

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Time to tune in: Australia's migrant and refugee broadcasting communities request government support to survive**

The National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC) is calling on the Federal Government to make a genuine and practical commitment to multiculturalism and multilingualism in Australia by supporting ethnic community broadcasting—Australia's largest multilingual institution.

Funding for content production and culturally appropriate training is at the heart of the NEMBC's request to assure the sector's survival.

In an open letter to The Hon Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, President of the NEMBC, Victor Marillanca, requested an increase of \$2.3 million to support the sector. Marillanca said "this funding will go directly into content production for ethnic community broadcasting, which services the cultural, linguistic, social, communications and settlement needs of Australia's diverse population."

Government support for ethnic community broadcasting has stagnated for the past 12 years, placing a burdensome strain on a sector already relying on the goodwill of thousands of volunteers. The NEMBC hopes that the 2010-11 budget will deliver on the ALP's promise for increased support, at a time when dedicated investment is becoming crucial to promote and maintain harmonious multiculturalism in Australia.

"The sector leads the way in ethnic broadcasting in Australia by producing 2,400 hours of programs every week in over 100 languages. This is four times as many hours of ethnic broadcasting as SBS, in 42 more languages than SBS, at a fraction of what it costs Government to fund SBS," said NEMBC President, Victor Marillanca.

The McNair Ingenuity Audience Survey of late 2006 reveals that 57% of Australians listen to community radio in an average month, illustrating that community broadcasting plays an important role in Australia's media landscape.

Ethnic community radio plays a unique and vital role in responding to the changing needs of Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse population. These services provide translated local and country-of-origin news and information, as well as facilitating connections within and between local communities and local services.

A study conducted by Griffith University found that for new migrants and refugees early access to ethnic community radio makes a profound difference to their settlement outcomes—providing a sense of belonging and inclusion in society and empowering these communities to survive through the broadcasting of critical news and information otherwise unavailable.

The Howard Government terminated the highly successful Australian Ethnic Radio Training Program (AERTP) in 2004, which had been in operation for 10 years.

"Stations try to make do with their own depleted resources, but these are not sufficient to sustain the sector. The restoration of funding for the AERTP (a modest amount of \$200,000 annually) would provide culturally appropriate training for community broadcasters, which is essential to establishing programs for new communities and sustaining existing programming with technical developments," said Marillanca.

With no increase in funding for 11 years, community broadcasters are asking why the government is turning its back on this vital service and ignoring the perceptions this is generating within and beyond Australia.

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