

MEDIA RELEASE

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Stopping Social Unrest through Ethnic Community Broadcasting

As the SBS MD, Shaun Brown, pointed out, SBS plays an important role in preserving harmony in difficult times. A robust multicultural society, he told a broadcasting summit in Sydney, can buttress Australia against social unrest.

“However this is not even half the story. The largest service provider of ethnic and multicultural broadcasting in Australia is community radio” said the President of the NEMBC, George Zangalis.

“Ethnic community broadcasting is Australia’s largest multicultural and multilingual broadcasting network. It involves more than 3,000 volunteers who broadcast programs in over 100 languages, from as many community radio stations right across Australia. This broadcasting network does not emanate primarily from Sydney, but delivers localised content, through local and trusted voices, that reaches areas where no other government or commercial radio can reach.”

“Ethnic community broadcasting is in the best position to be able to bind the fabric of local communities and keep them informed and networked during an economic crisis. It will do it at a fraction of the cost of larger broadcasters.”

“Ethnic community radio produces 80% more programs than SBS Radio. SBS Radio which is predominantly funded by government, received \$21 million in 2006-07 at a cost of \$1,500 per program, in contrast to the \$2.7 million going to ethnic community broadcasting at a cost of \$35 per program” said Mr. Zangalis.

“Government funding for ethnic community broadcasting has not increased since 1996, forcing community broadcasters to make unbearable sacrifices in order to stay true to their community obligations. The NEMBC has requested an additional 2.5 million a year compared to SBS’s claim of tens of millions.”

Community broadcasting fosters inclusion and belonging for minority communities, helps build community networks, provides an irreplaceable source of information, discussion, debate and entertainment. This in-turn facilitates social cohesion to Australian society as a whole. Its economic value is in developing pathways to employment, training and skilling people providing leadership opportunities, working with emergency services and strengthening local economies by giving local people information on local businesses” said Mr Zangalis.

“Ethnic community broadcasting, a unique Australian enterprise, should not be ignored and especially with this next budget and the damaging social effects of this economic crisis.”

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