

STATE ETHNIC BROADCASTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NSW)

Minutes of meeting held on  
Thursday, 14 May 1981  
at 5 Elizabeth Street, Sydney

PRESENT

Rev. Fr. N. Mansour ..... Acting Chairman  
Mr I.A. Birzulis  
Mr P. Bosi  
Mr P.G. Darmo  
Mrs H. Eizenberg  
Mr R. Gonzalez  
Mrs L. Gustin  
Mrs O. Katchan  
Mr G. Messaris  
Rev. Fr. S. Pappas  
Mr S. Pejsachowicz  
Mr R. Treister

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr S. Kerkyasharian..... Head of Radio  
Ms. T. Rod ..... Secretary

1. OPENING

The Acting Chairman opened the meeting at 7.20 pm after being requested by Mr Bosi to take the chair.

2. APOLOGIES

An apology was received from Mr A. Hee.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 1981 were accepted (moved: Mr Treister; seconded: Mr Birzulis) subject to the inclusion of the following statement in the third paragraph of Agenda item 4:

"He also said that the incident leading to Mr Bosi's suspension from news broadcasting was considered closed".

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

The Committee noted Mr Fowell's reply to the request for clarification of SBS news policy and agreed that a letter be sent thanking him for his offer to make available to the Committee the SBS Information Paper on news which the Committee was awaiting with great interest.

5. SBS NEWS POLICY

It was noted that the Guidelines for Co-ordinators and Broadcasters made no mention of the news service. Mr Kerkyasharian explained that the Guidelines do not outline policies in specific operational areas; they only offered general guidelines for program production. However, SBS was in the process of drafting a Broadcasting Handbook which would cover both procedural and operational matters.

It was further noted that there were separate guidelines on news policy issued to co-ordinators and broadcasters. The Committee requested that these be made available to them as well. Mr Kerkyasharian said that SBS has a number of policies regarding day to day operation of the radio station and these could be made available to the Committee upon request.

6. SBS APPEAL PROCEDURES

The Committee considered the document "Committees of Appeal and Review" tabled at the meeting. It was noted that Committees of Appeal and Review are convened "at the discretion of the SBS Board" and that the decision regarding grounds for appeal rested largely on the goodwill of the Board.

Mr Kerkyasharian explained that these committees refer to appeals to the SBS Board which may be made over the heads of senior management. The Board considers all appeals and takes into account all material made available to it by the parties involved.

Mr Kerkyasharian also explained that Committee of Review may be convened as a result of Management action based on public reaction to an ethnic program.

It was also noted that all permanent and temporary staff employed at SBS are employed by the Public Service Board under the provisions of the Broadcasting and Television Act. SBS is also able to engage the services of contractors in accordance with procedures approved by the Public Service Board.

In considering the media release of 4 May which had been sent to members by SBS, the Committee agreed that if there is any restructuring of ethnic radio, then SBS should also reconsider its appeal procedures. Mr Kerkyasharian explained that the restructuring referred to in the media release involved merely the restructuring of language groups on 2EA/3EA according to the current policy. SBS had, however, already indicated to the Association of Ethnic Broadcasters and Co-ordinators that it was prepared to consider investigatory and enquiry procedures regarding co-ordinators and broadcasters.

7. REVIEW PROCEDURES

It was noted that in the minutes of the meeting held on 24 August 1978, SEBAC (NSW) had decided that complaints regarding community language programs would be forwarded to SBS for gathering of data which would then be handed to SEBAC who would arbitrate and advise SBS. It was further noted that these review procedures had been accepted by SBS. Mr Bosi said he would make available to the Committee papers related to consultations held between SEBAC, NEBAC, The Chairman of SBS and Mr Brian Murray of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.

The Committee noted that review procedures are instituted before management action and that in the past certain language programs on 2EA had been reviewed by SEBAC at the request of SBS. However, in the matter leading to Mr Bosi's suspension from news broadcasting SBS had not referred the complaint from a listener of the Italian program to SEBAC before taking action.

The Committee also noted that in the 5 May media release the termination of Mr Bosi's services had resulted from "long standing differences in both policy and operational issues". The Acting Chairman observed that SEBAC had never been consulted about these "long standing differences" policy issues although these would affect the communities the Committee sought to serve.

It was also noted that the present atmosphere of rumours, dissatisfaction and uncertainty made working conditions for co-ordinators and broadcasters at 2EA very difficult.

The Committee resolved (moved: Mr Birzulis, seconded: Mrs Katchan):

RESOLUTION

That SEBAC, which is vested with the responsibility of advising and assisting SBS in ethnic broadcasting and in expressing the needs of the communities, regrets that SBS has not followed the procedures as outlined in the Executive Director's letter dated 7 August 1978 nor had any regard for the resolution passed by SEBAC on 24 August 1978 at a meeting attended by Mr Brian Murray. With a view to assist in resolving disputes, SEBAC would prefer that any complaints from listeners be referred to the Committee for arbitration.

SEBAC further noted that SBS policy on appeal procedures appears to be needlessly restrictive and allows SBS total freedom in structure of appeals. These procedures should be reviewed at the earliest opportunity.

The meeting adjourned briefly at 9.10 pm to allow Mr Bosi and Mr Kerkyasharian to withdraw.

It was noted that ethnic radio started in an ad hoc manner but that its initial input had been largely from the ethnic communities. SBS had then been established to oversee it and had gradually taken over all decision making functions and developed a bureaucratic structure. It was further noted that the Broadcasting and Television Act had made no mention of a separate news department for SBS. The Committee requested that copies of the section of the Broadcasting and Television Act dealing with SBS be made available to it.

The Committee also regretted that no meeting had been called for over six months during this critical period for ethnic radio.

The Committee resolved (moved: Mrs Katchan; seconded: Mr Gonzalez):

RESOLUTION

That SEBAC expresses its concern about the lack of consultation between SBS and the Committee, and feels that some of the recent events resulting in an unfortunate confrontation might have been averted had the Committee been consulted before action had been taken.

It was also agreed to send a telegram the next day to the Ministers for Communications and Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, the Executive Director of SBS and the Chairman of NEBAC expressing these sentiments. The following wording of the telegram was agreed to (moved: Mrs Katchan; seconded: Mr Birzulis):

SEBAC (NSW) views with grave concern the current crisis in ethnic radio and wishes to express its regrets about the lack of consultation by SBS with the Committee.

(Signed by all members present at the time).

8. USE OF ENGLISH ON 2EA

It was agreed that discussion on this item be deferred to a future meeting after Mr Pejsachowicz's return from overseas.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

10. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Monday, 15 June 1981 at 7.00 pm.

It was agreed that the Acting Chairman could call a meeting earlier at short notice should the need arise.

11. CLOSE

The Acting Chairman closed the meeting at 10.05 pm.

ADDENDUM

to Item 7

It was unanimously agreed by all the members contacted by telephone by Rev. Fr. Mansour on 15 May 1981 to add the following sentence to the text of the telegram:

SEBAC will assist in any way if asked.