

COMMUNITY BROADCASTING SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW

# Summary of stakeholder discussion—Perth and regional Western Australia

This document provides a high-level, deidentified summary of the discussion at the workshop held virtually on 22 July 2024, and does not reflect all views given.

**September 2024**

## Challenges for community broadcasters in Perth and regional Western Australia

* Reliance on grant funding:
* need for development, transmission and operational funding for small to large stations,
* stronger stations opting to apply for project-based grants due to perceived high demand for other grant streams or eligibility limits, which can be unstable and time-consuming to secure,
* some stations also rely on local government for grants or other support.
* First Nations media has a need for capital investment in remote areas.
* Revenue streams are becoming more limited: difficulty in securing sponsorship due to insufficient audience data or insights.
* Shortage of skilled technicians: finding and retaining qualified technical personnel, especially in remote or geographically dispersed areas, is difficult.

### Calls for reform

* Funding model that offers scalable yearly stipends to stations to improve stability and long-term planning.
* Support to diversify revenue streams and enhance fundraising skills, potentially including support for grant writing to maximise opportunities.
* Develop partnerships with sector, businesses, community organisations, and other media outlets for sponsorship and cross-promotion.
* Invest in training programs and employment pathways to build and retain technical expertise.
* Encourage and invest in resource sharing and collaboration among stations, beyond technical personnel or capability.
* Provide support and guidance for the transition to digital broadcasting to station staff and volunteers.
* Streamline licensing processes and timeframes for a user-friendly experience.
* First Nations call for a centralised funding model.
* Digital divide: Many stations struggle to invest in the necessary equipment and expertise for digital broadcasting.

## Regulatory

* Complex licensing processes/temporary licenses hinder operations and place burden on stations.
* Insufficient support and unclear policies for the future of radio broadcasting create uncertainty.
* Plan for changes in technology to leverage opportunities for growth in sector.
* Stations want to set a standard by delivering a good product within their operational scope, and to provide continuity of service to their audience.
* Importance of local content and storytelling, including local news and events, and celebrating the bespoke nature and resilience of community radio.
* Community service role for First Nations broadcasters in providing essential services, especially in remote areas or in response to emergencies.

### Calls for reform

* Further research and analysis of audience preferences, especially in rural or remote areas, to better understand their needs and inform programming and marketing strategies.
* Leverage high production values and community needs for stations or sector to engage with sponsorship or other partnership opportunities.
* Embrace digital technologies and online streaming to reach new audiences.

## Sponsorship

* Stations struggle to get adequate/accurate audience data to demonstrate impact to potential sponsors.
* First Nations stations effectively secured community partnerships or sponsorships by using various strategies including sales and grant writing.
* Sponsorship steadily increase for stations engaging with advertising or media buying agencies.
* Level of sponsorship is restrictive, complex and unclear; and legislation has not kept up to date.

### Calls for reform

* Aggregated sponsorship minutes for community radio stations to allow greater flexibility.
* Greater clarity around limits for sponsorship and advertising, including for online streaming.
* Potential to increase sponsorship limit to 6 minutes.
* Advocate for changes to sponsorship and advertising regulations to align with the digital age.

## Volunteers and staffing

* Many stations rely on dedicated volunteers who contribute their time and skills, but the demanding nature of volunteer roles, combined with a lack of compensation, makes it difficult to recruit and retain staff.
* Recognising and providing for workforce needs and time commitments for station staff, volunteers and management committees.
* Stations need paid part-time coordinators or station managers, to enable effective succession planning and to improve business continuity.
* Challenges in preparing for and adapting to recent human resources legislation and requirements.
* First Nations reliance on broadcasting grants to bolster award rate salaries for staff.

### Calls for reform

* Connect other initiatives, like education programs and pathways, to drive training and development.
* Ongoing training initiatives/incentives to upskill staff and volunteers, especially when technology changes.
* Share information/resources via a centralised coordination point for governance and workforce matters.
* Attend sector conferences and networking events to improve collaboration and strengthen relationships.