



Summary of stakeholder discussion—Brisbane

This document provides a high-level, deidentified summary of the discussion at the workshop held in Brisbane on 18 July 2024, and does not reflect all views given.

September 2024

Challenges for community broadcasters in Brisbane

- Stations with specialised formats often struggle to find fitting grant opportunities due to their license type. This restricts their ability to diversify their programming and broaden their reach.
- CBP grant program perceived to favour smaller stations, discouraging larger stations with higher operational budgets from applying. Success seems unlikely, leading some to abandon the process.
- Some stations find success with CBP grants and emphasise the need for well-defined project goals that align with their strategic objectives.
- Strict rules prevent stations from accessing grants even if they have had financial difficulties in the past.
- Distributing funding fairly across various sub-sectors (e.g. ethnic and First Nations) is a complex challenge.
- Combining the CBP and IBMP could create additional competition and limit access to resources.

Calls for reform

- Better ways to demonstrate the impact of community radio beyond traditional metrics.
- Reassess how station size and format affect grant accessibility. Consider establishing dedicated funding streams for stations with specialised program needs.
- Address misconceptions surrounding CBP grants and provide clearer guidelines for larger stations (e.g. consider surplus rather than turnover).
- Explore alternative funding sources, such as partnerships with arts organisations, to provide more financial stability for stations.
- Multi-year funding: the triennial funding model makes long-term planning easier, increases stability and stations' ability to leverage funding for growth and improvements.

Community participation

- The current method of community radio license relies on member numbers, a metric considered outdated.
- Member numbers don't accurately reflect community engagement in some stations. Many supporters are invested in specific programs, but are not members.
- There's ambiguity about what constitutes membership, leading to inaccurate reporting.
- The difference between community participation and serving community interest needs clearer definition.
- The term "ethnic" used in regulations is not inclusive.

Calls for reform

- Implement a broader community engagement metric for renewal alongside/instead of member numbers.
- Clearly define what constitutes membership.
- A more inclusive metric that captures diversity of interaction (e.g. subscriptions, online engagement).
- New codes of practice are expected and stations want them to be clear, concise, and easy to understand.
- Update regulations with more inclusive language.

Sponsorship

- Stations struggle to define their market and secure sponsors due to niche audiences and lack of metrics, making it hard to secure significant funding.
- Inconsistent data collection methods across stations make it difficult to demonstrate audience reach and value to potential advertisers; affecting smaller stations disproportionately.
- There is uncertainty around program sponsorships, and what constitutes as the sponsorship component (e.g. just the 'sting' or the whole program).
- Some stations believe the 5-minute limit on sponsorship messaging hinders their ability to generate revenue during peak broadcast, but agree that increasing minutes is not a viable option.
- Inability to insert sponsorship during long (1 hour+) programs means some missed sponsor opportunities.
- Some stations feel they are unfairly targeted for exceeding sponsorship limits, especially because there is confusion between what constitutes as sponsorship vs. community service announcements.
- Community radio stations find it difficult to compete with commercial stations for sponsorship dollars. Greater government advertising could provide a much-needed revenue stream for community radio.
- Government agencies perceived as unaware of the advertising opportunities offered by community radio, particularly for reaching specific demographics.

Calls for reform

- Review the 5-minute sponsorship limit to allow for greater flexibility throughout a 24-hour period.
- Provide clearer definitions and guidelines on program sponsorships.
- Investigate ways to reduce competition with commercial radio for advertising dollars.
- Ensure fairer treatment of community radio stations regarding sponsorship complaints.
- Standardise data collection practices across stations to allow them to better demonstrate their reach and impact to potential advertisers.
- Introduce quotas for government advertising with community radio.

Volunteers and staffing

- Stations should not have to rely on 100% volunteers; it's not sustainable.
- Community radio plays a valuable role in training future media professionals, but it is not acknowledged.
- Limited funding hinders stations' ability to offer competitive salaries, access training resources, and provide proper HR support; which leads to staff finding paying jobs in the broader media industry.
- Succession planning difficulties exist in operations and governance, creating a burden for station managers who constantly train new staff and Board members.
- Complex HR regulations and limited resources make it difficult to manage staff and volunteers effectively.
- Specifically-designed training programs, along with mentorship opportunities, are crucial for staff development and retention.

Calls for reform

- Establish a centrally funded HR support service to help with HR issues for stations.
- Provide funding for training programs specific to community radio needs, including specialist broadcasting.
- Facilitate greater collaboration between community radio stations, universities, and training organisations for relevant training programs and pathways.