



Disability Media Australia
PO Box 564
Alexandria NSW 2015

Community Broadcasting Sustainability Review
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 2154
Canberra, ACT 2601

Dear Review Committee,

Submission to the Community Broadcasting Sustainability Review

On behalf of Disability Media Australia (DMA), I am writing to contribute to the Community Broadcasting Sustainability Review. As the peak body for the Radio Reading Network, which comprises 19 AM/FM and digital radio licenses, we serve Australians living with a print disability by delivering live reads of daily newspapers and periodicals. Our mission is deeply rooted in providing accessible media services to the 4.4 million Australians identifying as disabled and the additional 2.8 million carers and community supporters who rely on inclusive media.

DMA fully endorses the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA)'s pre-budget submission and Roadmap 2033, particularly supporting Objective 4 under the Amplify Diverse Voices Strategic Priority. This objective aligns with our commitment to ensuring that community broadcasters with disabilities are not only visible but that their voices are amplified across the media landscape.

Through our activities, we ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in media production and broadcasting, providing a platform for authentic storytelling that reflects the diverse experiences of our community.

The Radio Reading Network is a vital service in this regard, offering an essential service to those with print disabilities. However, we recognise the broader need to expand our services to be inclusive of all people with disabilities. This expansion would allow us to stimulate content creation that reflects the lived experiences of disability, foster participation and employment pathways, and create critical channels of communication between government departments, service providers, and advocacy organisations to people with disabilities, their carer's and families.

The sustainability and growth of the Radio Reading Network are critical to maintaining our service to Australians with print disabilities. The Community Broadcasting Program has been instrumental in supporting our operations, and continued, enhanced funding is essential to ensure that we can keep pace with the evolving needs of our community. The value of Radio Reading extends beyond information dissemination; it is a lifeline for many

who rely on it to stay informed, connected, and engaged in their communities. This is particularly so in times of emergency and health crises when the network becomes an essential service critical to providing access to information.

Growth and certainty in funding are necessary to not only sustain current Radio Reading Network services but also to innovate and expand our offerings. As we look to the future, it is imperative that the Community Broadcasting Program recognises the unique role that Radio Reading plays in the media landscape and provides the necessary resources to increase our capability, grow impact and secure our future.

A key component of our strategy is ensuring that disability is accurately represented in news reporting. Through a partnership with the CBAA's National Radio News, DMA secured funding from the Walkley Foundation for a 12 month pilot to embed a reporter with disability in the Parliament House Press Gallery, contributing to news content across community radio and other media. However, without dedicated funding for news and public interest journalism from the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF), we will not be able to sustain these essential services that contribute to diversity of voice in news media.

In addition to sustaining Radio Reading, DMA is leading the establishment of Powerd Media — a new media platform created by and for people with disabilities. Powerd Media aims to create a media ecosystem that amplifies the voices of people with disabilities, fostering a diverse audience through a multi-platform approach that includes both online and traditional broadcast platforms.

This initiative is closely aligned with Australia's Disability Strategy, and while DSS funding through the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building program has enabled us to establish Powerd Media, ongoing support through the Community Broadcasting Program is vital for ensuring the services sustainability. It is crucial that future funding takes a flexible approach, allowing us to seize strategic opportunities to serve a broader disability community through innovative media solutions like Powerd Media.

The work of Disability Media Australia and the Radio Reading Network has never been more important. As we continue to expand our reach and impact through initiatives like Powerd Media, we seek the ongoing support and flexibility of the Community Broadcasting Program to ensure that we can continue to serve and amplify the voices of Australians with disabilities. We strongly encourage the Review Committee to consider the unique needs of our community and to ensure that the future of community broadcasting is one that is inclusive, sustainable, and reflective of Australia's diverse population.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of James Manders.

James Manders
Chair
Disability Media Australia