

3CR Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into broadcasting legislation.

3CR - Community Radio Federation

The Community Radio Federation was established 23 years ago by a group of community organisations whose members were either marginalised or disadvantaged in the broader community and were consequently ignored or marginalised in the mainstream media. 3CR was established to give a voice to individuals, communities and views marginalised or discriminated against in the mainstream media. The station continues to run today 24 hours per day broadcasting 131 programs per week mainly in spoken word, in English and 20 other community languages.

3CR depends on 400 volunteers to broadcast these 131 programs weekly and has a limited staff of 3 full time and 3 part time workers to facilitate the running of the station. Each different program represents and gives voice to different communities and different concerns in the community. Member organisations who broadcast weekly at 3CR and make up the Community Radio Federation include: *The Voice of East Timor, The Federation of Community Legal Centres, the Union of Kurdish and Turkish workers, the Waverly Anglers club, the Health Services Union, The Victorian College of the Arts, The Free Chile Committee, Friends of the Earth etc.*

60 community organisations make up the Community Radio Federation, which owns 3CR, meets quarterly and elects a committee of Management and various working sub committees. This democratic process is enshrined in the station constitution and ensures the station remains truly representative of the communities who broadcast and listen to 3CR.

Over 300 community groups access 3CR weekly to educate the public about issues that are of concern or benefit to them (e.g. Koori legal services, Single Mothers organisations etc.). The station depends on donations and membership fees from a poor community to remain financial from year to year. No sponsorship or advertising is accepted. Small grants are accepted to run training or special projects such as Koori training or youth Vietnamese training projects.

This summary of 3CR will give you a good idea of how very different this model of broadcasting is to other commercial and public media, narrowcasters and also from many other the community broadcasters.

A wealth of community training, liaison, community development and information is generated free to taxpayers, through the voluntary work of 400 people at 3CR every week. Not only is this an extraordinary and free community service but it has enormous social benefits for participants involved and is a crucial cog in the democratic process encouraging freedom of speech, debate and an outlet for members of the community who wish to dissent the status quo.

Community radio as a crucial third tier in broadcasting in Australia.

Community Radio is an essential and cost effective community service delivering far more to the community of Australia than it receives in terms of funding or other resources. It delivers:

- **Free training** to members of the community in the areas of radio production, journalism, communications, literacy, public relations, community development, research, mentoring, small business management, administration, public forum development and facilitation, technical innovation and maintenance, Internet, email, and basic computer literacy, reception work, promotions, project management, the development of non traditional skills for people disadvantaged in the community, cross cultural communication, etc.
- At 3CR alone, every week, 400 people improve or maintain their **self esteem** through their voluntary work and contribution to the community
- **Employment opportunities.** While community radio is not a great employer of paid staff, due to inherent limited resources, it is often a place where volunteers network, develop skills, maintain or improve integration within the community and motivation during periods of unemployment.
- **Inter community relations,** diversity, harmony, and a greater understanding of difference are developed through the range of diverse programs that focus on the many different issues that effect the many different communities that make up the broader Australian community. Numerous diverse groups all working together under the same principles of community radio and sharing information and resources provides the basis for the essential work of breaking down communications and cultural barriers and conflict.
- Community radio truly **reflects the make up of our community.** One of the key principles of community radio is to be run by ordinary members of the community with volunteer broadcasters and volunteer committees of management. Commercial and public media are run, and broadcast the voices of journalists and professionals. The sound of Community Radio is made up of the full gamut of voices and accents that make up the broader Australian Community.
- Community radio is one of the most effective ways to reach all communities through **locally targeted community education** projects. Commercial and Public broadcasting is increasingly becoming nationalised and losing its local content. This not only limits the information available that is specific to local communities but also entails a loss of local pride and identity.
- **Cross cultural education** and development of inter community links.
- The definition of **narrowcasters** should be more clearly defined to ensure no overlap with other sectors. E.g. some narrowcasters operate with the same objectives as community broadcasters within the same region as existing community broadcasters but with out the license restrictions. If

there is a limit on Community broadcasters then having easy access to a narrowcast license makes a mockery of community radio license restrictions.

- **Media Ownership – Monopolies** threaten to limit the range of views and information that are available across most media for the public's general information. We increasingly depend on existing and emergent media technologies for daily news, information, education, international relations, and the development of cultural identity in a world of shifting global boundaries and identities. Consequently the role of community radio is increasingly important for its component of local information, community services and representation of a diverse and multi cultural Australian community.

- **Community Radio is accessible** - as new technologies threaten to give the world new wealth divides according to rich and poor, radio is still a crucial media outlet for many communities for a number of reasons:

It is relatively cheap to run, especially when broadcasters are volunteers.

The technology is simple and quick to learn therefore accessible to the majority of the community.

Radio receivers are the cheapest media receiver available and portable accompanying people in their cars, kitchens, factories, offices and football ovals.

People disadvantaged by literacy skills are less advantaged in the world of radio.

It is also an immediate source of information and especially aided by the mobile phone.

One of 3CR's biggest listening audiences is the non English language community which depends on weekly programs to stay in tune with their communities in Melbourne and information back home and to get information about crucial community services. Most of these listeners would not be able to access the Internet, many would not be able to read the local newspaper, and many Ethnic media outlets are not locally based or do not deliver information to minority groups within community language groups (e.g. Zaza language group is linguistic subset of the Kurdish Community and broadcast 2 programs in the world one at 3CR Melbourne and one in Berlin).

It is our belief that community radio provides the most efficient and richest community service, on many different levels, than any other media outlet and that it should be recognised, preserved and supported in this role.