

DRAFT RESOLUTION

This meeting notes that ethnic community broadcasting plays an important role in building the Australian community. We specifically note:

- Ethnic community broadcasting plays a key role in settling new migrants, supporting established communities and helping descendants to maintain their culture. It also provides a professional and cost-effective means of providing information about government services to ethnic communities.
- The democratic structure of community broadcasting has ensured strong community participation, with more than 3000 volunteers producing 2400 hours of programs each week in 97 languages. These volunteers and the community fund more than 80% of the operational costs of broadcasting every year.
- Community broadcasting has a weekly audience of over 4 million a week (McNair Ingenuity Audience Survey, August 2006). Around 23% or 608,000 of 2.65m regular metro community radio listeners are Language Other Than English (LOTE) speakers at home.
- A Griffith University report entitled *Community Media Matters* (March 2007) analyses why community broadcasting is a growing sector and why people value it (see www.cbonline.org.au). The report concludes (chapter 6) that:

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. (p72)

Having considered the report and material in relation to the funding of community broadcasting and ethnic community broadcasting we resolve to:

1. write to all political parties to urge them to commit to substantially increase funding to community broadcasting and ethnic community broadcasting in particular.
2. encourage our members to support the campaign by writing to Ministers, Shadow Ministers and local federal MPs, either directly or through www.valueourvoices.org
3. actively support the joint funding submission of the peak bodies in the community broadcasting sector (including the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council and the Community Broadcasting Association), which seeks an extra \$16.8m per year, on top of the \$8.1m currently provided by the Commonwealth.
4. support the two particular priorities of ethnic broadcasters:
 - **Program Content Funding:** Since 1996/7 there has been an actual decline in the per hour rate for content production from \$48 per hour to

\$35.35 this year. The joint submission seeks an additional amount of \$1.893 million for ethnic broadcasters to bring funding back to 1996 levels. Limiting this funding restricts the participation of women, young people and new and emerging communities in particular.

- **Training:** Training is crucial, so the National Training Project should be funded beyond 2008 when the pilot ends. The submission seeks \$2.8m per year for the sector as a whole. With the demise of the Australian Ethnic Radio Training Project (AERTP) in 2004, which provided over \$200,000 per year, the NEMBC seeks a similar amount for the development and delivery of dedicated training for ethnic community broadcasters.

The increase sought is reasonable because of a 54% growth in the number of licences/stations (to over 480) since 1996. Federal funding levels have only risen by 27% since targeted funding was introduced in 1996/97. The rapid expansion of the sector has led to a real decline (42% in targeted funding and 40% in core funding) in the support available per station.

We also note that the claim is supported by the recent comprehensive inquiry into community broadcasting by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts, which found that community broadcasting is highly valued and grossly under-funded. Their bipartisan report, *Tuning in to Community Broadcasting* (tabled 20 June 2007), recommends \$15.4m in additional funds. We call on the Federal Government to respond quickly to the report.

The Commonwealth proposes to spend around \$107m on a new Australian Citizenship Test over five years. For a fraction of that cost community broadcasting could improve its capacity to assist migrants to better understand Australian society and institutions.

We call on the next federal government, whether Coalition or the ALP, to contribute more to community broadcasting.