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**Multicultural Radio & Television Association of WA (INC)  
6EBA 95.3 FM, 386 Fitzgerald Street , North Perth WA 6006**

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**Submission to the Standing Committee on Communications,  
Information Technology and the Arts, House of Representatives, to  
“inquire into and report on issues pertaining to Community  
Broadcasting in Australia”**

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## 1.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In order to inform the Committee about “who” MRTA 6EBA 95.3 Fm is, a brief history of who we are may help in identifying ourselves here in Western Australia. Our radio station is Perth’s only Multicultural community broadcaster, fulfilling the needs of it’s ethnic community.

From it’s humble beginnings it commenced broadcasting in 1979, through Curtin University ie Curtin Radio 6NR. It then moved to its own premises, an old house in 20 View Street in North Perth.. However after a few years, and with an increase in membership these premises were too small. 6EBA purchased a house in North Perth, and had it refurbished as a radio station to facilitate the broadcasting of ethnic communities programmes. These premises are owned and operated by 6EBA 95.3Fm, and all multicultural broadcasting is done here. MRTA is an Incorporated Association with it’s own Constitution, and manages the affairs of the Association under the Associations Incorporation Act 1987 of Western Australia. The MRTA Council consists of 16 councillors who are elected to Council every two years by the Membership, consisting of approximately 78 different ethnic groups of broadcasters who broadcast in their own language. 6EBA broadcasts 24 hours of the day, every week of the year to its listeners living in all suburbs around the Perth Metropolitan area and also some country towns. There are a large number of volunteers who are involved in all aspects of broadcasting, ie production, programming panel operating etc. In a week approximately 200 people attend the station, and this includes guests on the talk back programme. These ethnic broadcasters who are members of MRTA are encouraged to participate in all aspects of broadcasting and station activities. In addition to live broadcasting 6EBA provides overnight music from midnight to either 6am or 7am depending upon the time of its first live broadcast of the day. In addition to its multicultural radio programmes 6EBA also broadcasts community programmes for the benefit of all communities ie Senior’s, . Womens Issues, Crime Watch etc.

In addition there are separate programmes for New and Emerging Communities, Youth , Information, and settlement issues and many other. 6EBA tries to fulfill its role in the local community by participation and involvement on local and state issues, which are important to the whole community

## 2. Terms of Reference

### 2.1 The scope and role of Australian community broadcasting across radio, the Internet & other broadcasting technologies

As stated in the Introduction 6EBA has been involved in community broadcasting ie Multicultural radio for the past 27 years. This has provided an important link in communicating with different ethnic communities with information about a variety of issues ie health, education, employment, women's issues etc. As these radio broadcasts are in their own language it provides a better understanding of events concerning them, and also the music and cultural content assist in maintaining their own cultural identity. The number of ethnic communities who broadcast on a regular basis from 6EBA are approximately 78, and this makes the wider community aware of the ethnic diversity of Multicultural Australia. which helps to achieve a better understanding, and also reduces the fear of ignorance, which leads to hate and prejudice.

6EBA is aware of its license conditions, and endeavors to involve all the ethnic community members in the administration and operational requirements of the station.. It must be acknowledged that volunteers are the backbone of our operations, and also are actively involved in the MRTA Council, which manages the affairs of the Association..The stations interest in community broadcasting is to provide a medium of broadcasting to the different multicultural communities, which make up the MRTA, who would otherwise have no means of communication with their own communities, on matters of common interest. There are approximately 300 volunteers who assist with the numerous radio programmes broadcast daily from 6EBA, and represent all ages, both genders, and who broadcast their own language programmes. 6EBA recognises and appreciates the work volunteers do, not only in terms of programming, formatting and presentation of programmes, but also with regards to the tremendous cost saving to the station if they were paid.

Ethnic communities have the autonomy to programme and select their own music, which reflect their culture and traditions. In essence Multicultural radio 6EBA broadcasts music from around the world, whilst also enabling participation of religious groups to use the broadcast facilities available. There ar five paid staff employed at 6EBA, which does not include two contractors. Volunteer ethnic communities contribute to the costs of broadcasting, in addition to voluntary work.

### 3.

It is envisaged in the future that with an increase in funding from the Federal Government, Training programmes can be implemented to enhance the knowledge and skills of all broadcasters. More funding will also assist 6EBA in progressing with the introduction of digital technology and also broadcasting on the Internet, which could be quite expensive

## **2.2 Content and programming requirement that reflect the character of Australia, and its cultural diversity**

Being a Multicultural Community broadcasting station 6EBA is mindful of it's responsibility to broadcast not only programmes that reflect it's diversity but also the content of Australian music. Important Australian events ie Anzac Day, Labor Day, and other national events are given prominence on 6EBA to make the public aware of Australian tradition, history and culture.

There are approximately 78 different language programmes broadcast, and special programmes on Youth, Seniors and sport, including community organisations ie police information are also broadcast on this station. Locally produced programmes with an ethnic content account for an average 16 hours per day, with overnight music broadcast automatically from 12 midnight to 6am or 7pm depending upon the time of he first live broadcast the next day. There is no other community radio station that broadcasts and promotes local and ethnic communities, and provides information such as settlement information for newly arrived migrants, news about events in their country of origin, thus giving them support and assistance in settling in Australia.

Local news regarding community events, forthcoming elections, information about Australia's security, in a language that they can understand, is also broadcast on 6EBA. Australian music content is also represented in programme broadcasting.

The availability of different ethnic language broadcasts on 6EBA, assist and contribute to a better understanding of the diverse cultures, music, history and traditions of multicultural Australia, and dispels fear and hatred and racial prejudice due to ignorance and lack of understanding

## 5.

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

At the present time 6EBA broadcasts on 95.3 Fm, and has a reasonable coverage of both the Metropolitan and outlying areas. Reception is good, and there seems to be no problems in ensuring quality also. The studios are well equipped with a variety of two CD players, cassette recorders, turntables and MP3. Also there is a Computer programme Jazzler 2 System in operation, which is used for programme recording, editing and storage of radio programmes of the different ethnic language. There are two production studios and the facilities are used for the production of radio programmes, as well as used for training of broadcasters

In technical terms the power output of the Transmitter is 5Watts, which seems adequate to provide a wide coverage of the area where most ethnic groups reside, and also outlying areas. There are no facilities for podcasting, digital broadcasting or web streaming, as the cost associated with this new technology is quite expensive, and 6EBA does not have the financial capacity to embrace this modern technology. From comments made by the Minister for Communication, Helen Coonan, it would be at least the year 2010 before Digital Technology is introduced into Australia.

Whilst the effect of New Technologies on station operations has not been evaluated, it would be prudent to have adequate training to upgrade the skills of broadcasters so that they are competent to change over to these technologies, when the time comes for their introduction.

At the present time due to financial constraints, and the lack of funds available to ethnic broadcasting communities, it would seem that the “age of digital broadcasting is a long way of “

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

Funding is vital to the maintenance and operational requirements of 6EBA, as is the case with all community broadcasting stations. However it must be acknowledged that the costs do not remain static and are always rising. Whilst 6EBA acknowledges the financial support that it receives from the Federal Government through the Department of Community, Information Technology and the Arts, any increase in funding in the future would fulfill an important aspect of Training of broadcasters in both their technical skills, and also updating their knowledge of an important aspect of broadcasting ie Media Law.

A large number of ethnic broadcasters who regularly broadcast on 6EBA, have been doing so for the past fifteen or twenty years, and the main focus of training was on panel operation, and the basics of being a broadcaster, with very little emphasis on their knowledge of Media Law. Extra funding specifically used for Training would enable broadcasters to acquaint themselves with Media Law, ie Defamation, Copyright Law, broadcast of a court case which is currently being heard, and other situations where the broadcaster may be in breach of these Media Laws. It must also be understood that this knowledge would help in safeguarding the broadcaster, their ethnic group and also the radio station from legal action, which would be detrimental to their financial status

The information provided below is taken from the Financial Statement ie Profit and Loss account for the year ended 30 June 2005, presented at the Annual General Meeting of the MRTA ., and approved by members who attended this meeting

##### Major Sources of Income

➤ Airtime	\$155,444.56
➤ Grants from CBF, Culture & Arts	\$258,206.00
➤ Membership Fees	\$ 6360, 00
➤ Projects	\$ 3503. 00
➤ Sponsorship	\$ 23,996.09
➤ Telstra Leasing	\$ 12,060.05
➤ Miscellaneous Income	\$ 349.92
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 499,178.50</b>

**Expenditure**

❖ Employees Wages & Security	\$147,752.88
❖ Transmitter Site	\$ 48,000.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$511,852.73</b>

Special emphasis on Youth involvement and participation is reflected in the number of youth programmes broadcast on 6EBA. To date the youth in the Ethnic Community broadcast 14 hours per week, at different times and days of the week. In addition to radio broadcasting, 6EBA employs a full time Youth Leader, who is responsible in coordinating youth programmes, organizing youth conferences, in general managing youth affairs pertaining to the station. The youth in the different ethnic communities are recognised for their potential to increase their involvement and participation in the radio station, which ultimately benefits the future of this station.

From the figures provided above the income generated from Sponsorship amounts to \$23,996.09. To increase sponsorship for financial gain, at the risk of reducing ethnic communities from broadcasting, will be a retrograde step, and in the long term will not benefit community radio, as it will be seen to discriminate against certain ethnic communities who will not be able to avail of the means of communication with their own ethnic community.

Sponsorship in Community Broadcasting stations must conform to the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 Schedule 2, Part 5, Clause 9(3), which states that sponsorship content must be limited to 5 minutes in any hour of broadcasting. 6EBA as a community radio station, conforms with the Act

New and emerging communities mainly from the African continent have been given special consideration with regards to allocation of AIR time, as 6EBA understands their needs to their community, in terms of employment, settlement education and training, and social services.

One of the significant benefits of Multicultural Community radio is that ethnic broadcasts are done in their own language and to their own community, where the older generation may not be able to understand the English language, used as a medium of communication to the wider Australian community. Multicultural radio overcomes this disadvantage, thus informing the ethnic community about



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issues which are important in them fulfilling their role and responsibility in being good citizens. This includes the right to vote at all elections, being security conscious and generally being involved in Australian society.

Extra funding is always welcome as it can be used in a number of areas which can enhance the operational requirements of 6EBA. As already mentioned there is always a need for training to update the skills and knowledge of broadcasters, both practical and theoretical. Not only will the ethnic broadcasters improve their personal skills, but this will be reflected in their own broadcasts from 6EBA, thus presenting quality radio transmissions, which may be comparable to other commercial stations. Technical equipment can also be updated to keep abreast of the latest development of communication equipment..

Another area, is the purchase of outdoor broadcasting equipment which is necessary to record community events and other occasions which can then be rebroadcast on the individual ethnic community radio programme. This will benefit those members of that particular community that were not able to personally attend these events or functions, and give them the opportunity to be aware of what occurred.

## **Conclusion**

In preparing this submission I have endeavoured to portray the role of 5EBA as a community broadcasting station with its distinctive Multicultural role. As mentioned previously 6EBA represents the diverse ethnic communities which broadcast from it's premises, and serves as a means of "keeping in touch" with their own communities. Broadcasts of the different ethnic languages, culture and music also reflect the vast diversity of Multicultural Australia, which helps to break down the cultural barriers that prevents growth, peace and harmony between people of different races, religion and cultural backgrounds

The role of volunteers are recognized and appreciated by 6EBA, and efforts are made to include them in the management of the station in both administrative and operational areas. They are the backbone of any organization and 6EBA is no exception.

Australia is Internationally recognized for its extremely tolerant attitude to people from many nations who have migrated and made Australia their home, and in this context it is a truly Multicultural society. .

6EBA tries to fulfill its role as a community radio station by pursuing the essential role of radio to inform, educate and entertain its listening audience

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**24 March 2006**

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