

Community radio offers diversity of music, locally-produced programs, and community participation

ACMA has released research into the different services and operations of more than 260 community radio stations across Australia. ‘This is a comprehensive report that illustrates the diversity of this important sector of the radio industry, and the way in which community radio serves distinct communities,’ said Ms Maddock.

The report, *Survey of the Community Radio Broadcasting Sector 2002–03*, includes information on programming, program sources, music genres, number of staff, volunteers and subscribers, income and expenditure. These are broken down by location and categories of community interest as listed in the table below.

The data was collected using an online survey form by the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) in 2004 through its CBOOnline Database Project. The project is an initiative of the Community Broadcasting Foundation that was funded by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

The Australian Broadcasting Authority (now ACMA) also provided financial assistance to the CBAA in order to increase the survey response rate and sample size.

The sample includes 154 stations out of a total of 262 community stations operating at the time of the survey. Sample weights were applied to the data to extrapolate sample estimates to the total population of community radio broadcasters across Australia.

The collaboration between

the CBAA, the Communications Research Unit (a unit of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts), and ACMA enabled the provision of aggregated CBOonline data from the CBAA, an independent analysis of the data by the CRU, and the publication of this report of statistical tables by ACMA.

USE OF THE RESEARCH BY ACMA

ACMA is using the research results when assessing community radio licence renewal applications.

As ACMA is responsible for the allocation and renewal of community radio broadcasting licences, the research data provides a basis from which to consider the operations of individual community radio licensees. ‘This research is a very useful comparative tool to assist the Authority in assessing community radio licensees at licence renewal time,’ said Ms Maddock.

The *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* requires that community radio licences not be operated for profit, that the community participate in the operations of the services and the selection and provision of

programs, that services meet community needs, and that licensees have the capacity to provide their services.

MAIN RESULTS

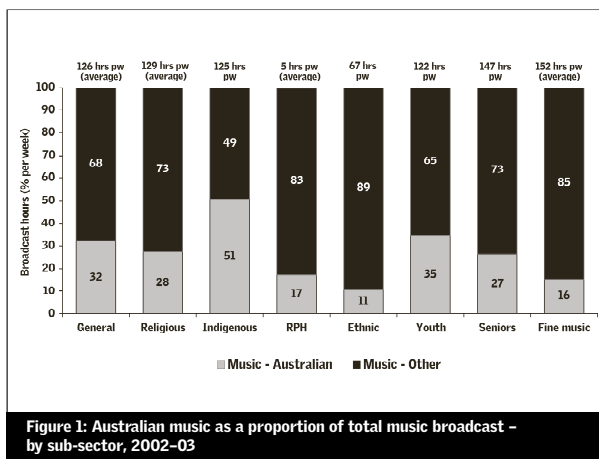
The national community radio sector broadcasts a total of 43,836 hours per week. Ninety-eight per cent (or 256 out of 262) of stations broadcast 168 hours per week, while the remaining stations broadcast between 126 and 150 hours per week.

MUSIC

Music was the mainstay of many community stations (accounting for around 70 per cent of total programming) with a wide variety of styles on offer. Music styles included classical, hip hop, electronica, jazz, and ethnic music, as well as more popular styles such as rock/pop, easy listening and country music.

The proportion of total programming time devoted to music ranged from around 75 per cent by general community, religious, Indigenous and youth services, to just over 90 per cent by services that target seniors/mature-aged and fine music communities. RPH and ethnic stations placed greater emphasis on spoken word programming (97 per cent and 60 per cent of total programming respectively).

The Community Broadcasting Codes of Practice 2002 require at least 25 per cent Australian music to be broadcast by individual community licensees as a proportion of total music. However ethnic and classical (fine music) services are required to broadcast a minimum of 10 per cent Australian music. The survey found that each sub-sector met,



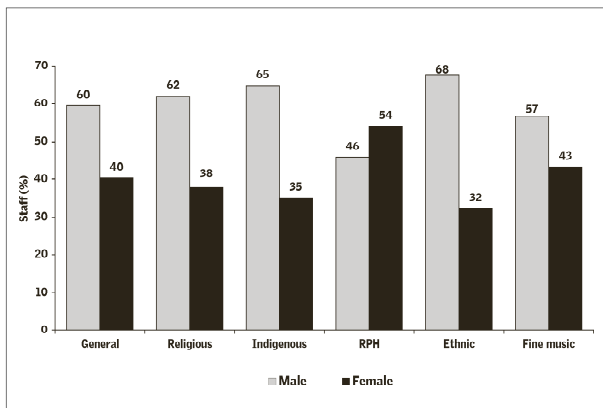


Figure 2: Gender of staff - by sub-sector, 2002-03 Note: percentages for the youth and seniors sub-sectors are not reported due to small sample sizes.

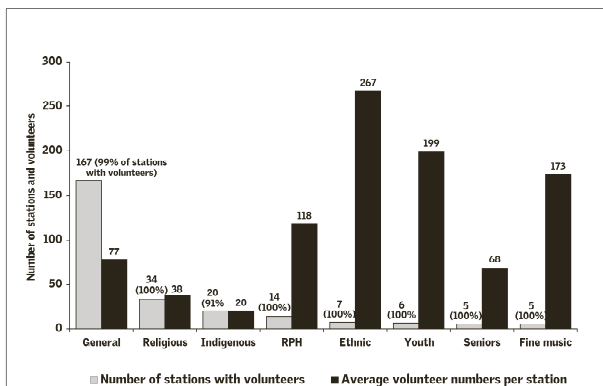


Figure 3: Volunteer numbers - by sub-sector, 2002-03

and in some cases exceeded, these code requirements (Figure 1).

LOCALLY-PRODUCED PROGRAMS

Most programs were put together locally by individual community radio stations. On average, three-quarters of all programs across Australia were locally-produced. The remaining quarter was drawn from satellite services.

The proportion of locally-produced content was highest for youth services (95 per cent or 160 hours per station per week on average), fine music services (92 per cent or 155 hours), and stations that target seniors/mature-aged people (91 per cent or 147 hours).

Stations in metropolitan and suburban areas had the highest proportion of locally-produced content (86 per cent of total programming). This compares to 72 per cent for regional areas and 60 per cent for rural areas. Rural and regional services relied more heavily on satellite services than their metropolitan and suburban counterparts.

STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND SUBSCRIBERS

Nationally, 144 community radio stations (55 per cent of all stations) employed a total of 880 staff, with an average of six staff employed per station. Less than half of staff were employed on a full-time basis. The remaining 118 stations (45 per cent) did not employ

staff. Generally, females accounted for less than half (39 per cent) of the number of employed staff across the community radio sector, with the exception of RPH stations where 54 per cent of staff were female (Figure 2).

The sector relied heavily on community support, with more than 20,000 volunteers in total, or an average of 80 volunteers per station across the sector.

The gender distribution of volunteers averaged 45 per cent female and 55 per cent male involved in each community station. As with staff, RPH stations were the only service type to have more female (62 per cent) than male (38 per cent) volunteers.

Two hundred and forty-one stations (92 per cent of all stations) reported having fee-paying subscribers, making a total of 113,400 people who subscribed to community radio stations across Australia.

Fee-paying subscribers averaged 471 per station. Community participation in station operations was most evident in the ethnic, youth, and fine music sub-sectors with high levels of both volunteers and subscribers.

FINANCES

Community radio stations across Australia reported

income of \$46.6 million, with an average income of \$177,805 per station. Average income was highest for fine music, ethnic and Indigenous stations, and lowest for seniors/mature-aged stations. The sector drew from a range of income sources showing considerable diversity across the different community interest sub-sectors.

Sponsorship was the largest income item that accounted for almost one-third of total sector income. Grants from the Community Broadcasting Foundation accounted for \$3.5 million or eight per cent of total income. The foundation grants were the most significant source of income for ethnic stations.

The sector reported a total expenditure of \$45 million, and the average expenditure per station was \$171,809. As would be expected, non-profit community radio services spend almost all of their income on operational requirements.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The CBAA will be releasing the 2003-04 survey results later this year.

The full report containing 82 tables and 20 figures is on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au and go to ACMA > Publications > Radio & Television > Broadcasting > Research.

COMMUNITY RADIO BROADCASTING SERVICES, 2002-03

NATURE OF COMMUNITY INTEREST SERVED BY STATIONS	NO. STATIONS
General community	169
Religious	34
Indigenous (not including Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services)	22
RPH (radio for print-handicapped)	14
Ethnic	7
Youth	6
Seniors/mature-aged	5
Fine music	5
Total stations	262

Note: some special interest community radio services, i.e. gay and lesbian, arts, and specialist music stations are included with general community stations for statistical purposes.