



Submission to

**Community Broadcasting Sector Sustainability Review**

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Submission may be made public

Life FM wishes to make a few brief comments on the following areas of the review.

CBP funding, structure and outcomes

Legislative and regulatory issues

**CBP funding, structure and outcomes**

For a Community Broadcasting sector which has 5.8 million listeners, the current level of funding is seriously inadequate and needs to be doubled.

The current levels of funding puts pressure on the funding distribution body (the Community Broadcasting Foundation) to only be able to fund a small number of community stations. These stations tend to be those who are struggling to survive.

Larger stations, who if funded, would have the capacity to grow the sector both in audience and capacity. However, in the present CBF funding system and grants advisory process, they are actively discouraged from applying for funds.

There are also serious problems with the current peer-review process for allocating grants. When grant disbursement figures are scrutinised it appears that larger stations and Christian stations are disproportionately unsuccessful in receiving grants. There appears to be a bias against these stations.

**Government Advertising**

To increase sustainability, Life FM would also encourage that the Government implement a more equitable system for allocating government advertising across commercial and community radio stations.

## **Legislative and regulatory issues**

There are problems with the current Broadcasting Services Act which was developed when Community Radio was first envisioned.

There are major issues in the areas of sponsorship clarity, definition and implementation.

Time limits: The current regime of 5 minutes per hour is impractical for stations who are relying on sponsorship funding to keep the services operational.

Life FM would recommend relaxing the 5-minute per hour sponsorship limit, and give consideration of sponsorship averaging across a day rather than a strict per hour limit. This could be coupled with an upper limit to the number of spots in any one hour e.g. 7 or 8 minutes per hour.

In addition, Life FM would recommend that not-for-profit organisations and charities be excluded as “sponsors” when they purchase air-time arrangements, and not contribute to the 5 minutes per hour limit. At present Community Service Announcements may be run free of charge for these groups, but as soon as they want to support the Community Station, the spots become sponsorship announcements.

Finally, Life FM recommends the need to “tag” a sponsorship spot be dropped. The need to “tag” an announcement does not really give any clarity to listeners and only causes confusion in for sponsors. Dropping this requirement would make it easier for stations to encourage sponsorship campaigns on the stations.