



## **RMITV SCT Inc. Submission into the Inquiry into the Community Broadcasting Sector Sustainability Review**

August 2024

RMITV Student Community Television (SCT) Inc. welcomes the opportunity to respond to the inquiry into the community broadcasting sector's sustainability. This submission provides RMITV's perspective on the areas of interest to the review.

RMITV plays an important role in the community media ecosystem. While we have connections to RMIT University and the RMIT University Student Union (RUSU), we are a separate body that served as one of the founding member organisations of C31 Melbourne and Geelong. Since 1987 we have helped fund and distribute a variety of different media productions every year ranging from television sitcoms to short films, web series to animations, live broadcasts to discussion panel shows, and many other kinds of content. We provide a learning-by-doing environment where volunteer members gain hands-on experience through in-studio production, post-production, and on-location crewing. In our thirty-seven-year history we have seen many of our members go onto paid employment in commercial and government media as well as AV and related industries.

As with many other community groups, the COVID-19 pandemic created conditions that affected us at the time and continue to affect us today. In 2023 we saw the greatest cut to our primary source of funding. While we looked for grant opportunities to try and mitigate this shortfall, we found that funding rounds became intensely competitive with all other local organisations suffering similar conditions.

We successfully obtained a Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF) content grant by partnering with the Student Youth Network (SYN) to create the co-production "1700". While this co-production was successful in key areas and led to positive outcomes, it didn't happen in a vacuum; both organisations were facing dire economic challenges, which inevitably impacted our collaboration.

While RMITV and SYN overlap in terms of the communities they serve, we also have different accessibility concerns. Facing existential threats meant the issue of accessibility - paramount for community media and community groups in general - became a lower priority, and both organisations found themselves unprepared and ill-equipped to deal with accessibility issues from the other team. In some ways, this is the exact type of challenge needed for organisations to identify where improvement is possible and necessary. However, as far as multi-organisation grants are concerned, it is also a strong argument for having dynamic grants that can adapt to evolving needs, particularly in times of crisis.



While we are in a better financial position in 2024, RMITV still faces an overwhelming demand for the opportunities we provide and we are still in a position where we need to prioritise certain initiatives over others. One key area is training and what training we can deliver not only to our members but also to our volunteer board members and managers. Due to the nature of our organisation, we experience high turnover and depend on many of our outgoing volunteers to pass on essential knowledge and wisdom. External governance training and strategic planning have been essential tools in the past, but after several generations of turnover, which can happen quite quickly, it is possible to lose not only the lessons from these processes but also the understanding that these external options exist at the community level. While our organisation has been looking for solutions from within to address these long-term concerns, sector-coordinated initiatives to assist with governance, strategic and business planning would provide benefit not only to our organisation but the broadcasting sector as a whole.

In conclusion, RMITV can offer from our own experience:

- Members of our community, primarily students (of all ages), are keen to engage with community media and currently at a level of demand higher than we have the capacity to meet
- When focusing on existential crises and immediate capacity issues, longer-term planning and organisational resilience become lower priority
- Accessibility concerns may be harder to identify in multi-organisation project planning
- Sector-coordinated initiatives to assist with governance, strategic and business planning are essential to a healthy and vibrant community sector

As a key institution within Australia's community broadcasting landscape, RMITV supports strong and vibrant community media initiatives across Australia for the foreseeable future.

Anthony McCormack  
RMITV General Manager