



Summary of stakeholder discussion—Other metropolitan locations

This document provides a high-level, deidentified summary of the discussion at the workshop held virtually on 6 August 2024, and does not reflect all views given.

September 2024

Challenges for community broadcasters

- Reliant on grant funding
- Insufficient government funding; with many stations surviving through goodwill, doing more with less and experiencing extreme fatigue.
- Rising expenses such as electricity and competition for sponsors with commercial radio stations.
- Large listener bases but inability to capitalise on this due to advertising restrictions and tendency to be overlooked in government funding allocation.
- High reliance on volunteers with decreasing availability and increasing pay expectations.
- Difficulty finding skilled volunteers (e.g. journalism or fundraising); with limited funds to hire paid staff for governance, staff management and admin.
- Balancing the need for local content with the challenges of producing and funding it.

Calls for reform

- A significant increase in government funding for community radio.
- Review regulations to reduce bureaucracy, increase flexibility, and allow for more freedom to compete in the media landscape (e.g. deregulation of advertising limits, streamlining licensing procedures, and revisiting funding guidelines).
- Explore partnerships with universities to provide training and support, and allocating grant funding to hire staff who can manage volunteers and administrative tasks.
- Sharing resources and services between stations to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

Sponsorship

- 5-minute limit is a significant constraint on revenue generation for some community radio stations.
- Some feel disadvantaged when competing against commercial radio stations with longer slots; and lack the skills for effective sponsor management.
- Reliance on sponsorship, grants and donations, but difficult to get sponsors; particularly those with specialised programming.

Calls for reform

- Increase the 5-minute advertising limit to allow for greater revenue generation and/or more flexibility in sponsorship arrangements, such as longer sponsorship slots within programs.
- Provide more support to community radio stations in the form of funding, training, and resources for fundraising and sales.

Regulatory environment

- The regulatory environment for community radio is perceived as complex and burdensome, with potential negative impacts on station operations.
- There is an overlap between federal (ACMA) and organisational regulations for community radio.
- Community radio stations are concerned about the potential for license revocation due to complaints.
- The process of appointing board members can be challenging due to community involvement and scrutiny.

Calls for reform

- There is a need for better coordination and understanding of the regulatory landscape for non-profits between federal and state authorities.
- Re-evaluate the criteria for license revocation to ensure it is fair and proportionate.
- Simplify the process for appointing board members while maintaining community involvement.

Government funding

- Community broadcasters face challenges in securing sufficient and reliable government funding.
- Difficulty navigating government processes and rigid funding guidelines. The application process is often complex and does not align with the needs of community radio stations.
- Larger, more established stations may have an advantage in securing funding compared to smaller, regional stations.
- The value of community broadcasting is often overlooked in government funding allocations.

Calls for reform

- Streamlined/accessible grant application process.
- Shift towards a funding model that rewards stations based on their outcomes and impact, rather than simply on their size or location.
- The ability to reallocate funds within grants was seen as essential for adapting to changing circumstances.
- Given the increasing importance of local news, provide specific funding to support the development of local news services.