



Australian Government

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**

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.