



COMMUNITY  
BROADCASTING  
ASSOCIATION OF  
AUSTRALIA

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Regional Deployment Branch  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications  
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To whom it may concern,

The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Digital Tech Hub consultation.

As the peak body and national representative organisation for over 450 community radio stations across Australia – 76% of which are located in regional and remote communities – we value the opportunity to add our thoughts on:

- Using the existing network of community radio stations to promote the Digital Tech Hub; and
- Useful information for assisting communities to prepare for, and best use digital connectivity during disaster and emergency situations.

Community radio draws its listeners from a wide cross-section of the Australian community. Nationwide, **almost six million listeners tune in to the more than 450 community radio stations each week** – that's 29% of Australians aged 15 years and older.<sup>1</sup> 76% of these stations are in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia,<sup>2</sup> and 27% of the population or 1.7 million people in non-metro Australia listen each week.<sup>3</sup> Further, community broadcasting is the largest component of Indigenous media production in Australia and 48% of people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander listen to community radio during a typical week.

The CBAA is the peak body for community broadcasting stations in Australia and an internationally recognised, not-for-profit cultural organisation. Since our inception, we have strived to prioritise voices otherwise not heard on air and always prided ourselves on maintaining a diverse sector, supported by volunteers and other community-minded individuals.

The CBAA champions community broadcasting by building stations' capability and creating a healthy environment for the sector to thrive. We work toward ensuring that community

<sup>1</sup>Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2019). National Listener Survey Australia Fact Sheet Wave #2 December 2019 [online] Available at: <https://www.cbaa.org.au/sites/default/files/media/McNair%20yellowSquares%20-%20NLS%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Australia%20-%202019%20-%20Wave%20%232%20-%20190101.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2019), State of the Sector Report [online] Available at: [https://www.cbaa.org.au/sites/default/files/media/CBAA%20State%20of%20the%20Community%20Radio%20Sector%20Report%202019\\_4.pdf](https://www.cbaa.org.au/sites/default/files/media/CBAA%20State%20of%20the%20Community%20Radio%20Sector%20Report%202019_4.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2019). National Listener Survey Non-Metro Fact Sheet Wave #2 December 2019 [online] Available at: <https://www.cbaa.org.au/sites/default/files/media/McNair%20yellowSquares%20-%20NLS%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Non-Metro%20-%202019%20-%20Wave%20%232%20-%20190101.pdf>

broadcasting is recognised as an excellent, innovative, sustainable, accessible, trusted and diverse industry, and a key pillar in Australian broadcasting that contributes to an open society and cultural vibrancy.

## Question 2: What other existing networks can be used to promote the Digital Tech Hub?

Community radio stations in regional, rural and remote parts of the country are by their very nature, hyperlocal conduits for information and news. In our most recent Community Radio National Listener Survey, 65% of respondents in non-metro regions said that their top reason for listening to community radio was for ‘local information and local news’, with 44% listening for ‘local voices/local personalities’.<sup>4</sup> In some regions, community radio is the only source of local information. This creates a community mouthpiece which is trusted by listeners.

### Government Sponsorship Campaigns – on-air spots

Station programming is unique for each community need – and can be delivered in diverse languages, and in culturally relevant and community specific ways. Paid Government sponsorship (“advertising”) campaigns (in the form of on-air radio ‘spots’) delivered across the sector, can get to hard-to-reach regional audiences including First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with a disability, and areas underserved by other media. These communities most benefit from access to digital services and resources such as the Digital Tech Hub.

The sector’s media buying agency, Spots and Space ([www.spotsandspace.com.au](http://www.spotsandspace.com.au)), provides a cost-effective solution to the challenge of reaching diverse audiences, and can deliver in 126 languages.

### Community Education Projects

To compliment on-air ‘spots’ the CBAA runs Community Education Projects, or public education campaigns. In a Community Education Project, community radio content signposts to local support services, provides advice and recommendations, and offers a platform for individuals with a lived experience to be heard.

Radio features, interviews and audio content are transmitted on multi-regional broadcast infrastructure including satellite, analogue and digital radio, and online. Content is promoted to all 450 community radio stations via media packs posted out across the country. Culturally and linguistically diverse listeners are supported through translated and targeted content.

The CBAA can develop a Digital Tech Hub Awareness Project that will deliver a national community radio campaign that allows people living in regional Australia to access information about the Digital Tech Hub. This will be done by sharing the lived experiences of people seeking increased support to make the most of different communications technologies, or stories from Australians with more limited digital literacy using the Tech Hub and finding it easy.

The CBAA has a proven record of developing and delivering innovative and highly effective communications projects that result in long-term changes to attitudes and behaviours. The project’s methodology is based on a similar community education project run by the CBAA – the Suicide Prevention Project (SPP) delivered in partnership with the Department of Health’s National Suicide Prevention Leadership and Support Program.

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<sup>4</sup> Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2019). National Listener Survey Non-Metro Fact Sheet Wave #2 December 2019 [online] Available at: <https://www.cbaa.org.au/sites/default/files/media/McNair%20yellowSquares%20-%20NLS%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Non-Metro%20-%202019%20-%20Wave%20%232%20-%20190101.pdf>

The project has been running for over ten years, with funding renewed again until at least June 2021. The project team has won a Queensland Media Award; MHS Mental Health Award; and has been a finalist in the United Nations Media Peace Awards.

In March 2018, CBAA member stations were surveyed on the use and impact of the SPP:

- 78% of stations reported receiving phone calls from listeners to request phone numbers or further information about services after hearing segments on-air.
- Of those listeners who contacted the station, 32% stated the content encouraged them to seek help, 88% said their awareness of mental health and suicide prevention issues had been raised and 54% said that they became informed of mental health and suicide prevention services.

## **Question 8: What information would be useful in assisting communities to prepare for, and best use digital connectivity during disaster and emergency situations?**

Community radio stations play a critical role in regional communities both during natural disasters and in the recovery. The devastating bushfires that impacted Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria towards the end of 2019 and into 2020 saw over 80 community radio stations broadcasting to fire affected communities. These stations are closely linked to their local area and communities, drawing their announcing, producing and support volunteers directly from the towns and locales where they broadcast.

Being hyperlocal conduits for information and news, in many fire affected areas when power, internet and mobile reception went down, community radio stations played a critical role in emergency broadcasting and delivering local information on fire threats, road closures and available community evacuation and relief services.

While digital and online infrastructure are vital assets in emergency situations, telecommunication and electricity infrastructure are not immune to damage and outages. In times of intense disaster, terrestrial broadcast equipment including AM and FM equipment for community radio, ABC, SBS and commercial radio is vital to ensure the delivery of clear and consistent information to communities. In the recent bushfires, only two from 80 community radio station broadcast towers were damaged, compared to dozens of telecommunication towers.

To best support communities in accessing information in preparation for a disaster, the Digital Tech Hub's resources should include a list of broadcasters (community, ABC/SBS and commercial), their frequencies and website streams in each region. This ensures a multi-platform approach to supporting communities to access up to date information in times of crisis.

The CBAA is committed to working closely with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications to further share our ideas, experience and knowledge to leverage community radio's role in supporting regional communities access the information they need. As the peak body for the sector, and an active participant in research, policy and planning in broadcasting reform, the CBAA is well placed to provide further advice.

Kind regards,



Jon Bisset  
Chief Executive Officer