

Community Media Matters

An audience study of the Australian
community broadcasting sector

Michael Meadows

Susan Forde

Jacqui Ewart

Kerrie Foxwell

March 2007

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to extend their warmest thanks to the members of the Advisory Committee (Appendix D) who have both inspired and encouraged this project from its inception. In particular, we would like to thank Ian Stanistreet and Deb Welch from the Community Broadcasting Foundation, Judy Hiscox and Jen Levy from DCITA, Barry Melville, Wendy Coates and Joanna McCarthy from the CBAA, Ken Reys from the Australian Indigenous Communication Association, Russell Bomford from the Indigenous Remote Communications Association, Peter Lockett from Radio for the Print Handicapped Australia, and Peter Ho and Tim Tolhurst from the National Ethnic Multicultural Broadcasters' Council. We also heartily thank Tamara Doncon, Rebecca Pasqualini and other administrative staff who have provided invaluable assistance and information along the way.

A copy of the Executive Summary, and pdf versions of the full report, can be accessed at cbonline.org.au or can be obtained in hard copy from the researchers.

The research team working on this project comprised:

Associate Professor Michael Meadows, Chief Investigator, Griffith University
m.meadows@griffith.edu.au

Dr Susan Forde, Chief Investigator, Griffith University
s.forde@griffith.edu.au

Dr Jacqui Ewart, Chief Investigator, Griffith University
j.ewart@griffith.edu.au

Dr Kerrie Foxwell, Senior Research Fellow, Griffith University
k.foxwell@griffith.edu.au

Mr Derek Flucker, Senior Indigenous Researcher

Ms Heather Anderson, Research Assistant

Ms Christine Morris, Senior Indigenous Researcher (in the early phases of the project)

Contents

Executive summary	1
Chapter 1: Introduction	4
Chapter 2: Framing the study	10
2.1 Empowerment: community	
2.2 Empowerment: media	
2.3 Empowerment: society	
2.4 Summary	
Chapter 3: Research methodology	18
3.1 Qualitative audience research	
3.2 Selecting the sample	
3.3 Specific method applied	
3.4 Variation to the methodology	
3.5 Summary	
Chapter 4: Metropolitan and regional radio audiences	28
Introduction to the chapter	
4.1 Accessibility of the station	
4.2 Station presentation and style	
4.3 Local news and information	
4.4 Music	
4.5 Diversity	
4.6 Community groups and audiences	
4.7 Suggestions for improvement	
4.8 Summary	
Chapter 5: Indigenous audiences	50
5.0 Indigenous media as an essential service	
5.1 Maintaining social networks	
5.2 A medium for education	
5.3 A primary source of news and information	
5.4 Creating cross-cultural dialogue	
5.5 A crucial medium for music and dance	
5.6 Suggestions for improvement	
5.7 Summary	
Chapter 6: Ethnic audiences	72
6.1 Fieldwork conducted	
6.2 Methodology	
6.3 Background information to inform the analysis	
6.4 Findings	
6.5 Summary	
Chapter 7: Community television audiences	88
7.1 Sector overview	
7.2 Fieldwork	
7.3 Methodology	
7.4 Findings	
7.5 Suggestions	
Chapter 8: Conclusions and recommendations	98
References	104
Appendices	110

1 Executive summary

This report presents the results of the first national qualitative research study into Australian community broadcasting audiences. It explores why a significant and increasing number of Australians listen to community radio and/or watch community television, what they value about it, and how it meets their needs. Community broadcasting in Australia began in the early 1970s with the establishment of the first metropolitan community radio stations. Community television is a comparatively recent development dating from the early 1990s. Today, Australian community radio is a mature industry catering to a wide variety of interests. Our study deals with audiences for 'generalist' stations in metropolitan and regional Australia and explores responses from two major interest groups — Indigenous and ethnic communities. Audiences for the nascent community television industry provide a further focus.

The data on which our findings are based has emerged from a series of audience focus groups, interviews with individual listeners/viewers and station managers, and representatives of community groups accessing community radio and television. Our primary findings are detailed in separate chapters in this report, but are outlined in brief below.

For metropolitan and regional radio stations, audience members primarily 'tune in' for these principal reasons:

- They perceive community radio to be accessible and approachable;
- They like the laid back, 'ordinary person' station presentation style;
- They want to access local news and information;
- They want access to specialist and diverse music formats; and
- They appreciate the diversity represented in station programming.

A wide range of audiences access Indigenous radio and television across Australia with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous listeners and viewers identifying the following as key attractions:

- They feel Indigenous media offer an essential service to communities and play a central organising role in community life;
- Indigenous media help people to maintain social networks;
- Indigenous media are playing a strong educative role in communities, particularly for young people;
- They offer an alternative source of news and information about the community which avoids stereotyping of Indigenous people and issues;
- They are helping to break down stereotypes about Indigenous people for the non-Indigenous community, thus playing an important role in cross-cultural dialogue; and
- The stations offer a crucial medium for specialist music and dance.

Audiences listening to specialist ethnic programming on generalist community radio stations or full-time ethnic community radio stations are tuning in because:

- Station programming plays a central role in maintaining culture and language;
- Programs help them to maintain community connections and networks;
- Stations enable them to hear specialist ethnic music unavailable through other media;
- They want to hear local community news and gossip; and
- They want to hear news and information relevant to their lives in Australia, from their home countries, and from neighbouring countries/regions.

Audiences for community television watch because:

- They want to access alternative programming than that offered by commercial and national public television stations (ABC and SBS);
- They want to access information that they feel is unavailable anywhere else;
- They want to receive this information in non-traditional formats;
- They like the diversity of programming, particularly from niche interest groups; and
- A significant number of viewers of community television are frustrated by poor or unreliable broadcast signal reception.

While there are different perspectives offered by the various sub-sectors of the Australian community broadcasting industry, a number of key themes have emerged which draw them all together. A common thread running throughout our analysis of community broadcasting audiences is a need and desire for local news and information. Audiences feel they cannot receive localised or community-specific information from any other media sources, although they often access public broadcasters like the ABC and SBS for state or national news, and occasionally, commercial media. Another common theme to emerge, regardless of the sub-sector, is a desire to access and hear diverse music formats. Audiences regularly express either boredom or general dissatisfaction with the narrow range of popular and, usually, international (US and UK) music broadcast particularly on commercial radio. Thirdly, community broadcasters are providing an important 'community connection' role by publicising local events, engaging in community 'gossip', using local people as presenters, and projecting an approachable and accessible front to the community and their listeners. While this theme is less likely to be mentioned by community television audiences, it is prominent in comments from metropolitan/regional generalist, ethnic and Indigenous audiences and thus permeates much of the data. A fourth theme is the sector's ability to present social and cultural diversity in its programming. For many of the participants in this study, this is an important social responsibility function performed by their local community radio stations, in particular, with which they identify and support.

In summary, we conclude that the community broadcasting sector in Australia is fulfilling four broad functions:

- Providing alternative sources of local news and information;
- Offering diverse audiences diverse music program formats and styles;
- Enabling community members to 'connect' — either socially or by engaging with radio programming — thus 'creating communities'; and
- It more accurately represents Australian social and cultural diversity than other media outlets.

We will investigate these four over-arching functions in more depth throughout this report.

It's the local everything... really I think 3CR puts you into the slogan "Think globally, act locally", I really think... that applies across the board. So for people who want to have a voice about what's happening in the community, this is the natural place they would go, to 3CR (Focus Group, 3CR Melbourne, 2005).

This report is the culmination of more than two years' work with the Australian community media sector and their audiences. It is informed by the authors' seven years' research experience with the community radio sector, beginning with a study of managers, workers and volunteers in 1999 and continuing with this qualitative audience study. In this time, we have witnessed an increasing focus on community broadcasting from both the research community and within policy circles.

The increasing attention being paid to Australian community broadcasting is tied to growth in the sector, which, at the time of writing, has 361 radio licenses, 79 Indigenous community television licences, and four permanent community television stations with two additional services (Adelaide and Lismore) operating on Open Narrowcast licences. During 2006-06, an additional 30 temporary community radio licenses were issued (ACMA, 2006a:83-84; ACMA, 2006b:17; CBF, 2005). Based on these figures, the number of community media outlets has trebled since the early 1990s. More than 99 per cent of the permanent community radio stations are broadcasting 24 hours a day, seven days a week (CBOnline, 2006a:1).

The community radio sector in Australia is far bigger than the commercial radio sector which boasts 274 operating licenses. But in terms of resources, as indicated by financial turnover, the comparison reveals a stark contrast — the commercial radio sector annual turnover is currently around \$945 million (ACMA, 2006) while the community radio sector operates with total annual revenue of just under \$51 million (CBOnline Survey, 2006). Despite this disparity in resources, community radio produces more local content, plays more Australian music, and supports a greater diversity of Australian cultures than its commercial counterparts. As well, it has achieved substantial national audience reach — just over 4 million listeners in an average week, compared to 10.7 million for the commercial radio sector, and 7.3 million for the national (ABC/SBS) radio sector (McNair Ingenuity, 2006:30).

It is for these reasons that we offer — for the first time from an audience perspective — an analysis of why community media is succeeding in the current broadcasting environment. Our project has been helped by an increasing level of research in Australia into community radio and television audiences, most notably, the McNair Ingenuity quantitative audience research study which now occurs every second year. This research reveals that community broadcasting audiences have increased from 2004 to 2006 — and that about 47 per cent of the Australian population (around 7 million people) tune in at least monthly to a community radio station. About one in six community radio listeners are 'exclusive' listeners — that is, they do not listen to either commercial radio or ABC/SBS — and their primary reason for listening is to hear local news and local information (McNair Ingenuity, 2006:8). This study both tests and complements the McNair Ingenuity data. In doing so, we attempt to 'explain' the numbers to provide the research and policy communities, and the sector itself, with more detail about 'why' Australians tune in to community radio and television and 'how' they do it.

We have been able to go beyond what has been possible with approaches to industry research thus far (including McNair Ingenuity) in terms of the scope of fieldwork, and have included for the first time community television, ethnic and Indigenous audiences. The ethnic and Indigenous sub-sectors of the community broadcasting industry did not participate in the McNair Ingenuity study, believing that reducing an evaluation of their activities to 'numbers', along with the method adopted (telephone surveys), was an inappropriate way of evaluating their community and cultural contributions. Thus, the data presented in this report is the first to offer specific and qualitative analyses of the sector's ethnic, Indigenous and community television audiences.

This study has been further assisted by the growth in international academic literature examining community media, in no small part urged on by the recent official establishment of the UK community radio sector and an expected sudden growth throughout the country. Based on its 30 years' experience, the Australian community broadcasting industry offers an ideal case study from which its counterparts in Europe and the United States might draw. Our study aims to inform international community media practitioners and researchers of the strengths and weaknesses of the Australian community broadcasting network. It is impossible, though, to report on our findings without placing them in their true context. At the time of writing, the Australian parliament had introduced and passed two pieces of legislation which will have a significant impact on our nation's mediascape in the coming years — changes to media ownership laws and amendments to facilitate the full introduction of digital broadcasting by 2010-2012. We will consider these broader contextual issues before focusing on the project findings in detail.

Assessing the growth of community media

Since our previous study of the community radio sector (Forde, Meadows & Foxwell, 2002b), there has been growing academic attention directed towards community media research. This is evident in a significant increase in numbers of published journal articles, including establishment of the 3CMedia electronic journal (published on the sector's portal, CBOonline — www.cbonline.org.au), book titles, and special journal editions dedicated to community and grassroots media forms (see *Journalism*, Special Issue, 2003; *Transformations*, Special Issue, 2004, Howley 2004; Chitty and Rattichalkalakorn, 2007; and Kidd, Stein & Rodriguez, 2007 [in press]). We note, too, a growth in the number of conferences with a 'community media' theme, alongside an increase in the number of groups seeking membership from community broadcasting activists — the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), for example, recently established an Asia-Pacific arm and held its inaugural conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2005. The official establishment of the UK community radio sector is another sign that this type of media will attract more attention in the future. Japan's fledgling yet expansive community television industry set up its first peak representative body late in 2006 — further evidence of a growing global interest in media alternatives (Kawakami, 2006). The gathering momentum in Australia suggests this research on community broadcasting audiences is particularly timely.

This rise in community media research — and indeed in community media forms — could be quite simply attributed to increasing globalisation and the need for people to feel 'connected' to their local communities and to the people who create them. Internationally, scholars are beginning to consider seriously the impact of the community media sector within the context of globalisation and its potential impact on local cultures. Howley (2005:30) voices the conclusions of many when he asserts that 'locally orientated, participatory media organisations are at once a response to the encroachment of the global upon the local as well as an assertion of the local cultural identities and socio-political autonomy in the light of these global forces'. The importance of such community-based media is growing within the context of the ever-expanding global media industry. By 2003, ten multinational corporations — including AOL Time-Warner, Disney-ABC, General Electric-NBC, Viacom-CBS, News Corporation, Vivendi, Sony, Bertelsmann, AT&T, and Liberty Media — controlled most of the production of information and entertainment around the globe. The result, according to Kellner & Durham (2006:xxix), amongst others, is 'less competition and diversity, and more corporate control of newspapers and journalism, television, radio, film and other media of information and entertainment'. It is indicative of the community media sector's importance in a globalised world where the maintenance and representation of local cultures through the media has increasingly become a commercial enterprise rather than a community service. In this media environment, audiences are perceived as 'consumers' rather than 'citizens'.

The dominance of the 'global' in this era plays some part in the increasingly popularity and prevalence of community media. In addition, dissatisfaction with mainstream and particularly, commercial media forms, appears to be playing a significant role — not only because of their increasingly global or international nature, but also because of their continued and persistent need to generate greater profits and to 'thin the product' as a result of this quest for audiences as consumers (Pew Center, 2003; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2005). Hamilton (2004) cautiously identifies a trend for contemporary media organisations to base primary news decisions and content on economic considerations, leading to a greater emphasis on entertainment news — infotainment — the rise of the celebrity journalist, and an increasing focus on issues of interest to demographic groups targeted by advertisers (Chomsky 1997; McChesney, 2003; Hamilton, 2004). This is occurring alongside trends which show a steady decline in audiences worldwide for mainstream news content (Davis, 1997; Lewis, 2001; Hamilton, 2004; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004 & 2005; Deuze 2006). Thus, we attribute the growth in community media and the subsequent increasing attention given to them by the research and policy community to the combined effect of the rise of globalisation and the well-established public dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content.

Australian media policy, digital frameworks and what they mean for community broadcasting

This study of community broadcasting audiences emerges at a particularly critical point in Australian media history. A perennial issue in Australian media policy has been a debate over ensuring adequate provisions to foster diversity of ownership and content. At the heart of this issue are the needs of regional Australian audiences and, in particular, requirements for local news and information and local content. Two key pieces of legislation passed by Parliament on October 16, 2006, to be enacted in 2007 — the *Broadcasting Services Amendment (Media ownership) Act 2006* and the *Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Digital Television) Act 2006* — represent significant changes to the Australian media policy environment. The *Broadcasting Services Amendment (Media Ownership) Act 2006* has relaxed existing cross-media

and foreign ownership laws, allowing major media owners to own different media formats (e.g. radio and newspapers; television and radio) in the same media market, and for foreign investors to own more than 15 per cent of an Australian media enterprise. At the same time, the amendments have employed some safeguards to retain diversity and to ensure the needs of regional Australia are met by commercial broadcasters, including a requirement that at least five independent media groups remain in State capitals and four in regional markets, and that any merger may involve no more than two of the three regulated platforms (i.e. radio, television and the press) in any one license area. The assumption is that the number of media owners in both metropolitan and regional Australia will decrease when the changes take effect (Gardiner-Garden & Chowns, 2006).

Alongside the relaxation in cross-media ownership and foreign ownership restrictions are increased roles for both the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) in ensuring compliance with competition regulations and local content provisions. In relation to regional areas, the legislation specifically requires minimum levels of local content on regional commercial television, a minimum level of local content on regional radio (4.5 hours) — currently subject to review (a proposal to incorporate 12.5 minutes of news is also under consideration) — and special rules pertaining to ‘trigger events’ such as changes of ownership in regional areas which aim to ensure continued local content (DCITA, 2006). While the government has argued that information diversity will not decrease under the new laws — primarily because of increasing diversity offered by online and digitized media services — there are concerns that a further concentration of media in fewer hands will have a significant impact on the boundaries of public debate and discussion (Manne, 2006). Following the announcement that Parliament had passed the new laws, major Australian media proprietors — including the Packer-owned Publishing and Broadcasting Limited, Kerry Stokes’ Channel 7 group and the Southern Cross group — immediately initiated moves to re-organise their ownership portfolios. The prospect of increasing concentration of ownership in the mainstream media sector both nationally and globally suggests an even greater role for localised and independently-run broadcasting services typified by those in the community broadcasting sector.

The second piece of media legislation with implications for the broader Australian media environment enacted by the Australian Government is the *Broadcasting Services Amendment (Digital Television) Act 2006*. This Act is primarily concerned with existing free-to-air commercial stations and arrangements for conversion to digital and multichannelling. It heralds another step towards a digital future and has strong implications, particularly for the community television sector. According to its proponents, the impact of digitisation and convergence on the Australian media environment will transform it. The Minister for Communication, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator Helen Coonan, in an address to the Country Press Association Annual Conference (2006) shared her enthusiasm for this shift:

The pace of change in all of the industries involved in my portfolios is breathtaking. In telecommunications, ICT and the media, the constant evolution of technology means content can be delivered in all manner of ways to all manner of devices anywhere you want it, anytime you want it. This is the reality of the new consumer, the 21st century consumer. News and entertainment are always on, always available whether it is on the TV, over the phone or on the computer.

However, it is unclear and by no means conclusive that Australian audiences are enthused or eager for digital services. Some indication of this is the rescheduling of conversion to digital from 2008 to 2010-12. This has occurred in other countries too — the UK, United States, Ireland and The Netherlands have also put back their conversion dates (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006:6). The ACMA survey, *Digital Media in Australian Homes* (2005) found low levels of awareness of digital television. More than 16 per cent of surveyed households that had not taken up free-to-air digital television had not heard of it, more than 28 per cent had heard of it but did not know if it was available in their area, and 38 per cent of all surveyed households did not know that analogue services would eventually be switched off. The ACMA survey further reported that almost 42 per cent of households surveyed were not interested in digital television. While these figures are from 2005 and the digital take-up has gained some momentum since then, audiences still appear to be in no great hurry to acquire access to the digital spectrum. They also seem reluctant to spend time watching more television or accessing this through mobile phones — despite prophetic announcements about the desirability of the technology and its additional services.

Ready Get Set, Go Digital — A Digital Action Plan for Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006) deems that the entire community media sector will face the emergence of a digital future which presents both hurdles and possibilities for new services, especially in regional Australia. In February 2007, the community television sector was still awaiting a firm commitment from government on the arrangements for the transition from analogue to digital — particularly relating to capital expenditure required for digital technology. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts inquiry into community broadcasting has recommended that

the Federal Government support the transformation when the analogue spectrum is switched off in 2012. However, the existing situation with CTV channels being excluded from the digital spectrum has yet to be formally addressed (2007: xi). Despite the sector's optimism that the government's Digital Action Plan would enable the sector to simulcast in both analogue and digital formats until the digital switchover in 2012, the plan — released in November — appears to encourage the sector to either 'strike a deal' with an existing digital platform carrier or failing that, to change the sector's analogue signal to a digital one. At the time of writing, and despite considerable lobbying, no firm commitment from the Federal Government to fund CTV's change to digital or to provide an additional digital channel to the sector for multi-channelling has been forthcoming (Kelly, 2006:5; Commonwealth of Australia 2006:21).

The digital switchover to radio seems more straightforward, particularly as radio audiences seem even more reluctant to take up digital radio signals. Community radio stations, at this stage, are not being greatly disadvantaged by their lack of a digital signal. And in contrast to digital television, digital radio is not expected to fully replace the analogue services — they will operate alongside each other, with digital radio acting as a supplement, rather than as a replacement for, the current analogue services (Coonan, 2005):

International experience shows that digital radio will supplement existing analogue radio services for a considerable period, and may never be a complete replacement. Accordingly, the Government's framework has been built around digital radio being a supplement to existing services in Australia rather a replacement technology, as it is in television.

The revised media laws — both in terms of cross-media ownership and digitisation — are, according to the Federal Government, necessary to accommodate the convergence in media platforms enabled by digitisation.

Within the context of these changes — both current and proposed — we have canvassed in detail the thoughts and opinions of a sample of Australia's diverse community broadcasting audiences. Our analysis offers a contrast to prevailing rhetoric. While commercial media proprietors, preparing for the relaxation in ownership laws, jostle for position to be the first, most profitable and/or biggest on the Australian media block (Knight, 2006), audiences for community radio and television maintain their enthusiasm for local content relevant to local communities. The imminent reduction in the number of media owners suggest that the services offered by community broadcasting are entering a new age of importance.

Analysing community media audiences

While there has been an increase in research into community media, there is still much to be completed. This is especially the case for community broadcasting audience research. To date, the majority of research projects have focused on the production of community media rather than its reception. Downing (2003:625) notes the lack of attention to the user dimension:

... Given that alternative media activists represent in a sense the most active segment of the so-called 'active audience'... One would imagine that they above all would be passionately concerned with how their own media products are being received and used.

The community broadcasting sector's lack of resources has been readily identified as one of the primary reasons why it has been unable to undertake substantial audience research without government support (Forde, Meadows, & Foxwell, 2002). Policymakers have recognised the need for more data on the sector to help determine their own funding and planning priorities and as a result, have offered financial assistance for recent quantitative audience research — the 2004 and 2006 McNair Ingenuity projects are the prime examples. In the interest of exploring the nature of ethnic and Indigenous audiences in particular, the Federal Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts provided funding through the Community Broadcasting Foundation to assist with the completion of this project. Funded primarily by the Australian Research Council, the project received in-kind support from a wide range of community broadcasting sector organisations, detailed in Appendix D. The research evolved through a cooperative process, managed by the Qualitative Audience Research Advisory Committee (QARAC), made up of representatives from across the industry and the project research team. This enabled us to develop and apply a series of reliable qualitative audience research methods in order to produce the findings presented in this report. The research methodologies and theoretical frameworks we have used throughout this study are detailed in subsequent chapters. We have endeavoured to present our findings in a language and context which is useful to the sector, but which also enables national and international research communities to access and utilize the data. One of the primary outcomes of this project has been the development of a practical, economical and accessible audience research method which we hope will be of use to both the sector and other research-

ers attempting to conduct similar or allied studies. This will be made publicly available through the sector's web portal, CBOOnline.

Chapter 2 of this report outlines the background issues and theory which offer a current and international framework for this study. We had to not only grapple with the suitability of an entirely qualitative research framework, but also to consider current theoretical ideas around community media to contextualise the data we gathered from Australian community broadcasting audiences. Were local news content and current affairs services, for example, most important to audiences, suggesting the predominance of a 'public sphere' service being offered by community broadcasters? Were audiences tuning in more because of the organic, grassroots, or alternative nature of community radio and television, suggesting ideas of 'alternative media' might be more relevant? While academically-oriented, this chapter provides an overview of the issues we had to consider in carrying out this study.

Chapter 3 outlines our research methodology and the process of its development in consultation with our advisory committee and relevant scholarly literature. It was an important objective that the study generates a portable and useable research method for future community broadcasting audience studies, and the methodology was designed with this outcome in mind.

Chapter 4 begins the presentation of the study's findings, with results from the largest component of our project, metropolitan and regional community radio stations. This reports on the data gathered from 25 participating station focus groups around Australia. Coupled with this data are comments from community group representatives also involved in community radio. Analysis of these interviews provides greater insight into the audience focus group data.

Chapter 5 focuses specifically on Indigenous audiences encountered by our researchers over the project's span of more than two years. Chief Investigator Associate Professor Michael Meadows worked primarily with Indigenous researcher Derek Flucker to access Indigenous audiences in metropolitan, regional and remote areas, with assistance early in the project provided by Indigenous researcher Christine Morris. The sample was drawn from a broad range of Indigenous communities following consultation primarily with the peak industry media organisation, the Australian Indigenous Communication Association (AICA). It included eight focus groups and additional on-the-ground interviews with listeners and viewers in an additional 12 regions around the country. Although our 'generalist' metropolitan and regional station sample included more audience focus groups (25), the nature of our Indigenous fieldwork — detailed further in Chapters 3 and 5 — meant many one-on-one interviews were conducted, generating hundreds of hours of interviews and travel to remote, regional and urban areas.

Chapter 6 concerns ethnic community radio and reports on the 10 focus groups completed with audience members from a range of established and emerging ethnic communities. The cooperation and advice from the leading ethnic broadcasting sector body, the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC), made a vital contribution in determining sampling for this component of the study. While additional and subsequent translation issues had to be considered in both the Indigenous and ethnic community fieldwork, the results from these two elements of our project have provided useful new data which past researchers generally have found difficult to access.

Chapter 7 reports on the findings from the community television fieldwork, and again provides important data, particularly in light of the issues discussed previously in this chapter regarding the impact of the digital switchover. Indeed, this was a topic of great discussion at the recent Community Broadcasting Association of Australia's 2006 annual conference as the CTV sector feels its potential audience reach is suffering greatly from its inability to currently access the digital spectrum. Perhaps the most interesting data to emerge from our CTV fieldwork was the subtly different ways that community television audiences 'see' their local community television station — it provides a contrast to the sense of ownership that community radio audiences see as inherent in the way they engage with local stations and their programming.

Chapter 8 provides a summary of project findings, and suggests pathways to the future for the sector. It also offers some commentary on community audience research futures.

For those particularly interested in our research methods, we have provided a series of Appendices at the completion of this report — a fieldwork schedule with a full list of the stations and organisations who participated in the study; a series of interview questions for community group representatives who ran programs on community radio; and questions which guided focus group discussions with each of the sub-sector audiences.

The Chief Investigators on this project, all from Griffith University in Brisbane, welcome comments and questions from

sector representatives or fellow researchers, and can be contacted by email:

Associate Professor Michael Meadows, m.meadows@griffith.edu.au

Dr Susan Forde, s.forde@griffith.edu.au

Dr Jacqui Ewart, j.ewart@Griffith.edu.au

Dr Kerrie Foxwell, k.foxwell@griffith.edu.au

It is our hope that this report will continue to be of interest and use to the sector in the coming years and that it will help others to identify Australia as an international leader, not only as a proponent of innovative forms of community radio and television, but also in terms of its contribution to the examination and analysis of these forms of media.

In our earlier national station-based study, *Culture, commitment, community: The Australian community radio sector*, we concluded that overall, the sector is a significant cultural resource — ‘a medium for representing, maintaining and reproducing local cultures’ (Forde, Meadows and Foxwell, 2002:13). Commercial media is unable to deal with the diversity of cultures that characterise the community media sector because of the lack of profit involved in smaller audiences and the likelihood of offending audiences (and losing advertisers) through the broadcast of unpalatable political viewpoints, Indigenous and ethnic language programming, specialist music formats and so on. Thus, our approach is to consider community media alongside broader concepts of democracy, citizenship and the creation and maintenance of ‘community public spheres’. Following Rodriguez (2001; 2002), we conceptualise community media workers as involved in a form of participatory democracy and active citizenship located ‘within the everyday achievements of ordinary people’ (Rennie, 2002:12).

This project has completed a cycle which has come full-circle involving both community media production and audience reception. When we began the 2002 study, the news and information role of the sector was at the forefront of our research. It soon became apparent that this focus failed to capture the essence of the community radio and television industry. ‘Culture’, defined in the anthropological sense as ‘a whole way of life’, was a far more useful and accommodating term because it is expressed, represented, reproduced and maintained through the media. The media play a pivotal role in this process through the publication of beliefs, ideas and assumptions about the world expressed in news, information, and entertainment programming:

Culture is produced and consumed within social life. Hence, particular cultural artefacts and practices must be situated with the social relations of production and reception in which culture is produced, distributed, and consumed in order to be properly understood and interpreted. Contextualising cultural forms and audiences in historically specific situations helps illuminate how cultural artefacts reflect or reproduce concrete social relations and conditions — or oppose and attempt to transform them (Kellner and Durham, 2006:xxi).

Media are not the only sites where culture is communicated. It occurs between individuals, within and between groups and communities — this is the extent of ‘culture’ which, in our present era, relates to the media but is also ‘threaded through all social practices and is the sum of their relationship’ (Hall, 1980:60). Culture is about our everyday frameworks for understanding and communicating our experience of the world and importantly our place (or identity) within it. Community media enable the dissemination and affirmation of an extraordinarily diverse range of ‘everyday’ Australian cultures which serve to assure a place for millions of Australians within their local communities.

In this chapter, we explore several frameworks for conceptualizing community broadcasting under the broader concept of ‘community media’. It is difficult to suggest a single framework which encompasses the activities of its local and global manifestations. The ways in which the sector services a plethora of communities, alongside the different ways in which these types of media are produced, suggests a single organisational framework for this study is difficult to sustain. Debate over definitions is indicative of the general status of theory surrounding the operations of community media in general. It is variously referred to as ‘citizens media’ (Rodriguez, 2001), ‘alternative media’ (Atton, 2001), ‘radical media’ (Downing, 1984, 2000), ‘grassroots media’ and so on. Different researchers focus on different aspects of the sector, which generate different ideas about an appropriate definition. Howley (2005:2) offers a broad approach, arguing it should include...

...Grassroots or locally oriented media access initiatives predicated on a profound sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content, dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy, and committed to enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity.

Although this includes the sector’s central motivations and objectives in terms of community, media and society, what is immediately relevant to one station may not be to another. For example, while some politically-active stations may agree with a ‘profound sense of dissatisfaction’ with mainstream media, others, particularly regional stations, might find resonance with the ‘community relations’ aspect of this definition.

Given the size and diversity of stations and audiences we have encountered, we, too, have grappled with a single definition and model which encompasses and frames the diversity of our experience. We have thus adopted a complex framework, which theorises the sector’s operations at the level of community, media and society. We propose the umbrella term of ‘empowerment’ captures the essence of these multiple elements, helping to describe their impact on the lives of the seven million Australians who regularly tune in to community radio.

Community media, culture and empowerment

Empowerment is the recurring concept emerging from our previous station-based study and now, this audience-based research. The word appears frequently in academic literature surrounding community media but scant attention has been paid to the significance of the concept. It is an appendage word or descriptive term — generally attached to broader concepts such as ‘democracy’ and ‘citizenship’. It has become apparent during our involvement with the sector that the term demands a primary position — it best answers for us the question: ‘What is the sector about?’ We suggest the idea of ‘empowerment’ as an overarching term which encapsulates most, if not all, of the sector’s operations, functions and services. Grossberg (1987:95) defines empowerment as ‘the enablement of particular practices, that is... the conditions of possibility that enable a particular practice or statement to exist in a specific social context and to enable people to live their lives in different ways’. Adopting this argument, the community media sector empowers station workers and audiences to ‘live their lives’ through the media ‘in different ways’.

As a qualification, it is not the case that community media is empowering for ‘everybody, everywhere’. As van Vuuren (2006:380) points out, at the level of station management and operation, ‘a process of exclusion ensures that access to broadcasting is limited to those individuals and groups’ whose opinions align with a station’s purpose and will thus maintain its ‘value and purpose’. However, on a continuum of potential to empower, community media fare much better than other media. Rather than being subjected to the financial pressures which limit the broadcast options of commercial media, community media outlets in most democracies are free to disseminate the ideas, beliefs and practices — in other words, the cultures — of a multitude of communities defined by interest and/or geography. Community media, albeit not without their faults, empower everyday people with media access which, in the 21st century, is the most powerful medium for the communication of culture.

Facing the onslaught of an increasingly globalised mainstream media, the efforts of community media practitioners and the support of their audiences might hardly rate a mention. Couldry (2002:27) asserts that the power relations between mainstream and community media outlets is exactly the point — community media is a weapon of the weak and is thus worthy of academic interest. The growth in community media outlets in Australia and elsewhere heralds a small fissure in power relations between the mainstream media and ‘communities’ — it is a small crack in traditional relations between media producers and their audiences which has placed some power in the hands of local citizens. It is an opportunity, as Grossberg (1988:170) argues, to celebrate the — albeit comparatively small — power of local citizens to challenge the dominant ideologies characteristic of mainstream media:

Most cultural criticism focuses on culture’s critical relation (negativity) to the dominant positions and ideologies. Politics becomes defined as resistance to or emancipation from an assumed reality; politics is measured by difference. But empowerment can also be positive; celebration, however much it ignores relations of domination, can be enabling. Opposition may be constituted by living, even momentarily, within alternative practices, structures, and spaces, even though they may take no notice of their relationship to existing systems of power (Grossberg, 1988:170).

The relations of power between audience members and media producers are, at the very least, disturbed by the production and reception of community media. This is precisely the reason why analysis of the content of community media is not the sole focus in our research. Rather, we have examined the ways in which community media facilitate ‘community organisation’ and the cultural relationships between media workers and the communities in which they are involved (Tomaselli and Prinsloo, 1990:156). This resonates with Rodriguez (2001) and her assertion that we should avoid defining alternative media in terms of its opposition to mainstream media and rather focus on the ‘transformative processes they bring about within their participants and their communities’ (2002:79). This focus on ‘transformative processes’ describes the impact of community media in the context of people’s everyday lives. Community media is measured by more than its diversity of production, significant as this is in serving a multitude of cultures. The fissure in dominant power relations instigated by community media is empowering for communities who, prior to the establishment of the sector, were relatively powerless in their interaction with the media. This fissure has, in turn, empowered communities themselves as well as having broader societal impacts in terms of democracy and citizenship. It is a fissure which begins at the local level and is increasingly registering an impact globally.

In this *mélange* of influence, we should not overlook the fact that although media are of central importance in ‘winning consent’ for particular ideas and assumptions about the world, they must take their place alongside other cultural institutions in society which influence public opinion — libraries, schools, universities, associations, clubs and so on — in the production of this consent. Media are nevertheless the ‘most dynamic’ element of this theoretical framework (Gramsci, 1988:38-381). We argue that community broadcasting, too, makes a significant contribution to this process.

Empowerment: community

Community media empowers local citizens to participate in their communities through, for example, the broadcast of cultural events from music festivals to local Parents & Citizens' meetings and everything in between. Participation in the political life of their communities through the broadcast of rallies, protests, celebrations — community events — is also empowering for audiences. In those communities which experience a significant degree of social disadvantage, community broadcasting is a critical service — community media in these cases is about survival. This is particularly the case for remote Indigenous communities, newly-arrived refugee communities and associated supportive community groups. Empowering these communities to survive through the broadcasting of critical news and information otherwise unavailable is community media at its most constructive. We have distinguished between empowering everyday citizens and empowering disadvantaged citizens. This distinction is necessary to differentiate between groups who are comparatively privileged socially, economically and/or politically and those groups who are not. Community media for many stations and their audiences is empowering in terms of their ability to participate and access media which is relevant to their everyday lives — this 'ordinary' function of community radio encompasses ideas and beliefs which are not represented by mainstream media such as different musical styles, local cultural events, specific local news and information and the like.

Community media for disadvantaged citizens incorporates the everyday but is critical for the survival of communities and individuals within them. For example, in remote Australia, Indigenous community media performs a vital service in not only maintaining social and cultural networks but also in providing critical information on health, community services, etc. There is a qualitative chasm between this and enabling a local sporting club to announce its fixtures and empowering a newly-arrived refugee with information about community health services. The distinction draws attention to the range of services offered by community media in empowering its participants and listeners — at the level of the individual and their communities.

Topics that are considered relevant for the community can be discussed by members of that community, thus empowering those people by signifying that their statements are considered important enough to be broadcast. Societal groups that are misrepresented, disadvantaged, stigmatized, or even repressed can especially benefit from using the channels of communication opened by community media, strengthening their internal identity, manifesting this identity to the outside world, and thus enabling social change and/or development (Carpentier, Lie & Servaes, 2003:55-56).

The question of identity and the empowerment possibilities it represents is implicit in this discussion. It is particularly relevant for community broadcasting because of the unmatched ability of the sector to create 'communities of interest', based on criteria determined, for example, by social, cultural, linguistic, or geographical boundaries. One way of theorizing this is to look at the notions of 'common sense' and 'good sense' as espoused by cultural theorist Antonio Gramsci. We might argue that mainstream media, through the 'diffuse, uncoordinated features of a general form of thought common to a particular period and a particular popular environment' plays a central role in creating 'common sense' explanations for the world and our place in it (Gramsci 1971:330; Coban, 2005). For example, ideas and assumptions about Islam and Indigenous affairs in mainstream media, for example — rarely based on systematic study — create 'common sense' around such issues, more often than not leading to stereotyping and, in some cases, racism (Meadows, 2001; Manning, 2006). But it is not all bad, of course, and Gramsci, too, suggests that this 'common sense' contains 'a healthy nucleus of good sense' which, he argues, 'deserves to be made more unitary and coherent' (Gramsci 1971:328; Coban, 2005). In other words, the seeds for creating 'good sense' already exist, which is where community broadcasting becomes particularly relevant. Because of its ability to create 'communities of interest' — in other words, 'homogeneous social groups' — community media are in an ideal position to transform or 'renew' common sense into good sense. Gramsci continues (1971:419): 'At those times when a homogeneous social group is brought into being, there comes into being also, in opposition to common sense, a homogeneous — in other words coherent and systematic — philosophy.' A binding element in the process of creating and maintaining this homogeneous philosophy is a connection with reality — in Gramsci's terms, the 'simple'. He argues (1971:330):

[One must start with] a philosophy which already enjoys, or could enjoy, a certain diffusion, because it is connected to and implicit in practical life, and elaborating it so that it becomes a renewed common sense possessing the coherence and sinew of individual philosophies. But this can only happen if the demands of cultural contact with the 'simple' are continually felt.

This implies that ideological institutions like media that have established real community connections are more likely to be in a position to enact the philosophical shift from common sense to good sense. We suggest that, in theoretical terms, community broadcasting exhibits these characteristics. This could help to explain the significant common elements expressed independently by diverse audiences across the sector:

- A need and desire for local news and information;
- A desire to access and hear diverse music formats;
- Provision of an important 'community connection' role; and
- Social and cultural diversity in programming.

These criteria exclude mainstream media, the purveyors of 'common sense', and instead embrace an alternative philosophical framework.

While community empowerment is enabled through media, the focus here is on the community and a station's role in 'community development'. van Vuuren (2002:390) argues that we should value this 'community development' function more than its 'broadcasting function'. She draws attention to the 'quality and management of volunteers, the sector's training capacity and the nature of the various networks of which community broadcasting is a part'. The community development function of community radio is worthy of specialist consideration because it is, after all, a critical attribute from the perspective of the communities served by this type of media.

Empowerment: media

In a society where the media performs a central role in the production and maintenance of cultures — through the broadcast of music, news and information, representations of community and generally, a community's 'whole way of life' — participation by community members in media processes is recognised as a site of empowerment. This dissolves traditional boundaries between media producers and their audiences. In a practical sense, community media empowers communities or groups by enabling dissemination of their ideas to a much larger audience. In this role, community media challenges the status quo nature of mainstream media by providing a space where citizens can encounter, debate or experience alternative viewpoints and lifestyles. This is in stark contrast to the mainstream where voices of the elite have the power to set the media agenda in ways which affirm a position of dominance and overall, a preferred 'whole way of life'. Community media empowers the representation of other ideas and assumptions and this is its strongest contribution to 'communicative democracy'. This is the mandate of the community broadcasting sector and it is unfair to gauge community media's efforts only in comparison to mainstream media — and vice versa. The point is that given the saturation of mainstream media services, the penetration of community radio and television services is critical to providing and affirming a sense of difference and, by extension, belonging in the communities to which it broadcasts:

Citizens' media do not have to compete for global markets; they do not have to reach all audiences; they do have to 'talk to everyone' and therefore, local dialects, local issues, and local codifications of social reality find their way into citizens' media programming...citizens' media are in a privileged position to delve into, to explore, and to articulate (differences between subordinate groups) — unlike mainstream media which tend to generalize and smooth away such differences (Rodriguez, 2001:154).

Some suggest that it is the very nature of commercial media which causes it, or perhaps encourages it, to 'smooth away such differences'. McChesney argues that its very structure is the cause of 'lousy journalism' and that the media's failure to fulfil its true democratic function is the 'rational result of its operations' (2003:299). Chomsky, who is well known for his work on how the mainstream media 'manufactures consent', further argues (1997:np):

The real mass media are basically trying to divert people. 'Let them do something else, but don't bother us' (us being the people who run the show). Let them get interested in professional sports, for example. Let everybody be crazed about professional sports or sex scandals or the personalities and their problems or something like that. Anything, as long as it isn't serious. Of course, the serious stuff is for the big guys. 'We'll take care of that'.

In their goal to attract the largest possible audience, driven by their commercial (and, according to Chomsky, political) motivations, mainstream media regularly neglect small, minority, disenfranchised, disempowered, local, specialist groups. Considered together, these groups can form quite a large mass and in Australia they are able to be serviced by community broadcasting, which is by nature and mandate more structurally able to meet their needs.

There is mounting evidence that community media empowers disempowered, disenfranchised and disadvantaged groups in Australian society, enabling representations of their way of life, priorities and agendas. This includes Indigenous communities, ethnic communities and less obviously prison communities, gay and lesbian communities, print-handicapped

and vision impaired communities, younger and older communities and so on. In summary, community media — and for our purposes here, community broadcasting — enables citizens, regardless of social demographics, to interrupt the established dominance of mainstream media and society, by inserting their own content, style and cultural perspectives into community public spheres. This process is part of the broader public sphere where ideas from a diminishing range of perspectives compete for public attention.

Empowerment: society

Citizens of community media are empowered in terms of their capacity to participate in democratic processes. Here, we are talking about ‘communicative democracy’ through media. Empowerment at this level refers to the impact of community media in enhancing broader societal concepts, especially related ideas such as citizenship, democracy and the public sphere. These are familiar terms in literature on community media. They are terms which, at first glance, seem somewhat removed from the day-to-day efforts of station volunteers and the listening habits of community radio audiences. However, it is precisely individuals’ engagement with these micro-instances of participation which make these terms relevant to the processes of the community media sector. The nature of community media and the multiplicity of ways in which it functions in terms of democracy and citizenship complicate attempts to frame the sector at this level. Rodriguez (2001:160-161) expands on this:

Too many analyses of the democratization of communication lack acceptance and understanding of the diffuse nature of power struggles and negotiations. Only when we learn to design theories and methods able to accompany the fluidity of citizens negotiating power will we do justice to people and their actions of shaping everyday lives. What we commonly do — formulating a theory of how social change should happen and dissecting specific cases in relation to such criteria — will continue our myopic understanding of citizens’ media... [It is] this explosion of communication at the local level that makes citizens’ media into empowering tools for democracy. The disruption of established relations of power is a ‘messy’ enterprise, and our attempts to impose order and organization will only cause our alienation from these processes.

Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2003:58-59) draw attention to the link between community media and civil society. In this configuration, community media is situated between the domain of private economic organizations (for profit) and private personal and family relations — and public state-owned economic organizations and state and quasi-state organizations. As an intermediate organization (like charities, political parties, pressure groups, etc), community media functions as a part of civil society crucial to democracy fostering citizen participation in public life. This idea has some resonance with our earlier suggestion of the role of community broadcasting in transforming ‘common sense’ — as espoused primarily by mainstream media — to ‘good sense’ through its ability to create and maintain communities of interest. The instances of ‘micro-participation’ enabled by community media contribute to a broader ‘macro-participation’ as participants actively adopt civic attitudes and actions and perform a pivotal role in a healthy democracy — a critical element in the formation of ‘good sense’. Carpentier, Lie & Servaes conclude (2003:60):

Community media can overcome the absolutist interpretation of media neutrality and impartiality, and offer different societal groups and communities the opportunity for extensive participation in public debate and for self representation in the (or a) public sphere.

The authors argue that the distinction between community media, the state and the market fosters social antagonisms which do not capture community media’s role, or potential role in broader society. The antagonistic relations borne out of a media sector which, on numerous fronts, opposes the state, the market and mainstream media, places community media in a position of ‘discursive isolation’, unable to engage with some of the most powerful and critical discourses and their attendant institutions (such as the state, the market and the media) in any meaningful sense.

As a remedy to this ‘discursive isolation’, Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2003) assert a more fluid conception of state and civil society relations applying Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) theory of the rhizome. Rhizomatic thinking is characterized as non-linear, anarchic and nomadic, connecting any point to another point. In contrast, arabolic thinking is linear, hierarchical and sedentary represented by a tree-like structure where branches subdivide into smaller branches (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987 in Carpentier, Lie & Servaes, 2003:61). The relevance of the rhizome to community media is to ‘highlight the role of community media as the crossroads of organizations and movements linked with civil society [and]... incorporate the high level of contingency that characterizes community media’. And they continue:

Both their embeddedness in a fluid civil society (as a part of a larger network) and their antagonistic relationship towards the state and the market (as alternative to mainstream public and commercial media) make the identity of

community media highly elusive. In this approach it is argued that this elusiveness and contingency, as is the case for a rhizome, forms its main defining elements (Carpentier, Lie & Servaes, 2003:61).

This theoretical approach concurs with recent applications of radical democratic theory to community media (Rodriguez, 2001) where power is enacted and citizenship expressed in a multiplicity of forums including political action in the quotidian. Rodriguez (2001:158), for example, encourages a similar framework:

... Citizens' media are similar to living organisms that evolve and develop uniquely in permanent interaction with their complex environments/contexts: at some point they strengthen their struggle against one target, but later they can abandon a target and take on a new one, which, in turn, can be abandoned to focus on a third one. It is in the play of articulated historical conflicts and struggles where the richness of citizens' media resides, in terms of their potential as forces of resistance. But this same richness will be overlooked if we attempt to see citizens' media as one-dimensional static platforms aimed at unified goals.

In part, the rhizomatic approach questions some of the radical foundations of community media arguing that their antagonistic relationship with the state and the market neglects their bridging position between the state and civil society. (Carpentier, Lie & Servaes, 2003:61) suggest:

Community media establish different types of relationships with the market and/or the state, often for reasons of survival, and in this fashion they can still be seen as potentially destabilizing and deterritorialising... the rigidities and certainties of public and commercial medial organizations'.

This has certainly been our experience of community broadcasting. Radio stations, in particular, often find themselves in an uneasy situation of compromising their principled stance towards the state and the market while consistently seeking either funding (from the state) and sponsorship (from the market). Their supposed distance from the state and market is further complicated by the range of community groups, including state, quasi-state and private organizations which produce programming through the stations for broadcast to local communities. Community broadcasting enables these organizations to access and participate in dialogue with their audiences at the local level. In the case of their stance towards mainstream media, our current research project epitomizes the industry's efforts to gather data which will simultaneously strengthen its position as a serious media outlet in the broader public sphere while recognising the nuances inherent in participatory media providing access and participation at the local level.

The rhizomatic approach creates a discursive space for community media outlets to challenge mainstream media identities in both content and structure but also to foster potentially profitable relations with the state and the market. In adopting this approach, there is further potential for community broadcasting to act as a conduit for relations between both the state and the market. In short, establishing this agnostic position may enable community radio and television to better participate in public sphere activity by facilitating communication between local communities and larger institutions. As a 'pocket of resistance', community media is a significant site for democratization through the media (Wasko & Mosco, 1992:13). Carpentier, Lie & Servaes (2003) assert that despite their current precarious position, many community media outlets are able to enhance their role as a democratic voice by focusing upon their relations with the state, market and mainstream media and actively engaging with those discourses which are hegemonic (and thus powerful) while still retaining and protecting their identity in terms of serving communities and offering alternatives to the mainstream media. This does not mean community media need to embark on a program of expansion but rather better use their ability to articulate and access the local and thus empower local citizens in more ways — to act as a significant conduit for relations between communities, the state and market. As Rodriguez (2001:155) reminds us:

Although this inclination to think 'bigger is better' is perfectly understandable, fostering the growth and expansion of citizens' media should be carefully considered. When it comes to media production, the consequence of losing one's ability to articulate the local constitutes a critical component of the political potential of citizens' media.

Summary

In this chapter, we explored some theoretical ideas which frame our experience of the community media sector. We offer a framework comprising multiple elements to explain the operations of the sector in acknowledgement of the different ways and different 'places' where community media performs different functions or services. We introduced the theme of 'empowerment' as an overarching term which explains the sector's impact at the level of community (and the individuals therein), the media, and more broadly society. These three elements are interrelated but it is worthwhile distinguishing each approach from the other in order to draw out subtleties.

The media is a powerful element in the representation of culture and as such, participation in media processes by diverse communities is an empowering experience. Here, we refer to a definition of empowerment which emphasises ‘enabling practices’, allowing members of a community to ‘live their lives in different ways’. In our encounter with the Australian community broadcasting sector, this is the unifying theme which exemplifies both the impact of the sector and its potential to achieve its objectives.

At the level of ‘community’, media creates, and then empowers ‘homogeneous social groups’ to represent their own cultures or ways of life. We have distinguished between empowering relatively ‘powerful’ communities and empowering ‘disadvantaged’ communities and suggest there is evidence of a continuum of disadvantage (although not easily defined) which means that the importance of the services provided to some communities is of far greater significance than others. Embedded in this mix is the question of identity. Community broadcasting’s very ability to create ‘communities of interest’ places it in an ideal position to transform ‘common sense’ into ‘good sense’ — an objective proclaimed, albeit in a different language, in the sector’s mission statements.

In terms of empowerment and the media, community broadcasters disturb the established power base of the mainstream media. The media is a central element in the representation of culture. The efforts of community media workers and their listeners are able to interrupt ‘common sense’ mainstream media representations by offering alternatives which showcase the diversity of Australian culture at the local level. This is empowering for participating communities who are either not represented or misrepresented in the mainstream media. The dissemination of different ideas and assumptions about the world and our place in it affirms a place for millions of Australians by validating their ‘whole way of life’.

The final element of the framework for this study concerns the impact of community broadcasting on broader societal concepts such as democracy, citizenship and the public sphere. The ‘citizens’ of citizens’ media (station workers, community groups and audiences) have access to a unique avenue to participate in democracy. The very existence of the sector enables such micro-participation by citizens in the public life of their communities. This, in turn, feeds into the broader ideal of public participation in democratic processes. We conclude that the antagonistic position of community media in relation to the state and the market may not serve the sector particularly well. Framing the sector as a ‘rhizome’ and adopting an agnostic position towards the state and market, allows a revised formulation of what community broadcasting might mean in the future. The suggestion is not that Australian community radio and television stations should ‘sell-out’, but rather that they might consider embracing existing relationships with traditional ‘opponents’ and explore the democratic potential therein. Allowing for fluidity and complication in its relations with the state, market, and civil society has the potential to empower the community broadcasting sector in entirely new ways, perhaps strengthening this already ‘marginally’ powerful component of Australian society.

This project was a qualitative audience study and as such did not produce ‘numbered’ statistical data. Rather, our method focused on providing depth to statistical and quantitative data that had already been made available by two studies of community broadcasting audiences conducted by the McNair Ingenuity research group. These quantitative surveys, conducted in 2004 and again in 2006, were designed to provide information to the sector about the proportion of Australians listening to community radio or watching community television, and also to identify reasons ‘why’ they watched/listened (McNair Ingenuity 2004; McNair Ingenuity 2006).

Our project was designed not only to complement this quantitative data by delving further into the reasons ‘why’ audiences liked community broadcasting, but also to explore other issues such as particular types of programming they liked; suggestions for improvements to the sector; other media outlets regularly accessed by community broadcasting audiences; and how community broadcasting stations were accessed by, and interacted with, their communities of interest. Our qualitative audience study was particularly important to the Indigenous and ethnic programming sectors, as these groups did not take part in the quantitative research because of a belief that ‘quantifying’ their audiences would be misleading and would not capture the true nature of their community contribution. This report presents the only systematic data available thus far about audiences for Indigenous and ethnic community radio and television.

The project’s methodology was guided by the over-arching perception that while the sector needed ‘numbers’ in order to gain an understanding of its audience reach, these numbers would only tell the sector — and the research community — a limited amount about community broadcasting audiences. For example, the McNair Ingenuity Research (2004) found a significant difference between ‘metropolitan’ and ‘non-metropolitan’ listeners in its random survey. Metropolitan listeners cited ‘diversity in programming/they have specialist music or information programs’ as the key reason for listening, while non-metropolitan listeners cited ‘local information/local news’ as their main reason for listening. The qualitative method allows us to investigate in greater depth the reasons for such differences — why, for example, is local news and information so much more important to regional audiences of community radio? Similarly, why do metropolitan audiences place less weight on news and information, and more emphasis on specialist music and other programming? We wanted to move beyond the limits of quantitative research and to complement it through a series of audience focus groups and discussions with community groups who regularly access community broadcasting. Before outlining the method, we will provide a little more of the background to the qualitative audience research field in order to properly place it within an Australian community broadcasting context.

3.1 Qualitative audience research

Australia’s community broadcasting sector — one of the first established globally — has not received sustained academic or government attention with regard to audiences (Bear, 1979; 1983; Moran, 1994; Thornley, 1995; Barlow, 1995; 1997; 1999; van Vuuren, 2002). This situation is changing with community media increasingly identified as a site for innovative and more participatory practices — but the audience largely remains silenced (Forde, 1999; Ewart, 2000; Downing, 2001; Rodriguez, 2001; Forde, Foxwell and Meadows, 2002b; 2003; Atton, 2002). The handful of audience surveys carried out across the Australian community media sector over the past 10 years or so have focussed on individual stations — and virtually all have sought quantitative data. While the empowering possibilities of local media production have been canvassed and acknowledged globally in the past 10 years, analysis of local audience reception has not received similar research attention (Molnar & Meadows, 2001; Rodriguez, 2001; Downing, 2001; Atton, 2002).

Globally, there has been a significant increase in the number and popularity of qualitative research projects. Seale *et al* (2004:1) report that texts on qualitative research have increased exponentially in the past 10 years. The core method for this project — focus group discussion — has also experienced increasing popularity. Albeit attracting criticism from some quarters, qualitative research — and specifically the focus group method — is primarily a cycle of ‘shared activities and understandings’ (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999:18) where relationships between the researcher and the researched are potentially transformed to enable a more democratic process — essentially, it is about shared responsibility, knowledge and power (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999:18). This approach, with its emphasis on democracy, sits well with the sector’s own philosophies of democratic access and participation in broadcasting. Our efforts to establish an appropriate audience survey method does not assume that qualitative research has an ‘inherent’ capacity to alter the relations between researchers and the researched (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999:18). A critical aspect of this approach is to find ways to channel knowledge and findings into practical ends. In this configuration, the cycle of participation and sharing is satisfied by careful attention to the way the data is presented as well as ensuring the research has empowering practical possibilities for research participants.

At the level of policymaking, qualitative research captures the ‘audience first’ philosophy of community broadcasting and, in line with the industry’s legislative requirements, looks beyond markets and statistics to obtain a clearer picture of community broadcasting services in local communities. At the local level, this research promises to serve stations in terms of enabling them to better know their audiences and to provide them with increased information for potential sponsors. A key outcome of this project has been the development of a Qualitative Audience Research Kit for stations which demonstrates the portability and usefulness of the methods adopted here. The process therefore has the potential to empower community broadcasters by providing them with a cheap and effective method for investigating their audiences.

We were concerned to adopt a research method which would complement the nature, goals and processes of the community broadcasting sector. Our primary field of theoretical investigation concerns notions of the public sphere and the emergence of a true ‘community’ public sphere in the Australian media landscape. As such, the democratic and cooperative nature of focus groups held great appeal. Gibson and Cameron (2001:22), in devising a list of research priorities within the community research field, suggest priority should be given to ‘researching and developing mechanisms for promoting active citizenship within all types of communities, especially in disadvantaged areas’. By involving community media organisations in our research method and encouraging audience involvement and participation in discussions about community media, we attempted — by the very nature of our methodology — to achieve this aim of active citizenship. Further, Gibson and Cameron (2001:22) suggest that an important step towards developing a research agenda on ‘transforming communities’ is to document ‘best practice examples of projects that promote active and sustained involvement in a range of tasks by community members, especially those usually marginalised from decision-making processes’.

While market researchers have been the most enthusiastic proponents of the focus group method, they tend to see participants as ‘consumers’ rather than as ‘citizens’ (see Cunningham-Burley *et al* for more on this contrasting view of focus group participation, 1999). Green (1999:42) sees the shift towards focus groups as a popular research tool among academics as evidence of the ‘commercialisation’ of university research, and evidence of the current environment which requires academics to become more industry-relevant. It has been our experience, however, that while commercial market research companies — and media organisations — may find the focus group method useful for gauging group responses, it is independently useful also to our type of research which is investigating the cultural aspects of community broadcasting and attempting to determine how ‘an audience’ (which is a group of individuals) perceives, discusses and relates to community radio and television.

Focus groups are group discussions exploring a specific set of issues. The group is ‘focused’ in that it involves some kind of collective activity, such as viewing a video, examining a single health promotion message, or simply debating a set of questions. Crucially, focus groups are distinguished from the broader category of group interviews by the explicit use of group interaction to generate data (Kitzinger *et al*, 1999: 4).

A defining feature of focus group research is its rejection of ‘statistical representativeness’ in favour of a ‘theoretical sample’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which aims ‘to generate talk that will extend the range of thinking about an issue’ and thus recruits ‘groups that are defined in relation to the particular conceptual framework of the study’ (McNaughten & Myers, 2004:68). This project adopts this conceptual idea while giving due consideration to the statistical data gathered from the McNair Ingenuity research. Conveying the difference between a ‘theoretical sample’ of qualitative research as opposed to a ‘statistical sample’ of quantitative research was an issue in negotiations with our industry partners. Favouring ‘theoretical rigour’ over ‘statistical rigour’ has raised many questions about ‘bias’ and ‘objectivity’. While station selections are not random, the ‘1800’ number (detailed below) prevents stations from screening potentially problematic audience participants. Explaining to the sector that a qualitative research project carries some acceptance of ‘bias’ and actively seeks participants who will be ‘willing to generate talk’ (McNaughten & Myers, 2004) forced us to revisit the philosophical foundations of qualitative research and to clarify its validity as an appropriate tool for this study (Forde *et al*, 2006).

3.2 Selecting the sample

Our primary consideration was that people attending the focus groups would already be community broadcasting supporters — otherwise they would not hear broadcast announcements requesting their participation. This fuelled a debate about sampling and selection. One concern was that the project might fail to elicit ‘objective’ data about the sector because it would not be speaking to people who did not know about community broadcasting, or who chose not to watch/listen because it did not appeal to them. We were already looking at subjective outcomes, in that sense, because we were consulting only those people who were already audiences of community radio and television. The aim of the project was not to find out why some parts of Australian society did not tune in to community broadcasting — we wanted to

question a sample of the 47 per cent of Australians who do tune in at least once a month along with the 25 per cent who listen at least weekly. We wanted to ask them why they listened or viewed; what they appreciated about the sector; what they wanted to see improve; what other media they consumed and how that compared to their community broadcasting experience. All focus group research is biased in one sense: it involves a sample of people who are willing to attend; who have the means to attend; who have time to attend; who are willing to talk in front of strangers; and importantly, who care enough to give up their own time for the fairly unselfish purpose of research.

Given all these considerations, we needed to identify a sample of stations that was generally representative of the sector: successful and unsuccessful stations, small and large, youth and seniors, metropolitan, remote and regional, and so on. While participation in the focus group may be naturally biased by the issues discussed above, we made significant attempts through constant consultation with the sector to ensure the sample of stations we selected was generally representative of the sector's diversity. A Qualitative Audience Research Advisory Committee (QARAC) was established in the early phases of the project. It included a range of representatives from community-based, government and sector-representative bodies who attended twice-yearly meetings to provide guidance and to receive progress reports on the research. We also held twice-yearly Management Committee meetings by teleconference, which involved the researchers and a smaller group of Advisory Committee members to deal with more 'nuts and bolts' issues that arose. Without doubt, the integration of the over-arching Advisory Committee, along with the Management Committee, into the project's methodology ensured we were constantly updated on sector developments. It also ensured the sampling was representative of the sector as a whole. In addition, the Advisory Committee provided invaluable feedback on interpretation of the results, and identified sector changes which might explain certain trends. This supportive, collaborative structure was a central element in the successful design and implementation of the project methodology.

Selecting 45 to 50 representative focus groups was a challenge because of the multifarious ways of classifying sector audiences. Geographic location was an obvious criterion and was central to our focus on the role of community broadcasting in regional and remote Australia. However, the seemingly easy delineation between metropolitan and regional audiences is misleading upon closer examination of the sector. Regional stations can be further delineated by their proximity to the coast, by local industry, or by programming format, among other criteria. In a similar vein, metropolitan stations can be classified according to their programming format (youth, seniors, RPH, Christian, fine music etc), as 'sub-metropolitan' stations, according to the nature of their subscriber base, whether they are large or small stations etc. Stations can be further categorised according to their time as 'fully-licensed' stations. The selection of these groups is based upon our own experience of the sector, information from our advisory committee, and continuing informal meetings with community broadcasting participants at a range of venues. Ultimately though, the sample was drawn, trying to balance as much as possible the different elements that define community broadcasting: geography (urban, regional, remote); and target audience (eg. youth, linguistic choice, cultural background, disability etc); along with room for some flexibility.

Ultimately, focus groups were run at the following metropolitan, regional and remote radio and television stations:

Metropolitan and regional radio audiences

- Artsound, Canberra
- Valley FM, Tuggeranong Valley
- 2QBYN, Queanbeyan
- 2TVR, Tumut, NSW
- 2BAY FM, Byron Bay
- 2FBI, Sydney
- 2SER, Sydney
- 3RRR, Melbourne
- 3CR, Melbourne
- 3GDR, Melbourne

- Fresh FM, Bendigo
- 7THE Sound of the City, Hobart
- EDGE Radio, Hobart
- 4ZZZ, Brisbane
- 4MBS, Brisbane
- 4FCR, Fraser Coast Qld
- Radio Nag, Yeppoon
- 6CRA, Albany WA
- 6RPH, Perth
- Sunshine FM, Perth
- 6RTR, Perth
- 8KTR, Katherine
- Radio Adelaide
- ROX-Fm, Roxby Downs SA
- 5TCB, Bordertown SA

Ethnic audiences

- Macedonian program, Plenty Valley FM, Victoria
- Vietnamese youth program, 3CR, Melbourne
- Sudanese program, 3ZZZ, Melbourne
- Turkish program, 3ZZZ, Melbourne
- Tongan program, 5Ebi, Adelaide
- Serbian program, TEN73 Border FM, Albury-Wodonga
- Filipino/Tagalog program, 104.1 Territory FM
- Indonesian program, 104.1 Territory FM
- Chinese Youth program, 4EB Brisbane
- Greek Seniors program, 4EB Brisbane

Indigenous audiences (further data was collected from other communities—see Section 3.4)

- Radio Larrakia, Darwin

- 3KND, Kool 'n' Deadly, Melbourne
- Bumma Bipperra Media, Cairns
- 98.9FM Murri Country, Brisbane (formerly 4AAA)
- Radio Goolarri, Broome
- CAAMA, Alice Springs
- TEABBA, Darwin
- Umcewarra Media, Port Augusta

Community television

- Channel 31, Brisbane (Briz-31)
- C31, Melbourne
- Channel 31, Adelaide
- Access 31, Perth
- TVS, Sydney

Focus groups were attempted, but ultimately did not occur either through lack of attendance or lack of cooperation from the following stations identified in our original sample:

- TOP-FM, Darwin
- 3SYN, Melbourne
- Croatian program, TEN-Border FM Albury-Wodonga

The failure to organise these focus groups is not necessarily reflective of either the station's or an individual program's popularity. In two of the three instances above, insufficient responses were received either by the station or the 1800 number to constitute a full focus group. But it was also the case that the focus group method was perhaps not appropriate. At SYN-FM in Melbourne, for example, the majority of its audience is young, usually school children aged up to 17. The ability for these students to attend a focus group from 5.30pm to 7.30pm was limited unless they had cooperative parents, public transport, etc. TOP-FM in Darwin was conducting its own audience research at the time we approached the station and management there decided that focus group feedback was not a necessary part of the station's marketing or research profile. We found at other focus groups where attendance was slightly below the minimum of six that issues such as weather at the time, age of the participants, or access to suitable transport all had the potential to affect attendance. These issues were more pertinent to some stations and programs than others.

3.3 Specific method applied

After consultation with the qualitative research literature and discussion with community broadcasting sector representatives through QARAC, the following 'three-pronged' methodology was adopted. While the focus groups formed the core of the study, it was also important to conduct what we have labelled Key People interviews to identify local issues of importance to establish a station's background and to alert the 'key person' at the station to the station's role in assisting to organise the focus group. The Key People interviews gave stations the opportunity to identify two or three people who

could be interviewed as part of the second phase of the research, the Key Group interviews. These interviews were conducted with representatives of community groups who regularly accessed the station and were designed to capture more information about the ‘community role’ of the station beyond that offered by audience members in focus groups.

Method 1 — Key people interviews (station coordinators, sector representatives, language group representatives) were conducted to identify key themes emerging from the quantitative research, which needed to be explored in greater depth; to identify data collected by previous audience studies; to note perceived attitudes towards audiences and audience research; and to put in place strategies to identify focus group participants.

Method 2 — Key group interviews with community groups, sponsors, local musicians, artists etc who have regular interaction with community broadcasting enabled us to identify the nature and extent of local access; to define the ‘community value’ of local broadcasting for such groups; and to determine the educational value of community broadcasting to local communities. This component of the methodology recognised that in order to evaluate Australian community broadcasting, the sector needed to be examined from the perspectives of those who work or volunteer (our previous study), and those who access and utilise the sector but who may not necessarily be part of the audience.

Method 3 — Focus group discussions formed the core of the study. We conducted 48 focus groups: 25 for metropolitan and regional audiences; 10 for ethnic language groups; eight for Indigenous audiences; and five for viewers of community television. We also gathered data from Indigenous people in a further 12 regions although this data was not collected through formal focus groups — this method is detailed below.

The vast majority of the focus groups contained between six and 10 audience members representative of the sector’s geographic, cultural and linguistic diversity (market research recommends focus group sizes of eight to 12; sociological research recommends five to six [Kitzinger *et al* 1999:8]). In order to identify participants in the focus groups, we adopted what we called the ‘Method Five’ approach, which saw researchers and the station work together to access listeners and viewers in a variety of ways:

1. A broadcast announcement which began running about four weeks before the scheduled focus group, announcing that the research was being done and that a focus group was imminent for this particular station. Interested audience members were encouraged to ring either a 1800 number, or the station’s telephone number. Overwhelmingly, we found most potential participants called the independent 1800 number — the exception to this was 3RRR in Melbourne, where there were more calls made to the station than to the 1800 number.
2. Announcements within particular programs by popular presenters, giving out information to the audience about the focus group and encouraging them to call the 1800 number or the station.
3. A community announcement sent to all local press after the broadcast announcement began airing, to ensure that any audience members who perhaps were not regular listeners, but maybe tuned in to a program once or twice a week, might also be accessed.
4. A circular email or letter to the station’s list of subscribers or members (if one was available) informing them about the focus group and encouraging them to take part. Again, this method was designed to catch those audience members who might not be regular listeners, or who may have previously listened to the station but had recently switched off.
5. Finally, we encouraged momentum within the station as much as possible to ensure the station was supportive of the focus group process and to ensure all staff were aware of the timeframes involved.

After the first five focus groups were conducted, we made the decision to introduce a \$1000 cash prize for all focus group participants as a small incentive to attend. While attendance to that point had been adequate, we felt this small incentive — whereby anyone who attended a focus group went in the draw for \$1000 — might encourage more to attend.

In order to attract the desired six to 10 focus group participants, we found it necessary to confirm attendance from 10 to 15 people. Almost inevitably, there were work or personal reasons which, at the last minute, prevented participants from attending. To counter this, we tried where possible to confirm more attendees than we actually needed. If, as the focus group date approached, we still did not have enough audience members registered, we encouraged the station to run the broadcast announcement on higher rotation and for popular presenters to be even more vocal in their encouragement to

audience members to participate. If we found we had more than enough registered to attend, we were selective in terms of age, gender, ethnic diversity and so on to ensure the focus group was as diverse and representative as possible. The focus groups generally ran for one to two hours, and participants were provided with refreshments and a light supper during or after the discussion.

Once the focus group began, with either a Chief Investigator or Senior Researcher as mediator, members of each focus group were encouraged to nominate their priorities for discussion before we canvassed common themes explored by all focus groups. This process of focus group research organisation and execution is more collaborative than other methods and can be an empowering process for participants (Catterall and MacLaran, 1997; Criterion Research, 2002). This method varied slightly for the Indigenous and ethnic focus groups which sometimes involved a translator. This is discussed further below. Mediators carried with them a one-page prompt-sheet outlining the main issues to be covered. This was used only if there was a lull in the conversation or if, at the end of the discussion, some essential issues had not been covered. Generally, mediators listened to the discussion and kept the conversation ‘on track’ with focus group participants setting the agenda.

It was also important at the start of the focus group to ensure there were no station workers, volunteers, or board members present. On eight occasions, we had to ask participants to leave (usually volunteers) who had thought that as audience members as well as volunteers, they would like to take part in the discussion. It was essential to the integrity of the research, however, that the participants felt they could talk openly and freely about the station without an ‘insider’ being present. On all but one occasion, it appeared to be an honest mistake by the volunteers involved to come along and they were happy to leave. In one case, however, at a regional station two focus group participants did not declare their involvement with the station when asked at the beginning, and it was only towards the end of the discussion that it became clear one participant was a board member, and the other was a station presenter. After assessing the transcript, it became obvious to the researchers that these participants had directed discussion to a reasonable extent and had also defended the station against criticism from other participants on several occasions. That transcript was therefore eliminated from the data analysis and the results of that focus group were declared invalid. The station was notified and at the time of writing, we had not yet received a response. This was the only instance where data was deemed to have been invalidated.

Upon completion of the focus group discussion, a recording was provided to an independent transcriber who provided a full transcription of the discussion to the research team as a Word document. This document was then coded through the NVivo qualitative statistics package, and along with all the other focus group transcriptions, was analysed to assess the major emerging themes. Separate NVivo files were created for the metropolitan/regional; ethnic; CTV; and Indigenous transcriptions to ensure issues specific to these sub-sectors could be explored.

3.4 Variation to the methodology

In both the Indigenous and ethnic focus groups, it was a primary consideration for us to promote an environment where communities felt comfortable about sharing their experience of community radio. Focus group research is a particularly useful method for allowing participants to ‘generate their own questions, frames and concepts and to pursue their own priorities on their own terms, in their own vocabulary’ (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999:4). Translators gave audience members an opportunity to discuss issues in a ‘vocabulary’ which was both familiar and appropriate for Indigenous and ethnic audiences. The location of focus groups was also important to these sectors of the industry — particularly the Indigenous research — as it was necessary to go into people’s communities in order to access their views (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999:11). For ethnic audiences, the primary deviation from the main methodology was the inclusion of a translator to assist in the operation of the focus group, and to also assist to locate audience members who may not speak fluent English (and therefore could not be contacted by our researchers). The Indigenous fieldwork deviated a little further from the main methodology, with sector representatives and the research team primarily responsible for the Indigenous component identifying early that formal focus groups would work in only a handful of cases. Focus groups were conducted where possible — usually at metropolitan or large regional stations — while in smaller and more remote locations either one-on-one interviews or small group interviews were conducted. These variations employed in both the ethnic and Indigenous fieldwork methods are detailed below.

- **Ethnic programming audiences**

The research methods used in the ethnic program fieldwork were consistent with those used for the community television and metropolitan/regional stations, although the additional component of the translator forced us to re-think some elements of the method. Individual stations were involved to the same extent in terms of organising the focus group.

Individual presenters would announce the upcoming focus group on the specific program that we were studying and general announcements for the focus group would also run on the station at other appropriate times. Listeners were offered the opportunity to either leave their name and phone number on our general 1800 line, or if there were language issues it was necessary for them to call the station and speak to the presenter and/or a production assistant in language to register their interest in attending. This involvement of the actual presenter in collecting names initially caused some concern, and advice from the NEMBC indicated that this could, in some cases, cause unnecessary pressure to be put on particular community members to attend. It was suggested that some presenters, particularly those with a high standing in the community, could perhaps oblige some younger or less senior community members to attend. We introduced a new component to the ethnic methodology which ensured the presenter was briefed on the importance of their role in simply collecting names and telephone numbers and that they were not to initiate any phone calls to community members, nor were they to pressure any audience members to attend apart from encouraging them to take the opportunity to provide feedback as all our announcements had done.

This method was more complex due to the involvement of a translator, and indeed in some cases where most members of the community could not speak English, we involved the translator rather than the program presenter in contacting people who had left their names with the station to register interest in attending the focus group. This further ensured the independence of the approach to potential focus group members. As part of our method, we introduced a 'pre-focus group briefing' with the translator to ensure they were fully aware of the aims and content of the project. This enabled them to better translate our questions and points of discussion which were put to the participants during the focus group. This pre-focus group briefing also gave researchers the opportunity to find out from the translators if there were any cultural issues, which should be taken into account during the operation of the discussion (for example, seniority of focus group members, order of speaking, gender issues that might apply, and so on). Across the board, we found such cultural considerations had a minimal impact on data gathering with most translators able to take these issues into account during the discussions.

The focus group participants were offered the opportunity at the start of the discussion to talk either in English or in their first language. Five of the focus groups were run in a community language, and five were in English, on the advice of the participants. Two of those groups — the Indonesian and Filipino/Tagalog — were conducted in English with agreement from participants because of an absence of available translators in Darwin. In cases such as this, we usually had a focus group participant who offered to translate for those community members who felt better able to express themselves in their own language. In our experience, however, it was far preferable for the focus group to be run either entirely in English (if ALL participants spoke English very well), or entirely in the language of choice. Focus groups which allowed some people to speak in English, and others to speak in their own language were generally less informative and contain less data than those conducted in either one language or the other — we believe this is due to the fact that people were less likely to interact with and respond to each other if they were speaking in different languages. It was also the case that those participants who did not speak English very well were less likely to participate if all the other participants were able to communicate in English. This only occurred in a minority of cases, but it was an important research method issue to note.

Based on these experiences, we suggest that future research involving cross-cultural focus groups be conducted, where possible, in a common language with an independent interpreter who is not a part of the discussion.

- **Indigenous audiences**

The Indigenous component of the fieldwork saw a great deal of travel to metropolitan, regional and remote locations to access audiences for a wide variety of Indigenous broadcasting organisations (see the opening sections of Chapter 5 for an overview of the breadth of the Australian Indigenous media sector). Altogether, the researchers ran eight focus groups with Indigenous audiences, and collected data from a further 12 locations. In remote areas, the researchers found it was better to tap into existing cultural events rather than to attempt to 'stage' a community gathering through a focus group or a research visit, so began to target major cultural and music events to ensure a large number of people could be accessed at the same time. At these events, the researchers would make contact with local community members with whom they had established an important prior relationship. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

An essential part of the Indigenous methodology was the involvement of a local community person as a research assistant. This ensured researchers were provided with introductions to ordinary community members and were also given a level of trust and legitimacy by the community involved, through the inclusion of a local person. It also meant the local community received something back through the research, i.e. a wage for a community member to assist with the

project, and the associated work experience gained. Indeed, in the communities where we were unable to locate a local research assistant we found it very difficult to collect substantial data — there was simply no-one to vouch for us in the community and to ensure community members ‘trusted’ our purpose. This approach also ensures that the ‘reciprocity’ philosophy which drives the Indigenous component of our research — that the communities should gain some benefit for their involvement — also receives a strong foundation through regular interaction with community people. For example, attendance at the Alice Springs Indigenous Telecommunications conference led to conversations which indicated a number of communities were interested in the Federal Government’s new Shared Responsibility Agreements, and in tapping into the Indigenous researcher’s ability to identify potential funding and granting opportunities for their community organisations. The researchers were then able to begin work on ‘returning the favour’ provided by the Indigenous communities — who have given us access to their communities to conduct the research — by participating in work which will provide real outcomes for the communities beyond the research project.

Another essential component of the Indigenous methodology, which was not an integral part of either the metropolitan/regional or ethnic fieldwork, was the need to create community contacts well in advance of a visit. This has required members of the research team to strengthen existing relationships and create new ones in selected areas to establish a dialogue with community elders and local broadcasters (Michaels, 1985; Morris and Meadows, 2001). For this purpose, the Indigenous researchers attended several sector conferences, general meetings, festivals and so on early in the project. Contacts made there with key community members or media workers were integral to the success of later community visits and also helped the researchers identify upcoming cultural and music events or community gatherings that could be used as a site for data collection. This also helped project researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of sector issues relevant to the communities involved — an important contextual element. We conducted the following focus groups:

- Radio Larrakia, Darwin
- 3KND, Kool ‘n’ Deadly, Melbourne
- Bumma Bippera Media, Cairns
- 98.9FM Murri Country, Brisbane (formerly 4AAA)
- Radio Goolarri, Broome
- CAAMA, Alice Springs
- TEABBA, Darwin
- Umeewarra Media, Port Augusta

We also collected data from the following community gatherings and events:

- Batchelor College (2004)
- RIBS (ex-BRACS) Festival, Alice Springs
- Laura Dance and Cultural Festival, far north Qld
- GARMA Festival, Arnhem Land
- Palm Island
- 4K1G, Townsville, NAIDOC celebrations & health service
- Torres Strait Cultural Festival, Thursday Island
- RIBS (ex-BRACS) Festival Woorabinda

- Yuendumu Sports Festival
- Maningrida 'Surviving Cyclone' festival
- Beagle Bay, Djaridjin, and One Arm Point, Kimberleys
- Umuwa, Anangu-Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara lands, 25th anniversary of lands hand-back

In addition, we monitored discussions held over five days on the popular *TalkBlack* radio program, broadcast by Bumma Bippera Media in Cairns. It included on-air interviews with project research personnel and was followed, each day, by an invitation by the program host, Greg Reid, for listeners to call in to comment on any aspect of Indigenous media. As a national talkback program for Indigenous listeners, this represented an excellent opportunity to tap into a range of audience members who not only listened to Indigenous radio but also interacted with other community members and the *TalkBlack* host through the program. *TalkBlack* callers' comments, along with transcripts from the Indigenous audience focus groups and interviews, were analysed through the NVivo statistics package.

3.5 Conclusion

The research methods adopted for this study of Australian community broadcasting audiences were specifically designed to complement quantitative data already obtained by external research organisations. In particular, we developed an approach from an amalgam of methods which built on the sector's philosophy of participation by involving stations in the research process. To accomplish this, we had to involve not only the stations, but also the sector itself. We had to confront the notion, for example, that a 'community of interest' such as Sydney's gay community would expect and require quite a different radio service to that of a remote Aboriginal community in the central desert region. And yet, this project sought to evaluate the audiences from both of these communities. What our research was designed to do was not to 'evaluate' the success or otherwise of particular community media outlets — that was primarily done as part of our last project (Forde, Meadows, Foxwell, 2002b). We set out to learn why community media audiences access community media and within this research framework, we investigated issues of empowerment, civic action, participation, access and community service from the perspectives of a range of community broadcasting audiences.

We sought to answer some of the difficult 'how' and 'why' questions confronting community broadcasting by applying a series of participatory qualitative methods which engaged both the sector and its audiences. As the ensuing chapters reveal, this methodology has evolved into an original and useful way for researchers, scholars, sector bodies and individual stations to evaluate the impact, role, community contribution and, indeed, the very nature of 'what community broadcasting does' in a broad range of contexts. Our aim was for the huge variety of community broadcasting forms — regional, remote, or radical; full-time ethnic broadcasters; metropolitan-based youth; news-focused political activists; easy-listening and 'golden oldies' seniors; specialist broadcasting for Christian or Radio for the Print Handicapped and so on — to apply the methodologies to their own context. We hope the audience research methods developed throughout this project prove to be a valuable and enduring tool.

I think the idea of it being community... it's got a community base and it makes us feel like we're in a common unity (Focus Group, 2QBYN Queanbeyan, 2005).

We conducted 25 audience focus groups and 62 personal interviews with metropolitan and regional radio stations and with community groups who regularly access them. In both metropolitan and regional areas, research participants recounted the roles community broadcasters are performing in their lives and in their communities and their reasons for choosing to listen. While metropolitan audience numbers are greater than their regional counterparts, there are more community stations in regional Australia. As a result, we conducted more focus groups in regional areas than in metropolitan areas. In many ways the categories of metropolitan and regional audiences are inadequate to describe the multitude of audiences served in these areas — the delineation does a disservice to the cultures inclusive of, and broadcast by, metropolitan and regional community radio. Community media, more than any other media, represent the kaleidoscope of cultures which constitute the Australian experience. From Bendigo to Brisbane, Katherine to Hobart, Perth to Sydney—community media provides a platform where the ‘colourful’ (Focus Group, 2SER Sydney, 2005) of Australian society are represented and validated.

Overall, audience members understood the role community media performs in representing a diversity of cultures. We collected an enormous amount of data from metropolitan and regional audiences and it is difficult to present the range of experiences in a single chapter (Appendix A). Perusal of this fieldwork gives some indication of the diversity of audiences involved in the community broadcasting sector. It is worthwhile remembering that there are 361 community radio stations in Australia (ACMA, 2006) who in our experience, are committed to the idea of community and service and involve their audiences in many different ways. Nevertheless, our fieldwork did reveal ‘key themes’ which were consistent all over Australia, regardless of location. These themes, which provide strong indications of how audiences describe the role and contribution of community broadcasting, will be presented in further detail throughout this chapter and are briefly outlined below:

1. Accessibility of station

Audience members feel that they can ring their local community broadcaster and be put to air immediately or receive an instant response from station staff. Reasons for accessing the station range from birthday messages and finding lost dogs, to airplay for local musicians or promotion of local music, sporting and other cultural events. Audiences greatly appreciate that their community broadcasters are readily available and accessible.

2. Station presentation and style

Audiences identify community radio programming as often lacking the sleek presentation style characteristic of other media. This was an aspect they enjoy about their community station. Occasional mistakes on-air make audience members feel like the presenters are ‘one of them’ and they liken listening to ‘conversations with friends’. In fact, audience members regularly refer to stations and their presenters as ‘family’, ‘friends’, or ‘like listening to a mate’.

3. Local news and information

Audiences perceive that community broadcasters have become a major source of local news and information. This supports the findings of the McNair Ingenuity Community Radio National Listener Survey (2006) which found that nationally, the most-cited reason for listening was for ‘local information/local news’. As we found in our last study (Forde, Meadows & Foxwell, 2002), most stations do not have a dedicated news and current affairs program. Rather local news and information is delivered in the content of various programs or through community service announcements. News in this context often refers to information about events of interest in the local area or community. While audience members are happy with the local news and information currently produced, they identify it as an area where improvements or an increase in services is necessary.

4. Music

The community broadcasting sector is providing audiences with a diversity of musical styles and genres that are not available elsewhere. In many of the focus groups, specialist music aired by community broadcasters that listeners can not hear anywhere else took up a significant amount of discussion time. Musicians attending the focus groups also emphasised the

importance of community broadcasters in providing an outlet and an audience for their music. These musicians cited the accessibility of the station and the critical role it plays in supporting local music industries. Indeed, 2006 Female Artist of the Year ARIA award-winner, Clare Bowditch, in her acceptance speech, explicitly thanked community radio for playing her music when no-one else would.

5. Diversity

Audience members remarked consistently on the diversity of community broadcasting programming. Diversity in music programming and multicultural programming are seen as a positive attribute of community broadcasting. Even where audience members do not appreciate particular programs, they are prepared to put aside their personal preferences in acknowledgement of other interests in the community being served by the station. There is thus, a degree of respect and compassion exhibited by audiences in accepting the diversity of ‘communities within communities’ characteristic of metropolitan and regional locations.

This chapter will examine each of these key themes in greater detail in order to explore the ways in which Australian audiences are engaging with community broadcasting. It is important, though, to preface this discussion of our key findings with a broader consideration of audience comments alluding to the ‘social glue’ that community radio provides for them. Many audience members expressed the idea that community radio helps them to feel part of their community.

Creating communities

In both metropolitan and regional areas, community radio performs a pivotal role in representing diverse interests as well as bringing like-minded individuals and groups together. Consistently, participants in the focus groups remarked that by listening they feel they are part of the community. At Melbourne’s 3RRR, a participant summed up the feelings of many noting the tendency of new information technologies like the Internet to contribute to a general feeling of isolation:

It [3RRR] is something that actually brings the community together, whereas a lot of the stuff in the world today seems to be isolating us. You know, you can get all the information you need, sitting at home in front of your computer, and that sort of thing. Whereas, this is something that actually gives you a reason to get out and into your community, and a community that is open and accepting of you (Focus Group, 3RRR Melbourne, 2005).

Another participant at the 2FBi focus group drew attention to the role of local radio creating a sense of belonging to a community:

And I guess, like what you’re saying, the sort of product of today’s society is that disassociation from your environment and you know, you’re another number and you might be on a bit of a treadmill at work. You know what I mean, it’s just some sort of meaning to your life as well. Not that you don’t have any elsewhere but you know, I hope you do. Yeah, just being a part of something bigger that’s meaningful to you (Focus Group, 2FBi Sydney, 2005).

Community radio stations were referred to as ‘social glue’ (Focus Group, 2TVR Tumut, 2005) informing audiences about their community, particularly events and activities either taking place in the local area or broadcasting ideas, events and so on which will be of interest to their ‘target’ audience.

I’d say ‘community glue’... it glues the community together in so many ways, and allows that opportunity to hear in-depth discussion about what matters to the community. The presenters get on air, and then there’s a follow-up, so for me it’s that nourishing community feeling and sense of understanding about what’s going on in the community (Focus Group, Bay FM Byron Bay, 2005).

And from Artsound FM in Canberra:

Commercial radio makes me despair for this country and I find it quite depressing. And so listening to Artsound FM reminds me that not everybody belongs to commercial radio land and there is community out there. And in that sense, it’s given me a sense of connectiveness and it also reminds me that it’s necessary to keep striving for that—that it’s not a natural or a given and that’s one reason why I will support community radio because it’s an alternative to the mass (Focus Group, Artsound FM Canberra, 2005).

There is a significant amount of evidence which supports the sector’s role in maintaining local community cultures — of providing a conduit through which diverse members of the community feel a sense of belonging.

... I feel like I'm part of something bigger...in a very real sense that the world is out there and without even you know, kind of realising it, I was listening one day and I went, 'Oh I know that girl' you know, who does a particular show and it was like, oh, like all of a sudden there were these networks of life and world and music and venues and just things that are happening and they're being engaged with in a, just in a real way that you feel you can participate [and] if you don't want to participate in the world, it's happening anyway and I find, I like that, I like to know that that's happening. And I appreciate that so much more than just kind of this bombardment of either egos as you were saying or just hype...like [2FBi] it's organic and it also is kind of material and real and about you know, stuff that I do want to participate in and be part of (Focus Group, 2FBi Sydney, 2005).

For those who were new to a region, town or suburb, community radio is an avenue to learn about their new home. In metropolitan areas, community radio brings listeners closer together a big city, while in regional areas, stations provide insight into smaller communities. In regional Albany, Western Australia, a participant noted the importance of the radio station as an introduction to the local area:

It's definitely done that for me. Particularly in the first few months I lived here, and made this big, big move from Melbourne which was quite a big move. It was lovely us setting up the house, just to listen to the radio and the announcers and you really got a feeling of what was going on here. Because I tend to take it for granted now, but when I'd just come from the big smoke, it was such a beautiful difference, you had these sort of real people, instead of announcers interviewing local politicians and the stuff that you normally get at the commercial radio stations in the city. It was really good. I look back and that was really great to have the radio there (Focus Group, 6CRA Albany, 2005).

In metropolitan Melbourne and Sydney, participants remarked on how community radio alleviated the isolation of a big city, putting them in touch with other people with similar interests:

As I said, when I moved here, I didn't know many people and you get that sort of sense of belonging. You start going to a couple of Triple R events or whatever, and while you don't know anyone, you sort of feel like you belong because you know everyone is sort of thinking the same, on the same wave length. So you know, you might only just say hello to a couple of people and sit there and listen to whatever is happening but there is that real connection and that sense of belonging (Focus Group, 3RRR Melbourne, 2005).

... And you went like down, underground in the Mandarin Club and I wouldn't have known about it, I think, I think it was 2SER that I heard it on. And I went there and there was the most, it was the most strange-looking crowd ever seen, and I thought everyone looked really strange and you knew that anyone that you talked to would be really interesting, it was just really great, and, and it was like a little secret cult thing going on and I think you begin to see faces that you recognise and you do get to feel a bit of a community going on when in such a big city that's often, so incredibly isolating, it's really lovely to have had that feeling (Focus Group, 2SER Sydney, 2005).

A particularly devoted community radio listener indicated that based on experience in travelling around Australia, local community stations enable people to quickly acquaint themselves with new cities and towns:

I find community radio just a wonderful way to get to know a community and so as I've traveled around Australia and gone to live in new cities, it's just been a great way to tap in, whether it's an under culture or whatever it actually may be (Focus Group, Radio Adelaide, 2005).

For many, their local community broadcasters gives them a sense of 'where they are' by providing information, details of events, and discussion of issues relevant to the immediate local area. It demonstrates a close connection between the 'sense of community' concept and the important local informational role that stations are playing:

[Artsound gives] a sense of locality I think, that, I mean I think this is wonderful representation of Canberra. And the same might be said of community radio wherever it is, but you do turn it on and get a sense of where you are (Focus Group, Artsound FM Canberra, 2005).

And the other thing is that it makes for us, as a border town, it distinguishes us from Canberra in a way doesn't it? I mean, it sort of, otherwise we're just a suburb of, of Canberra. I mean I know we're a... suburb of Canberra but it, it says that we have our own identity and I like that (Focus Group, 2QBYN Queanbeyan, 2005).

Listeners, feel that their community radio station provides a greater sense of community for them than they may have otherwise felt. This theme consistently appeared throughout other discussions relating to the accessibility of stations, the broadcast style of station presenters, the local news and information contribution of community radio, and so on. An examination of these themes in greater depth illuminates the way a broad range of Australian audiences are 'seeing' community radio.

4.1 Accessibility of the station

The sense of local community and a general ‘belonging’ created by community radio station is significant. A critical aspect in the current and continuing ability of these stations to maintain local communities is station accessibility. The audience members we spoke to consistently praised the level and extent of access they have to their local community stations. For many of them, this has created a sense that they, and other members of the public, ‘own’ the station. In almost every focus group we conducted for our research, participants acknowledged that they were able to access program presenters and station workers easily and quickly. One focus group participant explained how this contributed to the sense of community ownership:

It’s for us, about us, and like I said if you want to ring up and put a request on, if they’re doing a theme and it’s a request for a birthday, they’ll happily put it in and do it (Focus Group, ROX FM Roxby Downs, 2005).

Audience members, in most cases, could ring a station and their call would be answered — sometimes by the only person present: the on-air announcer. Audiences frequently ring stations about music or music events, often to find out the name of a song or a band that had been played. At Perth’s 6RTR, an audience member recounted his experience:

And so I called up and I said, ‘Oh, you know, hi. I thought you’d been talking about The Hives and stuff.’ And he goes, ‘Oh, I’ll play a track for you, yeah.’ And then he sort of left it at that. And then I called him up and won a CD after that. I just love the fact that you can ring up and you can just go, ‘What was that song?’ (Focus Group, 6RTR Perth, 2005).

Station access distinguishes community radio from most other media. The exchange below at the SYN FM focus group, a Melbourne youth station, illustrates the capacity of stations to engage with their audience members in ways not available via other media:

Participant 1: I suppose following on from that, you feel on community radio, you can actually call up and you’ll get through as opposed to you know you just redial, you know I think I did it when I was a kid a few times. To try and call up, you’d press redial about 100 times and you’d get engaged every single time and yeah, you can bet there was how many hundreds of other people doing the same.

Participant 2: Yeah, absolutely.

Participant 1: That kind of accessibility.

Participant 2: Yeah, that accessibility, it makes a difference. If you kept on getting knocked back, if there was a shop or something that you kept getting knocked back from, you know, would you keep trying to go back.

Participant 1: Yeah you would, eventually you would give up.

Participant 2: If someone almost always welcomed you and appreciated you, you know, you felt a lot better about yourself. You’re more likely to sort of go back.

Participant 1: And from what Marty is saying, the fact that you can get through, it also provides services that give, like if you want to have a bit of fun and you want to say hi to someone on the radio, and you want to leave a message.

It’s only those community stations that do it for you most of the time. It’s very hard to get on a commercial station and say something... (Focus Group, SYN FM Melbourne, 2005).

Being able to speak to presenters serves a purpose beyond accessibility. The ease of access to presenters enables audiences to stay in touch, locally, through the immediate broadcast of messages. Audience members at Fresh FM Bendigo cited how a simple phone call to their local radio station makes them feel ‘special’ and acknowledged in their community. In this case, it was sending birthday messages or welcoming overseas visitors to Bendigo (Focus Group, Fresh FM Bendigo, 2005). Focus group participants also commented that being able to call the station alleviates loneliness and serves to acknowledge members of the community who might otherwise go unnoticed. This is especially the case for older listeners where illness or mobility issues can restrict participation in the community. At Golden Days Radio in Melbourne (a seniors’ station), audience members know the regular callers and appreciate the role the station is performing at the individual level:

Well, I think you would be hard-pressed to stop Edna, have you met her? Edna rings in every presenter. God knows what her telephone bill is.

I said to her once she must have an enormous telephone bill. She just looked at me.

Yes. That’s her pleasure and who would stop her.

I suppose it’s her lifeline.

It is. As it is for Margaret of Pascoevale, and so forth.

And a lot of those people are very lonely.

They are, yes.

They get acknowledged on the radio.

It's interesting when I was on the phones, only for about three or four months but they loved chatting. You've got to develop some... just to get away, pleasantly to put the phone down, because it is certainly and most of them just love to be able to. And what other station do you get this apart from those terrible talk backs. You can ring in, and five or 10 minutes later, you hear your name on the radio.

Yes.

And people feel that they are part of something. That's a very important part of GDR (Focus Group, Golden Days Radio Melbourne, 2005).

'Feeling part of something' and the 'sense of belonging' facilitated by community radio motivates listeners to participate in community events. This is largely a consequence of a station's accessibility to its community and its role in promoting local events. Listeners are aware of local events and through their experience of community radio, feel empowered to participate, realising that they are part of the community. The overall tenet of community radio — 'about us and for us', as one focus group participant described it (Focus Group, Rox FM Roxby Downs, 2005) — nurtures a desire by some to seek a greater level of ownership of their community by attending events:

But going back to your question about what it's changed for me with the community I guess is, because it gave me a bit of a sense of community that has caused me to want to put back to the community and you know, I've started doing some sort of community-based programs that I hadn't thought about before. I mean even like tonight, you know, in the past if I'd heard that, it would have just gone in one ear and out the other. I wouldn't have actually thought, oh well maybe I will come in and put in my two bob's worth in... And I think because you are getting something from them that connects you with, you want to expand on that (Focus Group, 3RRR Melbourne, 2005).

And from the Christian station Sonshine FM in Perth:

Yeah, broadcasting events, upcoming events and stuff like that, that are coming and yeah, they're doing that all the time you know. Oh there's a conference here with such and such or this is going on there and that's going on here. And you really do, and then, you know, many times I've heard someone and I've thought oh it sounds interesting and off you go and you meet a new set of people and then that can lead somewhere else. So you do get out there in the community (Focus Group, Sonshine FM Perth, 2005).

In summary, the community radio stations we studied perform a broadly dual role in their communities. Firstly, the station's accessibility reveals to members of the audience that there is a community 'out there' and that they are (or can be) a part of it. Secondly, through the broadcast of local events, news and information, these stations enable and motivate members of the community to become actively involved. In short, the stations alert audience members to the presence of a community — and this is a source of comfort and stability in an increasingly isolated world. Stations offer avenues for their audiences to participate in the community, thereby maintaining and promoting the culture of a community. In this respect, it brings together people who are interested in similar areas and provides places and spaces for activities to take place. This is empowering for listeners both at the personal and cultural level. Connecting with others who have similar interests legitimates and validates their own interests and passions. It helps people to grips with who they are and where they fit into their communities, however they are defined. Audiences confirm the early mandate of Australia's community broadcasters to 'have a better appreciation of the interests, hence needs, of their broadcasting communities than anyone else, including government' (Staley, 1978:2). And they acknowledge the positive role stations are performing in their communities. Audience members are critical of some areas and issues and these will be addressed later in the report.

4.2 Station presentation and style

It's relaxed. It's not pretentious and that's good, because so much of what we get by the media is pretentious, it's based on image and sometimes it's manic. That's the thing you don't have with community radio. It's nice. It makes you feel good (Focus Group, 6CRA Albany, 2005).

A strong theme to emerge from our research is the distinctive 'style' of community broadcasting. Audience are particularly enthusiastic about the difference between listening to mainstream and community media. Often the lack of slick professionalism, characteristic of community media, is perceived as a negative attribute of the sector and its presenters. But audiences in this study emphasised that the relaxed manner of community broadcasting is one of the main attractions. They frequently noted that this distinctive 'station style' contributes to a perception of accessibility — a positive and endearing quality. Occasional mistakes make listeners feel like the presenters are 'one of them'.

Coming back to the amateurism, if you want of the announcers, it's like talking to a good mate or something like that. There's no barrier, 'I'm just a professional here and you're just somebody listening'. It's like they're actually talking to you all the time which makes it a lot easier to listen to. If something goes wrong, they just laugh and get along, go on with it, and everything else and they will just give their point of view. They will play something and say whoops, I forgot to put in a warning about language and things like that. They're just easy going, it's a very easy thing to listen to (Focus Group, 4ZZZ Brisbane, 2005).

Some focus group participants feel this alternative style of presentation shows that presenters are, in fact, 'ordinary people':

Because the presenters are coming from... the communities about which they are talking, [which] they work within, it's not like listening to a show where it's a journalist covering a topic of the week. Because they themselves are working in that particular area, they know the people, if they don't know it themselves they've rung up... [like] the food show; they know all the chefs and have them out. So you actually do get a better quality of information to a degree (Focus Group, 3RRR Melbourne, 2005).

Overall, audiences feel the relaxed style of presentation dissolves the traditional separation between producers and audiences maintained by mainstream media. This hierarchy between audiences and producers is further challenged by our earlier findings concerning station access. Being able to call the station and speak to a presenter or station worker reinforces the open and inclusive philosophy of community radio. A 2FBI listener (Sydney) explained how he has built a rapport with presenters and is now actively participating in a program from home:

But that's the great thing, like, you know, I don't know those guys or anything but I'm involved with the show in a, I shouldn't think about the show, I think, what could we do, you know... (Focus Group, 2FBI Sydney, 2005).

One of the most surprising findings is the frequency with which audiences refer to stations and presenters as 'family and friends'. This is a direct consequence of the style of community media where everyday citizens are given the opportunity to participate in the quite extraordinary phenomenon of broadcasting. All over Australia, with startling repetition, audience members noted their close relationship with their local community broadcaster:

I think for someone living up in the hills alone you often know some of the presenters or get to know them with radio being as intimate as it is, so your family increases (Focus Group, Bay FM Byron Bay, 2005).

There's a kind of like laid-back approach to the station which is good if you know, that's what you want and the kind of laid back approach that it presents, it makes you feel like one of them. So therefore, you sort of sit back like, talking to a mate kind of thing. They're just there, you know (Focus Group, SYN FM Melbourne, 2005).

You probably feel, when you listen to QBN, that if, if you care about the station that you probably feel like you are part of the community because, it's like I said a while ago, that the presenters for all their mistakes or whatever...it's like you're listening to a friend (Focus Group, 2QBYN Queanbeyan, 2005).

... [Y]ou can hear and feel the sense of family that Triple R cares as much about its supporters as its supporters care about them. And you feel, as you said when you come back from somewhere else, it's like the first thing you do is turn on the radio and just hug the radio. Feel welcome (Focus Group, 3RRR Melbourne, 2005).

It became part of my life because I joined and enjoyed being with a whole new life people, a big family that I didn't know existed in my community... (Focus Group, 6CRA Albany, 2005).

Yes, it's almost a family to family, you switch on Sonshine like that, oh isn't that, that Arthur and Heather [who] just had little Daniel and you feel like part of their family. You get to know these people as people, not just a voice on the radio station (Focus Group, Sonshine FM Perth, 2005).

This sense of family is common to both metropolitan and regional stations, though in regional areas, audience members are more likely to actually know a presenter, or at least know what they look like. A participant at the Fresh FM focus

group (Bendigo) explained how she has to remind herself that she does not, in fact, know a local presenter although through his voice on the radio, she feels she has an established friendship with him:

It's funny. I've seen Andie walking to work — he probably thinks I'm stalking him. But it's funny at the lights: I'm just about to go, 'Hey Andie', and then I thought, 'Hang on, that guy doesn't even know me.' So, it's funny — you tend to think they, you know, [know you] (Focus Group, Fresh FM Bendigo, 2005).

The McNair Ingenuity survey (2006) found that in both metropolitan and regional areas, audience members listened to hear 'local voices/personalities'. Reflecting smaller regional communities where people live in closer proximity, 45 per cent of non-metropolitan listeners cited local voices/personalities as a reason for listening.

It's nice too, to hear voices that you know a lot of the time on the radio, like a lot of the announcers and like I was saying when you have kids on air, people I think feel more ownership of the radio station and it's nice to hear a... familiar voice (Focus Group, 2TVR Tumut, 2005).

So while a lack of professionalism in community radio is often cited as a reason why the sector does not attract the same level of audience listenership as commercial radio, our results indicate that for the audiences that do listen, the very distinctive and often, personal style of many of the presenters is something they deeply appreciate. This is not because they like to laugh at the presenters — although humour was a part of their response — but more because it makes them feel that there is no barrier between the presenter and the audience, that the presenter is an ordinary person who is 'just like us'. This is comforting and appealing to most focus group participants. Ironically, a 'lack of professionalism' was often used as a compliment referring to the absence of the 'slick' characteristics of commercial presentation style. It is worthwhile emphasising that 'professionalism' is a concept normally defined by the presentation style of commercial and public broadcasters. It is important to note here that the benchmarks for commercial and public broadcasters are often of little relevance to the community broadcasting sector — at least in the minds of its audiences. It is misleading to evaluate the 'professionalism' of the community sector against models drawn from commercial and national public media. Community radio stations have developed their own style which is 'professional' in its own right — particularly when using 'connection to communities' as a measure of their success.

4.3 Local news and information

The CBOOnline Survey (2006) found stations produced 76 per cent local programming. According to this survey, 25 per cent of stations in rural and regional Australia were either the only radio service in their local area or the only source of local content. In specifically rural areas, 38 per cent of stations were the only provider of local content. Stations with limited metropolitan licences were often the only radio service providing local news and information to suburbs within their broadcast footprint. Community broadcasters thus play a vital role in providing local news and information to a variety of communities. Participants in focus groups around Australia emphasise their need for, and community broadcasting's role in providing, local news and information, particularly at a time when many commercial media services are focussed on state, national and international news. While the type and extent of local news and information vary according to a station's format, the common experience of both audiences and community groups interviewed is that this type of information and news is rarely covered by media other than community radio or television stations. In places where commercial media do provide some coverage of local news and information, audience members and community groups perceive it often does not offer the same depth and extent of coverage as that provided by community broadcasters.

In regional areas, the news and information role is particularly important as there are often fewer radio services and of those that are available, few are able to cater to local issues and events. These findings support the McNair Ingenuity survey (2006) which found that in non-metropolitan areas, 'local information/local news' was the predominant reason given for listening to community radio. In non-metropolitan areas (in this survey, audience members outside the eight capital cities*), 'local information/local news' was the most popular response in 62 per cent of respondents — 43 per cent of metropolitan audiences cited this as their reason for listening. This difference of nearly 20 percentage points highlights a key difference between metropolitan and regional audiences which this qualitative study supports. Metropolitan audiences have a number of news outlets available while in regional areas sources of local news and information are substantially less, especially given the tendency towards syndicated services from metropolitan commercial radio.

Often regional news is not of grandiose proportions but rather news of 'convenience', such as information on the cancellation of local sporting events (Focus Group, 2TVR Tumut, 2005). This is an example of news provided by community radio stations, particularly in regional areas, that is simply not provided by commercial or public networks. These

media are unable to focus on the local level specificities of regional communities, especially given the often large size of their broadcast footprint which deems the specific information needs of smaller communities difficult to accommodate — from both a time and administrative perspective. For some, local news and information is about sports, while for others it is about arts and cultural events. For others, it means social and political events either in their town or suburb or associated with their own ‘communities of interest’.

The CBOOnline Survey (2006) indicates that 93 per cent of stations broadcast news bulletins but these news services are often syndicated with the Community Radio Network’s National Radio News being the most frequently used (Forde, Meadows & Foxwell, 2002:84). The local news and information role of community radio stations does require some negotiation around definitions of ‘news and information’ and in particular, the format in which it is broadcast. Our research supports a broad definition of local ‘news and information’, which includes information about local music or cultural events, not necessarily within a formal news bulletin. The challenge to mainstream definitions of ‘news’ or more accurately, ‘newsworthiness’ was discussed at the Bay FM focus group:

Participant 1: But you see it depends how you define news, like I think, the news about the arts, the news about, I mean, music that’s news, arts is news, some theatre is news. Like news isn’t just, you know, bombs went off in London or the football. I mean we don’t have to listen to endless shows about football or cricket. I mean, it is your definition of news. There’s a lot of news on it but it’s not necessarily the way it can be defined on other stations.
Participant 2: It keeps you informed about so much that’s going on — keeps you up to date you get so much depth from it, it’s very, very informative.
Participant 1: Lost dogs, CDs stolen out of someone’s car, someone’s pinched Sean’s bike again! (Focus Group, Bay FM Byron Bay, 2005).

In our first station-based study of the community radio sector, we found that one-fifth of stations were not producing any form of local news service at all (Forde, Meadows & Foxwell, 2002:83). However, news and information is provided throughout different programs, in the general course of their delivery and through dedicated community announcements — this was observed by both metropolitan and regional audiences:

The local news component on Radio Nag comes through the programs, because most programs have news and information in them and they tell you what is happening locally. It is about local stuff that is happening here that you hear in each of the programs. The groups that present programs like RSL and Land Care talk about what is happening locally too. It is in-depth information and a wide source of information about the community (Focus Group, Radio Nag Yeppoon, 2005).

Information on local music or cultural events in both metropolitan and regional areas has emerged as the key focus of news provided by community broadcasters.

Yeah, well one of the roles that I think, that Triple R plays, is I guess, sending out messages to listeners about the arts community. So there’s a lot of publicising of music and art and different exhibitions and things that you might not necessarily hear about if you skip a week in reading the right magazine or, you know, you can tune into Triple R at any stage and you will, like if you’re away from Melbourne for a while and you come back, you just tune in and you’ve got your finger on the pulse again in terms of, you know, things that you might enjoy doing and that sort of thing. And I think for the arts, it’s really vocal (Focus Group, 3RRR Melbourne, 2005).

Focus Group participants note that the information provided empowers them to participate in the political life of their communities. At a number of regional stations, Council members have a weekly spot where they speak about local community issues and events. Outside formal Council information, the stations also act as a conduit for news about controversial events in the area. In Katherine, NT, participants identified the station’s role in informing them about a meeting surrounding the proposal to establish a nuclear waste dump. In metropolitan Melbourne, 3CR listeners emphasised that their station is the only place where you can find out about political rallies and activities:

And when you were talking about activism, a lot of word of mouth I would imagine is really big in that area like ‘From Little Things Big Things Grow’, an alternative group or an independent group needs some sort of action or some sort of voice would come from here (Focus Group, 3CR Melbourne, 2005).

The network of Radio for the Print Handicapped stations are defined as ‘information radio’. RPH stations are a special case in the community broadcasting sector. These stations offer information services to vision impaired, print-handicapped and other members of the community who, for various reasons, do not have the time or ability to read the local paper, magazines, books, etc. For example, one of the participants in the Perth’s 6RPH (Radio for the Print

Handicapped) focus group explained the radio station's role in providing information about community events and activities. The importance of these stations in the everyday lives of its listeners is captured in the following excerpt:

... As a vision impaired person, it's vital that it survives for that very reason. I have no way of listening to the newspaper. Trevor mentioned the programme 'New Magazine' which picks up where the papers leave off, the, you know page ten, eleven, twelve, down the track. But for me it's been absolutely vital right from the beginning because for the first time ever as a working person, I can also go to work and something like at morning tea time when everyone's sitting around saying oh did you see in today's 'Western Australian' where such and such happened to someone's report or whatever... For the first time, well for the last 10 years, I can actually join in (Focus Group, 6RPH Perth, 2005).

Under the *Broadcasting Services Act (1992)*, community radio stations are required to provide emergency services to their community and this was evident, particularly in regional Australia. It is well illustrated by two examples, from Katherine in the Northern Territory and Tumut in New South Wales. Participants in a community radio focus group for Katherine FM explained that in 1998, a massive flood inundated and isolated the town. A lack of local media, which focused on local issues, meant there was a high level of reliance on the community radio station for practical information such as how quickly the river was rising. One of the station announcers provided regular updates about river levels by running down to the bridge to check the water level in between playing songs on air. That service continued until the station's studios were inundated by floodwaters. Three days later, the station resumed broadcasting in temporary accommodation and was again able to provide the kind of news and information that locals needed at that time. In Katherine, as in many other small towns around the country, the community radio station provides an avenue for the community to work together to address such issues. A medical emergency in the aftermath of the Katherine flood illustrates the capacity of these stations to offer relevant services in emergency situations:

There was a woman rang in — her nebuliser had gone under water she had asthma so needed help. We put out calls over the radio. A woman over in East Katherine had one that she was willing to lend the woman if someone could pick it up. A taxi driver heard the call, went over and picked it up, delivered it. Radio was able to do that urgent call on the spot — it's the immediacy of radio, community radio (Focus Group, 8KTR Katherine, 2005).

Participants emphasised the importance of the station in giving out basic survival tips such as where residents could get food and water, how they could wash their clothes, where they could apply for emergency housing, and how to get medical assistance. One participant explained that during the flood, non-local news media representatives, camped beyond the flooded area of the town, were interested only in reporting on the presence of crocodiles in the main street — a catchy news item but of little relevance to floodbound residents. A similar role for community radio was identified by supporters of Bay FM in Byron Bay when a fire early in 2000 was the focus of local radio station activity. A member of the Byron Bay community explains:

A few years ago, I was the coordinator at the community centre here and there was a fire in town, and four young teenagers were killed in that fire and other people survived, elderly people survived, but all the other people in that block of flats were homeless and those young kids were dead. And it rocked the whole community, and everybody... Then we launched an appeal on BayFM, and through the media, for people to donate things, and it gave people instant information and when everyone was walking around saying we must do something, they were listening because the information got updated all the time. And if they wanted to come they could come and find out. The next few weeks flowed on but because there was an immediate response and people were aware of that through BayFM, it wasn't an emergency situation. But it was a critical moment and it really assisted everyone to be able to tap into and get that information on that day and the next couple of days at a really deep community level (Virago, Bay FM Byron Bay, 2005).

Another example comes from Tumut, NSW, where bush fires are a frequent threat. Focus group participants there described how the community radio station provided the sort of information that commercial stations are not interested in — most importantly, it is information that helped them to survive. One focus group participant explains what this service means to this community:

This is a more recent incident when there were fires, perhaps maybe from last year or the year before, just up behind Tumut. And we live on the other side, so we could see what was happening. We could see the fires and were wondering what was happening. And I rang the station, first of all I listened, and I listened for maybe 10 or 15 minutes when I switched it on. But then I rang the station and spoke to Dave who was on air at the time and Dave said, 'We've got the latest report, we're just about to broadcast it, everything's fine, it's all under control, you know, there's no need, there's no worry.' So almost instantly, you just had that news and sure enough they broadcasted the latest update on the fires around town, everything's under control... what was a catalyst, was there was a news report on the radio, on the TV and it was, obviously two hours delayed, or two hours earlier, and it was saying there are major fires burning around Tumut and you know, there's maybe evacuations or something like that which just startled, you know startling, but the

radio was able to do exactly what Steve [the local park ranger] wanted, I suppose, in an instant, you know — get the message across to the community (Focus Group, 2TVR Tumut, 2005).

Providing local news and information is an area that participants consistently recognised is in need of improvement. However, there is some conjecture over this, particularly in metropolitan areas where some do not necessarily want a dedicated news service. It is clear from this that listeners to community radio already go elsewhere for news. This is most likely a response to the number of news services available to metropolitan listeners. For the majority though, an increase in local news and information services would be welcome:

I like to listen to the local news and what's happening on the hour and you are not going to hear on that station so you kind of feel like you're missing out on what's happening, and you've got to read the paper or look at the TV news to actually know what's going on in the local area because you're not going to hear it on that station as far as the news items go. I don't know whether they can change that and get it sourced locally or not (Focus Group, 7THE Hobart, 2005).

Given audiences broad definition of news and information, there is the potential for community radio stations to improve this service in an innovative fashion, conveying information in ways outside traditional news presentation frameworks in terms of both content and format. One participant at the Radio Adelaide focus group suggested that local news need not be 'earth shattering' and that the station has a 'golden opportunity to talk about incredibly local issues'. A participant at the Tumut (NSW) focus group suggested local documentaries as an interesting way to deliver relevant news and information:

But I'm particularly interested in seeing the, this group, we see the need for, documentary, local documentaries made and funded by local radio for social, history, local history in fact, so I'm really not sure why I'm here. I'm interested in seeing the radio expand, engage other members of the community who may have stories that are worthwhile recording (Focus Group, 2TVR Tumut, 2005).

The single biggest obstacle to the production of more local news and information would seem to be — and this is supported by our 2002 station-based study — a fairly simple lack of resources and skills within stations. Where stations are producing local news bulletins or programs that contain important local information, it is generally on a shoe string budget. At the 2006 CBAA conference, we conducted a workshop to aid stations in injecting local news and information into their programming. We suggested stations use local 'news' oriented groups such as Landcare, Neighbourhood Watch, the police, local schools, history associations and so on to either run regular programs or appear regularly in some popular programs as a way of injecting local content in an economical way. Audiences have told us they do not need to hear an hourly news bulletin — they simply want information about a range of issues and events from their local area.

I mean I don't want to listen every hour that somebody has been charged with murder or somebody has been raped or you know the London things. I mean that's what I am trying to get away from, I'm sorry. So if we define that as news, I'm glad it's not on Triple R (Focus Group, 3RRR Melbourne, 2005).

In summary, the local news and information role of community radio is valued by their audiences, particularly in regional areas. Metropolitan audiences have other news sources and do not rely so heavily on community radio for their news. This does not suggest that news services on metropolitan stations are unimportant — but more that traditional definitions of news and newsworthiness need to be negotiated in the context of the community media sector. Audiences are quite attuned to the concept that the definition of 'what is news' can and should go well beyond the traditional journalistic boundaries that we might normally identify as 'news' and it is this broad type of local news and information that they are looking for.

4.4 Music

The ACMA Survey (2005) cites 'music' as the most prominent program format in the community radio sector. The updated CBOOnline Survey (2006) concludes that music accounts for 70 per cent of the sector's programming, with about 35 per cent Australian content. This reaches well beyond the sector's Code of Practice, which requires stations play 25 per cent Australian music. It is clear from this that the sector is performing a significant function in supporting the Australian music industry and this is evident in audience focus group responses. McNair Ingenuity (2006) concludes the two music-related responses to 'reasons for listening to community radio' ran a close second and third to the most popular response, for 'local information and news' (in the Australia-wide figures). Overall, 50 per cent of listeners mentioned 'local news and information' as their reason for listening. In contrast, 48 per cent listened because 'they play Australian music/support local artists' and 46 per cent tuned in for 'specialist music or information programs'. Our analysis of

audience responses in this study confirms these findings. Listening to audiences recount their experiences of music on community radio enabled us to explore the impact of the diversity of musical styles and genres being broadcast.

At every focus group, music was identified as a reason for listening to the station and the CBD Survey (2006) gives some indication of the variety of music genres available across the sector.

The audience members we encountered emphasise the diversity of music styles, in particular, pointing to the ways in which listening to community radio introduces them to music which they do not hear elsewhere. At Queanbeyan, participants mused about their introduction to country music:

And I think you're absolutely right, it's a bit of solemn memories, but it's also creating memories I think because I've heard music on community radio that I would never probably ever be exposed to because there are people that have their hobby horses, they're aficionados of a certain type of thing and although it could be repetitive with one presenter, I mean I've been, coming to Queanbeyan in 1985, I've been exposed to country western and I like the stories in those songs.

Yeah.

You know they start up with she left me and then my dog died, you know.

Ute blew up.

The ute blew up and the train got me, you know, but I, but I think that you can come to learn things which in your community radio, which you don't with the play lists in the commercial radio (Focus Group, 2QBYN Queanbeyan, 2005).

In metropolitan areas, listeners are often able to access music programs on several different community stations. McNair Ingenuity (2006) reported that 'specialist music or information programs' were the most popular reason for listening in metropolitan areas (48 per cent). This is also a popular response in non-metropolitan areas, with 42 per cent of respondents citing specialist music or information programs as a reason for listening. Given that music accounts for 70 per cent of all programming (CBOnline, 2006), it is fair to suggest specialist music programming is a significant feature of the sector and this is especially the case for metropolitan areas:

I listen to the radio station as I drive and I do a little bit of driving with my job and in particular I listen to a jazz show that's played most week nights between six and eight and I often find myself ringing in and being part of the talkback shows late at night and have won a few tickets to movies and kind of, I find that the radio station appeals to me because it, there's some local issues and local things about it and I think my favourite thing for, why I listen to it is because I like the jazz show (Focus Group, Radio Adelaide, 2005).

Because that's the reason why I listen to it, I listen to it to hear new music and, and if I want to hear something I can sing along with in the car or, and, or if I'm, you know, I like singing out loud and I can't sing to 2SER because I don't know the songs yet. So, but that's why I listen to 2SER is because, because they play stuff that I've never heard before and that's what I like (Focus Group, 2SER Sydney, 2005).

There is a clear pattern of audience members listening-in for particular programs of interest which are not available elsewhere. A Celtic music enthusiast had this to say:

I actually think that there are a lot of people who listen like that, those patterns, and they're actually quite expert at where the music programmes they want are. I mean, if I think about Celtic music for instance, there's a programme on Triple Z on Saturday mornings; there's a programme here on Monday mornings; there's a programme on PBS on also Saturday mornings, I think. They certainly used to put Celtic music there and you can, so you can chase it (Focus Group, 3CR Melbourne, 2005).

Participants commonly commented on the musical knowledge of presenters and the ways in which an enthusiastic presenter motivates their own interest. They note that presenters with a passion for a particular type of music bring to their programs specific and detailed information:

But I find, what I find, like most is the amount of information some of the presenters have, their sort of the knowledge they have about the music they present and it's — the music is so different from what you hear everywhere else, you don't find anywhere else. Because I didn't realise how much there was out there until I started to listening to Artsound. Especially the South American and, what's the music, African music? It's just, so much of it — really brilliant (Focus Group, Artsound FM Canberra, 2005).

The volunteer participation which is the backbone of the sector encourages and, importantly, enables a diversity of music styles. The freedom to diverge from strict playlists empowers stations and their presenters to broadcast music which may have limited appeal in their community, although this is not always the case. Participants distinguish the 'freedom' of community media from other formula-driven media:

It's professional without being corporately slick and that for me is a big turn off in a lot of other media. You get this kind of formulated stuff that you know what their play list might be. You can tell there's a method; there's a brand to a station — and I find that really irritating. I love the fact that EDGE don't do it (Focus Group, EDGE FM Hobart, 2005).

At the other end of the spectrum, older listeners commented on the importance of the music they heard. Seniors are not specifically catered for by other media, although certain stations broadcast 'easy listening' programs or tracks partially aimed at this audience. However, a typical 'easy listening' format refers more to music from the 1950s-60s onwards, rather than from the War and pre-War era music in which many of the older audience cohort are interested. At Golden Days Radio (Melbourne), we were reminded of a generation of Australians whose musical tastes are not available in the mainstream. These people, many of whom recounted their experience of the 1930's economic depression, value community broadcasters for the opportunities that the old-style music gives them to rekindle memories. For example, one participant began by telling the group how the music on Golden Days Radio took him back to the first time he kissed a girl. This man, aged in his 70s continued:

3GDR fills a void in my life which other broadcasters do not. It takes me back to when I was young, in my adolescence and early 20s. It brings back pleasant memories about the things I thought and wanted to do at that time. Sometimes I am thrilled listening to it and sometimes I am sad (Focus Group, 3GDR Melbourne, 2005).

A station aimed specifically at a seniors' audience in Hobart — 7THE Sound of the City — specialises in old-time music and country & western which their audiences cannot hear elsewhere. The audience focus group for this station voiced their appreciation for the information and old-time music communicated by their favourite announcers.

For youth audiences, the diversity of music and, in particular, support for local or Australian artists is very important. The McNair Ingenuity study (2006) concludes that for people aged 15 to 24, the most popular reason for them listening to community radio is because stations 'play Australian music/support local artists'. In our travels, we spoke to youth audiences at a range of generalist metropolitan and regional stations. 2FBi (Sydney) and EDGE FM (Hobart) are two youth-dedicated licensees and the insights offered by their audiences highlight the nature of the relationship between them, the music being played, and community radio. The McNair Ingenuity study (2006) concludes that youth audiences are appreciative of hearing local or Australian music they are able to access through community radio. Youth audiences tend to be far more critical of commercial or mainstream media. This cohort is particularly 'media savvy', identifying marketing, hype and other consumer-driven strategies typical of commercial broadcasters as a prominent reason for listening to community radio. At 2FBi (Sydney), one focus group participant commented on her dislike of commercial media and the real alternative provided by community radio:

I just can't stomach commercial radio and then all of a sudden, it was just, like, listen to FBI and it never ceased to amaze me just how much because it's 50 per cent Australian music and 50 per cent of that is local Sydney music. Like I just, I just think that's fantastic, you know. I just think that's great, like, there is so much (Focus Group, 2FBi Sydney, 2005).

In their respective localities, stations or programs catering for youth audiences expose local artists who in turn, are supported by these audiences at local venues. Stations and local artists are therefore in a symbiotic relationship where stations rely on them for music content, and local artists rely on stations for airplay and promotion of their work. Youth audiences benefit from exposure to local artists and are thus given an opportunity to participate in the cultural life of their communities. In these ways, community radio provides significant support for Australian youth culture, artists and audiences. The relationship between youth audiences, community stations, and local artists, in turn, boosts the local music industry economy. While providing a space for local youth to be heard and the opportunity to engage with other young people in the community at local venues with local artists, it also supports the Australian music industry economy. This precise role enthusiastically embraced by Sydney's 2FBi, as one participant explains:

Yeah, what I really like about FBI is that they play all the bands that I know, you know people you know in bands and you go and see bands and that and then yeah, you listen to the radio station, the bands you know who are being played, it's good (Focus Group, 2FBi Sydney, 2005).

While the relationship between youth audiences and community broadcasters is significant, we found strong support for local music talent and industry, relevant to other musical genres. For example, the CBOonline Survey (2006) highlights the role of community broadcasters in providing recording facilities for local musicians. During the two-month survey period, 271 hours of Australian music was reportedly recorded for broadcast by community radio stations around the country. The willingness of stations to support local musicians was a key discussion point during our focus groups. This support for local musicians adds another dimension to the overall community broadcasting philosophy of ‘access and participation’. The sector’s chain of fine music stations typify this role as recounted in this exchange at 4MBS (Brisbane’s fine music station):

Participant 1: You see it at youth orchestra concerts and so many community orchestras—there’s 4MBS recording it. And that’s a valuable service because rather than just other stations only supporting the superstars—and they are the only ones that ever get played—whereas here, there is more of a community base where not only the top of the iceberg but the submerged continent underneath of all these musicians—they’re getting heard too.

Participant 2: It is more balanced, isn’t it?

Participant 1: And you know what it is like to be a young person, hearing, ‘Hey that’s our orchestra on the radio.’ That’s helping to build an enthusiasm for classical music every time their orchestra gets played on the radio. So I think that’s one of the most invaluable things that 4MBS does (Focus Group, 4MBS Brisbane, 2005).

Similarly, at 3RRR (Melbourne) and 4ZZZ (Brisbane), audience participants emphasised the importance of community radio’s support for local artists and subsequently, their support for the local music industry. Participants differentiated their experiences of community radio from other commercial media — mostly referring to the opportunity to speak to an ‘actual person’ and the likelihood that their music would be listened to and broadcast:

And part of that music thing, you know, from an independent music musician’s perspective is that, for a band or an artist that is trying to get exposure, it’s very easy to, I mean, it’s not just a voice that’s behind the microphone, it’s an actual person. And, you know that if you drop off a CD or something here that that person is going to get it and that person is going to listen to it. It’s not going through some sort of filtering or library process, whether it fits into some sort of corporate, into the marketing strategy of the station. It’s about the person and what he’s passionate about. And that’s a really appealing thing, I think (Focus Group, 3RRR Melbourne, 2005).

Participant 1: There’s no way Brisbane could support the local bands it supports without Triple Z informing people — and the same with local artists. The mentions of gallery openings and stuff like that. It simply couldn’t exist in the form it does at the moment without Triple Z. I was kind of realising the other day just how many people, how many businesses that it affects, like how many pubs are supported through the live music industry and how many people’s jobs depend on that.

Participant 2: I would say it was absolutely integral to the music community of Brisbane and or Queensland as Brisbane is the hub of Queensland (Focus Group, 4ZZZ Brisbane, 2005).

At the EDGE FM focus group in Hobart, the station’s role in the local music industry was discussed at length and highlights some of the issues faced by this region:

We’ve been off the radar down here. I know when Triple J first arrived here in Hobart many, many moons ago, that was kind of a nice little thing where they had a bit of local content and there was a local guy... they did play some local stuff, but I think it was only put out to the local audience. I don’t think it went nationwide, which was good. I mean, it was something. But I think the thing with EDGE is that they’ve really got a focus on the local music and that’s why I sort of started listening. You’d be driving along and you’d hear something, and it might have been complete crap, but then you found out it was from Tasmania. ‘Well shit, somebody cares!’ And then you’d hear something that was good and it was from Tasmania. ‘Wow!’ For us, we’ve been around... our band’s been together for 18 years... Our last album got featured [on EDGE FM] for 3 or 4 weeks and you’d be driving along hearing your own tunes two or three times a day. It was fantastic (Focus Group, EDGE FM Hobart, 2005).

It is clear that community radio music programming is performing an important role for both audiences and their communities. Music is a chief reason for listening for many and audiences canvassed for this study emphasise the ways in which community radio showcases a diversity of musical genres. Audience members who are also musicians convey their appreciation of community radio and its accessibility. The support for local musicians enacted by local stations also bolsters the local music industry by providing audiences and artisans for the local music scene, supporting attendance at local venues and events. This appreciation of the diverse range of music styles and genres played on community radio is also reflected in Indigenous and ethnic audience focus groups. Their conclusions are similar — simply, that it is music they can not hear anywhere else. It is this notion of the ‘diversity’ of community radio — evident in both music and information programs — which we will now turn to in greater detail.

4.5 Diversity

Australian community radio caters to a diverse range of audiences. In part, this is due to the sheer size of the continent where differing landscapes instil different types of communities with equally diverse interests and priorities. For example, a community radio station in Alice Springs represents and caters for a different community than say, Bendigo or Sydney. The services provided in both metropolitan and regional Australia reflect the heterogeneity of the Australian community. As we have indicated, within these geographic definitions, another dimension of diversity exists. The Australian community radio sector services metropolitan, regional, rural and isolated communities. Within each of those areas, there exists a broad range of program formats — stations devoted to ethnic language programs; servicing the Christian sector or those with a visual impairment; and generalist stations that appeal to people across a broad range of ages and interests. Alongside these industry-defined sub-sectors, audiences also identify the presence and importance of diversity in music, programming and viewpoints:

... It's just listening to all sorts of different aspects of life, talking about Indigenous issues. Just alternative from mainstream points of view, and a lot of environmental things they talk about. The girl talks a lot of science topics which makes it really interesting sitting there listening to it. It's doing the better music, then does topics then goes back to music. It's nice a change just from constantly the same music again and again and again. The occasional word about something and then you're going back to music or commercials or anything else (Focus Group, 4ZZZ Brisbane, 2005).

Interestingly, audiences say they are not necessarily 'turned off' by the great diversity of programming on offer, even though this can mean on-air content they do not like. A station's accessibility, in tandem with a diverse range of programming — an overt policy of 'inclusiveness' — fosters similar attitudes from audiences. For example, participants at 7THE Sound of the City in Hobart commented on a presenter who has a speech difficulty following a stroke but were happy that this man had the opportunity to perform such an active role at the station and thus, within the community. We found a similar situation at Bendigo's Fresh FM. For the most part, audiences are more likely to accept the diverse nature of their communities and to embrace the representation of this through the local airwaves, even if, at times, programming was irrelevant to their needs:

It's good fun, yeah but that just doesn't interest me. You know I've got to be in the mood for it but I don't mind if they put it on. There are plenty of people out there who love that show... There's nothing wrong with it just doesn't appeal to me. That's what I love about the show, the station, you know, you get all sorts of things on it. It is very eclectic (Focus Group, 4ZZZ Brisbane, 2005).

I think... the great thing about it is because, it has the potential to be organic, that you can have all sorts of people presenting programmes and really, I couldn't be, couldn't care less if they've got an audience of one at Murray Bridge who happens to be interested in something or whether it's a popular programme and they've got, you know, a couple of thousand people listening, riveted to the radio. That's the beauty of, because it's not the commercial pressure that comes with advertising that you must produce consistently programmes that rate highly so that you get the advertising dollar (Focus Group, Radio Adelaide, Adelaide, 2005).

Focus group participants recognise that audiences for some programmes will be comparatively small, but that certain programs catering to a minority can potentially perform an important role in someone's life:

And back to what everybody else has said a million times over, there is something for everyone so that person that you were talking to, even if there was only one hour in the whole week that they could possibly get into, you know, they're a mad keen gardener but they love Brittany Spears, I don't know but you know, they will tune in for that time and get a lot of value out of it, yeah (Focus Group, 3RRR Melbourne, 2005).

I think diversity is a real advantage and there were piles and piles of niches that weren't being filled before EDGE was around and suddenly they only need about 20 or 30 fans and one person to be the announcer and you've just got hours all throughout the week that have all been filled and you've got people who are very satisfied by that. They will probably only tune in for an hour a week, but they're extremely supportive of EDGE because of that hour (Focus Group, EDGE FM Hobart, 2005).

Participants also observe how their local broadcasters have made them aware of the diversity in their own area:

You really do get to understand what subcultures there are within the community and there's a lot of things that have sort of come up and I thought, 'oh there's a group that's sort of interested in that and that's really interesting', so, yeah, that's kind of good (Focus Group, Radio Adelaide, Adelaide, 2005).

Yeah, I come from a fairly conservative background, I always thought things were pretty dull. But listening to the radio, you get to know a hell of a lot. A broader variety in music and how incredibly lively the entertainment scene is around the place and views of different people which becomes very interesting. I didn't know about that, I never thought about that but it's a fair comment, it's worth hearing. And yet, it's broadened both my ideas and my music range, incredible (Focus Group, 4ZZZ Brisbane, 2005).

Audiences generally understand the ethos of community radio and, in particular, its commitment to groups otherwise denied access to the media. At the 2SER (Sydney) focus group, one participant referred to these groups on the 'fringe' as 'colourful':

... Community things which you wouldn't expect to hear on just general, national media. I really appreciate that... I find that really, really important and the fringes like the... you know certain groups within society like the people in prison or mental health issues or you know, people who have specific interests that's addressed. I really enjoy that too, colourful I call it (Focus Group, 2SER Sydney, 2005)

Listeners also embrace ethnic programming (discussed further in Chapter 4), noting how representation of multicultural communities gives them access to the airwaves and also fosters their inclusion into the broader community:

When you think about it, groups like the Palestinians don't have a voice in the mainstream at all. But they are at least given the chance to articulate their views. And that's terribly important. And that also brings people into a community doesn't it?

It educates the people who can't get access to an alternative (Focus Group, 3CR Melbourne, 2005)

Others note the importance of Indigenous broadcasting (see Chapter 5) on metropolitan and regional stations. Like ethnic programming, audiences see this as an opportunity to learn about a community within their community. At Radio Adelaide, one focus group participant, referring to an Indigenous current affairs show, observed that '[I] always feel glad that, you know that voice is available'.

These stations represent a diversity of communities within their communities. Our study suggests that audiences understand the pivotal role this performs at both the level of the individual and that of the community being validated by virtue of access to the airwaves. The diversity of programming, ideas, and cultures characteristic of community radio fosters a sense of 'inclusiveness' within the community. On another level, audiences understand and know the diverse range of people living within their communities which in turn, serves to educate and introduce them to another sphere of their local area. While listeners might be jazz-lovers and support a station because of a three-hour jazz program, they do not begrudge the hip hop program because of what appears to be an inherent recognition of the aims of the station — to represent all facets of the community. One focus group participant noted that if there was no hip hop program, it would be just as likely there would not be a jazz program, hence his support for the diversity represented by that particular station.

4.6 Community groups and audiences

The data we collected was complemented by a series of one-on-one interviews with representatives from community groups associated with each station. While the focus group data has helped us identify key themes — accessibility, station style, local news and information, music, and diversity — community groups interviews further strengthened our understanding of what community radio does for its audiences as well as for local community groups. The data presented in this section draws on individual interviews with community group representatives.

We set out to identify and interview two to three community groups associated with each metropolitan and regional community radio station. The inclusion of community groups in our fieldwork followed advice from our advisory committee. These groups embody the ideals of access and participation in community broadcasting and their supporters are an important part of the sector's audience. Typical of this situation, a representative of the South Australian Music Association commented that its membership is made up of listeners to — or participants in — Radio Adelaide:

The audience is duplicated in, for example, our members. A lot of them would be, if not listeners of Radio Adelaide, they would definitely be sending all of their material into Radio Adelaide all the time and utilising Radio Adelaide's play lists and trying to be on the air through Radio Adelaide. So that's very important for them (South Australian Music Association, Radio Adelaide, Adelaide, 2005).

The key themes we identified at the beginning of this chapter are as applicable to an analysis of community group involvement in the sector but there are differences between this cohort's views and those of stations' audiences. Community groups are often organised around a single issue or organisation and they have regular access to on-air spots or interview time. Typically, these groups use stations to promote events and issues of local significance or to draw the attention of the local community to broader national or international issues. Groups we consulted range from government organisations (mostly local government) to not-for-profit entities (Appendix B). Their roles vary from advocacy and political activism, to arts' organisations and recreational groups. One such group we encountered was the Melbourne's Bishop Choir (3GDR, Melbourne), a men's barbershop choir which uses community radio to promote special events. The representative from this group commented that community radio needs him as much as he needs it. The choir's involvement with radio allows them to share and validate an experience which makes them happy:

The group is a good way of allowing men to sing with other men. You get a thrill out of singing with other men. So the advantage is that it gives men the opportunity to sing together and make marvellous music. There is nothing like it when people get together and sing (Melbourne's Bishop Choir, 3GDR Melbourne, 2005).

Other groups who participated in the research include Friends Alike of Bendigo (the local gay and lesbian community), Katherine's Country Music Muster, the Alma Street Mental Health Centre (Perth), the Country Women's Association (Melbourne), the Hobart Fringe Festival, the Sound Preservation Society (Hobart), the Multicultural Association in Yeppoon, along with an additional 55 — suffice it to say that we learned a lot about the multitude of community groups involved across the community broadcasting sector.

We concluded that there is the potential for community broadcasters to more effectively co-ordinate and network community groups accessing stations. Many community groups we spoke to are not aware of other groups using the same station. There is a possibility here for stations to facilitate better communication between groups who often share similar aims and objectives.

Community group involvement with stations varied, with some having a regular program or sponsorship agreement with the station or alternatively, a quid pro quo arrangement. The ACT Leiders Society (Artsound FM, Canberra, 2005) are involved in a mutually beneficial relationship:

We tell them that this concert's on and we'd like to have Artsound come and record and almost certainly someone will come and record and Artsound will add a recording of this concert to their library and they will broadcast it in due course as they feel inclined which is good for Artsound and it's good for us. I also email the media release to Artsound presenters to the Arts Diary people and so forth so that Artsound can announce the fact that this is happening and give us a bit of publicity for which we are very grateful and I also keep Tony Griffiths informed of course of what's going on and we also try and arrange to have an interview done in the week preceding the concert (ACT Leiders Society, Artsound FM Canberra, 2005).

As we do not have a definitive list of all community groups accessing the stations in our sample, it is perhaps premature to comment further. However, it is possible to observe that the responses from the groups we encountered underline the similarity in their philosophy and purpose to those of the community broadcasting sector. Comments from community group representatives in Brisbane and Perth are indicative of this:

We're members. I like what they do. They have a similar agenda. They tell good stories. They tell positive stories. And that's why we're there (New Farm Neighbourhood Centre, 4ZZZ Brisbane, 2005).

I think the whole of society is going a little bit too far away from community and we'd like to have more of a bit of community feel about this. I think community radio is there to do a similar job (Friends of Alma St, 6RTR Perth, 2005).

Specialist stations, such as youth and fine music stations, attracted community groups with similarly interests and agendas. The Sydney Festival (2FBI Sydney), for example, communicated the ways in which 2FBI — with a 50 per cent Australian music quota, 25 per cent of which is Sydney-based — shared its aims and audiences:

... We try and get the best of Australian DJ's and musicians and things like that... and it fits in with how FBI's focused on Australian bands and it's purely on that, and they've got real integrity about the way they do things and the bands they get involved and the artists they get involved and things like that. And people have responded to that and they're the only people who are doing it. No one else is doing it (Sydney Festival, 2FBI Sydney, 2005).

Some community groups reported that the support available from community broadcasters enable them to use their

funds for the organisation rather than advertising. As not-for-profit organisations, many community groups feel an ethical responsibility to spend their funds on providing services, rather than using donations and fundraising for advertising. Representatives from the Koala Markets (Fraser Coast Radio, Hervey Bay), for example, noted how this situation allows it to put funds towards worthwhile community projects:

It's important to us that we don't overspend on advertising. All our crew are volunteers, we run the markets and also run two food vans at the markets so there's a lot of people putting in a lot of effort to raise money for charity. We don't want to throw our hard-earned money away on advertising otherwise we're just working to pay for our advertising. We want to be working to raise money for junior sports organisations and local charities (Koala Markets, Fraser Coast Radio Hervey Bay, 2005).

Community groups are also appreciative of the sustained attention they receive from community broadcasters and the time allowed to delve into issues in a more substantive manner than other media. This is particularly important to political and advocacy groups. The stations allow them to continue their representation and explanation of issues in the media, which they feel mainstream outlets do not facilitate. A representative of the Queanbeyan Indigenous community (2QBYN Queanbeyan) noted the difference between its 'news' on community radio and the mainstream media:

No... it takes a big, it's got to be a big event or it's got to be a you-beaut friendly government event or it's got to be very a political hot potato and then they might do something about it. But on a day-to-day, everyday run of the mill, you know talking about ante-natal care, and the kids care and the hearing and all the health issues and the diabetes clinics and all those issues, QBN FM was covering those issues. The other, the other stations don't cover them at all (Queanbeyan Indigenous Community, 2QBYN Queanbeyan, 2005).

Another particularly heartening example of community radio support for community groups is that of the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre, involved with both 3CR and 3RRR in Melbourne. The centre is an independent charitable human rights organisation. It provides a range of critical services to asylum seekers who are denied the right to work, access to Medicare or to any sort of income because of their 'asylum' status. Alongside a host of other services, this organisation provides legal representation to asylum seekers as well as lobbying governments and fundraising. In 2003, 3CR donated \$12,000 to the centre from its Radiothon — a significant amount for a community radio station. The centre was responsible for uncovering the Cornelia Rau case which received significant mainstream media attention. A representative from the centre noted the difference in coverage between community and mainstream media:

While with community radio, there is that consistent commitment so community radio is like, you know, community-based independent media... It has a long term interest in this issue so it's always going to be able to provide you a forum and a space for it because it's based on that [community]. While mainstream media, it's only if they've got an audience for it or they deem it to be newsworthy. And community radio will often give you an opportunity to lay out the whole story in much more detail, will allow you to talk, you know, will be interested, not only just when there is bad news stories, but also when there is good news stories. Or there's other things, you know, it's not just got to be something like a Cornelia Rau (Asylum Seekers Resource Centre, 3RRR/3CR Melbourne, 2005).

Community groups use the station as a conduit to communicate to the broader community. Access to local stations means organisations have the resources to communicate to a larger audience which, in turn, raises awareness of their presence within the community. This effect is significant in small towns like Tumut, NSW:

It keeps the community in contact with what is happening at the school. Last year we held a fair and the students went to the station each week to talk about it and the station broadcast from the fair. Using the station made a difference in attendance at the fair, a lot of people listen to it and that is great. We can get to students and parents ourselves, but having that connection to get to the wider community is great. It creates a broader audience for us (Tumut Primary School, 2TVR Tumut, 2005).

The promotion of issues and events, in turn, empower community radio listeners by providing information that enables them to participate in events or to attend functions in support of these groups. Station accessibility fosters the creation of 'communities within communities' where people with similar interests and ideas can be organised and co-ordinated by inclusion in a local community group. At regional Roxby Downs in South Australia, 'The Club', a not-for-profit community organisation used the station, Rox FM, to encourage members of the community to support local charities. A representative from 'The Club' recounted a specific instance where a member of the community was aided by its charity work promoted weekly on the radio station. In a regional town like Roxby Downs (a mining town with a population of 4000), this type of community service is not available through other media:

... We've had the charity of the month running for about three years now and people come in and say, 'Oh can we be the charity of the month?' But there are certain stipulations they have to be non-profit as well, and it has to be for a legitimate reason. Gerald. He's like an old timer in town. He's been at the club working and associated with the club... since the club's inception. He's got diabetes and he had his foot removed so we basically put together a campaign to raise money for Gerald. And we raised about \$3,500 and we made up the extra \$3,500 to buy him a gopher to get around town so just stuff like that, you know, and it's cool, it's so cool when you... We've got him down here and I've presented him with this like ride-on gopher and he's, it was great, it's good, it's just stuff like that (The Club, Rox FM Roxby Downs, 2005).

While some groups were able to get limited mainstream media coverage or were prepared to pay for advertisements to promote their interests, there is a general consensus that dealing with community media is a relatively easy task. A representative from the Byron Bay Writers Festival noted the ease with which she accesses Bay FM:

The other thing we were talking about earlier is the immediacy of community radio, because you are talking to people who live locally and they're all right here, so you can go in the day before and talk about something and get a response whereas anything else you've got to have a very planned publicity attack for weeks before so radio is so immediate, because BayFM see themselves as, they're very open and readily accepting of people ringing up and saying, 'Can I come on and talk about what I've been doing at the last late minute', and they'll usually say yes, and you can see the impact of that on ticket sales sometimes and attendances (Byron Bay Writers Festival, Bay FM Byron Bay, 2005).

All of the groups we spoke to use a local radio station to promote events in the community. Examples include large, arts-based metropolitan events such as the Sydney Festival (2Bi Sydney) and the Hobart Fringe Festival (EDGE FM Hobart), to the Bendigo Football League's fixtures (Fresh FM Bendigo) and a meeting of the Caulfield Gardening Club (3GDR Melbourne). Representatives from the Hobart Fringe Festival recounted the relevance of local station EDGE FM to its youth audience:

So yes, basically, we decided that it was important that EDGE be involved because as the local community's radio station they are basically the collective voice for the culture that we were trying to celebrate. And they were really good in helping us produce the best possible event, like I said through the sound system and the publicity mainly (Hobart Fringe Festival, EDGE FM Hobart, 2005).

It was difficult for most of the community groups to estimate the number of attendees who had heard about their respective events on community radio. Most groups reported anecdotally that broadcasting on the radio had a positive impact on attendance. One youth worker in Albany was adamant that attendance at an annual local cultural festival had increased significantly following promotion of the event by the community radio station there. This and other examples we encountered supports our earlier findings that audiences do respond directly to community radio promotions, particularly where the community connections are clear and strong. A Queanbeyan Macedonian Club representative went so far as to conclude that the attendance at events was primarily due to the local community station because there was no other way for people to find out:

Oh yeah, it does, it does. Otherwise actually the people, only through the radio, not many people come here like everyday and ask what's going on but they listen to the radio, what's going to happen (Queanbeyan Macedonian Club, 2QYBN Queanbeyan, 2005).

Government organisations accessing community radio see the advantage of specialist stations that could target particular sections of the audience — such as youth — rather than producing announcements suitable for broadcast to a larger, more diverse audience:

I guess the advantage EDGE has because they do have a lot of young people there actually doing the talking, is that they'll put it in their own language. It's almost like their own cultural message. And I'm not saying that it's silly. I'm just trying to think of ways that they'll say it without making it sound silly. But they talk in terms of...the way a young person will talk. So it's not like the Minister for Health and Community Services said blah, blah, blah. It's like well, this is what it means and how do you think it's going to affect you? So it's bringing it down into, I guess, a young person's perspective (Office of Youth Affairs, EDGE FM Hobart, 2005).

It is clear from these examples that a diverse range of social groups use community radio stations in a number of ways. On one level, stations offer them an opportunity to promote local events and to improve community participation. The specialist nature of some stations enables such groups to reach very specific sub-groups within a community — for example, young people, the elderly, print handicapped, jazz music lovers, and so on. Importantly, stations are seen as representing opportunities for many groups to publicise ideas and information in far greater depth than is possible through

mainstream media. It allows coverage of ‘ordinary’ community events of no interest to other media. Publicising basic community information and ordinary community events helps community groups to bring together their own community of supporters — in essence, stations facilitate the creation (and gathering together) of such ‘communities within communities’.

Not all community group representatives we spoke to were listeners, and this highlights the reason why it is important for our study to include their views. Several high school teachers we interviewed, for example, found local community stations an invaluable source of training and experience for their students although they are not listeners themselves. So while this cohort was not able to be represented in our audience focus groups by nature of the methodology we employed in that element of the study, their input and information is important to inform a broader understanding of how community broadcasting interacts with and reaches its audiences.

We found that much of the community group involvement in stations was uncoordinated and that community groups were often unaware of the presence and nature of other groups involved in program production. This represents a lost opportunity for the sector to bring together like-minded groups who may be able to share resources, air-time, program responsibilities for the benefit of the station, the groups involved, and ultimately, their audiences.

4.7 Suggestions for improvement

Focus group participants were clearly and overwhelmingly keen community radio listeners and this made extracting criticism of the sector from them a difficult task. But there are a number of suggestions made by audiences for improvement. We have provided all participating stations with reports summarising comments — both good and bad — made by local focus groups. The majority of audience members who took part in our study gave unqualified support for their stations and did not want to see any changes, but eventually, most were encouraged to come up with suggestions for change, albeit most were minor, as this response suggests:

I think it sounds great. Don't touch it. And I think it's got a good variety at the moment. If I don't like it...there's plenty of people sitting here who would love the stuff that I don't like. But I don't want to touch it because there's so much on it that I do like. So I'll put up with what I don't like so I can hear what I do like (Focus Group, 7THE Hobart, 2005).

For the most part, criticisms relate to technical issues such as poor reception — a product of the transmitter power or topography — rather than particular comments about stations and the ways in which they broadcast. Quality of transmission and reception black spots are a perennial issue for the sector and its audiences. Numerous callers to our 1800 number were about the poor reception with some callers unwilling to attend focus groups but keen for the research team to pass on their dissatisfaction with local reception quality. In 2004, the Australian Government provided additional sector funding — \$1.5 million per annum for four years — to support upgrades to transmission infrastructure. Reception and transmission are issues which will require continued national funding responses and then, clear local solutions and negotiations.

Some criticism of on-air presentation also emerged. Audiences spoke of their frustration when presenters failed to back announce, because it was their very love of specialist music which was drawing them to listen to community radio in the first place. This is a training issue which can be dealt with by the sector's training representatives. While this criticism might seem small, given the sector's dedication to music and the importance of music to audiences, it is essential that announcers pay careful attention to identifying the music they are playing. This might be possible via station websites as suggested by this exchange at 2SER (Sydney):

Participant 1: But one, one thing I'd like to see on 2SER on their website, I might have missed it, it maybe there somewhere, is, is a list of every, maybe for the year, every feature CD they've had, so that when people are looking for presents or things they want to buy, Christmas or birthdays, they can say, 'oh yeah I remember that album'. But often people can't, what was the name of that album? You can't quite, you look it up on the website and maybe have a, a basic description of what type of music it is, you know like, vocal electronica or whatever.

Participant 2: Actually that's one of the, just similar to that is the back announcing. Sometimes they just don't do that at all or well enough and that's enormously frustrating. When I hear something I really, that catches me and then I just wait and I wait (Focus Group, 2SER Sydney, 2005).

Comments like these were not particular to 2SER. Improving website information and encouraging presenters to back-announce are relatively simple suggestions which will please audiences and which were raised regularly in our focus

groups. The only other consistent suggestion from the metropolitan and regional audiences is to raise the profile of stations through publicity. Participants note that the profile of these stations, particularly their community basis, is largely unknown to many others in the community. Often, audience members had either come across the station by accident or heard about the station from a friend. This was a key recommendation from our earlier station-based study (Forde, Meadows & Foxwell, 2002) where we suggested a national campaign to raise community awareness of the sector and its achievements. This is an additional demand on the sector and particularly its national representative body, the CBAA. We do feel, however, that a creative national initiative with local station support would benefit the sector and individual stations enormously. Audiences indicated that they actively seek out sponsors of local community radio station programming, seeing these businesses as 'community-minded' and therefore a preferable consumer option. This view was expressed by audiences in numerous locations. Here are a few examples:

I have done JB (unintelligible words), because I work next door to one, I go searching through and if it's not there I will go to Rocking Horse, or Skinny's or somewhere like that because they are always prominent in the area and they will sponsor shows or say this is what's coming up for you and if it sounds great, I'll go down and buy it from them (Focus Group, 4ZZZ Brisbane, 2005).

And also, where, where to shop some of the time is influenced by the ads that have been on as to which computer place I go to or where you bought your bike and things like that, yeah (Focus Group, Sonshine FM Perth, 2005).

Raising the profile of the sector at the national and local level has the propensity to increase sponsorship avenues for stations and thus alleviate some financial pressures. Importantly, it also provides the opportunity for more people in the community who need particular services, support or information to access this through community radio. There are clearly larger issues at stake here — an expected negative response by local commercial media to an increased profile for community broadcasting — but in general, audiences identify a real need for their community stations to be more visible.

In terms of sponsorship announcements, audiences overall liked them because they provided local information and were different to the commercial sector's advertising being less intrusive and sometimes humorous. In some cases where survey respondents voiced their disapproval of all advertising — including sponsorship announcements — there is a general acceptance that this is the only alternative source of funds for stations and thus they are prepared to tolerate it. This does not suggest audiences will welcome more sponsorship announcements. It is clear from the responses we received that listeners to community radio enjoy a break from the 'hard sell' approach, characteristic of other media and see local sponsorship as an opportunity for local businesses to identify community radio as an alternative to mainstream advertising.

4.8 Summary

The responses from audiences of metropolitan and regional community radio stations suggest that the sector is helping to create communities at the level of the local and within their particular 'communities of interest', thus contributing to the Australian community in several ways:

1. Stations seem accessible to and are accessed by 'ordinary' listeners regularly;
2. They provide opportunities for 'people like us' to broadcast without the need for polished presentation;
3. They provide local news and information which audiences often cannot access elsewhere;
4. They play Australian and specialist music ignored by other broadcasters; and
5. They offer a breadth of programming which is not evident in commercially-based mainstream radio broadcasters, or indeed ABC and SBS Radio.

The audiences suggest that there are some 'fine tuning' issues that need to be addressed by the sector, primarily:

1. Reception quality;
2. Back-announcing and provision of accurate website information; and
3. Promotion of stations within local communities.

This series of audience focus groups and interviews with community group representatives involved in metropolitan and regional community radio suggest that, more than any other media, this element of sector supports a multiplicity of Australian cultures in ways which are meaningful and powerful for its audiences. The music, information and the simple, direct nature of the stations empowers audiences to interact, access, participate and 'get out' into their communities. However, we are acutely aware that all is not rosy for every station in the sector. In our research over the past seven years we have come across many stations that struggle to fulfil their community responsibilities, that place commercial imperatives above community responsibilities, or that have such limited volunteer participation that their local content is almost non-existent. These stations are the exception rather than the rule. The audiences we canvassed in this study provide a representative and enduring volume of data about the positive contribution community radio makes to broader Australian society.

It's actually our only way of communicating. We don't have our finger in the pie of the big Murdoch stuff or Fairfax media or the big Channel Seven or Channel Nine networks and things like that. Murris are sometimes left on the backburner or in the back room (Interview, Palm Is, 2005).

Introduction

The information presented in this chapter was gathered from audiences in 20 different locations around Australia to take into account Indigenous cultural and media diversity in both radio and television production in urban, regional, and remote areas. This data was collected from eight focus group discussions in Cairns, Brisbane, Melbourne, Port Augusta, Alice Springs, Darwin (2) and Broome, around 70 face-to-face interviews conducted at national, regional and local sporting and cultural events, and invited comments from around 20 callers to the national Indigenous talkback radio program, *TalkBlack*, from November 7 to 11, 2005.

In June 2006, there were 160 (ex-BRACS) Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services (RIBS) serving communities in the vast, sparsely-populated areas of remote Australia covering most of the continent — 80 radio and 80 television licences (ACMA, 2006:183). Most are engaged in re-transmitting available satellite programming, both mainstream- and community-produced (ACMA, 2006:84-85; AICA 2006; Community Broadcasting Foundation, 2006). There are two Open Narrowcast television licences held in Western Australia by Indigenous organisations in Broome (Goolarri Media Enterprises, 2007) and Roebourne (Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation, 2007). In addition, there is an Aboriginal-owned and run Indigenous Community Television service (ICTV) which reaches an increasing number of regional and remote communities with the facility to downlink the satellite signal (Waru, 2006).

ICTV first began as a narrowcast/split channel service initiated by PY Media on Imparja Television's Channel 31 in 2001, following tests in 1998. A meeting of potential contributors to the service in November 2004 resulted in the name, Indigenous Community Television (ICTV), being adopted and a significant boost in program production from around 120 hours in 2004 to almost 300, the following year. The service, coordinated by PY Media, ran on an annual budget of about \$70,000 and included contributions from Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Service (RIBS) community hubs, including PY Media, Warlpiri Media, Pilbara and Kimberley Aboriginal Media (PAKAM), Ngaanyatjarra Media, TEABBA and other local producers (Waru, 2006). Until October 2006, when ICTV was incorporated as a separate organisation, PY Media coordinated 20 hours a day of Indigenous community TV programming. The 20 hour block was refreshed each month.

At the close of the fieldwork for this study in late 2006, a Federal Government funded roll-out of satellite receiving dishes and decoders for remote Indigenous communities was nearing completion. Some of the remote communities we visited had either just started watching ICTV or were still waiting for their receiving equipment to be installed. In addition, a Federal Government commitment of an additional \$48 million over four years to develop a National Indigenous Television Service was under discussion at the time of writing with the future role of ICTV uncertain. This developing situation is reflected in interviews we carried out in communities able to receive the ICTV signal. An additional \$5.3 million was allocated from July 2006 to shore up 'ageing and unreliable radio infrastructure' (Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts, 2006; ACMA 2006:185).

By comparison, Canada's Native television channel, the Aboriginal People's Television Network, in 2005 had an annual income of CAN\$22.9 million — CAN\$16.9 million of this is from cable subscriptions, mandated by the national regulator, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) (APTN, 2005). Maori Television operates on an annual budget of NZ\$34 million (Maori Television, 2006).

The community broadcasting sector has proved to be a major communications outlet for Indigenous voices in Australia with licensed stations in remote regions broadcasting more than 1,000 hours of Indigenous content weekly and a further 25 stations operating in regional and urban areas. There is one Indigenous commercial radio station, 6LN in Carnarvon in Western Australia, and one commercial television station, Imparja, based in Alice Springs (AICA, 2006). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have won access to the airwaves following persistent campaigns. Most major urban and regional areas have an Indigenous broadcaster complementing existing media. In addition to the community stations, there are two Indigenous radio networks. The satellite-delivered National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS) was launched in 1996 enabling Indigenous community radio stations across Australia to either link into national programming or choose to broadcast locally. In 2001, the National Indigenous News Service (NINS) began operating out of the NIRS' studios in Brisbane, providing a general, independent, national news service which features Indigenous stories and Indigenous perspectives on general news (Molnar & Meadows, 2001).

Community broadcasting is the largest component of Indigenous media production in Australia. The value of hearing local voices and stories is difficult, if not impossible, to quantify and is the distinguishing feature of all community broadcasting. For Indigenous media in particular, this has been identified in academic literature from the early 1980s to the present (see Michaels, 1986; Meadows, 1993; Molnar & Meadows, 2001). In more recent times, it is evident in the report of a national review of Indigenous media, *Digital Dreaming* (ATSIC, 1999), and in a subsequent report of a comprehensive investigation into Australian broadcasting by the Productivity Commission (2000). This expansive literature concludes that where local radio production is being undertaken regularly, stations play an important role in maintaining Indigenous cultures and languages. Where local and culturally appropriate frameworks are used to structure community media, then these media become part of the local community, that is, part of local culture. For example, 5UMA (Port Augusta, in South Australia) has estimated there are around 20 different tribal groups with 10 Indigenous languages still spoken in the area, and two have been chosen for broadcast because of their relevance to local audiences, originating from local communities and others in the central desert. The station prides itself on covering Indigenous issues in these languages and in 'plain English', thus accommodating those in the Port Augusta community for whom English is a second, third or even fourth language (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006; Forde *et al*, 2002). Our current study suggests strongly that this is not an isolated example, pointing to a role for Indigenous media beyond that of the generalist community broadcasting sector.

5.0 Indigenous media as an essential service

Relatively recent research into the Indigenous media sector in Australia has suggested its role in providing a first level of service for diverse communities across the country along with building a 'cultural bridge' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities (Meadows 1994; ATSIC, 1999; Productivity Commission, 2000; Molnar & Meadows, 2001). The audience responses from this project strongly support these findings. But we believe it is possible to take this further, based on the evidence that has emerged from this historic audience study. It is clear that where Indigenous media is active — the case for virtually all of the locations included in this study — it represents a central organising element for local communities. It is almost without exception a centre for community social organisation and clearly has developed as a media industry in its own right, with distinctly differing objectives from those of its community media 'partners', ethnic community media (with which it has much in common), and 'generalist' community media.

This central organising tendency is evident in the multiple tasks Indigenous media enterprises undertake both within and between communities. One stark example comes from Indigenous audiences in north Queensland. In November 2004, Aboriginal people on Palm Island, near Townsville, stormed and burned down a police station on the island following the death in custody of a young local man. While mainstream media branded the incident 'the riot', Indigenous voices on Indigenous airwaves spoke about 'the resistance' with a Cairns-produced (Bumma Bipperra Media) and nationally-broadcast talkback program, *TalkBlack*, providing listeners with views other than those from sources such as State politicians and the police — in short: 'black voices and black issues' (Interview, Palm Island, 2006). The program won an award for the best coverage of Indigenous Affairs at the 2006 Queensland Media Awards.

Indigenous audience representatives have identified local radio and television as the only real alternative available to them in such times of community crisis. One avid listener in Townsville captured the feelings of many when he observed:

I think the only tool the community has to use is using places like 4K1G to make sure that what was being brought out of the Palm [Island] community as a whole was projected in the right manner, not in a negative manner. That's only one part of the importance of Murri media or Indigenous media. It provides places like Palm, Woorabinda, the Cape [York] and other Indigenous communities, particularly the Indigenous population in the mainstream, with a voice, a balance, projecting our stories, our culture, our language the way we want to hear it but giving it to the wider audience too, people who live in the mainstream, people who don't often come in contact with Indigenous people (Interview, Townsville, 2005).

The data drawn from the perspectives offered by a diverse range of Indigenous listeners and viewers across the country confirms the central role played by Indigenous media in the communities involved. Under the overarching idea of Indigenous media as an essential service, we have identified five key sub-themes from the data which are consistent across the wide range of media being produced by particular Indigenous 'communities of interest'. While some of these inevitably overlap, we offer more detail under the following broad headings along with supporting evidence.

5.1 Maintaining social networks

Audiences for Indigenous radio and television programming across Australia have identified the crucial role this plays in providing the ‘cultural glue’ that holds communities together. Media does this by providing a medium for programs in local languages (including English) that reflect specific community cultural ideas and aspirations — ‘Black voices: Black issues’. Music request programs, in particular, are used by Indigenous audiences to maintain kinship ties. Local Indigenous media productions enable audiences to develop and maintain their own identities by challenging non-Indigenous stereotyping by offering alternative perspectives on Indigenous affairs.

5.2 A medium for education

The strong educative role being played by Indigenous media was identified by audiences and emphasised because of its powerful influence, particularly on young people. A common claim made by audiences was of the success of local media in diverting young people at risk away from substance abuse and self-harm. Indigenous media does this by helping them to gain greater self-esteem through publication and support of their involvement in cultural activities such as music, dance and other kinds of community-sponsored events. Many participants identified career pathways in Indigenous media as ‘a saviour’ in offering kids a real alternative in becoming media producers themselves. Indigenous media is seen as important in introducing children to law and culture, largely through the collection, broadcast and archiving of local dances, songs, stories and images. Several urban-based focus groups, which included non-Indigenous listeners, identified Indigenous radio’s primary role as one of educating the broader Australian community (Focus Group, 98.9 Brisbane, 2006; Focus Group, 3KND Melbourne, 2005; Focus Group, CAAMA Alice Springs, 2006).

5.3 A primary source of news and information

Audiences unanimously praise Indigenous radio as an alternative source of news and information that rejects the stereotyping of Indigenous issues by mainstream media. Several variations of Indigenous talkback programs in the Torres Strait, Cairns and Brisbane — the latter two networked nationally — offer audiences the only places to speak out without inhibition on issues of concern in their own voices. In northern Australia and the Pilbara-Kimberley regions, Indigenous radio has become the only source of local information during major weather alerts (e.g. cyclones and tsunami).

5.4 Promoting cross-cultural dialogue

This aspect of Indigenous radio and television was identified as important equally by Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. Both cohorts described listening to Indigenous radio as their primary source of information about Indigenous community events and issues: this was highlighted by health industry professionals, youth workers, and ‘ordinary’ listeners who participated in focus groups and interviews. Some suggested Indigenous media was the major element in the reconciliation process. In virtually all focus groups, participants identified stations as playing a central role in breaking down racist attitudes towards Indigenous people by providing the context for better understanding. Indigenous participants identified ICTV as playing an important role in promoting cross-cultural awareness within Indigenous Australia as well as between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

5.5 A crucial medium for music and dance

Indigenous radio, in particular, has been identified as the only medium that supports the burgeoning Indigenous music industry in Australia. Many of those interviewed, including several notable musicians and performers, argued that without access to local and network radio, there would be no opportunity for Indigenous bands to receive airplay for their music. Major Indigenous cultural events such as Garma (Arnhem Land), Laura (Cape York), and the Croc Festival (Port Augusta) feature both traditional and contemporary Indigenous music and dance and rely on community broadcasters to support local artists. Without Indigenous radio, it is doubtful whether any Indigenous music would find a place on non-Indigenous station playlists. Audiences felt the industry relied solely on Indigenous radio for support. They identified this as crucial because of the potential career paths and opportunities it offered for young people in communities with few options. Audiences felt Indigenous music airplay had a significant impact on raising community and individual self-esteem.

5.0 Indigenous media as an essential service

It gives us identity, a process of identifying ourselves so we get closer to ideas from 40,000 years of culture not just 200 years (Interview, Palm Is, 2005).

Audience-producer dialogue

One of the dominant elements that emerged from this research is evidence to support an assertion of the absence of a barrier between audiences and producers of Indigenous media. One media worker at Yuendumu described it like this:

The audience are the producers and that we get constant feedback from them as to what they want and also that they're prepared to just get up there and do it themselves and the separation of production processes from audience it's a unique situation it's something that the government should treasure (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006).

But in all locations we visited as part of this study, audiences expressed this in varying ways: a sense of ownership, communication, identification with the 'grass roots', access, and the innate ability by stations to relate to their listeners socially, culturally and linguistically. One put it simply (Interview, Laura, 2005): 'I feel more comfortable than when I hear any white man's radio station. Absolutely more comfortable.' A Palm Island listener observed:

It certainly arouses people when they can hear something that belongs to us; that's about us. It's a very special tool to Aboriginal people. We still need to move into what the whole program is going to be about, those sorts of things, and it gives the community some feeling of power, doesn't it? (Interview, Palm Is, 2005)

Communication between producers and audiences happens in many ways, through music but perhaps more importantly, 'talking about place' (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006). A listener to CAAMA Radio concluded (Focus Group, CAAMA Alice Springs, 2006): 'It's Aboriginal radio for Aboriginal people; people who take greater pride in being aboriginal people especially grass roots people — it gives them something to listen to and play a part of it.' Another important element which emerged, too, in commentary on the nature of news and information, is the absence of simplistic media representations. Many participants and interviewees told us that this was because Indigenous people were in control:

Oh, it's the Aboriginal content; it's them being Aboriginal themselves and there's no stereotyping and stuff like that, it's, you know they're readily accepted and enjoyed and, yeah, I think that, from some of the mainstream radio stations that are [a world apart] apart because they can get down to the level that we want to listen to and what they want to talk about... and certainly the way that they're able to put it across in a way that is, yeah, that is acceptable to us, you know. And the terminology, the everything — they know what they're talking about. We, we can relate to it (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006).

It was also attributed to the open nature of Indigenous radio and television enterprises on the mainland, or as in this case, throughout the islands of the Torres Strait (Interview, TSI, 2005): 'They're very open in their [approach]. If you've got something you want to put on the radio, they call in, you know, talk about your idea. If it's community news or, you know, you go into the studio and do all of that.' Another, reflecting the comments of many, described it like this (Focus Group, CAAMA Alice Springs, 2006):

I want to know what's going on but I don't want to hear that stuff [stereotypes]. I want to know in a language and that doesn't necessarily mean in a cultural language but a format, yeah, a lingo that you can get your head around, so that it's not too high ground, which would turn a lot of people off.

The communication network facilitated by Indigenous media is expansive, based on audience responses, and is unique. For example, almost every focus group identified the critical role radio plays in maintaining communication links between prisoners and their families, largely through music requests and associated messages. The continuing high rates of incarceration and deaths-in-custody of Indigenous people in Australia alone makes this an essential service. As one participant concluded (Focus Group, CAAMA Alice Springs, 2006): 'It keeps the dialogue going between people.'

But for the majority of audiences, it is simply about having confidence and feeling comfortable listening to and/or watching programs with which they can identify and trust:

Cherbourg Murri radio is very informative. It presents a point of view that we want to talk about — what you people call the blueprints of your world. We know our blueprints... it concerns the whole world and it gives us a sense of identity and direction (Interview, Palm Is, 2005).

Another defined this in terms of the radio, in particular, reaching out to its audience, wherever they might be:

So the radio, 4MW, it's now come into their... their bedroom or their veranda or... where they are, you know, fishing. And some of the communities are using the new technology now that [enables people to] listen everywhere... and it's very important, very important, that we need to maintain that... talking relationship (Interview, TSI, 2005).

A Cairns-based listener exemplified many when drawing a distinction between commercial radio and the local station run by Bumma Bipperra:

It's just a totally different listening environment. You know, we, it's like on commercial it's, go, go, go, go... but when you listen to BBM, you're not go, go, go, go — you're just enjoying it (Focus Group, BBM Cairns, 2005).

Audiences around the country identified the wide variety of programming types and styles as a major drawcard for them, ranging through music, language, gospel, sporting, multicultural programming, community service announcements, talkback, and news and information — within an Indigenous framework.

I think it's more to the point, you know. It's truthful, you know. You get none of that media hype that you hear down south or... there's no rude stuff on the radio. you know... you don't get people who come on the radio and insult people and things like that. People are going to be straight forward; they be straight forward and tell the truth, you know — no beating around the bush, which is good, it's good (Interview, TSI, 2005)

As one Melbourne listener observed (Focus Group, 3KND Melbourne, 2005): 'I think it's, you know, everything's good for kids, it's good for adults, it's good for elderly people. There's something for everybody. I really like that and no-one feels excluded. Well, no-one basically is excluded, you know.' Another listener from the same focus group described how she became a listener: 'I heard about 3KND from indigenous friends who I met through work and she, I said to her, "I want to learn more about indigenous culture" and she said, "Listen to the radio station".' Another young, non-Indigenous participant described how she had come to be an avid listener of 98.9FM in Brisbane (Focus Group, 98.9 Brisbane, 2006): 'I used to fight with my dad over the radio dial move it onto that head banging stuff as you call it and then I obviously gave up the fight and have been listening to it for eight years.' A young Indigenous woman in the same focus group acknowledged that 'pretty much all the elders in Inala listen to 98.9', confirming its 'authorisation', like other Indigenous stations, by key community figures. This was a common theme around the country: the importance of seeking confirmation from those in the community who have the greatest respect.

Defining the 'electronic messagestick'

Audiences for Indigenous media around Australia defined it many ways — 'the electronic message stick of the new millennium' was one eloquent response by a caller to the national Indigenous talkback program, *TalkBlack* (2005). But there are many other variants: 'our voice' was a simple description from the Torres Strait (Interview, TSI, 2005); the 'Murri grapevine' (Interview, Laura, 2005); or the 'bush telegraph' (Interview, Townsville, 2005). One passionate Palm Island listener (Interview, 2005) explained why he listened to Indigenous radio: 'Because it's blackfella listening to blackfella. You know you want to communicate with them. You know!' What has clearly emerged from the wide range of views we have canvassed is that Indigenous radio and television represent a first level of service in terms of the provision of news and information for the communities we visited. But it is also clear that media organisations do far more than this for communities who feel isolated by persistently negative and irrelevant mainstream media representation. Indigenous audiences undoubtedly consider their local media as an essential service. Some argue that it should be considered alongside other more traditional community service organisations (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006):

I mean the health service is vital, we need that. But I think Umeewarra [Media] is up there as well because, like I said, if you took away Umeewarra, you're taking away, you're disempowering us through lack of knowledge and lack of information and, it's certainly right up there, yeah. Yeah, information. And I would put the radio station up there with, you know, the major portfolios — with health and education.

The idea that Indigenous media provide an essential service is widespread amongst audiences. A discussion around this at the CAAMA focus group provoked this searching response (Focus Group, CAAMA Alice Springs, 2006): 'I have to say in that context it's an essential service it just needs perhaps some kind of review into the funding whether its adequate... Why aren't they putting it into the only media that's getting out there?' There are myriad examples from the interviews and discussions around this theme, emphasising the broad range of role Indigenous radio and television perform for their local communities. Here is a sample to illustrate this diversity:

It's good for, to listen to local and Aboriginal news and other news and well, it informs us about Indigenous news around Australia and local areas and I find it good, I enjoy it (Interview, Beagle Bay, 2006).

We have PAKAM which is good and a lot of people look forward to PAKAM, especially the request show for prisoners (Focus Group, Goolarri Media Broome, 2006).

It's a good way of communication and talking and message you know, listen to one other, or what other special funerals is on. That's one thing good about Goolarri and PAKAM, they'll tell each other when such and such funeral is for, you know. Or any, any community events, like big events. For instance, next week, they're having a, the first film festival in Balgo, so everybody know it, because PAKAM has been broadcasting it and through the BRACS (Focus Group, Goolarri Media Broome, 2006).

Yes, the radio 5NPY that's good for them young ones; young ones to ring him up to find out what's happening...and somebody's got a problem they've got to let the families know. And people are talking in Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara and they understand. Owa. PY Media, that's a part of the culture (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

4K1G provided our mob with a balance by getting what we wanted to say on national talkback radio through the Indigenous network... That's why black radio and black media needs to stay around as long as it can because it's the only tool we've got here. It's our vehicle to tell our stories and what's important to us (Interview, Palm Is, 2005).

I hear stuff on Talkblack that I'm not reading in the papers. I find that because I ring up 4AAA to find out times for funerals and all that kind of stuff. Funeral notices are really important for people to know (Interview, Laura, 2005).

The message is getting, getting the vital information out to people that affects their lives, you know, their daily lives — like government policies, you know, community events, you know, information from service providers, all that sort of stuff. If, if we had to lose Umeewarra then that information just would, take a long time getting to people — if ever (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006).

Participant A: To all the people especially grass roots people too, when they're sitting down not doing much, just having a chat with people — they love listening to the radio and at the same time, besides listening to good music, they are getting the message.

Participant B: And it's the only thing you can listen to in your car from one community to another. You can't watch television, you can only get CAAMA and ABC when you're driving up the freeway or highway or from community to community (Focus Group, CAAMA, 2006).

Not so long ago our community council was to go insolvent and most of the community didn't even notice because we have such strong Aboriginal associations here. Warpiri Media is really the core of that (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006).

The radio station itself is, I think, the hub of life. In some places it's the school, but here it's the radio station and they make it very, very relevant... And everybody's playing the radio here in every house you go into and the shops, everything! It's on all the time (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006).

The whole media network [PY Media] is absolutely critical to informing people with what's going on in their lives, the future, so that generations can now make a decision about what's best for them. It's the only alternative information they get... people are not functionally literate because of the failure of the education system so that the only real information people get is what they generate themselves through their own organisations (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

I think everyone listens to the radio station here [Woorabinda]. I always make a point of putting it on my radio when I come in because you don't get... a lot of other stations so they do listen to it. But I think it does meet a lot of needs (Morgan, 2005).

On 98.9 you do hear a lot about our issues because it's our own point of view; it's from our viewers, our radio station. It's a way of saying, 'Well this is what we want to say and it's coming from us.' There's no stereotypes. People are free to ring in and have their views if they disagree or agree which I think is great, because everyone's entitled to their opinion. That's why I think it's good that we do talk about our issues instead of everybody else talking about them (Focus Group, 98.9, 2006).

We've got that grass roots radio happening, talking to people, just that grass-roots stuff, none of that high, intellectual stuff, just the Murri way of talking and communicating. That's what I see as really important in that way so that people understand what you're talking about. You're from the same place, the same area, the same place and you know what you're talking about (Interview, Palm Is, 2005).

PAW Radio linking three major language groups in central Australia: Pintubi, Amatyerre and Warlpiri. Well, most important is to understand each other. We like to learn languages from each other — that's the most important thing — sharing languages. But first when people reached out, they couldn't understand what they were talking about. Now, today, people getting used to it, sharing the languages (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006).

Managing community resources

Audiences across the country expressed concern about a perceived void in national and regional Indigenous leadership in the wake of the demise of ATSIC — and for many, Indigenous media has taken up that role. The ability for networking of Indigenous radio and television to link communities around the country was identified as a major cultural resource:

Things have sort of, I guess, sort of dwindled a bit, in terms of Aboriginal, you know, affairs and leadership and that, and it's good to see that, you know, that there is, you know, another voice that's really building in other states that can flow onto South Australia. So it's a very good way of keeping the momentum going for Aboriginal people in this state (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006).

And also even more so now, with the demise of ATSIC and different organisations, I firmly believe that it is a voice for our Indigenous communities. And if it wasn't there anymore, I'd be out there (Focus Group, 98.9, 2006).

With the demise of ATSIC and we have lost, Indigenous people have lost their international, national representation. So it's important that whatever we are, we replace. We must strengthen to continue where indigenous people can be, do our own thing for ourselves and to continue and strengthening ourselves politically and economically and work together. So we've lost that national representation and, and national voice, so any other thing, programme in place must be able to continue is what I'm saying (Interview, TSI, 2005).

Another important role audiences identified being carried out by Indigenous media is in linking individuals and groups within communities. This is especially the case where communities are spread over vast areas as is the case throughout remote Australia, including the islands of the Torres Strait. The capacity for people to come together for meetings on a regular basis is extremely limited — but innovative uses of media have managed to overcome this in several regions. One is a unique system of broadcast radio, television and UHF radio devised by PY Media to maintain traditional processes of decision-making by consensus in the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara-Yunkantjatjara lands in the central desert. As this interviewee explains, whenever the APY Council holds a meeting, people out in the community need to know what's happening (Interview, Umuwa, 2006):

We need to have meetings, not a secret. They've got to be open, on the table and through radio broadcasting, a lot of people are out there listening. Sometimes, when something really important comes up, they ring the meeting and they talk in the meeting. They're way over there in the community but they can be in the meeting here, talking.

Another interviewee continues, reinforcing the unique role being undertaken by the local radio network, 5NPY (Interview, Umuwa, 2006):

There's no real news channel here except for ABC mainstream tele but you find that most of the news that [features] Indigenous people are only little sound bites that don't really make it and the people rely on what's being said through their own meetings that have been delivered after a while and then hopefully they've been able to deliver it out to the community. And that's where the likes of PY Media and 5NPY play a huge role in that just being able to get the message out to people.

It is clear from audience responses that in many remote regions, communication through Indigenous media such as RIBS (Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Service), formerly known as BRACS (Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme), has taken the place of regular community meetings. People in areas like the Torres Strait use the radio network through BRACS to raise and discuss issues such as erosion, disease threat and local politics. Talkback is a popular format for doing this and is considered to fulfil the role of 'a regional public meeting', as these comments suggest:

Yes, I listen every morning you know to the [local] talkback and it sort of brings people to that arena where we listen and people are talking about it. So yeah, I listen for it every morning and I also participate in talkback... 4MW... it's been acknowledged as a public meeting (Interview, TSI, 2005).

With BRACS, available people can listen to whatever information you need to share with the community rather than call a public meeting with a couple of things on the agenda, you can announce it through BRACS and it's easy access for information (Interview, TSI, 2005).

But the use of Indigenous radio as a meeting place is not confined to remote Australia:

We can talk about these issues rather than having to go house to house or through the Murri Grapevine, as we call it, and, of course, through community meetings which we haven't been able to do recently. Those are sorts of ways of communicating between people. It's all about lifting people's spirits once they know what's happening (Interview, Palm Is, 2005).

All of this suggests a central organising role for Indigenous media outlets, at least from the perspectives of their audiences. One question we asked of all interviewees and focus groups was what difference would it make if their station went off the air tomorrow? These selected responses capture the essence of the overall view:

A: Cut off from the world

B: Extremely sad

C: I'd have to go out and buy a lot of CDs! (Focus Group, 98.9 Brisbane, 2006)

It would be a terrible loss to the community because I feel the other stations wouldn't take up a number of, a lot of the issues that are being currently handled by this particular station (Focus Group, BBM Cairns, 2005).

If that radio was ever closed down, it would be the end of the opportunity to keep contact with our brothers down south in Victoria, Western Australia, Northern Territory (Logan, 2005).

I think we would be lost again so the communication would break down very badly and a lot of the things that happen elsewhere in Australia we'd know about a month later, maybe four or five weeks later, because with the system we've got now we can follow what goes on over the sea and also in Australia (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

It's all about knowledge and information and that's what empowers us you know, and having that information and Umeewarra is effectively the main means of doing that for this community.

Yeah.

And, if we lost it, I think it would just disempower us so much (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006).

The journey begins

One of the realities of identifying audiences for Indigenous media during our study was that a significant proportion of participants had been involved previously with Indigenous media at varying levels. It underlines the absence of a real barrier between producer and audiences in the Indigenous media sector. While it is important to acknowledge this, we believe that it in no way adversely affects our analysis. But to underline this seamless transition from listener/viewer to producer and back again, the comments from two new Torres Strait Islander 'recruits' serve to illustrate the impact of Indigenous media. Both have taken up careers as broadcasters after hearing Indigenous radio while still at school — and being 'captured'.

That was the first time I listened to Indigenous radio, but I didn't know that there was Indigenous radio around Australia. I only thought that it was on in the Torres Strait. So, actually it wasn't until I moved to Port Hedland, WA, that I heard a lot of different BRACS operating... So it was then that I knew there was an Indigenous radio and that BRACS was operating (Interview, Batchelor, 2004).

You can influence them with messages and give them the meaning of the power of what we are — to be an Indigenous person and be able to speak to your own people. Not only to your own people in your own region, but to your own people around the nation, now with the indigenous network. I think I'll be in this field for a good while (Interview, Batchelor, 2004).

5.1 Maintaining social networks

Promoting self esteem

A clear message we received from audiences across Australia is that Indigenous radio and television is boosting communities' self-image. They describe it variously as 'empowerment', 'ownership' and 'pride'. It is clear, too, that many believe that Indigenous media is now a mature industry in its own right, with an attraction for many young people — some as young as 10 — drawing them away from negative diversions existing in most urban, regional and remote communi-

ties (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006; Interview, Maningrida, 2006). There is no doubt that the Indigenous media sector is highly valued by its audiences but at the same time, there is frustration that a lack of recognition of its relevance and impact — reflected in minimal funding levels — offers no genuine future for its media workers. But the potential is clearly evident in these examples:

When I see that, that [Kimberley Girl on Goolarri TV] makes me happy to see an Aboriginal role model... starring on the TV like that An I'd like to see more role models and different things in the Aboriginal community (Focus Group, Goolarri, 2006).

The good thing about the radio also is that it's opened up a whole new area for indigenous people to get involved in, like broadcasting and journalism and, and we've had, people from here go to Bachelor college and places like that to study journalism at James Cook University and so on. And it's good to see those people are actually broadening their horizons through, like you know, like effectively, it has come from the radio station (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006).

We've got a young woman, for example, that has just started radio training... and she's had a really difficult couple of years through various personal circumstances. And it's simply been since she's started doing radio shows and learning how to edit radio shows that she's found her own self-confidence and that's given her enormous worth and a sense of direction (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006).

Quite often we'll get feedback from the elders in the community that they are really proud of what those young people are doing (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006).

It's that empowerment and speaking up and taking ownership and whatever. Perhaps that is part of CAAMA radio's responsibility: to give a voice to people to be able to say, stand up or go out, be proud (Focus Group, CAAMA, 2006).

4MW has provided us the service where... we are really, I suppose you know, proud of it and gives us that feeling of ownership (Interview, TSI, 2005).

For me, every morning, I can listen and I feel that it gives me a lot of strength... You know that they're thinking at a much deeper level than the mainstream mass culture out there (Interview, Laura, 2005).

He played a song and I could imagine the blacktrackers stranding up so tall. It makes you proud to be who you are and I am very proud to be an Aboriginal (Interview, Palm Is, 2005).

It makes you proud you're Indigenous when you hear your own people get up there and talk about your own cultural background, concerns of the community, voicing opinions on what could be changed, giving other Indigenous people ideas for how they can make a difference themselves (Interview, Palm Is, 2005).

And perhaps the last words should go to two teenagers who offered their views about listening to radio station 4K1G in Townsville:

You get to know about your own culture and everything. It's good to hear your own culture... All the people there are Murri... they talk for all the people (Interview, Townsville, 2005).

I like 4K1G because they describe everything that's happening today in Indigenous communities... Most other radio stations they don't realise what's happening today in Indigenous society and I believe it's a good way of understanding what's relevant today from our point of view (Interview, Townsville, 2005).

Maintaining community

So what is it about Indigenous media that attracts audiences? We received a wide range of responses to this question, some of which we have already canvassed. But it is clear from our analysis that audiences are very happy with what they describe as the relationships they have developed with their local broadcasters. For this North Queensland 12 year-old, it is straightforward (Interview, Townsville, 2006): 'I like the requests and the songs on it... They can play deadly music that I want. You can send messages and they say it on the actual radio and you can give birthday calls.' Audiences across the country talked about needing to be able to access their local radio stations to send messages — mostly through music requests — to family and friends. On the surface, this may appear to be a straightforward practice but audience discussion around this revealed it as an important way of maintaining contact and reinforcing kinship ties (Interview, TSI, 2005; Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006; Focus Group, CAAMA Alice Springs, 2006; Focus

Group, Goolarri Media Broome, 2006; Beagle Bay 2006). This focus group participant highlighted the difficulty many Indigenous people face in deciding to make a call in the first place, let alone to a radio station:

You wouldn't have, I think, Aboriginal people ring other local radio stations and even make a request for that matter... for people to... actually ring up and to make a request, that's, that's a big thing for them to do, you know. Where they'd never normally talked to anyone on the phone as well (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006).

Oh Goolarri's very, very good. Anyone can [come in here], you know. They really love it, being here (Focus Group, Goolarri, 2006).

It highlights again the nature of the relationship local stations must develop with their audiences to overcome such barriers. This is especially important where family members are geographically separated from each other with local radio as one of the few, non-threatening communication avenues available. In this way, request programs play a significant role in bringing community members closer together. As one focus group member concluded (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006): 'It's one way of saying that each person in the community is valued and respected.'

A majority of focus groups and interviewees described one of the main roles of their local radio or television service as bringing people together, like this comment from Yuendumu (Interview, 2006): '[PAW Radio aims] to bring people together, one people sharing one idea. Sharing, talking, culture sharing like respect [for] one another as one people... it's all about bringing one people together.' Further north, in the Torres Strait, the power of the radio network was evident in responses from interviewees there. All acknowledged the role of radio 'because it keeps the whole community together... linking people in the Torres Strait with other Indigenous people around the country' through NIRS (National Indigenous Radio Service) (Interview, TSI, 2005). Another gave an example of the radio enabling communities to keep in touch with sporting events 'because you've got family playing'. There were several examples of local radio (and television) being used to inform family members attending a game to come home! It is doubtful if this could be achieved through anything other than Indigenous radio and it is an emphasis on maintaining the idea of 'community' that provokes expressions of 'attachment' to a station, reflected in this short focus group exchange (Interview, Townsville, 2005):

A: It is a sense of community — it's like its ours.

B: It's Murri.

A: We take ownership.

Many of our interviewees and participants described the importance of building communities through Indigenous media because, according to this example, 'you can't get that sense of community anywhere else' (Interview, Laura, 2005). There are more practical reasons for Indigenous radio to focus on maintaining community connections, as this respondent to the national Indigenous talkback program, Talkblack (2005), suggests:

It's keeping our families connected, a lot of us can't read, a lot of us can't write but we all like listening to the radio, bit of country and western. And it's what these programs are doing they are community based, they're owned by Aboriginal people. They are controlled by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people.

Maintaining languages and cultures

Another key role of Indigenous media identified by audiences was its impact on maintaining languages and cultures. This was evident in comments from every participant in this study. It is viewed as a crucial role of local media, particularly in remote Australia where English remains the second, third or even fourth language in some communities. But the role of local media in this sense is not confined to remote regions. This response from Palm Island was typical of many from urbanised and fragmented Indigenous communities where traditional languages were no longer in common use, underlining the importance of maintaining cultural connections through the use of Aboriginal English, for example (Interview, Palm Is, 2005):

It depends how you talk. You could talk flash like a whitefella or you could talk like a blackfella. I talk my way. I just be me... You communicate with your people and they know what you're talking about in my language, my way, blackfella way, Murri way. They can relate to that, see (Interview, Palm Is, 2005)?

This is something local radio can achieve and is a major reason why it is so successful in servicing the diverse cultures that make up Indigenous Australia. In remote regions where traditional languages and cultural activities remain active, Indigenous media have been adapted to suit community needs. ICTV is a good example, with its high level of

Indigenous language content (around 80 per cent). This is how one community elder explained the importance of language and cultural programs on ICTV (Interview, Umuwa, 2006):

Interviewer: What does it do for young people?

Interviewee: They're learning.

Interviewer: What do they learn about?

Interviewee: Culture, and some inma [dances, songs]. The older people have been dancing before and they're watching and they're learning from that culture... Very important one for children learning... later they singing and some people learning singing and dancing.

Both Indigenous radio and television appear to be dealing effectively with regional linguistic differences, according to audience responses. ICTV, for example, often includes programs in several different Indigenous languages, and English, and this has been largely accepted unproblematically by audiences. Regional Indigenous television producers PY Media, Warlpiri Media, PAKAM and Ngaanyatjarra Media, in particular, have amassed many thousands of hours of archival video — some material more than 20 years old — slowly being transferred to a digital format for better storage and access. This represents an invaluable cultural resource, recognised in part by the National Indigenous Languages Survey, which recommended an audit of Indigenous media organisations to determine the extent of this archive (AIATSIS & FATSIL, 2005, p. 93). The various Indigenous media producers routinely dip into the collection for program material but also to fulfil requests from families who want to see images of relatives who have passed away. It is commonplace for program material with images of deceased people to be removed from air until families decide that enough time has elapsed and that the images can once again be viewed publicly. The management of ICTV through PY Media enables almost instantaneous withdrawal of offensive material if something slips through the usual cultural protocol checks (Interview, Umuwa, 2006). And so programming in various remote area languages is common on ICTV, most often without accompanying English subtitles. While some ICTV viewers interviewed said they would like to be able to understand more of what was being spoken in languages other than their own, they would prefer to watch programs as they exist rather than not at all (Interview, Umuwa, 2006; Beagle Bay, 2006; Focus Group, Goolarri Media Broome, 2006). This parallels the experiences and preferences of Native Canadians watching programs in various Native languages on the Aboriginal People's Television Network in its early years of broadcasting (Molnar & Meadows, 2001) and resonates with recent research into community acceptance of Maori Television in New Zealand (Maori Television, 2005, p. 6).

Above all, audiences acknowledge the power of local media in re-invigorating local languages and cultures, as this response suggests (Interview, TSI, 2005):

There's different languages in the Strait — Eastern Island, Meriam and Western Island — and it's important to use language because then you can retain that and, and teach it. So you not only can teach it in schools and other places, but over the radio. And people listen to it. And most of our songs are composed in language and... [the] young generation, young generation [are] listening to the songs, learning the songs, learning the meaning of the songs and learning the language at the same time... it's important that language be spoken over the radio.

Similarly, in central Australia, PAW Radio (formerly Warlpiri Media) deals with a linguistically diverse audience (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006): 'Radios here put on Aboriginal music, songs in language like in Warlpiri and they talk about the old land or community. Through that song and music and through that language it's communicating what is happening.' And as another Warlpiri listener observed (Interview, 2006): 'It's very good way to get the message across in our own languages to our own people.' Radio Larrakia in Darwin includes language speakers when possible, as this listener observed (Interview, 2006): 'When Big Frank comes on at TEABBA, he'll speak in language and then if he's not available, Kelly does this programme, she'll have guest speakers.' Audience feedback praised the station's focus on Indigenous affairs (Focus Group, Radio Larrakia Darwin, 2006):

It is a very unique radio station here in Darwin and as I've said earlier on, I'd say its only, the only radio station that does, hey, Aboriginal and Islander music, and links up to *TalkBlack*, crossing over to the TEABBA BRACS, Wednesday and Friday mornings. And you're still getting that Aboriginal language into the greater Darwin area (Focus Group, Radio Larrakia Darwin, 2006).

It is clear from audience responses that Indigenous media outlets place a high priority on setting appropriate cultural protocols for broadcasting. It is common for programs to be pulled from ICTV or radio music schedules on advice that someone in a video or band has passed away, for example. Stations rely solely on advice from their audiences in such matters, another clear indicator of the existence of a strong audience-producer relationship (Interview, Umuwa, 2006; CAAMA, 2006; TSI, 2005). The Goolarri Media focus group, which included an entire extended traditional family,

stressed the importance of respecting protocols by not using the names and cultural products of people who have recently died:

There was one bloke, from a band — he died and we didn't play the music for a while to respect the sorry business, you know. And then once, once they, we knew it was over here, we went back to the family to say, it's alright to play the songs over the PAKAM and Goolarri air waves (Focus Group, Goolarri, 2006).

5.2 A medium for education

This key role for Indigenous radio and television was universally highlighted by participants in this study. This theme overlaps significantly with others we have identified, underlining the importance audiences place on the impact of media on their children and their future. Audiences identified two main elements: providing children with both a traditional and contemporary education through media as well as identifying knowledge of media production skills as part of the education process. The attraction of working with media for Indigenous children is widespread, according to our study. Almost all accounts of media interaction involved young people. Here is a sample of comments from focus groups and interviewees:

Radio is one of the coolest things that they can do and we usually have a queue of our young people wanting to work with Warpiri Media all out there but particularly on those multimedia projects... we have all the same issues as any other community but we also have extremely strong people, not only elders, now the young people they're taking action and they're not accepting those unacceptable ways of life (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006).

But I, I know because of the programme, everybody listens to it. I know the, the classes, a couple of higher, upper classes at Yorke Island State School, they listen to the talkback show between nine and ten as part of the, the lessons because of all the issues that are up and... that's how they get people to listen to and also take part in the classroom discussions and issues (Interview, TSI, 2005).

Pitjantjatjara school and Yankunytjatjara schoolchildren they go to the college in Adelaide and they're learning about a different, different, different TV. And they're looking at what's happening to whitefellas on the other side of the world in that TV. That's no good for them children, that's really no good you know. We want to have our children to learn from our culture and I'm supporting this one for children not for old people, that's for young people. And when we die, the young people know that; they can feel it they can see, O my grandmother, O my father, he bin run this one: I can do that too! We showing the children that (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

Interviewee: Community people they watching TV, they learning from the TV.

Interviewer: What do they learn?

Interviewee: Because they see the people all talking to other people and they learning and they see themselves, and they singing the right way.

Interviewer: All that inma on TV?

Interviewee: Owa [yes], inma (Interview, Umuwa, 2006)

Travelling in any way in the country they can listen to music; they can put a TV there and make everybody happy, make everybody awake and think about the land: this is my grandmother's land; this is my tjamu's land, this is my kami's land, my grandmother's, and grandfather's, uncle's, mother's. The media we started for Anangu children. We can't give it to anybody (Interview, Umuwa, 2006)

Other young, youthful Indigenous people are starting to make things like that but in their way in their language and where they are it's a slow thing but it's changing and that voice is getting out there and they're using radio as that media. It's right there. They can go in and say, 'Hey, this is what I've done' (Focus Group, CAAMA, 2006).

And 4MW when, broadcasting live can share the messages of the day to each and everyone, important for our young generation to know about it and remember what the struggle was, and, and [that it] needs to continue (Interview, TSI, 2005).

So this is where I'm learning to listen to the radio and learn about my culture and I'm trying to teach my kids to listen in and also what they are learning at school (Focus Group, 3KND Melbourne, 2005).

[Kids] really enjoy it when Annette gets them to go to the BRACS. And they just love going to Annette and all being on the radio and saying 'Hi' to whoever (Interview, Beagle Bay, 2006).

When members of the focus group for radio station 98.9 FM in Brisbane were asked to nominate what they thought the station's primary role, it was unanimous (Focus Group, 98.9, 2006):

Participant 1: Education.

Participant 2: It's an educator.

Participant 3: It's an awareness raising and...

Participant 1: It helps bring things out in the open and starts people talking, educating.

Participant 3: It's a talking point — somewhere to start, like you mentioned about a bridge (Focus Group, 98.9, 2006).

ICTV

The advent of ICTV and its slow, steady spread across remote Australia seems to have created an extraordinary level of excitement amongst audiences in remote Indigenous communities. Wherever the community TV service was available, viewers spoke with passion and pride about the importance of seeing images of local, identifiable Indigenous people on TV — in many cases, for the first time. Although ICTV is performing many roles in the communities we visited — maintaining languages and cultures, connecting communities, promoting cross-cultural awareness, a source of news and information — audiences most commonly talked about it in terms of education: providing an environment where children, adults, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, could learn. Here are some examples of these responses, firstly from people in the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara lands, attending a cultural festival at Umuwa:

I see Anangu on whitefellas TV and ICTV that's very different from ICTV... Whitefella TV that really saddens the people, too many fights, something happening on TV and that's not good for Anangu people to watch (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

On ICTV we can see other people from other cultures celebrating in their own way and in their own languages. And we as older people see other older people doing things in their countries, looking after their own countries (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

The filming of inma and song and all of that is really important for future generations. Every time someone dies here we lose a library. We lose an enormous amount of information and under the pressures of the outside world that's increasingly at risk... If you can't record that and protect that and give it status within the community well then there is a great risk that these people will lose what makes them strong (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

We've been watching Imparja and ABC and all those programs. Those people, they set up that one that's because that belongs to them, you know, and why not? We got our own PY media TV, radio and everything and we want to go separately, Anangu way; that's what they want, Anangu, separate to ABC... We're going to go around the communities and ask people to put something on ICTV, perhaps one chap from Indulkana might be talking about what they do over there with CDEP; plant some trees; or anything they do. They got to talk and let other communities know on that TV so people see and they copy: 'We got to do it like Indulkana are doing it' (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

We've just finished a documentary on a trip when I took a group of footballers to Adelaide for the second time and we made a short documentary on that and now we're going to put that on ICTV so the rest of the communities on the lands know what their young fellas got up to because they weren't able to come us (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

Because we have PY Media and we have to put that one because out here, other people watch SBS and ABC and Imparja and a lot of good things coming out of ABC people see sometimes... but they want to get on with their own stories, you know, and sit down and focus on that one (Interview, Umuwa, 2006)

It's different because they got our cultures on ICTV... the families and cultural stuff like that and activities that kids do on ICTV. All the interesting things they do for the kids and the elders for their future.

Interviewer: Do you think it's important to have these programs on ICTV for kids?

Interviewee: It is important for them to watch and learn how the elders used to do those things and to learn more skills and stuff like that (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

ICTV, that's for the young children, young generation to learn. We've been asked the government for help and all the young people they don't sniff petrol there no more. We teaching our children, young men and young children and we need it; we need it for the land. We want to keep going so that the young ones can take over. We going forward, we not going backwards...we looking forward, not backwards (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

ICTV had arrived in remote communities in the Kimberley communities a few weeks before we visited, but people there were equally enthused about the 'really deadly' new television service. They identified the importance of seeing Indigenous faces on the screen, stories from their own and other cultures, and talked about the pride they felt in knowing Indigenous people had produced it all:

Well ICTV is a very special indigenous community television because you get stories from different places, different regions, different nationality, Aboriginal perspective. There's cultural, cultural stories, bush medicine which, you know, you hardly ever see on, on, like for instance, SBS, GWN, GR, ABC. Now and again they have things on ABC promoting Indigenous people and SBS but [hardly ever] through WIN and GWN (Interview, Beagle Bay, 2006).

Oh they think it's really great to see different, as I said, seeing different, different cultures on, on the ICTV which is very important. We do have a voice but it's just that, we're not being heard or being seen (Interview, Beagle Bay, 2006).

Those kids are brilliant when they talk about being responsible for their rubbish and, because it's not like white man's rubbish, it's everyone's rubbish now... And the other, the other little story about the kids looking after the water, you know, when the whole community runs out of water, they go down and they pick up, all the, turn all the taps off and that. No, oh, what a message to come through and for our kids, that's powerful. You know, if adults can do that, it doesn't mean the same to kids (Interview, Djaridjin, 2006).

I reckon we should have some of those channels out in the mainstream because then we get to know about what happens in communities and it's the contact. You know, when I go back out into there and I meet my friends, they've got no idea what it actually is like, how they, you know, how the mob live and how we all get on and how we, how we work together (Interview, Djaridjin, 2006).

I think that it's great for the communities because it provides, it's connecting the communities... BRACS people were able to override the broadcast within their own community but now it's creating a huge network, like someone in Warpiri community or Yuendumu or wherever is watching something from Ernabella or whatever (Focus Group, CAAMA, 2006).

The public media, the accessible media is useless, almost. If we can actually develop ICTV to an extent to where it's actually widely used and it's seen as an essential way of communicating with Aboriginal people wherever they might be then I think that's all for the better (Snowdon, 2006).

5.3 A primary source of news and information

Commentary from Indigenous audiences across the country clearly identify their local media, particularly radio, as the primary source of news and information about Indigenous affairs — apart from word of mouth. And leading the way on many of Australia's Indigenous radio stations is their own version of talkback. There are several popular community-based talkback programs on air with *TalkBlack* (Focus Group, Bumma Bipperra in Cairns), *Let's Talk* (Focus Group, 98.9 in Brisbane), and a local talkback program in the Torres Strait identified as the most influential and informative. The example of the central role of *TalkBlack* mentioned earlier in this chapter underlines its importance as an alternative source of information for Indigenous listeners in North Queensland — along with other who tune in from Broome to Melbourne. One elderly Palm Island resident offered this view of why *TalkBlack*, relayed by satellite across Australia through 4K1G in Townsville, was important in her life (Interview, Palm Is, 2006):

I love the talkback, very interesting because it includes affairs that apply to our people and I'm glad that they're making aware of our problems and what's going on and good things, too, that are happening around the place — like our Debutante's Ball that's coming up.

As another Palm Island resident observed (Interview, 2006): 'It's good to hear our own people's voices and opinions.' This is echoed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous listeners to such programs around the country. A Townsville listener described it like this (Interview, 2005): 'Its helpful, its informative, the issues too — it's about us black people having a say over the airwaves. You know, you have talkback programs but it's not the same, you know. Sometimes it might be family on there, and you say, 'Hey, I know that person.' And the program clearly has wide audience appeal, as this comment from a 16 year old Townsville listener suggests: '*TalkBlack* is pretty good because you can hear about all the issues in the community and find out the community's opinion about stuff that's gone on.' Time and time again, audiences told us that 'everyone tunes into *TalkBlack*'. Here's a sample of other views of *TalkBlack* and its perceived value:

It's like a relay... especially the variety. Lately they've been talking about alcoholism. They're all issues I can relate to; it's relating to what you're hearing and helping. If someone's looking for help, well, you might know the answers, and if

you don't know, someone else might know. That's networking, too, isn't it (Interview, Townsville, 2005)?

A good thing about it [4K1G] is *TalkBlack*. It's a good way to actually hear the people, not someone who's not Indigenous like talking for them, talking for the people. It's a good way to represent the Indigenous people of Australia (Interview, Townsville, 2005).

It's a great opportunity for Aboriginals to speak their mind. Whether some people believe it or not there are a lot of white people who listen to the radio station especially *TalkBlack*, where we are coming from now and also 3KND here in Melbourne. So I think it's a great idea (*TalkBlack*, 2005).

We need to have input like *TalkBlack* to air round our views. And it's very important to hear other people's view on things and comment (*Talkblack*, 2005).

I like the *TalkBlack*. I like to hear the way people are giving their views; I like to hear the way other Murris are feeling in the rest of the country, the rest of the world, I guess (Interview, Palm Is, 2005).

A similar pattern emerged from audiences in the Torres Strait talking about their own version through Radio 4MW:

The talkback sort of brings up them things you know... say for example, I might say, 'Oh bala, look, we have more people intruding in our waters here.' Lots of people listen because, for example, our water is important to us — this is where our livelihood is, you know, and it's part of us. So comment like that in the talk back, it's sort of inspiring that person, you know (Interview, TSI, 2005).

And the Brisbane-based *Let's Talk*, hosted by Tiga Bayles, came in for its fair share of praise as well:

I would say that another reason I like tuning in, too, particularly to *Let's Talk* show because it's a credible alternative to mainstream news that it's more balanced and you're given the truth. And as I say, it's out there — discrimination and the racism — and there's a lot of things that go on that you just don't get a balanced view in mainstream media (Focus Group, 98.9, 2006).

It is clear from audience responses in this study that listeners to Indigenous radio and viewers of Indigenous television see them as alternative sources of news and information. Mainstream media were universally condemned for their inaccurate and negative portrayal of Indigenous issues, as this sample of comments illustrates:

Well I found commercial radio stations generally around Brisbane are too focused on extracting your money. They're not really interested in presenting what's going on in the community and what events that are there for the families (Focus Group, 98.9, 2006).

[Mainstream media only report on youth] when they're doing something wrong or good, but other, no other, no other programmes like, the boosting or encouragement or recognition, you know (Focus Group, Goolarri, 2006).

It was a case of getting the facts right and that was important for our mob. Last year, we had every man and his dog against Palm Island at that particular time we had the police union against Palm, we had the Premier talking against Palm, we had the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs talking against Palm, so the mainstream media were getting their story rather than the community's story. The only tool for the community to use was 4K1G to get that message back out there that saying that things are not what they're made out to be these are the facts and these are the facts coming from the people (Interview, Palm Is, 2005).

The [mainstream] stories aren't targeting them, they're targeting a mainstream white audience and it's always caning blackfellas and focusing on the negative stuff (Focus Group, CAAMA, 2006).

I never hear about indigenous stuff on it [mainstream media], those stations and on these TV's. It's like indigenous people don't exist (Focus Group, 3KND, 2005).

Sometimes we see ABC come to community when the community involved in a bad story about people sniffing petrol: that's white people coming in, the ABC pictures and news and they get a story and they spread the news everywhere, you know: Australia, overseas. A couple of people have been ringing and we said, 'No more: that's it!' Unless we get to the community and talk about it because this is our community, we own this community and we don't want Imparja, ABC or SBS to come and get a bad story about our community. So we're going to say 'No'. Already we've said, 'No!'. So that's it (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

Members of the CAAMA focus group were critical of Imparja Television's 'taming down' of some local news stories,

arguing that CAAMA Radio was able to deal with negative stories by providing context and solutions rather than merely description (Focus Group, CAAMA, 2006):

It's one of the only ways that people in remote communities find out, other than word of mouth, about what's happening in the rest of their community... CAAMA will report the negative but it will look at the problem and how it can be solved and what should be done (Focus Group, CAAMA, 2006).

Indigenous radio stations, particularly in northern Australia, play a crucial role in alerting coastal communities of cyclone and tsunami threats. James Cook University scientist, Dr Douglas Goudie, found that the most effective way of conveying warnings was by using remote Indigenous radio and combining 'the techno weather reading with more traditional weather-reading in a way that would respect both ways of looking at weather' (Goudie, 2005). When Category 5 cyclone Ingrid in early 2005 swept across the north, Indigenous radio stepped to centre stage, as Goudie (2005) recounts:

During that time, day and night, 4K1G and all their affiliates through BRACS gave very good how-to information on what to do if you are in the area at any time threatened — get to higher ground, make sure you have water, torch and the rest of it, which most people already know, but they were very attentive to not over-dramatise it, just giving good clear messages about where it was and maximise safety. So much so I went back to the Bureau of Meteorology in Canberra and said they should get the first formal award in the world from the weather bureau to any media outlet as a reward in appreciation of their accurate, timely and safety-oriented coverage of that event.

On a day-to-day basis, Indigenous radio is the only provider of news and information that directly affects the lives of Indigenous Australians. Information about community events, meetings, deaths, funerals, tombstone openings, local sporting results and coverage and, as one participant who called into *Talkblack* to air his views concluded: 'Bumma Bippera's broadcast of the Laura festival; rugby league in the cape; the memorial service for old fella McGuiness; the tribute concert for the Mills' sisters' (*Talkblack*, 2005). All of this is available only on Indigenous radio. It is information of central importance to the daily lives of Indigenous people across Australia. It is clear from audience responses to this study that mainstream media have failed to provide this service whereas Indigenous media, focussed on its Indigenous audience — 'the Murris around here' (Focus Group, BBM, 2005) — is clearly meeting this need, according to its audiences.

It's at the coalface, and you're getting it from the horses' mouth. They're there and it's happening to them and people can hear this. The media doesn't always print the truth. And you can ring up and find out what's going on up there — and someone else will ring and say, 'That's not what's going on, this is what's going on' — you know, facts (Interview, Townsville, 2005).

A lot of the time with mainstream media, stereotyping indigenous people in Australia, you see images portrayed in the newspapers, negative comments in the radio, and also in print media. What we're trying to do is say, 'Look, there are some really positive things happening out there in Palm Island with regard to youth issues' — and that hardly ever hits ground. Or you've got Aboriginal and Torres Strait sports people who do really good things in the community. They're all human beings as well (Hepi, 2005).

People find it enormously difficult in discussing their affairs and how they feel about things off the lands that are happening here with people who haven't been briefed and do not know or understand the importance of relationships; the importance of whole lots of things that occur here that only a local media organisation can know. They run it. They don't need to mess about having to explain the background to a whole lot of issues. It's a given. So it's very easy, given that and the ignorance of the other media outlets. Just by virtue of not living here, it's very difficult to get unbiased opinion and it's very difficult to get the whole picture unless it's locally-owned, and managed and run (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

I've learnt more about this end of Australia since we've been here with that radio station than I've heard in my whole life... you learn most of it from talkback (Interview, TSI, 2005).

We just turn it on in the morning and we always like to listen to the talk back because it gives us an idea of, well, what the hot issues are in the community at the moment and whose running with them. One so that we, because we have to write ministerials and things like that, it's good to keep in an ear on what's happening in the community (Interview, TSI, 2005).

If you're wanting to get a message out to the Aboriginal community, it's one way of coming in and talking over the radio. And you know it's going to get out there and feel confident that the, the information is going to be, you know, spread throughout the community (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006).

5.4 Promoting cross-cultural dialogue

Several prior studies of the Indigenous media sector identified its dual role as providing a primary level of service to Indigenous communities as well as presenting non-Indigenous audiences with a cultural bridge. Audiences in this study reflected this assessment and there was strong evidence that many believe Indigenous media is playing a crucial role in educating the broader Australian community. Many believe, too, that it should be supported and encouraged to play an even more central role in promoting greater cross-cultural awareness and understanding. A significant number, albeit a minority, of focus group participants for this study were non-Indigenous, revealing an existing strong audience for Indigenous media programming amongst the non-Indigenous population. And it was largely from this cohort that the strongest statements about the role of Indigenous media came. Here are some examples:

I would say that clearly the target audience is always Indigenous people, but there are non-Indigenous people that listen to it — so much so that earlier this year, it started streaming live through the internet (Goudie, 2005).

Without a doubt, Port Augusta is considered a very racist town and yet Umeewarra has gone a long way to actually breaking down some of those barriers, yeah (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006).

Sometimes I think that it's only Aboriginal people who are listening but you walk into a business and it's coming out of the speakers in the shop and there's a lot of non-Aboriginal people listening to it and I think that they like the station and are probably interested in Aboriginal issues (Focus Group, CAAMA, 2006).

On a single front this program best suits me to be involved in our struggle. The white listeners get to listen to the cross section of our people, to learn of a humanity without us being demonized by the rest of the white media (*Talkblack*, 2005)

Also giving mainstream indigenous and non-indigenous students the opportunity to broadcast from the University, I think that's another way we can come together and look at reconciliation (Hepi, 2005).

A: I think, and it's about bridging the cultural gap.

B: Yep.

A: You know, bringing non-indigenous and indigenous people together (Focus Group, 3KND, 2005).

I'm a human services worker and I work with people in crisis so you hear and witness a lot of the bad stuff that's going on out there within our community and being in able to tune into this radio station yeah it has sort of shown me a different side to life within our Indigenous communities as well the positive things (Focus Group, 98.9, 2006).

I think Tiga's show does a lot to educate the community we're always going to have people who are going to say what a load of garbage but it's there and it's a start, and it's a good start and they're bringing the focus on people's way of life (Focus Group, 98.9, 2006).

5.5 A crucial medium for music and dance

There is little doubt from our research that without the Indigenous media industry, there would be an almost total absence of Indigenous music on the Australian airwaves. Wherever we went around the country, in every community — no matter how small — somewhere, a band or two or three or more seemed to be practising. And the range of musical styles being adapted is extraordinary — country, rock, reggae, ska, hip hop, gospel: it's all there alongside traditional forms both on the mainland and in the Torres Strait. CAAMA DJ and musician Warren H. Williams is in no doubt about the importance of Indigenous media:

I think CAAMA was one of the first to ever have a radio station and a recording studio all in one. So as soon as they recorded that stuff and then put it straight on air, you know — can't get any better than that... most of the BRACS' broadcasters play their own community's music which is very good (Williams, 2005).

During our visit to the Garma Festival in Arnhem Land, former Midnight Oil singer and then Opposition spokesperson for the Arts, Peter Garrett, summed up his view of the sector:

It's no doubt that Aboriginal media particularly in the top end and it's championing of all the stuff produced by people in community has gone a long way towards really ramping up the number and the quality of people out there making music. I think it's very, very important. What's also interesting to me is the fact that people are drawing on a musical

heritage that's quite diverse so unlike in the south where you hear people pretty much going on what is working at the time in the charts you people here are drawing your stuff from a much wider range (Garrett, 2005).

Indigenous music and its widespread appeal across the country on Indigenous media outlets was a common topic in all focus group discussions. It was described by audiences variously as a key element in establishing and maintaining Indigenous identity, languages and cultures. From the group of teenagers in Townsville (Interview, 2005) who spoke passionately about their love of Indigenous music on their local radio station (4K1G), to the elderly residents on Palm Island (Interview, 2005) who recounted the nostalgia in hearing their favourite 'golden oldies', Indigenous audiences clearly feel their local radio stations are performing a role that no others can achieve. There is clear support for local artists and recognition of a growing number of high quality musicians emerging from the remote communities. The importance of using requests to link friends, families and communities emerges again in this discussion. Here is a sample of audience commentary:

[It's] getting to hear your local family, you know, singing as well, which is often not been the case because they never had the opportunities in the past to get their music out there... and that really goes to strengthening family ties... it's a multi-faceted sort of issue because... where people have never, not had the opportunity to talk about their lifestyle or their feelings or anything, you know they can bring them out in their music. And you know it's going to get out into the community and... I think that's a really good way of really empowering Aboriginal people (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006).

Black artists out of the community, can be, can be heard and it's, it's also, the fact that it, it really supports indigenous artists you know... So it's about local artists from the local area that are singing about things that impact on local people and you wouldn't get that through any other radio station (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006).

Everywhere, everywhere, everywhere, I listen to all, all kinds of music because they play all kinds anyway... Plus you can ring them up and say, 'Oh, you know, play me this song', you know, and they play it (Interview, TSI, 2005).

Traditional songs about the pearling days, musical stories: but the music that comes off the radio is very important and for oldies like myself, it brings back memories and you know, you remember the song (Interview, TSI, 2005).

Often young people go in there and actually record their own music they'll sit and write with some of the Warlpiri Media staff and they'll get something they're happy with and then they'll record it. It's terrific way of improving their own performance as well, they get very proud they often do those recordings themselves (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006).

Because the one thing you can guarantee with the locals is, they love their music, they love their radio and you won't find a car here that hasn't got a radio that's not tuned into the local station (Interview, TSI, 2005).

It's great to be able to hear so much music, things like blackfella music. I finally got to buy that CD the other day. I would never have heard of them if I hadn't listened to KND and as a DJ now, I've got an opportunity to go out into venues to play that music (Focus Group, 3KND, 2005).

Interviewer: Why do you like Tonky Logan's program on 4K1G?

Interviewee: Because he plays a lot of good music (laughs). I'm not exactly a spring chicken! (Interview, Palm Is, 2005)

The music is an important part of it all. Mainstream radio stations very rarely play Indigenous music (Interview, Laura, 2005).

Participant 1: Where else could Indigenous artists get their work play if it wasn't for CAAMA?

Participant 2: On the car CD player with the kids going, 'Mum! Not again!'

Participant 1: Probably on world music shows, like other radio programs that have world music or the community. radio stations — unless they get a lucky break (Focus Group, CAAMA, 2006).

I remember when I was about 16 I don't know if any of you have heard of the Indigenous Intrudaz. Well, I remember when those boys first started. I went to school with them and their first big break they ever had was at 98.9. And I remember driving them in and how exciting it was for them to come to this radio station and meet all of these people. So every time I listen to 98.9, I hear voices I know from my community, like Mop and the Dropouts, Angus Rabbit — people I know personally — and to hear them on a radio station, I think it's pretty fantastic. Especially these three boys are only 22 and their first break was on an Indigenous radio station (Focus Group, 98.9, 2006).

Participant 1: And music is for the soul so, you know, you feel good when you listen to a good song... if I'm working outside and a good indigenous song comes on, I'll start dancing when I'm working, you know.

Participant 2: The neighbours, do they think?

Participant 1: I'm mad anyway, so I don't care. The neighbours know I'm mad (Focus Group, 3KND, 2005).

It's deadly when they sing in language, eh? It makes your hair stand, eh? (Interview, Palm Is, 2005).

5.6 Suggestions for improvement

It has been a difficult task throughout this research to get our audiences to identify issues that require attention in the sector. The overall response has been overwhelmingly positive and in all focus group discussions, we had to work hard to elicit the most minor criticisms at times. But suggestions for change did emerge and in a nutshell, audiences want more of the same. At the top of the list was a call by audiences, broadly reflected across the country, for more funding for the sector and recognition of it as a stand-alone industry. The question of adequate resourcing of these established communication systems was raised time and time again during our visits to communities across Australia. Audiences for the huge diversity of media we have covered in this study are unanimous in their call for recognition of the unique nature of the Indigenous media sector and the need for it to be funded to be able to better meet community expectations. There is overwhelming evidence that Indigenous media represents an essential service where it is active in communities across the country. Audiences called for recognition of this by policymakers and funding agencies:

It would seem to me that what's got to be supported is to increase the resources, community control, regional-local networks. That's where the resources should be going, getting the people to use it as part of their daily existence and incorporate it into their society so it will become a useful tool for them. Anything, any programs that are centrally coordinated by people who don't know the particular people's interests is going to fail. No more than the Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra people here would want to run Warlpiri Media because that's Warlpiri business (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

Audiences in the Torres Strait echo this view — this comment is typical of several from the region (Interview, TSI 2006): 'It needs to continue because of the importance of having your own radio and of your own people operating it.'

Audiences expressed a strong desire for the sector to increase its emphasis on targeting young people. While this is clearly being done in a wide range of innovative and effective ways, audiences feel there is an urgency in ensuring young Indigenous people are educated about their past, present and future — and see Indigenous media playing a critical role. Audiences suggest that existing evidence of the successes in remote communities where young people have been diverted away from substance abuse into media-related work that the industry has an enormous potential to offer alternative pathways — if it is funded accordingly. Audiences want greater training opportunities for emerging broadcasters with the Umeewarra focus group suggesting setting up a mentoring or internship program for trainees with other radio stations (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006; Interview, Yuendumu, 2006; Interview, Umuwa, 2006; Interview, TSI, 2005). There is a strong feeling that despite an increase in the level of young people training within the sector to undertake skilled jobs, there are few paid career paths for them to pursue without trying to move into the mainstream. The demand by young people to take up training positions within their local media organisation is undoubted, reflected in this observation (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006): 'There is a real hunger from young people for that employment and the media is one of the most attractive options for them.' A youth worker captured the essence of the importance of this activity (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006):

We have a fantastic partnership with Warlpiri Media. It's one of our standard projects is going out bush and doing radio interviews and film documentaries on old people's stories and on how young people react to those stories. It's also a forum for young people to talk with old people about the things that concern them and they tape that both audio and video and they're usually edited in partnership with Warlpiri Media. They often provide the cameras and as they are doing the editing and the shooting they are training our young people up... We have a number of young people who've gone into full-time employment with Warlpiri Media (Interview, Yuendumu, 2006).

This comment from a young media worker from the Torres Strait perhaps underlines what it means to be working in the industry for the many hundreds of other broadcasters, young and old, whose commitment to their communities was acknowledged and praised by their audiences around Australia (Interview, Batchelor, 2004):

And I can honestly say that in 2005, it is going to be my 30th birthday, and I'm actually living my dream. To think that when I first came back here [Torres Strait], I said, 'Gee, I really like that' [Torres Strait Radio]. Ten years later I said, 'Gee, I wouldn't mind doing that'... Now it makes me think I'm living my dream and I'm going to be there celebrating their 20th birthday. And it'll go down in history, as me and a couple of other colleagues of mine, being a part of that radio in Torres Strait (Interview, Batchelor, 2004).

From our two year engagement with Indigenous media audiences, producers, sector organisations and representatives, it is clear that there is considerable sector wide concern about this issue. Several callers to *TalkBlack*, along with a significant number of participants around Australia, voiced their suspicions that it was deliberate government policy to keep the sector under-funded. This response sums up the thoughts of many (*TalkBlack*, 2005):

One, I think that the Federal Government should take a lot of blame for not creating positions within the Indigenous radio stations and that's because of the lack of funding. I found that there is a lot of emphasis on studying radio, getting into colleges but where do they go when they finish?

A more cynical observer was not alone in drawing this conclusion (*TalkBlack*, 2005): 'Doesn't matter what they are going to do, at the end of this enquiry [this study] they are going to hammer youse, because they have hammered everything else.' It is important to note these were not isolated observations. The audiences taking part in our study were generally very well-informed about issues within the sector, confirming the close relationship they have with their local media organisations. This is further support for the idea of an absence of a real audience-producer barrier across the Indigenous media sector. Clearly, audiences feel they are part of a process of dialogue which helps to create a diverse range of communities of interest around Australia with local media the hub.

The critical role being played by talkback radio in its various program formats has clearly captured audiences around the country — and they want more time allocated to this to enable more dialogue. There was a call by several focus groups (Focus Group, Umeewarra Media Port Augusta, 2006; 98.9, 2006; and 3KND, 2005) for greater support for local musicians, especially emerging artists, and this comment is typical of many on this topic:

They're doing a pretty good job as it is but it could always be better... There's heaps of Indigenous artists out there who are really talented people and they should be played more, that's what it's all about as far as I'm concerned giving the little bloke a go (Focus Group, 98.9, 2006).

Other issues raised included suggestions that stations could become more involved in organising local community activities like dances, music events and needed to promote themselves more actively in their local communities — and to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences. Another suggestion was for stations to introduce more traditional, local languages into their programming where possible. These comments relate particularly to urban-based stations (Interview, Townsville, 2005; Focus Group, 3KND Melbourne, 2005). Audiences want the extension of local news and information sources to include those often ignored, as this exchange suggests:

Participant 1: Reach out to the parkies and get their views too — they're very knowledgeable. They got a lot of brains — it's just because of the alcohol.

Participant 2: A lot of parkies, they come down here and people say they're bludging, but a lot of them can't go back to their communities because of family feuds, things like that.

Participant 1: Got to reach out.

Participant 2: A lot of them keep in contact with family through the station (Interview, Townsville, 2005).

5.7 ICTV

The roll-out of ICTV reception equipment along with moves to set a National Indigenous Television Service during this study meant that it was hot topic for remote community audiences. Audiences in communities in the APY lands and the Tanami Desert, where Indigenous television was 'invented' in the early 1980s — EVTV at Ernabella and Warlpiri Media at Yuendumu — expressed concerns that 'their' established communication system was being threatened from the outside. For these communities, their local media systems — radio, UHF radio, and ICTV — are an integral part of their culture, as this comment by a concerned elderly woman suggests:

I heard that national people from national capitals they want to take away that culture from the land. EVTV, that's for the Pitjantjatjara people in the lands and we don't want to lose this one. This is our culture and we are teaching our children and we know that they've got a different culture — Northern territory got a different culture; in New South Wales they've got a different culture. Here, in the Pitjantjatjara lands we got a lot of children here. We are teaching our children. That's why we fight for land rights and we've been given that land rights back because we've been teaching the children to dance, to sing... and keep our culture going. We don't want to give our culture to someone else to run this one. This is the Pitjantjatjara lands and Pitjantjatjara people are holding their own culture here. We want this one to keep going. We don't want to lose it. I'm talking strongly because this is the land and this is the culture of the Pitjantjatjara people. We started EVTV long time ago, really long time ago (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

The same speaker, intent on making her point, reminded us of the central role local media plays in the lives of the Anangu:

Travelling in any way in the country they can listen to music; they can put a TV there and make everybody happy, make everybody awake and think about the land: this is my grandmother's land; this is my tjamu's land, this is my kami's land, my grandmother's, and grandfather's, uncles, mother's. The media we started for Anangu children. We can't give it to anybody (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

Another participant, a senior member of the APY Council, acknowledged that the national reach of ICTV meant that other Indigenous people now wanted to participate, which he saw as a positive sign, as long as it did not interfere with the existing service to Anangu (Interview, Umuwa, 2006): 'And our other people starting to come in... Aboriginal people from the cities, they come in too. I'm really proud, you know, because people from other communities come in and support us.' Like several other participants from remote Australia, he considers local media organisations as part of the culture, part of the community, serving local community needs in producing culturally-relevant television programs for broadcast on ICTV:

Because we have PY Media and we have to put that one because out here, other people watch SBS and ABC and *Imparja* and a lot of good things [are] coming out of ABC people see sometimes... but they want to get on with their own stories, you know, and sit down and focus on that one. So that's what we're doing because we work for Anangu... We love to see ABC but this is Anangu, Anangu programs. That's what they want (Interview, Umuwa, 2006).

5.8 Summary

Audiences for Indigenous media across Australia proved to be as diverse as the media over which they feel they have ownership. Analysis of the comments we recorded in 15 different regions around the country offers strong support for the idea that Indigenous radio and television is an integral part of Indigenous culture and as such, is a central organising element of societies where it is active. Audiences see their media as essential services, offering them far more than news and information about their communities and the outside world. There are no other media in Australia that fulfil or that could fulfil the role currently being played by the existing Indigenous media industry — and an industry it has clearly become. Audiences confirm that it is an enduring symbol of community empowerment: 'Our voices'; 'our images'; 'the Anangu way', 'black voices, black issues'. Indigenous media play a critical role in maintaining cultures and languages through the intimate relationships they have with their diverse communities. Based on the evidence adduced here, it is clear that the absence of the audience-producer barrier is a defining characteristic of Indigenous media in Australia. This has led to innovative uses of a range of technologies: radio (particularly talkback, language and music), video through ICTV, and UHF radio. It is also clear that this has come about because communities have identified a functional need for this technology to maintain and expand traditional communication systems.

Audiences made it clear that they regard Indigenous radio and television as a powerful medium for education, particularly for children and thus, their future. This emphasis on education emerged across all of the themes we have identified here and in many ways, offers a holistic concept of the ultimate goals of Indigenous media in whatever form. Clearly, educating the next generation is the focus but the media's educative role extends across cultures, with non-Indigenous audiences recognised as playing a vital role in learning more about Indigenous cultures, thus contributing to the process of reconciliation. At all of our visits to regions over the past two years, audiences consistently and spontaneously raised the notion that Indigenous media provides a cultural bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. Audiences told us that this element has great potential for future development, particularly through access to ICTV for the broader Australian population. However, it is important to note that participants stressed that Indigenous media's primary role was to provide an essential service to Indigenous people — additional outcomes must follow from this.

Audiences in all regions involved in this study expressed their dissatisfaction with mainstream media representation — and equally, lack of representation — of Indigenous issues in ways that might engage them. Apart from some passing references to acceptable and occasional coverage of relevant issues by the ABC and SBS, audiences we canvassed are unanimous in their conclusions that mainstream media in Australia have failed Indigenous people. This is an alarming finding — that in 2006, the major sources of information for most Australians remain unable or unwilling to address this void in their programming policies. Support for Indigenous media in Australia is, according to our audience research, still largely driven by perceptions of negative coverage of Indigenous affairs in the mainstream media. Research over the past two decades suggests that this has not changed and it should be of concern (Michaels, 1986; Mishra, 1988; Langton, 1993; Meadows, 1994; West, 1994; Hippocrates, Meadows & van Vuuren, 1996; Molnar & Meadows, 2001; Meadows,

2005). As a result, Indigenous media remain the primary sources of information for communities about issues of relevance to them, apart from word of mouth. Indigenous media are identified by audiences as 'theirs' and the only places where they are able to speak out without fear of censorship. The several hugely-popular talkback programs on Indigenous radio clearly perform this role. During the troubles on Palm Island in 2004, the Bumma Bipperra-produced *TalkBlack* was the only space where Indigenous people felt their voices and thus, their perspectives, could be heard. At one stage, 4K1G, which relays *TalkBlack* via satellite around the region and the nations, was threatened with legal action by the Queensland Police Union because of the uncensored nature of the commentary. The station refused to close down this essential avenue for alternative views (Onus, 2005). As audiences participating in this study concluded, for these reasons alone, the role of the Indigenous media sector should be recognised and adequately resourced.

Audience feedback underlined the crucial role being undertaken by the Indigenous media sector in supporting, virtually single handed, the burgeoning Indigenous music industry. Without Indigenous radio, local bands would never get out of the garage. Music and dance, both traditional and contemporary, are featured at every major Indigenous cultural festival in the country. And there is a myriad of young people who have immersed themselves in the industry either as listeners or as producers. Music production, like media, is one of the few available options for young people in Indigenous communities across Australia. And like broadcasting, it presents alternatives to young people easily lured into substance-abuse and self-harm. The outcomes that flow from the maintenance and expansion of the Indigenous music industry are clear but it is Indigenous media that are leading the way.

Concerns by audiences over inadequate sector funding were widespread and across all regions. There is strong evidence that the sector is offering real alternatives for young people wanting to become involved in media production and steady enrolments at tertiary training institutions such as Batchelor College in the Northern Territory attest to this. However, the relatively few full-time paid positions available across the industry offers limited opportunities for young broadcasters seeking a career path. In short, audiences reported that there are few career paths, essentially because of a lack of funding. The reliance on CDEP payments to staff RIBS units has been commonplace. However, recent Federal Government changes to the CDEP system will remove this as a media production funding option for community councils. Historically, volunteerism at the levels of those in the generalist community radio sector has not been part of contemporary Indigenous culture, although there are many regular volunteers in Indigenous media. Nevertheless, the absence of such funding sources as CDEP to support or 'top-up' wages for local RIBS' broadcasters is likely to have a devastating impact on the sector. Audiences voiced their anger and concern over this, again reflecting their high level of knowledge about the local media production process.

While the roll-out of the ICTV signal into remote Indigenous communities has been enthusiastically received, there are significant concerns about 'outside interference' with the existing ICTV service. Audiences, particularly those who have become used to their own local television service — in the APY lands, central Australia and the Pilbara-Kimberley regions — are worried that deliberations over the introduction of a National Indigenous Television Service will marginalise them. They see this as particularly ironic given that communities centred around Ernabella and Yuendumu 'invented' Indigenous television more almost 25 years ago (Michaels, 1986). This will need to be carefully managed to avoid a 'bush-city' divide. ICTV is clearly offering remote communities and those able to receive it via satellite (the signal was unscrambled in 2006 for general viewing) an innovative alternative to mainstream television programming. Audiences in urban and regional centres (including Darwin, Alice Springs and Broome) want to be able to receive ICTV but without having to pay for a separate satellite dish and decoder — the current and suggested delivery platform for the service. Many in this audience cohort who had glimpsed the service, believed it could play a major role in challenging stereotypes about Indigenous Australia which, they reminded us constantly, remain prevalent in mainstream media portrayals. Regardless of these concerns, ICTV represents the most significant advance for remote Indigenous communities in the past 20 years in terms of its potential to contribute to the maintenance of languages and cultures, boosting self-esteem and making a significant contribution to reinforcing a sense of identity amongst its diverse audiences. It has already begun to achieve this, according to the audience feedback we have included in our study.

The evidence offered by the audiences for Indigenous media we have canvassed over the past two years, both complements previous research into the sector and advances our knowledge significantly. We can say without fear of contradiction that the Australian Indigenous media industry is providing an essential service for a diverse range of communities across the country. It is much more than simply a purveyor of news, information and music, although it is the only source of relevant information for these. Indigenous media enterprises are part of Indigenous cultures. By their very nature, they fulfil multiple roles within their communities — unique, complex roles that are simply beyond the capacity or will of existing mainstream organisations.

The ethnic radio sector is perhaps the most diverse sub-sector in community broadcasting. In 2006, ethnic programmers broadcast in 95 languages from 125 radio stations across Australia. Seven of these stations are full-time ethnic stations, with more than 4000 broadcasters involved in the sector (NEMBC, 2006:5). Recent research in the United States has found that 45 per cent of all African American, Hispanic, Asian American, Native American and Arab American adults now prefer ethnic television, radio or newspapers to mainstream media sources (Deuze, 2006) and it is within this context that we embarked on this component of the study — to determine what exactly ethnic audiences value about their own programming on Australian community radio.

This component of the study provided some of the most diverse focus groups that we encountered, and along with findings from the range of Indigenous focus groups and interviews, probably represents some of the most important data emanating from this project due to the lack of available information about this community broadcasting industry sub-sector.

The findings indicate that while metropolitan and regional stations are performing an important social, cultural and informational role for their audiences, ethnic language programming appears to be fulfilling an essential role for many ethnic communities that simply cannot access the information they require from any other source. Our results indicate that it is providing an essential service for new migrants. But it is doing far more than this — when a community becomes more established in Australia, ethnic language programs act as an important link to other members of the same community in their local area through maintenance of languages, and links to home which other information and media sources cannot provide.

6.1 Fieldwork conducted

The research team relied heavily on the sector's representative body, the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC), in the initial stages of the project to ensure ethnic audiences we examined were representative of the sector. Based on advice from the NEMBC, which was provided after several full-board meetings and discussion with sector representatives, we planned 11 focus groups with ethnic audiences who are listeners to the following programs at the stations listed:

- Macedonian program, Plenty Valley FM, Victoria
- Vietnamese youth program, 3CR, Melbourne
- Sudanese program, 3ZZZ, Melbourne
- Turkish program, 3ZZZ, Melbourne
- Tongan program, 5Ebi, Adelaide
- Serbian program, TEN73 Border FM, Albury-Wodonga
- Croatian program, TEN73 Border FM, Albury-Wodonga
- Filipino/Tagalog program, 104.1 Territory FM
- Indonesian program, 104.1 Territory FM
- Chinese Youth program, 4EB Brisbane
- Greek Seniors program, 4EB Brisbane

The aim was to sample a cross-section of the ethnic community radio sector to ensure, as much as possible, that the audience opinions we gathered were representative of different sub-sections of the audience within ethnic broadcasting — e.g. youth, seniors, established communities, and emerging communities. We interviewed program presenters before each focus group met. That interview established program content, the profile of the presenter in the community and the general program aspirations. We found, for example, that while the 3CR Vietnamese youth program provided a general talkback and request show for the broader Melbourne Vietnamese community, the Serbian program at Albury-Wodonga

in Victoria provided an essentially information-based and community news format with no talkback facility. We can say, therefore, that the programs selected ranged from light entertainment to serious spoken-word and news-based productions. These issues will be covered in further detail later in this chapter.

All of the ethnic language focus groups were conducted successfully, with the exception of the Croatian program at TEN73 Albury-Wodonga. We conducted an interview with the program presenter and one community member in order to gather some data from this community about the program. The focus groups run with the Territory FM stations — Filipino/Tagalog and the Indonesian program — received a smaller number of participants than our other focus groups and fell under our minimum target of six participants. However, we have included these results to ensure the programs are covered but it should be noted that the data is drawn from a smaller sample of participants than was the case for the remainder of the focus groups.

It is important to note here that poor attendance at a focus group does not necessarily reflect on the usefulness or popularity of the particular program involved. We have found, for example, in some cases that our focus groups were simply ill-timed, which contributed to poor attendance. Various local events such as a funeral for a prominent community member or celebrations of which we were unaware contributed to last minute withdrawals by some participants.

6.2 Methodology

The research methods used in the ethnic program fieldwork have been outlined more fully in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3, Section 3.4). Focus groups for this part of the project were conducted in much the same way as those for the metropolitan and regional stations. The need to ensure that people with limited English language skills would not be excluded meant that we had to use a different method of gathering the names of would-be participants.

In some cases, we were reliant on language program presenters to collect names from people who called the station in response to a broadcast announcement about a planned focus group. At other times, it was possible to use a translator as the point of contact for potential participants. In that event, a pre-focus group briefing was used to ensure the translator was fully aware of the aims and the protocols of the project. The focus group participants were offered the opportunity to conduct the focus group either in English or their own language, or both. Five focus groups were run in a language other than English. Of the remainder, two — the Indonesian and Filipino/Tagalog community focus groups — were conducted in English because of a lack of available translators in Darwin at the time. Both of these discussions took place using a combination each group's first language and English. In these cases, we used a focus group participant as a stand-in translator to inform the mediators about the content of comments offered in first languages. In our experience, it was far more preferable for focus groups to be run entirely in a single language. This is covered in more detail in Chapter 3 for those interested specifically in the issues we confronted while conducting this kind of bi-lingual research. Where translators were used, they were placed close to our recording equipment so that their simultaneous translation of comments during focus group discussions could be easily heard.

6.3 Background information to inform the analysis

The data from the ethnic focus groups was compared with the findings of research conducted by sector and other bodies on ethnic radio programming and ethnic audience research. We have provided an overview of findings from some recent reports we consider to be significant. Data from the McNair Ingenuity survey (2006), the Community Broadcasting Database 2002-2003 survey (ACMA, 2005), the Community Broadcasting Database 2003-2004 survey (CBOnline, 2006) and research by Centrelink into media usage by ethnic communities serve as both a background to and a source of comparison for our findings.

McNair Ingenuity

The McNair Ingenuity (2006) quantitative data provides a wealth of information for the community broadcasting sector as a whole, along with findings of specific interest to ethnic community radio. It is not our purpose to re-evaluate this here. We offer a summary of the relevant McNair Ingenuity data to contextualise our own findings:

- Community radio reaches around 28 per cent of people who speak a Language Other Than English (LOTE) in their home on a weekly basis. As there are an estimated 19.8 per cent of Australians generally who speak a

language other than English at home (ABS, 2001), this indicates community radio is doing well in reaching a relatively high proportion of the non-English speaking ethnic population;

- Of all community radio listeners, 19 per cent of them are LOTE speakers at home. This is more in line with the general population statistics indicating, as our previous report found, that community radio listeners are representative of the general Australian population (Forde, Meadows & Foxwell, 2002);
- A comparison of metropolitan and non-metropolitan community radio audiences indicates the importance of ethnic programming in metropolitan areas. While 23 per cent of regular metropolitan community radio listeners are regular LOTE speakers at home, the proportion falls to just 11 per cent of non-metropolitan listeners. This reflects the fact that most non-English speaking people live in metropolitan centres, and reinforces the importance of ethnic language programming in metropolitan areas;
- The provision of programs in other languages is one of the less significant 'reasons for listening' cited by community radio audiences. As reported elsewhere in this study, the most cited reasons are local news and information, Australian music content, and specialist music or information programs. Across the nation, seven per cent of community radio listeners cited 'programs in other languages' as the primary reason for listening to community radio. Not surprisingly, in metropolitan areas, this figure is slightly higher at nine per cent of listeners, and in non-metropolitan areas it plummeted to three per cent; and
- It is possible, within the McNair data, that some of the 'specialist music programming' listeners, which constitutes a sizeable proportion of the community radio listening population, are actually referring to specialist ethnic music. It is impossible to determine from the quantitative data how important ethnic music programming is to those specialist music audiences.

Community Broadcasting Database

The Community Broadcasting Database, administered by the CBAA, also surveys the sector each alternate year in an effort to provide an overview of the sector's activities, financial status, programming and so on (the CBAA plans to coordinate the major quantitative study by McNair Ingenuity every second year, alternating with collection of the CBD Survey Data). We have used data from the 2002-2003 CBD Survey, which has been compiled by ACMA (ACMA, 2005) and the 2003-2004 CBD Survey compiled by the CBAA (CBOnline, 2006). The primary difference — for the purposes of this chapter — between these results and those reported above by McNair Ingenuity, are that the CBOnline and ACMA 'ethnic community' findings relate to full-time ethnic language stations, not generalist stations that might provide some ethnic program content. Additionally, while the McNair Ingenuity data is clearly based on a quantitative survey of community radio audiences and the findings therefore relate to listeners, the CBOnline and ACMA data is based on a survey of stations themselves and therefore presents findings about the sector, rather than about its listeners. However, both sets of data — ACMA, 2005 and CBOnline, 2006 — are useful to our project and will be drawn upon in our findings. The key findings from the CBOnline and ACMA studies relate to ethnic programming as follows:

- While the most prominent program format for the community radio sector is music, ethnic stations are more likely to carry spoken-word content than music content. This is indicative of the sector's importance as a source of local, national and international information for its audiences who may often have poor English skills or who are looking for news from their home country. Spoken word programming comprises almost 64 per cent of ethnic stations' total programming, while it makes up just 26 per cent of programming on generalist stations (CBOnline, 2006:30; ACMA, 2005:2). Similarly, music comprises only 36 per cent of ethnic station programming while it constitutes 74 per cent of programming on generalist stations (CBOnline, 2006:30; also ACMA, 2005:2). The figures are consistent, with minimal variation, between the 2002-2003 survey (ACMA, 2005) and the 2003-2004 survey (CBOnline, 2006). These findings very likely reflect Community Broadcasting Foundation funding guidelines which require programs to run 50 per cent language spoken-word programming in order to receive funding for particular programs — ethnic programming featuring primarily music does not attract funding.
- Ethnic stations are more likely to run a higher proportion of international satellite content than generalist stations. RPH stations are the only sub-group more likely to run international satellite material (35 per cent of total content, most notably from the BBC satellite service [CBOnline, 2006:45]). Ethnic station content

includes 82 per cent of locally-produced programming and 15 per cent of international satellite content. Generalist stations provide 77 per cent locally-produced content, 18 per cent sourced from Australian satellite-delivered material, with just 5 per cent international satellite programming (CBOOnline, 2006:45). This is clearly consistent with many ethnic programs' connections with countries overseas and their reliance on international news to match their audience's interests.

- Volunteer numbers are highest at ethnic stations, averaging 271 volunteers per full-time licensee. This is well above the national average of 75 volunteers per station (CBOOnline, 2006:64). ACMA (2005:7) concludes that 'community participation in station operations is most evident within the ethnic, youth and fine music sub-sectors'. This is, of course, helped by the fact that most ethnic, youth and fine-music stations are located in capital cities, where volunteer numbers are traditionally much higher than their regional counterparts. If we compare ethnic radio volunteer numbers to metropolitan station volunteer numbers, we can perhaps elicit more accurate data — metropolitan stations attract an average of 168 volunteers, which still places ethnic radio volunteers at higher levels — but does not reflect the significant difference seen in the national average of 75 volunteers per station.
- Ethnic stations also boasted high subscriber numbers, coming in behind fine music stations with the second-highest average number of subscribers per station. While fine music stations had an average of 2724 subscribers, ethnic stations reported an average of 1565 subscribers per station which compared very favourably with the average 337 subscribers for generalist stations (CBOOnline, 2006). It should be noted that 'Seniors/Mature-aged' stations which often fall into the category of 'generalist' stations had subscriber numbers of 852 per station (CBOOnline, 2006:71). These statistics are influenced by the fact that there are only seven full-time ethnic stations (and four full-time fine music stations), while there are 173 licences held by full-time generalist stations (CBOOnline, 2006), most of which are located in regional areas rather than the metropolitan areas. Average subscriber numbers for metropolitan stations more closely reflect ethnic station subscriber numbers, with each metropolitan station boasting an average of 1373 subscribers compared to 1565 for each full-time ethnic station (CBOOnline, 2006:72). This still indicates more significant support for ethnic stations, but does reflect the benefit that all full-time ethnic stations enjoy in capital city locations with high population and potential subscriber/volunteer numbers.
- Income levels for ethnic community radio is also relatively high, with each full-time station attracting about \$435,000 per year (CBOOnline, 2006:87), compared to just \$89,600 for stations targeting a primarily seniors/mature-aged audience (CBOOnline, 2006:89). Only fine music stations achieved a higher average station income at \$670,000 per station (CBOOnline, 2006:90). This indicates that relative to the rest of the sector, full-time ethnic stations are reasonably well-resourced and staffed, particularly when the high volunteer numbers are taken into account (NEMBC, 2006:8). It should be noted, however, that full-time ethnic stations are more poorly-resourced than their other metropolitan station counterparts — the average metropolitan station sees annual income of around \$601,000, compared to \$435,000 for the average full-time ethnic station (CBOOnline, 2006:91).

Centrelink

Centrelink has commissioned DBM Consultants to conduct research on the most effective formats and channels for their communications with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Essentially, they wanted to discover what was the most popular or used form of media and communications that ethnic communities accessed in order to find out about Centrelink's services, government activities, and policy. This data is useful for us because it indicates to what extent members of the ethnic community are using ethnic language programming to find out important government and community information.

As with our study, Centrelink was concerned to draw distinctions between 'established' and 'emerging' communities, as they feel that the informational needs of these two sub-groups are quite different. Centrelink surveyed members of the Chilean, Macedonian and Turkish communities as representatives of 'established' ethnic communities and Afghani, Somalian and Sudanese people as representatives of 'emerging' communities.

- The Centrelink data revealed that radio broadcasts in their own language (which could include either community radio or SBS radio) was the fourth most common way for community people to access Centrelink

information. We might assume that the large bulk of these people are accessing community radio more often than SBS radio, as the community broadcasting sector produces eight times more broadcast content directed at LOTE speakers than SBS (SBS Annual Report, 2005-06:26; CBOonline 2006:4-5). 46 per cent of respondents obtained information through radio broadcasts in their own language, while only 33 per cent got this information either through word-of-mouth, or through ethnic-language newspapers.

- In addition, radio broadcasts in their own language were the second most-preferred method for ethnic communities to receive information about Centrelink. The most preferred methods were translated brochures and fact sheets. Again, radio broadcasts in community languages rate above ethnic-language newspapers as a preferred medium to receive information.

These findings will be taken into account in our discussion of results from the ethnic programming focus groups which have indicated audience members use ethnic-language programming widely as a source of local information and for 'community announcements' about government policy and services.

6.4 Findings

The findings presented in this chapter are primarily based on the discussions occurring in the ethnic program focus groups. However, other important data relating to ethnic programming emerged from the generalist metropolitan/regional focus groups, so relevant material from that data set is included.

About 18 hours of focus group discussion was coded in the qualitative statistics program, NVivo, to analyse the findings from ethnic radio audiences. Approximately 65 people from metropolitan and regional areas around Australia participated in the 10 ethnic focus groups held. Attendance at the focus groups ranged from 15 participants to three, although most sat comfortably around seven to eight members which made for well-directed and concise focus group discussions.

As for metropolitan and regional focus groups, the mediator attended the discussion with some notion of general areas of discussion to be covered. However, the order of these points of discussion and indeed, whether they were raised at all was primarily the responsibility of the focus group participants. It was important for the mediator to allow the conversation within the focus groups to flow naturally, but to also bring the discussion back on track if it began to wander to more general discussion of politics, crime, youth and so on.

The NVivo analytical software package is not intended to gather 'quantitative' data, however, analysis of the number of responses in particular categories is a useful tool to employ from within the program. This gives us an idea of the most-commonly raised themes and comments in focus groups. If we look solely at the number of responses and points of discussion in the range of ethnic focus groups, the most commonly-mentioned themes are, in order of frequency:

- Maintenance of culture and language;
- Maintenance of community connections and networks;
- Music programming;
- Provision of community news; and
- Provision of news and information from overseas.

Other important topics of discussion which received attention during the discussions, but which appear a little less regularly than the five major themes identified above, are:

- Station accessibility;
- Provision of community announcements (government information, visa information etc); and
- News and information from Australia (national and state news, as opposed to the 'community news' theme identified above).

While these themes are important, our discussion in this report is limited to evidence supporting the five major themes identified — further work by the research team on specific aspects of ethnic community broadcasting will expand on this less-often mentioned feedback.

The five major identified themes provide some guidance for this discussion. Three of the five themes — maintaining community connections, music programming, and provision of community news — are consistent with findings from the metropolitan and regional focus groups (see Chapter 5). The fifth theme — provision of news and information from overseas — can be considered unique to the ethnic radio sector and it is no surprise that this is judged by audiences to be one of the most important functions of local radio. The importance of community radio in maintaining culture and language within the ethnic community sector parallels identification of this important role by Indigenous broadcasting audiences. In this sense, these two sub-sectors have a common interest.

6.4.1 Maintaining culture and language

Discussions centred around ‘reasons for listening’ to ethnic programming very often turned to a simple observation — based on the notion that it was ‘so nice’, or comforting, to hear one’s own native language spoken on the radio. Even though many of the focus group participants could speak fluent English, the need to hear their own language and to engage with their own culture was paramount. The comments relating to this section are also reflected in another category of responses which we have called ‘Homesick and longing for home’, suggesting a desire — not necessarily to hear news from the home country — but to simply hear the language spoken.

One young person who listened to a Chinese language program recalled:

Well in my case, it's just like listening and speaking and thinking English for so long, I just like kind of want to hear my first language for a moment, I feel like, “oh”, just like that [when I hear it].

A Sudanese participant, representing one of the emerging community radio programs which, at this stage, broadcasts only one hour per week for its community, found the fact that his native language is being used on the radio makes him more interested in the content:

First of all it's because it's in my language and it concerns me. Yeah, also it encourages me and it actually attracts me to listen to it because it is, it is in my own language. It also reminds me of my own country and the same kind of songs and it informs me of certain people and different issues that I love to keep abreast with.

A second participant from the Sudanese focus group further explained:

Yeah it preserves the culture and the national origins and it keeps people, makes it easier for people to, to settle knowing that they are not really total strangers.

A Turkish focus group participant who had arrived from Turkey just 12 months previously, with limited English, found the religious and particularly Ramadan programming provided on ethnic radio to be extremely important to his settlement experience. He further commented on the positive feelings that arose upon hearing his own language after his arrival in Australia:

And I like the, these radio programs as well, we came to a country where we didn't know the language or the religion but to be able to hear our own language on these radios, even for a short time, it's quite, it's quite good, we're happy.

A Filipino/Tagalog program presenter explained some of the feedback she received from audience members upon hearing their own language on Darwin radio:

Ah, it is, it's very brain draining but it is very nice because, at one stage somebody has text me and this is from the boat, from an international boat that docked at the wharf and they said to me that, ‘Oh, it is very nice to hear your voice on the radio, speaking our own lingo’.

Participants in the Tongan focus group, which was run entirely in English because of the strong English proficiency of participants, also found this notion of language and cultural maintenance very important. In fact, the Tongan discussions were indicative of many other comments within the ‘language’ theme which highlighted the importance of hearing their own language because it was comforting, the educational value of being able to learn more about their own language,

being reminded of words that have been forgotten, and of using language programming to help their children and grandchildren pick up the finer elements of the various languages:

Participant 1: Most of us don't use language at home and listening to the radio makes us feel more like we are at home (in Tonga).

Participant 2: And there is a sense of pride there too, hearing you own language go over the radio, it really helps there too.

Participant 3: The program is good for language retention and it helps you learn new words, I always learn a new word or two when I listen to the radio program.

Participant 4: It is something to do. You get to listen to the radio and you feel at home listening to your own language. It also helps me to practice my language.

This exchange from the Chinese youth focus group emphasises the importance of language programming to young people who may be fluent in English but who still wish to practice their native language — or perhaps the language of their parents — in order to maintain and improve their language skills:

Mediator: What would you do if this program didn't exist? What would that mean?

Participant 1: If it didn't exist, I wouldn't know all of them right now, maybe only Alice and Lena.

Participant 2: Yeah we all know each other [through the program].

Participant 1: And my Chinese would probably be a lot worse.

Participant 2: A lot worse or a little worse?

Participant 1: A lot worse.

Participant 2: No way.

Participant 1: It can actually get a lot worse, you know.

The Turkish focus group further expanded on the notion of the importance of language programming and it was a relatively consistent comment that audience members — particularly older audience members — wanted to hear voices on the radio that spoke their mother tongue 'well'. This is important for their own language maintenance as well as for the benefit of their children who they often feel are speaking a 'tainted' version of their native language due to their increasing proficiency in English. This comment is representative of other participants from the Greek Seniors, Tongan and Serbian focus groups who emphasise the importance of hearing 'well-spoken' languages on air:

We are getting so much enjoyment out of this radio, but there is also the side that needs, that needs to be bettered as well, for example... the Turkish language must be really, really good. When Turkish children listen to this radio, they need to, they need to learn the language properly and also for bilingual people, it's very important.

6.4.2 Maintaining community connections and networks

There are a number of comments or discussion themes arising from the ethnic programming focus groups, which fall within the general category of 'maintaining community connections and networks'. The desire for local community news, for example, is closely related to the theme of maintaining community networks but because we are able to sufficiently distinguish them, they will be discussed separately.

This theme deals specifically with the role of ethnic programs and stations in 'creating' or 'maintaining' community spirit, social life, and connections between members of the same community. Interestingly, this is being done in a number of different ways by radio programs. Some audience members feel the provision of a music request and talkback show is an important contributor to the maintenance of community networks, while others identify the establishment of a program 'fan club', or regular organisation of community gatherings as evidence that a radio program is assisting in the maintenance of community connections and networks.

The Sudanese focus group discussed the importance of its weekly radio program in creating community connections and the findings indicate this is perhaps more important to emerging communities. Established communities such as the Greeks and Serbians seem to have multiple avenues through which to be in touch with community members — regular church gatherings, cultural events, the Greek Club and so on in which the radio program is not necessarily directly involved. For emerging communities, however, these organised social groups are non-existent and so radio provides a more important source of 'community glue'. This comment from the Sudanese Focus Group is typical of many around this topic:

The radio broadcasting is the only thing that also connects me to other members of the community and I'm unable to do that within just this one hour. The other thing and again it's, it's the time where it's, when it's broadcast because whether it's girls, boys, men, women, housewives, they all, they either go to school, or go to work or go even, even housewives are studying languages, and the only time when they come back home is after this broadcasting time and this is their only means whereby they can get the information.

Another Sudanese focus group participant further demonstrated that radio is often the only source of information for this emerging community which is still to make solid connections between new arrivals and those already-established here:

Yeah, that's what it's considered, a connecting means for information... when you turn the station on, you can hear names of some people that are around that you are not aware that they're even here and this gets you, starting to search and find where they are and by talking between the listener and the announcer. Also it's, it's a means of contacting certain people or anyone for that matter, especially if you, if there is an occasion that you want to send a greetings or a congratulations, there's a wedding of some people, or presenting them as song and saying presented to such and such in the names and song and of course this is something very interesting. Also, recently the Horn of Africa had some big celebrations for the community and in it there were quite a lot of different, not just issues, but different things that were happening and the radio was able to basically take all that and transmit it to the community at large and this was something very exciting for them... this of course was a medium for them that otherwise they would not have been able to bring it to everyone that maybe didn't know about it.

The Tongan community in Adelaide felt a little isolated from other larger Tongan communities on the eastern seaboard, and feels that for this reason, radio performs a more important function as a source of community networking:

You find Tongans in groups in the same areas in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane but we are spread out in Adelaide and there are only a few places and times that we get together and we do that by listening to the radio.

Significantly, focus group members across this sub-sector identify not only the importance of connecting with their own community through the radio station, but also with the broader Australian community. Several participants in the Turkish focus group felt this is one of the key roles of the program, which at the time broadcast only one hour per week:

The radio, this radio station is not separating us from Australia, as our friend said before, it's integrating us to Australia. It's very important. Our children are growing up Australians anyway, maybe they're having difficulty adapting culturally, but through the radio, they will be able to get some help or adapt anyway. And also we see our differences as richness, in Turkey too, where we come from different backgrounds and things that, backgrounds, we're living the same thing here too and we're happy about that. Everyone's got their own different folklore, folklore and songs and everything else so we have that here too and we're happy with that.

Participants in the Vietnamese focus group were particularly vocal on this theme, as their program seems to provide a unique mix of requests, talkback, oral history, counselling and live karaoke. The overwhelming impression is of the importance of the program in introducing community members to each other, keeping listeners up to date with what other community members are doing and informing listeners about community events. Significantly, it is the humour and entertainment value of the program which seems to draw listeners together:

Participant 1: I like this station because it is a very open program. We can call in and you know, and share our feelings with others and we can recognise their voice but we don't know who [they are] but we can call in and talk and share our feelings and it makes us feel good about that. After a long day at work we look forward to tuning into this program and we can talk to all the listeners and we hope that the program can have longer time because the time we feel is not enough, the broadcasting time. We highly appreciate the service of this radio station. It provides a great service to our community so I always recommend this station to all the people I know.

Participant 2: ... This community radio program is mainly for entertainment, entertainment and it's like a bridge to connect the listeners to one another.

Participant 1: It's, this community program is a, mainly to do with entertainment and you know, to connect people in the community to one another.

The Vietnamese focus group gave examples of community members calling up during crisis times for the family, and receiving advice either from the program presenter on-air, or from other community members who then called up the station to offer advice. They often recognise the voices of people who call in to the station regularly while out shopping or in the street, even though they do not know that person to look at them. Another listener uses the program as a kind of dating service, and if he 'thought the caller was a good singer or a good talker', he leaves his number with the station and ask that caller to get in contact with him. Several of the focus group members had met up in this way.

The Chinese youth program at 4EB in Brisbane led to the establishment of a fan club for the program, and our focus group was primarily comprised of club members. They organise social gatherings, barbecues, quiz nights and regularly speak to each other during and after the program through MSN and other internet sources to discuss on-air content. All members of this focus group agree they have been introduced to a range of like-minded young Chinese people through the program and the fan club.

Closely related to the themes of language preservation and creation or maintenance of community networks is regular mention of music programming as one of the key reasons ethnic audiences listen to community radio. Music is, of course, a real avenue for language and cultural maintenance as explored in the first theme. But because it was regularly raised as an issue by focus group participants, we have considered it a separate theme. The emergence of ethnic music as one of the key reasons why people listen is a further demonstration of the importance of ethnic programming in maintaining culture and language.

6.4.3 Music programming

Like metropolitan, regional and Indigenous audiences, music programming emerged as one of the key reasons why ethnic audiences tune in to community radio. While music content is more important for some ethnic radio programs than others, there is a widespread view by audiences that 'music from home' and for the older generation, exposing their children and grandchildren to traditional music is an important function of ethnic radio. There is also a sense that members from outside particular groups enjoy the music even though they might not understand what is being said or sung — and so music is seen as a way to bridge cultural gaps between ethnic communities and mainstream Australia. The love of music programming is an integral part of these audiences' desires to hear their first languages:

I just feel that looking forward to listen to broadcast in my language every Wednesday, every time I come home from work, I am looking forward to listen to the broadcasting in Indonesian. Yeah, not just the music, the Dangu music. And because the, also the broadcast keeps me up to date with what's happening in the community, even though the music is probably, have more priority. I feel happy (Indonesian Focus Group, Darwin, 2006).

Another Indonesian participant called home to Indonesia to let his family hear the music he was able to enjoy in Darwin:

When I listen to radio, if I talk to my father on the telephone I will put the telephone close to the radio so he could hear the standard of [Indonesian] music, he will be surprised to hear the standard of music in Australia.

The Tongan focus group in Adelaide reiterated the importance of music to the popularity of its program, primarily because it was music they cannot find from any other source:

Participant 1: For me, it is the music. I want to listen to Tongan music.

Participant 2: If the time devoted to the program was expanded, it would be good to have more music.

Participant 3: The main thing for me is the music because some of us don't have access to Tongan music.

Participant 1: Commercial radio stations are not so into Tongan music.

The Turkish focus group, which provided a great deal of interesting conversation and extended comments for the project, identified the centrality of music to cultural maintenance. Language, cultural events such as religious occasions, and music are consistently identified by focus groups as important services provided by ethnic community radio that are central to the celebration and maintenance of traditional culture:

I just want to add something. Turkish folklore is very strong and... culture is very, very strong. Within this folklore, the music, the songs, they are written from the heart, when someone's died or come through or... through love, the songs are written that way so we are able to listen to those songs, cultural songs through the radio (Turkish Focus Group, Melbourne, 2006).

The music programming provided by the Vietnamese youth program on Melbourne's 3CR also received a positive response from focus group participants, although in the case of the Vietnamese community it seems the music programming is more interactive than with other groups we examined in this study. Rather than just listen to and enjoy the music, participants call in to the station and sing their favourite songs on air or play guitar for listeners:

Participant 1: Yeah, elderly people like myself like the music program. And we all take part in that, I sing, she sings, he sings.

Mediator: Karaoke on radio?

Participant 1: Yeah.
 Participant 2: We can play guitar.
 Mediator: Oh great!
 Participant 2: Play guitar and sing karaoke sometimes.

Within this theme, which demonstrates the importance of music to ethnic audiences, many focus group participants pointed out the bridging role that music actively plays between the ethnic community cultures and mainstream Australia. Several focus group participants reported listening to their own language program at their workplaces with co-workers 'always happy' to hear the music and talk even if they often cannot understand spoken word content. One Serbian focus group member explained:

Oh, I can tell you, I work at the hospital in the evening, when I can then I turn on the radio and then I said to the nurses, come on this my music. A few times I took the CDs of the bands [in to work]...

And the Turkish focus group:

I talk to people who plays Turkish [music] but they are Australians and when I ask them, what's the difference between Turkish music you know, in Australia, you know the Western music, he said you can't compare because Western music just one, two, three, four, but Turkish music five beats... Australian culture started to discover Turkish music... I was in the city, about two months ago, when these people played Turkish music, all Australians, more than 80 per cent of audiences were Australians, they danced with the Turkish music... it was Turkish music so this kind of things connects the Australian culture towards our culture...

This was backed up by some comments from our generalist metropolitan and regional focus groups who commented on the practice of sometimes tuning in to ethnic language programming to hear the music. While some in the metropolitan and regional groups reported switching off when ethnic language programs start, others welcome it as part of the diversity of programming they enjoy (Focus Group, 3CR Melbourne, 2005):

Participant 1: And that's what you love about it.
 Participant 2: The diversity, the diversity.
 Participant 1: Switch it on.
 Participant 2: Yeah.
 Participant 1: And not understand what's being said.
 Participant 2: Absolutely.
 Participant 1: And you might even just listen to it because you like the music.
 Participant 2: Yes.
 Participant 1: I quite often do that.

And from the music-loving audiences of Canberra's ARTSOUND:

What I like most is the amount of information some of the presenters have, their sort of the knowledge they have about the music they present and it's, the music is so different from what you hear everywhere else, you don't find anywhere else. Because I didn't realise how much there was out there until I started to listening to Artsound. Especially the South American and what's the music, African music, it's just, so much of it, really brilliant.

The importance placed on music programming by a majority of ethnic focus group participants suggests to us that music is one of the key reasons why people listen to ethnic community radio programs — and this applies to both ethnic and non-ethnic audiences. For ethnic audiences, hearing music is an integral part of the process of maintaining culture and language. It is also something familiar which reminds them of home. Many participants feel there are many 'non-ethnic' Australians who tune in to the ethnic music broadcasts just for the pure appreciation of the music.

It is this regular mention of music and the importance of request shows on ethnic community radio that leads us to suggest that the large number of community radio listeners identified in the McNair study who nominated 'specialist music and information programming' as their main reason for listening may indeed have been referring to specialist ethnic or world music programming — not just the usual jazz, fine music, or country music 'specialist' formats that are often identified. The Community Broadcasting Database Surveys (ACMA 2005; CBOonline, 2006) conclude that music programming is generally less important to the ethnic broadcasting sector than to the generalist sector, with a higher proportion of spoken-word content run on ethnic radio programs. This is clearly the case, and is probably primarily due to CBF funding arrangements, which requires programs to provide at least 50 per cent language content before a program can receive specialist funding. These focus group results bear out the importance of spoken-word programming, which will be

dealt with in the next section. They also suggest, however, that music programming is not just a source of entertainment. For many people, it is a way of maintaining culture and language and for some was just as important as spoken-word programming in terms of learning and/or maintaining language. Put simply, music is considered by ethnic community radio audiences to be a central component of creating and maintaining cultural and community connections.

6.4.4 Provision of community news

Closely related to the earlier theme of ‘maintaining community connections’, the provision of local community news is one of the key reasons why ethnic audiences tune in to local radio. This finding is also consistent with results from both the metropolitan/regional generalist stations and the Indigenous media fieldwork which has found that provision of local news and information is one of the key functions of community broadcasting. Within this general definition of ‘community news’, we have primarily considered news about local ethnic communities. However, many focus group participants mentioned the importance of finding out about what was going on in their local area generally, particularly if they were new arrivals to Australia. We had expected most focus group participants to nominate ‘news from home/overseas’ as one of the key functions of their chosen radio program so it was something of a surprise to discover that they were more concerned about accessing information about their own communities here — and the broader community surrounding them — provided it was in their own language.

Vietnamese focus group participants, who generally love their music content, also greatly appreciate the high levels of spoken-word content on their program. One older woman reported calling in for counselling and for someone to talk to. Another explained that community members call in to talk about trouble they were having with their families. Essentially, though, they are more interested in what is happening in the Melbourne Vietnamese community than issues outside Australia:

Participant 1: We talk about you know, that drug dealer, the one that was caught in Singapore that was hanged and sometimes we talk about communists and communism.

Participant 2: And sometimes we talk about other things but on the whole we talk more about the issues here in the Vietnamese community here rather than issues outside the community.

Participant 1: Yeah.

Participant 2: Anything that affects us right in Melbourne, yeah.

Clearly, this ‘community news’ theme and discussion was dominated by audiences’ desires to find out what is essentially community gossip (e.g. ‘who’s married their daughter off’ [Greek Seniors Focus Group, Brisbane 2006]), funerals, and achievements of local community members. Such programs are also a source of information about community events. The Tongan focus group, which identified that they are essentially an oral culture whose people rely heavily on face-to-face contact and telephone conversations, find the radio particularly useful for disseminating information about community events and gatherings:

Participant 1: It is a really effective communication tool. Everyone knows what is going on and where you should be.

Participant 2: It is the last confirmation for us. Hearing things on the program reminds us that they are on.

Participant 1: Really, it is like the final confirmation to cement plans and that is a more effective way of doing it (letting us know about events), than phoning people or emailing them.

Participant 2: You hear that radio every Friday and you know what is going on for the weekend.

The Serbian community also discussed the use of their program as a very localised source of information about the Albury-Wodonga Serbian population:

Mediator: OK, so just to follow up on that, some of the communities that we’ve spoken to have said that their language program enables them to keep up with what’s going on in the community and to find out what’s happening with individual families, you know...

Participant 1: Yeah, that is true, true.

Mediator: Do you find out those sorts of things from your program?

Participant 2: Yep, absolutely, yes.

Participant 1: Only thing, we don’t announce death.

Participant 2: Well we should do that too.

Participant 3: It’s much less local Australian news because everybody can see it on the, on the television and out from the community, it’s mainly the, the happy things.

Participant 1: Happy, happy things and social events, like when the minister, the priest comes around and there’s the church service...

The Greek community, which enjoys a number of weekly programs on Radio 4EB in Brisbane, similarly reiterated:

In local news, in our local news, we find out who's died, who's in hospital, what's happening to people we're interested with.

... We hear about funerals that we might have missed, we hear about birthdays, people's birthdays, you know someone, they have a habit of ringing up and saying, 'play this record for my friend because it's their name day or their birthday' or whatever. So that way I find out about who's celebrating what and the, various functions that are on, whether I can attend or not, as the other lady said.

Established communities such as the Tongan, Serbian and Greek communities seem more likely to use their radio programs for this type of community news, announcement of events etc than they are to use it as a source of local Australian news in their own language. This is because they generally feel confident about accessing news about Brisbane, Queensland, Australia and so on from the English-language media — and so their programs have taken on a more localised/community component. This is not the case for emerging communities, such as the Sudanese and some new Turkish migrants, who rely on programming for Australian news, presented in their own languages, and more essential information about visa processes, employment and so on.

A Sudanese focus group participant reiterated the importance of not just hearing news from the home country, but being able to easily access local and national news from Australia through Sudanese-language programming:

Because you don't have much time here to meet with all your friends... and especially when you're driving, you turn the station on and it attracts you, you know just pulls you towards it because you're anxious to hear what's going on, something in your own language and it keeps you occupied and abreast of what's happening. And again it talks about issues that are also happening in the country itself, not just overseas.

A member of the Turkish focus group further clarified the importance of ethnic-language programming in providing essential Centrelink and government information:

As we're living here, we're able to hear what our responsibilities are and also our rights are here, like for example, when you hear information about Centrelink, or about taxation office, traffic infringement notices to be aware of those and what to do and what not to do. Legal, family matters, divorces, domestic violence, those kinds of things, to get those information in Turkish. To understand these matters wrongly or understand them a little bit does not, will not help you.

One of the Greek Seniors focus group participants explained the importance of receiving local community news — in Greek — from community radio because of the difficulties in accessing that type of news from Australian sources, which are too difficult to understand:

In my case, I was very happy because it's true Greeks are very interested in news, they are very news conscious. Whether it's local or Greece or the world at large, at last people would be informed because you know a lot of them say, migration is, you're deaf and dumb. So, suddenly you're getting your communication skills back.

Many of the focus group participants commented on the role of SBS language-broadcasting in the discussions, and this material will be dealt with shortly. However, it is important to mention here that the ethnic community members drew an interesting distinction between the role of language programming on SBS and that provided by their local ethnic community broadcaster. A member of the Greek Seniors focus group explained that while SBS is considered a source of information about Greek Australians and about news from the home country, it cannot provide the immediate and local news that Brisbane's 4EB provides to listeners, specifically about the Brisbane Greek community. Local Greek programming is more accessible, and in many ways, more relevant to their day-to-day life, than the Greek-language programming on SBS Radio (albeit the latter was very highly valued).

These findings highlight the importance of local community information and are consistent with the quantitative results from the McNair Ingenuity study, which reported that 'local news and information' was one of the primary 'reasons for listening' cited by community radio audiences. Similarly, the Centrelink data provides further support for these findings in its discovery that radio broadcasts in a community's first language are the second most-preferred method for ethnic communities to obtain information about government services. They are a more preferred method than newspapers in their own languages, and came in second behind translated brochures and fact sheets easily accessible from Centrelink offices (Centrelink, 2003:5).

6.4.5 Provision of news and information from overseas

While local community news content slightly 'out-rated' this final theme of provision of news and information from overseas, these two categories are clearly related to community members' needs to not only be informed about events and happenings in their Australian community, but also their desire to maintain a link with their home country. This theme is closely related to another series of comments we have considered within the framework, 'homesick and longing for home', and both reflect a desire by participants to hear familiar terminology, familiar towns and place names, and to keep up with the politics of their home country. It also enables community members to hear news that may affect family members who remain in the country of origin. The importance of news from overseas is borne out by the quantitative data from the CBOOnline/ACMA surveys, which demonstrate ethnic stations use three times as much international satellite content as their generalist station colleagues. These two themes are also generally reflective of a broad range of comments from ethnic radio audiences which suggest the heightened importance of news and information programming. Indeed, many comment that news, followed by traditional music, is their primary reason for tuning in. Participants from the Tongan focus group in Adelaide explained:

Participant 1: Even the general news for people like us who have been raised here (in Australia) is good because we learn news about what is going on in Tonga.

Participant 2: Not everyone has the Internet to access news from home (Tonga) and listen to what is going on in Tonga and Tongan communities around the world, especially in American, New Zealand and Australian Tongan communities.

A young person in Year 11 who attended the Turkish focus group was born in Australia but still considers it important to keep up with news from Turkey:

It's also given me a chance to, like, most of my friends they don't usually tend to, like, follow the issues that are going in Turkey and this is easy for me to, by automatically listening to the Turkish radio to actually go to school the next day and actually explain the problems that are actually happening in our own country so it actually gives me an advantage in that way

There was also a sense that the only time their home country was mentioned by mainstream Australian media was when there was a war, major disaster, or an event involving 'Australians' — but what they really desire is general, day-to-day news from their country. A Sudanese participant explained:

Another thing as far as the importance of the station for me, almost all the information that we get, for example on Sudan through the other media, like television and so on, the news, it's basically when something is happening, something big with a foreign major disaster or something, they bring in and they concentrate on that particular area but they don't talk about the street life, about daily life in general, how is it happening there, that's not giving them any information from any of the other media.

Several focus group participants mentioned the importance of receiving news from home, but where possible for that international news to be produced locally to ensure old tensions and arguments occurring in the home country are not continually reiterated in the ethnic media here. A Sudanese focus group participant again offered this comment:

The role, the role is very sensitive of the station because it's probably the only medium that joins north and south because we come from a war torn country and it's always between the north and the south and... the radio is the medium that joins them together peacefully and they become one and that is very important.

The NEMBC has recommended to the House of Representatives Standing Committee's current inquiry into community broadcasting that locally produced news services for ethnic communities are an essential part of smoothing the migrant settlement experience and assist with cohesion among ethnic communities in Australia:

News services provided by ethnic community broadcasters mediate against the sometimes undesirable influence of foreign news services. The latter are generally produced to serve the national interests of the country from which they emanate. As such they are often hostile to the tenets of multiculturalism. Locally generated ethnic news services are broadcast in an Australian context giving the immediacy and localism that it implies (NEMBC, 2006:16).

Harking back to a previous comment about the role of SBS radio, it is quite possible that many people in ethnic communities rely on SBS for their general news from home but are, in fact, relying on local ethnic language programming for more localized and specific information, music, and cultural content. SBS is most commonly mentioned by older focus group participants who identify it as a major source of news and current affairs for them, not just about their own coun-

try but about other nations around the world. Limited television news programming in language on SBS is also identified as a major source of international news for some, although there are also some complaints that SBS is dominated by certain ethnic groups and do not provide news relevant to all significant communities:

Participant 1: Sunday morning I wake up and I want to put it SBS. From six o'clock to twelve o'clock, every different nation, country.

Participant 2: Every country.

Participant 1: Foreign languages only not Serbian, never.

Participant 2: Yeah, never.

Participant 1: Then, now, even Centrelink, I go over there, I find it, all other people, languages, didn't find the Serbian...

Participant 1: ... A few years ago Red Star was a [soccer] champion, like a champion on the belt, they'd beaten Japan and one South American team. Never been in any Australian newspaper around Australia, on the TV or broadcasting.

Participant 2: Anywhere.

Participant 1: Nowhere and we hardly even could find out that Red Star beat that South American team.

Participant 2: Yep.

Participant 1: And they're world champions.

Participant 2: Three nil.

Participant 1: And they, so many Serbs around the world... if they win, they don't mention it, if they lose, they don't mention it...

Despite this exchange, focus groups participants generally agree that they do obtain news about their home country from SBS radio in language, or from their ethnic community radio program. As discussed previously, though, community radio ethnic programs seem slightly more likely to be valued as a source of local community news or news about settlement in Australia, than as a source of 'news from home'.

6.4.6 Looking to the future — suggestions for improvement

Many people participating in the focus groups offered suggestions for the programs about how content could be improved, or how the program could better serve the community. Most often, participants simply asked for more air time. A satisfactory solution for many seems to be access to several shows per week which variously offer a news-based spoken word program in language, an entertainment-based music and request show, and an 'about town' community news and announcements show. This is clearly not achievable for many groups, and emerging communities such as the Sudanese are limited to a one-hour program per week which they feel is insufficient for the needs of a growing community.

One-hour programs alone offer few opportunities for presenters to cover issues in-depth, to receive talkback calls, or to play a reasonable amount of music. The Indonesian focus group prefers two hours of programming rather than a one-hour program, and the Serbian focus group similarly suggests that a program broadcast more than once a week will enable a more diverse range of information and culture to be broadcast. The Sudanese focus group was particularly vocal on this issue:

Participant 1: One of the restrictions is again, the time limit, it's only one hour a week and this is not enough even to cover 1 per cent of any of the issues. One of the other obstacles that we see is that [the program] is on a Friday and it's in the middle of the day and those that are working would not be able to really listen to it as they want to. And those that are not, might not be home listening to it and those that go to pray, if they are Muslims, they will be of course, it's at the same time... the timing may need to change.

Participant 2: Also, the broadcasting service is the only means that links the overseas to Australia as far as information is concerned which is very valuable to us. Unfortunately again it is just one hour and for example, even the you know, the newspapers of the Horn of Africa's got one page, it speaks about Sudan and of internal affairs and that's not sufficient enough so they need something like this whereby it links, brings the people to an awareness what's happening outside as well as what's happening here in Australia and the time is not enough to cover any of that.

The Turkish community radio program, also broadcast for only one hour a week at the time of our focus group, raised the notion of providing different types of programming — spoken word in one hour, and music-based entertainment in another — in order to more appropriately fulfil the needs and desires of the community:

For example, some of the community radios like [a more established community] has got broadcasting for long hours, what we get within an hour they wouldn't get it in eight hours. The information, the news, they wouldn't be getting it

because they don't know when they're going to give that news, to be able to listen to it. But I want to add as well, one hour is not enough for us. It doesn't mean that one hour is enough. The difference between our program and the other radios is that it's got both entertainment as well as information whereas with the other radios either you have information or entertainment, it's not both.

The Vietnamese community, serviced by three programs each week on Melbourne's 3CR, are particularly fond of the Vietnamese youth program run by presenter Chi, which offers a variety of community news, music and live karaoke. They do not always tune in to the other Vietnamese programs which are either current affairs-based or focus specifically on women's issues. It is important to note here that we specifically targeted the audience for the youth program for the focus group. Focus group participants are generally very grateful for the contribution their presenter, Chi, makes to their community through his program and their comments are reflected in other focus groups which show a general appreciation of program volunteers. In fact, we discovered three brightly-wrapped gifts for Chi under the focus group discussion table after the group had departed as a sign of their gratitude (they had apparently expected/hoped to meet him at the focus group but, of course, he was not present). They are clear in their desire for the program to be extended because of the 'joy' it brings to the community:

I think that it is important and I hope that the broadcasting hours would be increased and then it is quite a good you know, like a food for the cultural development in our community.

I think that it would be good if the broadcasting hours would be increased.

I am grateful to the broadcasters of this station, they provide me with a lot of happiness and I think that, I hope that the broadcasting hours can be increased.

We expected individual communities would be seeking more air time for their specific programs although we observed that more established communities, such as the Greek community, did not comment on this issue as much. It is generally recognised within the sector that the more established migrant communities — Greek, Italian, and Chinese — are reasonably well-catered for by ethnic language programming on both community radio and SBS (and other media such as newspapers), while the emerging communities are competing with them for access to air-time. It is fair to say that the Greek program audience from which our focus group was drawn went to air on a full-time ethnic community radio station which clearly has more air time available. It was the communities serviced by generalist stations — who generally ran one or two-hour programs — that have the strongest desire for more broadcast time. For example, this was expressed by the Serbian community on TEN73 Border-FM Albury-Wodonga, the Vietnamese community on 3CR Melbourne, and the Indonesian and Filipino programs on 104.1 Territory FM. It was also more pronounced with the emerging communities who may also have found it difficult to access information and cultural content from other media sources such as SBS radio or television.

The Ethnic Broadcasters' Association of Queensland (4EB) similarly identifies the need for increased programming for new and emerging communities. It also has outlined opportunities to increase ethnic youth programming to target second-generation migrants, but there are hurdles to overcome:

Unfortunately, we have a limited amount of airtime and there is a large amount of demand so it is difficult to cater for all communities but we strive to do so. As a result many programs on 4EB-FM are limited in length. Many programs are only 45 minutes in length which indicates how difficult it is to gain a one-hour program or a program of longer length (EBAQ, 2006:3).

The Ethnic Broadcasters' Council of the ACT (1CMS) reinforces this argument and offers further reasons for the difficulties new and emerging communities face in obtaining air time on community radio. It is felt that air time cannot be 'taken back' from established communities in order to service emerging communities, and yet there is an increasing need for new communities to access the airwaves:

Australia has evolved an enviable and internationally unique system of community media, particularly community radio; a system which is responsive to the needs of our culturally diverse community. There are however, still unmet demands, particularly for recent (emerging) and small communities. As well, in larger language communities the existing broadcast times may not enable program makers to cater for the diversity found within that community (eg, age; gender; religious; cultural and linguistic needs) (EBC, 2006:2).

Our results suggest a predictable call from most of the ethnic communities for more programming time, reiterated by sector representatives. The Centrelink data identifies radio broadcasts in their own language as the second-most preferred

way for ethnic communities to receive government information. This indicates calls for more air-time have a significant basis. Although ethnic communities have identified radio broadcasts in community languages as the fourth most common way to access government/Centrelink information, it is the second most-preferred). A Greek Seniors focus group participant refers to the 'common language' that is used in radio broadcasts making it accessible to all listeners — she feels brochures and newspapers produced in language might only be accessible to well-educated or younger members of the community as many older migrants have poor literacy skills.

All focus groups were prompted to suggest any improvements which could be passed on to stations or program presenters. The Chinese youth, Greek Seniors, Filipino/Tagalog, and Vietnamese youth program audiences had no suggestions for improvement apart from increased air-time — they generally commented that the program provides everything they expect it could provide in the given time frame and it brings them great satisfaction. The major suggestions for improvement, which came from only one or two focus groups, were these:

- More music;
- Greater use of talk back;
- More 'good news' programming; and
- More funding for programs and presenters.

6.5 Summary

The results from this series of 10 focus groups with ethnic audiences from a range of communities around Australia indicate the people who participated in the study are overwhelmingly supportive of the information and entertainment service provided by existing programs. They are grateful to both the stations and individual presenters and producers for the contributions they make to the community, and to issues they consider are essential to community life — maintenance of culture and language, enjoyment of traditional music, creation and maintenance of community networks, provision of local community news and essential 'settlement' information, and provision of news from home to help with feelings of anxiety and homesickness.

The importance of all types of news programming to ethnic communities is supported by the findings from other elements of this project, particularly the audience responses from metropolitan and regional radio stations and Indigenous media outlets. It is further supported by quantitative data emanating from the McNair Ingenuity surveys of community radio listeners. News programming serves the multiple purposes of informing people about local community events and gossip, as well as providing important information about legal issues, visas, Australian cultural practices etc for new migrants and older people with poor English skills. The role of music in the lives of all the community radio listeners we have spoken to is strong, with many ethnic focus group participants speaking passionately about the impact that traditional music programming has on their general feelings of well-being and happiness. Music programming is essential to their enjoyment of ethnic radio and is inexorably connected to maintenance of culture and language. Indeed, 'hearing your own language' is the most commonly expressed reason for listening to ethnic community radio and the further experience of 'hearing music in your own language' only serves to increase the importance of such programs. Music is used for entertainment, to improve and maintain language skills, to communicate with other community members through request programs, and to reignite memories of home.

These results suggest that while ethnic audiences are extremely supportive of and interested in spoken-word language programming — particularly news content — the CBF guidelines which prevent funding of ethnic programming providing high levels of music should be revisited. Music is not used merely as a form of entertainment in ethnic community radio programming — it appears to perform an important role in cultural and language maintenance. While some balance between spoken-word language programming and music programming is certainly needed, focus group participants place equal 'cultural' value on spoken-word language and language through music.

As the ethnic community radio sector generally has not been included in previous quantitative sector data, notably the McNair Ingenuity surveys, the findings of this study are particularly important. Detailed individual station reports will be provided to those who participated to ensure gain a full understanding of the content of the focus group discussions. This new data will assist them to build on their strengths and address their weaknesses.

7.1 Sector Overview

The community television sector is relatively young and still developing, with the first broadcast made only 12 years ago in 1994 despite concerted lobbying by the sector since 1973 (Rennie, 2001:57). It was not until 1992 that a Federal parliamentary inquiry recommended that broadcasting spectrum be provided for community television stations. Two years later, what has become known as Channel 31 began, with stations transmitting in five metropolitan and two regional centres. Since that time, there has been a great deal of upheaval and uncertainty in the sector, primarily due to its developmental nature. During the 10 years from 1992 to 2002 a test regime was imposed on the nascent CTV sector during which temporary Open Narrowcast licenses were provided on an annual but renewable basis. The lack of certainty CTV organisations have faced in relation to continuity of broadcasting has impeded their aim of financial stability and the sector has remained under-resourced and fragile.

The roll-out of digital television is presenting a further challenge — an issue taken up by the national inquiry into community broadcasting by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. The committee began the inquiry in 2006 and was due to report around April 2007. However, the urgency around CTV's lack of digital access compelled the committee to release its report on community television in February 2007. There is little doubt of the committee's support for the continued presence of community television in Australia. Committee chair, Ms Jackie Kelly (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 2007:vi), made this clear in the report's Introduction:

Community television should be able to participate in the exciting future of digital broadcasting and continue to develop the richness, diversity and experimentation which have characterised its growth to this point. Any delay in ensuring digital broadcasting would be irresponsible and fly in the face of all Australian Government undertakings to date.

The inquiry committee has recommended that the Federal Government set aside \$6 million to support the conversion of community television to digital from 1 January 2008, with a further \$1.7 million for the CTV sector for each year of digital-analogue simulcast until the planned shutdown of the analogue spectrum in 2012. The committee has recommended that the current analogue Channel 31 be sold to a commercial operator before 1 January 2008 with a proviso that it 'must carry' community television for the simulcast period (2008-2012). Should the analogue channel not be sold during 2007, the committee has recommended that a national broadcaster (either ABC or SBS) be temporarily allocated the licence with a 'must carry' proviso for CTV during the simulcast period (2007:xi). Prior to the release of these recommendations, the CTV sector was in the unenviable position of losing thousands of viewers per week as Australians who purchase either digital set-top boxes or new television receivers with digital tuners lose their ability to access the existing analogue CTV stations. Around 20 per cent of Australians now access the digital television spectrum.

Although merely recommendations at the time of writing, the committee's findings send a clear message to government policymakers — that CTV has a future on the digital spectrum.

There are currently six licensed community television stations in Australia including Channel 31 Brisbane, formerly Briz-31 (Queensland), Linc TV in Lismore (NSW), TVS in Sydney (NSW), Channel 31 in Melbourne (VIC), Channel 31 in Adelaide (SA) and Access 31 in Perth (WA). All stations except Linc TV and Channel 31 in Adelaide are now operating on permanent licenses. A seventh community television service — Bush Vision — operated at Mt Gambier from 2005 but the licence was handed back in March, 2007 when management conceded it was unable to meet appropriate ACMA criteria (ACMA, 2007). OzTam surveys reveal that community television has a cumulative audience reach of 3.6 million people a month (CBAA, 2006:1). More than 3000 volunteers contribute to the sector. Research commissioned by the CBAA has found 'there is a 52 per cent audience awareness of community television within the five metropolitan markets' (CBAA, 2006:1).

Competition for CTV licences has always been fierce and when licenses were first offered, several consortia vied for broadcast rights. Test transmissions and programming began prior to the granting of permanent licences at most CTV sites. Australia's longest-established community television, Linc TV in Lismore, first began broadcasting in 1993. However, the service has been intermittent since then and during 2006, the station was forced to stop broadcasting after its transmitter was struck by lightning. At the time of writing, this had been repaired and planning was under way to relaunch broadcasts by the end of February 2007. Brisbane and south-east Queensland audiences have been able to tune into Briz-31 since July 1994 and Melbourne's C31 began broadcasting in October 1994. TVS (Television Sydney), was unofficially launched in late 2005 after the then Australian Broadcasting Authority awarded the licence to TVS rather than to CTS, which previously held the Sydney CTV licence. The ABA's decision was a result of some controversy over a commercial arrangement between the station and commercial television company Renaissance Television. This arrange-

ment saw Renaissance providing re-runs of television shows and movies between 8am and 4pm on weekdays in return for the right to sell advertising slots on Melbourne and Sydney CTV stations (Media Watch, 2002). The company also charged community groups to show programs on the station (Alarcorn, 2004), and as Renaissance appeared to be operating as a commercial concern rather than as a community-based non-profit producer, its involvement in community television was thwarted and stations involved with Renaissance were closely examined with some licenses re-allocated to competing groups.

Perth audiences had to wait until June 1999 to access CTV. A permanent license was supposed to be allocated to Adelaide CTV in 2006, but the existing license holder (C31 Adelaide) is still operating on a temporary license until ACMA makes a final decision (House of Representatives Standing Committee, 2007:12). Bush Vision in the regional South Australian city of Mt Gambier began broadcasting in September 2005 but handed back its licence in March 2007, unable to meet ACMA criteria. Bush Vision operated on a temporary Open Narrowcast license like Linc-TV in Lismore and C31 in Adelaide who do not enjoy the relatively stable future ahead of their contemporaries in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

7.2 Fieldwork

The community television research and fieldwork has provided an interesting contrast to the metropolitan and regional, ethnic and Indigenous broadcasting audiences we have encountered. On occasion, we experienced some difficulty in recruiting participants for CTV focus groups. This may be due to the sector's infancy and the uncertain status of some of the stations and licenses. However, we did manage to conduct focus groups with audiences from five of the seven existing CTV stations, representing a strong sample. As the sector matures, future research will undoubtedly yield additional data and enable a more considered analysis of the role of CTV in Australia — especially in the light of recent Parliamentary committee recommendations (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 2007). In some cases, permanent licenses had been granted to some stations only six to 12 months before our focus groups were conducted. This would have had a significant impact on the stations' ability to attract a sizeable audience in such a short time, particularly when compared to community radio stations such as Melbourne's 3RRR, which saw a huge response to our call for a focus group, largely because of its 30-year history. Despite these difficulties, important insights into the sector's audiences have emerged from our data.

Focus groups were held with audiences from the following five of the seven community television stations:

- Channel 31, Melbourne
- TVS, Sydney
- Channel 31 (formerly Briz 31), Brisbane
- Channel 31, Adelaide
- Access-31, Perth

We also undertook interviews with station managers to obtain background information about the stations prior to running the focus groups. Interviews were conducted with station managers at Linc-TV in Lismore and Bush Vision, which could not be included in the research due to time limitations and issues with Linc-TV's transmission status for the duration of our project. We interviewed several program producers associated with each station to gain an understanding of the role community television performs for those accessing and using them. Program producers represented a variety of community groups actively engaged in working or volunteering for various communities of interest. They represented the CTV equivalent of the 'community groups' we spoke to for our study of the community radio sector. For many community groups, their involvement in producing programs for CTV is a way of communicating and connecting with other communities. This data provides insights into the relationship between community television stations and such community organisations.

As with the focus groups undertaken for community radio stations, we endeavoured to attract between six and 10 participants to each of the CTV discussions. The Perth and Adelaide groups attracted five participants each and as this was under our minimum of six we attempted to re-run them at a later date. The second focus group in Perth attracted only one participant, despite six people registering to attend, and in Adelaide, no registrations were received and so the second

focus group at that station did not proceed. We thought it important that this chapter should include community television audiences in Perth and Adelaide have therefore have included data from them for this chapter. Many of the issues raised by the Perth and Adelaide focus groups — albeit just below our preferred attendance threshold—were similar to those discussed by other CTV groups. Thus, we believe it appropriate to include the data from the two pilot studies. The focus groups with community television audiences in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne all occurred successfully, according to the criteria we set. This chapter is also partially based on data collected from interviews with community-based program producers working in community television.

7.3 Methodology

The research methods used in the CTV fieldwork were consistent with those used for the metropolitan/regional radio stations, fully outlined in Chapter 3. Individual stations were approached about the project and their assistance was requested in publicising the forthcoming focus group. Stations were given a script for the announcement, but were free to adapt this to suit station format and style. CTV in Perth produced an excellent announcement for the second focus group, which would be useful as a template for future research of this kind. As with the radio fieldwork, audience members were offered the opportunity to leave their names and phone numbers on our general 1800 line or to register via the station they watched. The vast majority chose to call the independent 1800 number, as was the case with community radio audiences. We specifically requested that station volunteers and program producers/presenters not attend the focus groups, so that participants would feel free to discuss all aspects of the station and programming. The broadcast announcement was complemented by follow-up community announcements in local press, a subscription list mail-out or email to all members, and a general encouragement by the research team for station staff to support the research.

7.4 Findings

The following key themes emerged from the CTV focus groups:

- CTV provides an important viewing alternative to commercial and public broadcasters;
- It has an informational, rather than a connective, role in relation to communities;
- It provides local information in non-traditional formats which is appreciated by audiences although some think its local news and information content can be further developed; and
- It promotes and fosters diversity in a number of significant ways (across cultures, genders, religion and between different interest groups i.e. sport etc).

A number of other issues emerged from focus group discussions — chief among them was the frustration some participants experienced with poor reception and repeat programming. Focus group members also made valuable comments and suggestions about each of the stations in relation to programming and content, and these have been included at the end of this chapter. We have provided a report of issues and suggestions raised during focus groups to each of the participating stations. We base this chapter's discussion of findings around the four major themes identified above.

7.4.1 Providing an alternative

Community television audiences believe it is an important and much appreciated 'alternative' to commercial and national broadcasting (i.e. ABC and SBS). While a few participants watch nothing but community television, most watch commercial and national television, but often prefer community television for a number of reasons. In particular, audiences indicate that the range of programs on community television provide an excellent alternative to what some see as very narrow programming on commercial television. This is demonstrated in the following exchange between participants in the Channel 31 Brisbane focus group:

Participant 1: I primarily watch it for the old movies.

Participant 2: [We watch it] Because the commercials don't play movies at 8.30 on Sunday (anymore). I don't know why. And the commercial stations have American cop drama, CSI and all that.

Participant 1: Reality TV leaves me cold. I can't stand reality TV.

Another audience member found the programming on 31 Brisbane contains variety and there is ‘usually something interesting’ on the station. For him, it is a good alternative to the commercial stations. Community television provides not only alternative programs, but also a range of points of view and opinions that are not reflected on commercial television:

Participant 1: I flick straight on to Briz31... you see more obscure stuff. And I like the obscure stuff. I don't like Top 40 garbage. I like, you know, alternative music.
Participant 2: And I think that's why we all like watching this channel. Because it has obscure stuff.
Participant 1: And because it has an alternative point of view.

Similar stories emerged from focus groups held at other community television stations, including Adelaide and Melbourne. A participant at the C31 Adelaide focus group remarked:

C31 to me is an alternative to other stations. There is too much sport on television on Saturdays, there is nothing but sport and there is nothing you can watch. Other channels can be so boring and it is nice to see something that is not boring and not sport.

Another participant in the same focus group explained that the station not only acts as an alternative, but by showing non-mainstream programs, it makes him want to do things he would not normally do:

C31 has a more homey feel, it is less ultra-commercial. It gives you a look into people's lives. You see things on there that are not rehearsed to perfection. They don't edit things totally. They have more interesting subjects and it is not the stuff you see on the other channels. I would like to see more behind-the-scenes type stories. Programs that give you a look behind the scenes, other stations just show you the shiny side, they don't want to show the other side of life and C31 gives you that. It makes you want to do what they are showing.

For many participants, community television is not just another option in the range of television channels available to them — it is an important alternative, as this TVS viewer concludes: ‘I really appreciate the station. It gives you an alternative to mainstream television and it is a good option to have.’

While CTV is clearly providing alternative viewing options for its audiences, focus group participants are very clear about the differences between community and commercial television. The absence of what audiences termed ‘slick’ production values on community television is much appreciated by some and echoes the findings in our metropolitan and regional radio focus groups, as the following exchange between participants in the Channel 31 Brisbane focus group reveals:

Participant 1: It's more intimate.
Participant 2: ... That's what's good... we don't want...
Participant 1: We don't want anything that's too slick.
Participant 2: Don't want anything too slick.

Audience members perceive that a great deal of time and effort is devoted to the production of programs on community television, as this Adelaide focus group participant suggests:

You can see they are trying hard. I enjoy it because it offers another selection of channels. It is lower budget viewing, it is not a million dollar McDonalds ad where everything is perfectly timed. They make a few little mistakes and we all know what it is like to be in front of a television camera and I enjoy seeing that.

The audience members we spoke to generally have more faith and trust in the programs they see on community television than those that air on commercial stations. For one participant, the believability of programs on community television is much higher than on other stations. This reiterated findings in the metropolitan focus groups, in which audience members voiced their appreciation for the ‘passion’ and expert knowledge that many presenters demonstrate about specialist topics, or niche music forms. It is also consistent with a key finding from the community radio sector which identifies audiences appreciation for the ‘ordinary voices’ they hear. Audiences across the CTV and radio sector trust these voices more than the ‘slick’ professional sound of commercial radio (see Chapter 4). This is reinforced by a comment from a 31 Brisbane audience member:

Most shows are made by people with a passion you know, for whatever, for better or worse sometimes and, and it's down to earth, it's got that, well it's more believable, obviously than the commercial networks that force things down your throat.

Focus group participants ascribe the believability factor in community television programs to the types of people who are involved in producing programs, as one participant describes them — ‘real people’.

Community television provides an important and valued alternative to other stations for its audiences. The ‘alternative’ component is particularly identified by audiences who contrast community television with the style and content of commercial stations. Contrasts with the national broadcasters, the ABC and SBS, were less frequent.

7.4.2 Informing communities

Another theme to emerge from the CTV audience focus groups was the role of stations in informing audiences about communities. Audiences find the stations are doing this in two very distinct ways. Firstly, stations are making people aware of areas of the communities in which they live that they may not have previously known about. Secondly, CTV stations are informing people about communities of like-minded people. In both respects, community television is performing a different role to community radio. Where community radio stations are actively creating a sense of community for audiences, community television is far less active in this process and more likely to be simply a conduit for information. A Channel 31 Brisbane audience member observes: ‘If you look at some of the programs, it’s actually giving you news or information regarding different topics or things within your own community.’

While two participants in the same focus group commented that community television had a role in helping people to engage with their local communities, most audience members’ experience of the stations did not support this idea. A participant in the TVS (Sydney) focus group explained that not only did he value knowing what was going on in his local community, but also he found it useful for getting others to become involved:

It’s what is going on in sort of the local area, in the Blue Mountains, like down to Sydney, but it’s all relevant and local and I mean, I like the Melbourne shows, all the local knowledge shows, if it’s to do with what’s in our country and I am also involved in teaching in the Blue Mountains and I find that I am trying to get the students involved in the community themselves, so it is actually very helpful for me as a teacher to see what’s going on and then hopefully, for the students to focus on various things in the community.

The second theme to emerge in this area was that for some, community television acts as a provider of information about communities of like-minded people. A C31 Adelaide audience member explained how this works:

I watch because they show you things that make you part of the people who are involved in them (the shows). There is a cooking show that is so good that it seems like it is over in two minutes even though it is a half-hour show.

Another Adelaide audience member explained that watching certain types of programs on the station gives her a sense of commonality with similar people in other countries. She used the example of watching a European caravanning program, explaining that because she has similar interests, she feels the people on that program are like her. A third Adelaide participant voiced another concept of community:

I am interested in what is happening in various countries around the world and in Australia. I am interested in community, but it does not have to be our community.

CTV’s role in creating a sense of commonality between people is not limited to those watching, with program producers explaining that the stations provide an important avenue through which they can connect to various groups and communities beyond their own. C31 Melbourne program producer Leila Koran finds that the airing of her programs on the station facilitates indirect networking, which for her, is another kind of community, allowing her to tap into a broader network of people.

Just back to the viewers, one of the things that we find at the school, is that we have next-to-no community involvement and often what there is isn’t very positive. It’s often counter-productive. So, I see this as a way of actually reaching our community in a constructive way. So it’s like only the best that goes out, you know.

CTV’s role in relation to the idea of ‘community’ represents a considerable point of departure from our community radio findings the latter’s role in creating a sense of community for audiences. While community television audiences feel some connection with other like-minded viewers and they find out about local events through their CTV station, there is no significant sense of connection to the station itself. In essence, there does not seem to be a C31 Melbourne community in the same way that there appears to be, for example, a 3CR community in Melbourne, or a 7THE community in Hobart.

In fact, we found that there does not seem to be any significant engagement by stations with their audiences in the same way that there is with community radio. CTV audiences express a degree of separation from stations that was not evident in comments from community radio audiences. In particular, the inability of audience members to call in and talk to program producers and presenters and a lack of interactivity between programs and audiences means audiences feel disconnected from stations, personnel and the production process. In addition, audiences are unsure of whether some programs are live transmissions or repeats, and this further contributes to audiences' sense of disconnection.

CTV focus group participants feel that there is broad scope for community television to do more in the way of fostering a sense of community. A participant in the Adelaide focus group felt that while coverage of local events creates an immediate sense of community, the station needs to work more on informing people as part of the community. He offers the following example:

When the Italian festival is on you get news and information about that and that is a good angle to show and that gives you more of a sense of community at that time. I think they are trying to do that [create a sense of community] but it is not coming across that way. It is not coming across that they are informing you as part of the community. C31 could bring that in by taking a camera crew and seeing you [at events].

Other focus group participants think community television can do more in relation to facilitating connections between groups and audience members within geographic communities. Participants in the Channel 31 Brisbane focus group believe the station can play an important role in connecting people with each other through the facilitation of community debate and discussion. Several think a talk-back program on the station would enable people to connect with each other through discussion of controversial topics and important issues that are in the public interest.

A C31 Adelaide audience member expressed the view that television plays a fairly limited role in creating a sense of community — in fact, no television station gives viewers a sense of community. A second C31 Adelaide focus group participant explained that 'community' is not an important issue for her and community television plays a different role in her life. She initially stated that she is not a community-minded person and prefers to see places featured on television programs rather than the inhabitants. However, after some discussion between participants her view changed: 'C31 should get more involved in the community. There are all sorts of community things that they could show.' Participants in the Access 31 Perth focus group did not get a sense that the station is creating community and one explained why: 'It's very commercial, isn't it? We'll have a look at this option and have a look at this chocolate-making factory. We'll have a look at this football club.'

Closely connected to the idea that community television informs audiences about local communities is its role in providing local news and information. Most stations do not provide a structured news bulletin, with the exception of 31 Brisbane, where Queensland University of Technology students were, until recently, providing a nightly news bulletin as part of their assessment during semester. Linc TV, prior to the failure of its transmitter, was also broadcasting occasional programs produced by students at Southern Cross University. However, local news and information is often contained within programs that are produced and broadcast about areas within the station's footprint.

7.4.3 Local news and information

CTV audiences reveal that the role the stations play in informing audiences about what is happening in their local communities is an important one. Audience members suggest that programs produced by members of local communities contain information that is valued by its audience members, specifically because of its local nature. Some appreciate the role locally-produced programs play in introducing them to aspects of the communities in which they live—and of which they previously had been unaware. An Adelaide C31 viewer takes this further:

Talk television tells us about upcoming events and it gives information on what is happening in motoring etc, events that you would otherwise not have known about. It helps you become involved in local events because you plan to attend them.

A C31 Melbourne audience member reported that the station is where he feels he gets 'to know more about what's happening that would interest me locally'. A 31 Brisbane audience member agreed:

But then if you look at some of the programmes, it's actually giving you news or information regarding different topics or things within your own community. It could be via a story that you didn't know about and all of a sudden you now get that, so that's technically news as well. So it really comes down to the definition of what you call news.

This echoed findings from the majority of our community radio audience focus groups which suggest that audience are willing to look beyond traditional notions of news and current affairs. Many participants we spoke to tend to define the sector's contribution to local news and information in terms of its contribution to providing local/community information through non-news programs. CTV audiences acknowledge C31 stations promote local events which they feel they would otherwise not find out about, as one C31 Melbourne viewer explained:

It lets me know when niche things like speedway or drags [are on], where I wouldn't otherwise know when they're on, where they are or even things like costs and that... [otherwise] you just miss them.

Another Melbourne focus group participant is of the view that the station provided important local information that she cannot access elsewhere:

I like Channel 31 better actually than the other commercial televisions (sic). I like ABC, or SBS for particular programmes but I feel I know what's going on then too, to a certain extent at least, it gives you a feeling you know what's going on. You don't get that from a newspaper or from the other television programmes.

Most participants are not interested in watching a structured nightly news bulletin on community television, as they feel there is little point in replicating services provided by other, better-resourced stations. However, several suggest that additional programming that covered local events and issues would be beneficial.

You know, even if they show an hourly highlight once a week, you know, at least they can get enough news on the local community areas, these days it gets put out by the local paper (Focus Group, TVS, Sydney, 2006).

The Sydney audience group suggested stations run several new programs that they feel would improve people's local knowledge and distribution of local information, including programs that feature local musicians, a local gig guide, and a festival program. Another participant agreed: 'A program of local council events would be good too. That is what I would consider community news, topical information about what's happening locally.' Adelaide community television viewers want documentaries about the local area, local produce and producers, local attractions, and a gardening show. There is a suggestion that the station form a link with the State Government to educate people about a variety of issues. Clearly, the local news and information contained in programs is not only valued by audiences, but often acted upon by them.

7.4.4 Diversity

As with ethnic community radio and some of the metropolitan and regional radio audiences, the issue of community television's role in fostering and promoting diversity emerged as a significant theme. Some of the program producers we spoke to also suggest stations perform a similar role for them and for the people featured in their programs. CTV audiences acknowledge that a station's role in promoting diversity encompasses a range of areas that are often ignored by commercial media. These include the promotion and fostering of diversity across cultures, religions, genders, and between different interest groups such as sports and the arts.

In the focus groups held in Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide, participants appreciated the stations' broadcasting Deutsche-Welle news. In particular, they like the fact that they are able to tap into international news and views via that program. A 31 Brisbane audience member commented: 'I'm always looking for the good ones on Briz31, um, anything to do with Deutsche Welle will... I'll grab. If I'm available to watch, I'll grab it first.' Audiences perceive that stations enable access to information and views about the diversity of local communities. A TVS focus group participant explained how the station promotes activities relevant to Sydney's diverse ethnic communities:

I have a big interest in multicultural festivals and what is going on in that area and the station gives you an idea of what is on in the various multicultural communities. It's a good resource for students as well. I tape [those] shows and show them to my students and they are very useful for education purposes and they contain humour as well.

A 31 Brisbane audience member also appreciated community television's role in this respect:

There's just more specialised content on community television, which really caters to the community, I guess in that it's very multicultural and there's lots of specific shows that cater to different cultures.

Yet another added that it has a role in promoting the interests of various groups and individuals including those involved in arts, music and culture. A C31 Adelaide focus group participant pointed out that CTV stations are one of the few

places which broadcast programs in a variety of languages, which he feels is important in maintaining ideas of community:

Maintaining community languages is something Australia is quite poor at, and we should have more of that. We need to provide incentives to maintain programming in languages, learning languages at school etc — if you have programs in language it helps those who learn at school.

For program producers, community television provides an important space where community issues not covered by other stations can be explored. For one producer, the opportunity to produce a program for a group of teenagers and to air it on Adelaide's C31 provides a number of spin-offs, including the chance to involve students who have mental health issues. In this instance, groups of Indigenous students are involved in producing programs and have the opportunity to publicise their issues to a broader community. Producer David Salomon says the issues involved are often marginalised by mainstream media, but community television presents an opportunity for disaffected groups to present their own stories:

You know, we have some students who are borderline, you know, mental illness, whatever that means, who have become, you know, most days in a presenting role. There're kids who have been very disaffected you know, who are asking to do their own projects, so I guess the degree of an initiative some students are taking is a surprise, not that I wasn't hoping for it...

The producer of a chat show aired on Access-31 in Perth, called *Moose Goes Live*, feels his program gives a voice to people with disabilities and homeless people who would otherwise not have their issues covered by the media.

7.5 Suggestions

CTV audiences identified a number of issues and problems with community television that they feel require attention. The most frequently have not experienced similar problems, they mentioned friends and family members who are unable to receive an adequate signal. A short exchange between two members of the C31 Adelaide focus group was indicative of this issue:

Participant 1: There is no swearing or rude words, if the reception was better I would watch it a lot more.
Participant 2: There are a lot of people who would watch it if the reception was better.

The quality of reception seems to vary according to where television sets are placed in houses. Channel 31 Brisbane audience members report reception had improved in the months prior to the focus group.

Another problem audience members identify is that, Like their community radio counterparts, CTV audiences want to see a higher level of station promotion both within their local communities and to potential audience members. It was common for CTV focus group participants to discover community television 'by accident', indicating a need for the sector to work on promoting itself more effectively. A participant in the TVS (Sydney) focus group explained how she found the station:

I came across TVS out of chance because I channel search, and I found it very good with a lot of the educational type of stuff, you know a lot of multicultural type of shows that were on and that kept me looking and wanting to know more about it and then when I saw the ad and I rang up and then I got on the net and found out what other programmes and so forth were on.

And this observation from the Adelaide focus group:

We only found out about C31 six months ago. I was sorry I didn't know about it sooner. When we discovered C31 it happened to have one of those old films on it and I like them and don't like sex and violence and bad language.

The recognition by audiences that community television offers an alternative to commercial stations could be a useful promotional point for the sector.

One of the issues many focus group participants mentioned is the difficulty they experience in finding a CTV program guide. Audiences from several stations reported that the TV guide in major newspapers does not include community television program listings, and that the information was published elsewhere in the newspaper. Participants would prefer that viewing guides be included with the mainstream station information.

Participants are critical of repeat programming by stations. Repeated screening dilutes the impact of programs and CTV audiences want more original content, rather than re-runs.

Another issue was a lack of audience interactivity with CTV production, especially when compared with community radio. Participants value the interactivity that community radio allows (and we found many of the CTV focus group participants are also regular community radio listeners), but they feel the same opportunities are not available in the community television sector. Some suggest that talk back programs, where audience members can phone in comments, would be one way of addressing this. Another way of achieving a level of interactivity would be if stations produce a regular program where a roving camera crew and presenter interviews ordinary people in the street. Others suggest production of programs such as panel debates and discussions with input from the public would also assist.

Several focus group participants mentioned their concern about the future of community television with the current switch from analogue to digital. They are concerned that they will not be able to access CTV once commercial and national broadcasters have fully made the transition to digital. However, a program producer points out that if the switch can be successfully made, there will be significant benefits.

I mean, I see a time, you know, if we ever get this broadband stuff sorted out in Australia that's going to be a new market for, you know, straight away, for a whole lot of different things that are happening, and perhaps even what we're doing with C31 now (C31 Adelaide producer David Salomon).

The CBAA also raised this issue in its submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. The CBAA reminded the committee that community television needed to be broadcasting on digital spectrum within 12 to 21 months or it would experience financial problems due to the loss of existing and potential audiences. The need for an urgent resolution, it seems, has not fallen on deaf ears. At the time of writing, federal parliament had yet to make a decision on recommendations by its own Standing Committee to support the immediate expansion of CTV onto the digital spectrum. But it seems that this stumbling block for CTV, at least, is on the verge of being removed (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 2007).

7.6 Summary

Perhaps the most significant — certainly the most common — theme to emerge from the five CTV audience focus groups was that the sector provides an important alternative viewing experience for its audiences. That factor is resoundingly cited as the reason focus group participants tune into and support CTV in Australia. Some watch the station for nostalgic reasons, and others tune in because they find the variety interesting. There are other similarities between CTV and community radio audiences. In particular, audiences' acknowledgement of the diversity of programming and stations' roles in promoting cultures and cultural activities are similar to responses from the community radio and Indigenous media sectors. In providing such diversity, community television is, for many of its viewers, filling a void in the existing television programming market. Community television's provision of information at the local community level is also appreciated. Focus group participants want to find out what is happening in the communities to which they belong, however they are defined.

Based on the evidence we present here, the most significant difference between the local community television and community radio sectors is that CTV, unlike radio, does not appear to be actively creating a sense of community for its audiences. While CTV stations are providing information about local communities, they have been unable to go that step further and actively connect people with each other through the medium, or indeed to create a sense of a 'Channel 31 Brisbane' community, or a 'TVS' community in the same way that many community radio stations do. The television audiences we consulted consider CTV stations to be less intimate and less interactive than is suggested by the community radio audience analyses. This may be because of the very nature of television. There is no doubting the differences between radio and television production practices. And both commercial and national television and radio connect with their audiences in quite different ways. It may be that there is considerable room for development as the sector becomes more established — particularly in regard to licencing and funding regimes — and more consistent in its approaches to programming.

Despite the concerns and issues raised about community television, audiences overwhelmingly appreciate its existence and its provision of an alternative, free-to-air broadcasting outlet. Most importantly, they reject suggestions of outside bodies interfering with community television, perhaps captured by this comment from a TVS (Sydney) viewer:

TVS has leant over backwards to commit to freedom — its commitment is to unfettered freedom. You can quickly pick up what the program is like. If people start interfering with it, it will decrease the concept of (reason for) its existence.

This study of Australian community broadcasting audiences has identified a range of complex reasons as to why people choose to listen to community radio and/or watch community television. The evidence is summarised through a series of ‘key themes’ for each of the industry audience sub-sectors. These offer an insight into the individual roles of each, along with more common functions that they perform.

Metropolitan and regional radio audiences

The evidence suggests that metropolitan and regional generalist community broadcasters play a key role in the lives of their audiences. The main reasons identified by participants in this study to explain why they listen to metropolitan and regional radio are these:

- **Station accessibility** — audiences feel they can ring up, drop in, and thus participate in station activities at any time. In other words, they see no barrier between themselves — the audience — and the producers;
- **‘Ordinary’ station presentation style** — the prevailing tendency for community radio stations to use ‘ordinary people’ or ‘people like me’ as presenters is a major drawcard for audiences;
- **Local news and information** — audiences perceive that community radio is the only source of specialist local information or information of use to niche groups. There is a widespread view that public and commercial broadcasters either cannot or are unwilling to provide such programming;
- **Specialist or niche music formats** — examples cited by audiences demonstrate a strong appreciation of a wide variety of music not generally accessible through commercial or national broadcasters. This includes local or Australian music, jazz, classical, world music, independent and alternative bands; and
- **Diversity** — audiences appreciate the diverse and unpredictable nature of programming. While some participants in this study express distaste for certain programs, in the same breath they acknowledge that if a station did not broadcast a ‘rap’ or ‘death metal’ music show, for example, it might be unable to broadcast programs more to their own liking. There is widespread audience acknowledgement of the attraction and importance of radio and television programming that represents Australia’s cultural diversity. Again, the view that this element is either neglected or ignored by commercial broadcasters, in particular, was almost universal.

Indigenous audiences

In line with metropolitan and regional audience perceptions, audiences for Indigenous radio and television also reveal a great appreciation for the ‘ordinary’ nature of Indigenous broadcasting, evident in the strong connection between producers and audiences. There is an acknowledgement, too, that music and information programming produced by Indigenous broadcasters is unique — there is no other source that Indigenous audiences feel provides them with the services they seek. Indigenous broadcasters are primarily broadcasting to Indigenous audiences, although a significant non-Indigenous audience exists across the country. This is clear from the overwhelming representation of Indigenous people in focus groups and face-to-face interviews we conducted across this sector. Evidence we gathered suggests that the exceptional success of this sector — as perceived by its diverse audiences — is largely due to, as one Palm Island interviewee succinctly put it: ‘Blackfella talking to Blackfella.’ Our analysis of audience commentary and discussion offers strong support for the notion that Indigenous media represent essential services in communities where they are active. We identified five key themes which support this and explain why Indigenous audiences listen to or watch community radio and/or television:

- Indigenous-produced radio and television programming, particularly talkback radio, plays a **primary role in maintaining social and community networks, languages and cultures**;
- Indigenous community radio and television are considered by audiences as a **major medium for education**;
- Apart from word of mouth, audiences identify Indigenous media as their **primary source of news and information** about issues and events relevant to their lives;
- Indigenous media play a crucial role in **promoting cross-cultural dialogue** and in breaking down stereotypes;

and

- The Indigenous media industry, through radio and television broadcasting, has become **a crucial medium for supporting Indigenous music and dance.**

Ethnic community radio audiences

Audience responses from the ethnic community radio sector reflect, in part, responses from Indigenous media audiences. This is particularly evident in relation to language and cultural programming and its acknowledged importance in the maintenance of cultures and identity. The evidence here, too, reinforces common threads which link all elements of the community radio and television sector — themes such as provision of local (or community-specific) news, maintenance of ‘community’, and ‘hearing our own voices’. Key themes include:

- The program or station contributes to a maintenance of culture and language;
- Audiences are able to maintain or create community connections and networks as a result of programs;
- Specialist music helps to maintain language and culture while also reminding people of home and creating a sense of belonging;
- Provision of community news enables audiences to keep up with friends and family, and to find out local community gossip and community events; and
- Provision of news and information from overseas is a notable, but less important function for ethnic community radio audiences — while they want to hear news from their home countries, it is more important for them to be able to access Australian and community news in their own languages. This enables access to community services and support networks that otherwise remain unknown.

Community television audiences

Community radio audiences consulted for this study — reinforced by data from interviews with community groups who access the stations — have much in common with each other. With the exception of the Indigenous-produced community television network, ICTV, the nature of radio appears to lend itself more effectively than television to enabling access, participation, and creation of a sense of a community. We found far more in common between the views of audiences for metropolitan/regional, ethnic and Indigenous stations than we did between audiences for community radio and community television generally. This appears to be due to the very nature of television itself — or at least audience perceptions of it — and to the embryonic nature of the community television industry in Australia. Despite valiant attempts by all CTV stations to ‘create community’ and to provide access for a wide range of culturally diverse community groups, there was no real sense within our audience focus groups that participants belonged to the one ‘community’. Indeed, they generally appear to watch community television for their own specialist programs and for the rest of the time, switch between national and commercial broadcasters. Community television audiences also express a sense that it is difficult to feel part of a station because they do not feel able to simply ‘front-up’ to volunteer. There is a sense that the technical expertise required to participate in television production — even at a community level — is beyond ‘ordinary’ people. Additionally, community television audiences are aware that most of the programming they view is pre-recorded and so there is no sense that a ‘live’ person is on-air while they watch. This understanding of the more controlled nature of television also appears to be hindering audiences’ abilities to participate and to feel a part of a station’s audience, in that sense, at least. Despite these differences from community radio, community television viewers do engage with their local stations for these reasons:

- CTV stations provide an important viewing alternative to commercial and public broadcasters;
- Audiences generally feel stations have an informational, rather than a connective, role in relation to communities;
- CTV provides local information in non-traditional formats which is appreciated by the audiences, although some believe local news and information content can be further developed; and

- The sector promotes and fosters diversity in a number of significant ways (across cultures, genders, religion and between different interest groups i.e. sport etc) and this is valued by audiences.

Common sector themes

Across the four sets of audience data, we have been able to identify key themes which help to explain why Australian audiences are increasingly tuning in to community radio and television. While some themes are unique to a sub-sector, there is a set of overarching criteria that are universally relevant. This suggests that community radio and television have attracted diverse audiences and are fulfilling a common role for many, while also providing specific — and often unique — services to specialist communities. In essence, sector-wide audience responses reveal that regardless of their social, cultural or political context, a set of common themes draws all community broadcasting audiences together:

1. Community radio and television provide an important 'community connection' function — they 'create communities' both around a station and in the broader community through the use of ordinary people as presenters, and by being openly accessible;
2. They provide local news and information either to local geographic communities or to specific 'communities of interest' which are not being serviced by other media;
3. They provide specialist and niche music programming (whether Indigenous, Australian, jazz, Italian, classical etc), which supports cultures and/or languages, or enables audiences to simply feel 'happy' or 'joyous' at hearing music which 'lifts their spirits' and brings back memories; and
4. Community radio and television produce programming that reflects the diversity of Australian culture. Audiences across the sector acknowledge and appreciate this as an important social responsibility function of the community broadcasting industry.

How they compare with McNair

These findings are particularly important to consider in light of the quantitative audience survey data produced by McNair Ingenuity in two recent studies (2004, 2006). Quantitative and qualitative research data work best and are more meaningful when they are considered together. Generally, comments from our audience focus groups and interviewees support the McNair Ingenuity findings with a few small variations, explained, in part, by the broader scope of our project. However, overall, our findings are consistent with McNair's primary data which concludes that the main reason why Australians listen to community radio is because of the provision of local news and information (McNair Ingenuity, 2006:22). This factor is less important for metropolitan audiences than for regional audiences — a logical outcome, considering the range of alternative broadcasting outlets available to urban listeners. Our audience study supports this — when the data are combined, 'local news and information' is the most-often nominated reason for listening to community radio across the country.

The McNair Ingenuity research concludes (2006:22) that in metropolitan areas, 'specialist music or information programs' is the most-often cited reason for listening, and our qualitative audience data again bears this out. In light of this, we suggest that the next round of quantitative data gathering separates this category into its component parts — 'specialist music' and 'specialist information' — in order to gain a better understanding of audience preferences. Specialist information programming could refer to current affairs, news, talkback, or political information coming through stations such as 4ZZZ, 3CR and 2SER and this is disguised by the linking of music and information in the McNair Ingenuity survey category.

Audiences in our study nominated specialist music as an important reason for listening to community radio. In particular, the broadcast of Australian music was highly valued and suggests a significant cultural role being performed by those community radio stations that include a high proportion of Australian music in their playlists. Metropolitan audiences, in particular, expressed an appreciation of the levels of Australian music being broadcast. This is significant, given the level of competition in urban markets from commercial radio stations, suggesting that community radio has taken the initiative on the airwaves in terms of Australian content in music. This is a further indication of the important cultural contribution made by community radio in Australia, identified in our earlier study of station managers and volunteers (Forde, Meadows & Foxwell, 2002).

Our evidence suggests that a majority of people in our focus groups were either listeners or viewers who prefer community and national broadcasters over commercial broadcasting. This contrasts with McNair Ingenuity's finding that 66 per cent of those surveyed listened to both community and commercial radio while only 54 per cent listened to both community and ABC/SBS radio (McNair Ingenuity, 2006:13). Overall, a majority of our focus group participants reported tuning in to ABC or SBS (primarily for ethnic community audiences) when they were not listening to their local community radio station. They are more likely to turn to the national broadcasters — particularly ABC Radio — for hourly news bulletins. Our analysis revealed audiences listening to commercial radio — as well as community radio — but they made up a much smaller proportion of the total than that indicated in the McNair Ingenuity survey. We estimate this proportion was below 50 per cent. While they sought out community radio for localised news, community news and gossip, audiences often relied on mainstream news sources for state-based and national news. Our data suggests that community television audiences are a little more likely to tune in to commercial television than their community radio counterparts—community television audiences appear to be 'channel surfers' who are regularly amused by, or interested in, community TV programming while scanning to see what is on. This also means that they are regularly tuning in to either commercial or national broadcasters as well. In practice, an accurate picture of audiences' listening and viewing habits is difficult to paint. This complexity is evident in the overlapping interests of the McNair Ingenuity sample (McNair Ingenuity, 2006:13; see Appendix E).

The slight disparity between our findings and those by McNair Ingenuity can be explained in several ways. It is evident that the majority of those taking part in our focus groups, in particular, are strong supporters of community broadcasting and its broad objectives. This was clear in a tendency for focus group participants to spontaneously articulate their 'distaste' for commercial radio style, content, and its 'slick' presentation. This bias is an expected outcome, particularly when focus group participants are, in essence, self selecting — each was invited to nominate for a place on a focus group although it was by no means guaranteed that they would be selected. Our aim was to identify and question those who regularly use community broadcasting and our sample most certainly reflects that. However, the scope of our study extends well beyond that of the McNair Ingenuity research in terms of our inclusion and special focus on Indigenous and ethnic community broadcasting audiences. In these two sub-sectors, the support for community radio — and ICTV — is at its strongest. The McNair Ingenuity figures (Fig 18, 2006:25) suggest that regardless of how long audiences tune in, their top three reasons for listening remain the same — local news and information; playing Australian music and supporting local artists; and specialist music or information programs. There is only one variation to this, with listeners tuning in for 11 to 20 hours nominating 'programs not available elsewhere' as being 'slightly more important' than any of the other three — but generally the trend is consistent. What this suggests is that regardless of whether our focus groups attracted exclusive listeners, very regular listeners, or part-time listeners, their views on why they listened to community radio and what they felt community radio offered them are consistent with other listeners as captured by the broad McNair Ingenuity nationwide telephone survey.

The McNair Ingenuity research concludes that community broadcasting audiences are increasingly accessing station websites and 'live streaming' station programming via the Internet (McNair Ingenuity, 2006:26). Analysis of our focus group cohort reveals that although this activity is prevalent amongst audiences for youth stations, it is generally not common across the remainder of the sector. Audience focus groups for youth stations such as EDGE Radio in Hobart, SYN-FM in Melbourne, and FBi in Sydney confirmed their regular use of these stations' innovative and extensive online resources. The primary reason audiences say they access station websites is for programming information. The publication of either incorrect or out of date information on station websites was one of the few areas of criticism of youth community radio. Thus, we recommend strongly that all stations need to ensure that online program information is regularly updated and easily accessible by listeners or viewers.

Another key reason for listening revealed by McNair Ingenuity (2006:32) was audience support for 'local voices and local personalities' — in other words, for announcers who sound like 'one of us'. This emerged as one of the main reasons why our focus group participants say they enjoy listening to their particular stations. Although it appears a little further down McNair's list of reasons for listening, it still figures prominently. Similarly, 'diversity in programming' was nominated by 28 per cent of McNair Ingenuity's sample as the reason for tuning in (McNair Ingenuity, 2006:32). Our analysis supports this.

Empowerment and democracy

In *Culture, commitment, community: The Australian community radio sector* (Forde et al, 2002), we concluded that community radio is an important cultural resource for the Australian community. We qualified this by concluding that while some stations need to connect more directly with their communities, most in the sector have achieved this. Upon

completion of this first national station-based study, we were aware that while stations believe they are performing a significant cultural role in their communities by enabling access and participation in ‘real-world’ local media, the audience had yet to be consulted. We now have access to a plethora of recent research data relevant to community broadcasting in Australia — quantitative research by McNair Ingenuity (2004; 2006), ACMA (2006), CBOnline (2006a), and our own work, both quantitative and qualitative (Forde *et al*, 2002). The key missing element was, of course, the voices of the audience and this study has attempted to fill that void. Together, this portfolio offers perhaps the most comprehensive data set for any community broadcasting system globally. But regardless of its international standing, this combination of multiple methodologies and approaches enables us to be more confident in assessing the role being played by the Australian community broadcasting sector and its diverse elements.

The evidence drawn from this array offers strong support for the conclusions we reached in our 2002 study — that in a multitude of Australian communities, community radio and television stations are listening to the voices of their audiences, enabling communication of their own and others’ ideas, assumptions and beliefs about the world. This acts to affirm listeners’ and viewers’ perceptions of their places in local communities and by extension, the broader Australian community. It is common for communities supported by community radio, in particular, to exist on the margins of society in terms of social, cultural and political criteria. This includes ethnic groups in metropolitan areas, Indigenous communities in remote areas, regional groupings — the gamut of specialist and niche communities which is at the heart of contemporary Australian culture. In effect, we are talking about audiences within the national community broadcasting audience. The sense of belonging and identity produced and maintained by the diverse array of Australian community radio and television stations is difficult to quantify and yet, as this study confirms, is perhaps the most positive contribution of the sector to Australian society.

The overwhelming view of the audiences we have canvassed in this study is that community media matters. And they have confirmed that it is performing a wide range of roles, well beyond mere providers of news, information and music for the multitude of ‘communities of interest’ that comprise Australian society. But what is it about community broadcasting that inspires such passion amongst its audiences?

We suggest that ‘empowerment’ is the single, recurring theme throughout our encounter with the Australian community broadcasting sector, expressed in a number of ways. It is evident in audiences’ positive responses to the ways in which local stations enable a sense of belonging and identity by acknowledging the value of creating an environment where community voices can be heard — and for many marginalised communities, it is the *only* place their voices can be heard. This acknowledgment of the importance of the idea of community is highly valued by the audiences who participated in this study.

Empowerment comes, too, through access to, and participation in, the broadcasting process itself. For tens of thousands of community media volunteers around Australia and their millions of listeners and viewers, the process of community broadcasting is not confined to program production. In fact, the vast majority of activity across the sector takes place off-air, beyond the studios, where community connections are being created, maintained, and reinforced by the processes that define the unique nature of community broadcasting in this country. In our first study (Forde *et al*, 2002), we revealed that volunteers in the community broadcasting sector participated at around two-and-a-half times the rate of volunteers in the general Australian community — so it is a significant activity. The audiences we have explored in this study are part of this notion of empowerment which stems from the enhanced community processes the sector is able to facilitate.

Empowerment at another level comes through the media themselves. Audiences across all sub-sectors reveal an awareness of the monolithic nature of mainstream media and express frustration at its increasing inability to take account of cultural difference. This is especially evident in the voices of Indigenous and ethnic communities where these differences are perhaps more visible but it extends to many other ‘sub-cultures’ within Australian society, marginalised by dominant global media agendas. Audiences who participated in this study consistently expressed support for ‘the local’ — community radio, in particular — to challenge ‘the global’ — manifested through mainstream media. It is clear that the community broadcasting sector in Australia now offers a network of radio and television stations that encourage expansion and dissemination of a diverse range of ideas within the broader public sphere. It is likely that a further concentration of Australia’s already limited media ownership profile will place further pressure on the media policy environment that enables this ‘marketplace of ideas’ to bloom. Audiences clearly believe the community broadcasting sector performs a critical role in this process.

This form of empowerment — for audiences, volunteers, community organisations who access local stations and station managers alike — is by no means unique, with community media audiences around the world expressing similar attitudes in the face of globalisation, essentially driven by major media corporations (Herman & McChesney 1997:200; Pew Research Centre for the people and the press 2003). The extent (McNair Ingenuity, 2006) and nature of audience participation in the Australian community radio sector, in particular, as outlined in this study, suggests that something unusual — perhaps unique — is happening here. In the United States, for example, the audience for National Public Radio — albeit a rough equivalent to the community radio sector here—hovers around 10 per cent (McCauley, 2005). This pales when compared with the 25 per cent of Australians who regularly tune in to their local community stations. Based on audience responses gathered during this study, we estimate that Indigenous and ethnic community listenership levels are considerably higher — well above 60 per cent in some communities. A 1998 Roy Morgan audience study of Brisbane Indigenous station, 4AAA (now 98.9 FM) revealed it reached around 60 per cent of Brisbane's Indigenous community (Meadows and van Vuuren, 1998). In remote Indigenous communities and in some of the ethnic language language groups we encountered, the evidence from respondents suggest audience levels of around 90 per cent — perhaps higher — given the close-knit nature of the social organisation that defines them. It is clear that participation by local communities in Australia in this empowerment process is extraordinarily high — and, according to community media audiences themselves, extraordinarily important. It is a form of 'active citizenship' which suggests an interest in — and a commitment to — the democratic process.

Virtually all of the reasons our audience participants give to explain this phenomenon relate to the failure of mainstream media to 'bridge the information gaps' people perceive in their lives. There is an extensive body of research into commercial media processes which reveals a propensity for such organisations to compete for dominance in the same narrow market, ignoring those who do not meet criteria as 'consumers'. This inevitably leads to a narrow range of programming trying to attract the same audience (Schultz, 1994; Herman and McChesney, 1997; McChesney, 1997; 1999; 2003; 2004). Such trends are evident in Australia — for example, the withdrawal of local commercial radio from regional areas deemed to be commercially unviable (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts 2001:1-2). It seems evident from this and previous studies that the Australian community radio sector, in particular, is successfully providing programming and services for many of those who do not easily fall into such commercially-defined categories.

The steady growth of global media with its focus on a narrowing range of consumers, impacts negatively, too, on notions of democracy and conceptions of citizenship. It is here that community radio, in particular, is playing a critical empowering role. The Australian community broadcasting sector has become a medium for individual, minority and group empowerment. As such, the sector is a counterbalance to globalisation — driven primarily by global media organisations — and its impact on local cultures. It is clear from this analysis of the diverse audiences for community radio and television across Australia that the community broadcasting sector is playing a significant role in revitalising the idea of active citizenship. In doing so, the sector is making a significant contribution to the public sphere and thus the broader notion of Australian democracy.

- AIATSIS & FATSIL (2005). *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in association with the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages.
- AICA (2006). 'About'. Australian Indigenous Communication Association, available at <http://www.aica.asn.au/> <viewed 19.11.06>.
- Alacorn, C (2004). RTV is old news while CTS get the boot, *B & T Magazine*, 13 September, <http://bandt.com.au/news/68/Pc026968.asp> <viewed 13.2.07>.
- APTN (2005). *Annual Report*, Aboriginal People's Television Network, available at <http://www.aptn.ca/images/stories/corporatepdfs/Financial/annualreport2005final.pdf> <viewed 1.3.07>.
- ATSIC. (1999). *Digital Dreaming: A national review of Indigenous media and communications—Executive Summary*. Canberra: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.
- Atton, C. (2001) 'Approaching alternative media: theory and methodology', paper presented at *Our Media, Not Theirs I*, ICA Preconference, 24 May, Washington, USA.
- Atton, Chris (2002). *Alternative Media*, Sage: London.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2001). *2001 Census Community Profile Series: Australia*, available at <http://www8.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/ViewData?&action=402&documentproductno=0&documenttype=Snapshot&order=1&tabname=Summary&areacode=0&issue=2001&producttype=Community%20Profiles&&producttype=Community%20Profiles&javascript=true&textversion=false&navmapdisplayed=true&breadcrumb=PLD&#Table1> <viewed 15.10.06>.
- Australian Communications and Media Authority (2007). 'Conclusion of community television trial in Mount Gambier, SA', media release, 8.3.07, available at http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD//pc=PC_310074 <viewed 14.3.07>.
- Australian Communications and Media Authority (2006). *Communications Report 2005-2006*, Melbourne: ACMA, available at www.acma.gov.au/CommsReport <viewed 12.2.07>.
- Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) (2005). *Survey of the Community Broadcasting Sector 2002-2003*, ACMA: Sydney.
- Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) (2005a). *Digital Media in Australian Homes*, available at http://www.acma.gov.au/acmainterwr/_assets/main/lib100068/digitalmedia.pdf <viewed 5.12.06>.
- Barlow, D (1999) 'Understanding access and participation in the context of Australian community broadcasting', *Communications*, 24(1): 85-104.
- Barlow, D.M (1995). 'Effective Partnerships Between Community Groups and Radio', paper presented to the *Asia-Pacific Regional Social Services Conference*, University of Canterbury, Christchurch NZ, 20-23 November.
- Barlow, D.M (1997). 'Whither non-profit community media?', *Culture and Policy*, 8(3): 119-137.
- Bear, A (1979). 'Public broadcasting in Australia', *Studies in Continuing Education*, 2, 1-20.
- Bear, A (1983). 'The emergence of public broadcasting in Australia', *Australian Journal of Communication*, 4, 21-28.
- Carpentier, Nico; Lie, Rico; and Servaes, Jan (2003). 'Community media: muting the democratic Media discourse?' *Continuum*, 77(1): 52-68.
- Catterall, M and Maclaran, P (1997) 'focus group Data and Qualitative Analysis Programs: Coding the Moving Picture as Well as the Snapshots', *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 2, no. 1, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/2/1/6.html>, <viewed September 3, 2003>.

- CBOOnline (2006). *Community Broadcast Database: Survey of the Radio Sector 2003-2004 Financial Year*, Full Report, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia: Sydney.
- CBOOnline (2006a). A window to Australian community broadcasting, available at <http://www.cbonline.org.au/> <viewed 19.11.06>.
- CBX (2006). "CBAA Member radio and television stations, November 2006", *CBX*, 32-33, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia: Sydney.
- Centrelink (2003). *DBM Consultants: Communications Effectiveness Module—Abstract*, provided to the authors in-confidence, DBM Consultants: Sydney and Melbourne.
- Chitty, Narren and Rattichalkalakorn, *Alternative Media: Idealism and Pragmatism*, Southbound, Penang (in press).
- Chomsky, N (1997). "What makes mainstream media mainstream?", *Z Magazine*, from a paper delivered to the Z Institute, June 1997, available at <http://www.zmag.org/zmag/articles/chomoc97.htm> <viewed 26.2.05>.
- Commonwealth of Australia (2006). *Ready, Get Set, Go Digital: A Digital Action Plan for Australia*, Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra.
- Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) (2006). *Submission to the House of Representatives standing committee on Communications Technology and the Arts*, CBAA submission 2 Australian Community Television, March 17, 2006. available at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/dcita/community_broadcasting/subs/sub61.1.pdf <viewed 14.12.06>.
- Community Broadcasting Foundation (2006). *Annual Report*. Canberra: Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.
- Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF) (2005). *Sector snapshot as at June 2005*, CBF: Melbourne.
- Coonan, Helen (2005). "Framework for the introduction of digital radio", Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Media Release*, October 14, 2005, available at http://www.minister.dcita.gov.au/media/media_releases/framework_for_the_introduction_of_digital_radio <viewed 9.12.06>.
- Coonan, Helen, (2006). 'Address to the Country Press Association'—27 October, Sydney, available at <http://www.minister.dcita.gov.au/media/speeches> <viewed 23.12.06>.
- Couldry, Nick (2002). 'Mediation and alternative media, or relocating the center of media and communication studies', *Media International Australia*, 103, 24-31.
- Criterion Research (2002). *Community Consultation: Focus Group Results*, Report to Strathcona County and KPMG Consulting, August.
- Cunningham-Burley, S.; Kerr, A. & Pavis, S. (1999). 'Theorizing subjects and subject matter in focus group research' in *Developing Focus Group Research: Politics, Theory and Practice* (eds) Rosaline S. Barbour and Jenny Kitzinger, London, Sage Publications, 186-199.
- Davis, Mark (1997). *Gangland: Cultural Elites and the New Generationalism*, Allen & Unwin: Sydney.
- Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts (2006). 'Backing Indigenous Ability', available at http://www.dcita.gov.au/indigenous_programs/funding_programs_and_support/indigenous_broadcasting <viewed 27.11.06>.
- Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (2005). *Digital Radio Policy Framework*, available at http://www.minister.dcita.gov.au/media/media_releases/framework_for_the_introduction_of_digital_radio <viewed 9.12.06>.
- Deuze, M (2006). "Ethnic media, community media and participatory culture", *Journalism*, 7(3): 262-280.

Downing, J. (1984), *Radical Media: The political experience of alternative communication*, South End Press: Boston.

Downing, John (2001). *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements*, Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Downing, John (2003). 'Audiences and readers of alternative media: the absent lure of the virtually unknown', *Media, Culture & Society*, 25: 625-645.

Ethnic Broadcasters' Council of the ACT and Surrounding Districts (EBC) (2006). *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications Information Technology and the Arts, Inquiry into Community Broadcasting*, available at http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/cita/community_broadcasting/subs/sub83.pdf <viewed 26.10.06>.

Ethnic Broadcasting Association of Queensland Ltd (EBAQ) (2006). *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications Information Technology and the Arts, Inquiry into Community Broadcasting*, available at http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/cita/community_broadcasting/subs/sub54.pdf <viewed 28.10.06>.

Ewart, J (2000). 'Capturing the Heart of the Region—How Regional Media Define a Community', *Transformations*, 1: 1–13.

Forde, S (1999). "Journalistic practices and newsroom organisation in the independent and alternative press", *Australian Journalism Review*, 21(3): 60-79.

Forde, S, M. Meadows and K. Foxwell (2002b). *Culture, Commitment, Community: The Australian Community Radio Sector*, Griffith University, Brisbane.

Forde, S, M. Meadows and K. Foxwell (2003). 'The Australian community radio sector', *Communications*, University of Nijmegen.

Forde, S, M. Meadows, J. Ewart and K. Foxwell (2006). 'The untapped potential of participation: New methods for evaluating audiences in the community media sector', *Australian Studies in Journalism*, 2006, 16, 74-100.

Forde, S. ; Foxwell, K. and Meadows, M (2002a). 'Creating a community public sphere: community radio as a cultural resource', *Media International Australia*, 103, 56-67.

Gardiner-Garden, John and Chowns, Jonathon (2006), *Media Ownership Regulation in Australia*, Parliament of Australia—Parliamentary Library, available at http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/SP/Media_Regulation.htm <viewed 6.12.06>.

Garrett, Peter (2005). Interview at Garma Festival, 7 August.

Gibson, K and J. Cameron (2001). 'Transforming communities: Towards a research agenda', *Urban Policy and Research*, 19(1): 7-24.

Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing.

Green, L (1999). 'Focusing upon interview methodologies', *Australian Journal of Communication*, 26(1): 35-46.

Grossberg, L. (1987). 'Critical Theory and the Politics of Empirical Research', in Gurevitch, M. & Levy, M. (eds), *Mass Communication Review Yearbook*, Sage: London, 6: 86-106.

Grossberg, L. (1988), 'Putting the pop back into postmodernism', in Ross, A. (ed), *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Post-Modernism*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, pp. 167-190.

Hall, S. (1980), 'Cultural studies: two paradigms', *Media, Culture and Society*, 2: 57-72.

Hamilton, J (2004), *All the News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey.

- Hepi, A. (2005) Sports Producer, interview at 4K1G, 28 November.
- Herman, Edward S. and McChesney, Robert W. (1997). *The Global Media: The New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism*, Cassell, London.
- Hippocrates, Cratis, Meadows, Michael, and van Vuuren, Kitty, (1996). *Race Reporter, a study funded by the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission*, Brisbane, November.
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communication, Transport and the Arts. (2001). *Local Voices: An inquiry into local radio*. Canberra: Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.
- Howley, Kevin (2005). *Community Media People, Places and Communication Technologies*, Cambridge University Press: UK.
- Kawakami, Takashi (2006). Personal communication.
- Kellner, Douglas. M. & Durham, Meenakshi. G. (2006). 'Adventure in Media and Cultural Studies: Introducing the KeyWorks', in Kellner, D.M. & Gigi Durham, M. (eds), *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, Blackwell Publishing: USA, ix-xxxvii.
- Kelly, L (2006). 'Connecting communities through television: Where to from here for CTV', *CBX*, November: 4-6.
- Kelly, L (2006). "Channelling success: Why more people are switching on to Community TV", Arts Hub Australia, May 10, 2006, available at <http://www.artshub.com.au/au/news.asp?sId=94374> <viewed 14.12.06>.
- Kidd, Dorothy, Stein, Gloria and Rodriguez, Clemenica, *Mapping Our Media*, Cresskill: Hampton Press (in press).
- Kitzinger, J. & R. S. Barbour (1999). 'Introduction: the challenge and promise of focus groups', in *Developing Focus Group Research: Politics, Theory and Practice* (eds) Rosaline S. Barbour and Jenny Kitzinger, London, Sage Publications, 1-20.
- Knight, Elizabeth (2006). 'James wanted out, Kerry wants in', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 November.
- Langton, Marcia, 1993. 'Well, I Heard It on the Radio and I Saw It on the Television': *An Essay for the Australian Film Commission on the Politics and Aesthetics of Filmmaking by and about Aboriginal People and Things*, Australian Film Commission, Sydney.
- Lewis, J (2001). *Constructing Public Opinion — How Political Elites Do What They Like and Why We Seem to Go Along with It*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- MacNaughten, P. and P. Myers (2004). 'Focus Groups', in *Qualitative Research Practice*, Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F. Gubrium and David Silverman (eds), London, Sage Publications, 65-79.
- Manne, Robert. (2006). 'Comment', *The Monthly*, November 2006: 10-13.
- Maori Television (2006). *Annual Report*, available at <http://corporate.maoritelevision.com/publications/MT%20Annual%20Report%2006.pdf> <viewed 1.3.07>.
- McCallum, K. (2005). *Local talk as a construction of public opinion on Indigenous issues in Australia*, unpublished thesis, Canberra: University of Canberra.
- McCauley, Michael (2005). *NPR: The trials and triumphs of National Public Radio*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- McChesney, Robert (1997). *Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy*, Open Pamphlet Series, Seven Stories Press and Open Media, available at http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Media/CorpMedia_McChesney.html <viewed 26.2.07>.
- McChesney, Robert (1999). *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, The New Press, available at http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/McChesney/RichMedia_PoorDemocracy.html <viewed 26.2.07>.

- McChesney, Robert (2003). 'The Problem of Journalism: a political economic contribution to an explanation of the crisis in contemporary US journalism', *Journalism Studies*, 4 (3): 299–329.
- McChesney, Robert (2004) *The problem of the media: US communication politics in the 21st century*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- McNair Ingenuity Research (2004). *Community Radio Listener Survey — Summary Report of Findings*, available at cbonline.org.au.
- McNair Ingenuity Research (2006), *Community Radio Listener Survey — Summary Report of Findings*, available at http://www.cbonline.org.au/media/mcnair_survey_06/McNair_Report.pdf
- Meadows, Michael (1993). *The way people want to talk: Indigenous representation in the media and Indigenous media responses in Australia and Canada*, unpublished thesis, Brisbane: Griffith University.
- Meadows, Michael (1994). 'The way people want to talk: Indigenous media production in Australia and Canada', *Media Information Australia*, 73: 64-73.
- Meadows, Michael (2001). *Voices in the Wilderness: images of Aboriginal people in the Australian Media*, Westport: Greenwood.
- Meadows, Michael (2005). 'Journalism and Indigenous public spheres', *Pacific Journalism Review*, 11(1): 36-41.
- Meadows, Michael and Kitty van Vuuren (1998) 'Seeking an audience: Indigenous people, the media and cultural resource management', *Southern Review*, 31(1): 96-107.
- Media Watch (2002). *Community or Commercial TV?* Australian Broadcasting Corporation, November 11, 2002, available at http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/041102_s4.htm <viewed 13.1.07>.
- Michaels, Eric (1985). 'Ask a foolish question: On the methodologies of cross cultural research', *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 3(2): 49-59.
- Michaels, Eric (1986). *The Aboriginal Invention of Television: Central Australia 1982-1985*. Canberra, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.
- Mishra, Vijay (1988). 'Aboriginal Representations in Australian Texts', *Continuum*, 2(1): 165–188.
- Molnar, H. & Meadows, M. (2001). *Songlines to Satellites: Indigenous communication in Australia, the South Pacific and Canada*. Leichhardt: Pluto Press.
- Moran, A (1994). 'Multiplying Minorities: The case of community radio', in Craik, J., Bailey, J. & Moran, A. (eds) *Public Voices, Private Interests: Australia's Media Policy*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin.
- Morgan, M. (2005). Interview at Woorabinda, 19 October.
- Morris, C, and Meadows, M (2001). *Into the New Millennium: Final Report*, unpublished findings of an ARC Collaborative Grant into Indigenous media protocols and processes.
- National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC) (2006). *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications Information Technology and the Arts Inquiry into Community Broadcasting*, available at http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/cita/community_broadcasting/subs/sub108.pdf <viewed 26.10.06>.
- Onus, Florence (2005). Personal communication, 19 August.
- Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia (2007). *Community Television: Options for Digital Broadcasting*, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, February 2007, Canberra.
- Pew Research Center for The People & The Press (2003). 'Press going too easy on Bush: Bottom-line pressures now hurt-

- ing coverage, say journalists, *National Survey of Journalists*, Pew Research Center: Washington D.C.
- Productivity Commission (2000). *Broadcasting: Final report*. Canberra: Ausinfo.
- Project for Excellence in Journalism (2004), *State of the News Media*, 2004. Available at <http://stateofthenewsmedia.org/2004/> <viewed 20.3.07>.
- Project for Excellence in Journalism (2005). *State of the News Media*, 2005. Available at <http://stateofthenewsmedia.org/2005/> <viewed 20.3.07>.
- Rennie, E (2001). 'Community television and the transition to digital broadcasting', *Australian Journal of Communication*, 28 (1): 57-68.
- Rennie, E. (2002), 'The Other Road to Media Citizenship', *Media International Australia*, 103: 7-13.
- Rodriguez, Clemencia (2001). *Fissures in the Mediascape: An International Study of Citizens' Media*, Cresskill, Hampton Press.
- Rodriguez, Clemencia (2002). 'Citizens' media and the voice of the angel/poet', *Media International Australia*, 103: 78-87.
- Schultz, Julianne (1994). *Not Just Another Business*. Leichhardt: Pluto Press.
- Schulze, Jane and Sainsbury, Michael (2006). 'Kerry Stokes joins media frenzy', *The Australian*, October 18.
- Snowdon, Warren (2006) Interview at Umuwa, APY Lands, October 27.
- Thornley, P (1995). 'Debunking the 'Whitlam myth' — the annals of public broadcasting revisited', *Media International Australia*, 77, 155-164.
- Tomaselli, K. and Prinsloo, J (1990). 'Video, Realism, and Class Struggle: Theoretical Lacunae and the Problem of Power', *Continuum*, 3(2): 140-159.
- van Vuuren, K (2002). 'Beyond the Studio: a case study of community radio and social capital', *Media International Australia*, 103: 94-108.
- Waru (2006). 'ICTV', available at <http://www.waru.org/organisations/ictv/> <viewed 19.11.06>.
- Wasko, Janet and Mosco, Vincent (1992). *Democratic Communication in the Information Age*, Garamond Press and Ablex: Toronto and Norwood New Jersey.
- West, Dot (1994). 'Indigenous Media,' *Voices from the Land: The 1993 Boyer Lectures*, ABC Books, Sydney.
- Williams, Warren H (2005). Interview at Garma Festival, 7 August.

APPENDIX A

Fieldwork schedule

METROPOLITAN AND REGIONAL RADIO:

- Artsound, Canberra
- Valley FM, Tuggeranong Valley
- 2QBYN, Queanbeyan
- 2TVR, Tumut, NSW
- 2BAY FM, Byron Bay
- 2FBi, Sydney
- 2SER, Sydney
- 3RRR, Melbourne
- 3CR, Melbourne
- 3GDR, Melbourne
- Fresh FM, Bendigo
- 7THE Sound of the City, Hobart
- EDGE Radio, Hobart
- 4ZZZ, Brisbane
- 4MBS, Brisbane
- 4FCR, Fraser Coast Qld
- Radio Nag, Yeppoon
- 6CRA, Albany WA
- 6RPH, Perth
- Sonshine FM, Perth
- 6RTR, Perth
- 8KTR, Katherine
- Radio Adelaide
- ROX-Fm, Roxby Downs SA
- 5TCB, Bordertown SA

INDIGENOUS FIELDWORK — FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS:**2004**

- Batchelor Batchelor College interviews
 BRACS Festival, Alice Springs, interviews

2005

- Laura Laura Festival, Cape York, interviews
 Palm Is Palm Island, interviews
 Townsville 4K1G, Townsville, cultural festival & health service, interviews
 3KND 3KND, Melbourne, focus group
 BBM Bumma Bippera Media, Cairns, focus group
 TSI Torres Strait Radio, Thursday island, cultural festival, interviews
 Woorabinda BRACS Festival interviews
 Talkblack Monitoring Talkblack callers

2006

- Yuendumu Yuendumu Sports Festival, interviews
 CAAMA CAAMA, Alice Springs, focus group
 Umeewarra Umeewarra, Port Augusta, focus group
 Larrakia Radio Larrakia, Darwin, focus group
 98.9 98.9 FM, Brisbane, focus group
 TEABBA Maningrida music festival, interviews
 TEABBA TEABBA, Darwin, focus group
 Goolarri Radio Goolarri, Broome, focus group
 Beagle Bay PAKAM, interviews
 Djaridjin PAKAM, interviews
 Umuwa Anangu-Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara lands, 25th anniversary of lands hand-back, interviews

ETHNIC AUDIENCES:

- Macedonian program, Plenty Valley FM, Victoria
- Vietnamese youth program, 3CR, Melbourne
- Sudanese program, 3ZZZ, Melbourne
- Turkish program, 3ZZZ, Melbourne
- Tongan program, 5Ebi, Adelaide
- Serbian program, TEN73 Border FM, Albury-Wodonga
- Filipino/Tagalog program, 104.1 Territory FM
- Indonesian program, 104.1 Territory FM
- Chinese Youth program, 4EB Brisbane
- Greek Seniors program, 4EB Brisbane

COMMUNITY TELEVISION:

- Channel 31, Brisbane (formerly Briz 31)
- C31, Melbourne
- Channel 31, Adelaide (pilot focus group)
- Access 31, Perth (pilot focus group)
- TVS, Sydney

Appendix B**METROPOLITAN AND REGIONAL COMMUNITY GROUP INTERVIEWS:**

ACT Jazz Society

ACT Leader Society

Aidwatch

Albany RSL

Alma Street Mental Health Centre

Asylum Seekers Resource Centre

Australia Indonesian Arts Alliance

Belmont Counselling Clinic

Bendigo Football League

Bordertown Arts Council

Byron Bay Chamber of Commerce

Byron Bay Writers Festival

Caulfield Gardening Club

Citizen Advocacy

City Centre Program

Community Development Officer

CWA

District Council of Tatiara

Express Media

Friends of the Earth

Hep C Council

Hobart College

Hobart Fringe Festival

Indigenous Community Rep — 2QBYN

Katherine Country Music Muster

Katherine Town Council

Koala Markets

Koori Program — 3CR

Legacy

Macedonian Community Centre

Medici Concerts

Melbournaires Bishop Choir

Moot Yang Gunya Festival

Multicultural Association — Radio Nag

Musica Viva QLD

Office of Youth Affairs — Hobart

Peats Ridge Festival

Philipino Program — Fresh FM, Bendigo

QLD Conservatorium of Music

QLD Symphony Orchestra

QLD Youth Orchestra

Queanbeyan Italian Community Centre

Rainbow Radio

Reconciliation Office Adelaide City Council

Roxby Community Club

Roxby Downs Area School

RSPCA

South Australia Music Industry

SPAT — Sound Preservation

Swinburne College

Sydney Festival

The Big Issue

The City of Albany

The Monitor (local newspaper)

The New Farm Neighbourhood Centre

The Spanish Centre

Tumut Fire Brigade

Tumut Police Station

Tumut Primary School

Urangan Bowls Club

Vital Statistix National Women's Theatre

Westcare Industries

Writer Group — Radio Nag

Youth Group — Radio Nag

Zenith Virago — Bay FM

Appendix C

Focus Group Agenda

Community Broadcasting Qualitative Audience Project 2005 Focus Group Schedule

The following information should be used by focus group facilitators as a general guide for discussion. As much as possible, enable focus group participants to generate discussion and to raise the points highlighted below. Questions here should only be prompted when discussion moves off track or conversation is limited.

Facilitator to note their impression of the overall focus group and interactions between group members. Important to note as these details are not available via the transcript.

Ensure no presenters or current volunteers are present. Invite participants initially to nominate what they see as the important issues. Give participants opportunity to raise issues for discussion. Remember you are there to 'facilitate'—as far as possible, let the participants run the discussion.

Ask where participants found out about the focus group.

Individual Themes

- Listening patterns: what they listen (programs) and when (frequency)?
- Why they listen? How did they discover community radio?
- Likes/dislikes? Expectations?
- Improvements?
- Future needs?

Community Themes

- Has the station increased your knowledge about your local community? If so, how?
- Has viewing facilitated your involvement in your local community or communities? Examples?
- Has station given you a sense of community? (or sense of belonging)

Media Themes

- Local news and current affairs? Quality and usefulness of content?
- Do you give feedback to the community radio station? Do you think your feedback is taken into account?
- Key differences between community radio and other media broadcasters

APPENDIX D**Membership of the Qualitative Audience Research Advisory Committee (QARAC)****Committee members:**

Chair and CBF Nominee, Ms Deborah Welch

IRCA Nominee, Mr Russell Bomford

CBAA Nominee, Ms Joanna McCarthy (replaced by Ms Wendy Coates)

Griffith University Nominee, Dr Jacqui Ewart

Griffith University Nominee, Dr Susan Forde

Griffith University Nominee, Dr Kerrie Foxwell

DCITA Nominee, Ms Judy Hiscock

NEMBC Nominee, Dr Peter Ho (replaced by Mr Tim Tolhurst)

RPH Australia Nominee, Mr Peter Luckett

Griffith University Nominee, Associate Professor Michael Meadows

AICA Nominee, Mr Ken Reys

Participants in attendance:

Dr Darren Benham, DCITA

Mr Barry Melville, CBAA

Mr Ian Stanistreet, CBF

Administration support:

Ms Tamara Donkon & Ms Rebekah Pasqualini, minute-takers, CBF

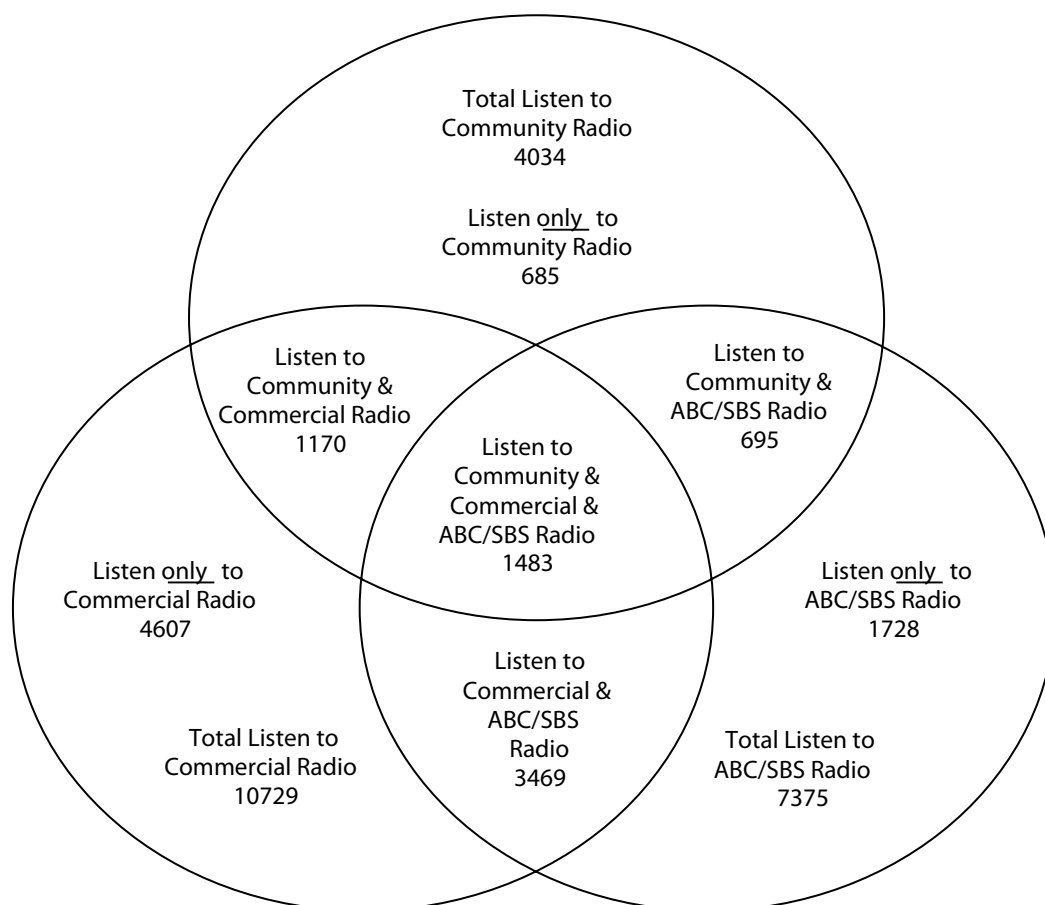
APPENDIX E

Source: McNair Ingenuity Research (2006:13)

Overlapping Radio Audiences - Australia

Many people listen to a mix of community, commercial and /or government radio stations:

Fig 4. Overlapping Radio Audiences – Australia ('000)



The concentric circles above (not to scale) diagrammatically depict how radio audiences overlap for Australians aged 15+ as a whole. The top circle depicts Australia's 4,034,000 community radio listeners aged 15+ in an average week, and shows how these consist of:

- 1,170,000 people who listen to community radio and commercial radio but not ABC/SBS radio.
- 695,000 people who listen to community radio and ABC/SBS radio but not commercial radio.
- 1,483,000 people who listen to community radio, commercial radio and ABC/SBS radio.
- 685,000 people who listen to community radio exclusively, that is, listen to community radio but not commercial radio or ABC/SBS radio.

