

## **Keeping community broadcasters accountable – the new renewals process**

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### **THINGS OFTEN MISSED IN RENEWAL APPLICATIONS**

#### *Introduction*

In assessing renewal applications we regularly find that certain questions are answered inadequately or incorrectly. I'm going to take you through those questions that are commonly problematic and give you a few tips on how to go about answering them.

#### **Q12. What community interest did the licensee represent at the time the licence was allocated?**

ACMA is not looking for a long explanation about the type of programming you provide. We want you to indicate the community interest that your station was originally licensed to serve.

If you're not sure what your community interest is check out schedule two on your stations broadcasting service licence. Your licence officially states what ACMA understands to be the community interest group that your station represents.

If you don't think your current programming is reflective of your community interest, as part of the licence renewal process you can apply to have it changed.

#### **Q17a - Describe the nature and diversity of the community interest the licensee intends to represent over the next licence period?**

This is a question that some of groups seem to struggle with. The purpose of the question is to encourage stations to do some forward planning.

The question asks you to describe how you think the community you serve may change over your next licence period. In responding you could outline possible changes that you are aware of, i.e. changes to local industry, social issues that may impact the community, technologically changes, demographic information, anything else relevant.

**Q23 - Explain how the licensee has encouraged members of the community to participate in the operations of the broadcasting service? Indicate whether the licensee has been successful in achieving community participation? Please provide details.**

ACMA will look closely at your response to this question as it's a condition of your licence that you must encourage community participation in the operations of the service.

You may find it helpful to break down this question into two parts.

*Part 1 - Explain how the licensee has encouraged members of the community to participate in the operations of the broadcasting service?*

Tell us the sorts of things your station is doing to encourage community participation.

Provide evidence to verify your answers. Eg. copies of on-air announcements, website invitations, newspaper advertisements, etc

Stuck for ideas - try talking to other community broadcasters or the CBAA.

ACMA has received positive feedback from a number of stations about this question.

Stations have found it a helpful reminder about they should be doing.

Second part of question

*Part 2 - Indicate whether the licensee has been successful in achieving community participation?*

This part of the question is often overlooked.

Tell us whether or not your strategies for encouraging community participation have been successful. Eg. Increase in station members and volunteers, good response from the community, etc

Again you must provide evidence in support of your answer.

**Q24 - Describe how the licensee encourages members of the community to participate in the selection and provision of programs?**

Again it is a condition of your licence that you must encourage members of the community to participate in the selection and provision of programs broadcast on your station

It may help to break down the question into two parts

*Part 1 - How does your station encourage members of the community to get involved in selecting programs broadcast on your station?*

How does your station tell the community that they can get involved in selecting programming? Eg. Listener surveys, on air announcements, through your website, newspaper advertisements, inviting people to join committees

How do you encourage involvement? Eg. Recruitment drives, outside broadcasts, surveys, etc

Again provide evidence in support of your response. Eg. copies of advertisements, listener surveys (include summary of results)

*Part 2 - How does your station encourage members of the community to establish new local programs or assist with the provision of existing programs?*

How does your station let the community know that they can get involved in developing, producing and presenting programs for the station? Eg. on air announcements, website, membership application form.

Does your station encourage involvement?

Again provide evidence of how you're doing this.

### **Additional questions ACMA may ask**

Your applications often raise issues we may seek to clarify. If so, we will write to you asking for more information.

Some of the questions we have been asking relate to:

1. *The percentage of talk based programming compared to music content.*

ACMA has access survey data which tells us the average levels of talk based content for different service types in different localities.

If groups differ greatly from the average we may ask why.

We want to ensure that your service is meeting the needs of the community

2. *Number of members or station volunteers*

Again ACMA refers to survey data

If your station has a significantly lower number of members or volunteers than the average we may ask why. Low membership could indicate that the station is not encouraging community participation

3. *Financial data*

Again ACMA uses survey data to determine average funding levels.

ACMA's main concerns are with groups operating at a loss, unusually high income or groups operating as part of a profit making enterprise.

Broadcasters need to be able to demonstrate that they have the financial capacity to provide a service. Adequate financial capacity is one of the criteria applicants must satisfy when they apply for a permanent community broadcasting licence.

#### *4. Website information*

If you have a website ACMA will likely check it out when assessing your renewal application.

Websites are useful tool that stations can use to promote their station and encourage community participation. They can assist you when trying to demonstrate compliance with your licence conditions.

If a websites is limited in the information it provides it could be an indication that a station is not open and accessible. Eg. does not indicate that the station is a community service, no information about membership or becoming a station volunteer.

Look at your licence conditions and think about what sorts of things that would be good to have on the site.

#### *5. Evidence*

It's important to provide evidence to back up all your answers. ACMA needs to be confident that your station is complying with its licence conditions in order to approve the renewal of your licence.