



and export-oriented new music and realise a range of spin-off benefits for youth welfare, employment and training in one fell swoop. Here was a chance to demonstrate the new, more inclusive approach to cultural policy promised by the formation of a combined arts and communications portfolio. It would involve no further legislation, regulation or expenditure, and would be based, not on speculation or dubious extrapolation from economic models, but on one of the most successful experiments in the history of Australian broadcasting. But the 'save HITZ' furore died down and its frequency was resumed by another contender, a Christian station offering 'Melbourne's best mix of light hits'. HITZ returned to the ABA's file of aspirant community broadcasters and the planning process proceeded, interminably. The station must now wait for the finalisation of the ABA's planning process, then apply for a community radio licence when the ABA chooses to advertise. In the meantime, it conducts further test transmissions when permitted to do so.

While recognising the importance of maintaining the integrity of ABA procedures and protecting the interests of other aspirants, it is disappointing that the lessons of the HITZ summer did not really register, that sympathy could not be translated into action. It is disappointing that a regulatory regime designed to facilitate the development and availability of new services was, in this case, unable to do so. It is disappointing that the government was either unable or unwilling to support a small but vital cultural enterprise which embodied so many of the better features of *Creative Nation*. But it is heartening to know that, although the earlier window of opportunity was lost, the HITZ story continues. □

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Teenagers tune in, turn on ...and drop out

The ABA has released a report which affirms the importance of radio to teenagers, while plotting a decline in their use of the medium.

Music, new music and all that: Teenage radio in the 90s found that the average teenager listened to nearly 13 hours of radio each week, a fall of three hours (20%) from five years ago. In contrast, adult listening declined by only 9% over the same period. The report notes the general industry view attributing the decline to the introduction of FM 'mainstream' stations and the disappearance of teen-oriented AM stations. Upon entering the market in the early 1980s, FM radio stations targeted audiences in the 18-30 year old bracket, and have largely retained these original audiences, who are now approaching, or have attained, middle age. Consequently, these stations maintain program formats that appeal to those whose musical tastes were formed during the 1960s and 1970s, and increasingly distance themselves from contemporary musical trends. Musical styles excluded from these formats for being too avant garde - styles such as dance and rap music - are increasingly regarded as mainstream by younger audiences. However, this thesis offers only, at best, a partial explanation, as the decline in teenage radio listening follows a consistent downward trend commencing in the the 1960s.

While 63% of those surveyed rated current radio services 8/10 or better, most (53%) wished for a wider choice of radio stations, 69% were not loyal to any station. The report states:

'The apparent inconsistency between the reasonably high satisfaction level expressed by teenagers about radio in general and the declining trend is not easy to reconcile. This finding may support the hypothesis discussed earlier that teenagers tend to spread their available leisure time across an increasing array of technologies. However, [it] may also suggest that lack of choice influences teenagers to increase their use of alternative music sources such as CDs or cassettes.'

The tentativeness of the report's conclusions follows necessarily from the disparate nature of its data. Much of the report uses information gathered in 1994 for the ABA's wider survey of listening habits, *Listening to the Listeners*, published last year. Information derived from other studies, together with ratings surveys and interviews with industry figures, was also used. The studies examined children of differing age brackets, with the median group (that is, information derived from *Listening to the Listeners*) being 14-19 years and an overall age range of 8-19 years. Although in some respects a 'composite' report format - which presents a pastiche of findings in order to display an overall mosaic - can be enlightening, in this case it is merely confounding. Moreover, the study repeats and, in so doing, compounds the flawed assumption contaminating each of its constituent elements: that of the homogeneity of perception, taste or outlook of those whose ages span the cusps of childhood and adulthood. None of the excerpts of individual reports appearing in the survey breaks down the responses of its subject age group into further sub-groups.

Music, new music and all that: Teenage radio in the 90s raises important questions; finding answers to them requires a more committed approach. □

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