



Wurundjeri Country



[cbf.org.au](http://cbf.org.au)

ABN 49 008 590 403

# Community Broadcasting Sector Sustainability Review

**Submission to the Department of Infrastructure,  
Transport, Regional Development, Communications  
and the Arts**

**30 August 2024**

Community Broadcasting Foundation acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which our organisation was founded. We pay our respects to all First Nations people across Australia, including those sitting at the heart of community broadcasting. We recognise and honour their enduring connection to country and community and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as our land's first storytellers.

We acknowledge the resilience and wisdom of First Nations people, honouring Elders who have guided in the past and those who continue to inspire us today. **Always was, always will be.**

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	5
Summary of recommendations .....	7
About the Community Broadcasting Foundation .....	8
About this submission .....	10
Priority Area 1: CBP Funding, structure, and outcomes .....	11
Recommendation 1: Consolidate funding lines .....	11
Sustainability and reaching the sector’s full potential .....	12
CBP Evaluation – Implementation of recommendations & future growth .....	13
The Capability and Capacity Gap: Emerging trends evidenced through our grant programs .....	19
Key trends .....	20
Content grants program trends .....	21
Development & Operations grants program trends .....	27
Sector investment grants program trends .....	35
Regional and rural Australia trends .....	39
Community Television revitalisation and transformation .....	41
Recommendation 2: Invest in the sector .....	41
Increasing sector sustainability, capability & capacity .....	42
Workforce capability: Capacity-building and investing in people .....	43
Recommendation 3: Be guided by Roadmap 2033 .....	44
Recommendation 4: Increase flexibility .....	47
We encourage collaborations .....	47
Sector Investment grants .....	48
Development & Operations grants .....	48
Outcomes and Evaluation Frameworks .....	51
Recommendation 5: Work with us and the sector to develop a CBP Outcomes and Performance Measurement Framework .....	51
Diverse outcomes for diverse stakeholder groups .....	52
Inter-connected and context-specific outcomes .....	53
Quantitative and qualitative data .....	54

What could capacity building support look like? .....	56
Sector-level coordination and resourcing for effective measurement.....	57
Priority Area 2: Legislative and Regulatory Issues .....	58
Priority Area 3: First Nations funding and licensing.....	60
Conclusion .....	63
Appendix A .....	64
1. Regional Australia: Broad Trends and Challenges for Regional Radio Stations .....	65
2. Programming for a diverse Australia .....	67
3. Community radio overcomes the Tyranny of Distance challenges in Australia .....	69
4. Economic benefits of Community Broadcasting, a precis .....	72
5. Sustainability and Community Participation.....	76

# Executive Summary

The community broadcasting sector has a shared vision, as outlined in Roadmap 2033: community broadcasting is at the heart of every community.

Roadmap 2033 is the culmination of broad sector consultations to reach a unified position on the sector's priorities and its plan for greater impact in every Australian community. Roadmap 2033 lays the groundwork for Government to build on this vision for the community broadcasting sector and offers a framework for how to respond to it.

The sector itself remains steadfast in its commitment to preserving and enhancing the diversity and locally-critical qualities that distinguish community broadcasting. The Roadmap 2033 vision is driven by the recognition of community broadcasting as an essential public asset, central to media diversity and deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of communities across the nation.

The sector recognises the critical role that community broadcasting plays in reflecting the rich diversity of Australian society. It is vibrant, dynamic, and deeply connected to the communities it serves. While Roadmap 2033 envisions a future where stations are thriving, securely funded, and working in partnership to amplify diverse cultures and languages, we stress that current funding levels are insufficient to address several pressing needs.

As we look ahead to 2033, our goal is to ensure that the community broadcasting sector is well resourced and enabled to share content that resonates with and connects deeply to local communities. This future is one where more Australians engage with community broadcasting for trusted news, information, and entertainment, and where the sector continues to be a cornerstone of Australia's cultural landscape, launching and sustaining artists and creatives throughout their careers.

We invite the Government to join us in shaping a future where every voice in Australia is valued and celebrated, and where community broadcasting remains at the heart of every community.

Throughout the Sustainability Review consultation process and beyond, the CBF remains committed to supporting the Government to deliver on its policy objectives, and as a trusted partner offering expertise on the community broadcasting sector's challenges and opportunities. We welcome the opportunity to work together to support and complement the direction chosen by the Government following this consultation.

The CBF recognises the importance of preserving the sector's unique contributions which serve our society in distinct ways. While the sector has outlined its aspirations in Roadmap 2033, any response to strengthen the community broadcasting sector's sustainability must first address a range of broader capacity and capability gaps.

By understanding and responding to these capacities and gaps, we look forward to expanding the conversation from one focused on deficit to one that can harness the immense potential of community broadcasting to advance the betterment of Australian civil life. By acknowledging the power of community broadcasting to build communities, to foster cross-cultural conversations and provide a platform for

grassroots initiatives and dialogue addressing entrenched social issues not given space in other media, we recognise the importance of local media produced by the community, for the community.

From combatting the spread of misinformation and disinformation, to fostering a greater understanding and appreciation for Australia's unique First Nations cultural assets, to enhancing social cohesion through expanded sharing of creative and targeted content amongst underrepresented communities.

Australia's community broadcasting sector is itself comprised of dynamic, thoughtful, creative people who reflect a modern Australia, adding an essential richness to the voices in Australian media. By highlighting the talents, capacities and leadership capabilities which the sector continues to attract, we reinforce the Australian community's trust and forward-thinking vision for its future.

Ensuring sustainability and diversity within the sector is crucial to propel community broadcasting into a future where it continues to thrive and evolve. Studies have shown that diverse media landscapes are better equipped to address the needs and interests of various communities, thereby enhancing democratic engagement.<sup>1</sup> By providing platforms for underrepresented voices, community broadcasting enriches public discourse by providing opportunities for unity and social solidarity in the Australian community.

Failure to sustain community broadcasting and its role in promoting respect for diversity and multiculturalism poses a threat to social harmony, stability and the democratic foundations of our society. By diminishing these platforms for diverse perspectives, social divides may become exacerbated and public trust in media institutions is diminished.<sup>2</sup>

It is crucial to maintain an independent media sector that reflects the full spectrum of society, ensuring that all communities have access to representation and reliable information. Therefore, we welcome a multi-faceted approach to achieving the goals of the community broadcasting sector as outlined in Roadmap 2033, and we endorse the sector's call for increased investment to support the sector to reach its full potential. We also encourage an approach that increases flexibility in how funding is allocated to the sector so it can adapt as needs in the community evolve.

The CBF welcomes the opportunity to have input into the Community Broadcasting Sector Sustainability Review and thanks the Australian Government for the opportunity to reflect on how together we can support the community broadcasting sector to realise the broader impact it aspires to achieve.

---

<sup>1</sup> Napoli, Philip M. 2001. Foundations of Communications Policy: Principles and Process in the Regulation of Electronic Media. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

<sup>2</sup> Sada, E. Y. 2022. The Emphasis of Community Radio Programs in Enhancing Socio-Economic Development Issues: Sidama Radio in Focus, Yirgalem, Ethiopia. Cogent Arts & Humanities, 9; Merlina Missimer et. al. 2017.

A strategic approach to social sustainability - Part 1: exploring the social system. Journal of Cleaner Production, 140, 32-41.

## Summary of recommendations

#	Five recommendations to ensure sustainability of Australia’s community broadcasting sector	Sustainability Review Discussion Paper
1	<b>Consolidate funding lines</b> - Review the funding stream allocations in line with Roadmap 2033 and consider consolidation of some to a higher level.	Priority Area 1: CBP Funding, structure, and outcomes
2	<b>Invest in the sector</b> - Support the sector’s funding submissions to enable greater sustainability through relieving pressure on the grant program, unlocking the opportunity to provide more longer-term granting, enhance capability and sector growth, development and innovation.	Priority Area 1
3	<b>Be guided by Roadmap 2033</b> - The funding priorities and granting streams should be informed by and aligned to the sector’s agreed priorities as expressed in Roadmap 2033.	Priority Area 1
4	<b>Increase flexibility</b> - Maintain and extend flexibility within the granting process so that CBF can respond to changing contexts and evolving development of the sector.	Priority Area 1
5	<p><b>Work with us and the sector to develop a CBP Outcomes and Performance Measurement Framework.</b></p> <p>The CBP Outcomes and Performance Measurement Framework should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage sector stakeholders to collaboratively design and own the key collective outcomes, impacts and measures that will also form part of the Roadmap Evaluation Framework (<i>soon to be developed</i>).</li> <li>• Draw on the CBF’s Outcomes and Evaluation Frameworks (<i>draft in progress</i>).</li> </ul>	Priority Area 1

# About the Community Broadcasting Foundation

The CBF has been an independent grant-maker since 1984, distributing funding provided by the Australian Government through the Community Broadcasting Program ('CBP'). In 2022/23, the CBF provided \$19.15 million in grants to support the maintenance and development of the community broadcasting sector.

Collaboration and partnership are central to the way we work, building on four decades of strong relationships and expertise. Together with community broadcasters, content producers and sector organisations around the country, the CBF is helping to build a thriving, impactful and resilient future for community media. Our strategic approach is to:

- **Build capability and capacity that secures a long-term future** through strategic and long-term thinking, and a focus on funding a resilient and sustainable sector, encouraging grantees to develop and embed strong governance and practice that strengthens inclusivity and accessibility.
- **Support participation and voice that creates connection and belonging throughout our diverse community** by granting for positive impact, supporting community media organisations to be engaged with and reflective of their community and supporting diverse communities access to information, cultural and local content that enriches communities and enables active participation in community life.
- **Partner and influence that champions community broadcasting** by building awareness of the sector's value and impact, purposeful collaborations and partnerships that deliver positive and meaningful change, sector advocacy and demonstrable impact by capturing, understanding and communicating the value and positive impact community broadcasting creates.

Our grant programs include:

- **Development & Operations grants** that support a resilient, thriving community media sector that reflects, amplifies and enriches the ever-evolving communities of Australia;
- **Content grants** that increase and diversify the voices heard in Australian media by supporting the creation of compelling content;
- **Specialist Radio Programming grants** that assist with the development, production and broadcast costs of specialist radio programming content to meet the needs of particular communities – including First Nations community broadcasting programming; and
- **Sector Investment grants** that support sector co-ordination activities and large-scale projects that are of benefit to the wider sector.

Our trusted and impartial funding process is aimed at strengthening media diversity and social cohesion through community media organisations that enrich people's lives with a diversity of choice in our media producing local stories, news and cultural content reflecting the many perspectives, people and communities that make up Australia. As a result, audiences hear diverse stories and local information that helps give people a deeper, more connected and cohesive sense of place and the community they live in.



Our support of independent, local and authentic voices in creating trusted news, information and cultural content builds community, and strengthens our society and democracy.

The robust peer assessment model we use to allocate our grants is respected by our stakeholders and is the exemplar independent granting model, delivering positive outcomes for community. A recent independent evaluation of the Community Broadcasting Program, conducted by the Social Research Centre, found that the Program had a range of positive impacts for broadcasters. The sector was largely satisfied with the application process and the support from CBF staff was highlighted as adding value.

## About this submission

Given our role in supporting the maintenance and development of the community broadcasting sector through our administering of the CBP, this submission focuses largely on the Review discussion paper's Priority Area 1 'CBP Funding, structure and outcomes'. Our response to this area includes analysis of emerging trends and data that highlights the nature of funding shortfall across various priority areas.

We also provide a brief response to the Review Priority Areas 2 and 3.

We have also provided some contextual information in our appendices.

# Priority Area 1: CBP Funding, structure, and outcomes

What should the funding priorities and granting streams be for the CBP from 2025 onwards?

The CBF’s funding deed provides eleven funding allocations (see Table 1) that effect Australian Government policy priorities. These allocations have accreted overtime, as different policy priorities have been identified by various Governments. The Sustainability Review presents an opportunity for realignment of these allocations with Government and sector priorities.

We look forward to further dialogue with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) about how to best represent sector and Government priorities within our next funding deed.

**Table 1: Existing funding allocations and possible future funding allocations**

Existing funding allocations	Possible future funding allocations
Ethnic Community Broadcasting fund	Multicultural and Ethnic Community Broadcasting fund
First Nations Community Broadcasting fund	First Nations Community Broadcasting fund
RPH Community Broadcasting fund	Disability Media fund
General and Transmission support fund	General and Transmission support fund
Australian Music Radio Airplay Project (Amrap)	Music, Arts and Culture (includes Amrap)
CBOonline	Capacity (includes Digital Radio, Multiplatform Development, CBOonline, CTV Transformation)
National Training	Workforce Capability (includes National Training and Industry capacity & skills)
Digital Radio Project	News and Public Interest Journalism (includes Enhanced National News)
Multiplatform Distribution Project	Emergency Preparedness
National Training – Industry capacity & skills development	
Enhanced National Radio News Programming fund	

## Recommendation 1: Consolidate funding lines

Review the funding allocations in line with Roadmap and consider consolidation of some to a higher level.

## Sustainability and reaching the sector's full potential

In considering the community broadcasting sector's sustainability, we endorse the CBAA's funding submission, highlighting that immediate support is needed, noting that there are risks of ongoing underfunding and that there is opportunity to adopt comprehensive long-term measures to help to transform the community broadcasting sector.

- *Immediate support is needed*

Immediate and increased investment is vital to maintaining adequate delivery, stability and accessibility of community broadcasting across Australia. Increased support will safeguard the essential role that community broadcasters play in delivering localised, diverse content that resonates deeply with their audiences. Community broadcasting is more than just a medium; it is the voice of local communities, a platform for unheard stories, and a vital source of reliable information. It has an integral role in fostering social cohesion<sup>3</sup>.

- *Market forces impacting community broadcasters*

Community broadcasters are not immune to the market force pressures being felt by others in the media industry, including the loss of potential revenue and audience due to the effects of digital and social media. Sponsorship revenue, donation revenue and discoverability for audiences relating to prominence issues are all impacted. Government has acknowledged the value of community media partly because it acts as a counterbalance to the negative aspects of these same forces.

- *Risks of ongoing underfunding*

The risks of underfunding the sector are profound. Compounding in impact over time, without adequate financial support, many community radio stations may face the threat of diminished delivery of essential news and local reporting or – in the extreme – closure, leading to a significant loss of local voices and perspectives.

Chronic underfunding over time diminishes the richness of the Australian media landscape and erodes the democratic value of diverse, independent media outlets.

The loss of regional and rural, CALD and First Nations broadcasters would be particularly significant, given the significant goodwill and social capital needed for such ventures. Moreover, the decline of community broadcasting would weaken efforts to counteract misinformation, leaving the public more vulnerable to biased or false information propagated by less accountable sources, and foreign disinformation not in the national interest.

---

<sup>3</sup> McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.

- *Comprehensive long-term measures*

There is significant merit in adopting comprehensive long-term measures aimed at transforming the community broadcasting sector through reforms that provide incentives for innovation and growth.

Furthermore, a commitment to robust evidence-based practices, thought leadership, and experimental approaches is crucial, particularly as the sector responds and adapts to the changing social and economic landscape. This includes adopting new technologies and methodologies to enhance the reach and impact of community broadcasting.<sup>4</sup>

Failure to implement these long-term measures could result in the stagnation of the sector, making it increasingly difficult for community broadcasters to survive in a rapidly evolving media environment.

Conversely, the community broadcasting sector envisions its potential to grow its contribution to a strong and diverse news media market helping to promote pluralism and protect our democratic processes—ensuring Australians have access to a range of sources of news, information and current affairs.

The CBF is committed to supporting this transformation, working with the government, sector peak bodies, and stations to ensure community broadcasting flourishes and continues to amplify diverse cultures and languages, contributing to greater First Nations self-determination and broad social cohesion.

To unpack how this transformation can occur, we will first provide some updates about the implementation of measures following the completion of the first phase of the Sustainability Review – the CBP Evaluation.

## CBP Evaluation – Implementation of recommendations & future growth

Phase one of the Australian Government’s Community Broadcasting Sector Sustainability Review was an evaluation of the CBP undertaken by the Social Research Centre (SRC) in 2023.<sup>5</sup> The CBF’s initial response to its Final Report has been provided previously to DITRDCA and has been published [here](#).

In addressing the question of CBP funding priorities and granting streams from 2025 onwards, the CBF has implemented and actioned the 11 recommendations provided by SRC as below.

---

<sup>4</sup> Rennie, Elinor Mary (2003) The future of community broadcasting: civil society and communications policy. PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology.

<sup>5</sup> Social Research Centre, Evaluation of the Community Broadcasting Program: Final Report, August 2023, published 21 June 2024.

- *Awareness raising, staff outreach and engagement activities (Recommendation 1 and 2):*

The CBF prides itself on its relational style of grant-making and its deep understanding of the sector's needs, challenges and aspirations. We continue to deepen our awareness raising and outreach activities through presentations and attendance at all sector-based conferences, the presentation of targeted webinars, the development of applicant resources and one-on-one station support.

In Round 1 2024/25, these activities, together with other contextual factors, resulted in a significant increase in application numbers compared to Round 1 the prior year (Development & Operations: 159 applications, a 20% increase; and in Content grants (102 applications, a 24% increase).

With applicants also applying for an increased quantum of funding across the board, coupled with no major increase to the available funding, Round 1 2024/25 grant allocations saw a significant decrease in success rates compared to Round 1 the year prior, with Development & Operations dropping from 81% to 68% and Content dropping from 78% to 53%.

Decreasing success rates can have unintended consequences whereby applicants become disengaged, disenchanted and disenfranchised with the CBF's granting process and may discontinue applying. Thereby, opportunities to best serve communities are significantly reduced. Thus, we actively balance outreach and engagement activities within the context of the available funding envelope.

- *Balancing the varied capacities of the sector, rolling contracts and embedding resilience and self-sufficiency amongst applicants (Recommendation 3, 4 and 7):*

The CBF's 2016 Restructure consolidated 36 grant programs into the three we have today (being Sector Investment, Development & Operations and Content [including Specialist Radio Programming]).

This Restructure was designed to give the CBF more ability to grant with strategic intent, and to allow applicants to apply for funding support on an as needs basis via a more streamlined application process.

Our grant programs are competitive in nature (except for Specialist Radio Programming) as opposed to a subsidy type model. Our grant model is aligned with developing organisational resilience in line with the [Station Resilience Model](#) through supporting staffing, infrastructure, training and community engagement activities that are also in line with sector outcomes and priorities, and as defined within [Roadmap 2033](#).

Subsidisation models can work in certain contexts but can conversely breed a reliance culture and hinder organisations from achieving self-sufficiency and sustainability. By and large, community broadcasters are self-sufficient, and the CBP supplements the achievement and enhancement of key policy outcomes. Equally, Government policy could determine that community broadcasters

are a critical community and cultural asset and some ongoing maintenance support for certain activities or services is appropriate (e.g. stations providing emergency services).

Best practice in granting resources show that core operational support is the most difficult for organisations to achieve via grant funding and that support for operations can be the most effective way to achieve strong outcomes. Similarly, over-reliance on ‘special project’ or ‘pilot project’ funding and chronic underfunding of activities hampers the non-profit sector broadly from organisational stability and achievement of the desired public good outcomes.<sup>6</sup>

- *Ensure sector representation is achieved in peer assessment process (Recommendation 5):*

There were 46 nominations to our Board and Committee nominations process in the latter half of 2023 and we appointed 12 new sector-based individuals to our dedicated team of approximately 140 volunteers. We appoint these positions in line with our [Diversity & inclusion Policy](#) in order to ensure broad sector representation in our peer assessment process and continue to seek out ways to encourage members from under-represented parts of the sector to contribute to our governance practices and processes.

We also provide the opportunity in our application form for applicants to identify particular characteristics or skills of assessors that might better understand their contexts. As far as we understand it, the SRC evaluation did not undertake an analysis or assessment of the skills and backgrounds of individual assessors that are assigned to read and assess applications.

Going forward, the CBF Outcomes and Evaluation Framework (in development) will provide a mechanism for us to regularly review and evaluate the grant process to ensure its appropriateness and fit for purpose.

- *Increase sector capacity to create accessible content and online delivery (Recommendation 6):*

The CBF continues to fund Content grants, with the majority of these grants supporting production salaries. A large proportion of the funded content includes a community engagement component in the development of content across radio and TV in First Nations, Ethnic, LGBTQIA+, Disability and regional communities.

Online delivery is also a key part of the development of content applications via the Community Television app (CTV+), the Community Radio Plus app, and the Community Radio Network (CRN), all of which the CBF continues to support, as well as various social media channels. This broadening of delivery mechanisms demonstrates good value for money in grant outcomes and provides opportunity to broaden reach of the diverse content being produced by the sector.

- *Target capacity building initiatives to address knowledge and skills shortages (Recommendation 8):*

‘Growing our capability’ is one of the four Strategic Priorities within [Roadmap 2033](#) with an objective to:

---

<sup>6</sup> Australian Institute of Grants Management, Grants Management Intelligence, Edition 2, June 2017.

*"invest in our people to attract and develop a skilled capable workforce."*<sup>7</sup>

The CBF currently supports training initiatives and capacity building activities at both a sector development and station level through the National Training Program (\$760k pa) and the Industry Capacity and Skills Training program (\$600k pa).

The [Roadmap 2033](#) development process identifies a need for:

- A workforce development strategy that "ensures we have the right people with the right skills in all roles needed for successful stations now and into the future".
- "Adequate employment of First Nations broadcasting and media services".
- The expansion of "training and career pathway programs [that allow] community broadcasters to acquire new skills that open employment opportunities and increase digital literacy and civic participation".
- A "sector wide traineeship program".
- Pathways for young Australians to get started in community broadcasting.
- The leadership development across the sector including emerging leaders.<sup>8</sup>

To deliver on this Roadmap priority however will require broad sector coordination and collaboration and is beyond the scope of the current funding envelope provided under the CBP.

- *Prioritise grants that support sector coordination and key initiatives that reduce burden on individual stations (Recommendation 9 and 11):*

The CBF has long supported sector coordination activities for the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA, \$880k pa), the National Ethnic Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC, \$460k pa) and Disability Media Australia (DMA formerly RPH Australia, \$210kpa) for operational costs, member support services and other sector intermediary and development activities.

CBF has also supported sector-wide development initiatives including (amounts are 2024/25 funding deed allocations):

- Australian Music Radio Airplay Project (Amrap) - \$699k
- CBOonline - \$719k
- Digital Radio Project (DRP) - \$4.7M
- Multiplatform Distribution Project - \$600k pa
- Enhanced National Radio News Programming - \$800k
- National Training and Industry capacity & skills development – \$1,367k

Based on the recommendations in the SRC evaluation Final Report, we created a new Sector Coordination opportunity for other sector organisations to support 'sector coordination,

---

<sup>7</sup> [Roadmap 2033: Community broadcasting's plan for greater impact in every Australian community](#), p.13.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.22



partnerships, knowledge and skills sharing initiatives’<sup>9</sup> during the 2024/25 financial year. In its inaugural year, this stream was made available to the following organisations in order to support activities that are of wider benefit to the sector:

- Australian Community Television Alliance (ACTA)
- Christian Media & Arts Australia (CMAA)
- First Nations Media Australia (FNMA)
- South Australian Community Broadcasting Association (SACBA)
- Southern Community Media Association (SCMA)
- Technorama

In 2024/25 we received four applications and supported all four in full as below:

- Christian Media and Arts Australia Ltd (CMAA) allocated \$197,300 to support a collaborative research project to measure and demonstrate community broadcasting impact across the Christian, ethnic, First Nations and disability parts of the sector.
- Technorama allocated \$33,992 to undertake a pilot Docoblitz training program with stations to ensure appropriate technical documentation is in place.
- South Australian Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (SACBA) allocated \$35,000 to host a state conference and Bilby Awards, undertake a station assistance program and equipment bank.
- Australian Community Television Alliance (ACTA) allocated \$25,000 to update and upgrade community televisions’ playout infrastructure and systems.

To avoid an impact on the available funding for the Development & Operations grants program, the CBF decided to strategically invest in this program this year from company reserves (totalling \$291k). However, it is not sustainable to continue to fund this program from CBF reserves and further support is required to facilitate and develop this grant program, make it ongoing, and to deliver on the recommendation.

The average amount historically requested from the group of eligible organisations between 2017/18 and 2023/24 when they applied through the Development & Operations program is \$442k pa.

- *Prioritise longer term funding opportunities (Recommendation 10):*

As per our strategic plan, we are increasingly providing multi-year grants in our Development & Operations and Content grant programs to provide greater security to grantees and opportunities for longer-term strategic thinking and planning.

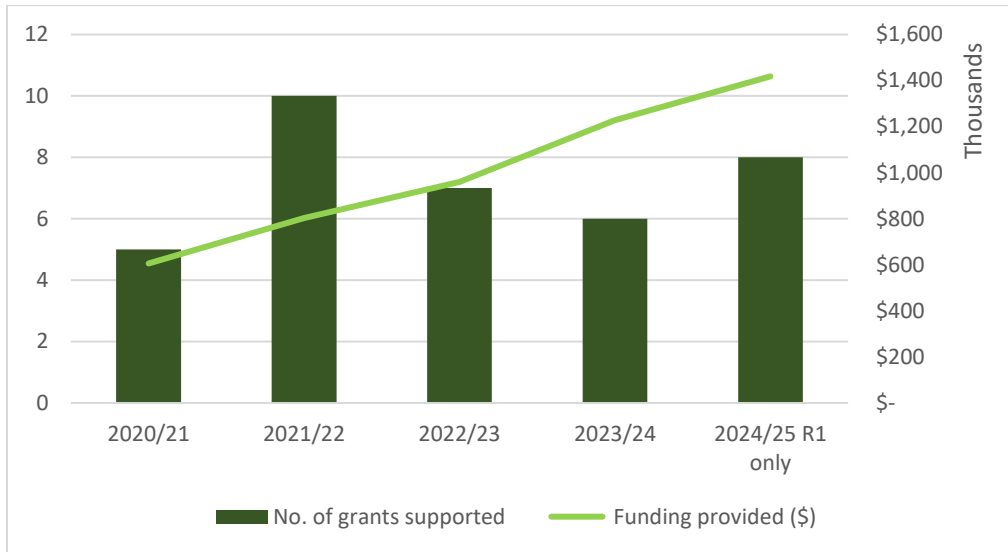
---

<sup>9</sup> Social Research Centre, Evaluation of the Community Broadcasting Program: Final Report, August 2023, published 21 June 2024. Recommendations 9 and 11 on p.viii.

<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/evaluation-of-cbp-final-report-june2024.pdf>

As seen in Chart 1 below, Round 1 2024/25 alone saw the CBF providing the highest level of multi-year grant support to the sector since 2020/21 with \$1.4M allocated to grantees in multi-year Development & Operations grants.

**Chart 1. Multi-year Development & Operations grants supported since 2020/21-R1 2024/25**



Whilst multi-year granting is both best practice and a priority in our strategic plan, and while decisions to fund multi-year are occurring, there is some degree of apprehension within our Grants Advisory Committees about ‘locking up’ funding from future years. The concerns were compounded during the early COVID years when the CBF attempted to get as much support out to the sector as possible but had existing multi-year grants in place.

We continue to learn about and aim to address this reluctance that we believe stems from the challenge and weighty responsibility of making funding decisions in a significantly resource-scarce environment.

Additional funding would ease this apprehension and provide more opportunities for the CBF to provide longer-term support to applicants to enable longer-term thinking and planning, innovation and development.

## The Capability and Capacity Gap: Emerging trends evidenced through our grant programs

The community broadcasting sector – while vibrant, diverse and a significant contributor in social, economic and cultural terms – faces a significant capability and capacity gap that must be addressed to ensure its sustainability and growth. Emerging trends evidenced through our grant programs highlight several areas where this gap is most pronounced, necessitating targeted interventions and strategic planning.

The CBF is in a unique position to comment on the self-expressed needs of the community broadcasting sector which can be interpreted via review of the application forms and reports we receive. Applicants are indicating that other sources of income (sponsorship, fundraising, philanthropy) are reducing or becoming more volatile and less predictable impacting organisational stability and continuity in personnel. This has also been evidenced through the recent Live Music Inquiry and the impact of cancelled festivals and tours and fewer events in the live music scene on sponsorship revenue for metropolitan and regional stations.

Through our support role and interactions with applicants and grantees, we also observe trends and emerging issues that might not be apparent in grant application requests. The capability and capacity challenges are evidenced through:

- The level of hands-on support required for many applicants to apply for funds
- Difficulty in accessing or providing key supporting documentation by a deadline
- Delays in grant reporting that hold up future grant payments, sometimes significantly
- Close case management by the CBF required to successfully acquit grants
- High turnover of key personnel (volunteer and paid)
- Governance and compliance issues.

Over the last 5 rounds of Content and Development & Operations grants assessment we have found that, while on average scores tend to sit in the high 70s and 80s (out of a possible 100), there is substantial variance within the range. The spread of scores amongst applications in a single round have frequently ranged from the high 90s down into the 40s, indicating a wide mix of quality and capability in the pool of eligible applications.

We have also observed some emerging trends over the past few years (particularly between the 2019/20 – 2023/24 financial years) that have inherently caused tensions in the way we are able to distribute the current funding available. One of the greatest challenges the CBF experiences every grant round is how to appropriately and strategically balance support for core operational costs versus investing in development opportunities that provide resilience and sustainability to applicants. While the opportunity to invest in longer-term granting opportunities is an important strategic priority, it is particularly challenging when the grant programs are under such demand within the current funding envelope. Many applicants express how vulnerable their organisations are.

While ‘sustainability’ is closely connected to the community broadcasting sector’s financial security, it is important to note that the sector has historically received public funding on the premise that a robust community broadcasting sector is in the public interest and is a critical community asset in a healthy democratic environment. In some instances, a culture of continual and repeated reliance on public funds risks organisational stability, particularly in an environment where grants are increasingly competitive and other revenue is increasingly unpredictable and unreliable. In our view support for capacity and capability building as described in Roadmap2033 will drive greater sustainability in the sector.

## Key trends

We continue to notice trends within the highly competitive Development & Operations and Content grant programs.

### *Pressure on the grant programs*

There is an increasing gap between what applicants have requested and what we have been able to support across both competitive grant programs.

The average shortfall across all grant programs over the past seven years is over \$9.5m.

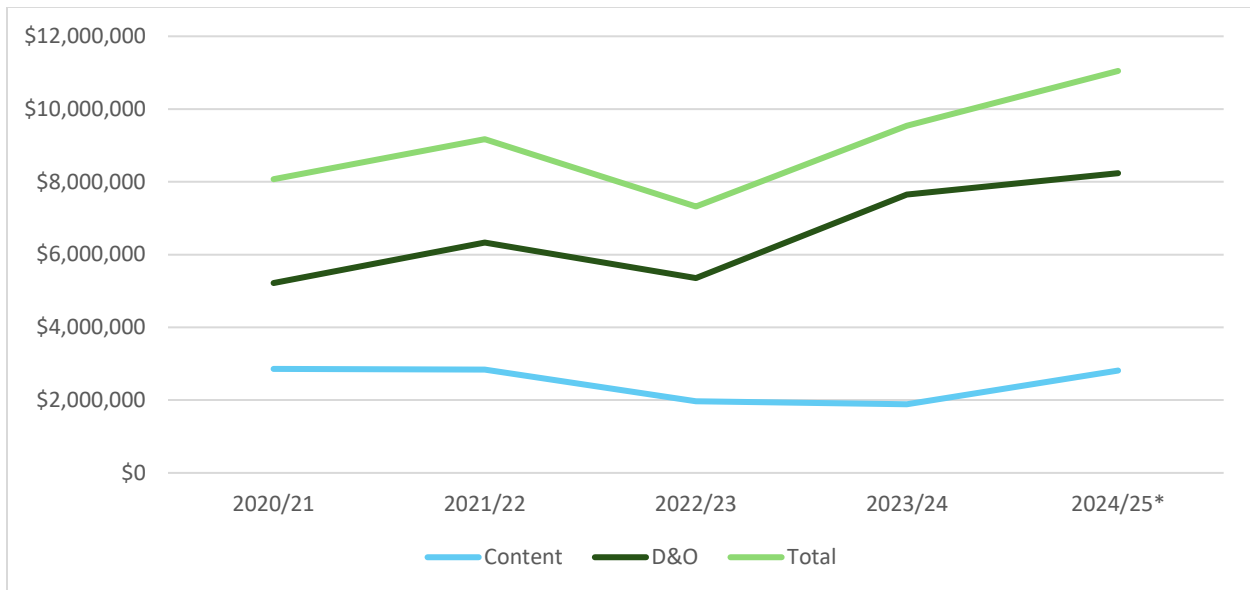
During 2023/24, there was an approximate \$2m gap in Content grants funding support and an \$8m gap in Development & Operations grants support as can be seen in Chart 2 below.

It is also worth highlighting that the shortfall represents the minimum of unmet demand, given applicants in a fiercely competitive granting round tend to:

- Strategically scale back their requests and limit their imaginations to give their application a better chance at success
- Fail to apply where there are significant capability and capacity issues
- Cease to apply after rounds unsuccessful applications, despite real needs and aspirations to deepen community impact.

The Development & Operations ‘cut-off’ scores are consistently very high, particularly for General, Transmission and First Nations funding (averaging 86%, 77% and 86% respectively) – without considerable resources and support applicants particularly from regional/ rural stations, and from CALD, First Nations and lower socio-economic / lower educational backgrounds and older volunteers often find it more difficult to write grant applications that achieve the scores required to be allocated a grant. Many unsuccessful or partially funded applicants tell us that they find the high scores required to achieve a grant intimidating, demotivating and unachievable. Despite our existing measures to address inherent inequities in the grant process, such as the ‘score bumps’ we apply to regional/rural and low-income stations, applicants that feel there is little hope of them being allocated a grant may opt out of applying, further entrenching inequities across the sector.

**Chart 2: CBP funding shortfall – Development & Operations and Content grants 2020/21 – 2024/25**



**\* 2024/25 data includes funds requested and funds available for Round 2 (yet to be allocated).**

Chart 2 illustrates the increasing shortfall between funds requested and funds allocated.

In 2024/25, there are almost \$3m in Content grant requests and over \$8m in Development & Operations grant requests - totalling over \$11m in requests for support that could not be met – representing an opportunity cost of potential station development activities and initiatives that the CBF’s grant programs have not been able to support.

## Content grants program trends

### *Increasing demand for support for news and current affairs programming*

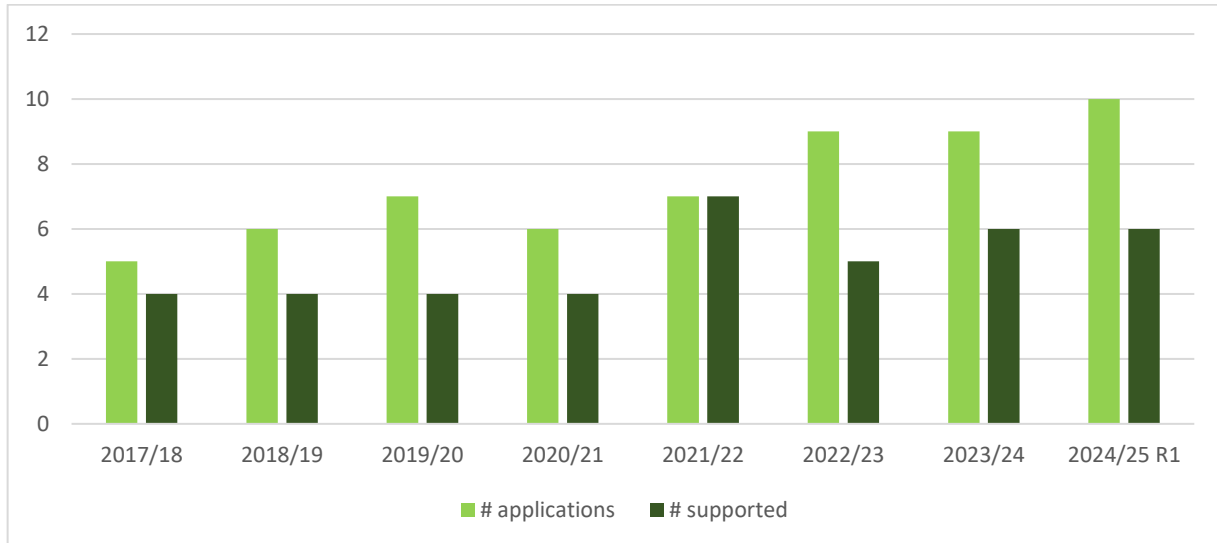
News and current affairs programs funded through the Content Grants program provide an essential lifeline in local communities and contribute a significant independent perspective nationally. Both new and established news and current affairs content are supported with Content grants – from remote First Nations communities broadcasting in local languages through to metropolitan-based and nationally broadcast flagship programs such as The Wire. A recent addition has been the two multilingual news services established at the NEMBC (recently discontinued due to lack of funding) and 3ZZZ in Melbourne.

The Enhanced National News Programming fund is provided to the CBAA (approximately \$700k pa) to support the ongoing production and subsidised supply of the National Radio News to the sector, the provision of a community broadcasting journalist in the Canberra Press Gallery and technology, coordination and editorial tools and resources that enable community broadcasters to effectively develop, share and broaden the reach of their community news services.

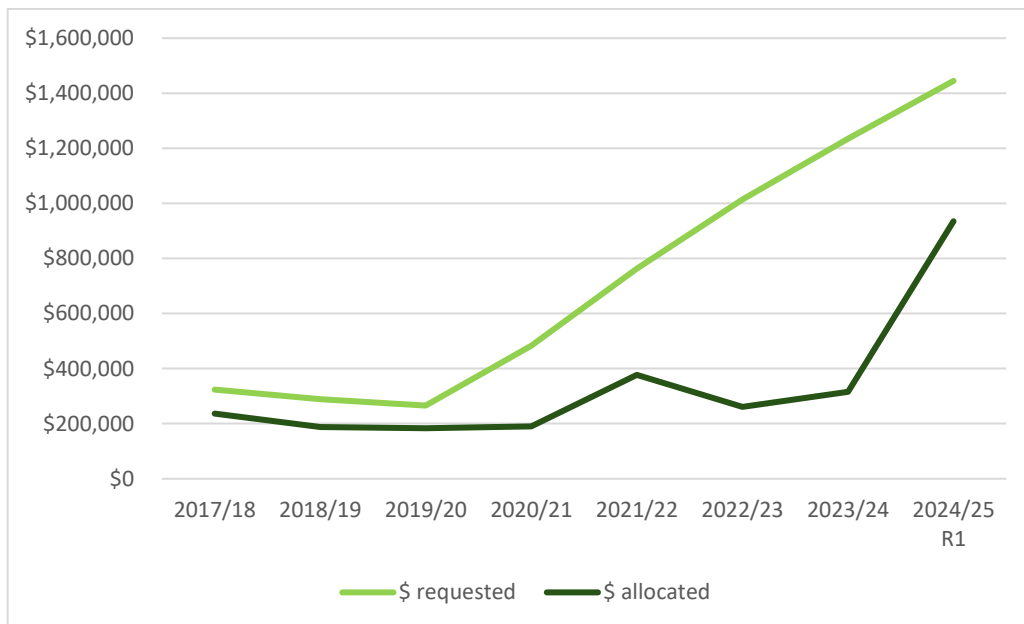
We continue to see an increase in the number of applications, as well as the quantum of dollars requested, for news and current affairs programming via our Content grants program, and there is an

increasing gap between the number of applications received and the number supported, as shown in Chart 3 and 4.

**Chart 3: Number of news and current affairs applications received and supported via Content grants 2017-18 – 2023/24, Rd 1 2024/25**



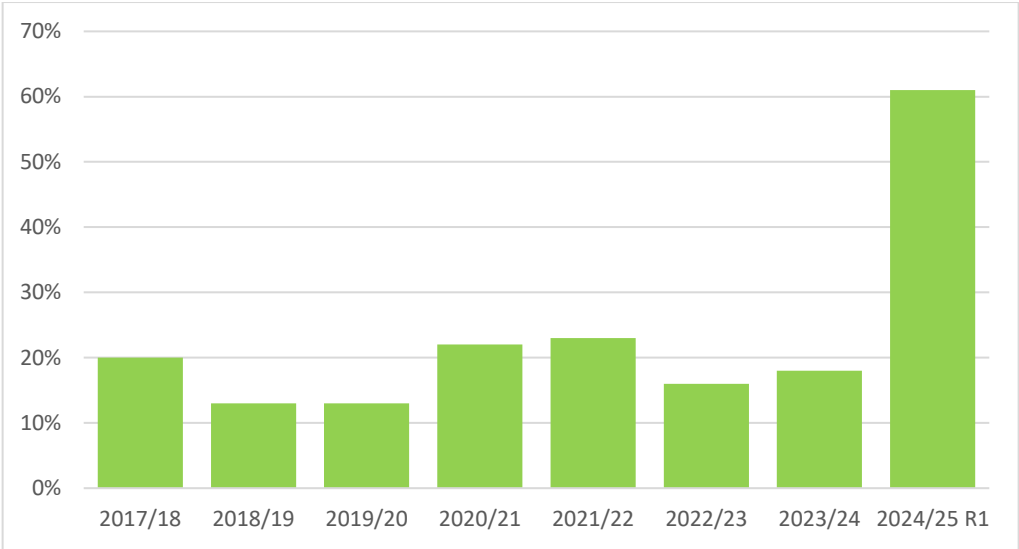
**Chart 4: News and current affairs funding – Content grants requested and allocated**



The CBF’s Content Grants Advisory Committee would like to support more news and current affairs programming, however, they are unable to meet the increase in demand without a corresponding increase in available Content funding.

From 2017/18 to Round 1 2024/25, an average of 23% of the available annual Content funding (excluding Specialist Radio Programming funding) was allocated to news and current affairs programming. We have also seen requests increase over the years – particularly in terms of quantum – for this type of programming. Additionally, in Round 1 2024/25, two requests totalling over \$780k were funded as multiyear grants for the first time which increased the proportion of Content funding (excluding Specialist Radio Programming funding) allocated to news and current affairs programs to 61%.

**Chart 5: Percentage of Content funding allocated to News and Current Affairs programs**



With producing trusted, independent locally relevant news and current affairs being a key strategic objective within Roadmap 2033 and the success of the CBAA-managed Enhanced National News Project, we anticipate that both the number of applications and funds requested will continue to increase. Without additional resources, we will be unable to adequately support the sector’s aspirations and the Government’s policy intent<sup>10</sup> to address strategic issues relating to increased media consolidation and news desertification in local communities, and the rise of misinformation and disinformation.

*Increased funding requests to support multicultural programming*

Whilst the number of applications received for ethnic programming support via the Specialist Radio Programming grant program has remained relatively stable in recent years, the amount of funding requested has increased. This program is non-competitive<sup>11</sup> in nature and designed to support programming that meets the needs of particular communities, (namely Radio Reading, First Nations and ethnic and multicultural programming).

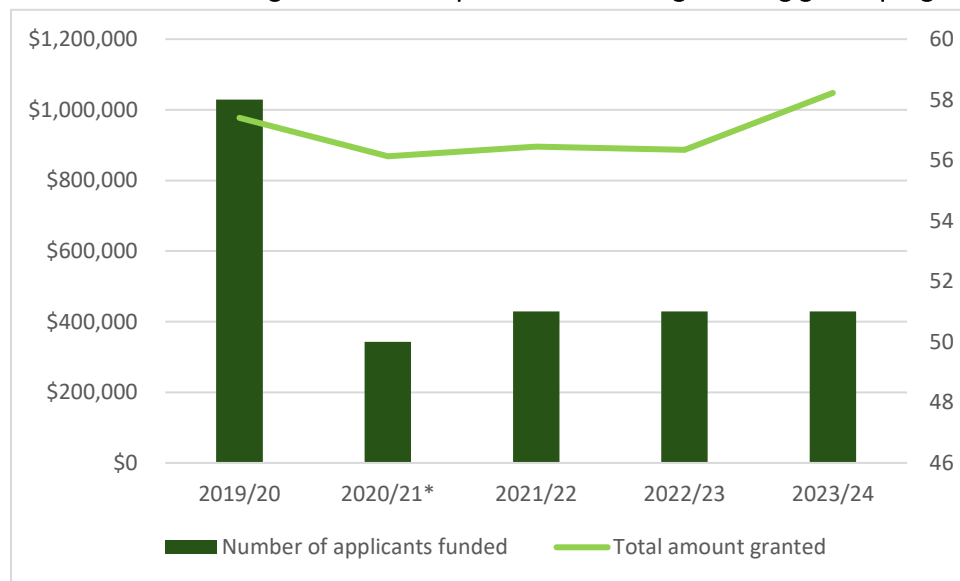
<sup>10</sup> [News Media Assistance Program \(News MAP\) | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.](#)

<sup>11</sup> Being non-competitive means that where applicants are eligible for this funding and requests are in line with the guidelines for what is considered reasonable, they are allocated what they request.

We also recently introduced a new opportunity to access \$2,000 through the Specialist Radio Programming grants program for stations that are hoping to develop new CALD programs. While still a new opportunity, we have received positive feedback and have already seen some stations engaging with migrant resource centres and settlement services and developing the relationships with local CALD communities to begin new CALD radio programs.

The recent Griffith University research into ethnic community broadcasting also identifies a range of trends relating to how ethnic and multicultural programs and stations are using digital technology to reach and engage with audiences.<sup>12</sup> This research highlights the increasing complexity of meeting audience expectations by producing programming for multiple platforms by largely volunteer producers. We have engaged with the recommendations that relate to our granting contained within that report, such as providing targeted communications about the range of grant opportunities available to support young people producing multicultural programming.

**Chart 6: Ethnic funding allocated via Specialist Radio Programming grants program**



\*2020/21 only had one Specialist Radio Programming funding round due to COVID

In addition to this increase in Specialist Radio Programming funding allocations, the number of general Content grants funded (or partially funded) through the Ethnic funding stream has also increased.

There were 9 Content grants supported via the ethnic funding line in 2019/20, 13 in 2021/22 increasing to 20 grants in 2023/24. Similarly, the amount requested and granted through the Ethnic funding stream has considerably increased. The total amount of Ethnic funding for Content grants in 2019/20 was \$203,815, that figure more than doubled in 2023/24 to \$442,818.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, A et al, *Connecting communities in a digital media era: Australian ethnic community broadcasting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 2023.



**Chart 7: Ethnic funding allocated via general Content grant program 2020 - 2024**

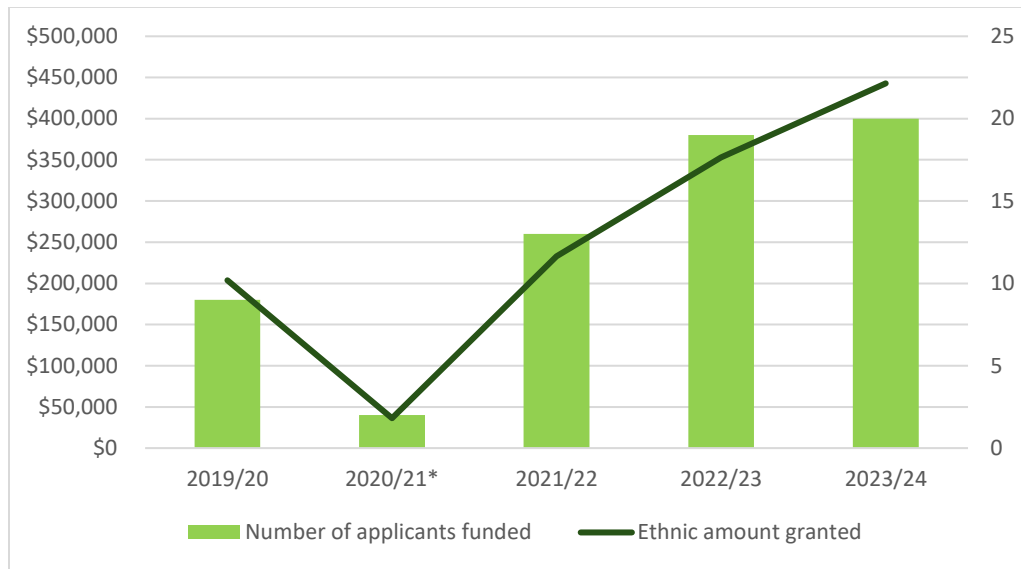
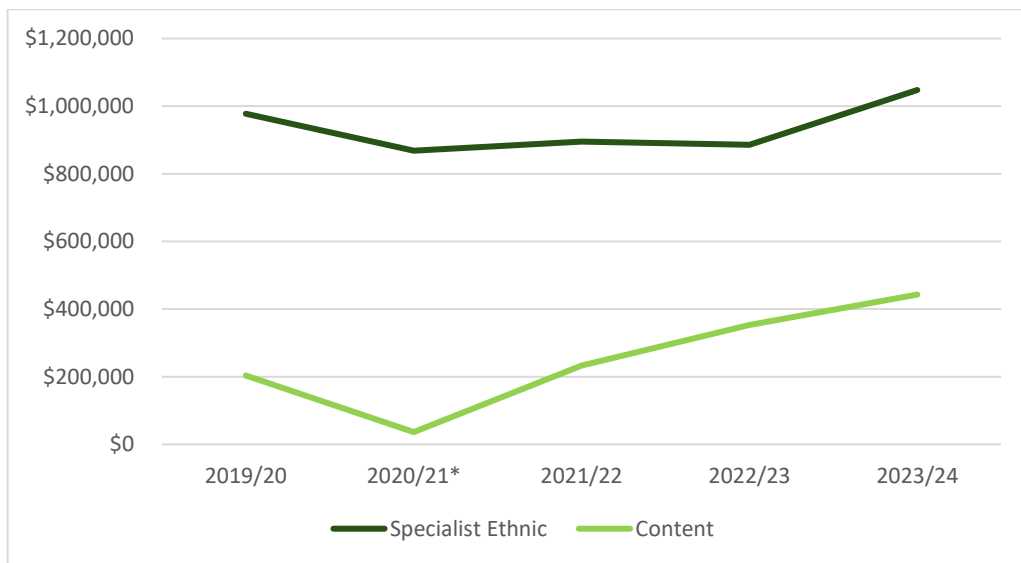


Chart 8 below demonstrates an increasing pressure on the Ethnic funding stream from both Ethnic Specialist Radio Programming and Content grants by and for Ethnic communities. Total amount of Ethnic funding allocated to support content production in 2023/24 was almost \$1.5m.

**Chart 8: Ethnic funding allocated via Specialist Radio Programming and General Content grants**



Based on the trends we see we anticipate the value of requests that aim to support ethnic and multicultural broadcasting to continue to increase, particularly given the National Ethnic & Multicultural Broadcasters' Council's strategic plans to enhance social cohesion through the development of stronger partnerships between multicultural programs / stations and the services that support CALD communities.

*Requests for Content grant support for Community Television productions anticipated to increase*

A key strategic objective of Roadmap 2033 is that:

*"Community television is supported to be accessible to Australians in more markets and platforms."*

This coupled with the recent passing of the *Broadcasting Services Amendment (Community Television) Bill 2024* to secure broadcasting spectrum for Community Television (until such time as it is required for alternative purposes) provides an opportunity for transformation for this part of the sector after years of uncertainty.

Each year we receive high demand for funding for community TV content productions from community TV broadcasters Channel 31 Melbourne, C44 Adelaide and Indigenous Community Television (ICTV), and from independent content makers partnering with these services.

Over the five-year period from 2019/20 to Round 1 2024/25, requests for funding to support community TV productions have remained above \$500K per year, peaking at \$905,298 in the 2023/24 year.

Over this five-year period, the funding allocations averaged 51% of the funding requested. The sector is made up of organisations and individuals who continue to create TV content post the COVID pandemic despite significant challenges. While the number of applications has steadily decreased the quantum of individual requests has increased (noting the 2024/25 figure contains Round 1 only).

**Chart 9: Community television content grant requests and allocations 2019/20 – Rd 1 2024/25**



With support from the Australian Government for Community Television’s future, and access to this vital resource a key Roadmap priority, we anticipate that both application numbers and the quantum of requests for support to produce community TV content will continue to rise in the coming years. See more on CTV below.

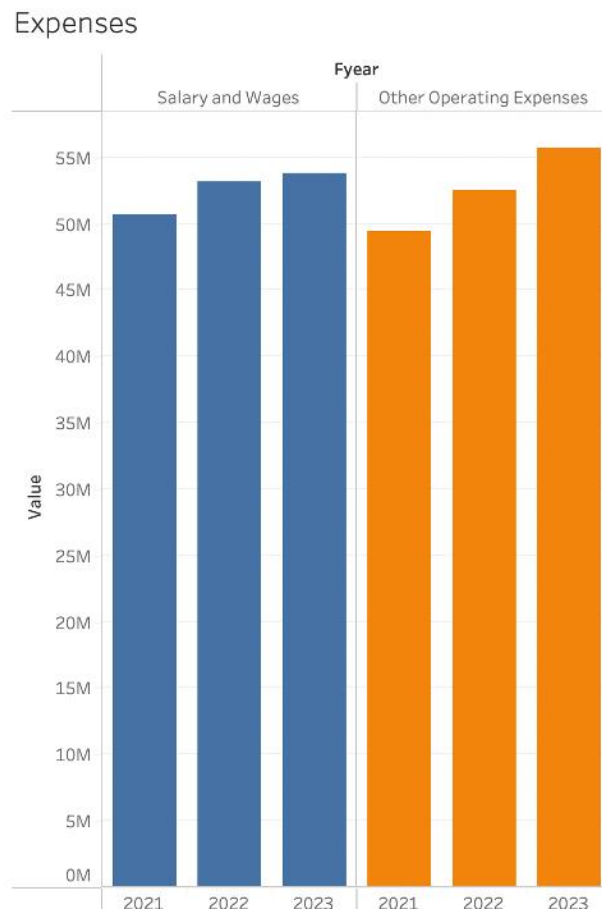
## Development & Operations grants program trends

As noted previously, the gap between funding requested and allocated within the Development & Operations grant program is widening. This is partly due to an increase in the quantum of funding being sought by applicants and which in turn is due to the economic climate and the rising costs that are affecting all areas of Australian society.

### *Rising costs at community radio stations*

Analysis of sector-based organisational financial reports for example increasing costs year on year from 2021-2023 for salary and wages and other operating costs, as can be seen in Chart 9 below.<sup>13</sup>

**Chart 9: Community broadcaster financial report analysis showing increasing costs 2021-2023**



These rising costs are translating into organisations requesting larger quantum's of funding support in their Development & Operations applications – particularly relating to salaries and operating and transmission costs.

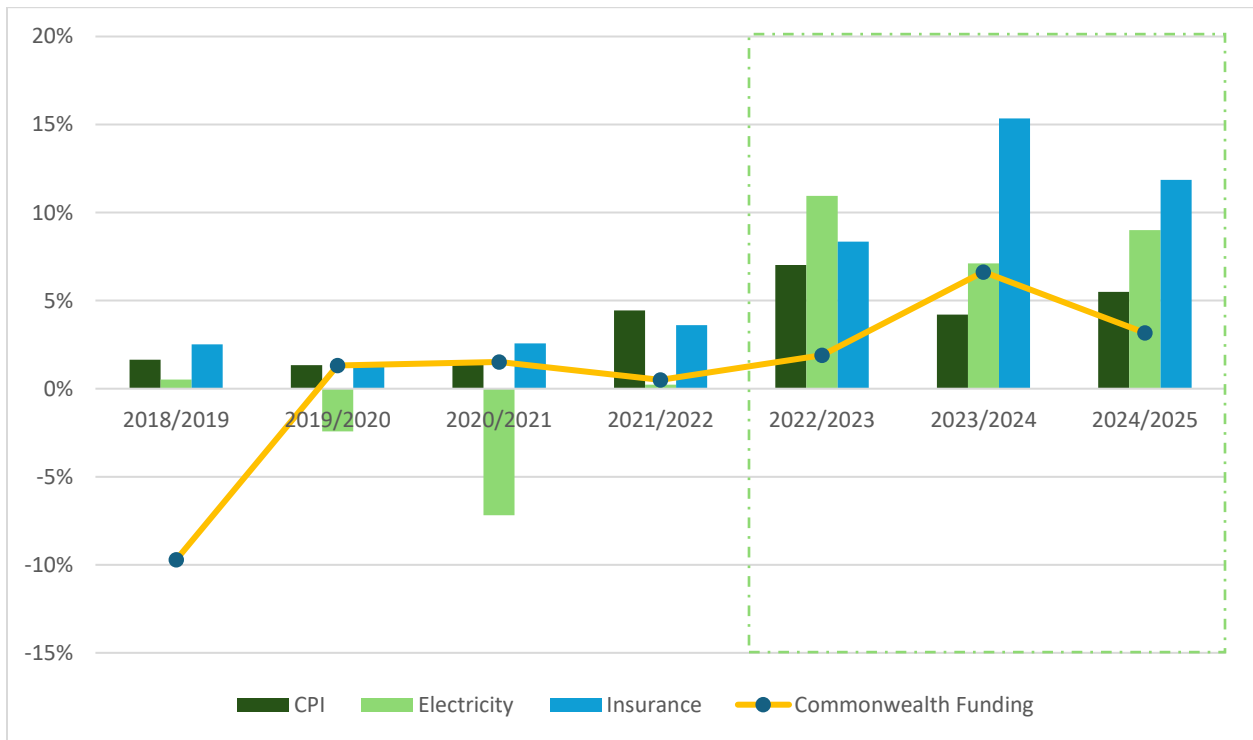
<sup>13</sup> CBAА analysis of organisational financial reports 2024.

The likely short- and long-term impacts of rising electricity prices are notable and put significant strain on resources. The significant and material impact of rising energy prices on radio stations has introduced a range of challenges across the broader broadcasting industry, affecting both commercial and community stations alike. Transmission power is a non-negotiable cost for broadcasters and generally the larger a station’s broadcast footprint, the larger the power bill.

The persistent rise in energy prices poses a long-term strategic risk to the sector's viability. As stations are expected to maintain high service levels in an increasingly competitive media landscape, these ongoing financial pressures could undermine their ability to operate sustainably in the future.

Chart 10 below shows a comparison of the inflationary changes across two examples of increasing costs for stations: electricity and insurance. These are charted against Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the indexation of the CBP, shown as ‘Commonwealth funding’.

**Chart 10: Tracking inflation across electricity, insurance, CPI and Commonwealth Funding**



**Source:** Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2024; Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF), 2024, Calculations by CBF. Note - 2024/2025 inflation estimates pertaining to Electricity, Insurance and the CPI more broadly are moving average forecast estimates.

The comparison of inflationary changes across electricity, insurance, and the general CPI against the percentage change in Commonwealth funding reveals a significant disparity. Over the observed period, both electricity and insurance costs have surged well above the general CPI, reflecting the broader trend

of rising operational expenses impacting the community broadcasting sector. Commonwealth funding has not kept pace with these inflationary pressures.

This disparity suggests a growing financial strain on organisations that find themselves largely reliant on Commonwealth funding, as their operational costs, particularly for essential services like electricity and insurance, have escalated more rapidly than the funding available to cover them.

#### *Increasing demand for Salary Support*

Salary support is being consistently sought from across the sector to enable organisations to maintain services to their communities, enable the sourcing of additional revenue and to coordinate, train and support volunteers. The sector understands the importance of paid staff in delivering sustainable and resilient organisations and regularly seeks support to deliver on a strong and capable workforce.

This is evidenced by the below excerpts from applications received over the last couple of years.

*Our exceptional team of volunteers has been powering through the pandemic to ensure our community radio station remains an engaging part of local life. With relaxed Covid restrictions, the increase in event engagement opportunities and plans for expansion, we're set to make waves in grassroots media with an increasing reach among young people. Despite standing down from salaries, due to a downturn in station sponsorship during Covid and floods, the Station Manager and Broadcast Coordinator have been performing their duties - above and beyond the call. To make the planned growth a reality, we need to secure funding in order to resume salaries for both and hire a dedicated Sponsorship Coordinator as all will be instrumental in securing sponsorships, expanding partnerships and growing training opportunities.*

Budget cost \$132,400 for three roles, applicant received \$0 for salary support.

*The Station activities have been increasing since the engagement of a Station Manager and it is important to maintain and build on this momentum. As our LAP covers approximately 10000 people, local funding sources are constrained. However, sponsorship and donations revenue is trending upward due to our Station Manager's efforts along with core team members. Funding now will continue to build on previous investments with existing and new volunteers, grow the Station presence locally, and increase sustainable income sources along with providing positive, family-friendly content from local voices.*

Budgeted cost \$30,100 for one role, applicant received \$0 funding for salary support.

*We require CBF funding support to sustain key roles crucial for our station's growth and stability. Without it, we cannot afford essential positions like the station manager and sponsorship manager, critical for programming, community engagement, and revenue generation. Waiting risks further decline in sponsorship income and weakens our station's resilience. Self-funding is unfeasible given our limited resources and obligations to fair employment practices. The demonstrated need arises from the decline in sponsorship revenue in 2023, and the necessity for dedicated expertise to rebuild and strengthen our sponsorship base. With CBF funding, we ensure vital positions are adequately compensated, fostering effective leadership and financial stability.*

*This support enables us to deliver quality programming, foster community connections, and solidify our impact in the community radio landscape.*

Budgeted cost \$47,148 for two roles, applicant received \$0 for salary support.

*Station relies on NIAA funding to operate our radio services. This includes support for staff wages and broadcast operational costs. Over the past 6 years there has been a freeze in NIAA funding levels for Indigenous media organisations while over the same period workloads have increased, the nature of work has radically changed and costs of living have continued to rise. To be able to sustainably grow our service delivery for audiences and remain culturally authentic and meaningful for our communities we need to be able to pay our team fairly which means seeking additional sources of revenue. Although we do strive to grow organically and toward self-sufficiency, targeted support by the CBF now would help us to retain a currently strong team and give us a surer footing to secure external support in the future.*

Budgeted cost \$130,689 for 3 presenters, applicant received \$0 for salary support.

#### *Increasing Operational and Transmission costs*

We are also seeing applicants requesting more for operational and transmission costs as evidenced by the below excerpts from application forms.

*We see obvious increase in transmission costs. CBF funding helps us fight inflation.*

Budgeted cost \$6,415 for site rental, electricity, data link and insurance, applicant was allocated partial funding of \$4,000 to support these costs.

*We still rely on CBF support particularly for areas of operations that do not readily attract sponsorships and donations. This remains the case even after we have sharply cut costs throughout our operations. Without CBF support we would find it difficult to focus on our various fundraising projects and daily operational challenges. As paid staff continue to be unaffordable, handling daily urgent tasks tends to divert our volunteers away from focusing on important fundraising and station-growth projects. A downturn in income from traditional sources persists: e.g., local-government arts bodies continue to undervalue our contribution to the local arts landscape as a specialist arts-radio station. Fundraising is very difficult for such needs as: - transmission rent and power - studio electricity and other costs - insurance - APRA licences.*

Budgeted \$50,288 for transmission site rental and electricity, applicant was allocated partial funding of \$24,500 to support these costs.

*Transmission costs for these services is substantial and the costs including power and maintenance is increasing annually, placing significant financial pressure on the organisation and impacting on the ability to instigate some technical and accessibility related projects and increase resources in areas such as programming and technical support.*

*The ongoing impact on many not for profit disability organisations with changes to government funding alongside the increased competitiveness for sponsorship and grant funding overall in the*

*community sector means that we are increasingly under pressure to continue delivering the vital RPH services with less resources.*

Budgeted \$517,754 for transmission site rental and electricity (on multiple sites), applicant was allocated partial funding of \$217,235 to support these costs.

*The only way we have been able to cover the increasing power costs is to reduce our signal level and thus use less power. This, however, has reduced signal at the verges of our footprint. To allow us to resume our normal replacement program and to prepare for a transmission site relocation in the next 2 years, we need significant assistance with both transmission power and transmission site rental this year. Our rental agreement expires this year and the new agreement has increased by 130% to \$48,169 Per year.*

Budgeted \$65,030 for site rental and electricity, applicant was allocated \$0 to support these costs.

*We seek assistance with funding of our transmission expenses due to our current financial position and cash balance. This expense is critical to the operations of the station and is an expense that we really have no choice or alternative in as the site is mandated by our license and is the only site available to us which reduces our bargaining power to achieve a more affordable transmission cost.*

Budget cost \$55,000 for site rental, electricity and maintenance, applicant was allocated \$0 to support these costs.

*The station incurs significant costs for transmission as in order to cover the topography of the ... region we operate 4 separate transmission sites. This necessarily involves 4 sets of site transmission costs, primarily electricity. We seek assistance in meeting these costs as we are a relatively small organisation with limited funding sources. CBF support for these parts of our cost of operation is important as it allows our remaining funds to be applied to support viability of the station, as the complex arrangement of multiple transmission sites incurs additional costs compared to a single site station. The funding support will enable continued full coverage of the ... region, supporting engagement with listeners of the area. The grant will free up our own funds to conduct OB's, attend more community events and improve our main transmitter.*

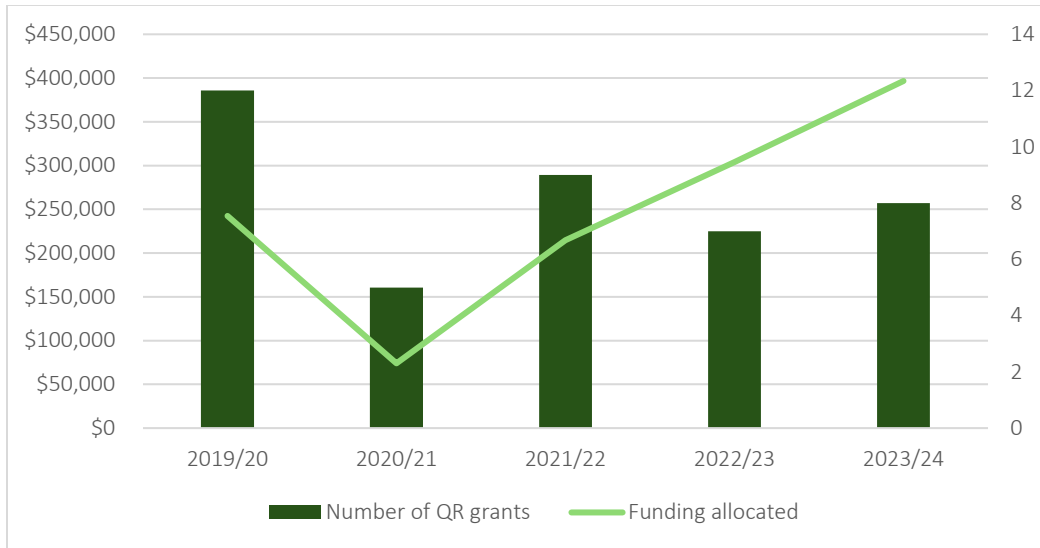
Budgeted cost \$12,573 for electricity, applicant was allocated partial funding of \$9,547 to support these costs.

*Quick Response grants increasingly important for stations that cannot respond to a 'shock'*

Our Quick Response grant program continues to support community stations to sustain services while grappling with unexpected events such as extreme weather, equipment breakdowns and forced relocations. Whilst the number of quick response grants fluctuates over time, the quantum of funding requested to support these kinds of instances has increased exponentially, particularly since COVID-19.

Since 2019/20, there has been a total of 41 Quick Response grants paid totalling \$1,231,693.

**Chart 11: Number and quantum of Quick Response grants allocated since 2019/20**



Across the Quick Response grant program during this period, 39 of the grants allocated were for emergencies and 2 were for matched funding opportunities.

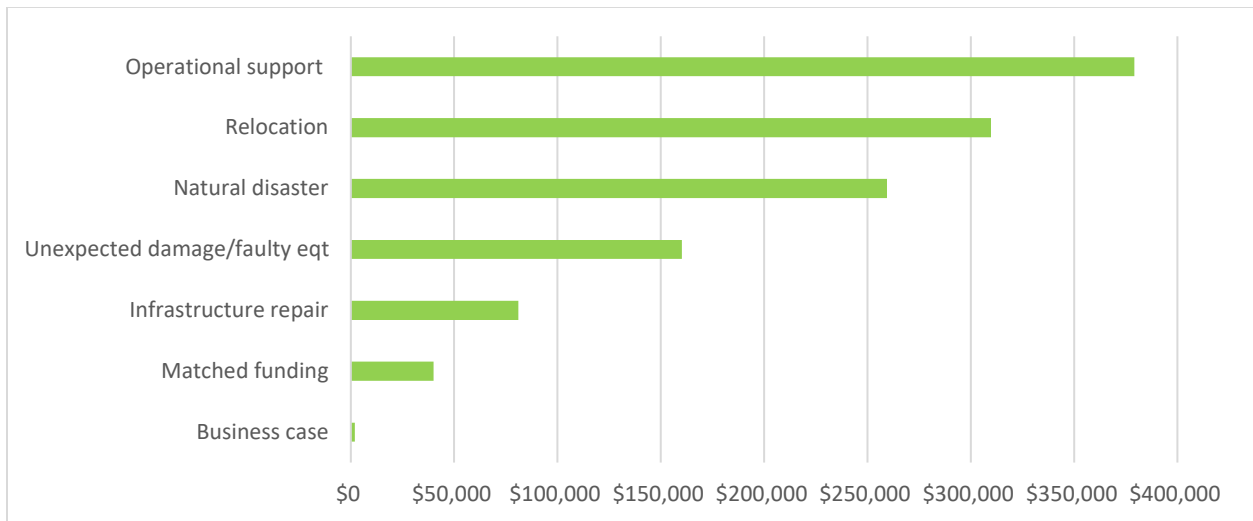
Of those 39 emergency grants:

- 13 helped to replace damaged or faulty equipment
- 11 assisted stations impacted by natural disasters (tropical cyclones, floods, storms and bushfires) - all largely affecting transmitter performance or stability of services
- 8 supported stations with the impact of sudden unforeseen studio relocations
- 3 supported infrastructure repair
- 3 assisted with operational costs due to legal proceedings and regulatory instability
- 1 supported the development of an urgent business case for Government when the Australian Community Television Alliance (ACTA) were required to complete a submission on behalf of Community Television regarding their ongoing licence renewal challenges and the transition to an online business model.

The two matched funding and time bound opportunities were for a Station Manager salary and a podcast training program for scientists.



Chart 12: Funding allocated to types of Quick Response grants

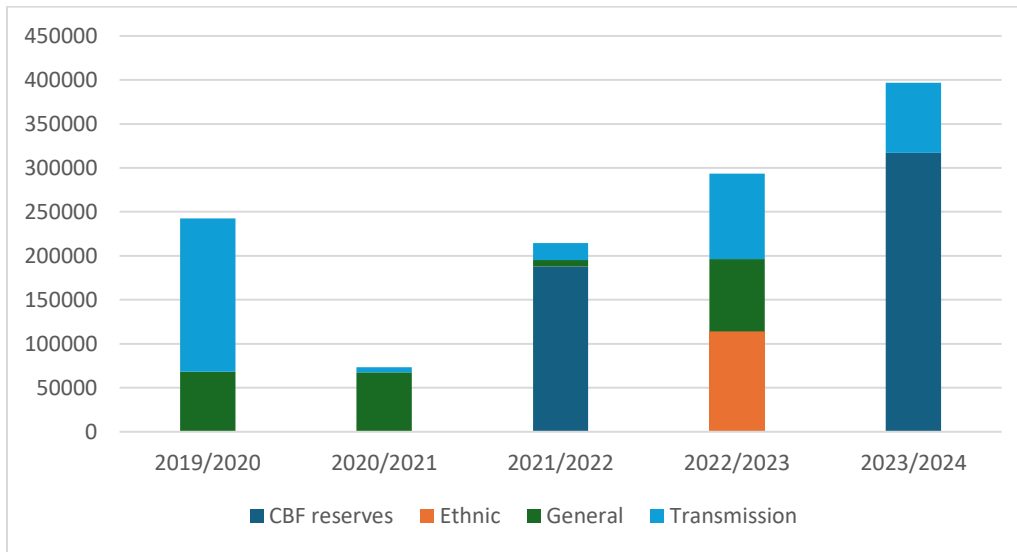


Funding for Quick Response grants is where available allocated from any remaining funding amounts post Round 2 allocations, but otherwise is funded from CBF Reserves, and can sometimes be a mix of both.

Funding for Quick Response grants has been steadily increasing over the last few years, with the majority of funding support coming from CBF reserves, with the exception of 2022/23, when CBF received an indexation adjustment that was partly used to support Quick Response applications in that year.

With the increasing severity and frequency of climate change related weather events, increasing costs of insurance, and with many applicants describing the vulnerability of their organisations and their inability to respond to unexpected shocks, the provision of emergency support is becoming increasingly important, and we anticipate the number and quantum of Quick Response grants to continue to increase. It is not, however, sustainable to continue to support greater levels of emergency support from CBF reserves.

**Chart 13: Funding source for Quick Response grants**



*Increasing pressure on First Nations funding*

The CBP provides approx. \$1.4m pa to support First Nations community broadcasting with the majority of this is allocated to Content grants due to the IMBP supporting operational and employment funding to support First Nations broadcasting.

Most of the funding available is allocated via the non-competitive Specialist Radio Programming grants program which supports the production and distribution of First Nations programming in language on First Nations stations and First Nations broadcasters on non-First Nations stations. With most of the funding allocated under this category, there is a continued and increasing demand in both the Content and Development & Operations grant programs for First Nations funding support as can be seen below.

**Chart 14: First Nations Content grants**

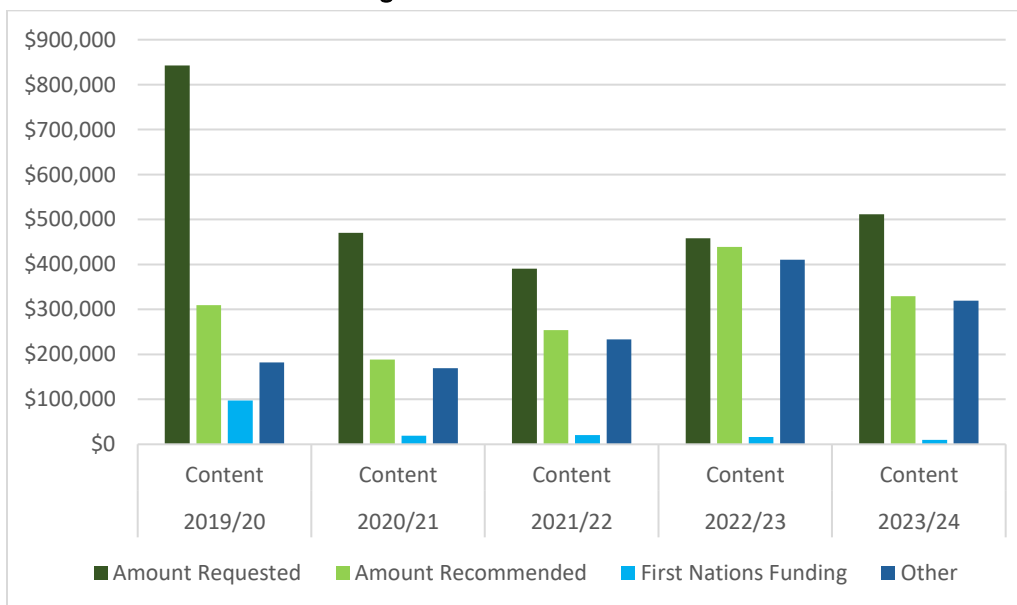
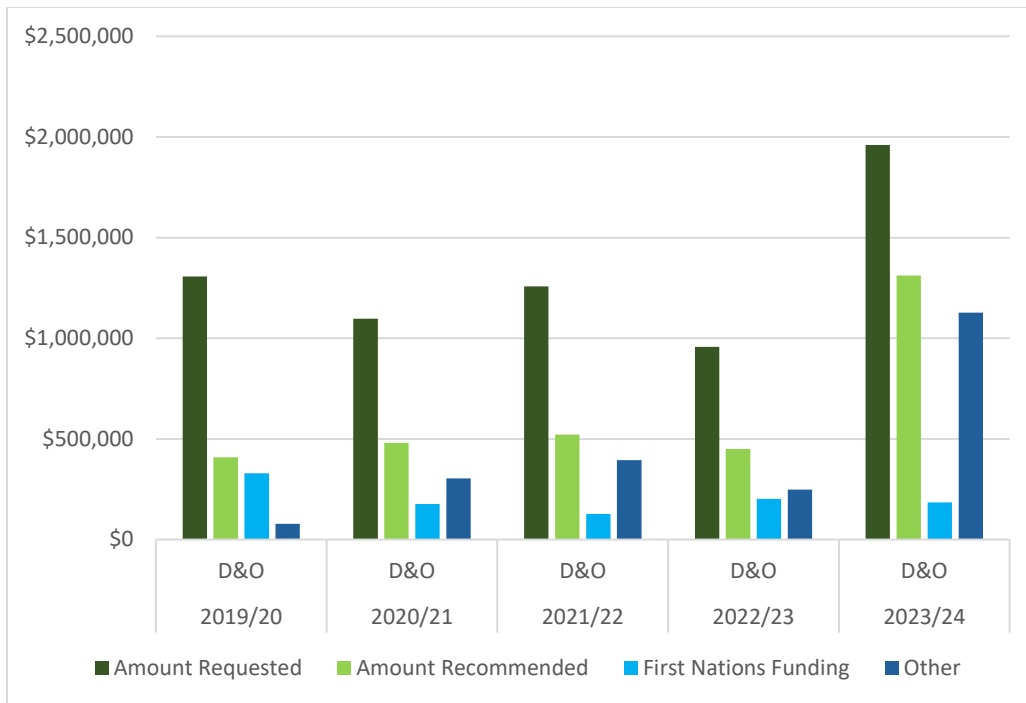


Chart 15: First Nations Development & Operations grants



As can be seen in both grant programs, First Nations organisations are being increasingly supported from the General ('other') funding line.

With approximately \$1.13m of General funding allocated to First Nations organisations in the Development & Organisation grant program in 2023/24 this placed an immense amount of pressure on the General funding line - which is the most competitive in nature and is the funding line available to all eligible community broadcasting licensees.

### Sector investment grants program trends

#### *Strong sector organisations – increased recognition of their role*

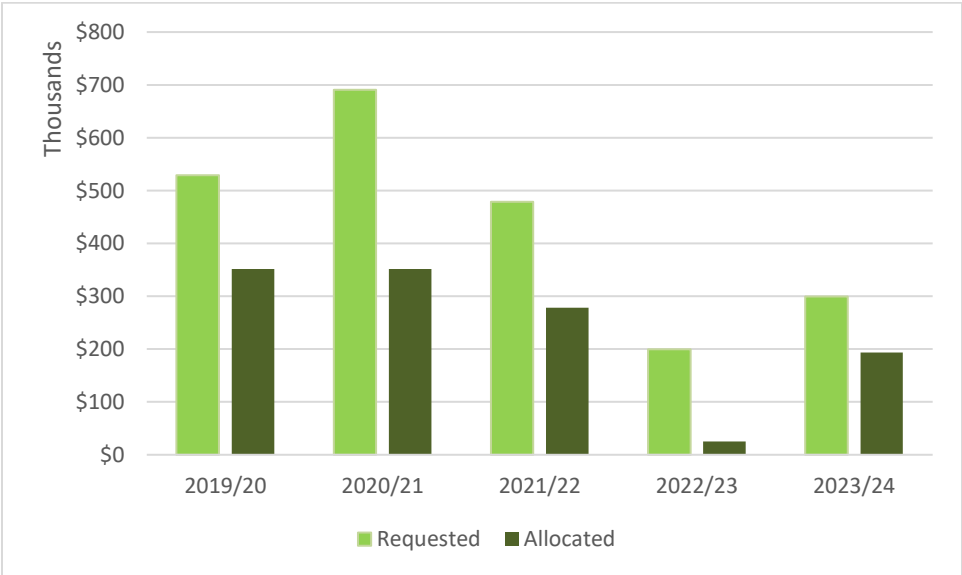
One strategic objective in Roadmap 2033 is to support broadcasters with strong, effective and collaborative sector organisations to ensure that, as organisations that support and enable members and facilitate cross-sector collaborations, they operate in an ecosystem that is supportive and helps them be successful in delivering impact. This depends on a fit for purpose regulatory environment that supports collaborations to achieve shared goals and sufficient financial support to ensure sector bodies can deliver initiatives suitable both to their own members needs and to the overarching goals of a diverse community broadcasting sector. By enhancing collaboration and coordination among these organisations, their ability to deliver impactful and measurable outcomes is improved. This ensures that sector organisations are not operating in isolation but are part of a cohesive, well-supported network that amplifies their efforts. By strengthening these organisations, we aim to contribute to a more resilient and responsive social impact sector capable of driving sustainable change through effective and far-reaching broadcasting initiatives.

As noted previously, the CBF has supported the CBAA (\$880k per annum), DMA (\$210k per annum and NEMBC (\$460k per annum) with their sector coordination activities for many years. The value of this investment has rarely increased over the years, despite rising operating costs impacting these organisations as well.

As discussed earlier, the CBF has decided to begin to action this Roadmap objective by elevating the other sector organisations from the Development & Operations grant program into the Sector Investment grant program. The table below shows the funding requested and allocated by these organisations through the D&O grant program and which will in future be managed through the Sector Investment grant program.

As a result of the sector’s deeper recognition and understanding of the role of sector organisations in supporting and strengthening the sector, it is anticipated that sector organisations will seek additional funding to support the sector’s development through identification and actioning of new initiatives and activities that address unmet and emerging needs.

**Chart 16: Total funding requested by and allocated to sector organisations that were historically funded through Development & Operations but would be applied and funded through Sector Investment moving forwards**



\*Nb. Less applications were received in 2022/23 as funding allocated in prior years was rolled over for activities that couldn’t proceed at the time due to the pandemic.

*Sector Development initiatives provide capacity and access to the broader sector*

Community broadcasting stations face significant financial barriers in acquiring and maintaining multiplatform technical solutions. The costs of accessing, developing, and supporting various platforms and technologies are substantial. Individual station audiences often lack the critical mass necessary to justify the investment in individualised solutions.

There are a number of critical digital infrastructure platforms currently being funded by the CBP that require continued support in order to provide ongoing technical capacity to the broader sector and access and content availability to audiences.

The CBAA are supported by the CBF to project manage and deliver several critical large-scale infrastructure platforms to the sector. The CBAA leverages economies of scale to engage with industry leading technology companies to provide community radio stations affordable or free access to industry-leading tools essential for reaching listeners across multiple platforms.

The impact of these infrastructure projects is to grow sector capability and audiences by connecting stations with listeners on all relevant platforms and supplementing their local content production services. Investing resources into practical and at scale solutions to address these critical challenges community radio stations face in the digital age ensures the continued relevance, vitality, and sustainability of community broadcasting in Australia.

These infrastructure-based projects include:

- Community Radio Network - CBAA's content distribution service, delivers community aligned, independent and grassroots content from across the sector, across different platforms, to assist community radio stations to supplement and complement their local content. The CBAA not only maintains the distribution platforms, which includes the VAST satellite HUB, the Digital Delivery Network (DDN) and File Transfer Protocol (FTP)) but also works with content creators to produce and curate aligned content to the sector 24/7.
- AMRAP - The dominance of online streaming services and social media consumption is making it harder for new Australian music to be discovered by audiences. The algorithms used by big tech are directing users to listen to established international acts and Australian artists are now featuring less and less each year in the ARIA Charts. Conversely, music remains critical to the future relevance and resilience of community radio stations, with 30% of listeners tuning into community radio to hear Australian music.<sup>14</sup> AMRAP provides infrastructure and support to enable Australian artists to upload their new music and to be easily discoverable and broadcast by community broadcasters. The project also actively promotes a range of diverse artists that are commonly under-represented in mainstream media.
- Digital Radio Project (DRP) - the DRP supports access and infrastructure that enables designated community radio broadcasters to provide reliable, free-to-receive digital radio services. With the continued growth and rapid expansion of listeners on DAB+, it is vital that community radio be available on this platform. Regional location rollout plans require liaising with commercial broadcasters regarding corporate structures and shared transmission infrastructure. The DRP maintains the DAB+ transmission for the existing 63 community digital radio services, however additional funding is required to investigate further locations and services as well as support further resilience and trials of emerging free-to-air delivery technologies.

---

<sup>14</sup> CBAA (2024) Community Radio Listener Survey ([Get Data About Community Radio Stations and Listeners | Community Broadcasting Association of Australia \(cbaa.org.au\)](#))

- Multiplatform Distribution Project (MDP) – addresses the critical need for community radio to adapt to Australia’s evolving audio consumption landscape. Listeners now engage with content across multiple platforms, including apps, smart speakers, podcasts, websites hybrid in-car systems, and social media.

The multiplatform initiative is a comprehensive strategy to ensure community radio remains accessible, relevant, and financially viable. The MDP includes the following services:

- Customised website solutions for community radio to allow stations to offer secure live streaming, audio on demand and podcasting services as well as providing access to audience data and analytics
- Community Radio + app - 98% of community radio stations are available via the app, across mobile phones, in-car and smart speaker platforms

The MDP:

- provides greater support and offer specialised product resources and training programs for onboarding of stations to build skills and capacity
- subsidises solutions for stations to be able to implement targeted paid marketing campaigns to drive adoption
- keeps abreast of and take advantage of rapidly changing future technologies
- ensures community radio stays at the forefront of audio innovation and new trends
- ensures listeners can access their community radio content whenever they choose and on whatever platform they use.

### *Increasing focus on delivering and measuring outcomes*

Sector organisations are recognising the need to prioritise their focus on outcomes. There is a strong desire to demonstrate the sector’s impact in community. An example of this is the recently CBF funded Social Return on Investment project led by Christian Media & Arts Australia (CMAA) in partnership with National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters’ Council, First Nations Media Australia, Disability Media Australia and consultants Think Impact. This project aims to understand the social return on investment and the overall impact of community broadcasters in these four parts of the sector. It will also empower the four sector organisations to measure their own sector’s impact by providing tools and methodology to repeat and expanded on this work in future.

### *Evolution for RPH to disability*

The CBP currently provides approximately \$1.5mpa to support the Radio Reading community broadcasting sector. The Radio Reading Network provides services to the 5 million Australians that live with a print disability caused by vision, cognitive, physical or literacy impairment, and consists of 19

AM/FM radio services nationally, and 10 digital radio services across Sydney, Darwin, Canberra, Hobart, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide.<sup>15</sup>

Increasing empowerment of people living with disability, coupled with the community broadcasting sector's desire to respond to and meet emerging community needs, have necessitated an evolving role of these services originally identified as 'RPH' or 'Radio Reading'. Further, technology advancements that support those with a print disability has meant that stations that were first licensed as 'RPH' or 'Radio Reading' community interest now find themselves as somewhat anachronistic given emergent technologies for accessibility. This presents an opportunity to realise an enhanced role of providing specialised programming by and for people with disability on issues of significance to this community.

Under the leadership of their rebranded peak body, Disability Media Australia (formerly RPH Australia), these services are now examining their role in servicing people with disability more broadly, as well as their families and carers. As a result, the Radio Reading sector is engaging in a strategic exercise to broaden its remit, in line with Roadmap 2033 strategic objectives relating to accessibility at stations and amplifying content by and for people with disability.

## Regional and rural Australia trends

With 76% of community broadcasting licensees located in regional and remote Australia,<sup>16</sup> we generally receive more Development & Operations applications from organisations located in these areas (compared to those in metropolitan or suburban areas). Whilst we may receive more applications, the quantum of requests received from regional and remote organisations is generally lower than those from metropolitan and suburban areas. This is due to a number of factors including costs in regional and rural areas being generally lower than in metro and suburban areas; regional and rural areas generally having lower overheads in terms of salaries, rents and operational expenses; regional and rural areas generally relying on volunteer workforce models.

Organisations in regional and rural areas however are facing a number of challenges in the current environment that is affecting their stability and resilience.

### *Attracting and Retaining Staff and Volunteers in Regional and Remote Areas*

Community broadcasters play a crucial role in providing a local voice and fostering community spirit, particularly in remote areas. However, attracting and retaining staff and volunteers in these regions is increasingly challenging due to higher living costs, relative to income; and isolation.<sup>17</sup> Community broadcasters are making significant efforts to offer local employment opportunities and build a sense of community, which ensures that stations can continue to operate effectively.

---

<sup>15</sup> RPH Australia website, viewed 9 August 2024, <https://www.rph.org.au/>

<sup>16</sup> CBAA, About Community Broadcasting, viewed on 14 August 2024, <https://www.cbaa.org.au/about/about-community-broadcasting>

<sup>17</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *General Social Survey, 2020* (Catalogue No. 4159.0). Australian Bureau of Statistics.

- **Impact of Declining Volunteering Rates**

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteering rates have declined significantly and have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.<sup>18</sup> This trend has made traditional volunteering models increasingly difficult to sustain. While some stations have managed to adapt better than others, the overall decline poses a significant threat to the sustainability of community broadcasting. Whilst the good will of individuals and the positive social impact for the community at large is vital, the incentive to volunteer is under threat and cannot sustain a strong and stable broadcasting community.

- **Cost of Living Pressures**

The rising cost of living, particularly elevated fuel prices and reduced available volunteer time, as highlighted in the general social survey<sup>19</sup>, exacerbate the challenges faced by community broadcasters. These pressures are more pronounced in rural and remote areas, making it harder to attract and retain volunteers who are vital to the operation of these stations.<sup>20</sup> Cost of living pressures on audiences are also impacting membership / donation revenue at many stations.

Studies focusing on rural and remote areas highlight that these regions face unique challenges, fewer economic opportunities and higher living costs for essentials due to transportation and logistics. These factors exacerbate the difficulties in maintaining a stable volunteer base for community broadcasters in these areas.

From the VA (2020) study "[v]olunteering in rural and regional Victoria is not only a way of life but essential to maintaining a variety of services. Issues for volunteering in rural towns and regional cities differ from issues in the Greater Metropolitan Melbourne area. Some of the known issues for volunteerism, in rural areas in particular, include ageing and declining populations, the higher cost of transport, lower levels of service provision and the tyranny of distance".<sup>21</sup>

- **Economic factors impact sponsorship revenue**

With this, we have seen a consistent increase in the quantum of Development & Operations applications received from organisations in regional and rural areas over the last couple of years, noting that the quantum in Round 1 alone for 2024/25 is higher than the total requested across the full 2023/24 year.

---

<sup>18</sup> Biddle, N., & Gray, M. (2023). Ongoing trends in volunteering in Australia. ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods, Australian National University.

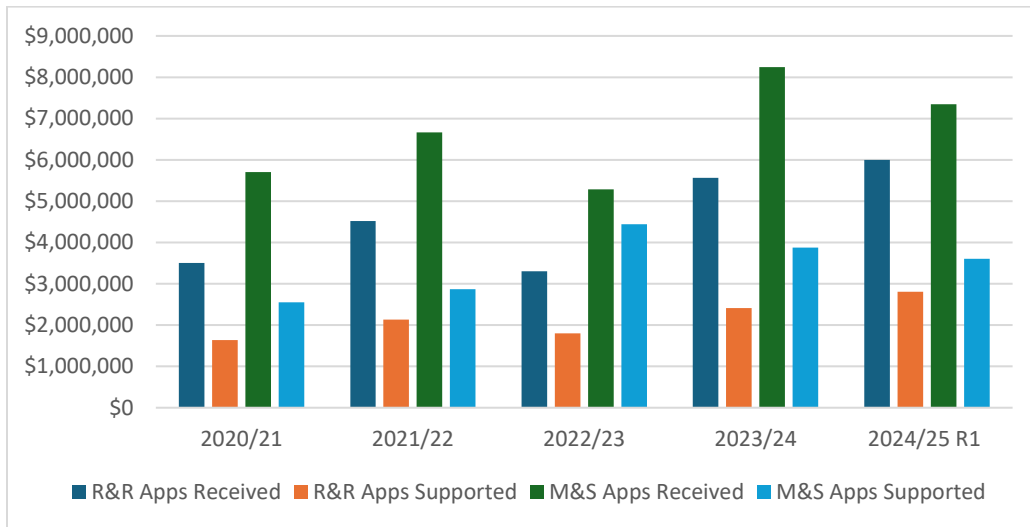
<sup>19</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). General Social Survey, 2020 (Catalogue No. 4159.0). Australian Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>20</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *General Social Survey, 2020* (Catalogue No. 4159.0). Australian Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>21</sup> Ellis, C., Muller, P., & Szeker, D. (2020). *State of Volunteering in Victoria 2020*. Volunteering Victoria. Available at: [www.stateofvolunteering.org.au](http://www.stateofvolunteering.org.au)



**Chart 17: \$ Quantum of applications received and supported from Regional and Rural (R&R) and Metro and Suburban (M&S) 2019/20 – Round 1 2024/25**



## Community Television revitalisation and transformation

Following the Government’s recent legislation securing community television’s access to spectrum for the foreseeable future, we have been working closely with the Australian Community Television Alliance (Channel 31 Melbourne and Channel 44 Adelaide) and the CBAA to advance the revitalisation and transformation of community television after a decade of disruption and spectrum uncertainty.

The two stations are working towards a consolidated model that will:

- improve their governance to be contemporary best practice and fit for purpose
- revitalise organisational sustainability by addressing financial restoration and improve revenue growth and
- redefine how community television operates.

Their aim is to secure a stable and thriving future for community television by leveraging existing strengths and resources, including the CTV+ app. Securing funding as well as prominence for CTV+ are critical factors for the future of community TV, and both require Government support.

We look forward to further dialogue with Government about how to support the forward strategy to build financial sustainability, resilience and growth for community television.

## Recommendation 2: Invest in the sector

**Support the sector’s funding submissions to enable greater sustainability through relieving pressure on the grant program, unlocking the opportunity to provide more longer-term granting, enhance capability and sector growth, development and innovation.**

## Increasing sector sustainability, capability & capacity

The CBF finds that the sustainability of the community broadcasting sector hinges on several critical factors. Primarily, ensuring consistent and adequate funding is essential to support core operations and foster development opportunities that build resilience across the sector. Closely related to this are capacity building initiatives which are particularly vital for smaller and regional stations, to enhance grant-writing skills, operational efficiency, and overall station management. Additionally, promoting diversity and inclusivity in the sector through targeted funding and support for underrepresented groups ensures a broader range of voices and perspectives. Lastly, fostering long-term strategic planning and multi-year funding opportunities can provide stability and encourage innovation. By focusing on these key areas, the CBF aims to create a robust, sustainable community broadcasting landscape capable of adapting to future challenges and opportunities.

Roadmap 2033 was designed to provide a 10-year plan for community broadcasting, by the sector, for the sector and Australia at large. It underscores the immense potential of this sector to contribute to the social, economic and cultural vitality of Australian society. Ensuring consistent and adequate funding is essential, not merely to support a reliant sector but to unlock potentialities for growth and innovation. Capacity-building initiatives, particularly for smaller and regional stations are crucial for enhancing operational efficiency and fostering robust station management.

Similarly, Volunteers Australia's National Volunteering Strategy has the strategic objective of "commitment to strategic investment," highlighting the importance of common enabling infrastructure to enhance the entire volunteering ecosystem.<sup>22</sup> The National Volunteer Strategy proposes that by investing in technology, research, resources, and support services, we can improve the capacity and capability of volunteer organisations nationwide. The aim is to ensure that volunteer efforts are well-supported, efficient, and impactful, fostering a more resilient community service landscape. The Volunteers Australia's strategy and Roadmap 2033 both call for strategic investments in infrastructure to build capacity and drive innovation to enable robust support systems and sustainable development.

Finally, through targeted funding and support for underrepresented groups, a broad range of voices and perspectives become part of the public discourse on a wide variety of social and political issues, enriching the social fabric. By focusing on these key areas, the CBF aims to cultivate a thriving community broadcasting sector that drives significant societal benefits and contributes positively to the nation's future and public discourse.

---

<sup>22</sup> <https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/National-Strategy-for-Volunteering-2023-2033.pdf>

## Workforce capability: Capacity-building and investing in people

The sector has prioritised growing its capability by investing in its people to attract and develop a skilled, capable workforce. A core strategic objective articulated in Roadmap 2033, is to develop a skilled and sustainable workforce that can adapt to evolving community needs; "to create a resilient, thriving sector by leveraging the collective strength, skills and knowledge of thousands of participants".<sup>23</sup> The community broadcasting sector is also a recognised, ongoing critical trainer and incubator of talent and a provider of career pathways and skills development across the industry.

As Roadmap 2033 identifies, the changing nature of work and volunteering in broader society presents both a threat and an opportunity for the community broadcasting sector. As Australian society evolves, so too does the landscape of volunteerism, necessitating a shift in how community broadcasters engage with their volunteers. Instead, the sector must reduce its dependency on volunteers by cultivating a skilled, sustainable workforce capable of adapting to the ever-changing needs of communities. This transition requires a strategic focus on professional development, fostering resilience, and embracing innovative approaches to meet the changing needs of communities. A trained, robust, adaptable workforce of community broadcasters can navigate these changes effectively, ensuring they continue to serve as vital, responsive platforms for diverse voices and local content.

Notably, workforce capability in the sector encompasses involves an assessment of all workers, including board members, volunteers, and staff—both paid and unpaid. It involves addressing how these individuals can be supported through training, resources, and infrastructure to create a capable and resilient workforce. The forward vision, as identified in Roadmap 2033, calls for a well-supported workforce to bridge the capability and capacity gap, which requires a multifaceted approach. The CBF recognises the importance of this and has long been committed to enhancing workforce capability. For example, in 2018, the CBF worked alongside Think Impact to implement an independent review of how the CBF can support station resilience through the Supporting Station Resilience Review 2018; providing a framework that highlights six aspects of station resilience and how our grants programs and guidelines can support the areas identified.<sup>24</sup> This framework envisions future-focused stations that are well-resourced and capable of thriving in a dynamic media landscape. The Station Resilience framework has been incorporated into our draft Outcomes Framework (*see Outcomes and Evaluation Frameworks section below*).

Nevertheless, the CBF faces challenges in addressing all workforce capability needs through the applications we receive, as people identify their own priorities and needs. Despite these challenges, the CBF remains dedicated to actualising resilience in the sector, ensuring that community broadcasting can continue to grow and innovate.

While the CBF continues to work with sector organisations to build effective support programs that grow our capability, in line with Roadmap 2033, the first step involves the development of a workforce development strategy that ensures we have the rights skills and the right people in the right roles across

---

<sup>23</sup> Roadmap 2033, 18.

<sup>24</sup> CBF (2021), Station Resilience framework available at [Granting to support station resilience - CBF](#)

the sector. The challenge remains however, in balancing funding for core operational costs versus development ideas for resilience and sustainability in this space. Support for workforce development also requires longer-term granting, in line with our strategy.

As a starting point, the sector proposes expanding training and career pathway programs would allow community broadcasters to acquire new skills that open employment opportunities and increase digital literacy and civic participation.<sup>25</sup>

### Recommendation 3: Be guided by Roadmap 2033

**The funding priorities and granting streams should be informed by and aligned to the sector’s agreed priorities as expressed in Roadmap 2033.**

#### What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of 3 grants streams under the CBP?

One of the main advantages of the CBP fund is that it provides a relevant opportunity where there are very few alternative grant avenues for stations to seek support for their core activity: broadcasting. Noting that some other opportunities require DGR status which only some stations have achieved.

In 2016, the CBF underwent a self-imposed review of its structure and governance systems and processes. The aim of the review was to determine what organisational structure, governance arrangements and funding model (funding allocations, grant programs and grant categories) the CBF should adopt to meet the current and future needs of the community broadcasting sector. It was through this process that the CBF shifted to a skills-based Board and adopted the current grant programs and Committee structure.<sup>26</sup>

At the time of implementation, it was agreed that an independent review would be undertaken to consider any further refinements required. A review of the 2016 restructure was undertaken in 2022.<sup>27</sup> The review process involved extensive research and consultation, bringing together strategic insight on best-practice grantmaking, analysis of the evidence base of our materials and stakeholder insights. The review was very positive about the restructure and recommended a series of evolutionary refinements to our governance and operations, including encouraging us to continue our work in enhancing our

---

<sup>25</sup> Roadmap 2033, p.22; Community media destinations: spotlight on training (2023); Communities, connections, and careers: building personal and professional networks through community media work. (2024).

<sup>26</sup> The CBF shifted from 9 Grants Advisory Committees and 36 grant programs, to 3 Advisory Committees and 3 grant programs (Sector Investment, Development & Operations and Content grants (including support for Specialist Radio Programming).

<sup>27</sup> Tony Grybowski and Associates & Think: Insight & Advice; *Review of the 2016 Community Broadcasting Foundation Restructure* (August, 2022). Available at <https://cbf.org.au/documents/2023/03/report-on-review-of-2016-cbf-restructure.pdf/>; Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF), *CBF response to the Review of the 2016 Community Broadcasting Foundation Restructure report and recommendations* (October, 2022). Available at <https://cbf.org.au/documents/2023/03/cbf-response-to-the-2016-restructure-review-report.pdf/>.

evaluation and performance frameworks to support the sector’s sustainability and growth. Most of the 21 recommendations were adopted or adopted with variation. A summary of the status of our implementation of the adopted recommendations has been provided above under the CBP Evaluation section.

In 2023, in the first phase of the Australian Government’s Review into the Sustainability of Community Broadcasting, Social Research Centre undertook an independent evaluation of the Community Broadcasting Program, which found that overall the grant making processes were found to be mostly efficient and effective, while also identifying opportunities for improvement. The SRC report identified that there were key areas of unmet need and found that the sector was largely satisfied with the application process, with some need identified for more streamlined, accessible application process with a more direct focus on funding objectives and outcomes, particularly for core operational funding.<sup>28</sup>

The CBF’s grant programs were designed to be:

- **Applicant focused and demand driven.** Applicants are able to ask for funding support for their needs and priorities, while also supporting a more strategic approach to supporting capability and capacity that secures a resilient, sustainable and long-term future.
- **Most funding opportunities are not platform specific.** Support is provided for community broadcasting through radio, television and other distribution platforms.
- **Grant applications are assessed by community broadcasting peers.** Our volunteers are ‘of and from’ the community broadcasting sector, appointed through open nomination processes.

Our strategic approach is to:

- **Build capability and capacity that secures a long-term future** through strategic and long-term thinking, and a focus on funding a resilient and sustainable sector, encouraging grantees to develop and embed strong governance and practice that strengthens inclusivity and accessibility.
- **Support participation and voice that creates connection and belonging throughout our diverse community** by granting for positive impact, supporting community media organisations to be engaged with and reflective of their community and supporting diverse communities access to information, cultural and local content that enriches communities and enables active participation in community life.
- **Partner and influence that champions community broadcasting** by building awareness of the sector’s value and impact, purposeful collaborations and partnerships that deliver positive and meaningful change, sector advocacy and demonstrable impact by capturing, understanding and communicating the value and positive impact community broadcasting creates.

---

<sup>28</sup> Social Research Centre, Evaluation of the Community Broadcasting Program: Final Report, August 2023, published 21 June 2024. Available at <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/evaluation-of-cbp-final-report-june2024.pdf>.

Our grant programs include:

- **Development & Operations grants** that support a resilient, thriving community media sector that reflects, amplifies and enriches the ever-evolving communities of Australia;
- **Content grants** that increase and diversify the voices heard in Australian media by supporting the creation of compelling content;
- **Specialist Radio Programming grants** that assist with the development, production and broadcast costs of specialist radio programming content to meet the needs of particular communities – including First Nations community broadcasting programming, and;
- **Sector Investment grants** that support sector co-ordination activities and large-scale projects that are of benefit to the wider sector.

Our trusted and impartial funding process is aimed at strengthening media diversity and social cohesion through community media organisations that enrich people's lives with a diversity of choice in our media producing local stories, news and cultural content reflecting the many perspectives, people and communities that make up Australia. As a result, audiences hear diverse stories and local information that helps give people a deeper, more connected and cohesive sense of place and the community they live in. Our support of independent, local and authentic voices in creating trusted news, information and cultural content builds community, and strengthens our society and democracy.

The robust peer assessment model we use to allocate our grants is respected by our stakeholders and is the exemplar independent granting model, delivering positive outcomes for community.

In our view, in the spirit of continuous improvement, while we are open to feedback and ongoing dialogue with the sector about how we can best meet its existing and emerging needs, we are unaware of any imperative to change the structure of the grant programs as they are designed to be flexible and responsive. However, acknowledging that we are investing in our own capacity to better understand the sector's emerging and future needs, and how we can respond to these needs, the detail within the grant program objectives and guidelines are reviewed and evolve from round to round and the CBF Outcomes and Evaluation Framework (in development, see below on *Outcomes and Evaluation Frameworks*) provides a mechanism for us to regularly review and evaluate the grant process to ensure its appropriateness and fit for purpose.

**What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of single-organisation and single year grants versus multi-organisation and multi-year grants?**

Whilst the CBF agrees that prioritising longer-term funding opportunities can foster security in the sector, that it is good grant-making practice and it aligns with the priority relating to 'strategic and longer-term thinking' in our CBF Strategic Plan, we struggle to balance longer-term funding opportunities within the current funding envelope which does not currently support the daily needs of the sector.

The CBF Grants Advisory Committees are reluctant to ‘tie-up’ funding in multi-year grants whilst the current funding provision is so competitive - and this reluctance, together with long-term under resourcing of the sector has, over time, contributed to an organisational practice of shorter-term granting. Multi-year funding investment needs further consideration with more fit-for-purpose guidelines, outcomes maps and reporting methods associated. As mentioned, however, it is difficult to set and manage expectations of this within the current funding envelope.

The CBF therefore stresses the importance of ensuring that we have the flexibility to implement our responsibility to the sector in a manner that is responsive to the rapidly changing financial, technological, political and social climate of our time.

### Recommendation 4: Increase flexibility

**Maintain and extend flexibility within the granting process so that CBF can respond to changing contexts and evolving development of the sector.**

<p><b>What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of the consortium model, co-location, sharing infrastructure and network content?</b></p>
--

### We encourage collaborations

In the community broadcasting sector, many kinds of collaborations exist including formal, informal, creative, or focused on resourcing and capacity. At the CBF, we celebrate and support collaborative projects and programs in our granting because the opportunity they present the opportunity for efficient use of funding, maximise positive outcomes and strengthening of capacity and resilience.

Collaborations are a key priority of the *Grow our Capability* pillar of the Sector Roadmap 2033 - expanding collaboration to share resources for common practices. The strategy highlights the benefits of a shared approach to operational delivery, technical services, and leveraging economies of scale locally and regionally.

With an independent, grass-roots sector, made up of hundreds of organisations, it is very difficult to generalise about solutions to issues that may support sustainability and development. There are a number of examples where consortiums, co-locations, shared infrastructure and network content work well, but equally, there are examples where these approaches are not appropriate nor workable on the ground. Sharing technology and ‘back-end’ administrative functions may help (particularly smaller) stations, but we are cautious of policy that may diminish the local or community interest component of content – this content is what makes community broadcasting so unique and valuable.

Our funding approach is to encourage collaborations, where possible and relevant, noting that ‘connected’ is one of the key elements of station resilience, ‘where developing and fostering relationships that can be leveraged to enhance station outcomes and impact’.<sup>29</sup>

The following case studies demonstrate the potential of collaborations and partnerships.

## Sector Investment grants

### Australian Community Television Alliance

We recently provided a grant to support the Australian Community Television Alliance (ACTA) to undertake a project to enhance the programming department computers and play-out software at Channel 31 Melbourne and Channel 44 Adelaide. The upgrade will transform how the two stations work together ‘behind the scenes’ by working towards a concept of centralisation of playout and broadcast systems, enabling either station to manage programming play-out and scheduling, enhancing service quality, reliability and redundancy, ensuring efficient operations across the two organisations and enabling future growth. The project concept is an example of how collaborations between stations can deliver cost-effective solutions that also drive innovation and provide more resources for local programming production.

## Development & Operations grants

### Collie Community Broadcasting Association

The Collie Community Broadcasting Association (CCBA) has taken the lead with their Collaborative Technician salary for seven stations in South West WA project. This project has been allocated a multiyear grant from the CBF for the 2024/25 to 2026/27 period to support the establishment of this initiative and build capacity into the future. The group identified the need for collaborative technical support to oversee current and future technical requirements at the seven stations that have formed the collaboration. The project is to support the employment and training of a technician because technical professionals in the community radio sector are currently nearing retirement age. The project will also develop technical sustainability and fix technical failures that could see the participating stations off air for a period. This model also addresses the financial burden of maintaining technical capabilities by creating a shared solution.

To ensure clarity in the processes of the collaboration, a Project Management Committee was formed and a Committee Charter was devised.

### 8CCC radio station in Alice Springs

8CCC has undertaken significant work in recent years to build its resilience so that it can support a vibrant Alice Springs community – nurturing local music, building employment pathways, and delivering local news and information. This foundation has enabled 8CCC to develop strong regional partnerships and collaborations. These include hosting PAW Media Remote First Nations Broadcasters in their studio and collaborating with PAW on outside broadcasts, establishing local news content sharing capabilities with

---

<sup>29</sup> Draft CBF Outcomes Framework



The Wire and partnerships and collaborations with local businesses and organisations, Bendigo Bank, Multicultural Community Services and the Chamber of Commerce.

### *Content grants*

#### *The Wire*

The Wire is a long-standing example of an exemplary news and current affairs program that relies heavily on a collaborative approach. Currently the host stations 2SER and 4EB work together to co-ordinate, resource and develop the program with 4ZZZ, 3ZZZ and Radio Adelaide producing the program across Australia. 2BAY FM in Byron Bay is a contributor station to The Wire providing a unique regional perspective. In the 2024/25 year, The Wire will expand collaboration and content sharing with at least 6 additional broadcasters via the CBAA's News Network and CAAMA radio broadcasts the live program to more than 200 stations each weekday. The Wire has been funded a multiyear grant from the CBF for the 2024/25 to 2026/27 period to strengthen the foundations into the future.

<b>What are the advantages/disadvantages of sector-coordinated initiatives to assist with governance, strategic and business planning?</b>
--

Roadmap 2033 identifies a strategic priority for the community broadcasting sector to grow its capability by investing in its people to attract and develop a skilled, capable workforce. This workforce includes development of governance capability – an area that underpins much of the sector's success and stability. Our funding programs encourage grantees to develop and embed strong governance and practice that strengthens inclusivity and accessibility.

We fund nationally coordinated training that aims to develop the sector's governance, strategic and business acumen, but the workforce development strategy and other areas of focus identified in Roadmap 2033, including leadership development for emerging leaders and pathways for young people are interrelated and all deserving of increased support.

The CBAA's funding submission identifies initiatives and investment to develop the workforce development strategy. In our view this is a high priority for investment in the sector.

Importantly, a further strategic objective to grow capability is to support broadcasters with strong, effective and collaborative sector organisations. As intermediary organisations, sector organisations require support to ensure they have the capacity to deliver their unique portfolio of initiatives, including assisting stations to develop their capacity to effectively plan and support good governance, strategic and business practices.

In our experience, whilst not without its complexities at the grass roots level, exploring the possibility of introducing Directors Fees where they are not in place could be a mechanism to lift governance standards across the community broadcasting sector. It may contribute to a sector-wide uplift in economic and business acumen at the governance-level. This approach may, for example, help to attract and retain First Nations people with appropriate governance skills and qualifications as such individuals are under demand across Government and broader industry where paid Directorships are standard. It is possible

the absence of Directors Fees in community broadcasting and media organisations may be a contributing factor to creating barriers to involvement by skilled board directors, particularly those that are people with disabilities, First Nations peoples, people with cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people of lower socio-economic backgrounds. We are not aware of any research that identifies the take-up of Directors Fees within broadcasting and media organisations. Structured sector-wide access to the available company directors' courses would also go a long way to addressing governance skills and capabilities.

## Outcomes and Evaluation Frameworks

### Which quantitative and/or qualitative outcomes should the framework consider?

The community broadcasting sector aims to develop a broad Outcomes and Evaluation Framework to measure the impacts of Roadmap 2033. This collaborative work is being led by the CBAA and aims to align outcomes at all levels of the sector, CBF and Government. There are likely to be other outcomes frameworks developed by and for organisations and parts of the sector that should also align with Roadmap 2033. As the sector develops these outcomes frameworks, it is keenly observing other relevant frameworks including the Australian Government’s Measuring What Matters framework and the Australian Communications and Media Authority’s Media Diversity Measurement Framework.

To measure the outcomes and impact of the funding we distribute, the CBF is in the process of developing its own Outcomes Framework, to underpin our organisational Monitoring & Evaluation Framework.

The CBF Outcomes Framework incorporates the key community broadcasting sector outcomes identified in [Roadmap 2033](#), the [Station Resilience model](#), the CBF’s strategic plan and the objectives of CBF’s grant programs. It uses a Theory of Change approach to capture how our activities aim to achieve the intended outcomes, and in turn contribute to broader media diversity and social inclusion impacts.

The CBF Board aims to finalise the CBF Outcomes Framework in November 2024. The Framework will be refined and updated over time, as evaluation findings become available to clarify and confirm, or prompt amendment of, our outcomes and the causal relationships between them. There are a number of areas where CBF’s intended outcomes and impacts are consistent with those of other sector stakeholders - therefore we are keen to consult and collaborate with the sector to ensure our shared outcomes and impacts are well understood and agreed, collectively owned, and can be expressed and measured in common terms.

*We propose that this initial CBF Outcomes Framework, and elements of our Monitoring & Evaluation Framework, provides a well-progressed conceptual model that could be further refined in consultation with key stakeholders to become a shared CBP Outcomes and Evaluation Framework.*

### Recommendation 5: Work with us and the sector to develop a CBP Outcomes and Performance Measurement Framework

The CBP Outcomes and Performance Measurement Framework should

- Engage sector stakeholders to collaboratively design and own the key collective outcomes, impacts and measures that will also form part of the Roadmap Evaluation Framework (*soon to be developed*).
- Draw on the CBF’s Outcomes and Evaluation Frameworks (*draft in progress*).

## Diverse outcomes for diverse stakeholder groups

The CBP contributes to outcomes for multiple stakeholder groups. The key beneficiary groups include (but may not be limited to):

- **Grantee organisations**, including stations and sector organisations.
- **Participants in grantee projects**, including broadcasters (staff and volunteers), students, members of SROs, and community or creative partners.
- **The sector as a whole** – i.e. multiple stations, broadcasters, and/or sector organisations collectively.
- **Communities and audiences**, including the local communities of stations, audiences including key ‘community of interest’ cohorts, and the wider Australian community.

Within these groups there is wide and rich diversity – including unique communities of interest, cultures and languages, religions or beliefs; geographical and local characteristics; and organisational characteristics including size, income, staff and volunteer profiles, and partnerships (and for sector organisations, even more fundamental aspects such as purpose and governance structures).

*A shared CBP Outcomes and Evaluation Framework should identify outcomes for all these key stakeholder groups, including individuals, organisations and at sector or system level. The whole sector should ‘see themselves’ in the framework.*

The key intended outcomes identified in our Framework can be summarised as including (but not necessarily limited to):

- **Social inclusion outcomes** especially for those who are not well-represented in media, including:
  - Community participation opportunities through volunteering or other involvement with broadcasting
  - A sense of connectedness for audiences and discovering further opportunities through broadcast content or information.
- **Media diversity outcomes** through the production of:
  - Speciality content, cultural preservation and celebration, music, arts, nurturing creative arts and economies
  - Independent news/analysis, including with a local focus, and emergency information for community resilience and wellbeing
  - Content produced by and for people from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups.
- **Capability and employment outcomes** including skill development opportunities, employment and volunteering pathways, and confidence building.
- **Growing awareness and audience uptake of community media**
- **Contribution to broader social, cultural and economic impacts** for communities including direct and indirect benefits, and social return on investment, as highlighted in Appendix A.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Precipitous economic benefits (Figure 2 venn diagram).

These outcomes for audiences, communities and participants are enabled and multiplied by several important interim outcomes which we aim to influence at station and sector level, including through our Sector Investment grants to sector organisations who play a key role here:

- **Station resilience** – which we understand to comprise 6 key aspects, and was highlighted in the CBP Evaluation (2023) as a priority for granting and outcomes evaluation:
  - Representative – clearly understanding and responding to its audiences interests and habits
  - Well-led – unified, flexible governance, and strategically aligned culturally safe operational practices
  - Connected – relationships that enhance station outcomes and impact
  - Appropriately resourced – adequate resources from diverse sources
  - Future aware – informed about and planning for future conditions, and able to respond early to warning signs of crisis
  - Learning – leveraging and sharing knowledge and seeking out new approaches.
- **Contemporary and fit for purpose platforms and systems**, which support quality broadcasting across multiple platforms, respond to changing audience preferences and behaviour, and are scaled for greater efficiency
- **Strong, effective and collaborative sector organisations** with the expertise, capacity and resources to innovate and partner to unlock greater capacity and efficiency across the sector.

*Development of a shared CBP outcomes framework should consider all the above outcomes, as well as:*

- *Align with Roadmap 2033 and its associated Evaluation Framework (soon to be developed).*
- *Incorporate the Station Resilience Model and an associated suite of indicators and measures that enable efficient monitoring of station resilience.*
- *Where possible, align with Measuring What Matters and associated indicators and measures.*
- *Identify the most important outcomes upon which to prioritise measurement and evaluation efforts and resources.*
- *Retain some flexibility to explore unintended outcomes.*

## Inter-connected and context-specific outcomes

CBF's initial draft Outcomes Framework envisages three levels of outcomes over time:

- 1) **Short term grant outcomes** - the direct results of grant-funded projects or initiatives;
- 2) **Medium to longer term outcomes at station or sector level** - which may flow on from short-term outcomes, or be directly funded through larger, multi-year or Sector Investment grants;
- 3) **Broader impacts at community and audience levels** - to which our grants are one of many contributing factors.

We understand that the short-term outcomes of our grants (resulting from grantees' successful implementation of funded projects or initiatives) can then unlock further outcomes or flow-on benefits, that in turn contribute to broader media diversity and social inclusion impacts.

For instance, a grant to a station for salary or core operational support expands the station's capacity to engage and partner with its local community. A grant to a sector organisation for delivery of training or a conference upskills the staff, volunteers or Committee members of the stations that attend.<sup>31</sup> These outcomes should in turn strengthen station resilience in various ways, and thereby contribute to new or multiplied impacts for audiences and communities.

Conversely, some of our larger grants aim to directly support medium to longer-term station and sector-level outcomes, particularly through the Sector Investment program which is expanding.

At the same time, we recognise that in some cases, a grant for operational costs may simply enable a station to continue broadcasting. In these cases, the ultimate impact may be simply a continuation of the vital contribution that station it is already making in its community, rather than something new or enhanced. The CBP Evaluation (2023) noted that while many positive outcomes and impacts of grant-funded initiatives were identified by stations, many continued to rely on the CBF for core funding year after year; for many of these stations, relatively small grants and limited other resources (financial and human) are consumed by day-to-day operations, leaving them stuck in a 'catch-22' situation, unable to invest in building their capacity and financial security to a sustainable level from which they can develop strategically and grow.

*The CBP Outcomes Framework should:*

- *Consider short, medium and longer-term outcomes as well as broader impacts, and the causal relationships between them.*
- *Recognise that the extent, type or sequence of outcomes achieved will vary amongst grantees, and allow for a rich diversity of outcomes according to the specific needs and context of each grantee's organisation or community.*
- *Recognise and examine the role of station/organisational resilience and capacity as key intermediate outcomes that are likely to influence the extent to which other outcomes and impacts are achieved.*

## Quantitative and qualitative data

*Rather than defining certain outcomes themselves as being either quantitative or qualitative, we suggest that a shared outcomes framework should (wherever possible) draw on a mix of quantitative and qualitative data in order to describe, measure and evaluate the key outcomes and factors influencing their achievement.*

Capturing and synthesising qualitative data (for example, about peoples' experiences, observations and reflections around outcomes) is vital for understanding quantitative results in more depth. It is especially

---

<sup>31</sup> Community media destinations: spotlight on training (2023).

insightful for learning about what helps or constrains the achievement of outcomes in different contexts – it provides the ‘why’, not just the ‘what’. At the same time, quantitative data remains vital for keeping qualitative findings or themes in perspective.

Our organisational Monitoring & Evaluation Framework will have an increased focus on gathering robust qualitative data, to complement the substantial quantitative data we hold. We look forward to working with the sector and the Department to develop a Performance Management Framework for the new Funding Deed, informed by Roadmap 2033, its outcomes frameworks and our own Outcomes and Evaluation Frameworks.

### How can services be supported to collect and report on data?

*Stations and SROs will benefit from a range of funded, collaboratively designed and scalable capacity building supports over a number of years, to enable them to:*

- *Design and implement outcomes measurement and data collection that aligns with our shared outcomes framework and meets our reporting requirements;*
- *More effectively use this data for ongoing organisational learning, improvement and decision-making, and demonstrating their impact within their own communities; and*
- *Participate in a way that is practical and appropriately scaled for each organisation, considering their size, staffing and resourcing constraints.*

As highlighted in the CBP Evaluation (2023)<sup>32</sup>, historically our grants data has provided limited insight into the outcomes and impact of our grants. In recent years we have requested more structured outcomes-focused data and reporting from our grantees, however our recent review of grantee reports suggests that grantee capability and capacity in outcomes measurement and reporting varies widely. While some stations and sector organisations have well developed understanding and practice, for many, there is a need to strengthen foundational knowledge around outcomes, as well as some technical basics of measurement and data collection.

In line with Preskill and Boyle’s (2008)<sup>33</sup> model of evaluation capacity building, we suggest that in order to effectively and comprehensively measure the CBP’s outcomes and maximise its impact, stations and SROs will require capacity building support that:

- Is coordinated across the system, organisational and individual levels;
- Nurtures a culture of evaluative thinking and learning, beyond just reporting; and
- Uses multi-modal approaches to building capability (i.e. not just training or a template).

---

<sup>32</sup> SRC report [Evaluation of CBP Final Report.pdf](#).

<sup>33</sup> Hallie Preskill & Shanelle Boyle, A Multidisciplinary Model of Evaluation Capacity Building, *American Journal of Evaluation* (2008) 29.

As system-level actors, the CBAA, CBF and the Department have a role in motivating stations and sector organisations to collect and report the required outcomes data and making this as straightforward as possible in our grant funding and acquittal reporting processes. However, we should also play a role in creating and resourcing an enabling environment for sector organisations and stations to build their organisational capacity and processes, and the knowledge and capabilities of their people – not just in data collection and reporting, but also analysis, interpretation and ongoing use of data to drive effective management decision making, community engagement and strategic planning. Using data and analytics has been identified as a key skill gap by many stations in relation to their broadcasting platforms and listener data; building knowledge and capability in this area is vital for strengthening community media organisations.

For many smaller and less well-resourced stations, significant time and staffing constraints mean they have little opportunity to engage with data collection or reporting, let alone capacity building. Therefore, data collection requirements and capability building supports must be carefully designed in consultation with the stations and sector organisations they aim to support, in order to remove barriers to participation and leverage existing processes and strengths. Offering flexible, scalable ways to learn and contribute data will be key, as not all stations will be able (nor should they be expected) to participate to the same extent.

### What could capacity building support look like?

In order to support improved data collection and evaluative practice across such a diverse sector, we suggest a modular mix of evaluation capacity building supports will need to be provided sector-wide over a number of years, potentially including some or all of the following:

- User-friendly data collection and management systems/platforms – which could be centrally managed on behalf of stations with limited capacity
- A simple set of common data collection tools and process guidance for measuring key outcomes across organisations (e.g. such as audience engagement, aspects of station resilience, member satisfaction, etc.)
- Structured, accessible training, where appropriate
- Flexible and responsive expert mentoring and advice to support implementation and troubleshooting, and build confidence
- Peer learning through a community of practice or similar model, where organisations can share real examples of their challenges, solutions, and ideas
- Facilitated sharing and discussion of results and learnings – to further encourage cultural change, and to build the sector's knowledge base.

The above suggested modes of capacity building are early ideas only, and further discussion with key stakeholders is needed to identify appropriate capacity building modes and opportunities to leverage existing strengths and processes. We also anticipate that the design and delivery of supports could involve external subject matter experts as well as existing sector capacity building organisations (i.e. sector organisations, and potentially CBF). This means that collectively, the sector organisations may have a dual role in evaluation capacity building – some as participants, others as providers, and some possibly as both.



## Sector-level coordination and resourcing for effective measurement

*Finally, we suggest an additional component of sector-level resourcing and coordination is required, to ensure a consistent design and approach is taken across key elements of a shared CBP measurement framework and other sector-wide measurement and evaluation initiatives that are currently or soon to be in development:*

- *The Roadmap Evaluation Framework.*
- *The Station Resilience model which was highlighted in the CBP Evaluation (2023) as a granting priority and has useful potential to be measured by stakeholders at various levels – including individual stations, SROs, and collectively across the sector, as well as within the context of CBP. We understand that the CBAA is developing a tool to help assess how stations are positioned in their progress towards station resilience.*

These initiatives will provide substantial valuable data for CBP outcomes measurement if the outcomes and metrics used across the sector are agreed and consistent – but if not, there is a risk of substantial re-work, inefficiency, and muddy results that cannot be aggregated or usefully monitored over time. Therefore, working together with key sector organisations and the Department to design and pilot these components will be in the whole sector’s interest, and CBF is ready and willing to participate in its design.

## Priority Area 2: Legislative and Regulatory Issues

**What are the impacts of current licensing conditions on your organisation’s sustainability?**

**What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of introducing *community participation tiers* for remote, rural, regional and metropolitan services?**

**What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of including social media reach and listener data as part of community participation?**

The CBF does not have detailed commentary on these questions and defers to the CBAA’s submission as it speaks to the perspectives of the sector.

**What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of introducing *fixed-term programs* to train and retain paid staff in the sector?**

The CBF supports training activities across the sector via funding provided under the National Training fund (\$767k per annum) and the Industry Capacity and Skills development fund (\$600k per annum). The majority of this funding is provided to the Community Media Training Organisation (CMTO), who as the sector’s Registered Training Organisation (RTO) administer training programs across the sector on technical and broadcasting skills and management, governance and leadership skills development. Station level grants are provided through our Development & Operations grants program for those organisations that have relationships or partnerships with other RTOs.

The current training funding provision places limitations on the number of training places that can be achieved in future years due to increasing costs associated with administering and delivering training programs. Sector capacity in this area is further hampered by the challenges of retention in the sector. This is not solely down to a lack of training functionality across the sector but rather the ability of the sector to appropriately remunerate staff in comparison to our commercial counterparts. As previously noted, the community sector is a ripe and viable training ground for those embarking on a media career<sup>34</sup> but once trained, many participants move on to other roles in the industry where competitive salaries and development opportunities are more readily available.

With that, training is not the sole solution but rather, a solution focused workplace development plan has been identified as a key sector strategic priority within Roadmap 2033. This plan needs to consider such things as remuneration, training and retention strategies and we hope to work together with the sector and the Government on this plan that we believe is a key consideration in the sector’s sustainability into the future.

---

<sup>34</sup> Anderson, Heather, Bridget Backhaus, Charlotte Bedford, and Poppy de Souza. 2021. “Community Media Destinations: Spotlight on Creative Industries.” Brisbane: Griffith University. <https://apo.org.au/node/313962>; Community media destinations: spotlight on training (2023); Communities, connections, and careers: building personal and professional networks through community media work. (2024).

With that, we would caution against burdening the sector with additional red tape or restrictive compliance requirements attached to training programs – either at an organisational or individual level. RTOs are already subject to a strict and robust compliance processes and any additional requirements could lessen their ability to effectively scope, build and deliver on the sector’s already complex training requirements. Indeed, the sector has already lost one RTO who because of the compliance requirements chose to give up their registration status and focus solely on media training opportunities for members of their community (i.e. how to address media and respond to media queries).

The CBF is about to embark on an evaluation of the sector’s training programs, in collaboration with the CMTO. We hope that this evaluation will give us a forward focus for how support for training can be more effectively utilised into the future. At this stage, we believe that consolidation of training funding allocations and building in more flexibility in its requirements would allow the sector to address the training needs as they arise.

**What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of the current sponsorship limit and/or process?**

No comment. We defer to the CBAA’s response for sector views on this topic.

## Priority Area 3: First Nations funding and licensing

The First Nations broadcasting and media sector is grounded in the key principles of First Nations self-empowerment and self-determination, equity and equality. It provides primary and essential services for many First Nations Australians and has great potential to further improve First Nations people’s lives. Organisations in the sector have grown to realise their potential to inform communities, provide relevant training and employment with dignity, to showcase and develop the creativity of First Nations Australians and to help maintain cultures and practices.

Ultimately, the creativity, connectivity and capability of First Nations broadcasting and media must be leveraged to provide access to stories and information relevant to First Nations Australians – and that would create meaningful change.

In addressing questions about the funding and licensing needs of First Nations communities, the CBF defers to and supports the positions put forward by First Nations Media Australia (FNMA) via their [Calls to Action](#).

We recognise the vital role that First Nations media plays in preserving and promoting Indigenous cultures, languages, and stories. First Nations media is a prime example of empowerment and self-determination delivering on Close the Gap outcomes – and moreso – the broad social, cultural, economic and societal outcomes of First Nations excellence.

We endorse FNMA's recommendations regarding the funding needs and preferences of the First Nations media sector, acknowledging their expertise and leadership in advocating for a future where Indigenous voices continue to thrive and resonate across the Australian media landscape.

### What are the main funding, licensing and revenue challenges; and how might they be addressed?

We defer to the FNMA Calls to Action and the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group interim report. The principle of First Nations self-determination should be the guiding principle for all effort towards reforms that address First Nations funding, licensing and revenue challenges. This principle together with First Nations self-empowerment must be realised by ensuring that the Government and any other organisation working to support First Nations media genuinely engages and *co-designs* reforms with the First Nations media sector.

### What should the funding priorities be for the IBMP from 2025 onwards?

The First Nations media sector has identified its funding priorities in their [Calls to Action](#). These are also endorsed by the CBAA through their funding submission. The CBF defers to these positions and refers to [Roadmap 2033](#) for guidance on broad sector priorities that also apply to First Nations media.

### **Which funding model and/or grants structure would best support the First Nations sector?**

As stated previously, the CBF endorses the position of First Nations Media Australia in relation to this question and provides this information as ideas for consideration and further discussion.

The CBF needs-based model of granting is independent and based on best practice grant-making principles with a sector-based peer review function at the heart of the process. This model could be considered as an alternative to the existing rolling contractual model utilised, as we understand it, by the IBMP.

There are several management and governance structures that could also be considered as models that could work within the principles of First Nations self-determination, incorporating a First Nations governed Board to make funding policy and allocation decisions, with the option for efficiency and support provided by back-end administration undertaken by the CBF.

Models include:

- The SBS/NITV model where NITV is its own decision-making entity within the broader SBS organisation. NITV has its own leadership team and makes its own creative and editorial decisions but leverages the broader infrastructure and business operations of SBS.
- Creative Australia as the leading Arts granting body in Australia are in the process of setting up a separate First Nations Board of Directors that will oversee governance for their grant programs and have delegated funding allocation powers for funding relating to First Nations communities whilst utilising the management, operational and granting structures that exist within Creative Australia.
- The Disability Media Australia (DMA) and Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) management agreement whereby each organisation has its own separate and independent Board of Directors but is managed by the one CEO. This provides independence of strategy and purpose for each organisation but leverages the operational, advocacy resources and relationships of the peak body for the benefit of community broadcasters with a Radio Reading / Disability community of interest.

The CBF understands that strengthening operational funding is a core concern for FNMA and we look forward to further dialogue with them and with Government to assist in the development of a funding model and governance structure that will deliver on FNMA's Calls to Action.

### **Which Australian Government department could administer the IBMP?**

This is a matter for Government and for First Nations media organisations to comment on.

Of note, the CBF administers a First Nations fund that has distinct objectives. If First Nations funds are consolidated in future, we caution against change that may impact the outcomes of this fund, particularly

for First Nations programming on non-Indigenous stations, organisations that have no existing funding relationship with NIAA.

**Which organisation could distribute/make decisions on First Nations funding?**

The principle of self-determination is our primary concern.

In our dialogues to date with FNMA, we have heard that they do not want the CBF to make decisions on IBMP First Nations funding. They have indicated that a First Nations-controlled entity would be the only appropriate step to make decisions on First Nations funding. They have indicated that such an entity should have an independent, skills-based Board, with scrupulous attention to managing conflicts of interest.

We are open to dialogue with First Nations media and Government about how the CBF might be in a position to provide assistance in the transition.

**What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of introducing a licence type for First Nations broadcasters over the current licensing model?**

We defer to FNMA's position on this matter. If there should be a change to First Nations licensing, we would aim to work with Government to ensure that 'grandfathering' of eligibility was achieved in order for First Nations broadcasters to continue to be able to receive CBF grants.

**How would the First Nations licence differ from existing licence types?**

We defer to FNMA's position on this matter.

## Conclusion

The CBF has welcomed the opportunity to have input into the Community Broadcasting Sector Sustainability Review. While 'sustainability' is closely connected to the community broadcasting sector's financial security, it is important to note that the sector has historically received public funding on the premise that a robust community broadcasting sector is in the public interest and is a critical community and cultural asset in a healthy democratic environment.

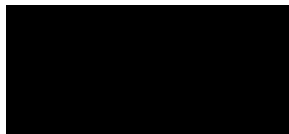
Therefore, in our submission we have urged the adoption of Roadmap 2033 as the guiding framework for the community broadcasting sector's future. By aligning our efforts with the strategic vision outlined in Roadmap 2033, we can collectively build capacity and capability and work towards an even more vibrant and sustainable sector. In this connection, we reiterate the following recommendations for the Government's consideration in planning for the sustainability of the community broadcasting sector:

- Consolidate funding lines
- Invest in the sector
- Be guided by Roadmap 2033
- Increase flexibility
- Work with us and the sector to develop a CBP Outcomes and Performance Measurement Framework

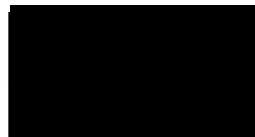
Adequate funding, strategic alignment, and increased flexibility are essential to achieving the long-term goals of growth, innovation, and deeper community connection. Through our work administering the CBP, we see the great potential of the sector's impact in local communities as expressed through the many grant applications that we are unable to support due to limitations on the funding envelope, not through lack of merit in the proposals.

Addressing the sector's capability and capacity gaps will also ensure that the sector can realise its full potential to maximise the benefit to the broader community. Furthermore, developing a shared CBP outcomes framework will ensure that our collective impact is both measurable and aligned with the sector's broader objectives.

Together, these actions will enable the community broadcasting sector to thrive, enriching communities, cultural identities and a sense of unity across Australia.



**Ian Hamm**  
Community Broadcasting Foundation  
President



**Jo Curtin**  
Community Broadcasting Foundation  
Chief Executive Officer

# Appendix A

We provide the following five sets of contextual information to assist DITRDCA with background that may assist in the Sustainability Review:

1. Regional Australia: Broad Trends and Challenges for Regional Radio Stations
2. Programming for a diverse Australia
3. Community radio overcomes the Tyranny of Distance challenges in Australia
4. Economic benefits of Community Broadcasting, a precis
5. Sustainability and community participation



# 1. Regional Australia: Broad Trends and Challenges for Regional Radio Stations

Regional Australia is experiencing significant demographic, economic, and technological changes that are shaping the landscape for community broadcasting. Key trends include population shifts, economic diversification, and the increasing penetration of digital technologies. Population growth in regional areas has been bolstered by internal migration from metropolitan areas, driven by lifestyle changes and the availability of remote work options. Economically, regions are diversifying beyond traditional industries like agriculture and mining to include tourism, education, and renewable energy sectors. Furthermore, the digital divide is narrowing, with increasing internet accessibility enabling more digital engagement and content consumption in regional communities.

## Challenges for Regional Radio Stations

Despite these positive trends, regional radio stations face several unique challenges that can impact their operations and sustainability:

Regional radio stations often operate on modest budgets, relying heavily on community support and small grants. Limited financial resources constrain their ability to upgrade equipment, expand programming, or invest in staff training. Keeping pace with rapid technological changes can be challenging. Upgrading to digital broadcasting equipment and maintaining a robust online presence require significant investment, which is often beyond the reach of small regional stations. While regional communities may have a strong sense of local identity, engaging a diverse audience across different age groups and interests can be difficult. Regional stations must balance traditional broadcasting with new media platforms to retain and grow their listener base. Attracting and retaining skilled personnel is harder in regional areas compared to metropolitan counterparts.

## Efficiency and Impact of Regional Radio Stations

Despite these challenges, regional radio stations operate with remarkable efficiency and have a significant positive impact on their communities. Their ability to deliver high-quality, relevant content with limited resources is a testament to their resilience and community support. Here are a few reasons why their modest funding asks are justified given their major positive impacts:

Regional stations play a crucial role in fostering community engagement and social cohesion. They provide a platform for local voices, promote local events, and address issues specific to their communities, thereby strengthening regional identity and connectedness.

During natural disasters and emergencies, regional radio stations are indispensable. They provide timely and accurate information that can save lives and aid in disaster response and recovery efforts. Regional stations produce content that is specifically tailored to the interests and needs of their local audiences. This includes local news, cultural programming, and support for local artists and musicians, which are often overlooked by larger, metropolitan-focused broadcasters. These stations contribute to the local economy by providing jobs, supporting local businesses through advertising, and stimulating economic

activity through their operations and events. Regional radio stations are vital in preserving and promoting local cultures and languages, particularly in areas with indigenous communities. They help maintain cultural heritage and ensure diverse voices are heard.

Regional radio stations are indispensable assets to their communities, delivering substantial positive impacts with efficient use of modest funding. Addressing the challenges they face—through targeted funding, technological support, and strategic partnerships—can enhance their capacity to continue serving their communities effectively. Supporting these stations aligns with broader goals of regional development and social cohesion, underscoring the importance of sustained and adequate funding for their operations.

## 2. Programming for a diverse Australia

Australia's multicultural and multilingual population presents unique challenges and opportunities for the community broadcasting sector. To adequately serve all communities, additional funding is required to support multilingual programming and cultural representation. These efforts ensure that community broadcasters can effectively reach and engage with Australia's diverse population, fostering inclusion and social cohesion. Our needs differ markedly with those of many other advanced OECD economies that evidence less diversity and consequently have less diverse needs and requirements.

### Providing Multilingual Content

Catering to Australia's diverse population necessitates the provision of content in multiple languages. Community broadcasters need to produce or acquire content in various languages, which involves additional costs for translation, production, and specialised staff. For example, Melbourne's 3ZZZ community radio station broadcasts in over 70 languages, ensuring that many cultural groups have access to relevant and engaging content. This commitment to multilingual programming helps bridge language barriers and keeps communities informed and connected.

### Resource Requirements

Producing multilingual content requires significant resources. Translators, bilingual producers, and cultural consultants are essential to create accurate and culturally appropriate programming. While these additional costs can be substantial, the benefits of providing accessible content to non-English speaking communities are invaluable. It ensures that all Australians, regardless of language, can participate in community life and stay informed about local and national issues.

### Cultural representation: Reflecting Cultural Diversity

Ensuring that the cultural diversity of Australia is reflected in community broadcasting programming demands a broader range of content and outreach activities. Community broadcasters like Koori Radio in Sydney play a vital role in representing First Nations cultures, providing content that celebrates and preserves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. Such programming supports cultural pride and continuity, reinforcing the importance of diversity within the broader Australian community.

### *Community Engagement*

Engaging with various communities to understand their needs and preferences is crucial for effective programming. This involves organising community events, conducting surveys, and building relationships with cultural leaders and organisations. Community broadcasters often facilitate workshops and training sessions to empower local communities to produce their own content, further enhancing representation and participation. Community radio stations often promote and preserve local culture, which can attract tourism. The promotion of local festivals, traditions, and cultural sites through radio can lead to increased tourist visits, contributing to the local economy.

## Benefits of Diverse Programming

### *Social Cohesion*

Providing diverse programming promotes social cohesion by giving voice to underrepresented groups and fostering mutual understanding among different cultural communities. Community broadcasters play a critical role in facilitating dialogue and building bridges between various segments of society. This inclusive approach helps to reduce social isolation and promote a sense of belonging for all Australians.

### *Access to Vital Information*

Multilingual and culturally representative programming ensures that all communities have access to vital information, including news, health updates, and emergency announcements. This is particularly important in times of crisis when clear and accurate communication can save lives. By catering to the needs of diverse populations, community broadcasters enhance the overall resilience and well-being of their audiences.

Australia's multicultural and multilingual population requires community broadcasters to adopt a comprehensive and inclusive approach to programming. Additional funding is essential to support multilingual content production, cultural representation, and community engagement activities. These efforts ensure that all Australians, regardless of language or cultural background, have access to relevant and engaging content. Investing in diverse programming not only enriches the cultural fabric of Australia but also strengthens social cohesion and ensures that community broadcasting remains a vital and inclusive service for all.

### 3. Community radio overcomes the Tyranny of Distance challenges in Australia

Australia's vast landmass and low population density create unique challenges for the community broadcasting sector and communities at large. These challenges may be collectively referred to as the 'tyranny of distance,'<sup>35</sup> and necessitate investment in infrastructure and operational costs to ensure effective service delivery. Despite these challenges, the benefits of reaching rural and remote listeners are substantial and underscore the need for increased funding. What is most notable is that the sector appears to overcome the tyranny challenge better than most, with modest resources, well below the per square km resources invested in the UK and many other advanced OECD economies. Moreover, the sector assists other proximate and non-proximate sectors and industries overcome the tyranny of distance challenges.

Australia's community broadcasters cover extensive geographic areas with sparse populations. This requires more transmitters and infrastructure, which are costly to install and maintain. For example, community stations like 8CCC in Alice Springs need multiple transmitters to reach scattered populations across the Northern Territory and South Australia. Although this increases costs compared to a single transmitter in a densely populated urban area like Melbourne CBD, it ensures that remote communities stay connected and informed. It also connects small businesses to local listeners.

The infrastructure needed to support community broadcasting in these vast areas is not inconsequential. Transmitters, antennas, and satellite connections must be robust and widespread to cover the distances between communities. While the initial investments are needed and ongoing maintenance costs for such infrastructure are necessary, to provide continuous service across remote regions like the Kimberley and Pilbara, the SROI is significant. Reliable communication can significantly enhance community well-being and connects these otherwise geographically spread zones, enabling intra-regional trade and commerce, and promoting local community events and activities. This is critical given the relatively low levels of internet penetration and utilisation in these geographic territories.

#### Listener Reach

While sufficient investment in community radio is essential, particularly to fund core activities and infrastructure; the benefit of reaching isolated individuals and communities is invaluable. In urban areas, a single transmitter might reach hundreds of thousands of people, whereas, in remote regions, it serves a critical role for the thousands of residents within the locality, offering them essential news, emergency information, and cultural programming. Many of these listeners rely upon the radio service for much of their essential local information.

---

<sup>35</sup> Briscoe, Jo. *Collaboration despite the tyranny of distance*, Theatre and Performance Design 6.1-2 (2020): 147-155; Clyne, M., 1992. *Multilingualism research in Australia: Tyranny of distance and challenge of a new society*. In *Thirty Years of Linguistic Evolution* (p. 399). John Benjamins.

## Transportation and Logistics

Serving remote and rural areas involves operational expenses, including transportation costs for staff and equipment, increased fuel costs, and more frequent maintenance due to harsh environmental conditions. Remote broadcasters often need to travel long distances over difficult terrain. Staff frequently traverse vast areas to maintain equipment and deliver content. These individuals go to these lengths and logistical efforts to ensure that even the most isolated communities remain connected. The relatively modest quantum of investment needed from government to ensure the continuity of service are clearly worthwhile investments; investments in local communication and service delivery.

## Environmental Challenges

Australia's diverse climate, which includes extreme weather events, can affect broadcasting infrastructure. Harsh conditions can damage equipment and disrupt services, necessitating repairs and replacements. Despite these challenges, maintaining broadcasting services in remote areas ensures that vital information and emergency updates reach all listeners, contributing to community safety and resilience.

## Staff and Volunteer Retention

Attracting and retaining staff and volunteers in remote areas is challenging due to higher living costs and isolation. Nonetheless, community broadcasters make significant efforts to offer local employment opportunities and build a sense of community. These efforts ensure that stations can continue to operate effectively, providing a local voice and fostering community spirit. Providing sufficient supports to ensure that stations are able to continue to operate ensures that this goodwill is not lost, and viable upskilling continues to occur.

## Revenue streams

The revenue of community broadcasters is constrained by their limited ability to generate revenue through advertising and sponsorships, given the smaller audiences in rural and remote areas. Despite this, community broadcasters play a crucial role in promoting social cohesion and providing platforms for local voices, which are vital for maintaining community identity and solidarity. They also provide low-cost mechanisms for local vendors, merchants and business communities to share essential promotional information providing a hub for local trade and commerce. Community radio stations often promote and preserve local culture, which can attract tourism. The promotion of local festivals, traditions, and cultural sites through radio can lead to increased tourist visits, contributing to the local economy.<sup>36</sup>

## Community Engagement

Community broadcasters offer personalised and community-focused content that is invaluable for remote and rural populations. They provide a platform for local issues, cultural programming, and emergency information, which is essential for these communities. The commitment to serving remote areas ensures that all Australians, regardless of location, have access to important information and a

---

<sup>36</sup> Cammaerts, B. (2009). Community Radio in the West. *International Communication Gazette*, 71(8), 635-654.

sense of belonging. The tyranny of distance presents challenges for Australia's community broadcasting sector, but the benefits of reaching rural and remote listeners are substantial.

Community radio also presents significant 'spillover' benefits to other sectors and assists them in overcoming the challenge. Local radio facilitates trade and commerce, and local activity engagement, absent of local radio these opportunities would be underserved due to the tyranny of distance. Wide coverage areas, operational costs, upskilling require sufficient funding to ensure the continuity of service and the future of the sector. Increased financial support from the government and stakeholders is crucial to maintaining and expanding services, supporting cultural diversity, and ensuring that all Australians have access to vital information and community-oriented programming.

## 4. Economic benefits of Community Broadcasting, a precis

### The multifaceted economic benefits of the community broadcasting sector

Community radio plays an integral role in fostering social change, promoting local culture, and enhancing community cohesion. Beyond these social benefits, community radio significantly contributes to local and regional economies. The sector's contribution to the economy is diverse and the sector is critical to numerous stakeholder groups, beyond the listener communities and broadcast communities. Local businesses, creative industries and cultural communities (amongst others, see Figure 1) all rely upon the sector in various ways, and benefit from its presence.

FIGURE 1 – Community Broadcasting Stakeholder groups



This segment presents a non-exhaustive precis on the economic value of community broadcasting, referencing recent research and case studies.

### Employment Creation

Community radio stations generate direct employment opportunities for radio presenters, technicians, administrative staff, and journalists, particularly in areas with limited job opportunities. A study by Order (2015) in Australia evaluated the economic value of community radio in Perth. These stations not only provided direct employment but also created indirect jobs by requiring goods and services from local



businesses. The study highlighted that the economic impact varied based on personal motivations and station characteristics, underscoring the complex nature of community radio's economic contributions.<sup>37</sup>

Additionally, the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) found that community radio stations contribute significantly to local employment, with over 22,000 volunteers and 840 paid staff nationwide, further amplifying the economic impact through volunteerism and skill development.<sup>38</sup>

## Supporting Local Businesses

Community radio offers an affordable advertising platform for small businesses, which may not have the budget for more expensive advertising mediums. Community radio stations in the UK and Australia face operational and ethical challenges, particularly in terms of funding.<sup>39</sup> By providing targeted advertising options, community radio supports local businesses, contributing to local economic growth.<sup>40</sup>

Further evidence from the United States shows that community radio stations play a critical role in local economies. According to the National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB), local businesses benefit from the cost-effective advertising options provided by community radio, which helps them reach niche audiences and drive economic activity.<sup>41</sup>

## Enhancing Local Economies through Information Dissemination

Community radio stations play a crucial role in disseminating information that can enhance local economic activities. This includes broadcasting market prices, agricultural advice, job vacancies, and educational content.<sup>42</sup>

Community radio remains a vital source of information for local communities, contributing to economic development by improving access to critical information.<sup>43</sup> Community radio stations in rural areas have been found to provide essential information that boosts agricultural productivity and local trade,

---

<sup>37</sup> Order, S., 2015. Towards a contingency-based approach to value for community radio. *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 13(1-2), pp.121-138.

<sup>38</sup> Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA). (2019). *State of the Community Broadcasting Sector Report*. Community Broadcasting Association of Australia.

<sup>39</sup> Gordon, J., 2007. Community radio, funding and ethics. *The International Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 3(2), pp.23-40.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Huntsberger, Michael William, "The Emergence of Community Radio in the United States: A Historical Examination of the National Federation of Community Broadcasters, 1970 to 1990" (2007). Faculty Publications & Hermansky, Jillian, "Impact of Community Radio on Community Development in the United States" (2022). Capstone Collection.

<sup>42</sup> Gaynor, N., & O'Brien, A. (2012). Because it all begins with talk: community radio as a vital element in community development. *Community Development Journal*, 47(4), 436-447.

<sup>43</sup> Conrad, D. (2014). Deconstructing the community radio model: Applying practice to theory in East Africa. *Journalism*, 15(6), 773-789.

significantly contributing to economic development.<sup>44</sup> In Australia, the community radio sector has been found to foster local culture and community engagement with community radio providing a platform for local content production – a significant medium for the dissemination of critical local information.<sup>45</sup>

## Promoting Social Cohesion and Economic Resilience

Community radio fosters social cohesion by providing a platform for dialogue and community participation, leading to more resilient economies. For example, community radio has been found to empower underrepresented communities through information, education, and civic engagement.<sup>46</sup> The economic benefits of this are evident through advertising revenue and its role in sustaining operations, contributing to a stable economic environment essential for sustainable development.<sup>47</sup>

The benefits of social inclusion and cohesion of community radio for minority groups is well-established in that it fosters a sense of community and economic resilience.

In Australia, community radio in non-metropolitan areas has enhanced social capital by fostering volunteerism and civic engagement, particularly among younger volunteers.<sup>48</sup>

## Cultural Preservation and Tourism Promotion

Community radio has the potential to contribute to positive social change by preserving and promoting local culture within local communities, thereby attracting tourism. The non-commercial, participatory nature of community radio helps preserve local culture, making it an attractive destination for tourists, thereby boosting local businesses and contributing to economic growth.<sup>49</sup>

Community radio stations have also been found to play a crucial role in promoting local festivals and cultural events, contributing to the local economy.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Deloitte Access Economics. (2023). Connecting Communities Report 2023: The Economic and Social Contribution of Commercial Radio & Audio in Australia. Commissioned by Commercial Radio & Audio. Retrieved from Commercial Radio Australia.

<sup>45</sup> Forde, S., Meadows, M. E., & Foxwell-Norton, K. (2003). Community radio and local culture: an Australian case study. *Communications*, 28(2), 231-252.

<sup>46</sup> Krishnan, B., & Hemmige, B. D. (2023). The Role of Community Radio in Gender-Based Development. *Proceeding International Conference on Science and Engineering*.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Vuuren, K. V. (2002). Beyond the Studio: A Case Study of Community Radio and Social Capital. *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture and Policy*, 103, 94-108.

<sup>49</sup> Hopkins, K. (2022). The Cultural Work of Community Radio. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*, 29(2), 491-493.

<sup>50</sup> Hart, J. W. (1992). Community Radio: Potential for Social Work in Engaging Rural/Remote Area Communities. *Australian Social Work*, 45(1), 37-43. & Forde, S., Meadows, M. E., & Foxwell-Norton, K. (2003). Community radio and local culture: an Australian case study. *Communications*, 28(2), 231-252.

## Indirect Benefits and Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Community radio's economic impact extends to indirect benefits and social return on investment (SROI). By enhancing social cohesion, community engagement, and local identity, community radio stations foster environments conducive to economic resilience and growth. According to studies, the SROI of community radio includes improved education outcomes, increased civic participation, and enhanced social capital. These indirect benefits translate into long-term economic gains, as communities become better equipped to tackle economic challenges collectively and leverage their social networks for economic opportunities.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Backhaus, B. (2020). Tuning In: Identity Formation in Community Radio for Social Change. *International Journal of Communication*, 14, 16; Meadows, M. E., & Foxwell-Norton, K. (2011). Community broadcasting and mental health: The role of local radio and television in enhancing emotional and social well-being. *The Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media*, 9(2), 89-106; Nirmala, Y. (2015). The role of community radio in empowering women in India. *Media Asia*, 42(1), 41-46.

## 5. Sustainability and Community Participation

The sustainability of community radio is closely linked to its economic impact. For example, one study found that sustainable community radio stations provide consistent support to local economies, enhancing their overall contribution to economic development.<sup>52</sup> Research by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) shows that financially sustainable community radio stations are better positioned to provide continuous support and services to their communities, further amplifying their economic impact.<sup>53</sup>

Community radio is a vital tool for social change and cultural preservation and a significant contributor to local and regional economies. By creating employment opportunities, supporting local businesses, enhancing information dissemination, promoting social cohesion, and attracting tourism, community radio plays a multifaceted role in economic development. The indirect benefits and social return on investment further amplify its economic value. Ensuring the sustainability of community radio stations is crucial for maintaining these economic benefits and effectively serving their communities. The substantial economic value of community radio warrants continued support and investment.

FIGURE 2 - The diverse benefits of community broadcasting

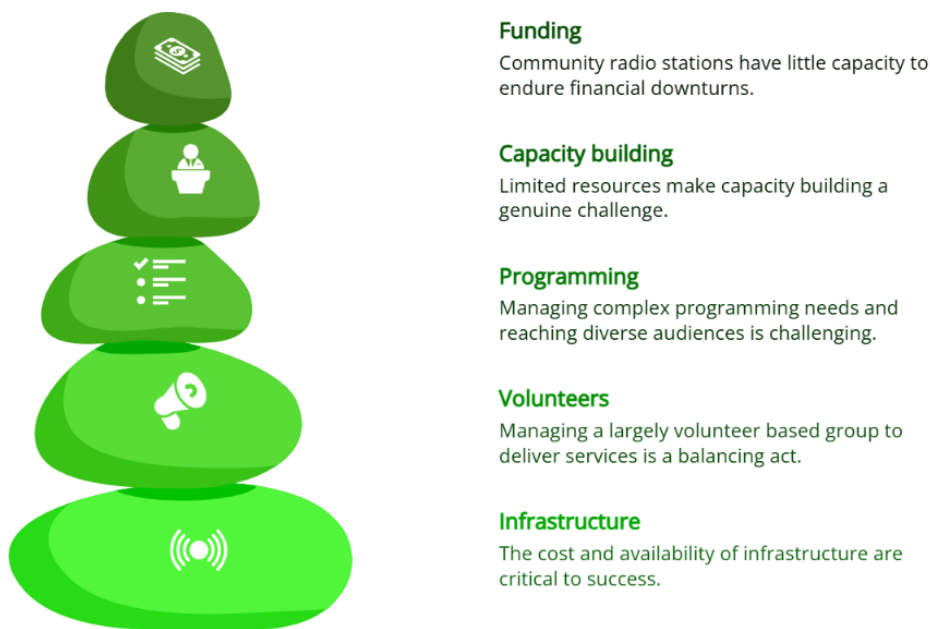


<sup>52</sup> Hussain, F., & Tongia, R. (2007). Community Radio for Development in South Asia: A Sustainability Study. 2007 International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development, 1-13.

<sup>53</sup> Myers, M. (2008). Radio and Development in Africa: A Concept Paper. International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada.

Succeeding within the sector requires that broadcasters carefully manage their finances to meet diverse recurrent financial needs, but access to core funding remains critical to continuity.

FIGURE 3 – A careful balancing act



Given the broad social and economic benefits of community broadcasting, including promoting local culture, providing news/educational content, and ensuring diverse voices are heard, securing core government funding is imperative. Such funding would provide financial stability, scope for innovation, and capacity building, which are essential for the sector's sustainability and growth.

### Financial Stability - Ensuring Continuity of Services

Core funding ensures that community broadcasters can maintain essential services and programming without the constant threat of financial instability. This stability allows broadcasters to plan for the long term and invest in areas that require substantial upfront costs, such as infrastructure and technology upgrades. Consider, consistent funding can help stations like Outback Radio 2WEB continue to deliver vital services to remote communities, ensuring that they remain connected and informed.

## Building a solid financial foundation

Core government funding is crucial for providing a stable financial base that supports the essential functions of community broadcasters. Policies that allocate consistent and adequate funding can help broadcasters maintain operations and plan for future growth. Establishing transparent criteria for funding allocation ensures that resources are distributed fairly and effectively. Long-term funding commitments can reduce the uncertainty associated with annual budget cycles and enable strategic planning. This approach not only supports the current operational needs but also facilitates future development and expansion.

## Capacity for Innovation – Investing in New Technologies

Enabling investment in new technologies and training programs necessary for adapting to the digital age is vital for the continued relevance of community broadcasters. Government funding can be earmarked for specific innovation projects that might be too risky for broadcasters to undertake on their own.

Innovation is key to the continued relevance and competitiveness of community broadcasters. Policies that support investment in new technologies and innovative projects can drive sector growth. Funding for research and development, as well as pilot projects, can encourage experimentation and adoption of cutting-edge technologies. Establishing innovation hubs or labs within the community broadcasting sector can facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing. These initiatives can foster a culture of continuous improvement and technological advancement, ensuring that community broadcasters remain at the forefront of media innovation. But stability is the primary driver of innovation for the sector, absent of core funding proponents are not able to serve their communities let alone engage in innovation activities.

## Capacity Building - Enhancing Organisational Capability

Supporting improvements in governance, financial management, and community engagement is essential for the long-term sustainability of community broadcasters. Core funding can facilitate professional development opportunities for staff and volunteers, enhancing the overall capability of the organisation. This includes training in new technologies, best practices in content production, and effective community engagement strategies.

## Investing in the future of the sector

Capacity building is essential for ensuring that community broadcasters can operate efficiently and effectively. Policies that provide funding for professional development, governance training, and organisational improvements can strengthen the sector. Encouraging partnerships with educational institutions and industry experts for training programs can enhance skill development.<sup>54</sup> Supporting initiatives that promote best practices in governance and management can lead to more resilient and capable organisations. By investing in the human capital of community broadcasters, the sector can better meet the needs of their diverse audiences and ensure high-quality service delivery.

---

<sup>54</sup> Communities, connections, and careers: building personal and professional networks through community media work. (2024); Community media destinations: spotlight on training (2023).

Securing core government funding is essential for the sustainability and growth of Australia's community broadcasting sector. Financial stability allows for the continuous provision of essential services and long-term planning. Capacity for innovation ensures that broadcasters can adapt to new technologies and remain competitive. Capacity building enhances the organisational capabilities necessary for effective operation. By implementing policies that provide consistent and adequate funding, the government can support the vital role community broadcasters play in promoting local culture, providing educational content, and ensuring diverse voices are heard across Australia.