideration of the special training needs of the RPH, Indigenous and Ethnic broadcasting sector.
- 6.5 The CBAA is managing the National Training Project in consultation with all sector organisations and Registered Training Organisations. The CBAA and the sector expects that the delivery of accredited training will lead to consistent standards in program content and improved operational viability across the community broadcasting sector.

## **7. The CBOonline project**

- 7.1 Funded by DCITA through the CBF and managed by the CBAA, the CBOonline project consists of an online portal and reference tool highlighting the sector and its achievements (<http://www.cboonline.org.au>) and the annual Community Broadcasting Database.

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<sup>11</sup> 2004 Community Broadcasting Database, op cit.

<sup>12</sup> Susan Forde, Michael Meadows & Kerry Foxwell, op cit, Executive Summary.

- 7.2 The CBOonline website provides a much needed, centralised ‘window’ to the community broadcasting sector. While diversity is strength of the sector, this very trait has led to a fragmentation of information available on station activities, with each sector organisation hosting its own website highlighting the information relevant to their own constituent stations. In the case of the CBAA, whose membership is not confined to a particular type of station, web resources are often aimed at sector users and not at the public. CBOonline has overcome both these issues by providing a portal to the entire sector that is accessible to the lay public.
- 7.3 CBOonline offers a broad range of features and resources, but perhaps its greatest utility has been allowing for a centralised approach to promotional campaigns in the sector. It also provides a comprehensive, easily searchable listing of stations, linking potential listeners, sponsors and community groups with appropriate stations.
- 7.4 The website features a comprehensive range of detailed articles and short news items on station and sector activities and initiatives. Entries on particular stations are linked to their station listing, thereby providing users with an insight into a range of activities stations are involved in. The site also features comprehensive history of the sector, discussion papers, and importantly, the new 3CMedia academic e-journal. 3CMedia is fully refereed and provides for a managed and professional approach to the gathering of important research.
- 7.5 Increasingly practical information relevant to station managers and programmers is being hosted on CBOonline. This includes: marketing, grant and funding information; links to relevant industry bodies and programming resources; a range of audio content in MP3 format; and information for volunteers. In addition, CBOonline now provides links to resources on other sector websites so that station users can more readily pinpoint the broad range of information available online.
- 7.6 The relatively new *Indigenous Hub*, created by the National Indigenous Radio Service, provides an overview of the unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander broadcasting sector, in one easy to access location. It also now hosts the *Indigenous Almanac*, an Aboriginal history and current issues resource for programmers. The Almanac has steadily remained one of the two most visited sections of the website.
- 7.7 The CBOonline website meets a demonstrated community need for reliable qualitative and quantitative information about community broadcasting by providing a rich storehouse of publicly accessible resources. Over recent years the site tracking statistics have been consistently high for website visits and the return on investment has been high. CBOonline’s effectiveness is well-demonstrated by the interest it has attracted from the public and within the sector, and from government and academia.

- 7.8 The Community Broadcasting Database has also met a pressing need to have access to reliable and comprehensive data about the sector's activities. To date three annual collections of data from fully licensed community radio stations have taken place for the Community Broadcasting Database (**CBD**). The information derived from the CBD has become integral to sector operations and has paved the way for a more integrated approach to management. It allows for the efficient targeting of the limited resources available, in that it provides sector bodies with the information needed to determine policy direction and identify priority areas for development. It has been central to funding and grant applications, and underpins media promotional activities, by providing accurate and reliable supporting information.
- 7.9 Furthermore, government, grants bodies and would-be sponsors expect information of this nature to support applications and requests for commercial backing. Without this information the future sustainability of the sector would be threatened. The development and implementation of the CBD has been a very fruitful exercise and has led to a better understanding of station operations. It has also allowed additional research needs to be identified. As such the CBAA and the sector's key bodies (as represented by the CBOOnline Consultative Group - the CCG) believe there is a need for a holistic approach in this area and recommend an expanded role for the CBOOnline Project as the central research hub for the sector. This will involve altering the focus of the project to include audience research, and possibly also qualitative studies of particular operational areas or station types. This is discussed later in this submission under "Opportunities and Threats to Achieving a Diverse and Robust Network of Community Broadcasters".

## **8. The Australian Music Radio Airplay Project**

- 8.1 The Australian Music Radio Airplay Project (**Amrap**) was established with a one off grant of \$1.5 million from the Commonwealth Government, as part of its 1998 package of Contemporary Music Initiatives, for the creation of a "satellite network and real audio internet site providing 100% Australian music content". The project became operational in August 2000 and is managed by the CBAA under the direction of an advisory committee of community broadcasting and record industry representatives. This group currently consists of the NEMBC, AICA, the Australian Record Industry Association, the Australasian Performance Rights Association and the Association of Independent Records.
- 8.2 Community radio is the lifeblood of the Australian music industry, providing local artists with opportunities for radio airplay and audience development which are not available elsewhere. However, for many years musicians and broadcasters were constrained by the lack of any formal consultation or distribution mechanisms between the two industries. Musicians seeking exposure on community radio were forced to deal with more than 350 stations on an individual basis. Similarly, broadcasters wanting to find new local music for airplay were forced to deal with numerous record companies and independent artists on an ad hoc basis.



- 8.3 Amrap has resolved this dilemma by providing a centralised service which connects artists and industry to the community broadcasting sector and thereby increases radio airplay opportunities for Australian music. This has been achieved through three core areas of activity:
- (a) the regular national distribution of contemporary Australian releases to more than 350 community radio stations;
  - (b) the production and national distribution of radio programs and segments which promote Australian music to the sector's 3.7 million weekly listeners; and
  - (c) the development and expansion of a web presence which provides a central reference point for community broadcasters, musicians, industry bodies and the general public to learn about new Australian music and its promotion by community radio.
- 8.4 Since its establishment, Amrap has received widespread recognition from all stakeholders as a landmark project which has achieved enormous success in increasing radio opportunities for Australian musicians across the broadest range of musical genres. More than 2,000 individual musicians and groups have received the benefit of its services. Further, the development of innovative partnership projects with industry associations, state arts agencies and arts festivals has broadened awareness within the creative industries of the vast promotional opportunities afforded by community radio.
- 8.5 Amrap's music distribution and festival broadcast initiatives also complement other Commonwealth live performance initiatives such as the Contemporary Music Touring Program, Playing Australia and Festivals Australia. For many musicians, radio airplay drives the initial interest for their work in new areas, which leads to the opportunity for live performances in those areas. Similarly, tours by artists, particularly in regional and rural areas, are supported by radio airplay of that artist's work.
- 8.6 Amrap's delivery of relevant, cost effective programs has enabled whole new audiences around the country to be exposed to local musicians. In particular, Amrap has focussed on bringing new Australian music to audiences outside metropolitan areas, targeting the 60% of community radio stations that are located in rural, regional and remote communities.
- 8.7 The geographic isolation of these stations means that station personnel have traditionally been unable to establish strong links with the music industry, and don't have access to the social and professional industry networks that might exist in metropolitan areas. Amrap breaks down this isolation, providing a central liaison point between regional stations and industry. As John Durr, Manager of Black Market Music, told a recent independent evaluation of the Amrap project:

*The Amrap project has been an inspired piece of Government funding. It has brought under-represented and independent music to the attention of the whole country, especially the rural and regional sectors, which are limited in the information and music that they are capable of receiving. There have been many examples, in our record company, of artists who have taken their act and their music to regional Australia and have found audiences, and interest, simply on the back of community radio exposure, brought about by the Amrap project.*<sup>13</sup>

- 8.7 The project enjoys the strong support of all levels of the Australian music industry including individual musicians, independent record labels and the major industry associations and record companies, who all recognise the revitalising effect the project has had on community radio's relationship to the local industry. The independent evaluation recently conducted of the Amrap project concluded that:

*Since Amrap has been operating, the amount of contemporary Australian music played on community radio has increased by 25% nationally. There has been overwhelming support from those involved with the project for its effectiveness, efficiency and ability to exceed the project objectives - doubling the Project's life from its original grant allocation is a credit to the professional running of the service. This is impressive when given the geographical spread of stations with which it has to work. The project has serviced well the vast majority of community stations that operate outside capital cities. Until Amrap started, these stations - and their audiences - have had inadequate access to contemporary Australian music resources.*<sup>14</sup>

## **9. About the Community Broadcasting Audience**

- 9.1 Given its programming diversity, specialist content and its emphasis on providing access to those who are not served by other media, the objective of community broadcasting is not, and nor should it be, to draw mass audiences. However, the fact that the community broadcasting audience is large and diverse demonstrates that the service it provides is highly valued by the Australian public. In fact, community broadcasting has a strength and influence amongst the Australian people that far surpasses its scarce resources.

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<sup>13</sup> Developing Media Works, *Evaluation of the Australian Music Radio Airplay Project for the Community Broadcasting Foundation*, Developing Media Works (2005), available at [http://www.cbf.com.au/Content/articlefiles/AMRAP\\_report\\_summary.pdf](http://www.cbf.com.au/Content/articlefiles/AMRAP_report_summary.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

9.2 In 2004, respected pollsters McNair Ingenuity Research undertook the most comprehensive survey ever conducted of the Australian population and their community radio listening habits.<sup>15</sup> The survey was funded by DCITA through the CBF and launched by Minister Helen Coonan in September 2004. The results demonstrated that community broadcasting reaches the widest cross-section of the community.

### *How many listen?*

- More than **seven million Australians** - or **45 per cent** of people aged over 15 - listen to community radio **in an average month**.
- More than **3.7 million** people 15+ listen to community radio **every week**.
- **685,000** Australians **listen exclusively** to community radio **every week** - that is, they do not listen to commercial radio or ABC/SBS. In fact, **exclusive listeners** account for nearly **1 in 5** of the entire community radio audience.
- **1,317,000** people listen to community radio, and may listen to ABC/SBS, but do not listen to commercial radio – accounting for **8%** of the population.
- In rural and regional Australia, **2.5 million** people - **46%** of people aged over 15 - listen to community radio each month. More than **1.4 million** rural and regional Australians tune in each week and **339,000** listen exclusively to community radio.

### *Who listens?*

- The survey found that community radio draws its audience from a **wide cross section** of the community, with at least **20 per cent** of **most demographic groups** (based on age, sex, employment status, income, etc) tuning to community radio during a **typical week**. Clearly, the diverse nature of the sector's programming means that it is able to reach all sections of the Australian population.
- More than **1 in 5** people in each age group listen to community radio in a typical week, with **15-24 year olds** having the greatest percentage of listeners (**27%**) followed closely by people aged **40-54 (26%)** and then people aged **25-39 (23%)** and people aged **55+ (22%)**.
- Community radio listening varies by State, with the **Northern Territory** having the most listeners in an average week per head of population (**42%**), followed by **South Australia (30%)** and then **Western Australia (29%)**.

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<sup>15</sup> For the full National Listener Survey, go to CBOonline at <http://www.cbonline.org.au/index.cfm?pageId=44,0,1,0>.

- **Darwin** has the largest community radio listenership of any city (**45%**), followed by **Perth (36%)** and then **Adelaide (31%)**.
- **One-quarter** of all **full-time workers** listen to community radio in a **typical week**. **Students** are also likely listeners with over **one-quarter** listening in a typical week. People who are **unemployed, retired or doing home duties** are also likely to listen to community radio, with **1 in 5** tuning in over a typical week.
- Community radio listeners tend to be in **professional and managerial** roles (**1 in 4**); however **18%** work in **white collar** roles and **17%** in **blue collar** occupations.
- **25%** of people who regularly speak a **language other than English** in their household, listen to community radio during a **typical week**. **16%** of community radio listeners in an **average week**, belong to households where **English is not regularly spoken**.

### *Why do they listen?*

- The key reason given for listening to community radio is that they have ‘**diversity in programming** / they have **specialist music or information** programs’. This is the main reason given by both men and women, all age groups and all occupation categories. It demonstrates conclusively that the sector’s greatest strength is its ability to cater to niche audiences whose listening needs are not met elsewhere on the dial.
- However, for **rural and regional listeners**, the most commonly cited reasons for listening were for **local news and local information**; for **local voices and local personalities**; and because **locals can air their views** / **easy local access**. With the increasing networking and syndication of national and commercial radio, the value rural and regional Australians place on the localism of community radio is not surprising.

## **Reflecting the Australian character and cultural diversity through community radio content and programming**

10.1 The community broadcasting sector has made a rich contribution to the cultural life of this country throughout its thirty-year history. The diversity of program content available through community broadcasting has broadened the media choices available to all Australians. As the third tier of the free-to-air broadcasting system, the sector provides the opportunity for many people to take control and to become producers of radio and TV programs. This is of major significance in a world where there is increasing opportunity for passive consumption of a vast array of mass media entertainment but a decline in outlets at the local community level for people to take control of their own communications needs.

10.2 The sector's content and programming meets specialist needs that the commercial and public sectors are unwilling or unable to meet. Unconstrained by the marketing imperatives of commercial media or the national coverage concerns of public media, community broadcasters respond to the many and various content needs of their defined communities. This greater latitude to respond to audience need has shaped the community broadcasting sector's services over its thirty year history, allowing it to play a key role in shaping and reflecting the Australian character and cultural diversity.

10.3 Diverse, community-based programming is built into the regulatory framework for community broadcasting. When a not-for-profit community group applies to ACMA for a community broadcasting licence they specify what community interest they intend to serve. Upon grant of a five year renewable licence each station is then required to continue to serve the community interest for which the licence was granted. Another key statutory requirement requires each and every licensee to encourage members of the community served to participate in both operations and selection of programming. In addition all licensees are bound to comply with Community Broadcasting Codes of Practice which encapsulate guiding principles such as:

- harmony, diversity and social cohesion;
- pursuit of democracy, access and equity and giving a voice to those underrepresented in other media;
- greater programming choice;
- localism;
- editorial independence; and
- support for Australian music, arts and culture.

10.4 Communication is central to the concepts of culture and community. Cultures are reproduced maintained, altered and sometimes invented via communication. The media industry is primarily engaged in the communication of meaning. The content

they broadcast and distribute play a pivotal role in organising the images and knowledge through which people make sense of the world. The Australian community broadcasting sector has played this role in such a way which has constructed and reinforced a unique sense of national identity and a respect for and celebration of our cultural diversity. Community broadcasting is about conveying, representing, producing and maintaining the culture or ‘way of life’ of a diverse range of groups.

#### 10.5 Without the presence of community broadcasting in the media landscape:

- Indigenous people would be voiceless, and their cultures left to wither, without the continued revitalisation provided through Indigenous television and radio;
- Ethnic communities would be powerless without their local-language stations and children of migrants would be losing their sense of identity without continued maintenance and production of their culture;
- the visually impaired and the disabled elderly would be without community news and information if it were not for the services offered by RPH services;
- communities in remote areas would suffer without the local news and information provided on their community radio station, sometimes the only media service available to them;
- arts audiences would be unable to tune in to a wide range of alternative music, arts and cultural festivals, and new Australian writers on community radio and television stations; and
- audiences would lack access to a high levels of Australian content, particularly music, local drama, poetry readings and short story readings.

#### 10.6 The myriad ways in which community broadcasting nurtures, reflects and promotes the Australian character and cultural diversity will be considered in turn.

### **Indigenous Broadcasting**

10.7 The development of Indigenous broadcasting is one of the great success stories of Australian media history. As the CBOOnline Indigenous Hub states, “Indigenous broadcasting in Australia has a long history, beginning with a range of radio broadcasts on the ABC and community radio stations and building to the stage where there are now over 130 radio stations of various sizes around the nation.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> CBOOnline Indigenous Hub, created by and copyright of the National Indigenous Radio Service, available at <http://www.cbonline.org.au/index.cfm?pageId=43,0,26,0>. See the Indigenous Hub for a comprehensive history of the Indigenous Broadcasting sector.

- 10.8 In 2002-2003, 37 per cent of all community broadcasting stations aired programs aimed at an Indigenous audience, broadcasting a total of 1,602 hours of Indigenous programming. This is in addition to the programming provided by the 76 Indigenous Remote licensees.<sup>17</sup> The National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS), launched in 1997, networks radio programs to Indigenous stations across Australia. NIRS is based in Brisbane and forms a ‘hub’ station that links to primary networks via a series of digital ISDN lines and a national satellite footprint.
- 10.9 The Productivity Commission Inquiry into Broadcasting in 1999 recognised that broadcasting is important for Indigenous communities in that it provides ‘a primary level of service in remote areas and in local languages’. This acknowledged the unique role of Indigenous media in Australia and their primary objective to provide a first level of service for Indigenous people. The commission noted Indigenous media’s multifarious roles in providing a cultural bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and places where Indigenous people access skilled work opportunities. The report of the 1998 national review of Indigenous media, *Digital Dreaming*, also recognised how stations with regular local radio production were seen as playing an important role in maintaining local cultures and languages.
- 10.10 The CBAA supports the creation of a separate licence category under the BSA for Indigenous broadcasting. The CBAA regards itself as a friend and supporter of the Australian Indigenous Communications Association (AICA) and commends to the Inquiry AICA’s efforts to ensure that the voices of Indigenous Australians are heard on radio and that Indigenous access to all media - print, film and television - grows to meet your needs and aspirations.
- 10.11 The CBAA is on the record as supporting the efforts over the past 6 or 7 years to establish a new and distinct presence for Indigenous media – a national Indigenous broadcasting service and supports proposals for appropriate federal funding for such a service. In doing so we understand that the needs and imperatives for Indigenous broadcasters differ to some extent from those of the non-Indigenous communities. Non-Indigenous community broadcasting is sustained by more than 20,000 volunteers and grant funding is just part of the mix with membership donations and sponsorship being key sources of revenue. For the Indigenous broadcasting sector the requirement is more for a fully professionalised service providing training and paid employment.

### **Ethnic broadcasting**

- 10.12 Community broadcasting is the local medium that affirms and celebrates the cultural diversity of Australia. This is particularly important at a time when multiculturalism is under attack and particular ethnic and religious communities are facing hostility from parts of the mainstream media and general public.

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<sup>17</sup> 2004 Community Broadcasting Database, op cit.

10.13 As Bruce Francis, Former Executive Officer of the NEMBC told a Griffith University research project in 1999:

*All the programming that our people do has that cultural aspect as its central task—it is about providing cultural information in the public domain. Ethnic programming goes to the core of what we are as a multicultural nation...it is the core of people's understanding of their culture, and their right to a cultural identity and recognition in a democratic society.*<sup>18</sup>

10.14 Ethnic community broadcasting stations and the NEMBC have also played a leading role in assisting new, emerging and refugee communities make the transition to Australian life – providing news, information and assistance by and for these communities in their own languages.

10.15 Stations that hold full-time ethnic/multicultural broadcasting licences are 2000 Sydney, 3ZZZ Melbourne, 4EB Brisbane, 5EBI Adelaide, 6EBA Perth and 1CMS Canberra. However, a station does not have to have a dedicated ethnic focus to broadcast ethnic programming. In fact, 47 percent of the stations broadcast 2,125 hours weekly of programming aimed at people from non-English speaking backgrounds every week.<sup>19</sup>

### **RPH services**

10.16 The unique community service role that community broadcasting fulfils is no more evident than in the radio for the print handicapped (RPH) network. In 2002-2003, 16 per cent of stations put RPH programming to air, broadcasting a total of 1428 hours of RPH programs.<sup>20</sup>

10.17 RPH fulfils an undeniably essential role for many in the community, not only for people with a print disability. People with arthritis, the elderly and people with mobility disabilities also use RPH. Additionally, some non-English speaking migrants use the service to practise their English.

10.18 RPH also contributes to the ability of visually impaired community members to take part in their local community, by offering volunteer opportunities and providing information about local events and news.

### **Local voices, local content**

10.19 Commercial radio is dominated by networking and syndication of programming, resulting in a dramatic decline in localism since the 1990s. The commercial television and radio sector is now dominated by networked programming and most

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<sup>18</sup> Susan Forde, Michael Meadows & Kerry Foxwell, op cit, 55.

<sup>19</sup> 2004 Community Broadcasting Database, op cit.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.



regional services are aligned with one of the dominant networks. National broadcasting services ABC TV, SBS TV, Radio National, News Radio, Classic FM, JJJ and SBS Radio - are also largely networked, notwithstanding the fact that the ABC does operate many regional radio stations.

10.20 By contrast, localism is the hallmark of the community broadcasting sector. More than 70 per cent of the sector's content is locally produced by the station itself. The CBAA provides a satellite delivered service featuring the best programs produced by our member stations but these always remain a secondary choice for local stations, when local volunteers are not available.

10.21 Each station is independent and owned by its own community. It is their media outlet with the potential for discussion of local issues and events – a catalyst for community inclusiveness and the maintenance of identity. Community radio stations have the potential to be 'community hubs', generators of social capital – the connections between individuals and organisations that drive our society.

10.22 At a time when commercial media is increasingly networked and ownership and control of Australian commercial media is becoming increasingly concentrated, community broadcasting has become the voice of local communities. This is particularly the case in regional, rural and remote areas, where **35 per cent of stations are either the only radio service in their local area or the only source of local content.**<sup>21</sup>

10.23 Regional media in particular plays an important cultural role for their communities by constructing culture through meanings, values, and ideals. This happens through news and information programs, talkback, request shows and so on. In this way, media both reproduce and maintain the culture of a community. The broadcast of the ideas, stories, perspectives, issues and events to the radio station's community serves to affirm their culture amidst the homogenous mainstream media.

### **News and information**

10.24 The community broadcasting sector plays a crucial role in providing news and information services to its audiences. The 2004 Community Broadcasting Database indicates that 92 per cent of stations broadcast news bulletins and three-quarters broadcast current affairs programs.<sup>22</sup>

10.25 The community broadcasting service provides an independent news service, *National Radio News*, prepared and presented by the community stations 2NUR in Newcastle and 2MCE in Bathurst in conjunction with their respective universities and carried on the CBAA satellite.

### **Australian music**

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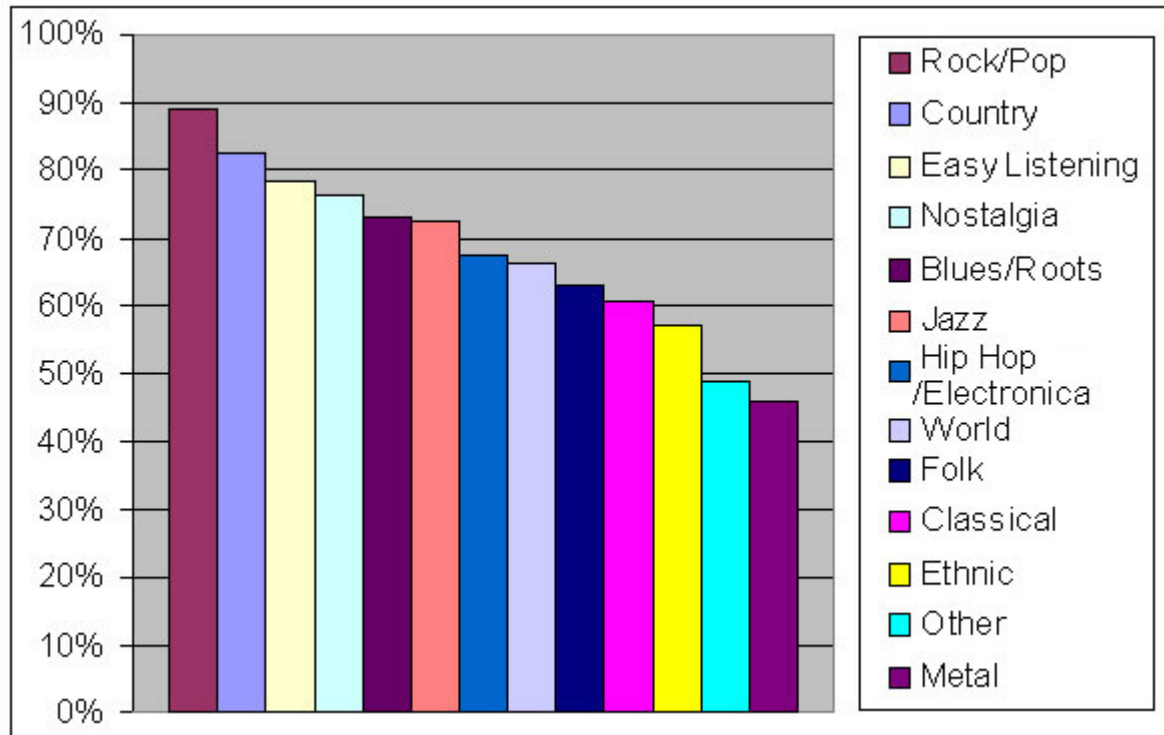
<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

10.26 While commercial radio tends to adopt narrow play-listed music formats which feature only a small number of local artists on heavy rotation, community radio stands out for its commitment to playing up-and-coming Australian musicians from a wide variety of genres. The sector’s commitment to Australian music is demonstrated by the 25% local music content requirement in its Code of Practice. During 2002-2003, the sector exceeded its minimum quotas for Australian music reaching an average of 32 percent.<sup>23</sup>

10.27 In addition, the practice of recording local musicians for rebroadcast is common amongst many community stations and during the period, 409 hours of Australian music sourced in this manner were broadcast across the sector during an average week.

10.28 The following table indicates the broad range of genres played on community radio during 2002-2003:



10.29 The figures also reflect the diversity of music broadcast throughout the sector, particularly as compared with other broadcasting sectors. The genres shown represent only a portion of those played on community stations. For example, the styles included in the ‘other’ music category ranged from experimental, avant-garde and reggae to show tunes, hymns and Scottish and Latin music.

10.30 Indigenous and religious music were categorised as overarching types of music,

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

which were further broken down into style or genre (e.g. Indigenous – country). Airplay of both these broad music genres was widespread in the community broadcasting sector during the period, with 63 percent of stations broadcasting Indigenous music and 84 percent airing religious music. In total there were 1,174 hours of Indigenous music and 4,132 hours of religious music played in an average week.

10.31 The importance of community radio in increasing the exposure and appreciation of local music by Australian radio audiences is demonstrated by the findings of the McNair Community Radio National Listener Survey of 2004. The main reason for listening given by more than a third of the community radio audience is because ‘they play Australian music and they support local artists’. This support for local music on community radio is even stronger in rural and regional areas, where more than 40% of the audience cite it as a reason for listening.

### **Australian arts and culture**

10.32 Community broadcasting seeks the active involvement of local arts communities and provides the opportunity for creative individuals to produce innovative programs. Community broadcasting stations play host to a wide range of high-quality spoken word, music, drama and poetry programs that feature, almost exclusively, Australian content. Community broadcasting’s commitment to radio drama and original Australian literature is particularly relevant in light of commercial radio’s complete recoil from any form of radio drama—and the reduction of radio drama productions on all ABC outlets except Radio National. Community radio stations also regularly organise outside broadcasts for local cultural events and festivals, which often incorporate discussions with local artists.

### **A Training Ground for the National and Commercial Sectors**

10.33 Any discussion of the contribution of community broadcasting must also acknowledge how it has built and strengthened the national and commercial broadcasting sectors in its role as a training ground for successive generations of media professionals. The following table demonstrates the role of community radio in nurturing the nation's talent:

| <b>Sector</b>     | <b>Name</b>     | <b>Position</b>                   | <b>Started on:</b>             |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Journalism</b> |                 |                                   |                                |
|                   | Andrew Denton   | Host, <i>Enough Rope</i>          | 2MCE Bathhurst                 |
|                   | Liz Jackson     | Host, <i>Four Corners</i>         | 2MCE Bathhurst,<br>2SER Sydney |
|                   | Jessica Rowe    | Host, <i>Today Show</i> ,<br>Nine | 2MCE Bathhurst                 |
|                   | Natasha Belling | Newsreader, Ten                   | 2MCE Bathhurst                 |
|                   | Fran Kelly      | Foreign                           | 2XX Canberra                   |

|                    |                                  |   |                                 |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
|                    |                                  | correspondent, ABC  |                                 |
|                    | Ramona Koval                     | ABC Radio   | 3RRR Melbourne                  |
|                    | Sian Prior                       | ABC Radio   | 3RRR Melbourne                  |
|                    | Marian Wilkinson                 | Fairfax   | 4ZZZ Brisbane                   |
| <b>Comedy</b>      |                                  |   |                                 |
|                    | James O’Loughlin                 | Presenter, <i>Evenings</i> ,<br>ABC Radio, NSW                                  | FBi Sydney                      |
|                    | Brian Dawe                       | Humourist, 7.30<br>Report   | 3RRR Melbourne                  |
|                    | Grieg Pickhaver aka<br>HG Nelson | Presenter, <i>The<br/>Dream</i>   | 3RRR Melbourne                  |
|                    | Coodabeen<br>Champions           | ABC Radio   | 3RRR Melbourne                  |
|                    | Merrick & Rosso                  | Nova breakfast,<br><i>Unplanned with<br/>Merrick &amp; Rosso</i> ,<br>Channel 9 | 3RRR Melbourne                  |
|                    | Santo Cilauro                    | Working Dog   | 3RRR Melbourne                  |
|                    | Richard Fidler                   | Ex-DAAS, ABC<br>Head of Comedy  | 3WAY<br>Warrnambool             |
|                    | Hamish & Andy                    | Fox FM  | SYN FM<br>Melbourne             |
|                    | Rove McManus                     | Host, <i>Rove</i>   | 6RTR Perth                      |
| <b>Television</b>  |                                  |   |                                 |
|                    | Catriona Rowntree                | Presenter, <i>Getaway</i> ,<br>Channel 9  | 2NSB Northern<br>Suburbs Sydney |
|                    | Fenella Kernebone                | Presenter, <i>The<br/>Movie Show</i> , SBS                                      | 2SER Sydney                     |
|                    | Jamie Leonarder                  | Presenter, <i>The<br/>Movie Show</i> , SBS                                      | FBi Sydney                      |
|                    | Kate Langbroek                   | Host, <i>The Panel</i>  | 3RRR Melbourne                  |
| <b>Other radio</b> |                                  |   |                                 |
|                    | Robbie Buck                      | Presenter, <i>Home &amp;<br/>Hosed</i> , Triple J                               | 2NCR Lismore,<br>2SER Sydney    |
|                    | Julie McCrossen                  | Presenter, <i>Life<br/>Matters</i> , Radio<br>National                          | 2SER Sydney                     |
|                    | Richard Kingsmill                | Presenter / Music<br>Director, Triple J   | 2NUR Newcastle,<br>2SER Sydney  |
|                    | Caroline Tran                    | Presenter, Triple J   | 2RES Eastern<br>Suburbs Sydney  |
|                    | Mick O’Regan                     | Presenter, <i>Media<br/>Report</i> , Radio<br>National                          | 2SER Sydney                     |

|                |                |                         |                              |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Writers</b> |                |                         |                              |
|                | Helen Razer    | Freelance journalist    | 2XX Canberra,<br>2SER Sydney |
|                | Sarah McDonald | Author, <i>Holy Cow</i> | 2SER Sydney                  |

10.34 The national and commercial sectors have benefited from the sector's provision of an entry level training facility at no direct cost for many years. They will gain flow on benefits from the higher general standard of training delivered and the greater transparency of individual skill levels afforded by the new National Training Project.

# Technological opportunities, including digital, to expand community broadcasting networks

## 11. Community Broadcasting and Digital Transmission

11.1 The CBAA has recently identified opportunities to sustain and expand community broadcasting services using digital platforms in two significant submissions to DCITA:

*'Adding Digital Value'*, CBAA 13 January 2006 – Addressing initial resource needs for digital community radio; and

*'Driving Digital'*, CBAA 23 December 2005 – Identifying the need to provide urgent digital access for community television.

11.2 The community television sector currently faces a critical point in its history. The increasing uptake of digital television means that the audience for community television is steadily diminishing, thereby affecting the sector's ability to generate sufficient revenue to survive. The CBAA's supplementary submission on community television addresses this issue and sets out a series of policy proposals by which the digital transition can be made. This present submission will address the CBAA's policy proposals for digital radio.

11.3 The introduction of digital radio to Australia presents a series of exciting challenges for the community broadcasting sector and the place of radio as a media form generally. The sector has worked for many years to ensure that community broadcasting is given every chance to take up these challenges squarely and for the overall public benefit. The CBAA has been an active and equal participant in the industry/government consultative process formulating policy for the new platforms, and our Technical Consultant, David Sice of Intermedia, is Chair of the Government's Broadcast Industry Technical Advisory Group.

11.4 The CBAA welcomes the Committee's interest in the technological opportunities currently afforded to the sector, particularly in terms of digital broadcasting. Community broadcasters are excited by the chance to be innovative in managing use of digital capacity and to provide fresh and vital services designed to supplement existing analogue offerings.

11.5 In October 2005, the Government made a series of commitments that make community broadcasting an essential part of the framework for digital radio in Australia, on a basis affordable for the sector. In announcing the Government's digital radio framework the Minister said '[c]onsideration of additional funding for community broadcasters to assist them with the costs of digital broadcasting will be considered in the normal budget context.'

- 11.6 The Government's digital radio framework guarantees digital capacity for community broadcasting and requires a joint approach to management and content provision, rather than being managed directly by existing broadcasters. Given that there is no requirement to simulcast the existing analogue services, in radio there is scope for innovative content development, drawing upon the pool of community broadcasting resources. Thus the framework allows contribution of content by community broadcasters from stations across each geographic area, and for collaboration of content from a wide variety of sources in the city and across the country as well. Facilities and resources for content aggregation are central to the ability of community broadcasters and stations to provide content and ready it for emanation using digital radio transmission.
- 11.7 It is also necessary to establish new management entities. The composition and structure of such entities is to be determined by the community sector. It is reasonable to expect a leading role will be played by sector and station representatives, with a mix of broadly based and specific city based perspectives.
- 11.8 On a joint basis the community sector is well placed to provide a wealth of innovative digital content leveraged from its existing infrastructure and activities. Many of the extra costs of digital content generation will be met by the community sector. However, new infrastructure is required for digital content aggregation, contribution and transmission carriage via digital radio technology.
- 11.9 There is a reasonable expectation that the Government would underscore its guarantee of digital capacity by assisting with the cost of linking and transmission aspects necessary to effect use of digital capacity. The CBAA has recently made a submission to DCITA which seeks such funding, through either:
- (a) public funding through the Department of Communications, IT and the Arts;
  - (b) a form of must carry free of charge obligation imposed upon the multiplex licensee/s in each licence area could be used to address the digital transmission cost aspects; or
  - (c) a combination of (a) and (b).
- 11.10 The framework outlines a staged rollout, with digital radio to be implemented in metropolitan areas as soon as practicable. The Government has also urged broadcasters to trial digital radio in regional areas so that technical and other issues can be resolved. The Government will then consider what financial support is necessary to expand digital radio into rural and regional Australia. The CBAA urges the Committee to lend its full support to the rollout of digital community radio in rural and regional areas, given the importance of these services in providing local content to their communities.

- 11.11 The Government's framework is built around digital radio being a supplement to existing radio services in Australia rather than a replacement technology, as it is with television. In the long term, should digital radio supplant the place of analogue radio in common use then the community sector would expect the Government to hold true to the full extent of its commitments and ensure sufficient digital capacity is provided to carry the full range of existing community broadcasters.
- 11.12 The advent of digital radio also offers the community broadcasting sector the chance to pioneer the use of other new technologies. The processes and infrastructure required to aggregate content and make it ready for transmission by digital radio lends itself to the provision of content re-purposed for delivery by other means, including Podcast, Web, DVB-Terrestrial, DVB-Handheld, Satellite and mobile telephone platforms. All of these technologies offer greater opportunity for access and participation in community media.



## **Opportunities and threats to achieving a diverse and robust network of community broadcasters**

12.1 There are a range of opportunities and threats affecting the overall future prospects for the community broadcasting sector, including:

### ***Opportunities:***

- The national roll-out of accredited training
- Ongoing support for infrastructure and technology innovation
- Growth and diversification through digital technologies and content sharing
- Revenue growth in sponsorship from Government Information Activities
- A growing research base of audience data and industry profile data
- Engagement with regional neighbours and other countries through the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC).
- Ongoing support for cultural industries collaboration through targeted support for the Australian Music Radio Airplay Project (Amrap)

### ***Threats:-***

- Stagnation or diminution of Government support for important initiatives and ongoing programs
- Further pressure on viability through marked increases in transmission site access fees charged by commercial providers that are arguably outpacing underlying costs
- Further segmentation of audiences and community support through proliferation of alternatives to community broadcasting.
- Incremental undermining of the audience base and the viability of community television whilst digital uptake grows and access to digital platforms remains unavailable.

These opportunities and threats will be considered in turn.

### **Opportunity: The national roll-out of accredited training**

- 12.2 The establishment of a National Training Project is a landmark opportunity for the community broadcasting sector. It will allow fully accredited Certificates II, III and IV programs and a range of short courses to be delivered at stations across Australia. These courses will address the needs of community broadcasters for basic broadcast skills, continue to provide for specific ethnic training needs, and extend accredited training to cover Indigenous and RPH special needs. The further development of sector-based accredited training will provide broad access to the achievement of industry recognised qualifications for those seeking a career in the media.
- 12.3 Extension of accredited training has clear benefits. The principal outcome of this comprehensive training regime will be an increase in the sector's general presentation and program content standards. Audience reach could be expected to increase as a result with attendant benefits for the ongoing sustainability of the sector. Moreover as broadcast skills training involves developing a range of technological, communication and organisational competencies that have broad application and value in the workplace, trainees enhance their skill sets and employment options. The community broadcasting sector will enhance its value as a skill provider to the both to the broadcasting industry and the general community.
- 12.4 In addition, the project will develop and deliver a nationally accredited management skills training program. The purpose of such funding is to address the current relatively low management skills base within the community broadcasting sector and to facilitate the development of community stations as successful not-for-profit community enterprises. The management skills training packages will focus on financial and human resources management, community networking and integration, sales, marketing and strategic planning within the specific context of the operation of community broadcasting stations. The program will emphasise the need for community stations to possess both good business skills and strong integration with the community served as the keys for long term stability and prosperity.
- 12.5 With few exceptions community radio stations in rural and regional areas operate with only part-time or volunteer coordinators with largely operational responsibilities. For these stations ongoing operational needs absorb all current resources and they face great difficulty gaining the expertise and necessary additional resources to drive development. The delivery of management skills training will have particular value for stations in rural and regional areas.

### **Opportunity: Ongoing support for infrastructure and technology innovation**

- 12.6 The community broadcasting sector's infrastructure needs have increased markedly in recent years due to several concurrent factors:

- The recent surge in new licensees with establishment infrastructure needs;
  - The aging of early station infrastructure;
  - Demand for regional extension of RPH services;
  - National training needs;
  - Permanent licensing of CTV; and
  - Technological change.
- 12.7 Their convergence has created an urgent requirement for additional resources to meet sector infrastructure needs. With the continuing consolidation of Australian media ownership, and the increasing use of networking by commercial and national media, community broadcasters are rapidly becoming the only locally owned broadcast media in regional and rural areas and often the only broadcast media presenting local programs. As the importance of community media in ensuring access to the airwaves, accredited broadcast skills training, and local and diverse programming grows there is a commensurate need to ensure that such stations are appropriately equipped to meet these responsibilities.
- 12.8 More needs to be done to encourage the availability of computer based resources across all broadcast and production studios within stations. Only 43 percent are fully networked, and 20 percent are not networked at all.<sup>24</sup>
- 12.9 The sector also needs to develop the appropriate infrastructure to support its ongoing role in the national provision of accredited broadcast skills training. Most community broadcasting stations do not currently possess ideal training facilities. The 2004 Community Broadcasting Database revealed that only 34 per cent of stations have a studio suitable for training. In broadcasting terms the minimum equipment necessary for efficient training is to have a training studio that mirrors the equipment in the station's principal broadcast studio and that is of sufficient size to allow training to be conducted in small groups. Such a facility would ideally be supplemented by networked or stand-alone digital audio workstations and sufficient ancillary equipment that would allow trainees to practice program production skills without the need for access to a fully equipped studio.
- 12.10 Community broadcasting stations are lean operations. The sector's volunteer ethic and cooperative ethos assist the containment of operational costs. However capital development and recapitalisation costs for broadcast infrastructure cannot be similarly minimised. With many older stations requiring recapitalisation and a host of new community radio and television stations needing assistance with meeting the infrastructure demands of a full-time service there is a clear need for access to ongoing additional resources for these purposes.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

**Opportunity: Growth and diversification through digital technologies and content sharing**

12.11 Online technologies already provide a foretaste of the opportunities that face community stations in terms of the capacity to provide programming and supporting information to audiences on an on-demand basis. The advent of digital terrestrial broadcasting for both radio and television will provide additional capacity for extensive value-adding (text, images and electronic program guides) to conventional analogue program production and broadcasting. It is important to note that in digital radio, content production and distribution are not necessarily linked or limited to existing broadcasters. Content and management of digital capacity is to be determined on a joint basis. Digital radio supplements rather than replaces analog and so there is no requirement to simulcast. Therefore in radio there is scope for innovative content development, drawing upon the pool of community broadcasting resources. Thus the framework allows contribution of content by community broadcasters from stations across each city, and for collaboration of content from a wide variety of sources in the city and across the country as well. This prefigures the establishment of new management entities. The composition and structure of such entities is to yet be determined by the community sector. It is reasonable to expect a leading role will be played by sector and station representatives, with a mix of broadly based and specific city based perspectives.

**Opportunity: Revenue growth in sponsorship from Government information activities**

12.12 One means of assisting the financial viability of community radio services, while also fulfilling government objectives, is to increase the amount of funding from government information campaigns which goes to community radio. In fact, any government department which seeks to provide equal rights of access to information to all members of the Australian community, in a manner which is fair and equitable, must include community broadcasting in its media planning activities.

12.13 The 'Principles for Government Information Programs' set down in part 2 of the Government Communications Unit's (GCU) *Guidelines for Australian Government Information Activities* (1995) state as follows:

- 2.1 The Government stresses that all Australians have equal rights of access to information about programs, policies and activities which affect their benefits, rights and obligations. The Government therefore expects all departments, agencies and authorities (referred to as 'departments' in the rest of this document) to carry out their public information programs based on the principles which guide all of the Government's relations with the community - fairness and equity.
- 2.7 The Government recognises that not all individuals or groups within the community are equally well placed to gain access to Government

information. A 1980 report into departmental information identified this problem and defined the 'information poor' as: *"those who are disadvantaged through low income, poor education, inadequate knowledge of English, physical handicap, geographical isolation or any other reason."*

2.8 The Government requires that departments, in preparing their information programs, give special attention to communicating with any of these disadvantaged individuals or groups which are identified as being within the designated target audience.

2.9 In line with its priority concerns, the Government expects particular attention to be given to the communication needs of young people, the rural community, and those for whom English is not a convenient language in which to receive information.

12.14 The McNair National Listener Survey shows that community radio reaches those audiences who cannot be accessed through traditional media, particularly low income earners, Indigenous people, people from a non-English speaking, the print handicapped, young people and people from regional, rural and remote communities. The McNair Community Radio National Listener Survey revealed that:

- **25%** of **rural and regional Australians** listen to community radio every week;
- **27%** of **young people** aged 15-24 listen to community radio every week;
- **26%** of **students** listen to community radio every week;
- **27%** of **blue-collar workers**, **27%** of professionals/managers and **23%** of other white collar workers listen to community radio every week;
- **25%** of people who regularly speak a **language other than English** in their households listen to community radio every week;
- **19%** of people who are **unemployed** listen to community radio every week;
- **20%** of people who are doing **home duties** listen to community radio every week;
- **20%** of **retirees** listen to community radio every week;
- Over **one-quarter** of all **part-time workers** and one-quarter of all full-time workers and listen to community radio every week; and

- **23%** of people earning **less than \$20,000 a year**, 25% of people earning \$20,000-\$40,000 a year, 26% of people earning \$40,001-\$60,000 and 26% of people earning over \$60,000 listen to community radio.
- Those who listen **exclusively** to community radio tend to be **lower income earners**, averaging **\$26,200** per year.
- **1,317,000** Australians listen to community radio but **do not listen to commercial radio**, therefore **cannot be accessed** by traditional commercial radio advertising.

12.15 We submit that the GCU should direct its departments to ensure that a greater proportion of funding for government communications campaigns should be allocated to community broadcasting.

12.16 By sponsoring community radio, government is making a direct financial contribution to local communities. All community broadcasting stations are self-reliant organisations and are essentially self-funding. Sponsorship is the primary means by which stations generate revenue and an increase in the level of government sponsorship would make a significant difference to the station's bottom line. In turn, helping to build a strong, self-sufficient and economically viable community radio sector decreases the strain on public resources.

12.17 Unlike commercial radio, funding received for carrying government campaigns goes right back into the station – paying for transmission access, capital infrastructure, use of copyright and maintenance of equipment.

### **Opportunity: A growing research base of audience data and industry profile data**

12.18 There is currently a great opportunity for the sector to promote its services more widely and to raise the general awareness of the services it provides. Given the sector's general low resource level it is not surprising that infrastructure needs and operational costs have taken precedence over promotional budgets. However, the provision of one-off funding from Government to conduct McNair National Listener Survey has led to a raised profile for the sector, attracting significant media coverage at local, city and national levels.

12.19 Since community broadcasting services are established to meet minority and niche community needs rather than develop mass audiences, audience size alone is not an appropriate sector performance measure. However such research results indicate a growing awareness and appreciation of the services the sector provides. Moreover there is considerable potential for cost-effective cross-promotion to be undertaken between the established community radio sector and the nascent community television sector.

- 12.20 Current audience figures are extremely important for sector development and have proven to exceedingly useful at a station level. However, there is no ongoing source of funding to allow for updated quantitative listener surveys like the one conducted by McNair Ingenuity from a one-off grant from the Department in 2004. In order to create a comprehensive picture of community broadcasting sector, it is important that both operational and listener profiles are available and updated at regular intervals. Rarely is either of these types of research considered in isolation, but instead are crossreferenced in order to create a well-rounded picture.
- 12.21 To encompass these broader objectives, CBOnline is being repositioned as a coordination point for sector research. This in line with the current direction the project is taking, with both the CBD and the recently established 3CMedia academic e-journal (see website specific information). At this stage, the sector envisages alternating each year between conducting a CBD survey and a listener survey. Qualitative studies of particular operational areas or station types would be investigated further if targeted funding were to be forthcoming. It is possible that they would be conducted in partnership with universities and/or other research organisations. Costs for quantitative operational research for the CBD could be contained within the current funding parameters (i.e. approximately \$70k per survey to cover the radio, television and Remote Indigenous aspects). However, full scale audience research comparable to that conducted by McNair Ingenuity in 2004 requires an increased funding commitment, which could not be met under the current funding provision.

**Opportunity: Engagement with regional neighbours and other countries through the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC)**

- 12.22 Australia is recognised internationally as one of the most 'mature' and developed community broadcasting sector in the world. In light of this, it would be valuable to develop the potential for the Australian community broadcasting sector to interact with other representative bodies at a regional and global level. The CBAA has commenced, on a formal level, engagement with the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC).
- 12.23 In the lead up to the inaugural Asia Pacific Conference of AMARC, the CBAA was able to negotiate with Aus Aid to secure funding for five representatives from our regional neighbours to attend. The CBAA, through its own funds was able to send two delegates to attend the conference which was held in Jakarta in November 2005. One outcome of that conference was the establishment of an Asia Pacific Regional Committee on which the Australian community broadcasting sector has representation.
- 12.24 There is great potential for the Australian sector to contribute to the development of the international community broadcasting sectors, particularly in the Asia Pacific region. Some of the benefits that would flow from such interaction for Australian community broadcasters include the opportunity to enter into training initiatives with other nations; the opportunity for personnel exchange programs; the

opportunity for accessing diverse cultural news and current affairs, music and other content suitable for distribution and rebroadcast to domestic communities of interest; the opportunity to share ephemeral resources (for instance advising on such matters as policy development and preparing submissions to regulators and governments); the opportunity to assist in the securing of international aid funding that could assist in the development and implementation of long term, sustainable activities and other programs that would enhance the viability of community media in our region.

- 12.25 On the regional and global level, Australia's involvement may open up opportunities for international internships within Australian community stations; the opportunity to access training and other material that may assist in the development and sustainability of community media; the opportunity for academic schemes that allow for the study of or research into community media in an international setting and the opportunity to access the ephemeral resources of the Australian community media sector (for instance by attendance at the CBAA, NEMBC and AICA conferences).
- 12.26 To achieve any or all of these potentials would require funding. The Australian government has demonstrated its commitment to development, stability and sustainability within the Asia Pacific region. The community broadcasting sector already provides a respected and interactive vehicle upon which a number of programs could be attached. Information on public health, community development issues, disaster prevention and peace initiatives are already broadcast on community media within our region. What is often lacking is expertise and experience to develop community media in the long term.
- 12.27 In order to assist in the regional development and implementation of a sustainable community broadcasting sector internationally, the CBAA seeks the endorsement of the Committee to pursue funding options through AusAid and other relevant government departments.

**Opportunities: Ongoing support for cultural industries collaboration through targeted support for the Australian Music Radio Airplay Project (Amrap)**

- 12.28 As stated above, the Amrap project was established in 1998 by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts in response to a long-recognised need on the part of musicians, music industry and community radio for nationally coordinated support for the promotion and distribution of local music to community radio stations. The project was part of the broader package of contemporary music initiatives introduced by then Minister Richard Alston. Funding of \$1.5 million was provided over three years and administered through the Community Broadcasting Foundation ('CBF'). The project is managed by a small team of two full time and two part time core staff under the auspices of the CBAA.



12.29 Amrap's primary objective is 'to promote contemporary Australian music through the community broadcasting sector.': The project's key achievements in its short lifespan include:

- (a) distribution of more than 70,000 cds by Australian artists to community radio stations, providing a service to over 2,000 Australian musicians;
- (b) funding the production of more than 15 local festival broadcasts for satellite distribution and national airplay across the community broadcasting sector;
- (c) funding the production and distribution of over 35 compilation CDs put together by community radio stations;
- (d) funding the production of six weekly Australian music programs for satellite distribution and national airplay;
- (e) establishment of the innovative 'Music Correspondents' initiative which commissions specialist music broadcasters from around the country to produce short program segments about aspects of contemporary Australian music for national distribution and broadcast ;
- (f) delivery to the community broadcasting sector CD stock equivalent to the value of the project's initial funding of \$1.5m
- (g) contributing \$200,000 to the establishment of the Digital Delivery Network ("DDN"), an infrastructure which allows the distribution of music as downloadable files to radio stations via satellite; and
- (h) sourcing an extra \$250,000 in auxiliary funding.

12.30 Amrap was originally conceived as a three-year project, but careful management and cost-efficiency has allowed it to extend its operational phase to span six years. In keeping with community broadcasting practice, administrative costs have been kept to a minimum, with the overriding focus always being on delivering tangible and beneficial outcomes for musicians.

12.31 Having derived maximum value out of all available funds, it is now expected that all funding will be exhausted by July 2006. Without further support, the project will have to cease operations at that time. The continuation of the program was endorsed by an independent evaluation of the project recently conducted by Developing Media Works. The CBAA recently made a submission to DCITA which contains a proposal for the further funding of Amrap so that this landmark project can continue to provide its vital and much-valued services to local musicians, the music industry, the community radio sector and the wider public. The CBAA urges the Committee to endorse this continuation of the Amrap project.

**Threat: Stagnation or diminution of government support for important initiatives and ongoing programs**

12.32 Between 1996 and 2004 the average level of Australian Government funding support available per station in real terms declined by 43%. This was redressed to an appreciable extent in 2004/05 following Minister Coonan's commitment (over four years) to injecting an additional \$1.5m per annum for distribution to

community broadcasting stations by way of transmission access costs subsidies and a further \$2.2m over four years to establish a national training fund that will enable the sector to provide for training in management and broadcasting skills, particularly in rural and regional areas, along with Indigenous, Ethnic and RPH training.

- 12.33 Targeted funding in transmission and training is widely appreciated and will do much to enhance the ongoing sustainability and growth of the sector. But there would be serious cause for concern if such support is not continued beyond the current four year commitment. As we have already identified in section 11 (above) there are now new opportunities to sustain and expand community broadcasting services using digital platforms (as the submissions *'Adding Digital Value'* and *'Driving Digital'* attest). A failure to support the sector's move into digital will result in stultification of growth and eventually a loss of audience support and therefore viability. The community television sector is currently facing a critical point. The increasing uptake of digital television platforms that do not presently carry community TV means that its audience is steadily diminishing and the ability to generate sufficient revenue to survive is being undermined.

**Threat: Further pressure on viability through marked increases in transmission site access fees charged by commercial providers**

- 12.34 Transmission is an area of major concern for community broadcasters. Only 69 per cent enjoy reception coverage on par with other broadcasters in their areas. In addition, with 60 per cent of stations leasing either their transmission site and/or facilities from a third party, the increasing cost of transmission is a major concern.<sup>25</sup>

- 12.35 Since the Government's sale of the National Transmission Network for \$650m in 1999 to *ntl Australia Pty. Ltd.* the community broadcasting sector has progressively been exposed to full commercial pricing of access to privately owned transmission infrastructure. While commercial media can pass these costs on to advertisers and public broadcasters' transmission costs are supported from the public purse the community sector is faced with a substantial increase in transmission infrastructure costs as a percentage of total operating costs with little opportunity to defray them through increased turnover. The consolidation of transmission infrastructure as a result of the introduction of digital broadcasting only threatens to further exacerbate this process.

- 12.36 The Government recognised this problem and has addressed it to some extent by the introduction of a Transmission Access Fund, which subsidises the costs of transmission for community broadcasting stations. However, the high costs of transmission remain an ongoing concern for community broadcasters. The CBAA urges the Committee to support indexed funding (both 'core' and 'targeted') in key areas of rising cost such as transmission site access and transmission technology access.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

**Threat: Further segmentation of audiences and community support through proliferation of alternatives to community broadcasting**

12.37 The sector cannot afford to retain a narrow focus on broadcasting modes of delivery alone. The new digital broadcasting platforms hold great promise but there is already a boom in distributed network technologies via the internet and 3rd generation wireless networks. PCs, mobile phones, games consoles and the like now provide multiple access paths for the consumption of media content. Community broadcasting services need to take stock of where they stand in the midst of this emerging flood of new content and delivery options.

12.37 The sector must adopt research strategies that ensure that it keeps pace with consumer trends and we must closely monitor the extent to which audiences remain committed to radio and television as we currently know them. There is a growing trend in community broadcasting to adapt to the challenge and community stations themselves become on-demand suppliers of content, podcasters, blog aggregators and the like.

**Threat: Incremental undermining of the audience base and the viability of community television whilst digital uptake grows**

12.37 Due to the surge in uptake of digital receivers, community television is rapidly losing access to viewers who make the transition to digital broadcasting. As stated in the CBAA's first submission to the present Review, the business model enshrined in the *Broadcasting Legislation Amendment Bill (No 2) 2002* (Cth) provides that stations may generate revenue through sponsorship and sale-of-airtime. With 40,000 digital set-top boxes being purchased every month, and sales likely to increase dramatically if incentives or subsidies are introduced, the viability of these revenue streams are being threatened as the size of the existing and potential community television audience decreases.

12.38 Community television needs to be transmitting on the digital platform within 12-21 months or will face serious financial hardship due to the steady erosion of its existing and potential audience. Further, to remain viable by reaching the entire television viewing audience, community television broadcasters must be permitted to simulcast in analogue and digital until the analogue switch-off date. This threat is discussed further in the CBAA's supplementary submission to this Inquiry.

# Recommendations

## Recommendations

Because this Inquiry process will take up to a year before there is a published report and findings, the CBAA is mindful not to preempt the detailed funding bid that the sector as a whole will be making to Government in 2007 in the lead-up to the next Federal election.

Our recommendations to the Community Broadcasting Inquiry therefore are in support of policy positions and points of principle, not specified funding needs. They are:

- i. Ongoing support for identified programming and key infrastructure initiatives.**
- ii. Indexed funding (both ‘core’ and ‘targeted’) in key areas of rising cost such as transmission site access and transmission technology access.**
- iii. Full recognition and continuing support for the ongoing development and delivery of accredited industry training.**
- iv. Commitment to supporting the transition of the community broadcasting sector to digital platforms in a way that upholds parity between the free-to-air industry sectors (commercial, national and community) and maintains structural diversity.**
- v. Urgent addressing of the need for community television to attain access to digital platforms for the purpose of simulcasting in order to retain its audience base.**
- vi. Support for research and data gathering activities including national audience research and further development of the Community Broadcasting Database.**
- vii. In order to assist in regional development and the implementation of a sustainable community broadcasting sector internationally, the CBAA is seeking endorsement to pursue funding options through Aus Aid (and other relevant government departments).**
- viii. Improved regulatory decision making, spectrum administration and licensing through the appointment of experienced proponents of community media to the Board of the regulatory authority, the Australian Communications and Media Authority.**

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