



Lauren Zoric | Dog Day Oz PR
T: 0405 793 722 E: lauren@dogdayoz.com W: dogdayoz.com

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Melbourne Community Radio Digital Launch

Thursday April 14, 2011

MC: **Brian 'Rockwiz' Nankervis**

Welcome to Country: **Aunty Joy**

Guest speech: **Lord Mayor, Robert Doyle**

Live from The Atrium, Federation Square, Melbourne 3000

11.00am sharp

Nine Melbourne community radio stations will make their digital radio network debut on Thursday April 14 when for the first time all nine stations will simultaneously broadcast side-by-side live from Federation Square to commemorate this historic occasion.

The nine Melbourne community stations are:

| | | |
|------|------|------------------------|
| 3CR | PBS | 89.9 LightFm |
| 3KND | 3RRR | SYN |
| 3MBS | 3ZZZ | Vision Australia Radio |

This is the first time that so many community stations have ever broadcast together anywhere in Australia – no mean feat in a broadcast sector offering so much diversity, with programming including specialist music, current affairs, youth, ethnic and services for listeners with print disabilities.

Community broadcasters in other mainland capital cities are also set to launch their digital radio services over the next few weeks.

Community Broadcasting Association of Australia General Manager, Kath Letch, welcomed the move to digital.

“The CBAA is delighted to see community digital radio launched in Melbourne with a combined live broadcast of all nine metropolitan-wide stations. Community broadcasters will make a strong addition to the diversity and local content of digital radio services available to the Melbourne community.”

Australia is one of the first countries to implement the new DAB+ format (Digital Audio Broadcasting using enhanced audio coding), which can offer text and pictures, as well as audio. Access to digital radio services has been made possible for metropolitan-wide community broadcasters thanks to Federal Government funding delivered through the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF) to support the CBAA national Digital Radio Project.

Australia is a leader in community radio worldwide – there are currently more than 350 long term stations, and over 100 organisations seeking new broadcast licenses, making community radio Australia's largest media sector. Melbourne holds a special place in community broadcasting with the highest number of metro-based stations and a strong history of cooperation. More than 23,000 volunteers participate in community broadcasting each year, and their contributions are valued at \$342 million (as estimated by CBF research).

Community radio has a long history of nurturing media and broadcasting talent, with alumni including Rove Mc Manus, Hamish & Andy (Austereo), Zan Rowe (Triple J), Scott Pape (The Barefoot Investor), Myf Warhurst (ABC TV), Ricardo Goncalves (SBS TV), HG Nelson (Triple M), Marieke Hardy (ABC TV), Kate Langbroek (Nova FM), Dave Hughes (Ten Network), Robbie Buck (ABC702), Fenella Kernebone (ABC TV), Tom Ballard (Triple J), Tom Elliott (3AW) and countless others.



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Community radio remains a solid fixture in Melbourne and Australia-wide, with steadily increasing audiences. According to a McNair survey (July 2010), the not-for-profit community radio sector reaches a broad listenership nationally with 26% of Australians aged 15+, or 4,433,000 people, listening to community radio in a typical week.

Unlike digital television, the introduction of digital radio does not mean there will be a switch-off date for analog radio services. Digital radio has been introduced as complimentary service rather than a replacement technology, but you do need a new radio to receive it. Commercial Radio Australia research suggests that over 200,000 digital radios had been sold in Australia by December 2010. This figure has doubled since March 2010, suggesting a healthy take up rate among consumers. With the inclusion now of community broadcasters this figure can be expected to rise even more rapidly.

ENDS



NOTES FOR EDITORS

(taken from http://www.cbaa.org.au/Info_For_Stations/Going-Digital-0)

What is Digital radio?

Digital radio broadcasting is a new radio transmission system and very different to analogue transmission. Instead of the audio directly modulating the radio signal as it does with analogue transmission, the audio is first digitised and it's the resulting digital data that modulates the radio signal. Stations will send a digital signal to a transmission multiplex that combines audio channels and encodes them into a single data stream. Community broadcasters will share digital multiplex transmission facilities with commercial broadcasters.

Can all community radio stations start digital services in 2010?

Federal Government policy is to introduce digital radio in stages. The first stage applies to metropolitan wide broadcasting services in the mainland capital cities of Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. This policy was first announced in 2007. Metro-wide community stations in those cities have limited and shared access to digital capacity on multiplexes in each city to commence services in 2010.

What does it mean in technical terms?

The nine Melbourne community stations will each broadcast at 48kbps. This is compared to commercial stations at 128kbps each. Under legislation, metro-wide community stations share access with each other to 2/9ths of digital capacity allocated on each available multiplex.

How will community stations be able to afford digital radio?

The Federal Government has made funding available for transmission and content delivery infrastructure for the introduction of community digital radio in capital cities. This infrastructure is currently being put in place through the CBAA Digital Radio Project with funding support delivered through the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF). The community broadcasting sector will continue to lobby for further funding as digital radio develops and to support the ongoing development of digital content.

What does 'associated data' mean?

This is the extra information that can be supplied with audio for digital radio. Text information and pictures can be provided along with the audio as part of digital transmission. For example: Track listings, information about radio programs, and information related to interviews.

What kind of services will community stations broadcast on digital radio?

A wide variety, and a mixture of simulcasts of analog services, and original content. Some stations plan to simulcast their analog service, some plan to simulcast for a while and experiment with original content, some plan to offer original content from the get-go, and others will be a mixture of all these options. As community radio has always done, community digital radio will offer wide range of programming, opinions and tastes on offer.

Some stations might have volunteers who are keen to make new programs that there isn't room for in the existing service, or podcasters that are already making programs that are not broadcast, or areas of programs that are currently in late night spots that could broadcast in the afternoon on a digital service.

Some stations may want to schedule their existing programs in different timeslots on their digital service or experiment with in their existing format.

In the early stages it may be a challenge to extend programming given the low resources that community stations have, but over time community digital radio offers the potential to extend programming and therefore access and participation in radio-making for volunteer, as well as greater choice for listeners.