



January 2023

# Community broadcasting matters to Australia's wellbeing and progress

## Submission on measuring what matters

### Introduction

Community broadcasters welcome the Government's efforts to *measure what matters* and provide a foundation for Australia's efforts to lift living standards, boost intergenerational mobilities and create more opportunities for more people.

An Australian Framework to measure progress and well-being should recognise and refer to the non-economic indicators of well-being supported by artistic and cultural engagement, volunteerism, community participation and connection and social cohesion and trust.

Community broadcasting should be recognised for its unique contribution to supporting these social outcomes and policy objectives.

Community broadcasting contributes to the nation's overall well-being and progress. Community broadcasting is a critical enabler of Australian arts and culture, a focal point for volunteerism and a trusted provider of local news and information to underrepresented groups. These activities foster trust in community and institutions and contribute to individual and social wellbeing. Five million people aged 15+ tune in to community radio each week.<sup>1</sup>

This submission informs Treasury's agenda to *measure what matters* by providing insight and data demonstrating community broadcasting's social impact.

### About the CBAA

The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) is the peak body and national representative organisation for over 450 community media organisations. The CBAA exists to support strong and successful community broadcasters. We champion an independent and free media and provide a portfolio of programs aiming to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of community broadcasting organisations across Australia. Over 450+ community broadcasting licensees deliver over 500 community radio services on AM, FM and DAB+.

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<sup>1</sup> Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2022) Community Radio Listeners Survey [online] available at: [www.cbba.org.au/broadcasters/get-data-national-listener-survey-station-census/national-listener-survey-fact-sheets](http://www.cbba.org.au/broadcasters/get-data-national-listener-survey-station-census/national-listener-survey-fact-sheets)

## The social impact of community broadcasting

Community radio is critical to the health and cohesion of Australian communities.

The community broadcasting sector promotes the diverse identities of Australians that enrich the social, cultural and democratic fabric of Australian society. It plays a critical role in providing a voice for Australian communities that are underserved by mainstream media – including communities in regional and remote Australia, First Nations communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, faith-based communities, youth and seniors' communities, the LGBTIQA+ community, people with a disability, and diverse artistic and music communities. with

### Community broadcasting promotes social inclusion and connection

Local independent community radio and television stations create community connections that are vital to a thriving, inclusive society. Community broadcasting allows real, local issues to be discussed and for community connections to be established around either geographic communities or communities of interest. It allows community voices to be heard regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Community broadcasting can also help reduce loneliness through programming, or encouraging and increasing volunteerism, reducing the stigma of being lonely and helping create more community connection.<sup>2</sup> Community broadcasting is valued as a medium to reduce social isolation and enrich community cohesion.<sup>3</sup>

Loneliness is a growing issue in Australia with a serious social cost.<sup>4</sup> Lonely people are more likely to experience drug abuse, depression, alcoholism and suicide.<sup>5</sup> Community broadcasting provides a familiar voice that keeps audiences company. It also serves to connect local, culturally or linguistically diverse and first nations communities. Listeners benefit from community radio by maintaining a connection to the outside world. Prior to the pandemic, around a third of Australians experienced loneliness and around 10 per cent experienced it in any given year.<sup>6</sup> Community radio stations are not only media outlets, they are a point of connection around which people can rally to support and care for their communities.

First Nations media organisations are essential champions of First Nations music, stories and culture. They nurture and support First Nations artists and are a conduit for the production and a promotion of their work. Just over 30% of community broadcasters are First Nations media organisations. They provide access to First Nations arts and culture to around 320,000 First Nations people, including around 100,000 very hard to reach people in remote Indigenous communities, or nearly 50% of the First Nations population.<sup>7</sup> Four out of ten of people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (38%) listen to community radio during a typical week.<sup>8</sup> The investment of communities into their local radio station means that a community radio station can be of exponential value to its community.

### Community broadcasting champions engagement with the arts and music that improves wellbeing and health

A growing body of evidence demonstrates the positive impacts that engagement with the arts has on health and wellbeing. A recent WHO review looked into around 3000 studies that collectively demonstrated the impact of arts on mental and physical health across prevention and promotion

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<sup>2</sup> Community Radio: The Joy of Social Connection (2018) Murdoch University p 3

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 1

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Above and Beyond Broadcasting: A Study of First Nations media and the COVID-19 pandemic (2022) [online] available at [firstnationsmedia.org.au/sites/default/files/files/Submissions/Above\\_and\\_Beyond\\_Broadcasting%20\(1\).pdf](http://firstnationsmedia.org.au/sites/default/files/files/Submissions/Above_and_Beyond_Broadcasting%20(1).pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Community Radio Listeners Survey [online]

of health and management and treatment of illness.<sup>9</sup> Practicing art and engaging with the arts are accepted social determinants of health. Current intersections between Australian arts and health are across music and psychology, trauma and psychosocial design and cultural practice for Indigenous health.<sup>10</sup>

Community broadcasting connects artists with audiences. 33% of listeners to community broadcasters tune in to hear Australian music and local artists, and 35% in to hear music not available on other stations.<sup>11</sup> Community broadcasters champion local artistic expression in diverse communities, making arts visible and accessible.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of community radio to communities through the new *National Cultural Policy – Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place* and calls on Government to increase support for community broadcasting to deliver local news, tell local stories and provide a platform for diverse voices and Australian music.<sup>12</sup>

*“Commercial and community television and radio broadcasting also play a role in promoting social inclusion by broadcasting local news, telling local stories, and providing a platform for emerging and established local artists. First Nations broadcasters also support and strengthen First Nations languages and connections to culture in communities across Australia. The importance of the broadcasting sector has been demonstrated in recent years during natural disasters and the pandemic.”<sup>13</sup>*

## Volunteerism and social participation underpin community broadcasting

Community stations rely on volunteers. The sector is powered by 22,000 volunteers compared with only 900 paid staff.<sup>14</sup> Volunteers promote the diverse and unique identities of Australians, giving voice to and enriching the social and cultural fabric of Australian society. CBAA participation survey shows 99% of staff and volunteers in community broadcasting find value working in the sector.<sup>15</sup> 63% of sector volunteers participate to share the voice of their local community and 78% of sector volunteers participate to share their love of music, culture and the arts.<sup>16</sup> This passion ensures voices of underrepresented communities are heard in the Australian cultural landscape.

The benefits of volunteerism extend beyond the benefits of social participation toward health and wellbeing. Individuals who volunteer benefit from improvements in mental health and quality of life. Volunteering is correlated to greater self-assessed psychological wellbeing, self-esteem, happiness, and satisfaction with life, lower symptoms of depression and anxiety, and lower indicators of suicide risk<sup>17</sup>. Volunteering also supports mental health through increased social interaction and purpose. Support for volunteers and volunteer involving organisations are essential to protecting and promoting mental health in Australian communities.

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<sup>9</sup> Health Evidence Network and World Health Organisation synthesis report 67, What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review (2019), Daisy Fancourt and Saoirse Finn. [9789289054553-eng.pdf \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/9789289054553-eng.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Australian Council for the Arts (2022) Arts, Creativity and Mental Wellbeing: Research, practice and lived experience discussion paper [online] available at <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/arts-creativity-and-mental-wellbeing-policy-development-program/>

<sup>11</sup> Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2022) Community Radio Listeners Survey [online] available at: [www.cbba.org.au/broadcasters/get-data-national-listener-survey-station-census/national-listener-survey-fact-sheets](http://www.cbba.org.au/broadcasters/get-data-national-listener-survey-station-census/national-listener-survey-fact-sheets)

<sup>12</sup> Commonwealth of Australia (2023) National Cultural Policy – Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place [online] available at <https://www.arts.gov.au/what-we-do/national-cultural-policy> pp 105

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 87

<sup>14</sup> Community Radio Participation Census (2022) pp 10

<sup>15</sup> Community Radio Participation Census (2022) pp 10

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Volunteering Australia (2021) Evidence Insights: Volunteering and Mental Health pp 4

Community media volunteers come from diverse communities including First Nations Australians, communities in regional and remote Australia, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, faith-based communities, youth and seniors' communities, the LGBTQIA+ community, from people with a disability, and diverse arts and music sub-cultures. The sector offers skills and training across Australian creative and cultural industries media, music production, song writing, podcasting, tech, event management and arts critiquing. It is uniquely positioned to provide opportunities for volunteering, community participation and sociability.

## Community broadcasting engenders trust in others and institutions

Community broadcasters provide up-to-date, local information in-language and in the appropriate community context. They act as a catalyst for community dialogue, linking people to critical news and information.

*Social researchers consider trust to be a fundamental ingredient to sustaining community well-being in highly interdependent modern societies<sup>18</sup>. There is strong evidence to suggest, for instance, that communities with high levels of generalised trust are much better at tackling poverty and disadvantage than those without.”<sup>19</sup> - The Scanlon Foundation Research Institute (SFRI)*

Access to information promotes trust, a key indicator of wellbeing. Community radio showcases local content, news and alternative voices, fulfilling demand for independent, localised news and information, particularly in underserved regional and remote communities outside commercial programming.

Local media provides content that caters to the needs and interests of local communities, contributing to the connectedness and wellbeing of those communities. 97% of sector listeners feel community radio provides them with an important connection to their community. 93% of listeners tune in because community radio delivers content that is not offered by other media outlets and broadcasters. And 91% of sector listeners feel community radio is an important source of local news and information.

The top reason listeners give for tuning in to community radio is to hear local information and news (50%) nationwide and (62%) in non-metropolitan areas.<sup>20</sup> Community radio showcases local content, news and alternative voices, fulfilling demand for independent, localised news and information, particularly in underserved regional and remote communities.

Community broadcasting stations in regional, rural and remote parts of the country are hyperlocal conduits for information and news. The community broadcasting sector has a long history of delivering local news and public interest journalism to diverse communities across Australia with 80% of licenses are located in regional areas.

## Recommendation

**An Australian Framework to measure progress and well-being should recognise and refer to the non-economic indicators of well-being supported by artistic and cultural engagement, volunteerism, community participation and connection and social cohesion and trust.**

**Community broadcasting should be recognised as a related policy objective linked to these indicators for its unique contribution to supporting these social outcomes.**

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<sup>18</sup> Esteban Ortiz-Ospina and Max Roser, 'Trust', Our World in Data, 22 July 2016, <https://ourworldindata.org/trust>.

<sup>19</sup> 7. Halima Khan and Rick Muir (eds.), Sticking Together: Social Capital and Local Government, (IPPR and London Borough of Camden, 2006), <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/sticking-togethersocial-capital-and-local-government>.

<sup>20</sup> Community Radio Listeners Survey (July 2022) [www.cbaa.org.au/broadcasters/get-data-national-listener-survey-station-census/national-listener-survey-fact-sheets](http://www.cbaa.org.au/broadcasters/get-data-national-listener-survey-station-census/national-listener-survey-fact-sheets)

Should you wish to discuss our submission further, please do not hesitate to contact Reece Kinnane, CBAA's Head of Advocacy and Communications at [reece.kinnane@cbaa.org.au](mailto:reece.kinnane@cbaa.org.au) or via 02 9310 2999.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jon Bisset' with a stylized flourish underneath.

Jon Bisset

Chief Executive Officer