

Director – Publishing and Communications
Communication Branch
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
Canberra ACT

Submission to Community Broadcasting Sector Sustainability Review

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the *Warming Up* project team, we are writing to make a submission to the Community Broadcasting Sector Sustainability Review.

Warming Up is a collaborative project between the community broadcasting sector and Griffith University researchers. The project has been ongoing since 2019 and seeks to explore the role of community broadcasting in supporting community resilience to climate change. The project team consists of five researchers spanning the fields of Indigenous education, creative arts, climate science, environmental communication, and media studies. Project leads, A/Prof Foxwell-Norton has a long-standing relationship with the sector built over more than 20 years and Dr Backhaus has been involved in community broadcasting as both a practitioner and a researcher for almost 15 years. Based on our longstanding engagement with the sector and recent research on the role of community radio in climate change communication, we are writing to provide feedback on priority area 1: CBP funding, structure and outcomes

Climate change represents an existential threat to the Australian way of life. Our research shows that community radio has a critical role to play in broadcasting hyperlocal information during times of crisis and disaster, which are predicted to occur with increasing frequency and ferocity due to the impacts of climate change. There is a need for additional capacity within the sector in terms of disaster preparedness, broadcasting, and, critically, trauma-informed recovery. While the CBF's existing Quick Response grants offer a useful mechanism for dealing with the immediate impacts of disasters, sustained, multi-year funding would ensure that stations in vulnerable areas or serving vulnerable populations could implement holistic approaches to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Critically and beyond disasters and extreme weather events, the sector is unique in its capacity to leverage the community networks of community broadcasting to foster effective climate change communication – and do so with the nuance necessary to create discussions that resonate with a vast and diverse Australia. The sector's role in disaster and crisis is applauded and a powerful element in infrastructure response. This acknowledged, the slower impacts of climate changes that cascade throughout the everyday lives of Australians and communities are also accessible via the sector. In between disasters or when crises seem distant, the synergies between participatory community led media and engaging the kaleidoscope of everyday Australian communities in climate action is a communication resource, currently undervalued. Our *Warming Up* project is working to capitalise on the community values well established by the sector and its stations and bring these to the urgency of climate action.

Substantial increases in financial resources will support the sector to realise its climate action potential alongside the many other benefits that will accrue to a sector explicitly geared to inclusion, representation and connectedness. Financial stability is a long-standing and ongoing area of concern for community broadcasters, particularly station managers. The crux of this issue is that current government funding is insufficient and cannot meet the needs of the sector. While grant structuring and processes of assessment and evaluation are important to revisit, without a substantial

increase in funding, many of issues will persist. We support the CBAA's proposed 100% increase in funding, with specific allocations towards priority areas identified in *Roadmap 2033*.

A further area of concern is the immense administrative load that annual grant cycles places on community radio practitioners as well as grant assessors. Multi-year funding would greatly ease this burden and allow community radio stations to focus on serving their communities. Multi-organisational grants and consortium models are valuable and represent a significant opportunity but should be complementary to single-organisation grants. We caution that an overemphasis on networked content and multi-organisational funding may inadvertently reduce diversity of programming and disadvantage smaller stations so a careful balance must be struck.

Finally, evaluation frameworks should include qualitative as well as quantitative data and assessment metrics. Quantitative data provides a useful snapshot but fails to capture the nuance and true impacts of community broadcasting. Listener numbers cannot possibly capture confidence, empowerment, or hearing voices that sound like yours on the radio - any evaluation frameworks must incorporate both qualitative and quantitative data. In collecting this data, there is also scope for greater partnerships between the community broadcasting and university sectors.

Australia is a world-leader in community broadcasting. In our view, ensuring the sustainability of the sector must involve increasing funding dedicated to supporting community responses to climate change, reducing the administrative burden on both grant writers and assessors by offering multi-year funding, and, crucially, increasing the overall amount of government support.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you'd like to discuss further.

Warm regards,



A/Prof Kerrie Foxwell-Norton



Dr Bridget Backhaus



On behalf of the Warming Up project team:

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