



COMMUNITY
BROADCASTING
ASSOCIATION OF
AUSTRALIA

6th August 2018

Select Committee on Charity Fundraising in the 21st Century
Committee Secretary
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Inquiry into Charity Fundraising in the 21st Century

Dear Committee Members,

The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) welcomes the inquiry into charity fundraising in the 21st century. The CBAA is a not for profit cultural organisation established for the promotion of community broadcasting including both radio and television across Australia. The CBAA is registered as a charitable institution - its details can be found on the ACNC charity register. As the peak body and the national representative organisation for community broadcasting across Australia, we value the opportunity to add our voice in support of the vital and broad work of Australian charities and the importance of Government support, both financially and through regulatory settings. We wish to highlight to the Committee the role and importance of community broadcasting in Australia, and, by doing so, demonstrate how charitable organisations – like community radio stations – are a vital contributor to many unique fields and in a far more significant way than commonly thought.

Community radio is a vital and growing part of the Australian media landscape. The 2018 National Listener Survey reported the highest listening levels for community radio on record – 5.7 million Australians tuned in to the over 450 not-for-profit community-owned and operated radio services operating across the country each week.¹ This is up from approximately 3.8 million in 2004.

As well as contributing to Australia's open society, strong democracy and vibrant culture through its unique programs and services, the economic contribution of community radio is substantial.

Approximately \$880 million is contributed annually to the economy by the community broadcasting sector. This is in part due to the significant value of the 25,000-strong volunteer effort that powers community radio stations through administration, library coordination, technical work, and on-air presenting. Special interest programming, local content, and community-based broadcasting are all important incentives that operate to attract the volunteers that keep community radio afloat, standing as testament to the importance of the sector in the eyes of active participants and listeners.

Though not widely known, community broadcasting is Australia's largest independent media sector and an important public resource for information and cultural engagement. By its very nature community broadcasting is vital in delivering public interest journalism, especially to under-serviced markets like regional Australia and culturally and linguistically diverse communities nationwide. Not-for-profit community stations provide programming that caters to the needs and interest groups of their communities and play an important role in providing a voice for those that aren't adequately serviced by other broadcasting sectors. These include Indigenous Australians, ethnic communities, educational services, religious communities, print disabled communities, youth, seniors and music, arts and cultural communities.

¹ Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2018). *Community Radio National Listener Survey- July 2018* [online] Available at: <https://www.cbaa.org.au/broadcasters/get-data-national-listener-survey-station-census>



COMMUNITY
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AUSTRALIAN MUSIC RADIO AIRPLAY PROJECT

In the most recent Community Radio National Listener Survey, 48 per cent of respondents said that their key reason for listening to community radio was that stations have “local information/local news” (48%).² This access to local content is even more important to those in regional Australia. Over one quarter (28 %) of people who regularly speak a language other than English in their household listen to community radio during a typical week. Further, community broadcasting is the largest component of Indigenous media production in Australia and half (48%) of people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander listen to community radio during a typical week. On a day-to-day basis, Indigenous radio is the only provider of news and information that directly affects the lives of Indigenous Australians (e.g. information about community events, meetings, deaths, funerals, local sporting results and coverage).

Community broadcasting is also a vital part of the country’s music and arts ecosystem and performs an important role in Australia’s radio-scape by supporting local music and music industries. Hundreds of community stations provide an avenue for local musicians and artists to be broadcast on airwaves across the country, and also serve as a catalyst for building diverse and passionate music and arts communities. These communities support vibrant live music and arts scenes and the venues that host them across the country. This dedication and passion for local music and the local music industry is ingrained in the community radio licence, which stipulates that community radio shall support local and underrepresented news, perspectives, music and culture. It is a common story that many local artists get their first radio play on community radio, which can be the start of long careers with continued support from community broadcasters.

As the peak body and the national representative organisation for community broadcasting across Australia, the CBAA champions community broadcasting by building stations’ capability and creating a healthy environment for the sector to thrive. We work toward ensuring that community broadcasting is recognised as an excellent, innovative, sustainable, accessible, trusted and diverse industry, and a key pillar in Australian broadcasting that contributes to open society, strong democracy and cultural vibrancy. Community broadcasting is a prime example of a sector of our society and community where charitable and not-for-profit organisations are vital. As such, the Government plays an important role in supporting an environment where charitable organisations can thrive in their operations, continue to attract dedicated volunteers, be financially sustainable and easily interact with regulation.

Recommendation

First and foremost, a coordinated and streamlined national fundraising regulatory scheme would address the inconsistencies, duplication, lack of clarity and wasted resources of having multiple layers and systems that are state based and which, presumably work towards the same goals and outcomes. Given our work across the nation, these issues come up on a daily basis and cost us time and money.

We would be supportive of using the Australian Consumer Law ‘one law, multiple regulators’ model as the starting point for developing a clear, nationwide coordinated approach. Importantly, such an approach would be able to keep pace with the changing nature of fundraising and charity work as a result of innovation, including digital engagement with wider and more diverse audiences.

The CBAA is committed to working closely with governments and this Committee to further share our ideas, experience and knowledge on this important topic. We would be pleased to also assist the Committee in organising discussions with our member stations, many of whom are also registered charities who can provide on-the-ground insights into the Committee’s inquiry.

Kind regards,



Jon Bisset
Chief Executive Officer

² Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2018). *Community Radio National Listener Survey- Australia* [online] Available at: <https://www.cbaa.org.au/broadcasters/get-data-national-listener-survey-station-census>