



Radio 2RPH Submission to the Community Broadcasting Sector Sustainability Review

The sustainability of Radio 2RPH

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RADIO 2RPH – AT A GLANCE

- Forty-plus years of broadcasting our volunteer-driven Radio Reading Service (in Sydney since early 1983)
- Independent, not-for-profit, member-owned and controlled co-operative with a continuous record of solvency and probity supported by a small professional workforce
- An adept and inspiring volunteer workforce of more than 200, the majority of whom are aged 65+, one in two of whom live with a disability
- Heard on 1224 AM and 100.5FM or on two digital (DAB+) channels in Sydney or online
- Broadcasting since 2009 in Newcastle and the Lower Hunter on 100.5FM and in Wollongong and the Illawarra on 93.3Fm since November 2021
- One of 18 services in the Radio Reading Network (RRN) in 6 States and 2 Territories
- A member of the sector bodies Community Broadcasting Association of Australia and Disability Media Australia
- Radio 2RPH commands 25% of the cumulative monthly national audience of the RRN

RADIO 2RPH CAPABILITY & STRENGTHS

- We are maintaining our service levels, innovating/upgrading our technology and are now providing professional development opportunities for volunteers and interns living with disabilities in media production, podcasting and radio
- Our monthly cumulative listenership is at its highest level ever at 164,000 people (aged 15+) which accounts for 24.5% of the monthly national audience for the Radio Reading Network (across AM, FM and Digital Radio)
- Yet because of mounting transmission and infrastructure costs and a drop off in sponsorship and grants, we are facing our third consecutive year of significant operational losses

BRIEF FOCUS ON HISTORY...

- For our analogue transmission support in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong we rely solely on BAI Communications which is in effect the monopoly-provider of wide coverage MF (AM) in Sydney
- From the test-transmission days of 1982 Radio 2RPH shared facilities with the University of NSW and broadcast at just 500W on 1629kHz (not on the broadcasting services band)
- In 1993 we were impelled by the Government and the ABA to shift the 1224kHz frequency (relinquished by 2WS) and were provided with transmission services free-of-charge by the Commonwealth owned National Transmission Agency

BRIEF FOCUS ON HISTORY...

- For the past 20 years Radio 2RPH has been paying Broadcast Australia (now BAI Communications) full commercial rates (increasing by more than CPI) for site leases and technical support services
- Broadcasting transmission site costs have increased by almost 38% over 5 years partly due to our service extension into Wollongong, but also due to a 17% increase in service charges

STRATEGIC FOCUS

Radio 2RPH is embracing a strategic review process to explore changing or broadening the scope of Radio 2RPH's community radio service to cater more to a wider disability and/or ageing audience through improving our understanding of:

- the profile, needs and preferences of our current audience,
- what people with a disability and/or older people would expect from a community radio service specifically provided by and for them, and
- ongoing relevance and financial ability

We have the ambition in the medium term to establish new DAB+ services in the Hunter, Central Coast and the Illawarra in line with the Government's commitment to regional expansion of digital services

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

Expanding our content offerings to include more programs to support the needs and interests of people with disability and older people and expanding cultural diversity of topics and programs

The opportunity (subject to Government policy and ACMA planning) to broadcast on DAB+ in the Hunter, Central Coast and the Illawarra as part of the Government's commitment to regional expansion of digital services

A single frequency DAB+ coverage area across the four contiguous regions to provide economies of scale, economic efficiency/cost savings and reliable high-quality service coverage

CHALLENGES

- Largely because of mounting transmission and infrastructure costs and a drop off in sponsorship and grants we are facing our third year of operational losses
- For our analogue transmission support in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong we rely solely on BAI Communications which is in effect the monopoly provider of wide coverage MF (AM) in Sydney
- Escalating transmission service and site access costs at an annual increase of 11% p.a. will prove unsuitable
- Such mounting costs are increasingly difficult to meet and will become unsustainable in the near term
- Revenue from sponsorship has declined significantly and there have been no funding stream increases nor growth in grant availability over the corresponding period

THE ROAD AHEAD

- Radio 2RPH supports the call by the CBAA for total sector funding to be increased from \$43m to \$80m per year, \$18.5m of which should be allocated to the Community Broadcasting Program (CBP) with all funding indexed to CPI
- We call for the existing CBF funding streams allocated to Print Disability (Station Support), Print Disability (Transmission) and Print Disability (Sector Investment) to be increased in equal proportion to any overall increase to the CBP
- We call on the Government either through the DITRCA or the ACCC to investigate the desirability and feasibility of imposing a concessional access price tier (or other appropriate regulatory control) on near-monopoly providers of transmission sites and services to protect community broadcasting licensees from unsustainable costs



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PRINT DISABILITY, LOW LEVELS OF LITERACY,
OR SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE