



## **SUPPORTING AUSTRALIAN STORIES ON OUR SCREENS**

### **ACMA OPTIONS PAPER**

#### **SUBMISSION BY COMMERCIAL RADIO AUSTRALIA**

**June 2020**

Commercial Radio Australia (**CRA**) is the peak industry body representing the interests of commercial radio broadcasters throughout Australia. CRA has 260 member stations.

CRA welcomes this opportunity to respond to the ACMA's Options Paper *Supporting Australian stories on our screens* (**Options Paper**).

The Options Paper is concerned with means of supporting Australian stories on screens in a multi-platform environment, with a particular focus on drama, documentary and children's programming.

CRA has kept this submission short, acknowledging that radio is currently not a primary focus of this consultation. Nevertheless, if these questions are being explored in relation to screen content, the ACMA may wish to consider similar issues in relation to audio.

#### **1. Australian music requirements on commercial radio**

There are comprehensive requirements under the Commercial Radio Code of Practice, regarding the broadcast of Australian music and New Australian music.

Australian music must be played daily between the hours of 6am and midnight to meet the quotas required under section 5 of the Commercial Radio Code of Practice. These quotas differ according to station format.

The proportion of total time that must be dedicated to Australian music is determined by the predominant format of the station. For example, not less than 25% of music on a contemporary hits station must be Australian. The average percentage across the commercial radio industry is approximately 20%.

There are also obligations regarding the proportion of Australian performances that must be 'new' (that is published within the 12 months prior to broadcast). These apply to the top three format categories.

Accordingly, stations playing 25% Australian music must ensure that not less than 25% of that music is new Australian music. Similarly, stations playing 20% Australian music must ensure that 20% is new Australian music and those playing 15% Australian music must ensure that 15% consists of new Australian music.

## **2. Imbalance between requirements for Australian commercial radio and those for online platforms**

There are no Australian content obligations applicable to online only radio or music streaming services, such as Spotify and YouTube.

CRA supports the deregulation of media platforms, leading to the creation, where possible, of an efficient, deregulated and consistent regulatory framework, designed to promote fair competition between players.

However, CRA is not aware of any proposals to remove the Australian music requirements from the Commercial Radio Code of Practice in the short to medium term. This leaves the commercial radio industry at a disadvantage when competing with established and emerging online music platforms, such as Spotify and YouTube.

This inequality is a significant issue for the commercial radio industry, which continues to comply with its Australian music obligations, while music platforms such as Spotify and YouTube are able to incorporate any music they choose in their content selection.

For now, the commercial radio industry continues to maintain its audience despite such challenges, due in part to radio's unique and personal engagement with listeners. Nevertheless, such inequality has the potential to hinder the commercial radio industry's ability to compete effectively with Spotify and YouTube in the future, in relation to both audience and advertising revenue.

CRA urges the ACMA to consider ways of redressing this balance, perhaps by requiring online streaming services to feature Australian music or to adjust their algorithms to serve a percentage of Australian music.

CRA would be pleased to expand on these points, if the ACMA would find it helpful.

Commercial Radio Australia