

Community Broadcasting Association of Australia

Submission to the new National Cultural Policy

May 2026



About the CBAA

The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) is the national peak body for community broadcasting licensees. We are proud to be awarded Association of the Year 2025.

The CBAA is a cultural organisation established for the promotion of community broadcasting including both radio and television.

Over 90 per cent of all community broadcasting licensees are CBAA members. They play an important role in providing a voice for communities that aren't adequately serviced by other broadcasting sectors, including:

- First Nations communities
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Educational services
- Faith-based communities
- People with a print disability
- Music, arts and cultural services and communities
- Youth and seniors' communities
- LGBTQIA+ communities

The CBAA is a company limited by guarantee and is also a large, registered not-for-profit entity under the ACNC.



Acknowledgement of Country

CBAA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We acknowledge First Nations' sovereignty and recognise the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities by Traditional owners of Country throughout Australia.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past and present. We support and contribute to the process of reconciliation.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been telling stories for millennia and we continue this rich tradition of sharing, protecting and enhancing culture. We honour the dedication and expertise of First Nations broadcasters and their work to strengthen and connect communities.

The CBAA is based on the lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation.

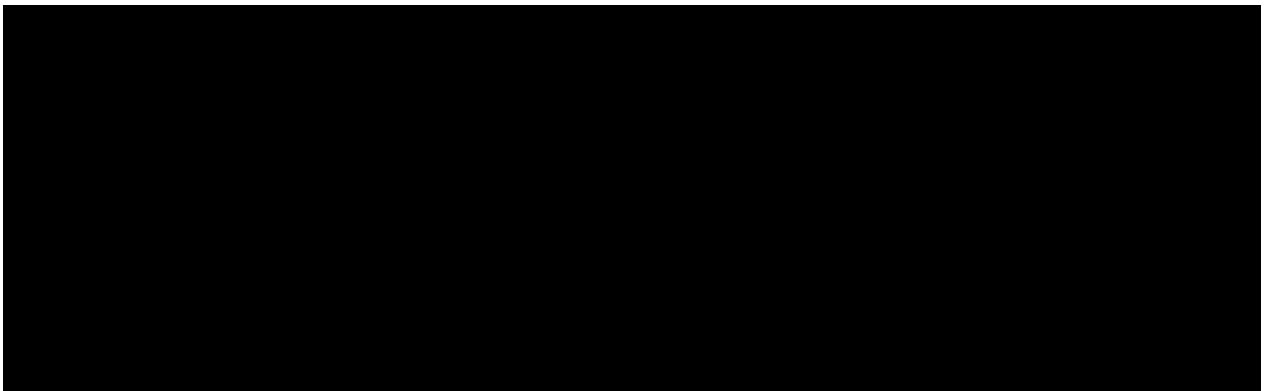


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Executive summary

The CBAA welcomes the invitation to inform Australia's new National Cultural Policy.

Community broadcasting is a significant cultural asset contributing to the success of the National Cultural policy across each of Revive's five pillars.

Pillar 1: First Nations First

34 First Nations organisations provide 143 community broadcasting services, the great majority in regional and remote areas. They champion First Nations culture and voices – broadcasting in-language to people in remote communities – and First Nations music playing some of the highest levels of Australian music of any broadcasters in the country.

Australians from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background are 48% more likely than the general population to listen to community radio with over one third (37%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples listen tuning in during a typical week.

Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story

Community broadcasters amplify the voices, art and culture of all Australians including First Nations, multicultural, LGBTQIA+, disability, youth, religious communities. Regional and remote communities and artists are well represented where over 70% of community broadcasters are based.

Multicultural voices are celebrated on community radio with local presenters across the sector broadcasting in over 110 different languages. Over one quarter of people (29%) who regularly speak a language other than English listen to community radio each week.

Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist

Community radio and TV stations are purpose-driven, democratic and inclusive communications hubs dedicated to supporting their artistic communities. On average, community radio stations broadcast 37% Australian music each week, exceeding the 25% quota. Many stations go much further playing more music and profiling artists from their region or a specific genre. 4ZZZ in Brisbane averages 60% Australian music and FBi in Sydney often exceeds its goal of 50% Australian music and 25% local (Sydney) music. Many stations present specialised music programming focusing on progressive, First Nations, alternative, electronic, classical, jazz and other genres. Stations like PBS in Melbourne demonstrate an organisational-wide commitment to diverse music and supporting the local live music and arts scene. The sector contributes \$153.1 million annually to Australian music industries, pays over \$2 million in licence fees to songwriters and music publishers.

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Australia's community broadcasters provide a truly national cultural infrastructure that supports all communities to participate in media – in sharing diverse art, culture and stories with one another.

Over 320 organisations deliver over 500 services on AM, FM, DAB+ digital radio and online platforms from bricks and mortar studios – 70% of which are located regional and remote areas.

Reaching over 5.39 million Australians, 1 in 4 people every week, and powered by over 900 staff and 18,200 volunteers, community broadcasting is one of the most expansive, diverse and trusted cultural platforms in the country.

One of the Guiding Principles in the Community Radio Broadcasting Codes of Practice is “We support and nurture local arts, music and culture.”

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience

Community radio is where Australian artistic careers are built. It is consistently described by artists as the first platform to play their new music.

Stations, programs and presenters play a unique, specialist role curating music discovery for listeners. 34% of listeners tune in specifically to hear Australian music and support local artists, while 35% seek out music unavailable anywhere else.

Community radio helps artists to find their first audience – the foundation from which musical careers are launched and sustained. Broadcasting 390,960 hours of Australian music annually¹, more than double the entire commercial radio sector, community radio generates \$38.9 million in airplay value and an estimated \$14.7 million in additional ticket, merchandise and music sales for Australian artists each year.²

Many of the artist first platformed on community radio go on to international success. Community broadcasters connect Australian artists with audiences at home and abroad through on-air discovery, live broadcasts and festivals. Radio streaming platforms and app-based listening make local stations available internationally.

"I think it's the lifeblood of the scene in the sense that, yeah, it's for many artists, it's a stepping stone, but not just a stepping stone, it's consistent, it's there. And it's always accessible and full of people so passionate about music that I'd struggle to see a music scene without a strong community radio ecosystem, because it does hold the rest of the industry up." – L-FRESH The LION³

Moving from policy to action

Revive: A place for every story, a story for every place includes and action to "increase support for community broadcasting...". That community broadcasting has a place in the National Cultural policy is welcome recognition.

In 2024-25 the Australian Government delivered an additional \$27 million for community broadcasting over three years. The Department claims "This will allow the sector to stabilise and modernise its operations".

However, even with this additional funding, real funding levels this year are lower than they were a decade earlier.

Poor resourcing is a handbrake on the sector's capability.

- The average station has an operational cost equal to 103% of station income
- 54% of stations have no paid staff.

As such, the potential for community broadcasting to contribute to achieving the vision of the National Cultural Policy remains largely unrealised.

New investments are required to secure the ongoing sustainability of Australia's largest and most diverse independent media sector, to upgrade services for the future and to level-up cultural impact.

This consultation for a new National Cultural Policy presents a critical opportunity to better integrate community broadcasting across the pillars of the National Cultural Policy and to achieve greater impact supporting an inclusive, harmonious and creative society.

The new National Cultural Policy should strategically engage the Australian community broadcasting sector and provide targeted, ongoing and indexed investment needed to sustain and grow the sector's impact.

A strong community broadcasting sector is key to ensuring Australia's new National Cultural Policy achieves its vision for *A place for Every Story, A Story for Every Place*.

¹ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio: Building the music-media ecosystem* (2026), viewed 12 May 2026.

² Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

³ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

Summary of recommendations

CBAA recommends the new National Cultural Policy include targeted commitments that support community broadcasting to have a greater impact amplifying Australian music, arts and creative industries, with content that celebrates diverse tastes, perspectives and interests including young people, First Nations, multicultural, disability, LGBTQIA+, faith-based and regional and remote communities.

1. The Federal Government's investment in First Nations community broadcasting should be increased (from \$27m to \$40m pa), be committed on an ongoing basis and indexed to maintain real value over time. This is critical to ensure First Nations voices, stories, culture, language and arts are centred in the National Cultural Policy.
2. Community Broadcasting Program funding should be increased (from \$27m to \$40m pa), committed on an ongoing basis, and indexed to maintain real value over time.
3. Parliament should legislate a radio prominence framework to secure Australian's access to diverse and local community radio on AM, FM, DAB+ receivers and streaming audio in all cars and smart speakers.
4. Music Australia and Creative Australia grant funding policies and guidelines should enable community broadcasters to apply for a range of arts grant opportunities in recognition of their crucial role as arts and cultural hubs for their communities.
5. Music Australia should make targeted investments in community broadcasting capability to achieve outcomes for Australian music programming, broadcast, curation and promotion, including:
 - a. an industry-led workforce, skills and training study for community broadcasting
 - b. Music Director roles at key community radio music stations
 - c. Upgrading existing community broadcasting digital platforms and content-sharing infrastructure to provide improved access, discoverability and visibility of community radio music for artists and broadcasters, and to develop new audiences for diverse Australian music.

The Australian Government's commitment

Revive committed to an action to: *'increase support for community broadcasting to deliver local news, tell local stories, and provide a platform for diverse voices and Australian music'*.

In response to this commitment, additional funding was allocated to community broadcasters in the December 2024 mid-year Federal Budget. The community broadcasting sector is grateful for this investment of \$9 million per year for three years (to 2027-28) that has eased some pressure on programs. Funding bodies have worked to deliver these funds to broadcasters as soon as possible and are being prioritised to support critical station operations. This additional investment will go some way to relieve pressure on the balance sheets of those community broadcasters that are struggling the most to keep up with increasing costs, declining funding availability and high community demand.

The Australian Government is an important partner in supporting the community broadcasting sector through two vital grant programs:

1. *Community Broadcasting Program (CBP)*, managed by DITRDCA and administered independently through the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF); and
2. *Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Program (IBMP)*, managed and administered by the NIAA.

Even with the commitment of new funding in the 2024-25 mid-year budget, funding for these programs has experienced real decline over the recent decade and not kept pace with rising costs.

A greater, longer-term investment in community broadcasting is required to support ongoing sector sustainability and to unlock the sector's potential to achieve more impact in critical areas of the National Cultural Policy.

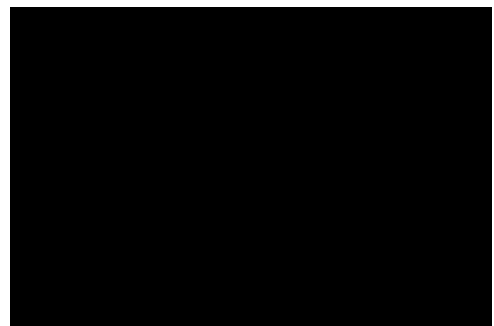
New research from Griffith University and Monash University highlights the significant social return on investment community radio delivers to Australia's music industry. The research ([Community Music Radio: Building the Music-Media Ecosystem \(2023–2026\)](#)) found 292 community radio music stations contribute more than \$153 million annually to the Australian music industries and generate returns of up to \$5.55, with a median return of \$2.47 across high-intensity stations for every dollar invested.

Increased government investment in the community broadcasting sector is a direct investment in the growth and diversity of Australia's music ecosystem.

If the above recommendations are adopted, a strong and sustainable community broadcasting sector will ensure:

- the voices, stories, language and culture of First Nations are centred in the national story.
- "a place for every story" through CALD, LGBTIQ+, faith-based and disability media.
- "a story for every place" through strong, local media and arts hubs in regional and remote communities
- growing audiences for diverse, new Australian music
- supportive media hubs local arts, cultural and creative industries

A commitment to elevate the impact of community broadcasting will achieve impact across all pillars of the new National Cultural Policy.



Pillar 1 - First Nations First: Recognising and respecting the crucial place of First Nations stories at the centre of Australia's arts and culture.

Community media champions First Nations voices

Community broadcasting is a platform sharing First Nations songs and stories at scale.

First Nations community broadcasters work across metropolitan, regional and remote areas and are vital sources of cultural connection and strength for communities. They share essential communications and are champions of First Nations language, music, stories and culture. They nurture, produce and promoting First Nations music, festivals and arts.

"When I'm played ... it helps continue that much-needed effect of Indigenous people seeing Indigenous people and then believing. Seeing is believing, so representation matters... then blackfellas start to see themselves in the station". (DOBBY, Murrawarri (First Nations) and Filipino artist).⁴

Community broadcasting helps to close the gap through; keeping communities, cultures, and languages strong; providing digital inclusion services, offering training, skills and employment opportunities; as well as providing a platform for essential communications fundamental to achieving health and education outcomes.

34 First Nations media organisations provide 143 services. Over a third (37%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people listen to community radio each week. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are 48% more likely than the general population to listen to community radio.⁵

Case Study: First Sounds distributes new First Nations' music.

First Sounds is a collaborative initiative sharing curated compilations of independent First Nations' music across community radio. Now in its 14th year, First Sounds provides a launch pad for independent First Nations artists to reach new audiences.

Each volume is curated by a panel of First Nations artists and media figures with a focus on developing awareness about regional remote and metropolitan First Nations artists, their songs and stories. The compilations source entries from First Nations musicians across the country, distributing them to community radio stations for airplay both digitally and physically via amrap.org.au.

A partnership between Gadigal Information Services (Koori Radio) and CBAA – First Sounds showcases the talent and stories of First Nations musicians across Australia.

Community broadcasters are a powerful platform for centring First Nations arts and culture within the national cultural fabric.

All community broadcasters are committed to reflecting First Nations cultures and advancing First Nations self-determination – a strategic objective in the community broadcasting Roadmap 2033.

The Community Radio Broadcasting Codes of Practice contain commitments all community broadcasters need to abide by including supporting the self-determination of First Nations people and prioritising First Nations voices discussing First Nations issues.

Indigenous community music stations play some of the highest levels of Australian music across the entire broadcasting sector. They prioritise airplay for First Nations artists - both new and established. 60% of listeners felt that music content on First Nations' community radio contributes to their cultural experience and deserves financial support.⁶

⁴ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

⁵ McNair yellowSquares, *Community Radio National Listener Survey Data* (2025).

⁶ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

"I really like when they play, especially, Aboriginal artists doing country music, because it's more relatable and I feel like they're talking to me as an Indigenous person...So I really liked that ... it was telling like a nice story or a nice message to Aboriginal people that could be listening in their car and, you know, they're feeling a bit downtrodden about everything. I listen to that song and I'm like, 'Okay, well, it's fine. Don't forget what I'm fighting for.' And then I keep going on with my day".

– Listener to Triple A ⁷

Recommendation: The Federal Government's investment in First Nations community broadcasting should be increased (from \$27m to \$40m pa), be committed on an ongoing basis and indexed to maintain real value over time. This is critical to ensure First Nations voices, stories, culture, language and arts are centred in the National Cultural Policy.

Case Study: Strengthening culture, music and language across the Pilbara and Kimberley

The PAKAM (Pilbara and Kimberley Aboriginal Media) Radio Network is an association of First Nations community broadcasters and media producers in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions of Western Australia. The network shares broadcasts between towns and remote communities across the region via digital platforms and a satellite service from Broome – which connect 12 Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services and 8 community broadcasting stations across the region.

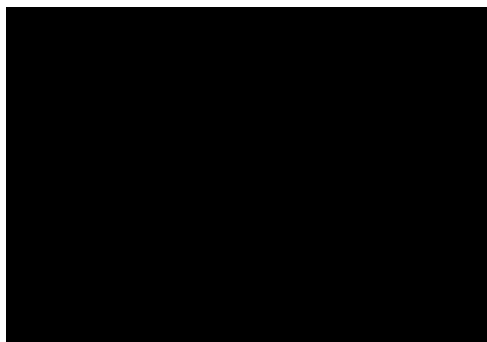
First Nations music is broadcast throughout the night with artists from the Kimberley region in heavy rotation. This helps remote local communities and communities across the country to keep connected to culture, art and music.

PAKAM runs an outside broadcast production truck that folds out into a concert stage. The truck supports the production, broadcast and recording of local festivals, story-telling and live music events in remote communities.

Highlights of PAKAM's 2025 broadcasts include:

- the 26th Mowanjum Festival, Australia's biggest traditional song and dance festival celebrating the culture of the Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunambal peoples.
- The annual Festival in Derby – a significant community event for the passing on of knowledge and culture.
- Bidyadanga Festival – a major annual arts and culture festival held in Western Australia's largest remote Aboriginal community.
- The Ngayuru Waaringarrem Health and Wellbeing Festival
- The Ngayuru Waaringarrem Halls Creek Music Festival – strengthening family ties and celebrating cultures through music and dance.

Broadcasts are recorded and published on various platforms including Indigenous Community Television (ICTV), ICTV Play, Indigitube, Youtube, Soundcloud and Facebook. Recordings are maintained in the PAKAM community archive.



Live broadcast: Mowanjum Festival 2024 PAKAM music truck

⁷ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

Pillar 2 - A Place for Every Story: Reflecting the breadth of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.

Community broadcasting reflects the diverse cultures, beliefs and languages of Australia, nurturing a strong sense of belonging among all Australian communities.

Community broadcasters are licenced, regulated media organisations. The legislated purpose of community broadcasting is to serve communities underserved by commercial and public broadcasters. They reflect the breadth and diversity of modern Australia with dedicated faith-based, youth and seniors' stations and LGBTQIA+.

"The wonderful thing about this radio station is it can reach people who feel isolated. The station doesn't necessarily know who's listening, but they're out there, you know. They could be a mum with a young baby, could be older people who are living alone. ... That's what, to me, is so wonderful about what this station does". – Listener: Rhema FM ⁸

A range of programming, and dedicated stations, represent, and cater for, people with a disability. Community broadcasting provides strong participation opportunities and develops greater understanding, appreciation and celebration of people with disability in the broader community.

Case Study: Community news platforms disability rights

Power Media political reporter Emma Myers made headlines when she questioned Health Minister Mark Butler during the National Press Club this year about his decision to 'cut the support of NDIS participants' as Australia's cost of living crisis continues when revealing more than 160,000 people would lose access to the scheme.

Bringing public attention to concerns about accessibility, equity and adequacy of the proposed changes to essential supports under the NDIS scheme, Myers' question was showcased by commercial news reporting, supporting the power of a voice too often left out of national conversations.

Community broadcasters are place-based media. They are obliged by legislation to engage their local community in their programming and broadcasting operations. With over 500 services nation-wide – and 70% based in regional and remote Australia – community broadcasting is the ultimate medium to support the vision of *A story for every place*.

"I want us to sound local. I know that we have a reputation nationally and even internationally in some circles. But I want us to sound like we're from this specific place. I want us to sound like we're from [this city] but more specifically that we're from [this suburb]. So I want there to be an element of localism in the way that we sound." – Program host

1.539 million Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people listen to community radio for an average of 15.5 hours per week. Collectively, the sector broadcasts in over 110 different languages.

⁸ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

Case Study: Bringing Melbourne's multicultural communities to air.

3ZZZ is a multicultural community radio station in Melbourne. It operates at the intersection of multiculturalism, live music and cultural celebration. The station's programming directly represents diverse communities by broadcasting regularly in over 70 languages and providing a platform for artists whose work exists largely outside the Western musical canon. In-studio live performances are a regular feature, with artists from across Melbourne's cultural communities coming to the studio and connecting with audiences who share their heritage, language and creative traditions.

Live broadcasting is central to 3ZZZ's cultural contribution. The station delivers two to three live broadcasts from community events each month and four major live cultural performances are produced by the station each year. Playing both a curatorial and platforming role, the station showcases community-led music and performances and partners with cultural festivals and events. The station's role both as a platform and producer speaks to its connection to Melbourne's multicultural arts ecosystem.

3ZZZ's reach also extends to international cultural exchange. The station has hosted many touring acts and international groups seeking connection with Australian-based musicians and audiences.

Until July 2025, 3ZZZ produced Polyfonix, a weekly live music program that showcased culturally diverse musicians from around Melbourne in live-to-air and studio performances. The program provided a platform for culturally diverse music and musicians. This activity has ceased due to funding constraints.

Stations nurture artists, musicians and creatives from diverse backgrounds and representing different artistic, cultural and musical traditions and sub-cultures. They enrich our social and cultural fabric and by telling community stories that mainstream media ignores. Community broadcasters ensure all Australians, regardless of their background or location can see and hear their stories portrayed.

Case Study: Former AFL player Leigh Ryswyk comes out as gay on JOY 94.9

Leigh Ryswyk the former Brisbane Lions AFL player and SANFL champion, came out as gay during an interview on the program GayFL: A Queer Footy Show (GayFL), on community radio station JOY 94.9 earlier this year. JOY 94.9 is Australia's LGBTQIA+ broadcaster, with more than 33 years proudly representing Australia's rainbow communities that brings to life the stories, news, creativity and performances of the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies.

No other AFL player in the sport's entire history had ever come out as gay, prior to Leigh. As part of JOY 94.9's community, Leigh felt safest talking to JOY 94.9's GayFL – speaking directly to his community and the GayFL team, rather than any other media outlet. GayFL is a loved program that celebrates AFL and AFL Women's news, culture, events, social media and off-field antics from a uniquely queer perspective, for and by the LGBTQIA+ community.

[REDACTED]

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Case Study: The largest collection of LGBTQIA+ podcasts in the world

JOY 94.9, Australia's LGBTQIA+ broadcaster, with more than 33 years proudly on-air connects through touchpoints on-air, online and in-person to foster community and help bring people together for all LGBTQIA+ community members to feel connected both at home and globally.

JOY 94.9's LGBTQIA+ podcast library is the largest collection of LGBTQIA+ podcasts in the world. Boasting extensive audio archives dating back to 2008, JOY 94.9 has become a global contributor of LGBTQIA+ culture.

Each month the station tracks global audience statistics, with regular large listenership numbers from the United States of America, China, Singapore and the United Kingdom. People around the world turn to JOY 94.9 because they do not have access to queer stories being shared in their own countries and communities. International podcast downloads frequently outnumber domestic downloads, and there are consistent downloads from countries where being same-sex attracted or gender diverse is illegal.

'The I in Us' is one such show and the only one of its kind in world. A program that shares stories by intersex people both in Australia and across the world, the program encourages people with intersex variations to connect with each other and features conversations from community members underrepresented by global media, breaking assumptions about the intersex community.

JOY 94.9 transcends borders, providing queer communities across the world a place for all voices and to be seen, shaping Australian and global queer culture and community.

Pillar 3 - Centrality of the Artist: Supporting the artist as worker and celebrating artists as creators.

Community radio gives new, local and experimental artists a fair go. The proven commerciality of an artist is not a condition of entry. Stations – through their eclectic mix of programs – provide space for experimentation and niche genres to be platformed and explored by audiences.

Community radio is consistently described by Australian artists as the lifeblood of the music industry, the first platform where new work finds listeners, and the foundation from which careers are launched and sustained.

In 2024/5 alone, CBAA members paid over \$554,191.00 to PPCA and community broadcasters paid over \$2 million to APRA AMCOS in licence fees.

Community radio listeners also contribute to financially supporting artists. In 2025, 11% of listeners reported buying tickets to a live gig after hearing an artist on community radio. 16% of listeners reported purchasing an artist's music or merchandise after hearing their music on community radio. By championing local artists through airplay, community radio stations generate an estimated \$14,772,970 in extra merchandise, music and ticket sale revenue for Australian artists.⁹

Presenters on community radio are experts in their field and the taste-makers of new Australian music. They celebrate artists as creators and curate music listening for engaged and trusting listeners.

For the growing audience of community radio listeners, 'hearing music not available on other radio stations' and 'hearing Australian music and supporting local artists' are among the top reasons for tuning in.¹⁰

Community radio supports artists to build a long-term relationship with engaged and supportive local audiences – to practice, share and promote their work – transforming creative potential into artistic careers.

⁹ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

¹⁰ Community Radio Listener Survey (2026)

"I just wouldn't want to be an artist entering this industry right now without community radio." – Mo' Ju (artist)¹¹

Community broadcasters are creative hubs for their communities often function simultaneously as event co-ordinators, producers, publishers, promoters, curators and recording labels. They partner with artists and arts organisations to deliver festivals, events, exhibitions and live performances – all of which support artist income and careers. Community supports musicians, visual artists, theatre makers, comedians, authors, dancers, curators, producers and arts workers. This breadth of activity makes community broadcasting a critical and irreplaceable component of Australia's cultural infrastructure one that treats artists as workers and invests in their professional development.

"A lot of [artists] come to me just asking questions about the industry – like how do I upload to AMRAP or how do I get my song on Spotify? So I really love making myself available to them and answering questions. So we've kind of created this little hub that they come to and they know that they will be listened to here" – Program Host

Recommendation: Music Australia and Creative Australia grant funding policies and guidelines should enable community broadcasters to apply for a range of arts grant opportunities in recognition of their crucial role as arts and cultural hubs for their communities.

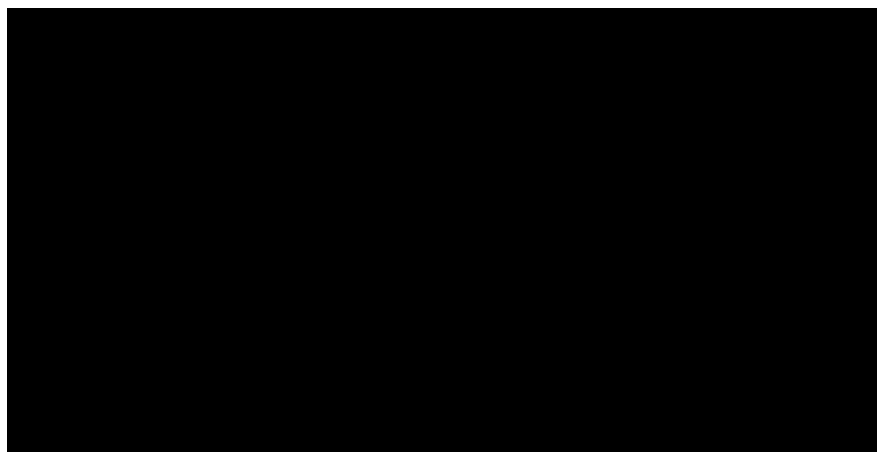
Case Study: Triple R 102.7FM (Melbourne) celebrates Australian live music.

Triple R is a volunteer-run community radio station in Melbourne with global reach and around 1 million listeners monthly. Its Brunswick East headquarters houses six studios and a 150-capacity live performance space, widely regarded as the best-sounding room in Melbourne.

Live At RRR makes live music as diverse and accessible as possible, broadcasting free-to-air and streaming on demand so performances reach more listeners in their cars and lounge rooms, beyond the bars and clubs. Free Friday evening events welcome audiences of all ages and cultures, with free attendance for subscribers and First Nations people. The participation of First Nations artists and diverse communities is central to the project's mission.

Each artist is paired with a genre-expert presenter, creating an intimate space where musicians can give real context to their work. Crucially, every performing artist receives a professionally mixed and mastered audio recording and a video of their performance, many of which are later released - recognising musicians as workers whose output has lasting value.

Triple R has a strong record of supporting artists early in their careers, platforming artists like Courtney Barnett and Amyl and the Sniffers before they achieved mainstream airplay. Many have since returned voluntarily, acknowledging the role the station played in helping them build sustainable careers.



¹¹ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

Case Study: Community hubs: community radio sustains Australia's live music ecosystem.

The Community Hubs: Strengthening Live Music Networks in NSW pilot demonstrates the unique capacity of community radio to function as cultural infrastructure not just as broadcasters, but an active network sustaining local arts and music ecosystems.

Led by the CBAA, MusicNSW in partnership with Sound NSW, the initiative supports 5 regional community radio stations across Western Sydney, the Northern Rivers, Central Coast, Bathurst and Orange. By combining local airplay with workshops, mentoring, skills development and live music events, these stations strengthen the networks between emerging artists, local venues, music industry professionals and audiences.

Community radio hubs evidence how community radio generates income opportunities for musicians through live performance while supporting the local venues and businesses that anchor regional and outer metropolitan communities' culture. The pilot also strengthens social connection, community participation and cultural expression by bringing together artists, broadcasters and audiences around local music. The project demonstrates how community radio delivers meaningful public value by supporting Australian arts and culture, fostering local creative industries and ensuring diverse Australian stories and music continue to be heard.

"The thing that always strikes me about community radio is – and almost the smaller they get the more pertinent this is – the amount of effort they've put in to preparing for those interviews. The genuine passion you can hear coming through for music. I mean I don't mind doing interviews, but I certainly enjoy them a lot more when you're talking to someone who you can feel is a genuine music fan and that's something that's always pretty much across the board with community radio". – Alex Cameron (Artist) Bad//Dreems ¹²

Pillar 4 - Strong cultural infrastructure: Providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts, culture and heritage.

Community broadcasting is critical cultural infrastructure.

Over 320 organisations deliver over 500 services on AM, FM, DAB+ digital radio and online platforms from bricks and mortar studios all across Australia.

Stations are purpose-driven, democratic and inclusive communications hubs for their communities supporting information-sharing, cultural connection, music as well as other arts and creativity. Access, diversity and inclusion is inbuilt into the legislative foundation of community broadcasters. The First Nations owned and led community broadcasters as well as those representing culturally, and linguistically diverse communities are invaluable assets to support achievement of the National Cultural Policy's vision and its commitment to putting First Nation's First and finding a Place for Every Story.

Community broadcasters are a vital infrastructure for Australian musical artists providing irreplaceable engagement with discerning local, national and international audiences through on-air broadcasting, the amrap.org.au digital music distribution platform, live broadcasts, festivals, the sector-wide Community Radio Plus listening app and commercial online streaming platforms like iHeart.com.

The sector contributes \$153.1 million annually to Australian music industries and provides a national skills pipeline for media and creative industries.

For every \$1 invested in community radio music stations, up to \$5.55 is returned to the Australian music industries in socio-economic value.¹³ Live performances, exhibitions, museums, films, books, festivals,

¹² Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

¹³ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

gallery openings and sculpture walks are supported through promotions, interviews, reviews and profiles on community broadcasting.

Community radio stations are a significant economic contributor to Australian music, generating \$153.1 million annually for music industries.¹⁴ The top 39 'High intensity' music stations contribute more than \$105 million in promotion, gigs, studio time, and music industry personnel training annually.¹⁵

Australia's network of community broadcasters is a proven economic driver for the live and recorded music sector, delivering significant cultural and economic value.

Listening is changing.

Maintaining free, readily available and easy access for all Australians to listen to critical community radio services is critical to informed and connected communities. Increasingly, listeners are accessing local radio services through internet-connected devices, rather than traditional radios. One third of listeners, now tune in through web-based services.

Community broadcasting services provide services to reach audiences through web and app-based streaming, on-demand audio and podcasting and DAB+ Digital radio. The Community Radio Plus app carries the streams of every Australian community broadcaster and is available on iTunes and Google Play to support mobile listening through connected devices.

However, there is no guarantee that these technologies will provide all Australians ready access to free-to-air broadcast services as technology manufacturers and operating systems are not obligated to carry free-to-air radio services. This means free-to-air radio services could be hidden, augmented, deprioritised below commercial streaming and podcasting platforms, or unable to be accessed at all.

Regulation is now required to ensure Australians can continue to freely and easily access community broadcasting services on smart speakers, smart devices and audio systems in connected cars. A radio prominence framework – similar the recently legislated Television framework – is essential to place obligation on manufacturers and operating system (OS) providers to ensure all communities maintain free, readily available and easy access to community radio services, no matter what technology audiences use to listen.

Recommendation: Parliament should legislate a radio prominence framework to secure Australian's access to diverse and local community radio on AM, FM, DAB+ receivers and streaming audio in all cars and smart speakers.

Strategic investment in community broadcasting is required

Financial sustainability is the sector's biggest reported challenge for community broadcasters. The average community broadcaster has an operational cost equal to 103% of station income.¹⁶

This is driven by increasing costs, declining volunteerism, a challenging sponsorship and advertising market, growing needs and expectations from communities and greater complexity of modern and multiplatform media operations.

Financial challenges are a handbrake on the workforce development and operational capability of the sector. 54% of stations have no paid staff members. 17,800 volunteers are doing the equivalent labour of around 3,900 full-time workers and volunteer numbers and average volunteering hours are in decline.¹⁷ Paid staff are needed to grow and diversify revenue to support sustainable

¹⁴ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

¹⁵ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

¹⁶ Financial Data Collection (CBAA) 2023/24

¹⁷ McNair yellowSquares, Community Radio National Listener Survey Data (2025).

operations. Paid sponsorship and marketing roles exist almost exclusively within the 20 largest organisations out of a total of 320. Over one third of paid staff work outside the sector to make ends meet.¹⁸

Declining real funding from the Federal Government over the last decade is contributing to this challenge. Current Government funding programs the Community Broadcasting Program (CBP) and the Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Program (IBMP) are receiving inadequate investment.

The Federal Government delivered an additional \$27 million over three years for the community broadcasting sector in 2024/25. This funding consisted of \$1m pa for community television transformation, \$4m pa for the First Nations media and \$5m pa for the CBP. This funding is not indexed and ceases in 2027/28.

However, the Australian Government's investment in community broadcasting programs have failed to maintain their real value and have not kept pace with inflation and rising input costs. Real funding contributions from the Australian Government in 2025/26 are lower than in 2017/18 Budget.

Funding for these programs does not match the increasing demands of communities for support and services. They fall well short of the station demand for grant funding. The average grant funding shortfall for the CBP is \$9.6 million across the last 9 years.¹⁹

The financial limitations of these programs mean they offer limited scope for strategic, long-term investment in station capability and innovation and limit community broadcasting's impact on arts and cultural policy challenges identified in Revive.

Recommendation: Community Broadcasting Program funding should be increased (from \$27m to \$40m pa), committed on an ongoing basis, and indexed to maintain real value over time.

Case Study: Investing in Stations' music impact.

The Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF) provides financial support for community radio program is *Mob Beats* – a weekly First Nations Hip Hop program broadcast every Friday evening on Triple A 98.9FM in Brisbane and distributed nationally via the National Indigenous Radio Service. Supported by CBF across three funding rounds since 2022, the program has become a trusted platform for emerging First Nations artists and a proven model for what targeted music programming investment can achieve.

Hosted by established First Nations Hip Hop artist Damien Bani, *Mob Beats* delivers 20 First Nations Hip Hop artist interviews annually, maintains a weekly playlist of 10 or more First Nations artists, and has delivered 3 outside broadcasts per funded year at major cultural events including Clancestry, Brisbane NAIDOC, and the University of Queensland. In its most recent funded year, 7 participants were involved in delivery, 6 identifying as First Nations Australians, 6 aged under 26, and 4 identifying as women.

The program's reach extends beyond airplay. Triple A's school-based trainees have co-hosted the program and gained hands-on experience in production, curation, and content creation, building genuine pathways for the next generation of First Nations broadcasters.

Approximately \$33,100 in CBF investment across 3 years has delivered a nationally distributed program that addresses a documented gap in representation for First Nations Hip Hop artists on Australian radio with accountability, consistency, and deep community ownership.

The CBF is a trusted and accountable funding body that can expand music and arts programs on community radio with additional government support. It already has the infrastructure, processes, and sector relationships in place. New funding can be used effectively with clear, measurable outcomes that align with Australia's cultural policy goals and the government's co-designed mandate with the community broadcasting sector under Roadmap 2033.

¹⁸ Community Broadcasting Participation Survey (CBAA) 2026

¹⁹ Community Broadcasting Foundation annual reports 2017/18 – 2024/25

Stronger, more sustainable community broadcasting – for greater cultural impact

With new government investment, community broadcasters can be strengthened. Strong broadcasters can have greater impact growing audiences for Australian musicians, supporting artist incomes, developing creative careers and building local social cohesion through amplifying the voices of multicultural and First Nations broadcasters as well as people with disability.

New investment in community broadcasting programs will support the sector to operate effectively in the modern media environment by:

- Developing the paid workforce
- Generating online revenue sources
- Increasing local news and journalistic content
- Integrating new Australian music streaming with on-air broadcasting
- Onboarding new technology to serve to contemporary audiences on all platforms.

For more information on the financial challenges and the Australian Government's investment in community broadcasting please see CBAA's Submission to the [2026-27 Federal Pre-Budget process](#).

Case study: amrap.org.au

Amrap.org.au is a free, purpose-built platform that connects new Australian music with community radio. For artists, it provides a direct pathway to get their music into the hands of presenters. Artists can upload content for discovery by community broadcasters across the country, track airplay, and access promotional opportunities in global markets including the United States. For station presenters, it offers a powerful tool to find and program Australian music by artist identity, genre and location. Amrap.org.au is critical digital infrastructure enabling community to radio fulfil its role sharing independent artists, First Nations musicians and culturally diverse artists with audiences.

“There's certainly shows that I will reach out to personally, but the AMRAP platform is just a game changer, and ... we're so fortunate to have that, to be able to disseminate music so quickly and efficiently to community radio stations and radio hosts, so it forms an important part of my strategy every single time I'm prepping for a release, even today. – L-Fresh the Lion (Artist) ²⁰

Careers for community broadcasters is a national skills pipeline for the arts

Community broadcasting is a vital infrastructure for skills development, training and employment across Australia's arts and creative industries. With a long history of training in journalism, audio production, broadcasting and event management, the sector delivers employment pathways, industry-led mentoring, on-the-job training, traineeships and business development opportunities across a wide range of creative disciplines.

Community broadcasting also provides an important pathway for communities underrepresented in mainstream media, including young people, culturally diverse communities, and people with disability. The broad national network of stations means they provide skills development in regional and remote areas as well as metropolitan centres.

D/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers remain significantly underrepresented in media ownership, leadership, storytelling and public discourse. Investment in community broadcasting is a concrete opportunity for government to recognise and include these communities to provide industry-relevant skills in production, broadcasting and media toward a visible, engaged and representative creative workforce.

Key skills and capability gaps in the community broadcasting workforce are in areas of technology, marketing, fundraising and governance and financial management. These areas of need align closely with those of the broader creative industries according to Services and Creative Skills Australia's (SaCSA) Creative Workforce Scoping Study. Notably, SaCSA recognised a gap in the study which did not include audio, podcasting, journalism and broadcasting sectors in its scope. This is a significant gap

²⁰ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

and future workforce studies should include community broadcasting so that identified skills needs can inform targeted, effective and accessible sector-appropriate training solutions and pilot programs.

[Our] official partnerships with venues and other organisations in the community are mutually beneficial for everyone involved ... Because at the end of the day, we know that they're not buying into us because it's exactly as commercially viable as it is to buy into another institution. They do it because of our brand and because of our cultural authority and our cultural capital ... So yeah, heaps of local arts and entertainment industry have a lot of investment in the station. – Program host²¹

Recommendation: Music Australia should make targeted investments in community broadcasting capability to achieve outcomes for Australian music programming, broadcast, curation and promotion; including:

- an industry-led workforce, skills and training study for community broadcasting
- Music Director roles at key community radio music stations
- upgrading existing community broadcasting digital platforms and content-sharing infrastructure to provide improved access, discoverability and visibility of community radio music for artists and broadcasters, and to develop new audiences for diverse Australian music.

Case Study: Sounds like Community Radio

Sounds Like Community Radio 2025 is a compelling example of community broadcasting's power to bring people together around Australian music and culture. Hosted by CBAA at Brisbane's 4ZZZ 102.1FM — one of Australia's most beloved community radio stations, celebrating its 50th year — the event took place on 3 and 4 September 2025 as part of and alongside BIGSOUND, Australia's premier music industry conference. Held in the heart of Fortitude Valley on Meanjin country, the event opened 4ZZZ's doors to the public for a free, live national broadcast and artist performances, drawing together presenters, volunteers, producers, music lovers, artists and radio enthusiasts from across the country. This event was leveraged to promote amrap.org.au to music industry representatives.

The event was a genuine celebration of the community broadcasting ecosystem, uniting stations from across Australia including PBS 106.7FM, Triple R, Three D Radio, Edge Radio and 2SER 107.3. It offered attendees the opportunity to connect, learn and reflect on the role community radio plays in sustaining local music scenes nationally. Plus, the BIGSOUND Listening Session returned, giving artists a chance to meet the individuals from some of Australia's most beloved community radio stations. By staging Sounds Like Community Radio within the BIGSOUND program, CBAA elevates community broadcasting at the centre of the national music industry conversation and demonstrated that community radio is not on the margins of Australian music culture, but integral to it.



Pillar 5 - Engaging the audience: Making sure our stories connect with people at home and abroad.

Australian audiences discover new music through community radio

Community radio stations are a powerful, steadfast ally to Australian artists. It is where new songs get their first airplay and Australian artists reach their first audiences.

37% of all music played on community radio is by Australian artists. With over 5 million Australians tuning in each week, for an average listening time of over 16 hours²², community radio is source of growth for the domestic music economy and supports the shared goal of making Australia a net exporter of music by 2030.

Community radio proudly holds a growing, deeply engaged audience that are actively seeking diverse, interesting, new music from Australian artists. Surveys suggest 34% of listeners tune in specifically to hear Australian music and support local artists, while 35% seek out music unavailable anywhere else.

The scale of community radio's contribution to Australian music is often underestimated. Community radio stations broadcast 390,960 hours of Australian music annually - more than double the output of the entire commercial radio sector, generating \$38.9 million in airplay value for listeners, artists and venues, in addition to royalties paid directly to artists.²³

When audiences discover music on community radio, it generates additional audience engagement on web-based platforms and streaming services – 19% (more than one million Australians) recommended a local Australian artist to a friend or shared their music online after discovering them on community radio.²⁴

1.5 million Australians looked up an artist on Spotify or other digital platform after hearing a local artist on community radio.

500,000+ (11%) Australians bought tickets to a local Australian artist's show after hearing them or about their gig on community radio

1 million+ Australians recommended a local Australian artist to a friend or shared their music online after discovering them on community radio

Stations build audiences for artistic expression beyond music. Comedians, choirs, dancers, theatre-makers, filmmakers, authors, opera singers, painters, playwrights and poets all use community media as a platform to share their work and build audiences. Community radio stations are embedded in local creative industries, providing engagement and promotional opportunities.

Community radio counters the algorithm, supporting artists as creators

Online streaming services and social media consumption are making it harder for new Australian music and art to be uncovered and loved by audiences. Their algorithms often prioritise established international acts and popular global stars to maintain listener engagement. Australian artists now feature less in the live ARIA Charts each year.

²² McNair yellowSquares, Community Radio National Listener Survey 2025

²³ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

²⁴ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

Conversely, community broadcasting promotes new and emerging artists, celebrates their creativity and seeks to develop and expand the tastes of audiences. Broadcasters are deeply trusted curators and committed champions of Australian music and local artists. Music directors and station managers are key sources of knowledge, supporting artists through curatorship, discovery and music ambassadorship. Purpose-driven, community-led music curation stands in sharp contrast to profit driven algorithms. The capital of community radio is the high trust and shared curiosity of their loyal listeners, and the mutually supportive relationship they share with local artists. Research indicates that such human-led curation leads to deeper listener engagement between artists and audience, compared to typical streaming platform experiences.²⁵

Case Study: Music Australia helps 3MBS share commissioned compositions with audiences.

3MBS – the first licensed FM station in Australia – supports Australian classical and jazz music. It is operated by enthusiastic volunteers dedicated to the recording and broadcasting of a wide range of music particularly classical, jazz and related genres. Committed to supporting musicians in their local communities 3MBS broadcasts the work of local, young and visiting musicians and broadcasts on average 450 artist interviews per year.

In 2026, Music Australia provided targeted support of 3MBS Melbourne through a small grant funding 12 new compositions by emerging Australian composers. The station provides direction and feedback to identified composers as well as the opportunity to perform their work to a discerning audience. The new works are shared with audiences through live and broadcast events in cultural spaces across Melbourne throughout 2026-27.

This project is a fantastic example of how investment in community broadcasting projects can effectively support artists to earn income, reach new audiences and engage in networking and career development. Music Australia's novel investment in community broadcasting projects achieves a direct and sustainable benefit to artists and warrants expansion in the future.

Community radio amplifies Australian live music.

Community radio stations are active participants in Australia's live music culture. Stations bring live music directly to their communities by supporting and organising festivals and events, with many operating their own live music spaces hosting regular performances. Where audiences cannot attend in person, stations extend the reach of live music by broadcasting events directly into homes across the country. Stations function as producers, promoters while also providing training pathways in music production, songwriting, technical production and event management. Through airplay, in-studio AV, artist interviews, artist publicity, live music, outside broadcasts, staff training, music curation and fostering community, community radio is a genuine engine of Australian creative industries.

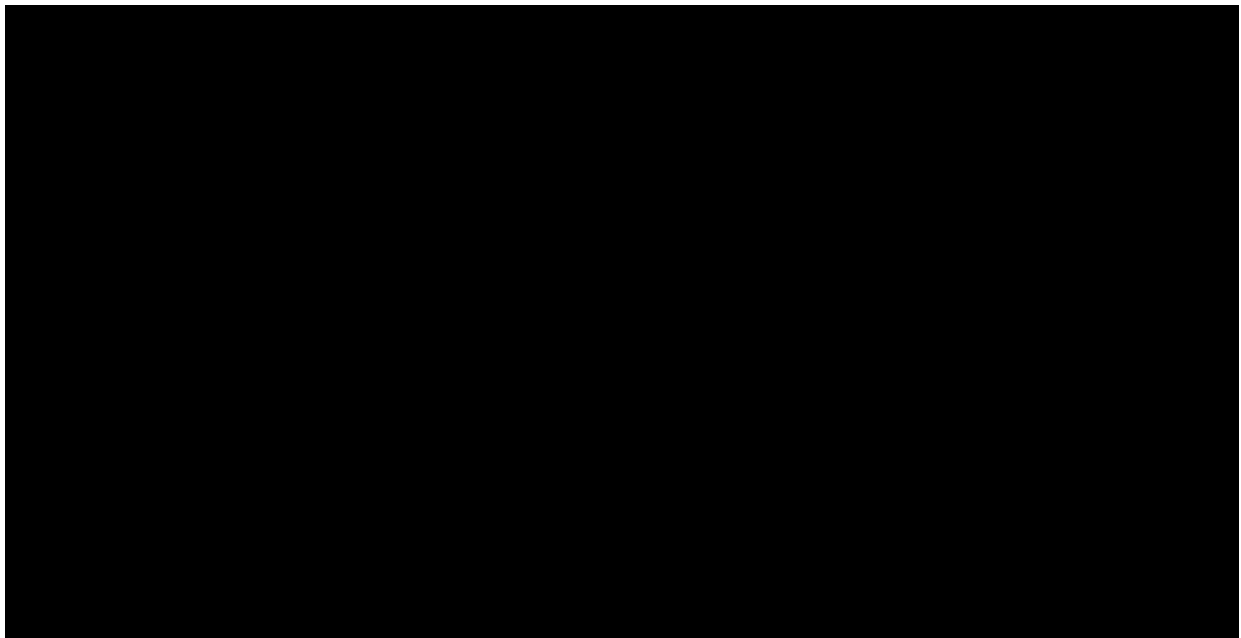
The sector's commitment to Australian music consistently and significantly exceeds its obligations. While community radio stations are required to broadcast a minimum of 25% Australian music, many stations set far higher internal benchmarks. The impact of this commitment on Australian music discovery is profound. According to CBAA listener survey data, 1.6 million Australians — approximately 30% of weekly community radio listeners — have discovered a local or emerging artist through community radio. More than one million Australians, representing 19% of weekly listeners, went on to recommend a local Australian artist to a friend or share their music online after first hearing them on community radio. A further one million listeners report that community radio is the only broadcaster playing the Australian music they want to hear. Community broadcasters are the primary discovery engine for Australian music, connecting artists with audiences in ways no other platform achieves.

²⁵ Monash University et al., *Community Music Radio* (2026).

Radio prominence will protect access to Australian stories, art and culture.

Community broadcasters are calling on government to introduce legislation guaranteeing prominence for Australian free-to-air radio, extending the same protections that exist for community television as a matter of urgency. Without legislative action, millions of Australians risk losing easy access to local radio on the devices they use every day, including cars and smart speakers. Without protection, device manufacturers continue to design connected products that deprioritise or remove Australian free-to-air radio services. This quietly erodes communities' ability to access local news, information, arts and culture currently freely available to all.

The consequences of inaction will affect vulnerable Australian communities most at risk; Indigenous Australians, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people living in regional and remote areas, for whom community radio is often the primary and sometimes only source of trusted local content. Any government investment must be matched by legislation that guarantees its accessibility. Without prominence protections, the reach and sustainability of Australian free-to-air radio and the communities it serves, will continue to be placed at risk by decisions made by global device manufacturers with no obligation to Australian audiences.



Case Study: Australian Christian music – a global export opportunity

Christian and gospel music was among the fastest-growing genres in the United States last year, with streaming up 18.5% year-on-year. Global Christian music streaming has grown more than 60% over five years.²⁶ The broader worship music sector spanning church licensing, live events, publishing and technology is estimated to be worth approximately US\$9.2 billion annually, making it a commercially substantial creative industry in its own right.²⁷

This global growth creates real export opportunities for Australian Christian artists, as digital distribution opens pathways to international streaming, touring, festivals and publishing markets. Australia's 36 Christian community radio stations and two open narrowcast services play a vital role in this ecosystem, reaching nearly two million Australians each week and providing emerging and established artists with airplay, promotion, live broadcasts and community engagement. The sector further supports artist development through listener awards, scholarships and collaborative national content sharing, making Christian community radio an important and often overlooked engine of Australian music industry growth.

Led by peak body Christian Media & Arts Australia (CMAA), the Christian radio sector has developed collaborative touring models that work as a national marketing and audience-development network. These models see local artists perform alongside international acts, giving local talent exposure on the national stage. Since 2024, more than 50,000 tickets have been sold for touring events coordinated through this network, demonstrating strong audience demand and the sector's growing capacity to deliver at scale.

Programs like *The Daily* – a three-hour weekday music show produced in Melbourne and broadcast across more than 25 Christian radio stations nationally – gives Australian Christian artists dedicated exposure through interviews, storytelling and promotion to audiences they could not easily reach on their own. Beyond the artists themselves, this programming sustains a broader creative workforce including producers, audio engineers and promoters as well as building audiences and live engagement.

Aussie artist Nathan Tasker received early airplay on Hope 103.2, 89.9 The Light and 1WayFM, helping him to build audiences across Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra and growing his live following from small local concerts to major ticketed shows. Sustained radio airplay contributed to four Top 10 singles and his first number one release, opening doors to international touring across the United States, UK, Europe and South Africa, and recording opportunities in Nashville.

Tasker's career growth has created broader economic opportunities for the musicians, production crews, technical staff and small businesses around him, illustrating how investment in community radio generates returns well beyond the individual artist.

The Christian music sector generates social impact well beyond the stage. Through partnerships with organisations like Compassion, artists and tours connect audiences with humanitarian causes — turning concert attendance into tangible community benefit. Tasker estimates that over 50,000 children have been sponsored through Compassion initiatives linked to his music since he first received radio airplay, with more than 1,500 children supported through education and feeding programs across just three recent Australian tours alone.

²⁶ Luminate Music Industry Reporting (2025).

²⁷ Global Christian Streaming Analysis and Industry Reporting (2025-26).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Community broadcasting is a significant cultural asset contributing to the success of the National Cultural policy across each of Revive's five pillars.

CBAA recommends the new National Cultural Policy include targeted commitments that support community broadcasting to have a greater impact amplifying Australian music, arts and creative industries, with content that celebrates diverse tastes, perspectives and interests including young people, First Nations, multicultural, disability, LGBTQIA+, faith-based and regional and remote communities.

1. The Federal Government's investment in First Nations community broadcasting should be increased (from \$27m to \$40m pa), be committed on an ongoing basis and indexed to maintain real value over time. This is critical to ensure First Nations voices, stories, culture, language and arts are centred in the National Cultural Policy.
2. Community Broadcasting Program funding should be increased (from \$27m to \$40m pa), committed on an ongoing basis, and indexed to maintain real value over time.
3. Parliament should legislate a radio prominence framework to secure Australian's access to diverse and local community radio on AM, FM, DAB+ receivers and streaming audio in all cars and smart speakers.
4. Music Australia and Creative Australia grant funding policies and guidelines should enable community broadcasters to apply for a range of arts grant opportunities in recognition of their crucial role as arts and cultural hubs for their communities.
5. Music Australia should make targeted investments in community broadcasting capability to achieve outcomes for Australian music programming, broadcast, curation and promotion, including:
 - a. an industry-led workforce, skills and training study for community broadcasting
 - b. Music Director roles at key community radio music stations
 - c. Upgrading existing community broadcasting digital platforms and content-sharing infrastructure to provide improved access, discoverability and visibility of community radio music for artists and broadcasters, and to develop new audiences for diverse Australian music.

Contact

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