The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Tuning in to Community Broadcasting

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

June 2007
Canberra

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ISBN 978-0-642-78923-5 (printed version)
978-0-642-78924-2 (HTML version)

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Foreword

Community broadcasting is an opportunity to bring diversity to the media landscape in Australia. Community broadcasters transmit on valuable spectrum that could be otherwise hired out to commercial users. The public policy reasons for reserving spectrum for community broadcasting has more to do with the community the broadcasters serve rather than anything done in the station itself.

Success of community broadcasters can be measured by station ratings, financial liquidity and ability to plan for the replacement of equipment needed to broadcast in the modern environment without waiting on uncertain government funding. Like all media outlets independence in content and production is valued.

The focus of this inquiry has been to support this independence, promote diversity, and ensure success of community broadcasters facing some big hurdles in transmitting into the future.

The Committee has made a number of recommendations addressing the need for increased Government funding to community broadcasters, both ongoing funding and short term funding for technical upgrades. However, these increases must be accompanied by a greater level of business acumen and improved management and financial accountability by community broadcasters.

While community radio is a vibrant sector, community television currently faces a crisis with no security of access to digital spectrum or option for simulcast. These issues were addressed in the first report of this inquiry released in February 2007 and the Committee, along with the community television broadcasters and viewers, anxiously await a Government response to that report.

I wish to thank all those who contributed to this inquiry and to both reports through submissions and discussions with the Committee.

I also wish to thank the members of the Committee and the Committee secretariat for their interest in the inquiry and commitment to working together to support the vitality of community broadcasting in Australia.

The Hon Jackie Kelly MP
Chair

Membership of the Committee

Chair	Hon Jackie Kelly MP	
Deputy Chair	Ms Julie Owens MP	
Members	Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP	Mr Andrew Laming MP
	Mr Peter Garrett AM MP	Mr Chris Hayes MP
	Mr Alan Griffin MP (until 25/5/06)	Mr Ken Ticehurst MP
	Mr Michael Johnson MP	Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP
	Mr Michael Keenan MP	(from 25/5/06)

Committee Secretariat

Secretary	Dr Anna Dacre
Inquiry Secretary	Mr Anthony Overs
Research Officer	Mr John Baczynski
Administrative Officers	Mr Daniel Miletic
	Ms Shannon Rooney

Terms of reference

The Committee will investigate and report on:

- the scope and role of Australian community broadcasting across radio, television, the internet and other broadcasting technologies
- content and programming requirements that reflect the character of Australia and its cultural diversity
- technological opportunities, including digital, to expand community broadcasting networks
- opportunities and threats to achieving a diverse and robust network of community broadcasters.

List of abbreviations

ACB	Association of Christian Broadcasters
ACMA	Australian Communications and Media Authority
AFMN	Australian Fine Music Network
AICA	Australian Indigenous Communications Association
BSA	Broadcast Services Act
CAAMA	Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association
CBAA	Community Broadcasting Association of Australia
CBD	Community Broadcasting Database
CBF	Community Broadcasting Foundation
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CTV	Community Television
DCITA	Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
EBC	Ethnic Broadcasters' Council
EPBAV	Ethnic Public Broadcasting Association of Victoria
FSG	Funding Strategy Group
GST	Goods and Services Tax

GVCR	Goulburn Valley Community Radio
IBP	Indigenous Broadcasting Program
IRCA	Indigenous Remote Communications Association
MCRA	Multicultural Community Radio Association
MRTAWA	Multicultural Radio And Television Association of WA
NEMBC	National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council
NIRS	National Indigenous Radio Service
NTN	National Transmission Network
PMBA	Progressive Music Broadcasting Association
RIBS	Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services
RPH	Radio for the Print Handicapped
SEIMA	South East Indigenous Media Association
SYN	Student Youth Network
TCBL	Temporary Community Broadcasting Licences
TEABBA	Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association

List of recommendations

2 The community broadcasting sector and governance and funding issues

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in conjunction with the sector's peak bodies, develop a guiding template for the structure of station boards or management committees.

The template for a community broadcaster board or management committee should ideally include:

- local council representative(s)
- educational institution representative(s)
- chartered accountant
- local Chamber of Commerce or business council representative
- other people suitably trained or qualified for managing such a community business.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government provide an additional $500 000 per year for four years, for the development and delivery of training material for the sector that focuses on management training for the community broadcasting sector.

This funding should be effective from 2008-09 and should be in addition to the $2.2 million over four years that the sector is currently utilising.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the Australian Communications and Media Authority, require that compulsory accredited business management training is incorporated as a community broadcasting licence condition, as part of the licence renewal process.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Community Broadcasting Foundation reassess their criteria for funding disbursement, taking into account effective management, business planning and accountability to the communities those stations serve.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government increase the general community broadcasting category of core funding for the community broadcasting sector by $10 million, with indexed annual increases.

This increase in funding is for the purpose of funding community broadcasting station manager positions.

This funding increase should be effective for the 2007-08 financial year.

The Committee also recommends that the Australian Government review this level of funding every three years to ensure it remains proportionate to sector growth.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government increase targeted funding for the community broadcasting sector to $5 million, with indexed annual increases.

This funding increase should be effective for the 2007-08 financial year.

The Committee also recommends that targeted funding should continue for four years, from 2007-08.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government ensure that regional and rural community broadcasting stations are not financially disadvantaged, compared to metropolitan stations, and receive support appropriate to the services they deliver, with regard to Australian Government grants disbursed by the Community Broadcasting Foundation.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government annually report to Parliament the percentage of Australian Government advertising expenditure that it allocates to the community broadcasting sector, and justify nil returns.

4 Regulatory issues in the community broadcasting sector

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Australian Communications and Media Authority:

- substantially improve its transparency with regard to community broadcasting complaint handling and decision making processes
- improve communications with community broadcasting licensees
- develop and implement extension services that allow community broadcasters to access Australian Communications and Media Authority officers
- increase awareness of its processes through workshops and campaigns directed towards the community broadcasting sector.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the Australian Communications and Media Authority, clarify community broadcasting sponsorship guidelines and provide detailed explanatory material concerning broadcasters' responsibilities.

The Committee further recommends that the update of sponsorship guidelines should be completed by 30 June 2008.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Australian Communications and Media Authority:

- provide significant extension support to community broadcasting stations regarding sponsorship guidelines
- significantly increase its awareness raising workshops and campaigns in community broadcasting forums.

5 Other community broadcasting sector issues

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government conduct an investigation examining:

- increases in transmission fees for not-for-profit community broadcasters
- the impact of transmission fee increases on community broadcasters
- ways to monitor and regulate transmission fee increases for community broadcasters
- the potential for transmission for community broadcasters to be made a Community Service Obligation
- transmission access issues for community broadcasters
- any competition issues concerning transmission.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government amend the *Copyright Act 1968*, extending the Section 47A statutory licence to enable community radio broadcasting licensees to broadcast sound material that is provided to those broadcasters by approved Radio for the Print Handicapped organisations.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government amend the *Copyright Act 1968*, creating a new statutory licence to:

- enable Radio for the Print Handicapped service providers to stream material on the internet
- enable Radio for the Print Handicapped material to be made available by way of download from Radio for the Print Handicapped websites.

This new statutory licence should be available to:

- print disability or Radio for the Print Handicapped licensees
- community radio broadcasting licensees, but only for material for which the expanded Section 47A relates.