

ABSTRACT.

This paper presents the viewpoint of the Community Radio Federation (Melbourne) formed on Sunday, 23rd June, 1974. The Community Radio Federation is a federation of community groups concerned with applying for a Public Broadcasting Licence to enable groups and persons representing a wide range of community interests and concerns to have regular communication with the Melbourne Community. In addition, it is the aim of the Federation that this independent, non-profit station, which they would own and operate would encourage community involvement in program production and encourage and give voice to Australian culture and the aspirations of the Australian Community. The paper outlines the basis for the Community Radio Federation including the legal entity for radio operation purposes, indicates the type of service, program and facilities offered to the community by the station, the licensing arrangements required, proposed methods of funding the station, ways in which the Government and other agencies could assist in the development of the station and lists groups which are interested in and support the Community Radio Federation.



1. GENERAL PHILOSOPHY.

The Community Radio Federation (C.R.F.) believes there is a need for independent, non-profit radio stations owned and controlled by the community and run in the common interests of the community. In addition, the C.R.F. sees a need for other types of public broadcasting services, for example, public access stations primarily run by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. The C.R.F. is primarily concerned itself with obtaining a licence for an independent community-controlled station in Melbourne. The C.R.F. philosophy is in line with that expressed by the Australian Assistance Plan, that is to give all the people in Australia a better opportunity to take part in planning, developing and controlling their own local community services . . . . . through dynamic interaction of diverse local groups the improvement of social programmes will be developed . . . . . the Australian Assistance Plan is primarily aimed for development of regional social planning and the involvement of local residents and organisations in each region to help overcome the common and shared problems. It is the aim of the C.R.F. to encourage community involvement in program production and to encourage and give voice to Australian culture and the aspirations of the Australian Community. The objectives accepted as the basis for the C.R.F. are set out in Appendix A of the Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Federation and are attached to this paper.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE C.R.F.

- ( i ) To enable groups and persons representing a wide range of community interests and concerns to have regular communication with the Melbourne Community.
- ( ii ) To provide this access through an independent, non-profit radio station owned and operated by a Federation of Community Groups.
- ( iii ) To encourage community involvement in program production and to encourage and give voice to Australian culture and the aspirations of the Australian Community.
- ( iv ) To apply for and hold a Public Broadcasting Licence.

3. GROUPS SUPPORTING THE C.R.F.

In Appendix B to the Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting attached to this paper are listed groups which supported the formation of the Community Radio Federation and groups which are interested in the C.R.F. and are considering joining the Federation. We believe that there is a potential for many more organisations to be involved and this is the list of groups which have shown interest in a relatively short time and without a great deal of publicity being produced concerning the C.R.F. It can be seen that the supporting organisations cover a wide range of community interest from education, conservation, trade union interests, women's interests, welfare interests, community service groups and groups interested in music and drama. The groups all see the need to have a means of communication with the Melbourne Community on a regular basis.

4. THE BASIS ON WHICH THE C.R.F. WAS FORMED.

The Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the C.R.F. are included as attachments to this paper. They give full details of the basis upon which the C.R.F. was formed and Appendix A in particular lists the objectives, the organisational form and the financial arrangements for the Community Radio Federation. It explains that the legal entity for the Radio Station, owned and operated by the C.R.F., would be in a Company, limited by guarantee, and this Company would be the legally responsible body in applying for a Broadcasting Licence and holding the same and in undertaking the overall responsibility for the Station, including staffing, program, finance, standards and debts incurred. Each group affiliated to the Federation would nominate one individual from the group to be their representative in the Company. Voting rights a



The organisational structure for program production and station operation will be indicated in the application which the C.R.F. makes for a Public Broadcasting Licence. At this stage, the operational structure has not been determined, but it is the intent of the C.R.F. to ensure that maximum community participation is ensured by the structure, whilst maintaining the necessary program and technical standards as required by the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, or relevant Govt or Independent Body.

5. SERVICE PROVIDED.

The program and services provided by the C.R.F. will be determined by the desires and common interests of the groups involved and the programming organisation would have to remain flexible and open-ended. Programming would be organised on a monthly basis with time slots available each day for immediate community needs or emergencies and newsworthy events. Programming for a typical day might include: an hour for community bulletin board, i.e. organisational matters and arrangements of supporting groups, including a news program emphasising news affecting such groups in the local community; good quality music, e.g. folk music groups also classical with emphasis on local production and local artists; single parents discussing their problems and possible solutions to them and inviting participation using the telephone call-in (talk back) technique to give voice to the concerns of isolated single parents; consumer protection program involving, for example how to buy a used car; "I'd rather wear out than rust out" - comments on Melbourne's past and present by an 83 year-old woman; music program produced for and selected by a class of technical school students; a foreign language after-school program about how to overcome culture shock for migrant children and their mothers; ~~xxxxxx~~ report on the progress of the Australian Assistance Plan involving a local region; Labor news and views, a trade union report; dramatic production by the Australian Performing Group; late news and good quality music.

6. HOURS OF SERVICE.

It is intended that finally a full seven-day-a-week service - morning, afternoon and evening - shall be provided by the C.R.F., i.e. a 10 to 18 hour a day service. The C.R.F. wishes to apply for a Public Broadcasting Licence so that its supporting groups have a regular means of communication with the Melbourne Community. No group will commit itself to a high level of programming and financial effort unless it can be assured of regular access to such a community station and that the station's future is assured without political interference caused by a change of Government or from commercial pressures. To achieve this, a fully independent Station, owned and controlled by the Federation of community groups is essential. For these reasons, a Government-run public access station could not guarantee this degree of independence, nor could it assure groups of the necessary immediate and flexible program time. The C.R.F., therefore, urges that the Department of the Media in drawing up public broadcasting plans, caters for this type of station. Further, it is suggested that public broadcasting plans should provide for low-powered community stations which can efficiently meet regional and local community needs, such as the needs of the Melbourne Community. The C.R.F. would be interested in such a station.

7. PROPOSED FUNDING.

( 1) General Philosophy.

The C.R.F. believes that the Government should accept some financial responsibility in the development of community broadcasting services - this is in line with the aims of the Australian Assistance Scheme for community involvement in and community solution to general community problems and services. The C.R.F. believes that the Government should have a Public Broadcasting Development Fund, administered by an independent funding authority, which is representative of the community and groups involved in public broadcasting. This developmental fund should provide capital grants to non-profit community stations to assist in their development and the development of program material which they use.



*Not intended to be used*

group use. The C.R.F. urges, however, that far greater community involvement be sought by the Department of the Media in the development of the Public Broadcasting Network - this would be in line with the recommendations of the Australian Assistance Plan. The C.R.F. would also suggest that during an experimental period, say several years, that various approaches to this question should be tried and, at a later stage, a more definite policy adopted concerning public broadcasting after some experience has been gained. The C.R.F. believes that the granting of a Public Broadcasting Licence to its organisation would provide one such area of community involvement in public broadcasting to be tried. Changes will, no doubt, have to be made to the Broadcasting and Television Act to allow increased community involvement in public broadcasting. The C.R.F. would urge that such changes should enable a maximum degree of flexibility to be allowed, especially during initial experimental stages in the development of this concept; and, in particular, such changes should allow the setting up of the type of community station which has been outlined in this paper.

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