

## Community broadcasting sector sustainability review Discussion Paper - June 2024 – 1RPH Responses

### The department is seeking input on 3 key priority areas:

#### 1. CBP funding, structure and outcomes:

Community Broadcasting requires sustainability, good governance practices, business skills and an understanding of reach and impact on audience.

**Business and governance training:** To strengthen the sector and its performance effectiveness and reach, CBAA could provide regular training to CB organisations that would assist them to be professional and run and grow a business whilst managing their existing and attracting new volunteers: Key areas needing support are:

- Better grant management - training in application content, implementation, financial management and reporting - and how grants should not be the only source of funding
- business development training so that this cyclic dependency of grants can be broken, and funding can be budgeted and monies spent appropriately
- managing and valuing volunteers

**Measuring impact:** Data collection and collation remain a problem. Without an understanding of how audience reach, and impact can be measured, means that Radio 1RPH just keeps doing the same thing – that which the volunteer presenters and readers like doing... and frequently have been doing for years. With accurate data, evidence-based decisions could assist programming to be appropriately targeted and grown. Access to tools to collect and collate audience interest in the current programs or new programs would mean that programs had more impact

### Specific Questions

- a. What should the funding priorities and granting streams be for the CBP from 2025 onwards?
- b. What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of:

- the 3 grants streams under the CBP?
- **single-organisation and single year grants versus multi-organisation and multi-year grants?** A: Different needs benefit from different times of implementation. Grants for equipment and infrastructure should be short, as the research should have been done before the request is made. Grants for research, business and program development, including ongoing staff and volunteer training/development, would benefit from a longer implementation & M&E time frame before final reporting
- **the consortium model, co-location, sharing infrastructure and network content?** A: Some CB are not mature enough to manage consortium and colocation effectively as the basics are not yet met within their own organisation... so these considerations need to be assessed on a case by case basis. Also the homogeneity of the audience communities needs to be considered.
- **sector-coordinated initiatives to assist with governance, strategic and business planning?** A: Whilst communities' needs and demographics differ, all CBA would benefit

from basic governance, business planning and strategic development. It will also reinforce that it is a business and not a social club for those who wish to hear their voices on the airwaves, and whose priority is to self, not the organisation. This misunderstanding creates a ripple effect through programming, strategies, orientation and all areas of the business.

- c. **Which quantitative and/or qualitative outcomes should the framework consider?** The number of listeners is largely useless without a breakdown of listeners by programs, and questions about the time certain programs are aired..e.g. are there more listeners simply because of the time of day or night? Or is it the subject matter? Knowing what is missing would assist. Also is the radio station being played in shops, aged care facilities? Where its content will impact lives differently. Where are people when they are most often listening? In their cars going somewhere? At work? At home? etc
- d. Community radio can provide a great service on local happenings, events, and ; and a vehicle for discussion within the community of what is important to that particular community.
- e. **How can services be supported to collect and report on data?** Provision of tools to undertake this and regular discussions about an assessment of data – otherwise data can easily be parked and ignored.

## 2. Legislative and regulatory issues:

The current requirement that CBs may not make a profit if they are to seek grant funding stops them growing and becoming self-reliant and sustainable.

Constantly chasing grants, with no security of receiving funding from 6 months or yearly, impacts the effectiveness and delivery of appropriate programs, limits or constrains growth and development of new programs or reach, and wastes time chasing funding instead of being able to be financially responsible and create and manage a budget.

Do all Community Broadcaster's clearly understand all the legislative requirements that impact their business as a charity? Receiver of donations? Manager of staff especially volunteers etc? C BAA could provide rolling available webinars, regular email updates or current information on these issues on their website.

### Specific Questions; and responses:

#### Questions

- **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?
  - including social media reach and listener data as part of community participation?
  - introducing fixed-term programs to train and retain paid staff in the sector? **A:** Paid staff - remunerating appropriately strengthens the business requirements of the station; and would help to manage volunteers appropriately and harness their energy and enthusiasm,

and potentially increase their commitment to the station, rather than just seeing it as a social group.

- **the current sponsorship limit and/or process?** A: Provision of core operational costs to enable a station to establish itself and manage its business properly and grow, would be ideal, but not as an ongoing crutch for an organization that retains poor business management.

### 3. First Nations funding and licensing.

Rather than segregation, suggest integration of community radio to reflect the diversity of the community demographics. This may need dedicated funding to existing CBAs as all stations should/could have a First Nation programming section as well as other cultures and languages

Support for First Nation local languages programming would be good where relevant and available also to strengthen local language learning and use.

#### Specific Questions

- What are the main funding, licensing and revenue challenges; and how might they be addressed?
- What should the funding priorities be for the IBMP from 2025 onwards?
- **Which funding model and/or grants structure would best support the First Nations sector?** A: There should be one grants structure, and equal access to training etc
  - which Australian Government department could administer the IBMP?
  - which organisation could distribute/make decisions on First Nations funding?
- **What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of introducing a licence type for First Nations broadcasters over the current licensing model?**
  - how would the First Nations licence differ from existing licence types?

A: Any licence has to have a clear purpose.... What is the advantage of a different licence to that of other community stations? Making the understanding of station licences the same, will assist in understanding the requirements and will enable greater movement between and amongst stations, and sharing and application of appropriate knowledge.