



# 2021-22 Federal Budget

CBAA Submission

3 February 2021



COMMUNITY  
BROADCASTING  
ASSOCIATION OF  
AUSTRALIA



## Introduction

To ensure the supply of essential services, the community broadcasting sector seeks an increase in its annual funding from \$20m to \$25.3m on an ongoing, renewed and indexed basis, via the Australian Government's Community Broadcasting Program (CBP). This increase will secure critical support for community broadcasting stations and the communities that rely on their services. Details of the uplift and arrangements are outlined below.

The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) appreciates the long-standing support that successive Commonwealth Governments have provided to the community broadcasting sector for over four decades. Without this support, the communities that rely on community broadcasting would have less access to vital health and safety information (including during recent emergencies such as the 2019/20 bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic); access fewer or no local news and media services; and have fewer or no opportunities to participate in creating media, gaining the vital experience to launch home-grown careers in the media, music and cultural industries.

CBAA welcomes this opportunity to provide input into the Federal Budget process and to engage in detailed discussion about the issues this submission raises. The CBAA works closely with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, having recently provided significant detail on the budget priorities outlined below. The CBAA looks forward to further collaboration with the DITRC to sustain and grow community broadcasting's service to Australia.

## Community Radio and the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA)

The CBAA is the peak body and national representative organisation for the 450+ community radio broadcasters in every State and Territory, licensed under the *Broadcasting Services Act (1992)*.

The CBAA is a global leader in the not-for-profit media space, championing an independent and free media sector which complements the footprint of public and commercial broadcasters. Community broadcasting is a vital part of the Australian community and media landscape, across regional, remote and metropolitan Australia. The CBAA provides a portfolio of programs that strengthen the capacity and sustainability of not-for-profit community broadcasting organisations.

Community radio licensees deliver more than 500 radio broadcast services (on AM/FM and DAB+ digital radio) across Australia and play an important role in providing a voice and news media services for communities not adequately serviced by other broadcasting sectors. These include:

- First Nations Australians
- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
- Educational services
- Religious/faith-based communities
- Print-disabled communities
- Music, arts and cultural services
- Youth and seniors' communities
- LGBTIQA+ communities

The most recent National Listener Survey of more than 15,000 Australians shows that over 5.8 million listeners aged 15+ across Australia tune in to community radio stations each week (29% of the Australian population).<sup>1</sup> Community radio audiences continue to grow year on year, with listenership

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

up from approximately 3.76 million in 2004. Of these listeners, over 1.5 million do not listen to any commercial radio and, further, 918,000 listen exclusively to community radio (that is, they listen to community radio but not commercial radio or ABC/SBS radio).<sup>2</sup>

The top reason listeners give for tuning in to community radio is to hear local information and news (52%).<sup>3</sup> Importantly, 76% of community radio stations are in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia,<sup>4</sup> and 27% of Australians living outside of metropolitan areas – 1.75 million people – tune in to community radio each week.<sup>5</sup> Regional and remote stations reflect the interests of their local communities – including music, sports, environment and arts – and connect people separated by hundreds of kilometres via the airwaves. Across all stations on average, 70% of content is locally produced,<sup>6</sup> including hyperlocal news and public interest journalism – and in some regions, these stations are the only source of local news.

Local information is particularly important during a crisis – and the 2019/20 bushfire season reinforced the role community broadcasters play in times of emergencies. Over 80 community radio stations broadcast to fire-affected regions and undertook diverse activities to support local communities – providing emergency broadcasts; acting as a catalyst for community dialogue; supporting and coordinating fundraising initiatives; and connecting people in regional Australia to critical services. The Government’s Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements recognised the valuable role community radio plays to keep communities safe, particularly when other communications services go down: “Broadcast media, such as the ABC and community radio, provide information to isolated and rural communities when they are unable to receive landline or mobile phone communication, use the internet or watch television.”<sup>7</sup>

Community radio stations draw their volunteers and paid workers from the hyperlocal and specialised communities that they serve. They are enmeshed in community, and can deliver Government health information, particularly regarding COVID-19, in a community-appropriate way. For many non-English speaking communities, community radio is the only source of information and news available in their language. First Nations community radio stations are also the fastest and most responsive conduits for getting information through to First Nations communities in a way that is accessible, in-language and timely. There are roughly 60 First Nations media organisations operating in over 235 communities across Australia, producing media content in more than 25 languages.

Community radio plays a vital role in supporting and nurturing arts, music and creative industries – enriching listeners, while supporting cultural industries and workers deeply impacted by the pandemic. On average, 37%<sup>8</sup> of music played on community radio is Australian – far surpassing the requirement of 25%. Research indicates that figures this high are not being achieved by commercial radio.<sup>9</sup> Community radio is a launchpad for the careers of many Australian musicians (e.g. Dan Sultan, Gotye, The Vines, Courtney Barnett) and listeners discovering new music they love will financially support the artist – by purchasing music, merchandise and tickets to gigs (when available).

Employment, work experience and training opportunities are also created and enriched by community radio. Musicians, on-air presenters and behind the scenes news, current affairs, programming, production, sound and engagement workers – both paid, and volunteer – receive training, support and mentorship. Many contributors start their media and cultural careers in community radio, such as the

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2 Ibid

3 Ibid

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

5 Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2019). Community Radio National Listener Survey Non-Metro Fact Sheet, Wave 2. [online] Available at: [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](https://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)

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

7 The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements’ report was tabled in Parliament on 30 October 2020. Chapter 13, point 13.6, p.285.

8 Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2018). CBAA Programming & Technology Survey.

9 [www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-22/commercial-radio-missing-australian-music-quotas-researcher-says/9575146](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-22/commercial-radio-missing-australian-music-quotas-researcher-says/9575146)

ABC Q+A's host, Hamish McDonald, who started his career broadcasting at community radio's National Radio News service based in Bathurst, NSW.

The CBAA's and the community radio sector's priorities are to enhance local and hyperlocal news production; enhance our leaders' governance, management and business skills; and ensure that stations are delivering content where their listeners are - via analogue broadcast services (FM or AM), DAB+ digital radio and online in a complimentary nature, through apps, streaming, podcasting etc.

## Urgent renewal of existing levels of funding is critical

The sector's funding is forecast to be reduced annually by \$3.9m on 1 July 2021. Without continuation of this funding there will be significant impacts to the sector's ability to broadcast at its current output, and reductions in media diversity and public interest journalism across Australia.

The loss of this funding will significantly impact community radio's DAB+ digital radio broadcast services (\$1.9m), station online services (\$600k), enhanced news programming (\$800k) and enhanced training for leadership (\$600k).

**Table 2.5.1: Budgeted expenses for Outcome 5**

	2019-20 Estimated actual \$'000	2020-21 Budget \$'000	2021-22 Forward estimate \$'000	2022-23 Forward estimate \$'000	2023-24 Forward estimate \$'000
<b>Program 5.1: Digital Technologies and Communications Services</b>					
Administered expenses					
Ordinary annual services (Appropriation Act No. 1)					
Amplifying Australia's Voice in the Pacific	5,675	5,675	5,675	-	-
Audio Description (a)	nfp	nfp	-	-	-
Australian 5G Innovation Initiative	-	5,000	10,000	5,000	-
Cadetship Program and Scholarship Program	837	-	-	-	-
Cherry Gardens Project	-	200	-	-	-
<b>Community Broadcasting Program</b>	<b>19,733</b>	<b>19,984</b>	<b>16,069</b>	<b>16,195</b>	<b>16,405</b>

Figure 1: Federal Budget 2020-21, Portfolio Budget Statements, Budget Related Paper No. 1.10 - Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Communications Portfolio, p.69.

## The Digital Radio Project

DAB+ digital radio is increasingly the way to broadcast free-to-air radio services on an economic basis. It provides an alternative free-to-air broadcast platform and minimises increasing costs of analogue (AM and FM) transmission.

The CBAA Digital Radio Project coordinates and supports over 55 digital radio services nationally, managing platform infrastructure and service delivery. This scheduled withdrawal of funds will result in a sudden and immediate impact to current services, as well as to planning and development activities across the Digital Radio Project.

- Community digital radio ensures that Australians can get access to a wide-range of diverse, free-to-air media services. Community stations broadcast a significant amount of local content, local news, information and stories that reflect Australian identity, character and cultural diversity.
- Listening to live radio is still the primary way Australians consume audio, capturing over 60% of all audio listening. 30.4% of this is happening via a DAB+ digital radio and is increasing.<sup>10 11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Commercial Radio Australia, GfK, September 2018, published February 2019. (Digital Radio listening, all stations 30.4%)

<sup>11</sup> Community Broadcasting Association of Australia 2019, National Listener Survey, Wave 1 Data Report, July 2019. (Listening using DAB+ digital radio community stations, 30.5%)

- The total annual allocation for the Digital Radio Project in 2020/21 is \$4.3m – the first \$2.3m is recurrent, with the remainder up for renewal every four years.
- **In this regard, the CBAA has long advocated that the Digital Radio Project be funded at \$4.5m on an ongoing basis, and indexed, to ensure no disruption to community DAB+ digital services, that digital radio can continue rolling out to new regions and that current services be maintained and enhanced. To meet ongoing need, the CBAA seeks the renewal of funding targeted for community digital radio beyond 1 July 2021 and increased from \$4.3m to \$4.5m.**

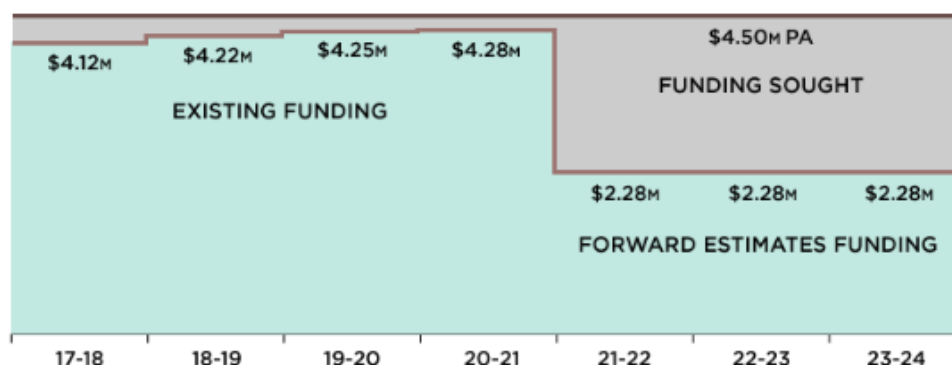


Figure 2: Funding to community broadcasting includes targeted annual support for free-to-air DAB+ digital radio.

## The scheduled withdrawal of the remaining \$2m from the \$3.9m allocation

The remaining funding reduction of \$2m will impact sector-wide projects developed to enhance stations' online services (\$600k), deliver enhanced news programming (\$800k) and increase enhanced training (\$600k)<sup>12</sup>, as follows:

- To assist community broadcasters to maintain and enhance their provision of news content, the CBAA seeks the Federal Government's ongoing funding of the Enhanced National News Project (via the Community Broadcasting Program), which produces and broadcasts 84 bulletins each week to 119, mainly regional stations, with an audience of 4.7 million listeners aged 15+ each month.<sup>13</sup>
- To continue the community radio sector's development and improved online presence, the CBAA seeks the Federal Government's ongoing funding to support the industry's Multiplatform Distribution Project, which includes the development and maintenance of a centralised community radio portal and app; affordable streaming and website solutions for community stations; and affordable access to smart speakers and integration with online platforms such as for podcasting.
- To support the capacity, skills and competencies of the community radio sector's workforce and volunteer base, the CBAA seeks the Federal Government's ongoing funding to maintaining the Enhanced National Training Package, as it continues to enhance the management and small-business skills of the sector in an evolving media landscape.

## Additional \$5m spend for exponential community output

Further, topping up the sector's allocation by **\$5m** to \$25.3m in total will support the necessary inputs to individual stations and their communities. Stations will be able to better undertake activities to build their resilience (e.g. by upgrading ageing infrastructure) to enhance their impact during

<sup>12</sup> 'One Nation support for media reform package,' (15 August 2017), *Parliament of Australia: Press releases*. Retrieved from [parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=ld:%22media/pressrel/5457268%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=ld:%22media/pressrel/5457268%22)

<sup>13</sup> Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2020), National Listener Survey data from Wave #1 January, compiled by McNair YellowSquares in October 2020 based on updated list of subscribing stations.

emergency events – such as the 2019/20 bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, where community radio services played a critical role.

Each year, competitive Development and Operations grants made available for 450+ eligible community radio stations (administered by the [Community Broadcasting Foundation](#)) is currently at or near \$6.5m (with \$1.7 earmarked for radio transmission support, and around \$1.6m drawn from funds specifically and importantly earmarked for specialist services including First Nations, CALD and print-disabled reading). The remainder ~\$3.2m is the most oversubscribed funding segment and is distributed via grants to hundreds of applicants.

This quantum is put in context when compared to the requests for this funding from radio stations which cumulatively exceeded \$8m (see graph below). This funding shortfall restricts the ability of the sector to sustain essential services, with impacts felt most significantly across regional Australia – regional and remote community radio stations make up about 70% of applicants.

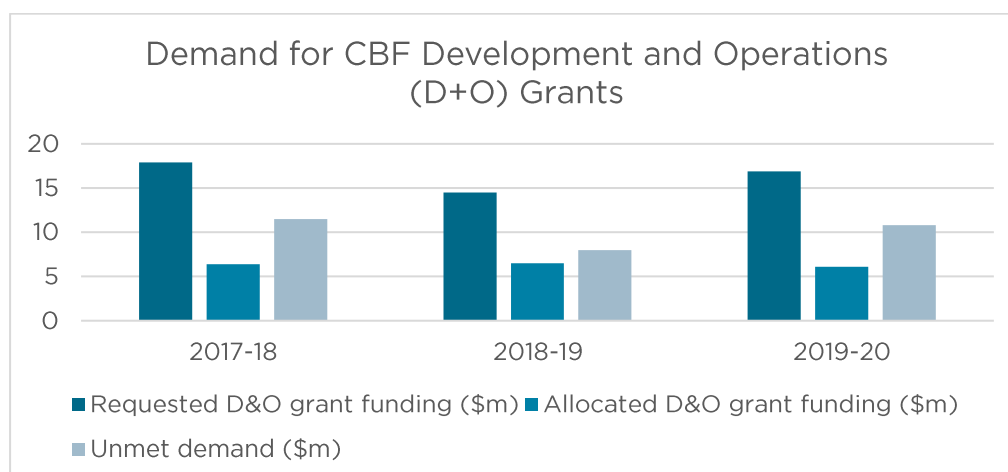


Figure 3: Demand by community radio stations for Development and Operations Grants - administered by the Community Broadcasting Foundation.

An increase in funding to the Community Broadcasting Foundation of \$5m annually, ongoing and indexed, specifically to the Development and Operations grants pool (delivered through the CBF’s “General Sustainability and Development Fund”) will meet the critical portion of station need. It will be available to all eligible stations and will be used to ensure resilience through upgrades to ageing technology infrastructure (e.g. transmission and studio equipment); creating and funding local employment opportunities; investing in strategic planning and training; and support an increase in capacity after the economic effects of drought, natural disasters and COVID-19.

Community radio stations achieve their significantly low-cost/high output radio production, with an overlay of strict regulations limiting their commercial fundraising capacity, through self-funding via sponsorship, fundraising and membership contributions and the efforts and commitment of community volunteers and employed staff.

Federal Government funding is an essential base, which is leveraged by community radio stations to grow other revenue streams – whether by investing in sponsorship staff; assets to undertake a fundraising radiothon or fundraising event; or by growing their digital presence to collect online donations.

## Conclusion

This submission promotes Federal Government measures to strengthen the community broadcasting sector and enhance the availability of broadcast services available to the public; increase the amount of Australian music and stories reaching listeners; connect communities to critical information during

emergencies; and increase connection, resilience, and sense of diverse and pluralistic Australian identity.

**The CBAA seeks an increase to the community broadcasting sector’s annual allocation from \$20m to \$25.3m on an ongoing, renewed and indexed basis, via the Australian Government’s Community Broadcasting Program (CBP). This will:**

- Ensure no disruption to 55+ community digital radio services and enable roll-out to new regions;
- Ensure no disruption to and the continued development of sector-wide projects including the enhanced national news project; enhanced training for leadership; and improving station online services.
- Sustain and enhance individual community radio station development and operations – through upgrading ageing infrastructure; building resilience for emergencies; increasing strategic planning; and creating employment opportunities, particularly in regional Australia.

Continued Federal Government investment will support community broadcasting stations and the diverse communities that rely on their services.

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