

Q & A

NARROWCASTING

WE SPEAK TO RON CAMPLIN, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF 2BS BATHURST, ABOUT NARROWCASTING OPPORTUNITIES, AS HE SEES THEM.

Why have you ventured into narrowcasting?

We have to look at those areas we can't cover commercially.

There is a specific need. Over the years, people have asked us, why don't you play this music or why don't you give us better service here - and you can't.

I've been in this business for about forty five years, in management for 38 years, ownership for 35 and the same questions continue to arise from our audience and advertisers - can't we be more specific with certain program elements, such as racing. There is a very strong lobby which really wants to have a racing service. I think a specific racing service in narrowcasting is one we must look at eventually.

In narrowcasting we have started Tourist Radio, Tiny Tots Radio and we have plans for a farm radio service. These services complement our commercial station, 2BS. There is no restriction to the number of narrowcast services that I can bring in under the one roof and operate specifically for farmers, the racing audience, tiny children.

Do you see narrowcasting as a threat?

Other broadcasters look at narrowcasting as a threat. I see it as opportunity. No one can do it better than the current broadcasters if they have a mind to. We have all the facilities here. As a commercial broadcaster it is a simply a matter of complementing the service we already have and using existing staff. When we sell an advertising package on tourist radio, it's a package we can sell in conjunction with 2BS as well.

I have been in a small country town for many years and we were not able to provide diversification of programming for audiences. It was not viable when we were limited to one licence to a



Ron Camplin

'I am very excited about the possibilities of narrowcasting - mostly because there is no restriction, there is no limit to the potential.'

market - now the limit is two. Even with two commercial stations, I would not use one as an exclusive farm service, or for tiny tots. I would look at it commercially and provide say, one for under 40s and one for over 25s. These are the only viable options in regional markets.

Narrowcasting fills up all the holes.

What is your background in radio?

I started at 2CH as office boy, then I was an announcer at 2XL Cooma for one year. In 1953 I went to 2MG Mudgee as an announcer and became manager in 1955 and managing director and part-owner in 1958. Mudgee's popula-

tion was 5000 in the town in those days (with a potential audience of 12 000) and the radio station power was 100 watts.

How does Tiny Tots radio work?

In Bathurst, there are 2800 babies between 12 months and 6 years - which is about half the audience of the first radio station I owned. There was nothing on air for them. Tiny Tots started broadcasting in early November and is on air 24 hours a day, seven days a week. People tell me that when the kids are a bit upset at night they can turn the radio on and they go back to sleep.

We run endless tapes with 70 minute loops and renew them each day. There is no advertising now, but we do run lots of community announcements. We will start selling advertising early in '94, once it is established.

We are getting wonderful comments from parents, pre-school and the city council. I think it's a goer from the initial reaction.

What about farm radio?

A large percentage of our audience lives on farms. This is very much a farm community, with a large number of small farms. 2BS does not do much farm radio programming because it's not a majority farm audience, but there are still a lot of farmers who require farm information.

Narrowcasting will allow me to do that.

What are the important factors in developing narrowcast services?

There will never be the revenue generated by something like Tiny Tots radio in a market of this size, but it's how people perceive the overall broadcasting operation that's important. It affects how we will be able to sell 2BS

AM as commercial services. People will feel better about the broadcasting service we give generally, as a result of all these additional services we will be able to provide.

What are the benefits?

It has been a frustration of mine for many years that we have not been able to provide a complete service within the community. For example, a newspaper covers sport, real estate, finance etc. I've tried all sorts of formulae to mix up radio listening and all you do is lose the bulk of the listeners.

Commercial radio, because of its nature, must maximise its audience. All commercial radio has to deliver to its customer, the advertiser, is an audience, and it has to maximise that audience. It's very easy to turn a commercial radio station off. The first thing is to have programs that are of general interest to your total audience, whereas with farm radio, I will be able to play 24 hour farm information, wool prices, vegetable prices, river heights, over and over again. We do the same with tourist radio and Tiny Tots.

There is a number of tourist radio services now - how has yours been received?

We have had a wonderful response from tourist radio and a wonderful response from tourist people in town. The tourist office in Bathurst has tourist radio playing and whenever people call into the tourist office they are encouraged to listen.

We started in February 1993. We update the tapes once a week and cross promote with 2BS.

Do you have any expansion plans?

In a few weeks we will be starting a special tourist service for Oberon, called Oberon Information Service. The final format will depend on how the people of Oberon would like it done.

We have also applied for tourist and information service for Blayney and we plan to put Tiny Tots in both those towns.

We think Tiny Tots is something we could do in many other areas, but we would like to test it first.

Farm radio needs are different. It needs to cover enormous areas, so 1 watt in a farming district is not viable and we have already used up the two drop through-frequencies available in this area.

Once planning is concluded, then we can look at the possibility of moving into a farming area, perhaps on top of a hill etc., having three or four transmitters in the coverage area to cover all the farms in the area.

What about the future?

I am very excited about prospects, possibilities and the potential available now.

What we are planning for now is digital audio broadcasting which will be the next major development. Radio stations should not be limited to one program source. The only thing that really matters is the kind of service that you give to the community. To date, we have only been able to give the equivalent of a one page service.

The newspaper route is the only way locally owned regional services will survive. There is a very strong push from community radio which is now moving into mainstream of broadcasting. It is very strong in localism and local markets.

Who do you regard as your competition?

Greatest competitor to small regional stations is aggregated television. They have the potential to reduce the size of their advertising windows to smaller and smaller markets e.g. have just a Bathurst window. Currently there are three stations with 13 minutes per hour each advertising and they are sold at rates the local radio stations cannot compete with because they do not have the inventory.

Narrowcasting gives me that inventory. It gives me more ads to sell for the same dollar and gives me the competitive edge.

TELEVISION VIOLENCE IN CANADA

On 28 October 1993, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) accepted the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) Television Violence Code. The code is effective immediately, and replaces the original 1987 code. It is expected that all stations will comply with the code from 1 January 1994.

The main features of the toughened CAB television violence code are:

- an outright ban on the broadcast of gratuitous violence, based on a clear definition of gratuitous violence;
- programming containing scenes of violence, suitable for adults only, cannot be broadcast before 9 p.m.;
- sensitivity about violence against vulnerable groups such as women and 'visible minorities';
- sensitivity about violence against animals;
- special sensitivity in children's programming; and
- a national program classification system to be developed and tested in cooperation with other segments of the broadcasting system, and to be incorporated into the code by September 1994.

As reported in the August issue of *Update*, Debra Richards Director Program Services ABA, along with other international representatives, participated in the debate on television violence and children's television, held in Montreal earlier this year with Canadian broadcasters, advertisers and program makers, on how to implement an effective code of practice for the portrayal of violence on television.

