

Frequently Modulating: Australian radio's relationship with youth

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Abstract

In the mid-2000s the radio dial in each of Australia's mainland state capitals was home to three stations either purporting to service youth or widely described as doing so. This was remarkable given the federal government maintained a conservative approach to the management of broadcast spectrum at this time and a range of interests competed for its use. Furthermore, each of the three youth stations operating in the mainland state capitals at this time were licensed in separate broadcasting sectors, complicating the notion that these commercial, national and community sectors addressed distinct objectives.

This thesis examines how this settlement was reached—how mainland state capital radio came to include an outlet of the national broadcaster's Triple J youth network, a youth community broadcaster, and Nova FM, a commercial station widely described as youth radio when it emerged in the 2000s. In accounting for the development of this settlement, the thesis focuses on the intersection of technical affordances, including technological, legislative and regulatory conditions that govern the use of radio spectrum, and the discursive formulation of rationales that made it possible to conceive of a specific relationship between radio broadcasting and youth and established the desirability of maintaining this relationship. The thesis draws on a range of empirical material to trace the historical lineage of these technical and discursive underpinnings, resulting in both an historical explanation of the broadcasting settlement of the 2000s and a history of the frequently modulating relationship between Australia radio and youth.

The thesis contends that the youth radio settlement of the 2000s was founded on policy work undertaken during the 1980s and 1990s that problematised the shift of commercial stations out of the Top 40 music radio format. Instigated by music industry stakeholders, this policy work initially focused on the reduced role commercial radio played in promoting new music. But, since Top 40 appeared in the early 1960s as the first substantive articulation of Australian youth radio and,

despite the emergence of national and community broadcasting alternatives, remained the dominant articulation of youth radio for more than two decades, its demise was increasingly problematised as undermining the relationship between radio and youth. I argue that it was this policy story that generated the necessary rationales for the federal government to facilitate the allocation of broadcasting resources to new non-commercial youth radio services between the late 1980s and early 2000s.

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of another degree at a university or any other educational institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person or persons, except where due reference has been made.

Chris K Wilson

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Abbreviations

AAP: Australian Associated Press

AAT: Administrative Appeals Tribunal

ABA: Australian Broadcasting Authority

ABC: Australian Broadcasting Commission (until 1983); Australian Broadcasting Corporation (post-1983)

ABCB: Australian Broadcasting Control Board

ABT: Australian Broadcasting Tribunal

ACMA: Australian Communications and Media Authority

AFCBS: Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations

ALP: Australian Labor Party

AOR: Album Oriented Rock

BA: Australian Broadcasting Act

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation (prior to 1927, British Broadcasting Company)

BSA: Broadcasting Services Act

BTA: Broadcasting and Television Act

CBF: Community Broadcasting Foundation

CCR: Capital City Radio

CBAA: Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (formerly PBAA)

CRA: Commercial Radio Australia (formerly FARB)

DMG: DMG Radio Australia

FARB: Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters (later CRA)

FAP: Frequency Allotment Plan

FCC: Federal Communications Commission (United States)

LAP: Licence Area Plans

NRP: National Metropolitan Radio Plan

PBAA: Public Broadcasting Association of Australia (later CBAA)

PMG: Postmaster General

RMIT: Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

RPS: Radio Programming Standards

SRC: Student Representative Council

TCBL: Temporary Community Broadcasting Licence

UHF: Ultra High Frequency

VHF: Very High Frequency

WTA: Wireless Telegraphy Act

YCB: Youth Community Broadcaster

YMS: Youth Media Society of Western Australia

Introduction

If you had been making your way across the radio dial in any of Australia's mainland state capital cities in the mid-2000s you will have come across three stations that either purported to service youth or were widely perceived as doing so. Given that the government continued to maintain a relatively conservative approach to the management of broadcast spectrum during this period and a range of interests competed for its use, the dedication of a substantial portion of it to youth radio services may have captured your attention. What's more, you may also have been puzzled by the fact that each of the youth stations you encountered was licensed to operate in a separate sector of the Australian broadcasting system, complicating the notion that each of these commercial, national and community sectors are allocated spectrum to address distinct broadcasting objectives.

This thesis aims to identify how this settlement was reached—how the broadcasting landscape of the mainland state capitals came to include an outlet of the national broadcaster's Triple J youth radio network, a community broadcaster specifically licensed to service youth, and Nova FM, a commercial service that, despite its operator professing a relatively broad target audience, was widely described in public discourse as an instance of youth radio when it emerged in the first half of the 2000s.

In accounting for the development of the multi-sector youth radio settlement of the 2000s, the thesis focuses on the intersection of technical affordances, including technological, legislative and regulatory conditions that govern the use of radio spectrum, and the discursive formulation of rationales that made it possible to both conceive of a specific relationship between radio broadcasting and youth and established the desirability of maintaining such a relationship. A preliminary examination of these technical and discursive underpinnings revealed deep historical lineages and in tracing these out a second fundamental aim of this thesis emerged—to identify and examine all of the substantive manifestations of youth radio in Australia's broadcasting history. The thesis seeks to provide an historical

explanation of the youth radio broadcasting settlement reached in Australia in the 2000s while also generating a history of the connection between radio and youth in Australia since the introduction of the medium in the 1920s. In addressing these aims the thesis synthesises a substantial volume and range of empirical material to generate the first analysis of the ways in which the relationship between radio and youth has been formulated and reformulated in Australia, modulating through time and across sectors.

This introductory chapter is divided into four sections. Section 1 presents the core argument made in response to the aim of the thesis. Section 2 examines the conceptual framework and scope of the thesis, outlining how it draws from and contributes to the intellectual territory opened up by the emergence of cultural policy studies in the 1990s and situates the research in relation to the limited range of scholarly literature that examines youth radio in Australia. Section 3 describes the research methods employed in conducting the inquiry and the materials consulted. The final section of the introduction highlights the central argument made in each of the thesis chapters.

Section 1: Outline of the Core Argument

In this thesis I argue that the presence of multiple youth radio outlets in metropolitan Australian radio markets in the 2000s was primarily facilitated by policy work undertaken in the 1980s and 1990s initiated by local music industry stakeholders concerned about changes to commercial radio programming. Specifically, the shift of commercial stations out of the Top 40 format during the 1980s came to be problematised in terms of diminishing what had been a long standing and multifaceted relationship between radio and youth, and I argue that this policy story generated the necessary rationale for the federal government to facilitate the allocation of broadcasting resources to new non-commercial youth radio services between the late 1980s and early 2000s.

By the early 1980s stations deploying the Top 40 format had been a prominent feature of Australian metropolitan radio for more than two decades. Imported from

the United States in the late 1950s to counter the impact of the introduction of television, Top 40 was a radical departure from radio's existing segmented programming model which was being appropriated by the new visual broadcasting medium. Instead of dividing broadcast time into a variety of distinct programs that served different population groups with the aim of accumulating a mass audience across the broadcast day, Top 40 was essentially a single continuously broadcast music program that completely defined the programming identity of a station. While such an approach made it conceivable that radio could serve distinct population groups at the station level, the intention of those that developed the format was to maintain radio's mass appeal. Top 40 was designed to do so by limiting core programming material to a very small selection of only the most popular current musical items (hit records).

That Top 40 would come to be conceptualised as the first articulation of Australian youth radio was a result of the format's reliance on recorded music sales to measure popularity, and the convergence of demographic, economic and cultural factors that established young people as the core record buying public from the mid-to-late 1950s. Despite centring on the tastes of young people, the format attracted a large listenership across a range of age groups. In fact, the type of cultural dynamism exemplified by Top 40 programming, which constantly introduced new hit records by wearing out the welcome of existing hits through high repetition, would increasingly be conflated with the state of mind and style of consumption of 'youth' or 'youthfulness'. This was a psychographic conceptualisation that Top 40 stations and other purveyors of new and emergent cultural product and practices found they could sell as an aspirational ethos to a broad audience.

The dominance of commercial Top 40 stations in Australian metropolitan radio markets through the 1960s and 1970s, in terms of both the number of stations and ratings, made youth seem essential to the success of the medium. It also meant that, despite alternative counter-cultural youth radio articulations appearing in the national and community broadcasting sectors in the mid-1970s, Top 40 remained the predominant way of conceptualising radio's connection with youth. As such,

when stations began to move out of the format in the early 1980s seeking to capture older segments of the population that had become a more lucrative commercial prospect by programming popular music from the past rather than hit music of the present, it is not surprising that the relationship between radio and youth specifically and radio's future generally, was considered to be in jeopardy. Although initially expressed as a commercial concern by business and marketing industry commentators, at the instigation of local music industry stakeholders, the demise of Top 40 was translated into a public policy issue.

The music industry has always had a stake in radio broadcasting as music has been a key programming element of the medium since its emergence in the 1920s. As an all-music radio format, Top 40 not only raised this stake by increasing the amount of music put to air, but its rapid diffusion and high turnover of musical hits interplayed with a concurrent expansion and reconfiguration of the industry based around the production and promotion of a continuous cycle of new music. Commercial radio's replacement of Top 40 with formats that centred on popular music's back catalogue rather than new music was problematised by music industry stakeholders as it reduced the role that radio played in the industrial development of music; an argument that was also extended to radio's cultural development. This formulation intersected with an existing policy framework that called on radio broadcasters to support local cultural development, and in 1982, an opportunity for it to be activated in the policy arena arose when the Australian broadcasting regulator conducted a review into the effectiveness of the primary local cultural development regulatory mechanism—a local music quota that required commercial stations to ensure 20 per cent of the music they played was Australian. The inquiry yielded results in 1986 and 1988.

Despite the rising political stocks of the music stakeholders under an Australian Labor Party federal government that from the mid-1980s until it lost office in the mid-1990s had sought to promote the music industry as a key sector of the economy, recommendations from the regulator to renovate the local music quota to specifically address the music industry's concerns by encouraging commercial

stations to play new music proved unworkable. This is perhaps not surprising given the ALP's general commitment to move away from restrictive industrial regulation and towards the realisation of social, economic and cultural objectives by intervening in the structure of markets. In the broadcasting field, the federal government decided that a range of policy objectives might better be addressed by the release of additional licences in each of the three broadcasting sectors. It was in the process of seeking to position the new music issue to take advantage of any such affordances that the demise of Top 40 was gradually and thoughtfully reframed as not simply a loss of support for local music development, but as a diminishment of the relationship between radio and youth.

The transposition of the issue of radio's diminishing use of new music into one of radio's diminishing relationship with youth was theoretically straightforward given what had emerged as a widely held conception of youth as a predilection for new and emergent cultural consumption. It was an important move, since it not only activated powerful and well-established governmental vocabularies relating to youth that extended beyond the cultural sphere, but better matched a key objective of the national and community broadcasting sectors to service disenfranchised audiences—sectors where, given the lack of interest from commercial broadcasters, new music policy solutions were most likely to be found. The broadcasting regulator, having failed in its bid to renovate the local music quota, was at the forefront of this process. It conducted a number of studies through the 1980s and 1990s that concluded youth were inadequately serviced by radio and which both drew from and informed discussions of the radio-youth disconnect by the media and cultural policy studies academics.

When the federal government technically afforded new opportunities to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) for national broadcasting services as part of the 1988 National Metropolitan Radio Plan and, following the introduction of the 1992 Broadcasting Services Act and nationwide spectrum review, community broadcasting services in the early 2000s, a refined policy story supported by an extensive and diverse evidence base existed that encouraged the allocation of at

least some of these new broadcasting resources to service youth. While it is indisputable that the Triple J youth radio network and the seven youth community broadcasters that were established through these affordances arose from a complex array of institutional investments and negotiations by the ABC and the registered not-for-profit community groups that underpinned the youth community broadcasters, this thesis reveals how the youth radio policy story was drawn upon to facilitate the allocation of broadcast spectrum to these organisations to realise their youth radio ambitions.

Interestingly, elements of the youth radio policy story developed through the 1980s and 1990s would also play a role in how changes to the metropolitan commercial radio landscape through the first half of the 2000s would come to be described as a return of commercial youth radio. New commercial licences also released through the post-1992 Broadcasting Services Act nationwide spectrum review were used by DMG Radio Australia (DMG) to establish the Nova FM network. Although DMG did not identify the network as targeted at youth and actually took definite steps to emphasise a broader target audience, I will argue that both the manner in which it described the network's programming and descriptions offered by the media highlighted a range of elements that had featured in the youth radio policy work conducted over the previous two decades and contributed to its acceptance as an articulation of youth radio in public discourse. When the broadcasting regulator began to refer to the service as youth radio in the mid-2000s, it undermined a key element of the rationale it had itself helped develop for the allocation of resources to non-commercial youth radio services, and further contributed to tensions between institutions offering youth radio services in different broadcasting sectors.

In tracing out development of the metropolitan youth radio settlement of the 2000s this thesis identifies and examines all of the key manifestations of youth radio in Australia's broadcasting history. The thesis contends that since the development of Top 40 commercial radio as the first articulation of Australian youth radio in the early 1960s, the relationship between radio and youth has manifested as the ABC's Double J founded in 1975, 'educational' community broadcasters licensed in the

mid-1970s that were closely aligned with student/youth interests, the ABC's Triple J network rolled out from 1989, the Nova FM metropolitan commercial radio network established from 2001, and community broadcasters licensed in 2001-2002 to specifically to serve youth.

Section 2: Conceptual Approach and Scope

This thesis draws from and seeks to contribute to the intellectual territory opened up by the emergence of cultural policy studies in the 1990s, while adding to the limited range of media history scholarship that has focused on youth radio specifically, and radio broadcasting generally.

The conceptual approach of this thesis is drawn from the field of cultural policy studies, a field that emerged amidst substantial debate in Australia through the 1990s (cf. the exchange between Levy, 1992; Cunningham, 1992a; O'Regan, 1992b). As noted by Flew (2001), cultural policy studies arose to address concerns that the discipline of cultural studies had become bogged down in abstract and dialectical struggles and could be reinvigorated by reorienting itself towards the history and politics of cultural institutions and the practices of those who administer them. By linking cultural studies to socio-democratic politics and citizenship discourses it was argued that there was a greater possibility for intellectual work to contribute to more effective forms of political practice, with cultural studies practice informing the work of decision-making agents in particular institutional and policy fields (Flew, 2001, pp.2-3). This thesis reveals that such an ambition was certainly realised by cultural studies scholars in relation to the policy process that yielded youth community radio investments in Australia in the early 2000s.

Beyond simply creating a more practice-oriented and socially relevant discipline, Rennie (2006, p.8) notes that the proponents of cultural policy studies highlighted that 'theory itself could benefit from an understanding of the processes, ideas, and structures created through the technologies of government'. Indeed, cultural policy studies has opened up new territory for re-thinking the relationship between culture and government, drawing on Foucauldian considerations of government as

an enabling category rather than one that stands over and against the individual and civil society and thereby encouraging a more extensive examination of the 'strategic nature of policy discourse' than had previously been the case (Cunningham, 1992b, p.170). In pursuing this task in relation to youth radio in Australia, I also draw from Foucault's conceptualisation of the materiality of discourse, and his analytical approach of seeking to establish 'the positivity of discourses, their conditions of existence, the systems which regulate their emergence, functioning and transformation' (Foucault, 1991, p.69). As such, the object of analysis of this thesis is best conceptualised as discursive articulations of the radio-youth relationship defined by the existence of establishing rationales, evident for instance in the case of the ABC's decision to create the Triple J youth radio network, or through the existence of commonly accepted public discourse that describes a set of practices as youth radio, as is evident in the case of Top 40 format commercial radio.

Such an approach obviates the need for a normative definition of what constitutes youth radio as a programming format. Likewise, the thesis will not define youth, or variants such as teenagers or adolescents, but seeks to examine the use of these classifiers as unsettled discursive constructions put to real and varied use in the allocation of radio spectrum as a cultural resource. It should also be clear that although I use the term youth radio as shorthand, the manner in which radio is presented first in the radio-youth descriptor is important as it illustrates that the thesis is not concerned with examining how youth as an audience utilise radio, but the manner in which radio has utilised, or is understood to have utilised, the concept of youth.

In this thesis I am concerned with the allocation of broadcast spectrum as a cultural resource, a technical affordance that occurs at a minimum institutional level of the station. As such, while I acknowledge that individual programming segments of a range of general commercial and community stations (cf. Van Vuuren, 2003, chapter 5 2TEN community radio case study; and the work of Huber, 2008 on commercial Take 40 Australia Top 40 countdown segments) are described as targeting youth, I do not address these as articulations of youth radio. While an individual station may

in some cases be the sole entity of a radio-youth articulation, for instance I take the ABC's Double J station to encapsulate a distinct articulation, the utility of articulation as a conceptual tool is its ability to capture abstracted radio-youth relationships, enabling, for instance, analysis of youth community broadcasting while obviating the need to address each proponent of what is classified as such an undertaking.

This thesis is primarily concerned with the emergence of youth radio articulations rather than the practices of entities that encapsulate them and therefore focuses on the technical affordances and discursive rationales that has generated cultural resource allocations rather than with how those resources come to be used. The exception is where such practices have been leveraged in the process of further or alternate allocation of resources to youth radio or constrained such options.

While the thesis primarily aims to account for the emergence of the multi-sector metropolitan youth radio settlement of the 2000s, in undertaking the task of tracing out the discursive formulation of youth radio it has generated a historical narrative that identifies and examines all of the substantive manifestations of what has been defined as such a practice in Australia's broadcasting history. As such, the thesis also makes a contribution to Australian media history scholarship.

Only a small body of scholarly literature has been published that specifically examines the relationship between Australian radio and youth that is not simply grounded in a particular manifestation of this relationship. Since this material was drawn into the youth radio policy development process of the 1980s and 1990s, as examined in detail in Chapter Two, it serves as both primary artefact and scholarly antecedent to this thesis. The key work here is Graeme Turner's (1993) book chapter 'Who killed the radio star? The death of teenage radio in Australia'. His chapter sketches out some of the causes and consequences of the demise of the commercial Top 40 radio format in the 1980s problematised as the disappearance of youth radio from the Australian metropolitan radio landscape. It has proven pivotal for this thesis, providing a setting off point and some pathways into the history of the

connection between youth and radio in Australia, but also in raising questions about what transpired between its publication and the multi-sector youth radio settlement of the mid-2000s. In providing an account of the development of aspirant youth community broadcaster HITZ FM, Mick Counihan's book chapter (1996) 'Summer in the suburbs: HITZ FM and the reinvention of teen radio', is the only other substantial scholarly output that examines the relationship between radio broadcasting and youth in Australia. Again, this piece proved an important launching point for the historical research of this thesis, and a point from which the thesis has pushed the youth radio narrative forward. It should be noted that Baker (2012) has examined the relationship between Australian online radio services and youth, but given the significantly different distribution infrastructure, legislative and regulatory framework covering such services they fall outside the scope of this thesis.

The thesis also draws from and contributes to historical scholarship on what are defined as distinct articulations of youth radio in this thesis—beginning with Top 40 and concluding with Nova FM. In relation to Australian commercial Top 40 radio, little scholarly literature has been published. The best sources of research on this radio format are popularly published accounts from ex-practitioners and fans, including Mac (Mac, 2005), Rogers and O'Brien (2008) and Kruger (2012). Griffen-Foley (2009) provides the primary scholarly material on Australian Top 40 as part of her broader history of Australian commercial radio, while Huber (2005; 2008) examines Top 40 in her doctoral thesis and subsequent work, but largely does so from a music categorisation rather than radio programming viewpoint. This thesis draws from these existing secondary sources. While it is beyond scope of this thesis to conduct substantial primary research into this type of youth radio, some future Top 40 research pathways identified in undertaking this project are outlined in the conclusion.

The ABC's Double J youth radio service has also not been thoroughly examined. While Inglis' (1983; 2006) two volume history of the ABC provides some material and the broader institutional context, as does Dugdale's (1979) book on sister station 3ZZ and the analysis of the state of the ABC in this period conducted by Rosenbloom

(1976) and Harding (1979), it is Helen Marie Dickenson's (1979) honours thesis, a journal article by Dawson (1992) and a chapter of Davis's doctoral thesis and subsequent journal publication (1984; 1985) which provide the most thorough examination of the establishment and operation of the station. The latter work is particularly important for this thesis as it deals with the policy context out of which the station emerged.

Surprisingly, the history of the Triple J youth radio network, despite its continuing role as an important part of the ABC and a substantial piece of Australia's cultural infrastructure, has not been comprehensively documented. As with Double J, Inglis' (1983; 2006) history of the ABC provides a basic examination of the network's development within the broader context of the national broadcaster. Some primary research on the formation of the network in the late 1980s and early 1990s was conducted for an Honours thesis by Lois Andrews, but this thesis has been lost and all that remains is an extract published in Moran's (1992) broadcasting reader. Much of the writing about Triple J has focused on the impact that establishing the network had on the existing Double J/Triple J Sydney-only service and its listeners, as well as on rural communities (Albury, 1999; Wark, 1990; Ames, 2004). While I draw on this work, I am chiefly concerned with the institutional and broader policy work that was undertaken to facilitate the establishment of the station. In Chapter Three, I make a key contribution in examining the role of the *Dix Inquiry* into the operations of the ABC (Dix, 1981a), whose findings in relation to Triple J have been either overlooked or misinterpreted by the existing literature.

One sector of Australian radio that has been subject to a moderate volume of scholarly work is that of community broadcasting. In developing an argument that the allocation of experimental broadcasting licenses to universities as a means of establishing community broadcasting sector resulted in a new articulation of youth radio, the thesis is particularly indebted to the work of Rosenbloom (1976; 1978) produced contemporaneously with the emergence of the sector; Thornley (1999; 2001; 2002), who utilised a combination of public documents, personal archives and interviews to produce a thorough examination of the political machinations behind

the sector's development; more contemporary work that links community broadcasting's past to its future, including that by Forde, Foxwell and Meadows (2002) and Rennie (2006), and research into individual station histories, particularly that by Phillips (2006), on Melbourne's 3RRR and as part of broader work on the Brisbane music scene, that by Stafford (2006) on 4ZZZ.

In conducting the research for this thesis, I found very little analysis of the integrated national spectrum review conducted by the regulator throughout the 1990s following the introduction of the 1992 Broadcasting Services Act, or the resultant release of new commercial and community broadcasting licences. Compared to the modest proliferation of work that emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s on National Metropolitan Radio Plan (NRP) (Miller, 1992; Miller, 1995; Collingwood, 1997; Collingwood, 1999; Brown, 1990), the post-Broadcasting Services analytical landscape is barren. With regards to the planning process that would yield a youth community broadcasting articulation of youth radio, the primary scholarly outputs are those by Counihan, on HITZ FM as an aspirant broadcaster (Counihan, 1996), and a paper produced by then general manager of the broadcasting regulator, Giles Tanner (1999), that detailed the proliferation of aspirant test broadcasters. In relation to the licensing of new community broadcasters at the conclusion of the planning process the only scholarly examination is that by Marcato (2005a) which focuses solely on Melbourne. Subsequently, two youth community broadcasters licensed at this time have been subject to some scholarly work—that by Rennie (2011) on Melbourne's SYN FM, and as part of a broader music radio examination, that by Fairchild (2012) on Sydney's FBi Radio.

The other youth radio articulation that emerged from the post-1992 Broadcasting Services Act planning process was that of DMG's Nova FM. Two small studies focus on the emergence of this network, that by Celmins and Buchanan (2005), who played a key role as practitioners developing the Nova format, and that by Phillips and Guilfoyle (2004), who examine how existing commercial radio stations and DMG prepared for the entry of Nova into the Perth market. This thesis builds substantially

upon these works, contextualising the emergence of Nova FM and establishing how the national Nova Network came to be described and positioned as youth radio in the market through a detailed analysis of the print media and trade press.

Finally, it is important to recognise that this thesis engages with and contributes to the study of Australia's long history of local content regulation, and in particular the local music radio quota. I am greatly indebted to the thorough and insightful research by Breen (1987; 1990; 1993; 1999), Counihan (1991; 2003; 1992a), Jonker (1992) and, Homan (2007; 2013) on the quota and its relationship with popular music policy. In this thesis I complement this work with the most detailed account to date of the emergence and conduct of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal's *Australian Music on Radio Inquiry* (reported upon in ABT, 1986; ABT, 1988c), the most comprehensive inquiry into the quota and one of the most comprehensive broadcasting inquiries in Australia's history.

Section 3: Methods and Materials

In mapping out the historical modulations of Australian radio's relationship with youth since the beginning of broadcasting in the 1920s, this thesis synthesises an extensive body of secondary research literature largely reporting on institutional and sectoral analyses (some of which were discussed in Section 1 of this chapter), and combines this with a vast array of new primary research data. Primary material was collected using two research methods: archival research and semi-structured interviews. This triangulation approach—combining secondary research with multiple primary research methods—is a typical means of enhancing validity in qualitative research projects of this type (Bowen, 2009, p.28; Sarantakos, 1993, pp.76-78; pp.155-156).

Archival research involves 'locating, evaluating, and systematic interpretation and analysis of sources found in archives' (Corti, 2003). I interpret this as broadly including official public institutional collections (such as, the National Archives), private collections (such as, that made available by Joanna Poznanovic), and digital repositories (such as, the Factiva newspaper collection). Archival material was

identified and collected utilising two systematic research approaches: directed search and comprehensive scanning. Directed search involved querying archive databases using pre-determined search terms, such as 'youth', 'teenagers', 'radio', 'broadcasting', depending on the particular archive and nature of the research task. Comprehensive scanning was generally used when examining a sequence of publications deemed relevant but only available offline – such as the ABC Staff *Journal Scan*. This involved identifying the entire sequence of items generated during the period under analysis and undertaking a page-by-page examination to locate pertinent material in each volume/item. Appendix 1 lists the archives consulted in this thesis and the primary research approach utilised for each.

The primary documentary material that forms the basis of this thesis is diverse. It includes:

- Communications and broadcasting legislation;
- court rulings;
- parliamentary debate (Hansard);
- ministerial statements;
- parliamentary and other government initiated inquiries;
- political party conference proceedings and policy platform documents;
- plans, decisions, inquiry submissions, media releases and investigatory and annual reports of the broadcasting authority, communications department and other relevant departments and regulatory agencies;
- ABC corporate plans, inquiry submissions, investigatory and annual and reports, and other internal and external communications;
- inquiry submissions and annual and investigatory reports of relevant sectoral bodies, including the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, Community Broadcasting Foundation and Commercial Radio Australia;
- broadcast licence applications;
- print, broadcast and electronic media, commentary and advertising; and
- broadcasting and advertising trade-specific print and electronic media reports, commentary and advertising.

While a range of documentary material used in this thesis has not previously received substantial scholarly attention, some of it has proven fundamental to the unique scholarly contribution of the thesis. This includes:

- Form 32 Licence Applications submitted by organisations in metropolitan Australia seeking a Community Broadcasting licence in the post-Broadcasting Services Act licence allocation round in the early 2000s;
- Australian Broadcasting Tribunal *Australian Music on Radio Quarterly Reports* authored by Ed Jonker in the late 1980s and early 1990s;
- Documents pertaining to the *Australian Music on Radio Inquiry* of the early 1980s, including reports, transcripts and submissions;
- Groove FM and Hype FM archive held by CK Wilson (compiled by Joana Poznanovic - former station manager of Groove FM and Hype FM); and
- Geoff Evans archive (in possession of, and made available by, Phoebe Thornley, Newcastle, NSW).

A range of analytical techniques are employed to examine primary documents in this thesis, dependent on purpose. A descriptive rather than critical approach is applied to technical documents, such as legislation and spectrum planning regulations, called upon to describe the technocratic context in which youth radio has been facilitated at different historical junctures. Given that the thesis purposely avoids defining youth, but is primarily concerned with the ways in which this concept is deployed to direct the allocation of cultural resources in the form of limited radio spectrum, I undertake a refined content analysis of selected government and related institutional policy documents that seek to define youth and the relationship between youth and radio. This analytic approach is clearly evident in Chapter Two where the political vocabulary of youth radio that informs the development of the Triple J and youth community broadcasting services is traced out. In Chapter Five I conduct a similarly refined content analysis of public statements made by DMG Radio Australia as the company sought to describe the nature of their Nova FM service; and media reports that settled upon a description of that service as youth radio. Here, as in all instances of content analysis conducted

for the thesis, I have chosen to avoid using quantification techniques that Bowen (2009, p.32) notes are 'typical of conventional mass media content analysis'. Instead, I illustrate discursive settlements using multiple and multi-source quotations. This technique is better suited to that task of tracing out the gradual and iterative formulations of discursive settlements that have informed the allocation of resources to youth radio, and to differentiating between sources based on their influence on policy development and institutional action.

Documentary evidence derived from archival research is supplemented in this thesis by material from interviews with members of the broadcasting regulator, and relevant public, community and commercial broadcasting organisations. A list of interviewees is provided in Appendix 2. The interviews were semi-structured, a technique that provided the necessary flexibility to both confirm or discredit lines of argument developed from documentary and secondary source material while also allowing new lines of argument to emerge. Respondents were provided with a set of questions and themes prior to the interview and during the interview I utilised a series of non-directive and summary probing techniques (Sarantakos, 1993, pp.194-195).

Section 4: Chapter Summaries

This thesis is divided into six chapters arranged to chronologically map out the modulations of Australian radio's relationship with youth since the beginning of broadcasting in the 1920s and culminating in the mid-2000s when the metropolitan radio landscape incorporated youth radio services in each of the three broadcasting sectors. This structure satisfies the thesis' dual purpose of accounting for the development of an abundant youth radio landscape in the mid-2000s while highlighting all of the key instances of youth radio in Australian broadcasting history.

Chapter One examines how the first substantive articulation of the relationship between radio and youth emerged in Australia in the late 1950s in the form of the Top 40 radio format which, having been imported from the United States, was taken up by a large number of metropolitan stations. I argue that Top 40 was the

dominant form of Australian metropolitan commercial radio through the 1960s and 1970s. This ensured that, despite the emergence of some counter-cultural non-commercial youth radio services in the mid-1970s, in the early 1980s Top 40, with its formula of high repetition of a limited selection of the latest popular music, remained the predominant way of conceptualising the relationship between radio and youth in Australia.

Chapter Two describes the disappearance of the Top 40 format from the Australian radio landscape in the 1980s, and traces out how this emerged as a policy problem that would eventually be formulated in terms of a disconnection between radio and youth. In this chapter I argue that local music industry stakeholders were pivotal in articulating changes to commercial radio formats in the 1980s as a policy problem. While these stakeholders were concerned that the demise of Top 40 reduced their ability to promote new local music, they came to realise the limits of expressing the issue in these terms, and found greater political traction and an expanded array of policy solutions by leveraging off well-established governmental vocabularies relating to youth. In this chapter I trace out how formulating youth radio as a policy problem through the 1980s and 1990s generated the rationales for the allocation of resources to the national and community broadcasting sectors to address the issue in the 1990s and 2000s.

The development of the ABC youth radio network Triple J, which was rolled out across the state capitals in the early 1990s and reached into the heart of regional Australia by the turn of the century, is the subject of **Chapter Three**. In this chapter I argue that the development of the network was not simply an extension of the ABC's existing Double J youth station established to serve as a counterpoint to Top 40 in Sydney in 1975. Instead, I claim that the network required a commitment of resources from both the ABC and the federal government and this settlement was only reached in the late 1980s as the imperative of the national broadcaster to expand its youth audience intersected with the emerging federal government policy position that, in the wake of the demise of Top 40, youth were no longer adequately serviced by radio.

Chapter Four examines the substantial commitment of broadcast spectrum made to community broadcasting services that sought to address youth in the early 2000s. In the period 2001/02 seven of 14 metropolitan community broadcasting licenses made available following the nationwide spectrum review and planning process mandated by the 1992 Broadcasting Services Act were allocated to youth stations. In this chapter I argue that a combination of heightened awareness of community licensing opportunities resulting from public consultation conducted during the nationwide spectrum review, simplification of the process through which aspirant community broadcasters could undertake on-air tests, public visibility of the success of test broadcasts conducted by aspirant youth stations and lengthy delays in the planning process, ensured that when the permanent licence application process was finally initiated a number of youth aspirants were ready to compete for the limited licences made available. While the broadcasting regulator may not have overtly discriminated in subsequently allocating licences to a number of these youth aspirants, I argue that the large body of policy material, some compiled by the regulator itself, which problematised radio's diminishing relationship with youth in the wake of the demise of Top 40, provided youth aspirants a very strong evidence base from which to make its licensing case relative to those seeking to serve other communities.

Chapter Five examines the return of commercial youth radio to the Australian broadcasting landscape in the form of the Nova FM metropolitan radio network established by DMG through the first half of the 2000s. Although DMG did not present the network to the market as targeted at youth (and actually took very definite steps to emphasise that it aimed to attract a broad audience under 40 years of age), I present evidence that it clearly came to be accepted as an articulation of youth radio in public discourse. In this chapter I trace out how Nova's youth radio credentials were initially established in the media and trade press before entering the academic arena and eventually government discourse where it undermined part of the rationale for the allocation of resources to non-commercial youth radio services.

In **Chapter Six**, the final substantive chapter of the thesis, I address some of the tensions that have arisen as a result of the emergence and coexistence of youth radio services operating in each of the three broadcasting sectors in Australia's major cities in the early-to-mid 2000s. I examine three particular flashpoints: the impact that the introduction of Nova FM had on Triple J and the ABC's restructuring of its youth broadcaster in mid-2003; the use of the regulatory system by DMG to silence Perth youth community broadcaster Groove FM, viewed as a competitor to its Nova FM service, and the apparent success of DMG and the commercial radio lobby in convincing the broadcasting regulator that changes to the extent and nature of commercial radio provision had diminished the need for youth community broadcasting services.

Chapter 1

Connecting Radio and Youth in Australia

Introduction

Distinct music and variety programs targeting young people had been incorporated into the segmented programming schedules that constituted Australian radio in the three decades prior to the introduction of television in 1956, but these were limited in number and radio essentially focused on adults. In this chapter I argue that the first substantive articulation of youth radio in Australia emerged in the early 1960s. This was not the result of an expansion of existing youth programs, but the adoption by a number of metropolitan commercial stations of the Top 40 continuous music format as a replacement for the segmented variety programming approach that had been appropriated by television.

The Top 40 format was developed in the United States in the early 1950s and its almost immediate success in countering the impact of the introduction of television led to a rapid and extensive diffusion across the country. Although designed as a mechanism for aggregating mass audiences by playing only the most popular current musical items determined by local record store sales, a range of demographic, socio-economic, cultural and technological conditions made young people the main record buying public by the mid-to-late 1950s and therefore the determinants of Top 40 programming—generating an enduring connection between youth, radio and the popular music industry. The connection between Top 40 and youth was initially played down but not resisted by US Top 40 stations, for not only had young people become an important market for a range of consumer products and services in addition to popular music, but, despite centring on the tastes of young people, the format continued to attract a large and broad audience.

When Australian commercial radio managers were investigating effective countermeasures to television in the second half of the 1950s the Top 40 format

they encountered in the United States was already firmly associated with youth. With similar social, economic and cultural conditions to those that had facilitated this association in the United States also prevailing in Australia, the connection was maintained when Top 40 was imported in 1958. As in the United States, the success of the format in delivering large audiences to radio in markets where television services had been rolled out led to its rapid diffusion across markets, but also within multi-licence metropolitan markets, generating a number of competing Top 40 services. Unlike the United States, where government regulation allowed for substantially more competition, facilitating greater levels of specialisation, Top 40 became the dominant form of Australian metropolitan commercial radio. In maintaining its limit on radio licenses, the Australian government contributed to the enduring market dominance of the format through the 1960s and 1970s. This ensured the format became the predominant way of conceptualising the relationship between radio and youth despite the emergence in the mid-1970s of some non-commercial youth radio services. In Chapter Two I argue that this made it relatively easy to problematise the abandonment of the Top 40 by commercial radio in the 1980s as radio's abandonment of youth, a formulation more amenable to policy intervention than the underlying concern of the music industry that they had lost an important vehicle for promoting their wares.

This chapter is divided into four sections. Section 1 describes the regulatory, industrial and programming settlement that emerged in Australia during radio broadcasting's first three decades and the disruption to this settlement resulting from the introduction and spread of television services in the second half of the 1950s. This section establishes the context in which the relationship between radio and youth first emerged in Australia and, importantly, frames the development of subsequent youth radio articulations examined in later chapters of the thesis.

In Section 2 of this chapter I describe the architecture of the Top 40 format adopted in Australia as a countermeasure to the introduction of television. I outline its development in the United States and identify the social, economic and cultural conditions under which youth came to the centre of its programming dynamic. In

this section I examine how the relationship between the music industry and radio was altered by Top 40, and the manner in which young people became a fundamental third party in this relationship.

Section 3 of this chapter describes the importation of the Top 40 programming strategy into the Sydney radio landscape by 2UE and its subsequent development and dissemination across Australia's metropolitan radio markets. I argue that a conservative regulatory regime that impeded the release of broadcast spectrum to licence additional stations enabled Top 40 to remain a dominant metropolitan programming strategy and the most fundamental articulation of youth radio for more than two decades.

The final section of this chapter examines the emergence of two alternative articulations of youth radio in the mid-1970s. These were made possible by the more progressive approach to broadcasting policy taken by the Whitlam Labor government which took federal power after 23 years of conservative rule in 1972. The introduction of FM broadcasting was considered fundamental to the expansion and diversification of radio services and it was through the process of planning its introduction that the government, drawing from the success of Free-Form¹ FM programming in the United States that sought to engage with youth as civic and political actors rather than consumers, made the case for the development of alternative youth radio services in each of Australia's state capital cities. Although these plans were stymied, the government did facilitate some experimentation with Free-Form youth radio by allowing the ABC to use its AM backup Sydney transmitter to start the Double J youth radio service. A second, more incidental, youth radio articulation emerged from the government's attempts to establish community radio as a third broadcasting sector. As with Double J, under the guise of experimentation, broadcasting licenses were issued to universities which increased contact between young people and radio. Over time, some of these university services would come to sound more like Free-Form rather than educational stations.

¹ Sometimes referred to as Progressive FM or Underground FM.

While the new alternative youth services were certainly innovative, they did not have a substantial impact on the youth audience captured by commercial radio, nor did they greatly alter the public perception that the relationship between radio and youth was one formulated on the basis of the consumption of commercial popular music. As a result, they did not feature in discussions of radio's diminishing relationship with youth in the 1980s and 1990s. What they did do was provide a precedent for hosting youth radio services in the non-commercial sectors. This would be called upon by those seeking to find new parts of the broadcast landscape in which to regenerate Top 40 youth radio, much to the displeasure of many of those engaged in these alternative youth radio articulations.

Section 1: Radio and the Impact of Television

When television broadcasting began in Australia in 1956 to coincide with the Melbourne Olympics it disrupted radio's segmented variety programming settlement that had been formulated over the preceding three decades and was underpinned by what had become a stable set of industrial and regulatory structures. Before I describe the programming settlement and the manner in which television impacted upon it, I will provide a brief account of these structures as they provide important context for youth radio developments in this and later chapters—particularly, with regards to government intervention in programming articulated as a demand for adequate and comprehensive radio service provision.

Establishing the Structure of the Australian Broadcasting Landscape

Following experimental broadcasts in the late 1910s and early 1920s, official radio broadcasting services began in Australia in 1923 (Mackay, 1957, p.20). In recognition of broadcasting's use of a public and scarce resource (electromagnetic spectrum), and its potential impact on the citizenry, the federal government exercised its constitutional powers to control the new medium and its market structure. This control was initially applied through the Wireless Telegraphy Act (WTA) (1905) and an expanding set of statutory rules issued under this Act and administered by the Postmaster General's Department (PMG) (Wireless Telegraphy Regulations (Cwlth),

1922, P2, 1.4; MacKinnon, 2012). Regulatory intervention under the WTA was largely technical and structural and, although some content was prohibited, the government did not seek to direct the programming activities of broadcasters (Evans, 1983, p.232). Indeed, the government was primarily concerned with establishing a technologically and commercially stable broadcast structure by controlling access to spectrum through a limited licensing system and assumed this was likely to foster quality programming (Johnson, 1988, p.55; Barnard, 1982; Hawke, 1995, p.35).

In 1924, after a failed attempt at creating a subscription-based broadcasting market, the government established a dual category system that would evolve into the national and commercial broadcasting sectors that remain a feature of the Australian broadcasting landscape (Curnow, 1961, chapter 9; Counihan, 1992b, p.14; Wireless Telegraphy Regulations (Cwlth), 1924). High power A-Class stations, financed through a combination of listener fees levied on receiver owners by the government and limited advertising and sponsorship, were licensed to provide quality programming to a broad and geographically dispersed audience. Low power B-Class licenses, in part conceived as a means of enabling existing amateur and experimental activity to continue, left stations to raise their own funds, including through unregulated amounts of advertising and sponsorship (Johnson, 1988, p.59).

By the late 1920s it was clear to the government that neither A- nor B-Class stations would voluntarily operate in the less populated areas where it felt the isolation-diminishing social benefits of broadcasting would be greatest (Cole, 1966a, pp.18-22). Despite receiving revenue from the licence fee system, the A-Class stations had resisted the government's call to pool their resources to develop rural services and in response, their licences were not renewed when they expired in 1929. Instead, the government acquired their infrastructure, placed it under the control of the PMG, contracted out the programming of these new national stations through a commercial tender and planned to establish additional outlets in rural areas (Curnow, 1961, chapter 13; BTCE, 1991, pp.11-13; Mackay, 1957, pp.27-28; Cole, 1966a, pp.20-21; Semmler, 1981, pp.7-9). When the programming contract

subsequently ran out in 1932, the government passed legislation to create the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) as a government-funded statutory authority to take responsibility for the former A-Class stations (the retention of the A-Class call signs by the ABC are a pertinent reminder of the national broadcaster's commercial history) (Johnson, 1988, p.57; Thomas, 1980, p.9; Blain, 1977, p.11).

While the A-Class stations were transformed into a national broadcasting service, B-Class stations, which had expanded in number and organisational scale through the 1920s and 1930s, were left to fend for themselves. Mackay (1957, p.116) reports that in 1934 the minister made it clear that the government thought of the B-Class stations as simply providing a supplementary service to the ABC. This was a significantly different sectoral hierarchy than that proposed in later years by the commercial broadcasting sector that the B-Class stations had evolved into. Although B-Class stations had lobbied for formal recognition as a distinct commercial broadcasting sector through the 1930s it was not until the enactment of Australia's first consolidated broadcasting legislation in 1942, the Australian Broadcasting Act (BA), that they were recognised as such (Australian Broadcasting Act (Cwlth), 1942; Johnson, 1988, pp.147-48; Given, 2003, p.52). The dual national and commercial sector structure established by the Act remained largely unchanged over the subsequent five decades in which the Act remained Australia's primary piece of broadcasting legislation, although community broadcasting emerged in a rather ad-hoc manner as a third sector in the mid-1970s, as discussed in Section 4 of this chapter.

Programming Governance: adequate and comprehensive broadcasting

It was through the 1932 ABC Act, and in formulating the commercial tender that preceded it, that the government first took an active interest in directing elements of radio programming to 'relate broadcasting to the needs of the nation' (Hitchens, 2006, p.150; Mackay, 1957, p.31; Johnson, 1988, p.57). In Chapter Two I trace the history of local content regulation back to specific directives issued in these documents. Importantly, they also set out the government's desire for broadcasting

to meet the demands of a diverse citizenry, providing a framework for later discussion about the extent to which youth were catered for by broadcasting services. The ABC Act expressed this as the requirement for the national broadcaster to provide ‘adequate and comprehensive programmes’, a terminology that has retained its currency² (Australian Broadcasting Commission Act (Cwlth), 1932, P3, S16). As a statutory authority the ABC is ostensibly free to interpret this directive as it chooses, but, as Davis (1985; 1988) and others (cf. Harding, 1979; Ashbolt, 1987; Rosenbloom, 1976) argue, the government maintains sufficient leverage through control of its funding, technical and transmission equipment³, and spectrum allocation to exert some influence over national broadcasting activity. This will be drawn into discussion of the establishment of ABC youth radio station Double J later in this chapter, and the Triple J ABC youth radio network in Chapter Three.

Despite the consolidation of control of the national and commercial sectors under the 1942 BA, the ABC alone was subject to the adequate and comprehensive programming requirement until the late 1940s. As with the previous WTA-based regulation, the Act primarily sought to influence the quality of commercial radio programming by limiting competition. However, as indicated by Hawke (1995, pp.35-36), such structural regulation alone was eventually deemed incapable of addressing ‘the various demands of citizenship and State’. In 1948 the Act was amended to establish an independent regulatory body, the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB), which was directed to ensure that commercial stations provided ‘adequate and comprehensive programmes’ that served the ‘best interests of the general public’, and to have particular regard for ensuring a ‘reasonable variety of programmes’ (Australian Broadcasting Amendment Act (Cwlth), 1948, Division 2, 6K1 and 6K2). Although this programming directive lacked precision, it did establish a principle that there were ‘interests independent of both the State and the market that could be collectively defined as public and that needed to be

² After the corporatisation of the ABC in 1983 this requirement was altered slightly to become ‘innovative and comprehensive’ (Davis, 1985).

³ In 1964 the PMG handed over the studio technical services to the ABC (ABC, 1999, p.84).

represented', and brought both national and commercial radio programming more firmly into the realm of public policy (Hawke, 1995, p.36; Cole, 1966a, p.266, p.506).

A Segmented Variety Programming Model

When the adequate and comprehensive directive took effect in the immediate pre-television period, the call for broadcasting to service an array of interests and tastes essentially reflected the nature of the existing programming settlement of both the commercial and national sectors. Variety programming had developed into a relatively sophisticated model for engaging what were understood as a socially and culturally diverse audience. But, its roots extend back to the introduction of broadcasting in the 1920s, as radio equipment manufacturers who were driving this process to establish a domestic consumer market simply felt that programming 'novelty, variety, and a general sense of excitement were . . . the best means of attracting consumers' (Johnson, 1988, p.31; Counihan, 1981; see McNair, 1937, p.150 for a description of direct involvement of equipment sector interests). Indeed, in Australia, as in the United States and Britain where it was concurrently established on a similar manufacturer-led basis, broadcasting did not arrive in the early 1920s 'to meet any clear existing consumer demand', but was instead seeking to create it (Given, 2003, p.22). It was, as noted by Williams (2003, pp.18-19), 'not only that the supply of broadcasting facilities preceded demand . . . [but] that the means of communication preceded their content'.

Broadcasting through the 1920s might reasonably be characterised as a series of sporadically transmitted events that demonstrated the technological capability and versatility of radio. Content was acquired 'parasitically', in the form of the remediation of a variety of pre-existing events, such as plays, operas, lectures, and sports commentary, from diverse 'places of entertainment and information' (Williams, 2003, p.18, p.21; Johnson, 1988, chapter 2; Jones, 1995, chapter 2). To this mix, broadcasters added an array of increasingly elaborate radio stunts; for example, one Sydney station even managed to relay a diver's live description of the bottom of Sydney Harbour to its audience (Johnson, 1988, pp.42-43). A more

familiar and less costly raw material was studio-performed and recorded music (Counihan, 1992a, pp.8-9). By the mid-1920s its increasingly liberal use was claimed to have reduced sales of sheet music and gramophone records, inspiring the formation of the Australian Performing Rights Association (APRA) in 1926 to seek royalties from stations on behalf of artists (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.252). APRA has continued to play an important role in the complex, and at times antagonistic, interplay between the institutions of broadcasting and music production—a relationship explored to some degree in this thesis (Walker, 1973, p.85; Counihan, 1992a).

By the late 1920s and early 1930s radio began to be appreciated less as a novelty with the potential to transmit a variety of content and more as a distinctive medium defined by the variety of content which each station, even those in multi-station markets, had come to offer (Johnson, 1988). In addition to remediated events, this now included medium-specific content, marking the constitution of radio as a new cultural form (Given, 2003, p.47; Griffen-Foley, 2009, pp.118-119). In the same period a more sophisticated understanding of the audience, including its divisibility into groups with specific needs that existed separately to broadcasting but could be addressed through targeted content came to the fore; while an even more complex understanding of the potential for broadcasting itself to form distinct taste-based cultural groups began to surface (Johnson, 1988, p.29; for an illustration of the more sophisticated approach to Australian radio audiences adopted at this time see McNair, 1937, Part 3). It was women and children that were first identified as distinctive audiences (Johnson, 1988, pp.19-23). While there is also some evidence that youth were viewed as an audience for ‘specialist talks and sessions’ in the 1930s, it was not until the 1940s and 1950s that a range of programs targeting youth were developed (Mackay, 1957, p.71).

Identifying the link between diverse audiences and program content was just one piece of the radio programming puzzle resolved in the 1930s. Broadcasters also addressed the issue of how this variety of content could best be assembled—how broadcast time could be divided. An important parameter in deliberations about

radio time was radio's space. As Potts (1989, p.5) notes, the prevailing technological conditions meant radio receivers remained both large and expensive through the 1930s and 1940s, essentially confining broadcast reception to the fixed domestic space of the living room—a space he suggests was transformed into a listening room. Matching programs to available audiences required broadcasters to understand the use of this space throughout the day. Punctuality, regularity and routine became fundamental to a programming regime that responded to, and sometimes manipulated, the flows of daily life within this domestic setting (Potts, 1989; Williams, 2003; Scannell, 1986; Johnson, 1988). So it was, for instance, that children's sessions were scheduled after school hours. Evenings were a 'prime-time' to reach all members of the household through family-oriented programs; a time when the daily audience peaked and commercial stations capitalised through high cost advertising and sponsorship.

According to Williams (2003, pp.86-96), broadcasters increasingly considered programming in terms of flow as much as sequence. Johnson (1988, pp.125-127) found that by the late 1930s Australian commercial and national stations were both expressing the importance of winning and holding an audience by curating programs in a manner that emphasised continuity. Likewise McNair (p.311), in his ground-breaking guide to Australian radio advertising published in 1937, confirmed that broadcasters had begun to think about their stations according to a 'general character'. But it was not until the post-television period that the station itself became the fundamental unit of promotion and consumption. Before then programs remained central, as is clear from the fact that listeners continued to be disciplined to select and schedule their radio consumption by consulting program guides published in newspapers and magazines (Johnson, 1988, chapter 3).

So it was that from the 1930s until the introduction and uptake of television in the mid-to-late 1950s both commercial and national radio engaged a segmented programming model in which their relatively continuous transmissions were divided

into programs with standard durations of 15, 30 and 60 minutes⁴ (Potts, 1989, p.30; Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.151). Although Miller (1997, p.53) argues, it would be 'quite wrong to draw an indelible line between the program output of the ABC and its commercial counterparts at this time', with both broadcast sectors presenting a range of entertaining and informative programs, including everything from dramatic serials to sports commentaries, quiz shows to sermons, community singing to news, operas to recorded popular music, it is also the case that commercial stations needed to respond to the market in determining their programming fare. As Mackay (1957, p.111) pointed out in the late 1950s, 'the demands are such that commercial broadcasting cannot afford to cater for minorities and programmes are broadcast in rough proportion to their popularity'. Increasingly, a view that the ABC was to service minority interests, complementing rather than competing with commercial broadcasting, took hold and has remained a source of ongoing debate (as discussed for instance in Bear, 1981; Davis, 1988; Debrett, 2010).

The importance of individual program popularity for the commercial stations was reinforced by the business model. In addition to spot advertising, whereby businesses paid for announcements priced by the word, commercial stations allowed businesses to sponsor entire programs at various lengths and costs (Crawford, 2008, pp.77-80; Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.25). This approach had been imported from the United States where a similar segmented programming landscape had emerged (Rothenbuhler and McCourt, 2002). Indeed, despite the establishment of distinct broadcasting market structures in Australia, Britain and the United States, the development trajectory in terms of programming was relatively similar in each of these countries to this point, with each settling on a segmented variety model (Williams, 2003, pp.26-34). Under the commercial model of the United States an even greater connection between advertisers and programming was forged when advertising agencies themselves began to produce entire programs on behalf of their clients (Smulyan, 1994, pp.81-86). This practice was

⁴ Although sometimes longer programs were presented, particularly by the ABC (McNair, 1937, p.233).

established in Australia by the local divisions of the US advertising agencies J Walter Thompson and George Patterson in the mid-1930s (Crawford, 2008, pp.79-80; Walker, 1973, chapter 15; Walker, 1967, pp.234-235).

It was in the early 1940s that the Australian division of the George Patterson agency, through its Colgate-Palmolive unit, produced the first notable youth variety show on Australian radio (Griffen-Foley, 2009, pp.217-218). *The Youth Show* catered to 'all tastes in music, drama and comedy' and enabled young performers to show off their talents (Crocker, 1989, p.23; Patterson, 1992; Potts, 1989, pp.85-86). The show's design, which introduced new performers and retained and trained a select group as the regular cast, would later be transposed onto Australian television through programs like *Young Talent Time* (Crocker, 1989, p.31). Another notable youth variety program developed in this pre-television period was 2UE's⁵ *Rumpus Room* which began in 1947 (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.264). Developed and compared by Howard Craven, *Rumpus Room* featured music from emerging artists and was produced live nightly from 5pm until 6pm in front of a studio audience. It was one of 2UE's most popular programs, remaining on air for 15 years and inspiring a range of imitators including 4BH's *Rumpus Room*, 2UW's *Teenage Club*, and 3AW's *Rumpus Time* (Moran and Keating, 2009, p.114; Mac, 2005, p.6; Kent, 1983, pp.88-90). While these programs certainly reveal that radio sought to engage with youth as one of its many audiences, according to Mac (2005, p.6), they were 'few and far between' with radio remaining essentially 'a medium by adults, for adults' in the pre-television period.

It was as a result of the disruption to radio's segmented variety programming approach in its entirety by the introduction of television that youth became more central to radio programming, particularly that of commercial radio which, despite early predictions, had emerged as the dominant sector of Australian radio in terms

⁵ Australian broadcast radio call signs on the AM band contain one number and two letters and FM band contain one number and three letters. The numbers refer to the state or territory in which the broadcaster is located as follows: 1 ACT; 2 New South Wales; 3 Victoria; 4 Queensland; 5 South Australia; 6 Western Australia; 7 Tasmania; 8 Northern Territory. The callsign letters are chosen by the broadcasting organisation.

of number of outlets and number of listeners (Mackay, 1957, p.125; Jones, 1995, p.49; McNair, 1937, Chapter 7, pp.333-335). The national service would retain and adapt a segmented programming model in the post television period and, although they continued to air youth programs such as *ABC Hit Parade* and *Teenage Jamboree* hosted by Dick Williams, these did not rate well against the increasingly youth-centred programming of commercial stations (Inglis, 1983, pp.229-231; Semmler, 1981, pp.58-59). As noted in the history of Melbourne ABC station 3LO, 'Williams' 'groovy' grasp of the language and perky little bow ties weren't enough to lead droves of teenagers to tune from the commercial stations to 3LO' (ABC, 1999, p.84).

Television and the Colonisation of Radio's Programming Space

Fiddling by successive Australian governments ensured that when television was introduced in 1956 under the Broadcasting and Television Act (BTA) which replaced the BA, radio broadcasters had been contemplating how to respond to the loss of their electronic media monopoly for more than a decade (Curthoys, 1991). The introduction of a new electronic media form was always going to pose a threat in terms of competition for audiences and advertising revenue, but Australian radio stations also deduced from the television services already operating in Britain and the United States that the more substantial problem was the likelihood that the new medium would appropriate its variety programming model. Indeed, in Britain and the United States, television had clearly replicated a range of radio's program types and adopted its segmented programming schedule, a strategy underpinned by technical similarities between radio and television receivers that meant television had also colonised the domestic space of the living room (Gomery, 2008, chapter 4). Potts' 'listening room' had been transformed into a watching room, reinforcing the general impression that television was radio with pictures; essentially not a new cultural form, but the upgrading of an existing one (Potts, 1989).

The impact of the programming approach adopted in Britain and the United States on the development of Australian television would be rather direct since Australia's new commercial television proprietors and the ABC both sent executive teams

overseas to learn first-hand about the operation of the new medium (Herd, 2012, p.46, p.52). The ABC sent personnel to Britain where both radio and television were, at the time, an exclusively national activity under the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); while Australian commercial television was more interested in activities in the market-oriented broadcasting landscape of the United States. The executives not only returned with a clear grasp of the programming model and types of programs that could be developed locally, but also ready access to a range of recorded British and US shows (Herd, 2012, p.52; Cunningham, 1997, pp.96-97). Of course, as it had been in the United States and Britain (Gomery, 2008, chapter 4; Crisell, 2005, chapter 7), local radio was also mined by television broadcasters for successful programs and recognised on-air talent⁶ (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.56). Indicative of television's direct encroachment on radio's programming territory, some existing radio programs began to be simulcast across the two platforms; for instance, *Pick-a-Box*, a quiz show hosted on radio since 1948 by Bob Dyer, perhaps the most successful star to make the transition between electronic media in Australia, was transmitted as both a radio and television program between 1957 and 1962 (Jones, 1995, p.67; Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.230).

Television's impact was initially felt most keenly by radio in terms of programming and personnel rather than audience and profitability. The new medium was rolled out in stages across Australia's mainland state capitals through the late 1950s and did not reach Hobart and regional centres until the 1960s (Herd, 2012, p.50, p.86; Jones and Bednall, 1980). Where television had arrived, its transmission hours were also relatively short. In 1957, the ABC's television service could be on air for as little as two hours in the evening, while the commercial stations provided between three and six hours of programming daily (Jones, 1995, p.66). The impact of television on radio industry revenue and profit was also initially muted as the advertising industry was incredibly buoyant through the second half of the 1950s (Crawford, 2008, p.135; Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.58). In fact, average station revenue remained static

⁶ Television also attracted technical off-air personnel from radio in Australia as it had overseas (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.56; Fornatale and Mills, 1980, pp.6-7).

and profit fell by just two per cent in the year television was introduced (1956/7), and growth returned and continued over the rest of the decade (Based on ABCB data published in Walker, 1973, p.91).

It was clear that television's impact would be an 'accelerating process' (Foster, 1995, 9.10). Where it was available, Australians had taken to television at a rapid rate. In its first year of operation 12 per cent of homes in Sydney and 26 per cent in Melbourne had acquired sets. By 1958 household penetration had risen to 40 per cent in the two capitals, and in 1959 it stood at 60 per cent (Jones, 1995, p.66). Nationally, Herd (2012, p.86) reports that take-up was faster than that achieved in the US and UK—after five years of television in Australia household penetration stood at 51 per cent, compared to 34 per cent achieved over the same time period by US television (1952) and 9 per cent by the BBC (1951). When television was on-air it clearly reduced radio listening. In 1958 the managing director of the Macquarie network reported that listenership had decreased by 20 per cent during the prime night-time television hours (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.56). The prospect of more television sets in homes and increased television broadcast hours suggested radio was in trouble.

Walker (1984, p.121) notes, that the "television terror", expected to reduce radio to a small, feeble, ancillary voice, never really struck'. But, this was not because radio retained a cultural form⁷ that was capable of amassing a sustainable audience in spite of television's encroachment. Certainly more lavish productions and larger competition prizes had proven futile (Crawford, 2008, p.133). Instead, it was because radio's cultural form was radically reinvented, primarily by the commercial radio sector. In the next section I argue that the fundamental articulation of this new form was the music and news Top 40 format imported from the United States; a format that would come to centre on the cultural tastes of young people.

⁷ Killmeier (2005, pp.166-167) provides an excellent conceptualisation of the 'cultural form' terminology in his description of the rise of 'automotive radio' in the 1950s.

Section 2: Top 40 and its Evolution as Youth Radio

As the new proprietors of Australian commercial television sent executives to examine the operation of television in the United States from the mid-1950s, so too did commercial radio executives make the journey across the Pacific to assess how its compatriots were responding to the new medium⁸ (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.55). What they found was a radio industry that was not only surviving the introduction of television, but flourishing, as evident from continued growth in receiver sales, stations, and advertising revenue (Rothenbuhler and McCourt, 2002, fig 17.1; Douglas, 2004, p.220). Mostly what they heard was not a diverse range of programs assembled into a segmented schedule, the type of programming that had previously constituted US radio and to which they were accustomed to providing in Australia. Instead, they encountered a radically different form of programming based on just two primary content types, music and news, and these were assembled by an increasingly large number of stations with an absolute commitment to continuity (Keith, 1987, p.2).

Although facilitating flow between programs and establishing the general character of the station they were presenting to the market may have previously been given some consideration by broadcasters, it became the defining feature of post-television commercial radio programming in the US, as it later would in Australia. Radio was no longer an assembly of programs but could be organised as one continuous program with 'only a middle, no beginning or end', a 'total station sound' that completely defined the identity of the station which emerged as a primary unit of production and consumption (Johnson and Jones, 1972, p.112; MacFarland, 1975, p.400; Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, p.147; McCourt and Rothenbuhler, 2004, p.4; Fong-Torres, 1998, p.81). In the absence of flagship prime-time programs, this approach was thought to provide the best chance of generating a sizeable audience over the course of the broadcast day since it reduced barriers to tuning-in, as listeners understood a station's program offer without the need to consult published

⁸ Griffen-Foley (2010) neatly documents the historical underpinnings of the relationship between Australian commercial radio and US broadcasters.

broadcast schedules, and gave captured listeners few reasons to tune out (McCourt and Rothenbuhler, 2004, p.6; Fornatale and Mills, 1980, pp.13-14). Radio was redesigned to accompany listeners through their day rather than being a dedicated activity of it, and sought to neither stimulate too much attention or any thought of turning it off (Berland, 1993, p.105).

This strategy clearly intersected with advances in radio receiver technology that saw a reduction in both cost and size and enabled radio to develop a more continuous relationship with listeners outside the living room and, following the release of more reliable car radios and small battery-operated portable radios, even on the move⁹ (Schiffer, 1991; Killmeier, 2005, p.162). As Killmeier (2005, p.161) argues:

Rather than an insignificant change in receiving sets, automotive and portable radio were a unique development in the history of radio – they were forms that reflected and shaped the ways people listened as well as the content of postwar radio¹⁰ and the spaces of listening.

While radio had proven incapable of competing with television for an audience in the living room, plenty of new television-free spaces, including the bedroom, the car, the workplace, and the street, had opened up. In Australia, the commercial radio industry's peak body launched its 1958 marketing campaign 'Wherever you go there's radio' to emphasise this point of difference (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.58).

Underpinning experimentation and diffusion of the new continuity-based programming was the emergence of a profitable new business model. Continuity programming substantially reduced radio's costs of production by limiting the variety of content and the number and diversity of staff it required (Rothenbuhler and McCourt, 2002, p.371; Fornatale and Mills, 1980, p.13). For music and news

⁹ As suburbanisation dispersed the population generating increasing car dependency and commuting times, both the US and Australia had a growing number of people spending an increasing amount of time on the move (Killmeier, 2005; Gomery, 2008, pp.144-145; MacFarland, 1979, pp.7-8).

¹⁰ Killmeier (2005) makes a compelling argument that, independent of television's introduction, changes to receiver technology was putting pressure on the traditional fixed-domestic programming model.

stations the cost of on-air talent, the Disc Jockey (DJ), and royalty payments for the use of recorded music as its the primary content, were marginal compared with that of the live performances and syndicated content of radio's past and television's present (Fornatale and Mills, 1980, p.13; Smulyan, 1994, p.160). While radio initially lost many of its major national advertisers to television, it was able to use its low-cost structure to attract advertising from more numerous local small businesses (MacFarland, 1979, p.11). The low-cost approach also fit well with the spot advertising model that radio had come to promote in lieu of the demise of program sponsorship. Eventually, radio broadcasters were able to convince national advertisers that a high frequency spot advertising schedule spread across several days could reach the same number of people and at lower cost than the huge static audiences it reached through flagship program sponsorship in the 1940s and which television was now offering (MacFarland, 1979, pp.58-63; Fornatale and Mills, 1980, p.22). This 'reach and frequency' approach has been retained as a central tenet of US radio advertising strategy. It was also adopted in Australia, and alternative approaches, such as that promoted by the Nova FM youth radio service in the 2000s are considered highly unconventional, as described below in Chapter Five (Jones, 1995, p.69; for an analysis of the transition to spot advertising in Australia see Walker, 1967, p.238).

So radical was the departure of radio in the United States from its previous programming approach and so complete was the colonisation of that approach by television that Johnson and Jones made a strong case in their 1972 guide to radio station practices that it was radio, rather than television, that was in fact the newest form of electronic media (Johnson and Jones, 1972, chapter 1). Even a new technical language emerged to describe radio programming in the post-television era (Keith, 1987, pp.2-3). The term 'format' was designated to refer to the list of ingredients found in a station's continuous program; these could include specific types of music, newscasts, sound elements (including sound effects), and even phrases to be delivered by announcers, as well as the manner in which these ingredients were

combined, usually within a repeated base program hour (Johnson and Jones, 1972, p.112; Berland, 1993, p.108).

While a range of formats (including some based on spoken-word such as *All-News*) would eventually be developed, many of which were designed to target specific audience segments, it was Top 40 music and news that first constituted format radio and was the dominant approach employed by US commercial radio when Australian radio broadcasters undertook their reconnaissance in the mid-to-late 1950s¹¹ (Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, p.192; Johnson and Jones, 1972; Barnes, 1988, for a description of some early American radio formats). Indeed, while Australian radio executives returned from the United States with a range of 'Television Counter Measures', it was the importation of the Top 40 format by Stewart Lamb, whose family owned Newcastle Station 2KO and Sydney Station 2UE, that profoundly changed Australian commercial radio and brought youth to the centre of radio's imagination (Foster, 1995, 8.35 mins; 11.30mins; Davidson, 1975, p.7, p.18; Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.55).

The Top 40

When Stewart Lamb made his trip to the United States in 1957, the format approach to radio was generally well understood in that country and the successful Top 40 format deployed by a vast number of syndicate¹² and independent stations, was increasingly well-defined (Land, 1957, p.1; Barnes, 1988, p.11; Gomery, 2008, p.147,

¹¹ In collecting data on the range of formats that have come to be employed by radio in the US the *Broadcasting & Cable Yearbook* defines a format as programming broadcast over 20 hours weekly (Broadcasting Publishing, 1993, P.B511). Programming broadcast from one to 20 hours weekly is defined as special programming. *Broadcasting & Cable* note that most stations broadcast one format and might include some special programming, while some report two or more formats. In Australia, single format stations have been the norm, although some of these have included special programming—for instance sports coverage.

¹² Four major Top 40 syndicates were established: Mid-Continent Broadcasting Company (engaged in 7 stations through 1950s-1960s), Gordon McClendon (engaged in 17 stations through 1950s-1960s), Plough Broadcasting of Memphis (engaged in 6 stations through 1950s-1960s) and the Bartell Group (engaged in 10 stations through 1950s-1960s) (MacFarland, 1979, pp.161-162). These groups all played a significant role in refining the format and ensuring its diffusion both directly, as the purchased new stations and indirectly as independent station owners studied and then imitated their stations operating in the same or different markets. For an excellent overview of the development of the four syndicates and their impact see MacFarland (1979) and Ganzert (1997).

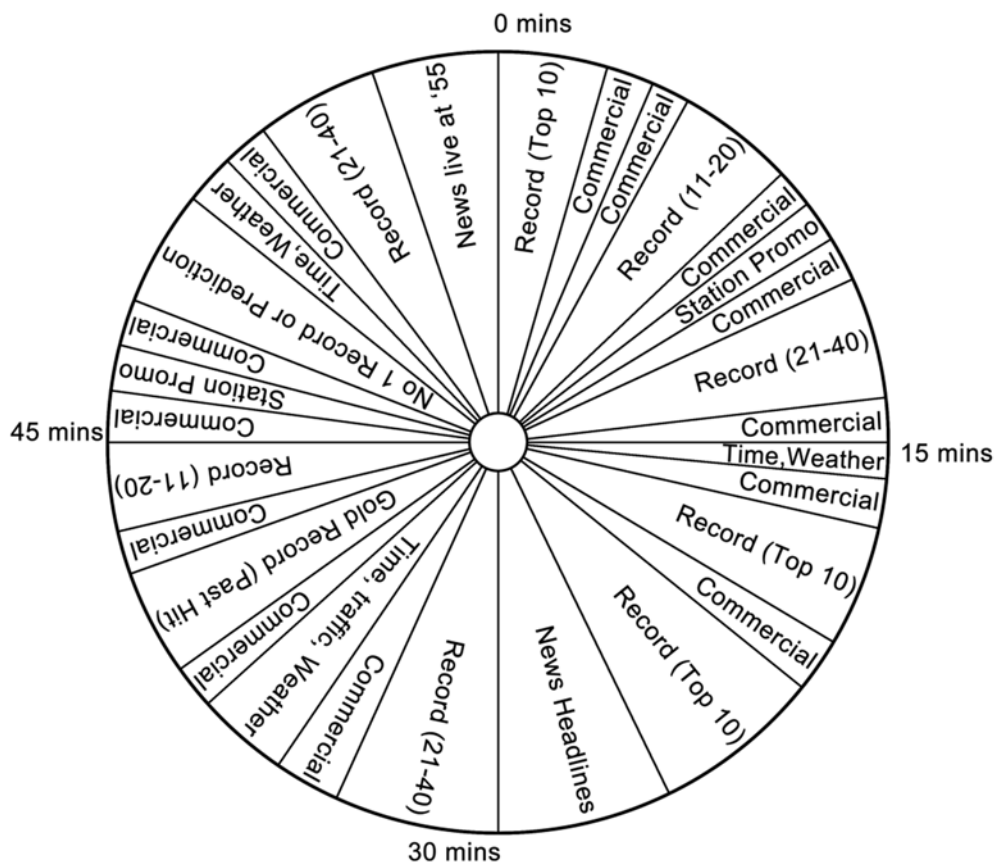
p.142; Mac, 2005, p.10). In May of that year Herman Land penned an eight page profile of the format's creator, Todd Storz, for *Television Magazine* that included an overview of the content and composition of Top 40 and the principles that informed it (Land, 1957). Land (1957, p.3) revealed that the key component of the format was a limited playlist of the current most popular recorded music tracks (hit records/hits) as determined by local record store sales, juke box plays and listings in the music industry trade magazines *Billboard* and *Variety*. To this was added a sprinkling of predicted hits, also identified through the trade press, and some hits from the past. The musical content of the Top 40 would, according to Land (1957, p.3), never include anything, 'that isn't a hit, can't be a hit, or wasn't a hit'. To the music was added regular news updates, time checks, weather reports, traffic updates, promotions and competitions, station identifications, and, of course, advertisements. These elements were all carefully combined into a base program hour, referred to as a 'hot clock', with attention to flow and pace to generate a 'sense that 'something is happening' all the time'¹³ (For an example, see Figure 1.1) (Fong-Torres, 1998, pp.81-83; Eberly, 1982, pp.203-204; MacFarland, 1979, pp.263-264). It was then the job of the DJ to translate the 'hot clock' on air, adding 'warmth' and 'sparkle' and using sound effects to put 'colour' into the sound (Land, 1957, p.2, p.4, p.6).

The repetition of the program hour combined with the limited popular music playlist ensured repetition of individual music tracks throughout the day: a practice defined as high-rotation, and provided the sense of familiarity considered fundamental to generating 'tune-in' and militating against 'tune-out' (see Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, pp.138-141 for an illustration of the complexity of the hot clock formulation). In seeking to explain the development of the principle of popular music repetition, Land (1957, pp.3-4) pointed to Storz's observations of juke box use in restaurants during the war. Storz claimed that, having observed different patrons over the course of a number of hours playing the same tracks, he deduced that at any given

¹³ One study found that a typical Top 40 program hour consisted of 22 commercials, 73 weather, time and contest announcements, 58 station call letter identifications, a 3 and a half minute newscast and 12 songs (Fornatale and Mills, 1980, p.127).

time there were a very limited number of popular records. When he witnessed the waitress use her tip money to play the very same tracks at the end of her shift despite hearing them all day, he also realised that people wish to hear these most popular tunes over and over (Land, 1957, p.3).

Figure 1.1 Sample Top 40 hot clock



Developed from the samples and discussion in Eberly (1982); Ganzert (1997); MacFarland (1979); Fatherley and MacFarland (2014); Keith (1987).

Land was relatively restrained in his presentation of the importance of Storz's restaurant observations, but many later authors have embellished this story to suggest that he had an epiphany in which he mapped out the Top 40 format in its entirety in one sitting. As McCourt and Rothenbuhler (2004) argue, in compressing the timeline of the format's development, such explanations have helped generate a broader misconception that Top 40 was designed as a segmentation strategy to attract youth by programming rock'n'roll, a concurrently emerging popular music

form of which they were the primary consumers (cf. Sterling and Kittross, 2002, p.368; Brewster and Broughton, 2006, pp.48-49; Miller, 1999, pp.53-57; Ward et al., 1986, pp.156-157; Johnson and Jones, 1972, pp.122-123; Smulyan, 1994, pp.159-160).The programming of Top 40 stations would indeed come to reflect the tastes of youth through rock'n'roll music, a transitional process well underway when Stewart Lamb was in the United States, and would establish Top 40 as the first articulation of youth radio in the United States, as I am claiming it was in Australia. However, the development and deployment Top 40 was a more considered and iterative process that began prior to the impact of rock'n'roll on the popular music marketplace and sought to 're-aggregate the mass audience for radio' rather than promote an aesthetic aimed at addressing a specific demographic segment. It was incredibly successful at doing so, even after the rise of rock'n'roll (particularly in Australia's limited competition markets as described in Section 3 below) (McCourt and Rothenbuhler, 2004, p.4).

Storz began his experimentation with popular music programming in 1950, shortly after he formed the Mid-Continent Broadcasting Company and purchased KOWH, the lowest-rating station in Omaha. Armed with the results of a university study that indicated music was the major reason Omaha residents listened to radio, and an appreciation of the success that New York station WNEW had in employing segmented music and news programming since the 1930s, Storz cautiously began to replace the station's line-up of talk, dramatic and genre music programs with popular music programs (Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, p.23; Fatherley, 1998, 4:35min, 15.30mins; MacFarland, 1979, p.165; Rasmussen, 2008, p.55; McCourt and Rothenbuhler, 2004, p.6). This was an incremental process and it was not until the end of 1950 that the afternoon schedule was composed of music programs, the end of 1951 that music programs dominated the entire schedule, and well into 1953 when the last specialty program was axed (Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, pp.24-26; Connell, 2014; Rasmussen, 2008, p.63; McCourt and Rothenbuhler, 2004, p.6).

Although not genre-based, the music programs Storz added to the schedule were discrete units, with music determined by individual disc jockeys and requests from

listeners (Rasmussen, 2008, p.63; Sharpe, 2014, p.160). Storz almost immediately began the search for an evidence-base identifying the tunes that would be most popular (Rasmussen, 2008, p.62). In this endeavour, Storz looked to the successful weekly *Hit Parade* programs that had identified and 'counted-down' the nation's most popular songs since the mid-1930s (Eberly, 1982, p.125; McCourt and Rothenbuhler, 2004, p.5). While the parades themselves provided some evidence of current music popularity, Storz was keenly interested in a larger selection of records and local rather than national musical tastes. He was chiefly concerned with the methods employed by the parades to pick the top tunes. These were no secret, with the presenter of *Your Hit Parade*, a program that Storz had included in the line-up of KOWH, beginning the show by announcing:

Once again the voice of the people has spoken to select the tunes of the *Hit Parade*. New Yorkers, Californians, Northerners, Southerners, Republican, Democrats, men, women - 120 million of you have told us what songs you want to hear this Saturday night. You've told us by purchasing sheet music and records, by your requests to orchestra leaders, by the tunes you listen to on your favourite programs. That's why the *Hit Parade* is your own program (McCoy Recordings, 1935; in Eberly, 1982, p.126).

Storz arranged for a number of local record stores to provide him with sales receipts and had local juke box distributors to provide lists of coin returns for individual records. These types of methods of local music consumption surveillance undertaken by Storz would remain fundamental to determining Top 40 playlists (Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, p.29, p.139; Rasmussen, 2008, p.62). As with the spread of music programming across all day-parts, the deployment of the central playlist was an incremental process. From 1952 a set of 10 or 20 top tracks were integrated into the repertoires of all music programs on KOWH (Sharpe, 2014, pp.160-161; Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, p.29; Rasmussen, 2008, pp.63-65). It was not until Storz acquired a second station in 1953, WTIx in New Orleans, that the number of top tracks was expanded to 40, giving the format its name. It took a

further three years before a completely centralised and continuous programming of the Top 40 playlist was introduced on all Storz stations (then totalling five)¹⁴ (Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, chapter 3; Sharpe, 2014, p.161; McCourt and Rothenbuhler, 2004, p.7; Fatherley, 1998, 17.10 mins; Armstrong, 2004; MacFarland, 1979, p.339).

Storz made it quite clear, in terms not dissimilar to those of the *Your Hit Parade* announcer, that the methods of Top 40 music selection were designed to ensure that the format acted as a democratic arbiter of current musical tastes and provided the general public exactly what they demanded when they tuned in¹⁵. He told Land (1957, p.2): '[t]he programming of music is out of our hands. It is controlled entirely by the choice of the public'. As with the prime-time radio programs of the pre-television era, Storz was attempting to attract the broadest possible listener base and, certainly through the 1950s, he promoted his stations to potential advertisers on the basis of total audience share (Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, p.35; McCourt and Rothenbuhler, 2004, p.11; spot analysis of Storz station advertisements *Broadcasting Magazine* 1950-1965). Storz told *US Radio* magazine, '[o]ur desire is that our stations please the majority of people the majority of the time' (US Radio, 1958, p.22; cited in Eberly, 1982, p.215). As one Mid-Continent programming director argued, the company was 'selling one thing and one thing only—audience . . . tonnage, how much audience' (cited in McCourt and Rothenbuhler, 2004, p.11). The phenomenal ratings achieved by KOWH and other Mid-Continent stations—at times more than 50 per cent of the market were tuning in—reveal just how successful the format was in attracting such a large and, necessarily, broad audience (McCourt and Rothenbuhler, 2004, p.11; Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, p.27).

¹⁴ Two program element and production procedure checklists for KOWH penned in 1957 and reproduced in MacFarland and Fatherley (2014, pp.96-101) provide an excellent feel for Storz's refined Top 40 format.

¹⁵ Killmeier (2001, pp.361-364) provides an excellent overview of gesturing to 'demographic ideology' by commercial broadcasters and notes that in part this 'distilled the vague FCC requirement that stations operate in the 'public interest''.

The breadth of the audience was initially reflected in the playlists of Top 40, which were best described as a type of musical pastiche (Grossberg, 1999, p.114; MacFarland, 1975, p.400; Eberly, 1982, p.200). According to Fatherley and MacFarland (2014, p.141), Top 40 stations might include on their playlists ‘country singers, rhythm and blues bands, ballad crooners, full orchestras, jazz bands, even ‘chipmunks’’. Ken Greenwood, who was employed at Storz station WHB, suggests that while ‘early Top 40 . . . was a musical concept that was almost entirely mature, or adult, performers’, gradually, from the mid-1950s this began to change as ‘the established artists were pushed off the playlist’ and were replaced by a growing number of artists playing a new form of popular music: rock’n’roll (Greenwood, cited in Eberly, 1982, p.201; see also Phil Jay, cited in McCourt and Rothenbuhler, 2004, p.12; Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, p.44). That rock’n’roll records would eventually constitute Top 40 playlists¹⁶ in accordance with its established research methods, was not the result of their broad consumption but rather the emergence of their primary consumers, young people, as a dominant segment of the record buying public (Dachs, 1964, pp.41-42; Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, p.64; MacFarland, 1996, pp.34-35; Fornatale and Mills, 1980, p.37; Douglas, 2004, p.226; Frith, 1981, p.93, p.206). It was in this way that the tastes of young people increasingly came to define Top 40 programming and the format itself became the first articulation of youth radio.

Top 40, popular music, and youth

The development of the relationship between the music industry and young people in the 1950s centred on rock’n’roll as a new form of popular music integral to the establishment of a distinctive and highly profitable youth culture has been comprehensively investigated from a range of sociological, cultural and economic perspectives (Frith, 1981; Rasmussen, 2008; Ward et al., 1986; Dachs, 1964; Dolfsma, 1999). I do not intend to revisit this material in any detail here. However, it is useful to report on some of the intersecting factors identified as enabling young

¹⁶It is important to note that as rock’n’roll fragmented into a range of sub-genres Top 40 playlists would again be described as a musical pastiche (cf. Morrow in Keith, 2000, p.61).

people to emerge as the most important segment of a rapidly expanding record market from the mid-1950s (record sales tripled in the five years 1954-1959) (Fornatale and Mills, 1980, p.44). It is also important to examine the role Top 40 played in the development of the popular music industry, to situate this in terms of the longer relationship between radio and music, and the manner in which youth came to be conceptualised as an important third party in this relationship.

Four primary demographic, socio-economic, cultural and technological factors are generally presented to account for the rise of youth as the dominant segment of the record market in the late 1950s. First, immediately following the Second World War, the birth-rate in the United States rose significantly and was sustained until the mid-1960s. This post war generation, commonly referred to as the 'baby-boomers', in the late 1950s began to exit childhood dependency and enter their transitional teenage years (Fisher, 2007; Frith, 1981, p.95; Dachs, 1964, p.30).

Second, the baby boomers were growing up in a period of sustained economic growth providing both those who had left school (even at the minimum leaving age of between 14 and 16 years of age) with secure employment and decent incomes, and the parents of those still at school with the discretionary income to provide their teenage dependents with a regular financial allowance (MacFarland, 1979, pp.6-7; Osgerby, 2004, p.21; Hobsbawm, 2001, pp.327-328). It is estimated that US teenagers in the late 1950s and early 1960s had 'earnings and allowances of between nine and ten billion dollars' annually (MacFarland, 1979, p.16).

Third, greater financial independence enabled young people to make the most of the more flexible social norms that had been developing since the 1920s and to experiment with new forms of self-expression that distinguished them from children and adults. In this period a 'teenage subject position was recognized as a distinct sociocultural and economic entity' which leisure and cultural industries in particular were well positioned to engage with (Osgerby, 2004, chapter 2; Frith, 1981, pp.185-186; Killmeier, 2005, p.172; Dachs, 1964, chapter 3). Rock'n'roll music emerged as an exemplar of the new mass youth culture—according to one commentator of the

period it was arguably 'the first music that has appealed almost exclusively to the youth culture' (Keniston, 1965, p.210; cited in Eyerman and Jamison, 1998, p.110). Identified as the most popular form of youth cultural consumption, it is not surprising that the 'day to day attentions of record companies became almost entirely focussed on the young' (Frith, 1981, p.93, p.204).

Finally, the coincident release of the 45-rpm vinyl record provided a small, durable and cheap means of distributing rock'n'roll to young people. It was a format that youth came to view as the 'cachet of the generation', with the larger Long Play record (LP) reserved for adults (Dachs, 1964, pp.30-32; Fornatale and Mills, 1980, p.41; MacFarland, 1979, p.16; Rasmussen, 2008, pp.46-47). Since 45 rpm records were essentially formatted as a single musical track¹⁷ they became the basis for Top 40 charts and playlists, and their durability enabled the repeated plays required by Top 40 radio (Huber, 2008, p.280; Dachs, 1964, p.40; O'Regan, 1992a, pp.105-107).

Records may have proven to be very important to the reinvention of a profitable radio industry in the post-television era, but the primary form of that reinvention, the Top 40 format, also proved to be a fundamental aid to the profitability of the music industry. Although for a long time the record industry felt that broadcasting records might reduce their sales, by the 1950s the industry had come to appreciate the role radio might play in advertising its wares (Rasmussen, 2008, pp.23-27).

Certainly the payola scandals that occurred at this time, involving the prosecution of DJs for accepting illegal payments from the industry to play particular records, is testament to just how important radio was thought to be for music sales promotion (Frith, 1981, pp.118-119; Barnard, 1989, p.42; Douglas, 2004, p.250-252).

As an all-music format, Rasmussen (2008, pp.52-53) notes that the Top 40 'transformed postwar radio into a giant marketplace for records' giving those in the US 'thousands of chances, to peruse the latest offerings of the recording industry'. But the Top 40 did more than this. Its high rotation of a limited playlist ensured that records wore out their cultural welcome, substantially reducing the lifespan of the

¹⁷ Records contained two sides but the track on the A-side was how the item tended to be branded.

hit record, but in doing so freeing up space for new hits. Top 40 constantly refreshed the market in a process Miller (1999, p.56) refers to as 'dynamic obsolescence'. The rapid diffusion and high turnover of new music this generated underpinned the substantial expansion of the music industry from the mid-1950s. In this milieu, Top 40 radio equated to new music radio, which equated to a successful music industry, with young people an essential third party to the relationship.

At a material level the young baby boomers were considered the fundamental market driving not only the commercial development of the music and a range of other cultural and consumer industries, but also their aesthetic development (Osgerby, 2004, p.22). Indeed, Eyerman and Jamison (1998, p.113; cited in Osgerby, 2004, p.30) argue that young people increasingly 'became the model and set the standards for the rest of society in many spheres of culture, from the most superficial like clothing and hairstyles, to the most deeply rooted like the basic social interactions of men and women'.

At a conceptual level, the role that young baby-boomers played in the acceleration of cultural change—a dynamic exemplified by Top 40 radio—was transposed to inform a generalised definition of youth that centred on an adaptive/adventurous state of mind (Hollander and Germain, 1992; Osgerby, 2004). In fact, this generalisation has yielded two divergent conceptualisations of youth. Firstly, it underpinned an age-based, lifecycle, definition of youth, in which young people were considered as being predisposed to engage with new or emergent cultural products and practices. Secondly, it has been drawn upon to complicate the relationship between youth and age, evident for instance in distinctions between cognitive and biological age, yielding a psychographic definition of youth centred on a predilection for new and emergent cultural products and practices regardless of age (Berger, 1963; Catterall and Maclaran, 2001; cited in Goulding and Shankar, 2004, p.30).

The record industry may have been comfortable with the relationship between youth and an increasing quantity of US radio programming in the late 1950s, but not

everybody was happy with the fact that ‘a minor portion of the population . . . [was] exerting disproportionate pressures on a mass-medium’ (Hodges, 1958). Storz and the other purveyors of Top 40 faced growing suspicion that their audiences consisted largely of teenagers who it was claimed did not buy advertiser’s products (Fisher, 2007, p.20, p.26; MacFarland, 1979, pp.500-510). In 1958 advertising executive Ernest Hodges argued that changes to radio programming limited radio’s commercial utility. He wrote in the trade journal *Broadcasting*:

A baby-sitting society has taken over the musical programming of hundreds of American radio stations. As a result, millions of advertising dollars are being spent to reach an audience interested not in products or services but in (as one critic put it) ‘bad grammar set to bad music’ (Hodges, 1958).

In a similar critique, the director of Artists and Repertoire at Columbia Records, Mitch Miller, told delegates at the 1958 national DJ convention, ‘[y]ou carefully built yourself into monarchs of radio and abdicated – abdicated to the corner record shop, to the eight to 14-year olds; to the pre-shave crowd that makes up 12 percent of the country’s population and zero percent of its buying power’ (Variety, 1958). Miller also held deeper concerns that the prevalence of Top 40 could lead to radio losing contact with a generation of adult listeners who might instead turn to private hi-fi music listening (Grevatt, 1958). This was similar to concerns voiced by Australian commentators in the 1980s and 1990s regarding the potential for a generation of listeners to be lost as a result of the demise of the relationship between radio and youth (discussed further in Chapter Two). The US broadcasting regulator, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), also weighed into the programming debate. Though anxious that Top 40 stations were not delivering the mix of programming to meet the needs of a diverse population in accordance with regulations similar in objective to the Australian regulator’s ‘adequate and

comprehensive' directive, they were loath to take actions against stations¹⁸ (MacFarland, 1979, pp.113-116, p.174).

Storz did not deny the central role youth had come to play in determining the Top 40 music mix. Instead, he denied that this corresponded to Top 40 stations only attracting young listeners. He pointed to the fact that the incredibly high ratings his stations achieved would not be possible if only young people were tuning in. He also quoted ratings figures that showed his stations dominated the market during school hours when a substantial portion of the youth audience was unavailable (Fisher, 2007, p.20; Land, 1957, p.4). Hodges (1958) was being disdainful when he asked '[b]y what obscure logic can [advertising] agencies justify attempting to sell an item of interest primarily to adults or a commodity for use by the whole family on a program or on a station which is playing music selected almost exclusively by youngsters?'. However, agencies did not need an 'obscure logic' when they could simply point to the market dominance of the Top 40 station on which they were buying spots.

According to Barnes (1988, p.11), advertisers and cultural brokers of the 1950s came to realise that 'in a number of areas, teenagers controlled the leisure-time activities of their entire families' and this included leaving the 'dial on Top 40 stations for lengthy periods'. They also promoted youth/youthfulness in psychographic terms, as a state of mind and style of consumption based on cultural dynamism and transience—the fashionable, but fleeting—that could be sold as an aspirational state to a broader audience (a concept examined in relation to popular music by Frith, 1981, chapter 8; more broadly traced out by Hollander and Germain, 1992; and Osgerby, 2004, chapter two; and clearly on the agenda of Storz's Top 40 stations according to Sharpe, 2014, p.161). While Top 40 stations could easily have altered playlist research methods to shift the focus from youth, there was a risk of losing the

¹⁸ Although, unlike the 'adequate and comprehensive' directive applied in Australia, the FCC prescribed seven program categories to be incorporated into radio schedules, a more precise policy that caused some issues for Top 40 stations until it was tempered in recognition of the realities of the new radio landscape in 1960, further downgraded in 1965, and repealed in 1976 (Shelanski, 1998, pp.93-94; MacFarland, 1979, p.116).

saleability of youthfulness, and, more importantly, the baby-boomer audience—an audience proving to be an excellent market for an increasing array of goods and services (Fatherley and MacFarland, 2014, p.95).

In any case, from the early 1960s the listenership of Top 40 would come to more closely match the youth segment that determined its programming. This was not because adults turned to hi-fi as Miller feared, but rather, in large, multi-station markets it made commercial sense to fragment the audience through targeted formats, some of which skimmed off Top 40's older listeners (Smulyan, 1994, pp.160-161). This process of specialisation accelerated in the early 1960s when the FCC aggressively promoted the uptake of non-simulcast commercial FM licenses, putting an additional 983 stations on air by 1962 and 2,328 by 1972 (Douglas, 2004, p.259, p.263). Top 40 became just one of dozens of radio formats (MacFarland, 1979, chapter 9). As discussed in the next section of this chapter, regulatory limits on the number of stations licensed in Australian broadcasting markets meant that Top 40 would remain the dominant commercial radio format for a much longer period, and despite some freeing up of spectrum, segmentation has not been pursued to the degree it has in the United States.

Section 3: Establishing Top 40 as Youth Radio in Australia

When Lamb returned from visiting a number of stations in the United States in 1957, including Top 40 stations KULA in Honolulu and KFWB in Los Angeles, he was convinced that popular music format programming was the future of Australian commercial radio (Mac, 2005, p.10; Davidson, 1975, p.18; Rogers, 2011, 55.25). According to Des Foster, head of news at 2UE, and later one of the longest serving federal directors of the Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters (FARB), Lamb 'realised that all the old programming ideas were not good . . . that it was all about formatting . . . and giving people a total reliance that you will get what you want to get at any time' (Foster, 1995). Lamb shared Storz's objective for Top 40 to 'appeal to the masses' according to Mac (2005, p.28). However, he was also aware that, while this might be the audience outcome, similar social, economic and cultural

conditions to those prevailing in the United States meant it was likely that programming would be strongly influenced by the tastes of youth.

Indeed, Australia had experienced its own post-war birth-rate spike that created a baby-boom cohort born between 1946 and 1961 (ABS, 2006a). The Australian baby-boomers, like those in the United States, prospered as teenagers in the post-war economic long boom, some staying on at school supported by parents and a large number joining the buoyant labour market as soon as they could. In 1960, some 60 per cent of 15 year olds participated in a labour market that was dominated by full-time continuing employment which yielded sustained real wage increases until the economic slowdown of the mid-1970s (Watson et al., 2003; Bessant et al., 1998, p.167; Withers, 1987, p.265; Irving et al., 1995, pp.114-128). Their consumer potential was increasingly well understood by the advertising industry, with estimates of the substantial aggregate income of the 15-19 year old cohort appearing in the business press by 1960 (Stratton, 1993; Zion, 1988a, p.288; Crawford, 2008, p.142). As in the United States, it was the leisure and cultural industries that were thought to have the most to gain from this market segment, with J Walter Thompson's Australian chairman, Tom Carruthers, reporting:

They have a high rate of consumption of items such as clothing and 'discretionary luxuries' for personal use, such as photography, sports equipment, record players, transistor radios, travel etc.

They will, in fact, offer potential markets of greater significance and size to business than has been the case hitherto (Carruthers, 1960, pp.1377-1378; cited in Crawford, 2008, p.142).

The record players Carruthers mentioned in 1960 were already getting a good workout thanks to the rise and popularity of rock'n'roll. It rose to prominence in Australia after the 1955 release of the film *Blackboard Jungle* which featured 'rock'n'roll's virtual signature tune', *Rock Around the Clock* by Bill Haley and the Comets (Rogers and O'Brien, 2008, p.i; Taylor, 1970, p.28 also provides a thorough account of rock'n'roll's emergence in Australia and the youth market). Over the coming years record players would get more use with popular music demand

fuelling a doubling of the number of records pressed in Australia between 1960 and 1965 (Walker, 1984, p.177). As the primary record buying public, young people would come to inform the programming of an increasing number of metropolitan commercial radio stations that turned to the Top 40 format. However, as in the United States, this transition, led by Stewart Lamb, was an incremental process.

Australian Top 40 commercial radio

The Lamb family had been involved in radio since 1947 when they purchased 2KO, but it was in the uncertain media environment of 1956 that the company, then operated by Stewart Lamb, took the 'bold and courageous move' to purchase Sydney's 2UE (Foster, 2012; Cushing, 2012). While Lamb 'had a reputation for being a bit of risk taker', he clearly recognised the dangers of making the transition to format radio (Mac, 2012). If nothing else, shifting to Top 40 would be costly since Lamb had huge sums invested in stockpiled transcriptions discs of serials, dramas and other programs, as well as sponsorship commitments tied to traditional radio shows amounting to thousands of pounds (Foster, 2012; Mac, 2005, p.10). So, like Storz, Lamb in collaboration with the company's general manager Alan Faulkner, began the transition by experimenting with and slowly expanding time commitments to popular music shows (Mac, 2012; Mac, 2005, p.10; Thompson, 2009, p.291). As in the United States, *Hit Parade* programs had been popular with Australian adult audiences through the 1940s and 1950s and provided a model for some of Lamb and Faulkner's early experimentation (Mac, 2005, p.7). In a move that signalled the more strategic centrality of youth in the transition to Top 40 format radio in Australia than was the case in the United States, they increasingly refined the *Hit Parades* to match emerging musical trends aimed at younger people, and added new popular music shows to the 2KO and 2UE schedule, including Pat Barton's *Platter Chatter*, and John Laws' *Teenage Tops* and *Latest and Greatest* (Mac, 2005, p.7, p.10; Laws, 1993, 12.00; Rogers, 2011, 55.30). A major step in the

transition occurred on 2 March 1958¹⁹ when they introduced Australia's first Top 40 program (Mac, 2005, p.10).

Pat Barton, a DJ at Lamb's Newcastle station 2KO had been appointed music director of both 2KO and 2UE in the lead-up to the launch of the Top 40 program. He was charged with the compiling the Top 40 playlist, a role that would make him one of the most powerful figures in Australian radio in this period (Jameson, 2007). In accordance with the method established by Storz, Barton based his Top 40 on record sales. He would travel to Sydney on Mondays to combine the sales data he had collected from music retailers in Newcastle with that collected by the 2UE record library staff in Sydney. To the Top 40 tracks, he added a number of 'predicted best-sellers' based on sample recordings and discussions with record company representatives (Mac, 2005, p.11; Jameson, 2007).

The launch of the Top 40 on radio in March 1958 was accompanied by the distribution of printed Top 40 charts to record stores. Eventually, up to 30 000 copies of 2UE's 'Original and Authentic' Top 40 chart would be printed and distributed each week and proved to be an important publicity tool for the station (Mac, 2005, p.11). David Kent, who would go on to play an important role in chronicling the development of music charts in Australia (c.f. Kent, 2009), recounted his experience of the first 2UE Top 40 show to Wayne Mac, highlighting its break with the existing *Hit Parade* formula in accordance with the move taken by Storz in the United States:

The thing I remember quite clearly from that afternoon was that the 40 songs from the first chart weren't played in strict order. They'd bounce them around from say, 35 to 29, up to 15, then back to 33 and with quite a number of predictions thrown in. The Top 40 was a complete twist on the old hit parade programs which people were used to hearing at that time (Mac, 2005, p.11).

¹⁹ The *Sydney Morning Herald* daily radio program guide first lists Top 40 as a 2UE radio segment on Monday 10 March 1958, running from 1.30pm – 4.15pm (SMH, 1958). It may be that the segment took some time to list in the papers.

Although, 2UE's breakfast announcer Gary O'Callaghan notes that immediately after the launch of Top 40 'most industry members thought 2UE had lost the plot' and, like many performers, he was himself sceptical of its future, these attitudes quickly changed (O'Callaghan, 2012; Mac, 2005, p.11). In the month following the launch, an editorial in the trade press pointed to the importance of Top 40 style programming for the future of radio, and stations in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Melbourne had all implemented a version of it by the end of 1958 (B&T, 1958; reproduced in Mac, 2005, p.12).

As a distinct program, Top 40 established its place on metropolitan radio rather quickly, but it took some time for 2UE and other stations to expand it into a continuous music radio format (Zion, 1988a, p.294; Zion, 1988b, p.73, p.182; Mac, 2005, p.28). In his assessment of commercial radio's transition to continuous music programming, Webb (1981, p.161) notes that by the end of the 1950s Australian radio was only 'just beginning to perceive that its future was inextricably linked with rock and pop', with evening commercial radio line-ups still including drama, variety and quiz shows in the early 1960s, and some stations still broadcasting radio serials into the mid-1960s. An examination of 2UE's program listings in the *Sydney Morning Herald* radio program guides of this period bears this out. Top 40 was programmed in the both the afternoons and overnight by early 1959, and in mid-1959 was also a mid-morning segment. Despite music clearly dominating 2UE's programming material by the early 1960s and the station having moved from third to first in the ratings since it introduced and expanded Top 40 programming, the station continued to broadcast serials until the mid-1960s (SMH, 1958-1962; Jones, 1995, Appendix).

2UE may have led the way by introducing the Top 40 concept, but it was Sydney's 2SM that in 1963 generated the watershed moment in its promotion as a continuous music radio format (Davidson, 1975, p.A20; Mac, 2005, p.36; Rogers and O'Brien, 2008, p.176). On 2 September of that year, the station rebranded itself on the basis of its DJ line-up, the '2SM Good Guys' and launched 'into the world of 24 hour pop programming' (Mac, 2005, pp.35-36; Webb, 1981, p.164). Conceptualising

and marketing Top 40 on the basis of DJ teams was a strategy that Kevin O'Donahue, (then 2SM manager) notes he and announcer John Brennan had identified on a trip to the US—further highlighting the influence of the US on Australian programming (Mac, 2005, pp.35-36; Davidson, 2011; Walker, 1967, p.243). It proved incredibly successful. 2SM replaced 2UE as market leader in Sydney in 1964 and 'dominated the scene for many years' (Jones, 1995, Appendix; Foster, cited in Balnaves and O'Regan, 2002, p.43). As such, it was an approach that quickly spread within and across Australia's metropolitan radio markets (Rogers and O'Brien, 2008, p.176). Stations rebranded themselves on the basis of monikers such as: 'Good Guys', 'Sound Guys' and 'Great Guys' amongst others; clearly marking a break with variety programming. This, and the related move of radio out of the confines of the living room, was exemplified in the marketing copy used to promote Adelaide's reformulated 5KA: 'For 24 hours a day 1200 on your transistor brings you the '5KA Good Guys' with the modern sound of . . . 5KA' (5KA advertisement reproduced in Mac, 2005, p.39).

The transformation of Australian metropolitan commercial radio in the late 1950s and early 1960s through the diffusion of the Top 40 format and recognition of the role youth increasingly played in the programming practices of commercial radio can be clearly traced through the commentary of the ABCB in its annual reports with regards to the compliance of the sector with its adequate and comprehensive programming obligations. Following general comments in its 1958 report²⁰ indicating an increased amount of music broadcast and decreased proportion of dramatic entertainment, in 1959 the ABCB specifically identified a shifting 'emphasis towards the provision of special programmes of currently popular dance music designed to attract adolescents' on some stations (ABCB, 1958, p.15; ABCB, 1959, p.17). In 1960 the ABCB summarised the metropolitan programming landscape as follows:

²⁰ ABCB reports are for financial years ending June 30. The 1958 report refers to the period 1 July 1957 to 30 June 1958.

. . . music of current, and often transient, popularity is the largest component of commercial broadcasting programmes, but at least one station in each state capital city maintains a policy of providing a much wider variety of entertainment and informative matter (ABCB, 1960).

Although it was comfortable that ‘the services of the different stations in the capital cities provided a satisfactory variety of programmes for listeners’, in its 1961 report the ABCB provided details of a study it conducted in response to public criticism of the proportion of ‘hit-tune’ music being aired (ABCB, 1961, p.20). From a random sample study of Melbourne stations, the ABCB concluded that although time dedicated to ‘hit-tune’ music had doubled in the four years between 1956 and 1960, it was still only a minor component of total music and other programming (ABCB, 1961, p.20).

By 1962 the regulator began to express concern about the continued expansion of Top 40 programming, suggesting there was too strong a focus on the ‘younger generation’ and imploring licensees to ‘give more thought to the provision of programmes which will be attractive to older listeners’(ABCB, 1962, p.19). In the first half of 1963, the regulator undertook another programming survey which found that ‘transient music’ (how the board now defined ‘hit-tunes’), accounted for more than one quarter of broadcast time: more than twice that which it had in 1960 (ABCB, 1963, p.22). Arguing that ‘such concentration on one type of music is difficult to justify’, and reminding the sector that it was ‘required, under the Act, to ensure that adequate and comprehensive programmes are provided for listeners’, the ABCB suggested that it was time for a ‘re-examination of the general structure of broadcast programmes by licensees’(ABCB, 1963, p.21, p.23). Much to the disappointment of the ABCB, the re-examination undertaken by licensees later that year called for more rather than less Top 40, and a transition to continuous Top 40, marked by the introduction of the Good Guys concept.

In its 1964 annual report the ABCB indicated that transient music accounted for 30 per cent of all metropolitan commercial radio programming. The regulator acknowledged that ‘[a] substantial proportion of present-day adolescents seem to

seek relaxation and enjoyment through rhythmic sound and action' (a description attributed to the rock'n'roll music that made up the hits of the Top 40), but was 'concerned that representatives of commercial broadcasting stations appear to have taken the view that the demand for music of this type justifies the exclusion of almost every other form of entertainment for it does not believe that the majority of listeners wish to hear only these programmes' (ABCB, 1964, p.20). The regulator conceded that this argument was difficult to maintain in light of the ratings results achieved by Top 40 stations. In 1964, Sydney's top rating station was Top 40 broadcaster 2SM, while more than half the radio audience was captured by Top 40 stations. In Melbourne Top 40 station 3UZ topped the ratings, and between them these stations were nearing a 50 per cent audience share²¹ (Jones, 1995, Appendix). However, the ABCB argued that 'audience-measurement surveys' are not 'an infallible guide to public tastes and desires', intimating that in the absence of alternative programs a number of older listeners must be tuning in by default (ABCB, 1964, p.19). As will be discussed in Chapter Two, this formulation would be called upon following the demise of Top 40 in the 1980s to suggest that, despite relatively stable listening patterns, youth were not adequately catered for by commercial radio.

As long as Top 40 programming remained a proven ratings winner Australian commercial stations were not likely to move out of it. Adults may have been listening in the absence of other formats, but stations were not prepared to risk losing the baby-boomer youth audience which was turning out to be an incredibly profitable consumer cohort (Crawford, 2008: 142-43). Indeed, the industry began selling the youth audience to advertisers. For instance, the 1962 *Broadcasting and Television Yearbook* featured an analysis highlighting 'the vast growth of the youthful market' (Greater Publications, 1962, p.44). In addition, Tebbutt (2006) has illustrated how the Australian advertising and marketing industries of this period began to promote the psychographic idea that, beyond the actual purchasing power

²¹ At this time Sydney Top 40 stations included 2SM, 2UE and 2UW. Melbourne Top 40 stations included 3UZ, 3KZ and 3AK.

of young people, youthfulness was an affective state of mind conducive to generating consumption in a broader population. This was certainly an idea given due consideration by commercial radio (cf. Bill Howie, 3AK Good Guy, in Mac, 2005, p.136).

The regulator made it clear in the mid-1960s that in order to encourage programming diversity it supported a segmentation of the radio audience in accordance with that which had occurred in the US where dozens of distinct radio formats had emerged and generated a closer match between Top 40's audience and its youth programming. However, with the exception of the introduction of the talkback format in 1967, Australian radio continued to be dominated by Top 40 stations throughout the 1960s and 1970s (ABCB, 1964, p.19; Tebbutt, 2006, p.860; Griffen-Foley, 2009, pp.264-271; Shoebridge, 1989; Zion, 1988b, pp.327-328). That in 1976 the regulator was still discussing the lack of commercial radio diversity by pointing to the fact that three of Melbourne's six commercial stations were Top 40 stations with a fourth employing a partial Top 40 format is clear evidence of this (ABCB, 1976b, p.64).

For all their angst, there is a strong case that the ABCB itself contributed to the lack of commercial radio programming diversity and ongoing dominance of Top 40 through the 1960s and 1970s by limiting the number of stations operating in each market. This argument rests on the Hotelling (1929) economic principle, which posits that commercial enterprises will tend to supply to the centre of the market until a point is reached where there is a benefit to providing niche goods or services²² (Steiner, 1952 first applied this principle to radio programming ; Wall, 2011 applies the principle to music radio formats; BTCE, 1993, discuss the principle in relation to Australian broadcasting, pp.45-52). While this point was reached in the United States through the release of additional AM licences and the opening up of the FM band in the early 1960s, the ABCB and successive conservative Australian federal governments in power between 1949 and 1972 essentially stopped issuing

²² This principle forms a strong base for much economic analysis of broadcasting markets (cf. Anderson, 2007; Polo, 2007)

new commercial radio licences on the AM band and delayed the introduction of FM radio. They did so on a range of resourcing and technical grounds, but also on the basis that programming services might be compromised if station profitability fell as a result of more competition (Cole, 1966b; Thornley, 1999, chapter 3; Hulme, 1968).

Interestingly, one argument against the introduction of FM was that the type of pop music prevalent on commercial radio would not make good use of the higher fidelity provided by the FM band (Hulme, 1968). With not a single new commercial licence issued nor any additional ABC service established in the state capitals between 1949 and 1972—despite a doubling of the population during this period—it is no wonder that once radio found a way to counter the impact of television they were under little competitive pressure to experiment with new formats (services analysis based on Walker, 1973, appedix B; population data is for the period 1947 to 1971 and is sourced from Lahmeyer, 2004). Indicative of the stagnation, by the early 1970s almost all radio sets sold in Australia had the actual call signs of individual stations printed on the dial (Evans, 1983, p.233).

Although 23 years of conservative rule came to an end in 1972 and the new ALP government led by Gough Whitlam initiated a process of expanding metropolitan AM services and establishing radio broadcasting on the FM band, the commercial sector would not initially participate in this process. The ALP had a long standing position that the commercial sector should not be enabled to further dominate the media and although Whitlam's government (in power from 1972 to 1975) had considered issuing commercial FM licences²³, pressure from the party ensured that issues of radio diversity would be addressed outside the commercial sector, through the ABC and by expanding public participation in the delivery of media services (Davis, 1984, p.35; Harding, 1979, pp.4-5, p.10; Priorities Review Staff, 1974, pp.20-21; Thornley, 1999, pp.156-157). As such, until the 1980s, when a new conservative government enabled the commercial sector to participate in FM broadcasting, Top

²³ In 1948 the previous ALP government had legislated against commercial FM broadcasting in order to restrict the sector's further expansion. This restriction was repealed in 1956 by the Menzies government (Thornley, 1999, p.68, p.82).

40 remained the dominant commercial radio format. While it would also remain the dominant form of youth radio, it did lose its youth radio monopoly as a result of the ALP's reforms. In the final section of this chapter I examine how two new articulations of youth radio emerged from the broadcasting reforms of the mid-1970s. The first was by design, in the form of an experimental ABC youth station, Double J, based in Sydney. The second was more incidental—the result of allocating experimental broadcasting licenses to universities as a means of establishing community broadcasting as a third broadcasting sector.

Section 4: Alternative Articulations of Australian Youth Radio

The ALP that took federal power in 1972 considered the reform of the Australian media system a party priority. This was reflected in the new government's appointment of Australia's first Minister for the Media and the formation of a Department of the Media (Edgar, 1979, p.216). In terms of radio broadcasting, the party platform centred on the introduction of FM radio. Given prevailing advice that the AM band was essentially full, FM was considered fundamental to achieving the party's goal of diversifying broadcasting services. Opening the FM band would provide the government the necessary spectrum to help the ABC expand its suite of offerings and to establish a new community radio sector centred on public participation to meet demands from 'various community groups seeking ethnic and specialist radio programs' (Davis, 1984, p.35).

Although not part of the party's reform agenda, the establishment of a distinct FM Youth Radio sector was proposed by the Department of the Media when the plan for introducing FM and expanding AM services²⁴—delayed by a series of inquiries (ABCB, 1973b; McClelland, 1973; McLean and Renwick, 1974)—was finally made public in July 1974. A draft of the plan was leaked to the press (Williams, 1974) and subsequently published in full in *New Journalist* (Manning et al., 1974a). It revealed that over three years from mid-1974, and at a total cost of AUD \$5.7 million, the

²⁴ Information had emerged from the ABCB in February 1974 that the AM band could accommodate up to 200 additional stations (Thornley, 1999, p.165).

department would create seven separately licensed and operated ‘young style’ FM stations. There was to be one in each state capital city and one in Canberra (see Table 1.1). While this effectively amounted to the formation of a fourth broadcasting sector, necessitating legislative change and a substantial financial investment, the plan provided few details about the rationale that informed this commitment (see Manning et al., 1974a, p.12 for a discussion of required legislative changes to accommodate the new sector). It simply stated that ‘programs available on radio for the 16 to 25 years age group are inadequate, with no further points of clarification nor an explanation of the process by which this conclusion had been reached (Manning et al., 1974a, p.11). This seems remarkable given that the broadcasting regulator remained convinced at this time that Australian radio actually over-catered to young people as a result of the prevalence of Top 40 commercial stations.

Table 1.1 Department of the Media radio plan, mid 1974 - mid 1977

Sector	FM	AM	Total	AUD\$ allocation
Commercials	18	24	42	nil
ABC	14	14	28	9.081m
Community	4	7	11	5.03m
Young Style	7	0	7	5.7m
Total	43	45	88	19.811

Source: Developed from a leaked version of the Department of the Media plan presented to the PRS inquiry and Cabinet. Document is dated 12 June 1974 (Manning et al., 1974a).

In fact, the Department of the Media had prepared a report on the musical needs of under 25 year olds in April, but this was not publicly released nor discussed (Department of the Media, 1974). There was also very little examination of the issue in government and public discourse following the plan’s release, although, after examining the document, *The Age’s* Ben Hills reported that ‘no one is quite sure what these ‘young-style’ stations are, of who thought up the idea’²⁵ (Hills, 1974). In

²⁵ In concluding his report, Hills (1974) ridiculed the plan, suggesting that the government will have to determine ‘whether young style radio is where it’s at ... perhaps a sort of tweenage ABC where the Blue Hills are a bike gang and Beat the Brains answers problems about pot-smoking’.

part, the lack of commentary at the time may have been the result of the overall plan not having endorsement by the government executive.

For those looking back at radio developments of this period it seems that the successful establishment of the ABC's Double J service immediately following the demise of the plan captured their complete attention. In fact, it appears that the deliberations of 'a loose network [of people] in and around government' who had an appreciation for US Free-Form FM youth radio that Davis (1984, p.38; 1985, chapter 3) suggests as the genesis of Double J may actually have informed the earlier departmental plan. Arguably, Double J was the result of this group pushing for other ways to actualise their youth radio concept in the wake of the plan's failure. This is certainly consistent with the findings of the Priorities Review Staff *Report on Radio* (1974, p.31) and reports of criticism from community broadcasting stakeholders at this time (Manning et al., 1974b) that the department's youth radio proposal emerged from within government rather than from broad 'public discussion' or 'a participatory process'. The plan's exclusive assignment of FM licences to the 'young style' sector (see Table 1.1) and the fact that the department's 'young style' terminology was later adopted by the ABC to describe Double J also supports the contention that it was this group of discussants and their desire to generate a local version of Free-Form FM radio that informed the department's plan (Davis, 1984, p.39).

In a set of notes on the history of Double J, compiled in 1976 by Department of the Media staffer Geoff Evans, the development of the station is clearly linked back to the department's research on the musical needs of under 25 year olds that preceded the departmental plan (Evans, 1976). In concluding that 'under twenty-five year olds were inadequately catered for by existing commercial and national radio' on the grounds that 'many artists whose work sold well, especially in the rock/folk album area, were grossly underplayed, on commercial radio especially, this research also pointed to the musical fare that was fundamental to the Free-Form FM format (Evans, 1976, p.1; for an overview of folk/rock music development in Australia and its absence from radio see Zion, 1988b, chapter 6). Before I examine

the particularities of the development of Double J as Australia's first non-commercial youth radio service, it is important to describe US Free-Form FM youth radio which, according to Davis, provided the impetus and model for the station's development (1984; 1985) and which I believe both underpinned the department's earlier plan and influenced the form taken by a number of community broadcasters subsequently established by the Whitlam government.

The Influence of Free-Form FM

It is Tom 'Big Daddy' Donahue, once a leading Top 40 DJ on the US West Coast, who is credited with creating the Free-Form FM radio format in 1967 (Broadcasting Magazine, 1968, p.30; Douglas, 2004, p.269). In part, Free-Form emerged as a reaction against the rigid structures of Top 40's centralised playlist and music rotation formulas, with Donahue even referring to it as an 'antidote to Top 40' (Donahue, 1967; Keith, 1998, p.84). But, it also represented a cultural and political reaction against the manner in which Top 40, with its limited promotion of hit singles, fast talking DJs, promotional jingles and incessant commercials, seemed to exclusively promote radio and popular music as objects of mass-cultural consumption and its audience as passive consumers (Douglas, 2004, chapter 10; Sterling and Keith, 2008, chapter 5; Donahue, 1967). In this way, Free-Form intersected with a broad counter-cultural youth movement emerging in the United States at this time, and rapidly spreading throughout much of the Western World. The baby-boomers, particularly those brought together through an expanded post-war higher education system, began to engage in new forms of political, social and cultural experimentation, demanding an expanded civic and political role to accompany that which they played in consumer markets (Keith, 1998, pp.7-8; Bell and Kristol, 1969; Scalmer, 2002, chapter 1).

Popular music was a key site of counter-cultural experimentation and representation (Eyerma and Jamison, 1998, chapter 5). Advances in recording technology and the greater capacity of the long play record (LP/album) facilitated more sophisticated musical arrangements, while popular music's lyrics increasingly

focused on the political struggles championed by the young, such as the anti-Vietnam War, civil rights and gender equality movements (Frith, 1981, p.48; Keith, 1997, pp.10-12; Keith, 1998, p.57). Ignored by Top 40 stations, partly because it was released as albums rather than singles, it is not unusual that this new, and apparently more 'authentic' popular music (sometimes distinguished on the basis that it was rock rather than pop) and demand from its young, and apparently more 'enlightened' listeners, spawned an alternative music radio format (for discussion of rock's 'authenticity' see Frith, 1981).

Free-Form FM was a counterpoint to Top 40 in almost every way. DJs were free to select their own music, often choosing tracks from a mix of genres that included 'rock and roll, folk, traditional and city blues, raga, electronic music, . . . jazz and classical' (Donahue, 1967, p.14). There was no central formula for combining the selected items. Instead, DJ's undertook a process of curation described by some as 'an auditory art form', arranging items on the basis of musical elements (such as tempo or key), lyrical themes, or some other attribute to create 'sublime segues and sets of sound that took listeners on soaring, imaginative music flights' (Nisker, 1994, p.52; Eberly, 1982, p.238; Ladd, 1991; referred to in Douglas, 2004, p.271; Fornatale and Mills, 1980, p.132). Speaking in a mellow, conversational style, Free-Form DJs talked at length about the music they played, showing a deep appreciation for its cultural, social and political significance, engaged in general political commentary and promoted a broad range of counter-cultural youth events and activities (Douglas, 2004, p.273; Ladd, 1991, p.10). While Top 40 programming was seemingly designed to match the rapid pace of modern society, Free-Form's laid back style encouraged listeners to slow down, to take time-out to reflect on contemporary societal issues. Douglas (2004, p.258) neatly captures just how radical a departure Free-Form was from existing forms of popular music radio with her suggestion that 'when young people tuned in to certain FM stations in the late 1960s, they entered a brand-new auditory, political and cultural world'.

Many Australians experienced this alternate radio world when travelling to the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, often returning with recordings to

illustrate the potential of FM radio to others (Davis, 1984, p.35). Davis (1984, p.35) notes that Jim Spigelman, initially a senior advisor to Whitlam and later secretary of the Department of the Media, was among those with first-hand experience of Free-Form FM after having travelled to the United States in 1968. He also implies that Spigelman was not the only member of the loose network of ALP government advisors, politicians and party members engaged in radio reform discussions in the early 1970s that had an appreciation for this format (Davis, 1984, p.35). In addition to Spigelman, this group included two other Whitlam advisors, Peter Wilenski and David White; the Minister for the Media's secretary, Peter Martin; politicians, James McClelland, Mick Young and Moss Cass (later appointed Minister for the Media); and ALP members with links to the ABC, Max Bourke and Alan Ashbolt (Davis, 1984, p.38; Inglis, 1983, p.321). That this group considered Free-Form FM an appealing model for local FM radio development is not at all surprising.

Firstly, Free-Form's treatment of youth as civic and political actors intersected with the government's broader interest in higher education and youth affairs (Irving et al., 1995, chapter 6) and clearly matched the political enthusiasms of the young and highly influential ALP ministerial staffers that were a feature of the Whitlam government (Duffield, 1986, p.60; Tiernan, 2004, pp.44-51; Forward, 1977; Wilenski, 1979, p.36). Indeed, Spigelman, Wilenski and Martin had all been active in the development of an Australian counter-cultural youth movement while attending the University of Sydney in the 1960s (Hastings, 2002, essay one; Irving et al., 1995, chapter 8; Scalmer, 2002, chapter 1; Fell, 2013). Wilenski had been president of the University of Sydney Student Representative Council (SRC) and National Union of Australian University Students and had led the Australian delegation to the World Assembly of Youth conference in 1960 (Irving et al., 1995, pp.199-200). Spigelman also held the presidency of the University of Sydney SRC and, along with Peter Martin, was a key figure and participant in the Freedom Ride project undertaken by students in NSW in 1965 that was pivotal in drawing attention to problems facing Indigenous people—a project that replicated Freedom Rides undertaken in the

United States as part of the civil rights movement (Fell, 2013; Sherington and Irving, 1989, p.199; Scalmer, 2002; Perkins, 1975, pp.74-75).

Although not named as one of the FM radio discussants by Davis (1984; 1985), Moss Cass's young press secretary Henry Rosenbloom penned a description of Double J in 1976 that clearly suggests Free-Form and its counter-cultural gesturing was highly influential in determining the nature of youth radio investment pursued under the Whitlam government. In his book *Politics and the Media* he wrote:

Rock is the language of cultural radicalism. It puts people in touch with their emotions; it frees them from an automatic acceptance of the artificial rhythms of urban and suburban life. In a very real sense, JJ is a deconditioning agent. It reveals by its own merits the junk and nonsense which is an intrinsic part of commercial radio. It tells its audience they can live different lives, think different things, like different music . . . to the cultural concrete which is poured through their beings every other day (Rosenbloom, 1976, p.24).

This point had clearly been made to ABC staff, with one former employee advised by Rosenbloom, according to Dugdale (1979, p.82), that:

The Minister meant that 2JJ was a huge success . . . and the country needed more of it. Rock; Rock was important. All over the United States rock stations were beating out their message, creating a social revolution. Rock was a conditioning agent. It weaned young people away from the values of their middle-class parents and introduced them to new ways of seeing the world. Rock was what the country needed.

Secondly, despite the waning role of Free-Form in US radio broadcasting by the mid-1970s with the introduction of playlists morphing the format into what became known as Album-Oriented Rock (AOR), it was widely recognised as the format that kick-started the popular uptake of FM in the United States, a process that Whitlam and his government were desperate to be recognised for initiating in Australia (Peter

Martin, interview cited in Davis, 1984, p.38). FM radio had been introduced in the United States in 1939, but for decades remained a relatively marginal feature of the radio landscape with most FM stations simply simulcasting a parent company's AM station output, and others specialising in classical and jazz music. When the FCC ruled against simulcasting in the early 1960s a 'more enterprising exploitation of the medium' was encouraged (Douglas, 2004, p.263). It was in this experimental environment that Free-Form emerged and was rapidly adopted by an increasing contingent of commercial FM licence holders and college radio stations across the country (Fornatale and Mills, 1980, pp.133-135; Sterling and Keith, 2008, chapter 5; Sterling and Kittross, 2002). While it never dominated the radio landscape, Free-Form highlighted the possibilities of popular music programming on FM, significantly increasing public interest in the band. According to Barnes (1988), 'the most enduring legacy of freeform rock was that FM was where it's at . . . [it] convinced a generation of listeners that music sounded inferior in AM monaural, a perception that has never been shaken'. In the wake of Free-Form, a range of new popular music formats were developed for the FM band and underpinned substantial growth in the number of stations, listenership, and revenue (which grew thirteen fold in the decade 1964-1974, from US\$19.7 million to US\$248.2 million) (Barnes, 1988, pp. 14-17; Sterling and Keith, 2008; Gomery, 2008, chapter 9; Douglas, 2004, p.259).

Despite the apparent enthusiasm of a coterie of influential government members and advisors for Free-Form and evidence that the format had stimulated FM radio take-up in the United States, the Department's plan to create a Young Style FM radio sector, and the broader radio development plan of which it was part, was rejected by the government executive in August 1974. The cost of the plan proved to be the major impediment. At this time an economic recession was beginning to constrain government finances and cabinet would not entertain a AUD\$20 million outlay. The fact that the none of the planned services were due to go on air before July 1975 further undermined the submission, with growing criticism that the minister and his department were incapable of implementing timely media reform (Davis, 1984,

p.38; Edgar, 1979, pp.216-220). Whitlam, having emphasised the development of FM in his pre-election speech of April 1974, was personally exposed over the issue (Whitlam, 1974). With mounting political pressure on the government translating into real concerns about its longevity and amendments to the BTA unlikely to make it through an increasingly hostile senate in which the ALP did not hold a majority, Whitlam reputedly told the minister that in the wake of the cabinet rejection he should forget 'grandiose' plans and come up something 'we can start tomorrow' (Davis, 1984, p.38; with regards to the impact of concern the government would be shortlived on broadcasting policy see Thornley, 1999, pp.125-126; and Cass, 1974). Whitlam also asked Martin and Spigelman to generate some low cost broadcasting options, and in this context, news received by Spigelman from the Department of the Media that the ABC had backup AM transmitters in Sydney and Melbourne which could legally be used for experimental broadcasting would set non-commercial youth radio on a new course.

The formation of the ABC's Double J

Although decisions relating to programming of existing ABC services are primarily a matter for the national broadcaster's executive and governance body, the introduction of any new service requires federal government support through the allocation of access to additional broadcast spectrum, the provision of transmitters and, generally, additional funding (Harding, 1979, p.6; Rosenbloom, 1976, pp.11-12). It is not unusual that in seeking the resources to establish a new service the ABC take into consideration the government's media policy objectives but, as Davis (1984; 1985) argues, the government's influence was more directed in the case of Double J. Having identified the possibility of using the ABC's AM backup transmitters in Sydney and Melbourne for new experimental services, the government's advisors began informal discussions with ABC staff, suggesting in the case of Sydney that a licence to operate a new service would be offered to the national broadcaster if it made a formal approach for the establishment of a 'station for young people' (Peter Martin, interview cited in Davis, 1984, p.39). Government advisors were confident the ABC would take up the offer as they understood that Free-Form style youth

radio was already being promoted by staff at the national broadcaster, particularly those involved in the ABC's Radio Action Movement (RAM), and the ABC commissioners seemed to have accepted the need to develop services for young people (Harding, 1979, p.6; Davis, 1985, p.317; Inglis, 1983, p.375).

RAM, formed in 1971 by a group of young ABC staff in Sydney that sought more innovative ABC radio programming, met in 1974 when the launch of FM radio seemed imminent to discuss the types of services the ABC might provide on the new band (Radio Active, 1974a; Inglis, 1983, pp.373-375; Owen, 1975, p.51). Chaired by Marius Webb of the Radio Special Projects unit, RAM was particularly interested in developing radio services that addressed the rapidly growing tertiary student and graduate audience (Inglis, 1983, p.321). *Room to Move*, one of the programs that had already emerged from this milieu to address such an audience was essentially a segment of Free-Form FM radio and was deemed by the Department of the Media to be the only program in the country to adequately service the musical needs of under 25 year olds (Department of the Media, 1974; as interpreted by Thornley, 1999, chapter 6, fn 36). Hosted by Chris Winter and produced by Ron Moss (like Webb, both would later be appointed Double J coordinators), *Room to Move* debuted as a one hour program on Sydney's 2BL in 1971, however, after recognition by the ABC that it was successful at attracting an audience of 'twenty-somethings', it was extended in duration and networked across Australia on ABC Radio 1 (Owen, 1975, p.51; Harding, 1979, p.5; Inglis, 1983, p.376; Davis, 1985, p.317; ABC, 1999, p.98). While the counter-cultural gesturing of Free-Form radio, as articulated by *Room to Move*, may not have appealed to some ABC commissioners, there was a keen awareness that the organisation had to improve its engagement with the youth audience as part of its mandate to provide adequate and comprehensive services (Inglis, 1983, p.376; ABC Triple J, 2005c). As Keith Mackriell, the ABC's Assistant General Manager (Radio) emphasised, 'we [the ABC] cannot escape a responsibility to provide for young people' and the provision of services for youth 'falls within the basic mandate we have in terms of the Broadcasting and Television Act' (Radio Active, 1974b).

After being unofficially alerted to the new 'targeted' licence opportunities, Arthur Wyndham, the Acting Controller of the ABC's Radio Network 1, presented a paper to the Commission arguing that 'the ABC was incapable of attracting the young without more stations', a proposition accepted by the Commission (Davis, 1985, p.314). Aware of this position, the Department of the Media officially approached the ABC in September 1974 and invited it to suggest what it would do with two new AM frequencies (Davis, 1984, p.39). On 23 September, confident that the ABC would develop young style radio yet obliged to observe ABC independence, the government executive approved the decision to make an unconditional offer to the ABC of experimental AM licences for Sydney and Melbourne (Commonwealth of Australia, 1974; the minister was very careful to emphasise the ABC's independence cf. Billboard, 1975, p.A6). The ABC accepted the government's offer and on 19 January 1975 launched Double J as Australia's first non-commercial youth radio service.

Double J, which famously opened with a track that Australian commercial radio stations had agreed not to play, Skyhooks' *You Just Like Me Cos I'm Good in Bed*, displayed all the hallmarks of the Free-Form format. The station's first coordinator, Marius Webb, echoed Tom Donohue's view of the inadequacies of US commercial music radio published eight years earlier (Donahue, 1967) when he told the *Sunday Telegraph* on the day of Double J's launch:

One of the most exciting aspects of 2JJ is the respect it has for its audience. It sees them as people whose musical tastes have been ignored by commercial radio – people who will choose to listen to good and varied music rather than 40 or so records recycled throughout the day (McIntyre, 1975).

In addition to adopting DJ-determined and relatively unstructured album music presentation, Double J also engaged in the type of social, political and cultural boundary pushing that had marked US Free-Form radio, with early segments like the *Ins and Outs of Love* sex advice show generating substantial controversy (for an

overview of programming and public reaction see Elder and Wales, 1984; Dickenson, 1979; ABC, 1979, pp.51-52).

While Double J may have infringed on ‘what had hitherto been regarded as a commercial sphere of operations, namely the ‘youth market’’, the commercial sector’s fear that it would significantly impact on its ratings and revenue were soon allayed (ABC - 2JJ, 1976, p.2). However, this was not before the sector waged a campaign against the station, arguing that as a complementary service to that of commercial broadcasters there was no need for the ABC to experiment with the provision of services for youth since they already catered for this audience, while also allegedly monitoring and recording Double J broadcasts in a bid to build evidence of malpractice to exert regulatory pressure on the ABC—a tactic the sector would later use against youth community broadcasters (Foster, 1976a; Foster, 1976b; Whitlam, 1976; Cass, 1976, pp.880-881; Rosenbloom, 1976, p.23; ABC Triple J, 2005d). Interestingly, the hopes of the ABC executive that the station would deliver the national broadcaster a substantial under-25 year old audience were also dashed (For discussion of the ABC’s competitive aims see Webb and Moss, 1974; Dickenson, 1979, programming chapter; McIntyre, 1975; Sunday Telegraph, 1974; Dawson, 1992, p.39; Blain, 1977, p.103).

Despite initially attaining good ratings, with data for July 1975 revealing that the station had attracted nearly six per cent of Sydney’s radio audience and 22 per cent of the 18-25 age-group, it was not long before Double J listenership declined and would never return to those same heights (Evans, 1976, p.1; ABC, 1976, p.2; Jones, 1995, Appendix). Qualitative research conducted by the ABC in 1976 to investigate the decline found that the station had a small group of core listeners and a larger group of peripheral listeners who had initially sampled the station but were drifting away since they found it difficult to cope with the ‘range and frequency of unfamiliar music’ and ‘social commentary and blasé DJ’s who feel inclined to give a critical point of view on almost any topic’ (ABC, 1976, p.6). Free-Form was clearly not for everyone. Double J’s ability to reach its target audience was also compromised by the weakness and unreliability of the signal from its transmitter

(Dix, 1981d, p.606; Inglis, 1983, p.377; ABC, 1976). It was not until July 1980, when the station was granted access to the FM band that Double J's signal reached a large part of Sydney²⁶ (Scan, 1980). In addition, attempts by Moss Cass, as Minister for the Media, and the ABC Commissioners to network the service across Australia's major cities to correspond with the national broadcaster's other offerings, did not eventuate²⁷ (Lord, 1975; Rosenbloom, 1976, p.6, p.26; Harding, 1979, p.39).

While Double J represented an important and innovative precedent for non-commercial youth radio investment, it did not capture a large enough proportion of the youth audience to temper the argument traced out in the following chapter that the demise of Top 40 commercial radio in the 1980s was readily presented as the abandonment of youth by the medium. Likewise, a second non-commercial youth radio articulation that emerged incidentally as the Whitlam government sought to establish a community broadcasting sector would also set an important investment precedent without allaying later concerns that youth were no longer adequately served by radio in Australia.

Community broadcasting, universities and youth radio

As mentioned, establishing a community broadcasting²⁸ sector was a key element of the ALP party platform when Whitlam took government in 1972 and a feature of the Department of the Media's 1974 radio plan (Manning et al., 1974a). The plan indicated that a total of 11 community licences would be offered to community groups and the government would assist them to develop their stations at a cost of AUD\$5.03 million (see Table 1.1). However, like the establishment of a youth radio sector, the Department's community broadcasting proposal necessitated changes to the BTA which was unlikely as the government faced a hostile Senate where it did not hold a majority, and required funds that the government could not spare in its

²⁶ Even then the location of the FM transmitter on the ABN-2 mast at Gore Hill was not ideal, and the station was granted lower power than the commercial FM stations who first gained access to the FM band at this time (Phillipps, 1981).

²⁷ However, it was relayed to Canberra and Newcastle overnight when the local services were off air.

²⁸ Community broadcasting was referred to as public broadcasting until the Broadcasting Services Act was passed in 1992.

recession-impacted budget (Manning et al., 1974a, p.12; Cass, 1978, pp.1321-1322; Thornley, 1999, p.124). So, as with youth radio, the government proceeded in an ad hoc manner to use alternative mechanisms that were quick, cheap and required no legislative change to create the new sector.

In part, a solution to the government's community radio development problem was delivered in a paper generated by government staffer Geoff Evans and passed on to Moss Cass (who was then Minister for the Environment but would later be appointed Minister for the Media). The paper suggested that the Wireless Telegraphy Act (WTA 1905), which had underpinned early Australian broadcasting, could still be used by the government's Postmaster General to issue licences for experimental communications (Cass, 1974; as discussed in Thornley, 1999, pp.124-125). This Act was already being used to allow the University of New South Wales (from 1961) and the University of Adelaide (from 1972) to operate restricted radio services to deliver coursework to students, and other radio-like services to be operated by universities and some other organisations²⁹ (Thornley, 1999, pp.247-249, pp.252-254). With this knowledge, on 23 September 1974 the government announced that it would utilise the WTA to establish community broadcasting in Australia by issuing experimental FM licences to the classical music broadcasting societies of Sydney (2MBS) and Melbourne (3MBS) and a new licence to the University of Adelaide AM station (5UV) which enabled it to 'conduct courses in public broadcasting and to make time available to public broadcasters'³⁰ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1974). The selection of these particular groups from

²⁹ One of the services licensed under the WTA in 1973 was a cable radio station developed by the Salvation Army and operated by high school students in Coffs Harbour (Tarling, 1980, pp.52-53; Thornley, 1999, pp.164-165; Stalling, 2003). Not only did this station, Dynamic Radio Coffs Harbour Youth (2CHY), provide the first local radio service for the town, but it is also recognised as providing the first legal community programming in Australia, and I would suggest also the first non-commercial articulation of youth radio (Langdon and Thornley, 1995; Townsend and Swansborough, 1975). Captain John Townsend, the station founder, notes that although the station sought to appeal to older age groups during the day, in the late afternoons it operated a popular music format in the mould of the Top 40 stations (Liddell, 2003; Townsend and Swansborough, 1975, pp.6-7). Indeed, Townsend suggests that the students were very good at picking hit songs in advance of other commercial stations, drawing interest in their playlists by record companies (Liddell, 2003).

³⁰ Note the careful wording here linking public broadcasting activities to the University's role as an educator.

the many that had expressed an interest in community broadcasting was quite deliberate. Not only could all of them 'be classified as experimental services to specific audiences rather than broadcasting to the general public', important because the government realised that the somewhat dubious way they were using the WTA was likely to be challenged by their political opponents and commercial broadcasters, but they also had ready access to financial and other resources and so did not require additional government funding (5UV from the university and the music broadcasting society through their generally wealthy members and patrons) (Thornley, 1999, pp.171-172; The Age, 1974).

While a range of approaches to licensing community broadcasters were explored by the government in the months that followed the 23 September announcement, including issuing restricted commercial licenses under the BTA, when Moss Cass became Minister for the Media in June 1975, no further licences had actually been issued³¹. With every indication that the government would face an early election that it would not win, Cass decided that shoring-up community radio as a third broadcasting sector required a large number of services to be licensed as quickly as possible (Thornley, 1999, pp.176-179; Tebbutt, 1989, p.131). WTA experimental communication licences remained the best option to make this happen. However, Cass would have to convince Reg Bishop, a far more cautious Postmaster General than Lionel Bowen who had been in the role when the first licences were issued, that the WTA could legitimately be used on the grounds that the services were experimental and would engage restricted audiences (Thornley, 1999, p.179). To this end, Cass decided that he would only offer licences to tertiary education institutions, a move that also circumvented the issue of funding and resourcing the new stations (Thornley, 1999, p.180; Tebbutt, 1989, p.131). It was this decision that facilitated a new articulation of non-commercial youth radio in Australia.

³¹ There were some new developments outside community broadcasting. In January 1975 the government called for applications for restricted commercial licences to operate community style services, but these had yet to be issued. In May 1975 the PMG issued WTA experimental licences to a government-community committee for the operation of two ethnic broadcasting stations in Sydney (2EA) and Melbourne (3EA) for three months from June to September, ostensibly to promote the benefits of the government's new Medibank health insurance scheme (Rennie, 2006).

On 21 August 1975 Cass announced that twelve tertiary institutions would be offered experimental licences under the WTA, a group thereafter referred to as Cass' Dozen (Rosenbloom, 1978, pp.118-119). In fact, in three cases the licences were offered to student unions and related community groups, since Geoff Evans, who was charged with identifying the recipients, could not find 12 university administrations prepared to take the licences (Thornley, 1999, p.182). The Whitlam government fell on 11 November before any of these licences could be issued. Yet, despite being displeased by the manner in which the licences had been announced and the dubious use of the WTA, the incoming Coalition government were not opposed to community broadcasting and realised there were some immediate political gains to be made by completing the process Cass had started (Thornley, 1999, pp.187-188). By the end of November the new government had issued the first of the WTA experimental licences to members of Cass' Dozen³² (Thornley, 1999, pp.188-189).

In a bid to emphasise the experimental and restricted nature of the licences a clause was inserted that limited stations to 'transmitting messages . . . containing matter of an educational character, intended for aural reception by the staff and students'³³ (Thornley, 1999, pp.182-183). Even on the basis of a conservative interpretation of this clause, the programming of the new stations would necessarily engage with young people, perhaps providing sufficient grounds for viewing this form of early community broadcasting as a new form of youth radio. However, it is the fact that a number of the new stations came to flout the educational clause and, drawing on the counter-cultural consciousness of participants, took on a Free-Form style of programming much like that of the ABC's Double J station that makes an even more compelling case for suggesting that Cass' intervention generated a new articulation of Australian youth radio (Warne, 1987, p.169). The manner in which Free-Form

³² They also flagged changes to the Broadcasting and Television Act which would in future allow community broadcasters to be legitimately licensed as broadcasters.

³³ This clause had been inserted by the ALP in response to concerns raised by Reg Bishop and the Attorney General about the legality of using the WTA for licensing community stations (Thornley, 1999, p.182)

programming came to be employed by two of the stations in Cass' Dozen, 4ZZZ in Brisbane and 3RRR³⁴ in Melbourne, has been particularly well documented³⁵.

The licence for Brisbane's 4ZZZ was allocated in November 1975 to the University of Queensland Student Union Media Committee, a group that had been advancing plans for a radio station and lobbying the federal government since 1973 (Stafford, 2006, pp.29-35). From the late 1960s the University of Queensland had become a natural haven for the 'radical movement' according to Stafford (2006, p.14), and it was students engaged in that movement, frustrated with the mainstream media and the limitations of their alternative print-media experiments, that pushed for the development of a radio station (Matchett, 2011). It was seemingly clear to Geoff Evans when he included the University of Queensland Student Union in Cass' Dozen that, although this group were well organised, they were essentially 'radical ratbags' and were unlikely to conform to educational programming restrictions (Thornley, 1999, p.182; certainly Free-Form style music programming was a feature of the groups' previous application to the ABCB, as noted in UQSU Media Committee, 1975). Indeed, the group had previously rejected an offer of an educational licence similar to that under which 5UV originally operated (Stafford, 2006, p.29). The opening statement delivered by John Woods to launch 4ZZZ on 8 December 1975 made it clear that 'to impose limitations or restrictions on public broadcasting is to seriously threaten a fundamental liberty, that of free speech' (Stafford, 2006, p.36). While Woods emphasised that popular music would be a key feature of the station, telling listeners that they had tuned to '4ZZ³⁶ in Brisbane, bringing you stereo *FM rock* on a frequency of 105.7 megahertz', for the first few months the station did feature some educational and spoken word block programming in accordance with its licence (Stafford, 2006, p.36, *my italics*). However, by the end of 1976 much of this had been replaced by Free-Form music programming (Stafford, 2006, pp.42-46).

³⁴ Originally the station broadcast under the callsign 3MT.

³⁵ Dickenson (1979, fn.30) indicates that Canberra's 2XX also deployed a Free-Form format similar to that of 2JJ and Fairchild (2012, p.62) documents the influence of Free-Form generally and *Room to Move* specifically on the development of the station.

³⁶ In February 1976 the ABCB decided that FM stations would have a three letter call sign and 4ZZ became 4ZZZ.

Jim Beatson, who had been the driving force behind 4ZZZ's development (and would in the 1990s encourage the development of youth community broadcaster FBi), claims that, having drawn inspiration from Chris Winter's *Room to Move*, he had always considered that the station would adopt a Free-Form programming approach (Stafford, 2006, pp.42-46; Thornley, 1999, pp.148-150; Palathingal, 2013; Matchett, 2011 also points to the influence of *Room to Move* on 4ZZZ's development).

Unlike, 4ZZZ, the 3RRR licence had been allocated to the somewhat conservative academic administrators of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). When 3RRR launched in November 1976, programming conformed quite rigidly to the educational model, covering such topics as secretarial studies, Russian arts and social psychology, and including only a small amount of contemporary music (Phillips, 2006, p.30). However, according to Phillips (2006, p.25), it wasn't long before 'the agenda was seized by a group of much younger, more adventurous pioneers, who immediately threw caution to the wind and created the station they wanted to listen to'. As was the case with Double J and 4ZZZ, the group drew inspiration from *Room to Move* and, in the mould of Free-Form, sought to present intelligent well-planned music programs 'that make connections, putting things together and drawing out implications and significance: going out from the music as well as providing the sort of analysis that deepens our understanding' (Matthews, 1977; cited in Phillips, 2006, p.34; for direct reference to American Free-Form in relation to 3RRR, see McLoughlin, 1977). Through the first half of 1977 the proportion of such contemporary music programming was increased and by mid-year the university administration seemed to have conceded that it was a legitimate form of educational programming (Phillips, 2006, pp.30-31). Not everyone was comfortable with the direction the station was taking. In May 1978 the head of the School of External Studies resigned from the 3RRR Board, reportedly feeling that 'the station's direct application to external studies was small and he could see no reason for spending education funds on an essentially music formatted station' (Phillips, 2006, p.31).

Commercial radio broadcasters were also not happy with the direction taken by 3RRR. FARB complained to the Postal and Telecommunications Department that the station was operating outside the educational conditions of its licence, and argued that the regulator should insist that special purpose education stations 'could only broadcast 'general interest' or music programs if they were directed at an educational audience' (Phillips, 2006, p.31; Tebbutt, 1989, p.135). As was the case with Double J, 3RRR and the other new community broadcasters adopting Free-Form programming may have broadly infringed on commercial broadcasting's popular music programming territory and challenged its monopoly on how the connection between radio and youth was conceptualised, but they did not seriously impact on the ratings or financial position of commercial broadcasters. Still, the commercial broadcasters kept up their campaign. In a bid to quell hostilities in 1978 the Public Broadcasting Association of Australia³⁷ (PBAA) promoted the position that the programming of community stations would 'complement and supplement, and not seek to compete with the programs of existing services' (Law, 1986, p.33). The government subsequently enshrined this in its 1979 policy position, noting that the new community broadcasting sector 'must be complementary and supplementary to the national and private sectors', a position that has been maintained ever since (ABT, 1979b, p.3; Rennie, 2006, pp.100-102).

Far from appeasing the commercial sector, the complementary and supplementary framework has proven to be an instrument through which commercial broadcasters have pressed their claims, not only against the educational licencees of Cass' Dozen, but subsequent community broadcasters holding less restrictive licences. Indeed, almost immediately after it was pronounced, some commercial stations argued that community broadcasters should not be allowed to broadcast material of any kind 'which ever or even might be heard on national or commercial stations . . . [which] would include such material as classical and light popular music, news and sport, and programs such as 'talk-back'' (ABT, 1979b, p.11). The regulator may have taken

³⁷ When the sector was renamed under the Broadcasting Services Act of 1992 the sector body became the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA).

a dim view of such an extreme position, but it failed to provide clear advice as to how distinctive community broadcasting should be and over the years the commercial sector has regularly sought to impose its own definition in order to widen its territory and diminish that of community broadcasters (ABT, 1979b, p.11). In 2006 it attempted to completely excise youth radio from the sector as discussed in chapter six.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the first substantive articulation of youth radio in Australia emerged in the early 1960s as a number of commercial radio stations across metropolitan Australia adopted a continuous Top 40 music and news format to counter the introduction of television. This format, which was developed in the United States as a new mechanism to aggregate the broad audiences radio had achieved through its pre-television segmented programming. However, it came to focus on the cultural tastes of youth since its primary material, recorded popular music, was selected on the basis of record sales which young people had come to dominate from the late 1950s. Despite the impact of young people on programming, Top 40 came to amass large and broad audiences in Australia for more than 20 years, in part because the government restricted the access of new competitors into the radio market. Top 40 also established radio as an important third party in the relationship between young people and the music industry—particularly with regards to the process of dynamic obsolescence that shortened the lifecycle of popular music items and thereby made a constant flow of new music fundamental to the recorded music industry business model. It is the perceived damage to this relationship caused by the move of commercial radio out of Top 40 in the 1980s that would drive policy concerns about the disconnection of radio and youth as discussed in the next chapter.

In this chapter I have also described the regulatory and industrial structures of Australian radio broadcasting that emerged over its first sixty years, setting an important context for the youth radio developments discussed in this and later

chapters. By the 1980s, the period in which the next chapter takes up the discussion, the Australian radio landscape was composed of three sectors, with the government addressing a range of broadcasting objectives, including ensuring that an *adequate and comprehensive* range of services were made available to Australians, through a combination of both direct content intervention and regulating the structure of the radio landscape. Youth radio, over which the commercial sector held a monopoly for almost two decades, found new articulations in the mid-1970s in the national sector, as the ABC's Double J, and in the new community broadcasting sector, as Free-Form university stations. The former was the result of strategic government structural intervention, while the latter appeared more incidentally. These non-commercial youth radio articulations may have irritated the commercial sector, highlighting the somewhat undefined boundaries between the sectors, but they did not seriously disturb the commercial sector's dominant hold on the youth audience, nor on how youth radio was popularly conceptualised. While the national and community sectors, and the youth radio precedents set within them in the 1970s, would eventually be drawn on by the government as it sought to address a perceived deterioration in the radio-youth relationship in the 1980s, it was the commercial sector that was the government's initial focus in terms of the cause of this deterioration and where it might best be addressed. The demise of Top 40 commercial radio, its governmental problematisation driven by concerns about the economic and cultural impact this had as it destabilised the local music industry and the lack of progress in addressing this issue in the commercial sector is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The Demise of Top 40

Introduction

In November 1988, Melbourne's 3XY, an exemplar of the Top 40 format since 1968 which had consistently led the ratings through the 1970s and early 1980s, was relaunched as '3XY Easy Rock' (Nicholson, 2007; Mac, 2005, p.301; B&T, 1988; Phillips, 1988b). 3XY's programming change is deemed to have marked the end of Australian Top 40 radio, with not a single capital city station deploying the format at this moment. This chapter establishes how changes to commercial music radio programming in the 1980s and 1990s emerged as, and remained, a significant public policy issue. I argue that the demise of Top 40 was initially translated as a local content policy concern since it reduced airplay for new Australian music. After it proved unworkable to revise the existing local content regulations to deal with this issue, the issue itself was transposed into one of broadcasting diversity—a formulation more amenable to structural intervention. The disappearance of Top 40 commercial radio was presented as diminishing an enduring and multifaceted relationship between radio and youth. The reformulation of the problem in such socio-cultural terms opened up opportunities for it to be addressed in Australia's national and community broadcasting sectors that were in part designed and historically deployed to address the needs of audiences disenfranchised by commercial broadcasters. While the disposition of existing outlets engaging with young people in these sectors to play new Australian music was certainly recognised in policy discussions, their limited reach in terms of population coverage, significantly lower ratings than commercial stations and targeted counter-cultural youth aesthetic, as described in Chapter One, meant they had little impact on the argument that the demise of the commercial Top 40 format signalled an abandonment of youth by radio.

The first section of this chapter traces the diminishing fortunes of Australian Top 40 stations in the 1980s and the rise to dominance of music radio formats that targeted older listeners through the 1990s, including Adult Contemporary and Album-Oriented Rock (AOR). Here I draw on a range of literature, much of which was incorporated into policy discussions, that identifies the aging of the baby-boomer audience as the primary factor informing the nature of changes to commercial radio programming during this period. The speed, comprehensive and enduring nature of the changes, that included the extinction of the Top 40 format, is deemed to have resulted from changes to the structure of the radio landscape facilitated by regulatory change. The initial change, the release of commercial FM licences in 1980, ruptured the existing broadcasting settlement in a manner not dissimilar to the introduction of television. Three later developments further unsettled the industry and are considered to have militated against experimenting with markets outside the core baby-boomer segment: cross-media legislative changes occurring between 1986 and 1988; the 1988 National Plan for the Development of Metropolitan Radio Services (NRP); and the introduction of new broadcasting legislation, the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), in 1992. These regulatory changes are considered in some detail, particularly the NRP and BSA which afforded non-commercial youth radio developments described in Chapters Three (Triple J) and Four (Community Youth Radio), and the eventual return of commercial youth radio, as described in Chapter Five (Nova FM).

In the second section of the chapter I establish how the demise of Top 40 emerged as a significant public policy issue that would eventually be expressed in terms of a breakdown in the relationship between radio and youth in the period between the late 1980s and the end of 1990s. I argue that this was not simply driven by the concern of government to ensure the provision of adequate and comprehensive broadcasting services for its citizens, in accordance with an objective of encouraging social and cultural inclusion. Instead, the diminishing relationship between radio and youth was largely problematised as a result of its impact on the growth and development of the Australian music industry.

At the time Top 40 was disappearing from Australian radio in the 1980s, the federal government was turning its attention to supporting the local music industry. From the mid-1980s until the late 1990s, a period Breen (1999, p.7) refers to as Australia's 'rock [popular] music policy moment', the government invested in a range of support measures. While it had long encouraged commercial radio to play a role in local music development, the objective and effectiveness of the regulatory measures it had deployed in doing so were reassessed and reframed in the context of (while also contributing to) this new popular music policy push. The inquiry into Australian music content regulation lasted more than five years and was one of the most comprehensive in the history of Australian broadcasting. This chapter provides the most detailed account to date of its emergence and conduct, particularly with regard to how the broadcasting regulator sought to understand and respond to the replacement of Top 40 programming by music radio formats which did not encourage the exposure and constant turnover of new music that had previously underpinned the development of the music industry.

The intersection of popular music policy and local content regulation provided the momentum to keep commercial radio programming conservatism on the government agenda, but it was only when the problem was reframed as radio's disconnection from youth that an appropriate language was found to pursue a solution outside the commercial sector. This chapter concludes with an examination of how this reframing took place. I argue that youth, as an established and identifiable socio-cultural group that were already subject to significant government intervention across a range of policy spheres provided a suitable object around which 'citizenship' rationales for national and community broadcasting interventions could be formulated, but the framing of the radio-youth disconnection issue in terms of the development of the Australian popular music industry served to highlight the role of youth as consumers. I will argue later in this thesis that the ongoing identification of youth as a consumer market has created tensions within and across Australia's radio sector.

Section 1: The Demise of Top 40

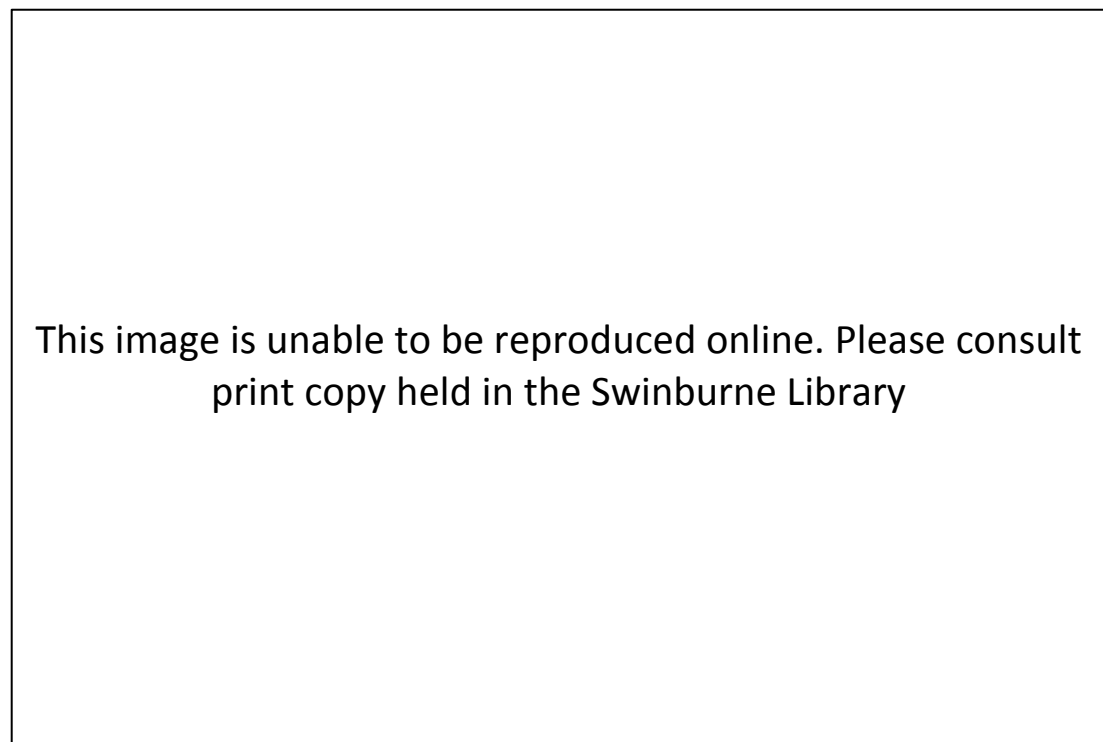
Radio Grows Up with the Baby-Boomers

In the early 1980s, Top 40 stations that had dominated metropolitan Australian music radio in the 1960s and 1970s began to shift out of the format—a process that accelerated as the decade continued (Turner, 1993, p.143; Mac, 2005, chapter 17). The three stations that had consistently topped the ratings with Top 40 programming in their respective markets during the 1970s, Sydney's 2SM, Brisbane's 4IP and Melbourne's 3XY, remained with the format until 1988 (although for a short period in the early 1980s 2SM had experimented with album music) (Jones, 1982; Kruger, 2012; Jones, 1995, Appendix). Then in quick succession 2SM was relaunched as 'Lite'n'Easy 1269' and 4IP as 'Lite'n'Easy 1008' (Mac, 2005, p.279, p.311). In November of that year, 3XY became '3XY Easy Rock', a move that prompted Neil Shoebridge (1989), writing for the leading Australian business magazine, *Business Review Weekly*, to warn that radio may be alienating a generation of listeners since there was no longer a single Top 40 station targeting teenage listeners in any of Australia's capital cities. Although for a few years a small number of stations made brief forays back into Top 40 programming (MediaSpy, 2012; ABT, 1990a, p.3, p.8), the rebranding of 3XY is widely considered to mark the end of the Top 40 era and the moment when changes to the radio landscape inspired public discourse that problematised radio's abandonment of youth. It is, for instance, this moment that Turner (1993) points to in his widely cited book chapter, 'Who killed the radio star? The death of teenage radio in Australia'.

It was commercial radio's response to the changing age profile of the Australian population that was the critical factor informing the nature of programming changes during the 1980s and 1990s, a process referred to as 'demographic creep' (Young, 1996, pp.103-104; Turner, 1993, p.146). By the mid-1980s, the post-war baby-boom that had created a population bulge centred on teenagers in the 1960s and 1970s was now centred on the young adult years. The oldest of the baby-boomers, the group that had been fundamental to the development of Top 40, were entering their forties, while the youngest boomers, who had helped sustain the format

through the 1970s and early 1980s, were now in their early twenties (ABS, 2003). The slogan adopted by 3XY to mark its move out of Top 40 in 1988 neatly captured how the commercial radio sector intended to deal with this population change. It read: '[t]he station you grew up with . . . has grown up too', a clear indication that commercial radio's focus would not be tied to a lifecycle segment, but a generational one³⁸ (see Figure 2.1) (Phillips, 1988b). Commercial music radio focused on members of the baby-boomer generation when they were young and it would continue to target them now they were young adults.

Figure 2.1 3XY trade press advertisement signalling format change, 1988



Source: Reproduced from B&T Weekly, 18 November 1988, consecutive right hand pages 9 & 11 (3XY, 1988).

It was not just that the baby-boomers represented a sizeable demographic cohort, but also that they remained an important driver of a consumer economy that began to boom after the war, as they had, and to which commercial radio's fortunes were inextricably tied (Harkin and Huber, 2004; Bennett, 2001, p.154; Savage, 1988,

³⁸ In the early 1990s 2SM rolled out a similar slogan: 'The Station You Grew Up With Has Grown Up With You' (Watson, 1991a).

p.167). By the 1980s the baby-boomers may have aged, but their penchant for consumer spending had not diminished. The combination of accumulated wealth, substantial disposable income, and a focus on consumption, made the boomers a relatively more lucrative market segment than younger and older groups, and therefore the commodity which commercial radio primarily wished to package and sell to advertisers (Miller et al., 1993, p.163; Mac, 2005, p.243; Davis, 1989c; Young, 1996, p.103; Miller, 1997, p.61). A survey of the Australian broadcasting and advertising trade press of the 1980s and 1990s (*B&T Weekly* and *AdNews*) confirms this as the accepted state of the market. Indicative of the writing of the period, *Ad News* reported in 1988, that 25-39 year olds were the 'advertising lucrative' radio bracket (Phillips, 1988a). Bob Lennon, manager of Perth's 6KY, reaffirmed commercial radio's focus on this target market in 1988, while also pointing to the likelihood that baby-boomers would remain important to broadcasters. He told *Ad News* that 'people could now be looking at the 35-54 group because it's the demographic of the future' (Findlay, 1988). By 1993, Lennon's future seemed to be rapidly approaching. Members of the industry's peak body, FARB, were informed at their national conference that the major radio demographic of the time was now 35-44 year olds—an event reported by Holmes for *Rolling Stone Magazine* in his poignantly tilted piece 'Revenge of the boomers' (Holmes, 1993, p.53).

In seeking to capture this prime baby-boomer market, commercial music radio would continue to rely upon two fundamental elements of music programming that had emerged with Top 40: music on the playlist must be popular and when the audience tunes in what they hear must be familiar. Top 40 programmers had identified what was popular to the audience by monitoring music sales while also predicting what will become popular from a looser combination of market analysis and instinct. Listeners were assured that when they tuned in they would be greeted by these familiar tunes by the Top 40 format's architecture of limited playlists and high repetition. But, since the dominant purchasers of records during the 1980s and 1990s remained young people (particularly 45 rpm singles that determined the Top 40, programmers felt the need to look elsewhere to identify music most popular

with the baby-boomer target audience (Miller et al., 1993, p.163; Huber, 2008, p.280). Indeed, by the mid-1980s, Melbourne station 3KZ, seeking to target the 25-39 year demographic, indicated it was experimenting with methods to determine playlists in light of the fact that record buyers represented just ten to fifteen per cent of the population and most of these buyers were aged under 25 years of age (Walker, 1984, p.142).

Fundamentally, the approach of commercial music radio programmers in seeking to address baby-boomers was shaped by the proposition that musical tastes are fashioned during youth and move with a person into adulthood. Holbrook and Schindler (1989) note that despite being unable to find any 'systematic empirical work' supporting this idea, by the late 1980s it had apparently gained widespread public acceptance, evident from the appearance of anecdotally-based reports in the popular and marketing trade press, such as those by Pareles (1988) and Stipp (1990), and its reflection in cultural products, such as films like *The Big Chill*³⁹. This position equated with an age-based lifecycle classification of youth, premised on the idea that the predilection for engaging with new or emergent cultural products peaks when people are young and declines with age.

Counihan (1996, p.20) argues that during this period 'variant forms of commercial radio seemed founded on [this] common set of assumptions: advertisers only want older audience; older audiences only want older music'. Turner (1993, p.144) concurs that radio conceived of its ageing audience at this time as one that 'does not seem to change its tastes or look for the thrill of the new'. He, like Potts (1989, p.40) and Breen (1990) argues that commercial radio sought to exploit the apparent nostalgic leanings of its reformulated audience that had 'listened to the Eagles in the 1970s on its record players, . . . tuned in to FM in the 1980s so it could listen to the Eagles on its car radios and now in the 1990s . . . *still* wants to listen to the Eagles—perhaps so it can remember the 1970s' (Turner, 1993, p.151, p.145).

³⁹ Holbrook and Schindler established an empirical base for this proposition through consumer preference research and in later work identified nostalgia preferences for other cultural products (Holbrook and Schindler, 1989; Holbrook and Schindler, 1994). Subsequent research in evolutionary psychology and neuroscience has also supported the idea of youthful taste-shaping (Levitin, 2006).

Programmers abandoned Top 40 and its focus on the transient musical hits of the present and instead looked to the hits of the Top 40 of a bygone era that had already proven popular with baby-boomers as an important raw material for a reformulated music radio. For instance, 50 per cent of 3KZ's playlist in the mid-1980s was composed of what it called 'flashbacks' (Walker, 1984, p.142). In fact, Casimir (2002) notes that programmers also looked to tracks from the back catalogue that had not achieved hit single status. This was partly a consequence of the role older boomers had played in the expansion of popular music's commodity form to include albums in the 1970s and which FM radio would prove an excellent conduit for in the 1980s and beyond (Potts, 1992, p.60).

Given that the boomers had a much longer musical heritage from which to draw than the young people on whom Top 40 playlists were centred, broader playlists could be deployed without reducing familiarity. This gave rise to programming developments like the 'no repeat workday', which emerged from Perth's 96FM—a technique unthinkable in the Top 40 era (Roberts, 2010). While radio programmers seemed to have adopted a general stance on the importance of pop music's back catalogue to the baby-boomers, a substantial increase in their commitment to audience research during 1980s suggests they were taking few chances as to which parts of this catalogue to use and how often, while also seeking to refine their approach to identifying contemporary music that could be successfully added to the playlist (Turner, 1993, p.150; Mac, 2005, pp.245-247; Jones, 1995, p.110).

According to Turner (1993, p.150) and others (Homan, 2007; Potts, 1992), callout research, the most influential new research method deployed by commercial radio in this period, may have enabled new tracks to be added to playlists, but it discriminated against new artists and new types of music. Callout research involves playing a small section (approximately 10 seconds) of a song or series of songs over the telephone to a sample of the station's target market. Respondents are then asked a series of questions to determine the degree of recognition, popularity, and 'burn out' (overexposure) produced by the track/s. Potts (1992, p.61) explains that, given the brevity of the exposure of the track to the listener under this method, 'if a

song sounds familiar or is similar to the style currently favoured on playlists, it will most likely gain the listener's approval'. Given its privileging of recognition rather than discernment, Turner concludes that this method 'does not just call up the listener, it calls up the past' (Turner, 1993, p.151).

In the early 2000s, those that developed the Nova FM network, which came to be publicly recognised as the return of commercial youth radio (as examined in Chapter Five), promoted their innovative approach to programming in terms of a rejection of callout research. But until then, and despite the various taglines and format names associated with music radio, from Easy Rock to Adult Contemporary, Classic Hits to AOR, in seeking to capture the aging baby-boomer market it was popular hits and selected album tracks from a bygone era, new music from the enduring rockers of that era, and music from new artists who sounded like hit-makers from the past⁴⁰, that was the primary raw material for those making Australian music radio (Davis, 1989c; Potts, 1992; Miller et al., 1993; Counihan, 1996).

Changes to the programming of commercial music radio in the 1980s may have been inevitable given the aging of the consumer market and therefore prime commodity audience, but the speed, comprehensiveness and enduring nature of these changes, including the extinction of Top 40, was driven by the introduction of commercial FM radio in Australia in 1980 and the risk-averse conservatism of radio owners following its expansion and associated changes to broadcasting regulation.

Commercial FM Disrupts the Radio Landscape

In the mid-1970s the ALP government introduced FM broadcasting in the community and national broadcasting sectors but, as noted in Chapter One, purposefully excluded commercial broadcasters from the band (Harding, 1979, p.10). It was not until a change of government and the release of the Postal and

⁴⁰ Indeed, the broadcasting regulator pointed to this trend when it sought to explore how to distinguish 'new music releases' from 'new music' on the grounds of how long the artist has been 'established' for and how new the style of music is (ABT, 1990d, p.111).

Telecommunication Department's 1976 inquiry into the structure of the Australian broadcasting system that commercial FM radio was endorsed by the federal government (Green, 1976, p.148). It took a further three years for this decision to be translated into action. In June 1979, the Communications Minister, Tony Staley, announced that the first stage of the rollout would involve the release of seven commercial FM licences in the mainland state capitals: two in Sydney and Melbourne and one in each of Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane (PTD, 1979, p.2). The licences would be issued to new entities to expand program offerings rather than facilitate the migration of existing commercial AM services—a decision that angered the commercial sector opposed to the introduction of new competition (Mac, 2005, p.212). The minister indicated that the regulator, then known as the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT), would hold public hearings into 'the merits and submissions of the various applicants' and would consider the commercial viability of the proposed new services and their impact on existing services in the specified broadcast area before issuing the new licences (PTD, 1979, p.2).

By the end of 1980, the ABT determined that each capital city market could sustain a new station and the seven commercial FM licences were allocated. On 11 July 1980 3EON-FM went to air in Melbourne as Australia's first commercial FM station. It was followed soon after by 3FOX in Melbourne and then FM broadcasters in the other capital cities (Marcato, 2005b, p.173). Marcato's (2004) thesis provides an excellent overview of the development of Australian FM radio, its expansion to include the commercial sector, and the impact of this expansion. He argues the new commercial FM stations did not immediately impact on the market share of existing AM stations (Marcato, 2004, pp.26-27). In part this was because the new stations required listeners to have access to FM receivers (according to Mac, 2005, p.213, rates of household FM receiver penetration were quite healthy at 80 per cent, but only 50 per cent of cars were equipped with FM radios when commercial FM began) and because listeners also had to be schooled in how to access the new band (Marcato, 2004, p.26; Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.85). Instead, it was the nature of commercial radio programming upon which the new FM stations had more immediate impact.

With commercial FM emerged a new set of radio owners, programmers and executives with a genuine enthusiasm for building a new type of Australian commercial radio (Griffen-Foley, 2009, pp.84-85; Marcato, 2004, p.25). The technical specifications of Frequency Modulation (FM) enabled new programming possibilities as it produces a much fuller sound and, with wider frequency range and less interference than AM, is clearly superior in the reproduction of music (Potts, 1992, p.59). As was the case with the Top 40 format, the United States provided models from which Australian commercial radio programmers could draw their inspiration. As discussed in Chapter One, FM emerged as a force in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s through the development and diffusion of the Free-Form music format—a format that influenced the development of non-commercial youth radio in Australia in the 1970s. By the time commercial FM began in Australia in the 1980s, Free-Form had been well and truly tamed as the AOR format. Its political posturing was gone and centralised playlists were brought back, but the wider, and historically deeper selection of album music remained to cater for a maturing audience (Douglas, 2004, pp.278-281; Marcato, 2005b, p.174; Keith, 1987, pp.89-91; Miller, 2008; Shane, 1996).

Mac (2005, p.217) argues that, although markedly accelerated, the pattern of FM programming development in Australia resembled that which occurred in the United States. He notes that the seven pioneering FM stations initially sought to create an impression that FM was a very different listening experience from AM music radio; one that was more mature and culturally refined. Marcato's (2004) case study of the establishment of 3EON FM bears this out. This station's programming team, many of whom had come from Top 40 stations, including Program Director and ex-3XY DJ Lee Simon, looked to break the shackles of that tight format. Simon described the station's early programming as 'laid back, cool and hip, almost anti Top 40' (Jones, 1995, p.109). This was the closest Australian commercial radio had ever come to Free-Form radio, with Marcato explaining that:

The station allowed its announcers free reign on the air, being able to select the music they played in their shifts. Announcers

were able to play long album tracks and the music could range from what was popular at the time to artists who wouldn't normally receive airplay on radio (Marcato, 2004, p.26).

As a complete package, this approach failed to attract a mass audience and draw in the AM Top 40 audience and so prompted the new stations to introduce formal popular music playlists. But it did provide the basis for increasing the proportion of album music and older tracks on this playlist. This proportion would be limited during the first half of the 1980s as the FM stations moved in on Top 40 audiences, a subtle change that was difficult for the broadcasting regulator to reconcile with its music radio format definitions (as discussed in Section 2 of this chapter). It increased substantially in the late 1980s and into the 1990s as they transitioned into AOR following the eradication of Top 40 and in accordance with the aging of the baby-boomer market.

As the FM stations moved into more structured contemporary formats they began to erode audience share of the Top 40 AM stations (See Peters, 1989 for a succinct overview of the transformation of radio markets during the 1980s). The superior quality of FM music transmission and a more sophisticated programming approach provided FM commercial radio advantages to which the AM stations were slow to respond. Their eventual actions, such as upgrading to AM stereo services in 1985, proved too late (Marcato, 2004, pp.38-40). In Melbourne 3EON FM was already clearly outperforming Top 40 station 3XY at this time (See Table 2.1) and was jostling with AM talk station 3AW for ratings leadership, while FM stations led the ratings in all other mainland state capitals (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.88). FM stations had successfully captured the two identified baby-boomer demographic splits at this time, 18-24 and 25-39 year olds, commanded more than a quarter of the listening audience and gained a disproportionate share of total radio advertising—by 1987 they captured more than a third of all metropolitan radio revenue but represented just one fifth of stations (Jones, 1988, p.5; ABT, 1990b, p.81). So dominant were the seven FM stations in the market that by 1985 they had the same profit share as their 27 AM rivals (Randall, 1992). By this time many of the Top 40 music stations

had sought refuge in talk and sport formats, while those that scrambled into new parts of the music radio marketplace, often targeting the top end of the baby-boomer demographic using Classic Hits and Easy Listening formats, continued to face competition as FM stations became broad, fully-fledged, AOR stations in the late 1980s (Mac, 2005, p.248).

Table 2.1 Overall audience share, Melbourne 3XY and EON-FM

Year	3XY	EON-FM
1978	15	n/a
1979	15	n/a
1980	16	1
1981	14	6
1982	12	7
1983	11	9
1984	10	11
1985	9	14

Source: Developed from Marcato, 2005, p.175.

While the introduction of commercial FM in 1980 may have destabilised commercial radio in a manner that contributed to the demise of commercial youth radio, a series of further changes to the structure of the broadcasting landscape, facilitated by government intervention from the late 1980s and into the 1990s, would stymie experimentation with markets outside the core baby-boomer segment and thereby ensure its continuing absence.

Changes to Broadcast Regulation Further Unsettle the Industry

From the start of the 1980s, but particularly after the election of the ALP in 1983, the federal government undertook a broad program of microeconomic reform in which it redefined its role in regulating a range of industries from one of controlling market access and directing activities to facilitating greater levels of competition and arbitrating in cases of market failure (see discussion in Department of Communications, 1986b, s.3.26-3.28; Brown, 1989, pp.482-483). As this shift tended to reduce the volume of specific technical regulations to which industries were

subject I will refer to this process as deregulation, although I hasten to add that it could equally be thought of as re-regulation, particularly in the broadcasting sector where market access remains tightly controlled.

With regards to radio, the government sought to significantly reduce the number of specific programming conditions it imposed upon licensees. In two revisions of the 1958 Radio Programming Standards (RPS) conducted in 1981 and 1986 specific programming conditions were reduced in volume from 34 pages to four (Armstrong, 1986, p.46). Later, under the Broadcasting Services Act of 1992, the Standards were largely transposed into self-regulatory codes developed through a consultative process between the sector's peak body and the regulator (Armstrong et al., 1995, pp.160-161). The government's desire to reduce content regulation compromised the ability of the regulator to modify the RPS that required commercial stations to play a minimum quota of Australian music which, as discussed in Section 2 of this chapter, consequently generated rationales for non-commercial youth radio investment. But it was the government's modification of mechanisms of structural regulation in this period that impacted upon the provision of commercial youth radio.

From the early 1980s the federal government became increasingly committed to pursuing its broadcasting objectives, including diversity and quality of service, by altering the structure of the broadcasting landscape (Armstrong, 1986; Beazley, 1990). Three major events marked changes to radio broadcasting structural regulation during the 1980s and 1990s: cross-media legislative changes that included a liberalisation of commercial radio station ownership limits in 1987 and 1988, the 1988 National Plan for the Development of Metropolitan Radio Services (NRP), and the introduction of the Broadcasting Services Act in 1992. These changes destabilised station ownership, increased debt levels and reduced profitability to a degree that the sector became risk averse, militating against experimentation with formats that targeted groups other than the baby-boomers and stymieing any return of commercial youth radio (Turner, 1993, pp.147-149; Miller, 1992, p.92; Safe, 1994, p.17; Campaign Palace, 1991). The commercial sector's peak body itself

argued that as 'program content is almost totally dictated by economic considerations, by commercial reality' the imperative to remain viable through the period of deregulation increased the likelihood that low-cost, music-based 'sound alike formats' would dominate commercial radio (FARB, 1989, pp.23-24).

In November 1986 the government announced that it would change its approach to the regulation of media ownership (ABT, 1988b, p.21). Existing provisions had sought to ensure ownership diversity within each medium by restricting the number of outlets owned and controlled by any one entity. The revised restrictions would enable the ownership of significantly more outlets within a single medium but restrict the ownership of outlets across different media in any single market. In the words of then Federal Treasurer Paul Keating, under the new laws media companies would have to choose between being 'Queens of the Screen, Princes of Print, or Rajahs of Radio' (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.92). The subsequent legislative changes covering radio, enacted in October 1987, doubled the maximum number of stations that could be owned and controlled by one company from eight to 16, although a limit of one station per market remained (Brown, 1990, p.7). These regulatory changes led to 'an unprecedented reshuffle in the ownership and control of broadcasting licences in Australia' as companies sought to consolidate their media holdings and take advantage of economies of scale opportunities afforded by networking a greater number of stations (ABT, 1988b, p.21). By 1990 more than half of all metropolitan stations had new owners and some stations had changed hands three or four times (Brown, 1990, p.3; Table 1.3).

The ownership reshuffle substantially raised the price of stations, in some cases stations were sold for 25 times their previously recorded net profit, and sale price records were broken (Brown, 1990, p.3). As an example, EON FM which had been valued at AUD\$1 million in 1980 was sold for \$37.5 million in 1986 and then sold as part of package with Triple M Sydney for \$90 mil in February 1987. Just a few months later these two stations were sold to Hoyts Media for \$130 million (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.91). Such inflated prices contributed to what would become debilitating levels of debt in the industry. But at this time the sale prices sent a

signal to government that it had significantly undervalued access to broadcast spectrum, thereby encouraging it to substantially increase licence fees while also rethinking the mechanism through which new licences would be issued (Given, 2003, pp.56-57). The introduction of a new licensing mechanism was incorporated into the government's 1988 National Metropolitan Radio Plan (NRP)⁴¹.

In August 1988 the government released the NRP through which it hoped to resolve a number of long-standing broadcasting policy issues and fulfil the objective of bringing a 'greater diversity of radio services to people in mainland capital cities' (Evans, 1988d, p.1; Evans, 1988f, p.2; Beazley, 1990, p.8). The plan made provision for the delivery of improved 'Radio for the Print Handicapped' services, the establishment of a parliamentary broadcasting network, the use of commercial licences to serve special interests, and the establishment of an ABC youth radio network (which will be examined in detail in Chapter Three) (Evans, 1988d). But the main feature of the NRP was the release of additional FM spectrum for metropolitan commercial radio (Evans, 1988e). Initially, two existing AM stations in each mainland state capitals would be able convert to FM, a process the government expected to begin in 1989 and complete by 1992. Stage 2 of the plan would release two additional commercial FM licences in each of these markets. This process was to begin in 1990 in those cities that had completed stage 1 allocations and also be complete by 1992.

The AM stations, having suffered at the hands of the FM stations since the early 1980s, argued they were at a competitive disadvantage and lobbied hard for the government to enable them to shift bands (Ad News, 1988; Miller, 1995, p.90; Jones, 1988, p.5). By the time the government responded with the NRP in 1988 many AM operators, particularly those operating music stations, felt that switching bands was the only way to ensure survival (Light, 1988; Burrett, 1989). Although the NRP would provide them an opportunity to make this switch, there was concern

⁴¹ New licensing mechanisms had been proposed in September 1987 when the government announced its intention to release 30 FM licences in regional markets, but were largely not pursued since the government felt it was unlikely the necessary legislative amendments would be passed in the Senate which they did not control. See: Jones (1988, p.11) and Marx (1989, p.10).

about the cost of such conversion. The government had decided that it would no longer simply apply a merit-based approach to broadcast licensing. Instead, in order to maximise financial returns for access to spectrum, and reflecting an increase in the trading of commercial broadcast licences, access to the FM band would be determined at auction (Given, 2003, pp.56-57; Brown, 1990, p.7; for an overview of government use of auction processes see Jones, 1988, pp. 7-12). The government believed that Stage 1 and Stage 2 auctions would together yield approximately AUD\$190 million in revenue (Evans, 1988d, p.3).

In accordance with the market-based approach to licensing, the government also indicated that it would no longer consider the impact issuing new licences would have on the commercial viability of the proposed service or existing services in the licence area (Evans, 1988e, p.4). Assessing commercial viability had long been a fundamental element of broadcast planning and its removal was subject to substantial backlash from the industry (FARB, 1989, p.8; Brown, 1990, pp.18-19; Jones, 1988, pp.2-3). But the government maintained that the market was the best determinant of viability with Ralph Willis, who became Communications Minister shortly after the release of the NRP, confirming that 'the very readiness of a new entrant to pay a substantial fee for a new licence is, in itself, evidence of the existing industry's commercial viability' (Willis, 1988b; cited in, Communications Update, 1989a).

Despite concerns about the financial burden they may face through FM conversion, most AM proprietors believed they could not afford to rule out shifting bands. When the first auctions were announced on 18 April 1989, the Minister revealed that 24 of 27 AM licence holders had expressed interest in FM conversion (Marx, 1989, p.11). As an example of the desperation of AM operators, in a bid to raise the capital for a successful bid to convert its Sydney station, the 2SM group put all of its buildings as well as its Melbourne and Brisbane AM stations up for sale, and general manager Sam Galea indicated the company had only a very loose fall-back strategy if they were unsuccessful (Burrett, 1989). The fierce competition that resulted from such desperation drove prices for the licences well above the government's reserve, well

above what the industry considered reasonable, and above that which the industry could sustain (Communications Update, 1989b; Communications Update, 1990a; Miller, 1992, p.92; Randall, 1992). While 14 bids ranging between \$5.48 million from Brisbane's 4kQ to more than \$31 million from Melbourne's 3KZ were successful, five of the 14 winners chose not to complete the transaction despite losing their \$50,000 deposits (Randall, 1992). While 3KZ handed over its \$31 million, transferred from AM to FM and moved from fourth to first place in the Melbourne market, the financial squeeze caused by the high cost of FM conversion had sent the station into receivership by 1994 (Marcato, 2005b, p.178).

The combination of the cross-media regulation reshuffle and the substantial costs incurred by those AM stations converting to FM pushed the entire radio industry into debt by 1990-91, a situation not experienced for 50 years (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.95). The industry faced other significant pressures during this period. The 1987 stock market crash was followed by a sustained recession that contracted available advertising dollars (Miller, 1992, p.92; Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.95). Furthermore, competition for national advertising increased as a result of changes to the regulation of regional television markets (FARB, 1989, p.25; Turner, 1993, p.148). In 1988/89 the industry's collective profit had fallen to AUD\$18.1 million, the worst result in more than a decade (Miller, 1992, p.93). In that same year the 30 AM metropolitan services posted a loss of AUD\$12.2 million, and FM metro profits had fallen since the previous year by 21.8 per cent to AUD \$21.2 million (Miller, 1992, p.93). Such results, and the accumulated debt, quickly stripped capital value from the sector (Sexton, 1994). By 1992 even successful stations were traded for less than AUD \$8 million, a far cry from heights of the late 1980s (Peters, 1992). The value of the industry's intangible assets, essentially licences, fell from a high of AUD\$1801 million in 1987-88 to just AUD\$458 million in 1992-93, and by the end of the 1990s was still less than half that recorded in 1987-88 (ABA, 2000b, p.11).

The high debt-low profit nature of the sector at this time did nothing to encourage risk taking in programming. This was not a time to chase anything but the most stable and lucrative audience. So when AM stations shifted bands under the NRP

they tended to adopt the broad AOR format of the existing FM operator in a bid to attract some of its prime baby-boomer audience. For instance, when Brisbane's 4BK switched bands to become B105 in 1990 it simply copied the format of market leader FM104, even taking the 'the precaution of poaching key on-and off-air staff to help them get it right' (Dare, 1990; Turner, 1993, pp.144-145). As Stage 1 of the NRP enabled the conversions of existing AM stations it did not increase the number of commercial broadcasters in metropolitan markets and so diversification of formats was not necessarily foreseen as an outcome. Stage 2 would increase the number of metropolitan broadcasters, but even the minister was not convinced this would increase diversity (Communications Update, 1989b). In any case, it would take some time to find out the impact of new stations licensed under Stage 2 of the plan.

In addressing the FARB Annual Convention in 1990 the Minister for Transport and Communications, Hon. Kim Beazley conceded that the industry was now unstable and 'some time for industry consolidation would be beneficial' before Stage 2 of the NRP proceeded, with new licensees not expected on air until 1993 (Beazley, 1990, p.10). A decision to further delay new metropolitan FM licensing was taken in 1992 after the minister, in negotiations with the industry over new broadcasting legislation, agreed that existing metropolitan commercial operators should be allowed more time to consolidate their position. As it turned out, legislative reform required the regulator (also reformed under the Act as the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA)) to replan the entirety of Australia's broadcast spectrum. This process took years and delayed release of new commercial FM licences until the 2000s (this planning process is discussed in Chapter Four and the release of new commercial licences in Chapter Five).

The ALP government had long sought to overhaul broadcasting legislation that had first been issued in 1942 and last substantially altered during the introduction of television in 1956. Although in his 1987 Policy Statement the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, referred to the Broadcasting Act (1942) as a 'nightmarish piece of legislation' that would be substantially reformed, it was not until 1991 that new legislation was

introduced into parliament and 1992 before it was passed as the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) (Hawke, 1987, p.34; Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992; Beazley, 1991). The Act, in accordance with the government's microeconomic reform agenda, sought to facilitate greater responsiveness of the industry to the 'complexities of the modern marketplace' (Beazley, 1991). Davies (1995, p.13) summarises a range of features of the Act that accorded with this approach, including the decision to retain the commercial licence auction process and the disregard for commercial viability during the planning and licensing process as introduced through the NRP. The Act also further liberalised radio ownership limits, removing the cap on station ownership and allowing ownership and control of two stations in a single market, while also relaxing foreign investment restrictions (Collingwood, 1999, p.12; Collingwood, 1997, p.5). This prompted further station trading and ownership concentrations in both regional and metropolitan markets—between 1986 and 1996 the number of stations owned by networks doubled from 72 to 145 (Carroll, 1996; cited in Collingwood, 1997, p.11).

In 1994 the two largest metropolitan networks, Village Roadshow and Austereo Ltd, merged to trade under the name Austereo, and in 1995 Australian Provincial Newspapers (which had purchased the Westgo network in 1994) acquired the Albert family's Australian Broadcasting Company network to become ARN (Shearer, 1995). These two network groups, ARN and Austereo, essentially controlled Australian metropolitan commercial FM radio with each group owning two stations in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide (Collingwood, 1997, p.12 and Appendix 2). Although seeking to target distinct audiences in dual station markets the networks did not stray too far from the important 25-39 demographic, and program diversification was only marginal. The redevelopment of music radio programming with aging baby-boomer audiences top of mind that began in the early 1980s and led to the demise of Top 40 youth radio in the late 1980s showed no sign of abating in the 1990s.

Section 2: Top 40's Demise as Policy Problem

The demise of the Top 40 format and its articulation as radio's disconnection from youth did not go publicly unnoticed (Turner, 1993, p.145). As noted above, Neil Shoebridge highlighted concerns in the business press in 1989 that the demise of Top 40 could cause future problems for the radio industry since an entire generation of listeners might be alienated from the medium (Shoebridge, 1989). In addition, Chris De Bono drew out consequences for the advertising industry in the marketing trade magazine *Ad News* (de Bono, 1990). In his article 'Teenagers: radio's lost market', De Bono explains that the demise of Top 40 had reduced advertising options for companies including Coca-Cola, a company that had indicated it 'would do a lot more radio [advertising] if a station was targeting teenagers' (de Bono, 1990: 23). Michael Gower of advertising agency DDB Needham reinforced these concerns in the popular press. He told *The Australian*, that he feared radio 'may lose all relevance to this generation of younger people who will grow up without developing the habit' (Strickland, 1994; cited in Sternberg, 1998, p.111). Such continuing identification and importance of youth as a consumer market would be particularly problematic in the later development of youth community radio as discussed in Chapter Four. However, it was concern that Top 40's demise reduced radio's support for the development of new local musical talent expressed, for instance, in an article by Kylie Davis for *The Australian* in 1989, that emerged as a substantial policy problem (Davis, 1989c). This section traces out in detail how this occurred in the context of increasing government support for the development of the music industry and particularly with relation to the effectiveness of existing broadcast regulation aimed at ensuring radio played a role in this development.

Popular Music Policy

The development of the Australian music industry emerged as a policy issue for the federal ALP government in the mid-1980s, and would remain a priority until a change in government in 1996 (Breen, 1999, p.153). Breen (1999) has provided a detailed history of the rising political stocks of the industry during this period. He suggests that the ALP's interest in popular music first emerged from the

development of youth policies that sought to support young people in the context of a rapidly changing social and economic environment. The government's commitment to young Australians was expressed at the highest level. Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, assumed responsibility for Youth Affairs under the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and in an address to the nation in August 1985 made it clear that: 'the welfare and encouragement of young Australians is our first priority as a Government . . . it is my first priority as a Prime Minister. And it is our collective priority as a nation' (White, 1990, p.22; Gleeson, 1987; cited in Breen, 1999, p.13). Popular music was considered an important vehicle for communicating the range of policies that emerged from this commitment, including education and training programs and road safety messages (Breen, 1999, pp.15-17). More generally, there was a sense that popular music could encourage the social connection and civic participation of young people. This reflected the conceptualisation of the relationship between youth, music and radio that was expressed within the ALP during the Whitlam era, albeit without the degree of politically charged language that inflected discussions at that time (cf. Rosenbloom, 1976, pp.23-24). This is not surprising since some of the policy advocates of that period, including Whitlam advisor Peter Wilenski, who had played a role in the establishment of Double J (see Chapter One), continued to be active contributors to policy discussions in the Hawke era (cf. Wilenski, 1983; as discussed by Breen, 1999, p.14, p.19).

Breen notes that it was the federal government's 1985-86 *Priority One* youth campaign, which included elements such as a music video promoting a phone number where young people could leave policy suggestions and feedback for the Prime Minister, and a series of major rock concerts, where information on employment opportunities were disseminated, that marked the beginning of a substantial relationship between government policy and popular music (Breen, 1999, p.15; ABC, 1985c). However, he argues that it was developments in industry rather than social policy that would quickly come to dominate the government's

interest in popular music (Breen, 1999, p.84) and be fundamental to the manner in which the demise of commercial youth radio was articulated as a policy problem.

The engagement of the Australian government in popular music as an industry was facilitated by the intersection of two emerging approaches to cultural policy in the mid-1980s. The first was a broadening of the cultural activities that could be considered as falling within the remit of government beyond a narrow range of 'high arts' to include more popular undertakings. The trajectory of this development has been explored in detail by a range of scholars including Rowse (1985) and Hawkins (1993); with specific popular music analysis provided by Homan (2013). It is in the 1986 report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Commonwealth Assistance to the Arts (the McLeay Inquiry) that popular music is first clearly legitimised as a cultural activity worthy of Australian government intervention (McLeay, 1986). The recommendations of this report with regard to the type of assistance that might be used to support popular music drew upon a second shift in cultural policy—the reconceptualisation of the arts as industries with an important contribution to make to the economy (cf. CMCSAG, 1989; 1990; 1991). Leo McLeay, Chairman of this Inquiry, neatly explains how popular music was considered in light of these two cultural policy trends:

Rock and roll is the culture of my childhood, and I'm going to do something about getting it some recognition for two reasons—first, because it is a cultural experience, and second, because it's an industry that we in Australia can export very successfully overseas, and we have done too little for it (Garrahan, 1986; cited in Breen, 1999, p.100).

Armed with McLeay's 1986 report and studies conducted by the Australian broadcasting regulator in 1985 and 1986 as part of its reappraisal of the role radio should play in the support the popular music industry (discussed in detail below), policy advocates, including ex-ALP federal member Peter Steedman, successfully made the case for government investment in the industry (Breen, 1999, p.41, p.44; Breen, 1993, pp.73-74). Their case was boosted by the success of a number of

Australian artists in US and European markets at this time, including INXS, Icehouse, Midnight Oil, and Men At Work (Homan, 2013, p.386). Over the following decade the government supported a range of research, education, training, business development and export market access initiatives, and coordinated industry events such as the 1995 *Contemporary Music Summit*.

The most significant investment by the federal government during this period was the formation of the Australian Contemporary Music Development Company (AUSMUSIC). This joint venture between government and industry was charged with delivering many of the government's music policy initiatives while also promoting Australian music domestically and overseas. AUSMUSIC was initially run by Steedman⁴², who had put together the Cabinet submission arguing for its formation. It was promoted by Prime Minister Bob Hawke in his 1987 election campaign and launched by him in 1988—a clear indication of the level of government commitment to the industry (Breen, 1999, pp.45-46, p.154, p.157; Hawke, 1987). According to Breen (1999, p.154) reports of AUSMUSIC's establishment were presented by the press in a manner that 'reflected the excitement that a new environment for cultural policy had arrived'. By 1995 the Company was drawing annual Commonwealth funding of AUD\$1.2 million (Breen, 1999, p.157).

It was in the context of this significant government investment that the demise of Top 40 radio, with its focus on new music, would become a substantial public policy issue that, reframed as an issue of radio's disconnection from youth, would legitimise government support for youth radio initiatives. It was a reappraisal of the effectiveness of long-standing local content regulations that required commercial radio to support local musical talent which initiated this problematisation, and through which its trajectory can be fruitfully traced to arguments for government investment in youth radio in the late 1980s and into the 1990s. This inquiry began in

⁴² Indicative of the perceived importance of radio to the local music industry, Barry Chapman, former programming director of the ABC's Triple J and the Austereo's Triple M network, was appointed AUSMUSIC director in October 1996 (Jinman, 1996).

1982 when the ABT announced its intention to repeal the most substantial of the local content radio regulations.

Commercial Radio Programming Changes as Local Content Policy Problem

On 5 November 1982 the ABT released a discussion paper announcing and calling for comment on its intention to repeal Broadcast Program Standard 3 that required a minimum of 20 per cent of music played on Australian commercial radio be performed by Australian artists (ABT, 1982d; ABT, 1982c). Given the 'weight and quality of the responses' it received over the following 35 days, the tribunal felt that 'any move to vary the requirement should be taken only after a public inquiry' (ABT, 1986, p.12). The mobilisation of the music industry and broader publics against the proposal is not surprising given that, with the exception of copyright, the quota was the only form of government assistance provided to the popular music industry at this time, and the quota had been such a fundamental element of the government's lengthy and consistent commitment to encouraging radio to utilise and support the development of local creative talent (Counihan, 1992a, p.7).

Indeed, by 1982 a local music quota system had been part of broadcast regulation for 40 years and was predated by a more general directive to support local creative talent. The first such directive was issued in 1929 by the PMG in its contract with the Australian Broadcasting Company to provide programming for the network of nationalised stations. The contract required the company to 'so far as practicable, encourage local talent by utilizing the services of persons who may possess attributes rendering them suitable for providing broadcasting items' (PMG, 1931 in BTCE, 1991, p.12). A slightly reformulated version of this directive was included in the 1932 ABC Act that relieved the Company of its programming role in favour of a statutory authority (Australian Broadcasting Commission Act (Cwlth), 1932, S23). In 1942, the appeal to utilise local talent was extended to commercial stations under Section 88(1) of the new Act that consolidated regulation of the national and commercial sectors (Australian Broadcasting Act (Cwlth), 1942, S88-1).

It was in the 1942 Broadcasting Act that a music quota, a more precise regulatory mechanism that enabled simple accountability checks, was introduced. Section 88 (2) of the Act directed that: '[n]ot less than two and one-half per centum of the total time occupied by the National Broadcasting Service and . . . any commercial broadcasting station in the broadcasting of music shall be devoted to the broadcasting of works of Australian composers, produced either on sound records made in Australia or by artists actually present in the studio' (Australian Broadcasting Act (Cwlth), 1942, S88-2). In tracing the rationales that emerged in favour of the quota, Counihan (1992a) reveals that, in addition to a set of cultural imperatives, which included the development of an Australian musical cannon and ensuring radio contributed to and reflected Australian cultural practices (PCA, 1942, para 530), there was a strong argument for government intervention in radio broadcasting to facilitate the development of the local music industry. The intersection and weighting of these cultural and industrial imperatives have been subject to ongoing debate with regards to the composition quota as well as a complementary performance quota which was introduced as a non-legislative directive in the early 1970s.

By the late 1960s, the broadcasting regulator had formed the opinion that the composition quota alone (which had been raised to 5 per cent in 1956) did not represent adequate compliance with the general directive to use Australian talent in broadcasting (ABT, 1986, p.139). In 1973 it introduced a new requirement for commercial stations to ensure that no less than 10 per cent of broadcast music time consisted of Australian performances and it informed stations that 'subject to review, in the light of response in terms of production by record manufacturers' this quota would be incrementally raised to 30 per cent (ABCB, 1973a). The quota level was subsequently raised in 1974, 1975 and 1976 and by the time of its proposed abolition in 1982 was set at 20 per cent (ABT, 1984b, p.2).

When the composition quota was introduced in 1942 there had been little opposition from commercial broadcasters or their peak body, FARB. But at FARB's annual convention in 1943 the criticism began (Counihan, 1992a, p.13), and, the

composition quota, and later the performance quota, have remained 'a constant source of complaint' (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.39, p.273; Homan, 2012). In 1977, when the regulator held an inquiry into the possibilities of self-regulation for commercial broadcasters, the sector perhaps hoped that at least the non-legislative performance quota would be dismantled. The quota system had at this time been criticized by the federal government's Industries Assistance Commission (IAC) in its inquiries into the performing arts and the music recording industries (IAC, 1976; IAC, 1977; IAC, 1978). The IAC, based on an analysis grounded firmly in neoclassical market economics, had argued that it was an unwarranted distortion of resource allocation, the costs of which were inequitably distributed, and suggested that while the general call for radio to play a role in 'Australia's cultural development' had a 'certain degree of emotive appeal, it provides no rational basis for government policy' (IAC, 1978, Appendix 7). But, to the chagrin of commercial stations, the ABT's self-regulation inquiry concluded that Australian content regulation remained important and it was an area in which the 'community could not reasonably expect broadcasters to immediately regulate themselves' (ABT, 1977, p.7).

Although local content regulation was maintained, the ABT began to emphasise its cultural nationalist underpinnings, seemingly in a bid to quell the arguments levied by the IAC that were framed in economic and industry policy analysis—fields in which the IAC clearly commanded greater authority. The ABT, drawing on parallel discussions of television content regulation, highlighted that the mandated levels of Australian compositions and performances were intended to ensure that Australian radio has an 'Australian 'look'' and that the 'fact that to a very large extent, the broadcast works of Australian composers and performers are inextricably interwoven with the music recording industry, happens to be a coincidental technical fact' (ABT, 1977, p.86, p.87; Cunningham, 1992b, pp.56-66). In a letter to FARB, the ABT reinforced its position that the 'fundamental basis, for the existence of Australian music quotas is simply to ensure that the Australian ethos is represented in commercial radio' (ABT, 1977, p.86; 1979 ABT letter to FARB Director quoted in ABT, 1986, p.24).

FARB responded to what looked like an opportunity for broader and less calculable local content regulation by forming the Australian Performance Study Group (APSG) in 1977 to investigate alternatives to the quota (FARB, 1983, p.2; ABT, 1983, p.12). Initially invited as an observer, the ABT's role in the APSG quickly expanded and in 1979 the group was made an advisory committee to the Tribunal (ABT, 1979a). The ABT stated that the group would 'examine Australian music content and other Australian content in commercial radio' and 'investigate ways of enhancing the Australian character of the radio medium' (ABT, 1980; ABT, 1982d; FARB, 1983,p.6).

In 1981, following studies of commercial radio programming and off-air activities under the auspices of the APSG, FARB developed and adopted a self-regulatory 'Code for the Development of an Australian Sound in Commercial Radio Broadcasting' (ABT, 1982d, pp.1-2; the code is reproduced in the ABT 1981-2 Annual Report - ABT, 1982a). FARB then successfully lobbied the ABT to adopt a position in its review of broadcast program standards in 1981 that the quota be retained for 12 months while the impact of the new self-regulatory code was assessed (ABT, 1982d, p.2). It seems that the ABT's desire for consensual regulation had tipped over into what Flew (2001, p.18) describes as regulatory capture, with the commercial sector it was supposed to regulate now dictating terms. In 1982, following its endorsement of another FARB-coordinated APSG study of the *Australian Sound* that identified 'more than thirty aspects of programming and promotion which are distinctly Australian', the ABT announced its intention to repeal the quota (ABT, 1982b; ABT, 1982c). The negative public response to this announcement encouraged it to hold the *Australian Music on Radio Inquiry*.

This inquiry, announced on 20 May 1983, had a broad remit to investigate whether the performance quota should be amended or repealed and 'whether any other regulatory approach to the broadcasting of Australian musical performances should be adopted, and, if so, the basis for any such approach' (ABT, 1986, p.12). The ABT received 100 written submissions by 8 July, supplementing the 101 submissions made to the repeal discussion paper of November 1982. Public hearings were

conducted in Sydney over 23 sitting days between 28 November 1983 and 15 June 1984. These yielded 2024 pages of evidence and 94 exhibits (ABT, 1986, p.229).

The inquiry was the first time a comprehensive assessment of the quota, its objectives, administration and impact, had been undertaken—important as it was, the IAC's investigation of the quota was just one component of its more general study on the music industry and was, as noted by Counihan (1991), blinkered by its theoretical framework. Indeed, along with the work conducted by the IAC, it was one of the first significant studies of the Australian popular music industry (ABT, 1983, pp.24-28; Breen, 1993, pp.70-71; evident in brevity of the IAC's music industry literature search - IAC, 1975). The inquiry reaffirmed that radio had a responsibility to provide airplay to Australian music, and that this was not simply to ensure radio sounded Australian but 'to give Australian listening audiences access to work by Australian composers and performers, thus reinforcing and encouraging the growth and development of Australian music' (ABT, 1986, p.158). The ABT found that the introduction and operation of the performance quota during the 1970s had coincided with, and contributed to an 'efflorescence in Australian popular music' (ABT, 1986, p.9).

The Top 40 format, with its fundamental reliance on new music and the shortening of its lifecycle (Miller's (1999) 'dynamic obsolescence' discussed in Chapter One), had virtually guaranteed that the Australian music quota system would translate into the emergence of new Australian artists. Bob Rogers, a pioneer of the Australian Top 40 format argues that while, 'it was possible for records to sell without considerable airplay . . . the link between the repetitive broadcasting of a record and its retail sales was undeniable' (Rogers and O'Brien, 1992, p.81). Reflecting on his days as one of the first Top 40 DJs, John Laws argues that the combination of the format and the composition quota was important to the development of Australian rock'n'roll. He notes:

It was the music boom we had to have. And because we played nothing but music 24 hours a day and we were required by . . . some government body . . . to play a certain amount of Australian

content, so there was an opportunity for people to go out and make records and get them played on radio (Laws, 1993, 8m.20s).

However, in its deliberations about the quota's role in encouraging 'the growth and development of Australian music', the ABT found that in its existing form the quota was not well targeted since it did not require stations to broadcast new Australian music. This was not the first time that the quota's objective was related to the promotion of new music. In 1975, Minister for the Media Doug McClelland who had introduced the performance quota, emphasised that it 'was deliberately brought in to encourage new Australian talent and the employment of Australian musicians' as he addressed concerns that commercial stations might be 'ignoring the spirit of the quota and system and exercising a consistent replay of too many recordings . . . [by] . . . existing proven talent' (Billboard, 1975). In 1979, the Chairman of the ABT, Bruce Gyngell, similarly reinforced the notion that 'the greatest area of encouragement should lie with the newly emerging talent so that they are given opportunities for air play rather than the more established and popular groups whose airtime is guaranteed' (ABT, 1979a).

The inquiry found that the quota was becoming less effective as commercial radio playlists shifted away from new music. The regulator concluded that there was now an 'over-use of 'gold' records . . . *Records with past listener acceptance*—as a way of maintaining Australian content, instead of the addition of new Australian records' (ABT, 1986, p.7, my italics). Indeed, research conducted by the ABT for the inquiry found that over 50 per cent of Australian items found on Sydney and Melbourne radio were gold records (ABT, 1986, p.103).

As discussed in Section 1 of this chapter, radio's use of gold music would become more pronounced in the late 1980s and into the 1990s. This would allow the ABT to introduce a Gold format definition in 1988 and point to its dominance of the airways by 1991 (ABT, 1988b, p.103). But the regulator was less sure of what was happening to music radio as the *Australian Music on Radio Inquiry* unfolded in the early to mid-1980s. The importation of the Good Music radio format from the United States in

1972, and its diffusion (although somewhat limited) thereafter, was identified as one cause of the increasing use of gold music by commercial radio (ABT, 1987, 2CH Rogerson and Joscelyne testimony, pp.52-103; ABT, 1986, p.89, p.101). Good Music was defined as an 'adult conservative music format based on melodic instrumental and soft performances of *past and present* vocal, plus news and information'; with the architect of the format in Australia, Bruce Rogerson, testifying it was certainly the past rather than the present that provided the majority of the musical fare (ABT, 1986, p.89, p.101 - my italics). But the regulator struggled to describe changes to the dominant Top 40 stations and experimentation by new commercial FM stations that also contributed to the rising fortunes of gold music.

The ABT had never collected detailed data on the nature of commercial radio programming. While the division of its music programming data into categories of light and popular had been enough to clearly distinguish Good Music and Top 40 stations, more subtle changes were not so easily captured (ABT, 1981, p.48). During the inquiry, the ABT relied on format definitions from the 1982 APSG *Australian Sound* study (ABT, 1982b). This study clearly identified and described two of four music formats, Good Music and Country Music, but had difficulty in classifying popular music stations. It did not employ the Top 40 descriptor, instead dividing popular music stations into Contemporary and Adult Contemporary formats. Contemporary was described in terms that seemed to conflate Top 40 and AOR formats as 'bright or up-tempo album oriented rock and/or new, current and past hits, plus news and information' (ABT, 1986, p.89). Confusingly, the Adult Contemporary format—identified as the most prevalent on Australian radio—was defined in the exact same terms, with the only exception that these stations would not play album-oriented rock music (ABT, 1986, p.89). Notably, the two popular music formats were not distinguishable on the basis of the proportion of gold music playlisted. The ABT was seemingly unconvinced that the rise of the Adult Contemporary format represented a comprehensive move to gold music programming. A careful reading of the testimony cited in the report reveals that the ABT was aware that at least some Adult Contemporary stations were committed to

gold music. Assistant Manager of Adult Contemporary station 2WS indicated that it played 35 per cent current music and 65 per cent gold music, but the ABT clearly did not deem this representative of the format (ABT, 1986, p.101, p.186). This had ramifications for the development of regulatory mechanisms to encourage new Australian music since, unlike Good Music formats that might be compromised by such directives (a development the regulator did deliberate over (ABT, 1987, p.3)), the ABT seemed comfortable that the vast majority of stations were employing formats which could accommodate more new music.

The regulator expected to publish its *Australian Music on Radio Inquiry* report by the end of 1984, but was delayed by a general challenge to the powers of the Tribunal to make Program Standards that in turn required legislative amendment (ABT, 1984a, p.28; ABT, 1985, p.34, pp.18-21). When the report was eventually released on 1 September 1986 the ABT determined that it would renovate the quota to include new music directives in the form of a bonus system. The ABT had some experience in applying bonuses. In 1976 it introduced a 25 per cent bonus for playing Australian album tracks in order to assist stations that specialised in album programming to comply with the quota since albums were in lesser supply than singles (ABCB, 1976a, p.80). The actual percentage bonuses for new music were to be determined at a conference of interested parties and the ABT hoped that a new broadcasting standard would come into effect on 1 December 1986 (ABT, 1986, p.2).

The ABT's timeline proved ambitious. The bonuses conference itself did not occur until 7-8 September 1987. Then, instead of deliberating over the percentage of the bonus, radio and the music industry representatives argued that the bonus system itself had two major flaws which rendered it unacceptable. First, it allowed stations to actually reduce their total Australian content since it traded quantity for a particular quality (newness) (cf. Britton evidence ABT, 1987, p.104). This was an unusually persuasive criticism given that this was the objective of the system. Second, since almost all commercial stations already met the existing 20 per cent quota, there was no real incentive for them to engage with a bonus system (ABT, 1988c, p.6).

In February 1988, now more than five years after the repeal proposal, the ABT released its final decision on a revised quota. The bonus system was abandoned. Instead, the ABT indicated that it would use the licence grant and renewal process to monitor and direct stations to play new music (ABT, 1988c, p.2). This was a mechanism of content regulation first proposed by the ABT in its 1977 self-regulation report and given a legislative base in an amendment to the BTA in 1981 (ABT, 1977, p.88). Section 83 (5) of the revised Act required applicants for licences and renewals to make a written undertaking with regards to programming, including local content support (Broadcasting and Television Amendment Act (Cwlth), 1981). The 1988 revised quota decision indicated that the ABT:

proposes at licence renewal to request stations to supply evidence that they have used a significant amount of this material [new, independent label and station-produced music]. If stations cannot demonstrate the use of this material, conditions may then be placed on a licence in order to encourage the use of new releases, new independent recordings and station produced material depending on the relevance of this material to the station's format (ABT, 1988c, p.2).

Essentially, the ABT would seek to derive discretionary station-based content regulation through licensing processes that were fundamentally aimed at governing the structure of the broadcast landscape. This hybridity reflected a moment of regulatory transition as the federal government moved to replace programming content directives with interventions in the structure of the broadcasting system, as discussed in Section 1 of this chapter.

When the government tabled a plan in February 1987 to release 30 new regional commercial FM licences as part of the deregulation process (ABT, 1988b, p.11; Duffy, 1987) it provided the ABT an opportunity to test its licence-based approach to local content regulation. In the process of allocating a commercial FM licence in regional Victoria in June 1988 the ABT asked applicants to nominate programming and administrative conditions they would be happy to have imposed upon their licence

if granted and this information was then used to judge applications (Communications Update, 1989c). All applicants proposed Australian music content conditions above the 20 per cent quota, with the successful applicant, Goulburn Valley Broadcasters (GVB), also including specific targets in accordance with the revised Australian music quota decision (ABT, 1988a; Communications Update, 1989c).

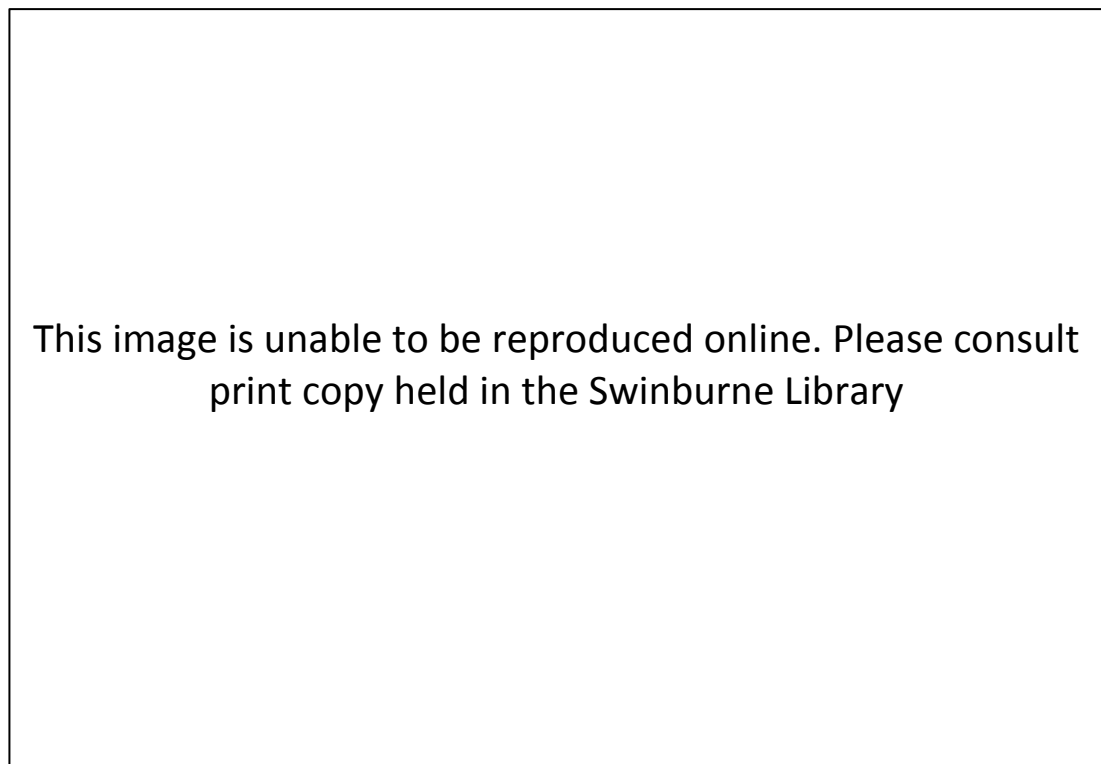
While the ABT were forging on with the new local content licensing system, the music industry, buoyed by increasing political support, but frustrated by the ABT's inability to renovate the more transparent quota system, made a very public statement that they would hold existing commercial radio stations and the ABT to account over the new licence-based local content system. A group calling itself 'concerned members of the music industry' took a full-page advertisement in the key industry journal *B&T Weekly* on 15 July 1988 and another in *Rock Australian Magazine* to present their position (see Figure 2.2; Sheppard, 1988). The group told *B&T Weekly* that to substantiate claims against stations they would be establishing their own 24 hour monitoring system (Sheppard, 1988).

During the inquiry the commercial radio sector had itself favoured replacing the quota with a system of local content regulation based on the licence renewal process under Section 83(5) of the Act as this would be a move towards self-regulation. FARB believed that the ABT should set out 'its expectations of licensees in this area, while not enunciating any specific (i.e. quantified) level of Australian music for broadcast' (ABT, 1986, p.212). Instead, FARB argued that compliance be based on information gained through the type of 'sound studies' previously conducted by the APSG that considered a range of program outputs and non-broadcast station activities. But the sector was clearly not happy with the use of such a mechanism as a means of refining and extending the retained quota system and was suddenly concerned that the regulator might translate unspecified performance measures into specific station-based content directives in the form of 'material conditions . . . placed on a licence' (ABT, 1988c, p.2). They argued that the regulator's framing of the new local content requirement was 'vague and

ambiguous', a point the ABT had conceded during the *Australian Music on Radio Inquiry* might be a problem if Section 83(5) of the Act alone was used as the basis of assessment and regulation (Sheppard, 1988; ABT, 1986, p.10, p.213).

In September 1988, a consortium of commercial stations mounted a successful Federal Court challenge to the powers of the ABT to impose local content conditions on licensees through the grant and renewal process (Federal Court of Australia, 1988). Justice Davies found that the paragraph discussing the grant and renewal option did not amount to a valid standard, condition, order or direction and made it clear that it did not 'constitute a step taken by the ABT with which any of the

Figure 2.2 Concerned members of the music industry trade press advertisement highlighting concerns about local content regulation, 1988



Source: Reproduced from B&T Weekly, 15 July 1988, p.9 (B&T, 1988b).

applicants is bound to comply' (Federal Court of Australia, 1988). While the court found that the ABT may well take account of the broadcasting of new music, new independent music and station originated material as part of the licence renewal process it raised the possibility that subsequent imposition of special conditions or

obligations regarding such material on licensee without an underlying standard may constitute an arbitrary and invalid exercise of power.

By the end of 1988, the ABT's intention to renovate Australian music programming regulation had been thwarted. The regulator indicated that it was still committed to the objective of ensuring radio played a role in the development of Australian music and would initially pursue this through a policy of encouragement, such as issuing a tip-sheet to stations that alerted them to new local music (Jonker, 1989, p.3; McClymont, 1989). It is not surprising that the regulator found it difficult to find the appropriate mechanisms and political will to implement new local content directives during this period of deregulation. But deregulation also brought opportunities for the regulator and the federal government to pursue its objectives by releasing new licences across each of the three broadcast sectors (Armstrong, 1986, p.48).

It's a Format Issue: From 'Gold Music' to 'Gold Format'

Coincidentally, radio's shift away from new music programming was increasingly identified as a distinct radio format issue. Ambiguities in the definitions of the Contemporary and Adult Contemporary formats in the *Australian Music on Radio Inquiry* with regards to the use of new music were somewhat resolved during the late 1980s as the programming practices that privileged the established and familiar were better understood and the number of stations adopting and overtly promoting these practices increased. The regulator identified a distinct Gold Music format in 1988, and also applied this moniker to identify hybrid formats such as Adult Contemporary/Gold and Contemporary/Gold (ABT, 1988b, p.103; Jonker, 1989, p.5). In 1989 the regulator concluded that Gold formats were the dominant programming type in Australian commercial radio (ABT, 1990b, p.64). It was clear that the link between music radio's need for new music, the quota's requirement for radio to play Australian music, and the Australian music industry's production of new music, was now broken—stations that had adopted Gold Formats would be fundamentally opposed to playing a substantial amount of new music and, consequentially, new Australian music (Des Foster, head of FARB, had made it clear to the ABT that

stations would not program material in order to meet the quota if this undermined their format, ABT, 1987, p.14).

Looking to the past itself, the regulator articulated the problem of new music programming in terms of the decline of the Top 40 format and held out hope that the release of new FM spectrum under the 1988 NRP (Evans, 1988d) for existing AM stations to shift bands and for the development of new commercial stations, would encourage greater format diversity and a return of Top 40. Early in 1990, the ABT was pleased to report that two metropolitan AM stations that had shifted from Top 40 to Adult Contemporary programming were reverting back to something that looked like their previous format and suggested that this had immediately increased the total number of new Australian tracks and artists added to radio playlists (ABT, 1990a, p.3, p.8). Mike Majors, Joint Managing Director of 41P, a station which made the return to Top 40 in January 1990, told the trade press 'We are currently the only station in Australia playing contemporary top-40 hits' (Dare, 1990). CBS Records' national manager concurred that 'it's a unique format in Australia at this time' while noting its importance for promoting new music since '70% of the top-selling songs last year got no airplay' (Dare, 1990). But the reversion of what had been the lowest rating Adult Contemporary AM stations back to Top 40 proved to be short-lived acts of desperation rather than sustainable business decisions.

As noted in Section 1 of this chapter, in outlining the NRP in 1988 the federal government had conceded that simply increasing the number of licences would not guarantee greater commercial radio programming diversity. The government did seek to implement measures to facilitate diversification. In the NRP it flagged an amendment to the Act that would replace the requirement for individual commercial broadcasters to provide adequate and comprehensive services with a directive that each licensee's service be assessed 'in the context of the diversity and comprehensiveness of all the services available in that particular area' (Evans, 1988h). An amendment to the Act in 1985 that gave the regulator the powers to conduct Area Inquiries had seemingly signaled a move in this direction which would allow greater specialisation (Broadcasting and Television Amendment Act (Cwlth),

1985; HOR-SCTCI, 1988, pp.48-51). Although the adequate and comprehensive amendment would eventually be made under the BSA 1992 (1992, Schedule 2 Part 4, Clause 8, 2(a)), through the 1988 NRP amendments the government decided to retain the general directive and instead establish a special interest commercial licence category, known as limited licences (Broadcasting Legislation Amendment Act (Cwlth), 1988).

Limited licences, which would be retained and renamed narrowcast licences under the BSA, did not carry the adequate and comprehensive requirement. Unlike community broadcasting licences of the period that were divided into service categories (general, special and educational), the legislation did not specify the types of special interests to be served by limited licences (Evans, 1988h). However, in 1989 the Minister for Transport and Communications, Ralph Willis, pointed to possibility that limited licences be used to direct rather than simply facilitate special interest broadcasting, with the ABT specifying particular programming priorities (Communications Update, 1989b, p.2). An advisor to Willis suggested that this would allow the limited licence system to be used to address concerns about radio's role in developing new Australian music, a position which the Australian Record Industry Association (ARIA) also supported (Davis, 1989c; Communications Update, 1989b, p.3). However, given that the government had committed itself to market rather than merit-based commercial licence distribution under the NRP, content-controlled special interest commercial licences seemed an anathema and it is not surprising that this line of policy development was not pursued.

While the government's release of additional FM spectrum to the commercial sector may not have produced the type of programming that would complement its investment in the development of the Australian popular music industry, a similar release to the national and community broadcasting sectors under the NRP and later Broadcasting Services Act would prove to have greater utility as will be described in chapters three and four. These regulatory interventions afforded the opportunity to address concerns about radio's role in the development of the music industry, but it was only by reframing the problem as radio's disconnection from

youth that an appropriate governmental language was found to effectively pursue such solutions. While the reformulation of Top 40's demise as radio's abandonment of youth was described and problematised in the media and trade press from the late 1980s, the following section examines how this unfolded in an accumulating series of policy papers and discussions that first emerged from within the ABT in the aftermath of the *Australian Music on Radio* inquiry.

It's a Youth Issue: Signalling New Approaches to Supporting Australian Music

Despite extensive discussion of the rise to dominance of Adult Contemporary music radio and its likely contribution to the decline of new music programming during the *Australian Music on Radio* inquiry, the demographic dimension of the shifting radio landscape encapsulated by the very name of this format was not directly articulated as a problem. Indeed, the relationship between music radio formats and the age of the target audience is discussed only once. Even then, the report simply highlights that the vast majority of Australian radio stations adopt an Adult Contemporary format that target 25 to 39 year-olds, but did not explore what this meant for younger audiences (ABT, 1986, p.93). It was not until after the inquiry, as part of its continuing interest in radio's role in Australian popular music development, that the regulator articulated changes to the commercial radio landscape as an abandonment of youth. The delay of the regulator's engagement with the youth issue until after the inquiry is all the more unusual since it had conducted a parallel inquiry into *Young Australians and Music* that was designed in part to inform the inquiry (Agardy et al., 1985; ABT, 1985, p.101). It seems that the ABT were persuaded by lobbying from FARB that this study be given no weight in its local content deliberations since it dealt with only a small proportion of the Australian population (Department of Communications, 1986a, 6.38 - citing letter D.Foster to ABT 14 November 1985). While it may not have had an immediate impact on changes to local content regulation, *Young Australians and Music* would be cited in later policy materials (Gillard et al., 1990; c.f. London and Hearder, 1997), used by advocates to push for the development of popular music policies (Breen, 1999, p.44; pp.78-79) and drawn upon in discussions of broadcast planning (Department of

Communications, 1986a, 6.29-6.40). As such, its handling of the connections between youth, radio and popular music is worthy of some scrutiny.

The *Young Australians and Music* study was initiated by the ABT in 1983 as part of an international comparative study of young people and music. The study was, according to the regulator, one of the first official investigations into the musical 'tastes, preferences and activities of Australian audiences and the importance of music to them' (Agardy et al., 1985, pp.1-2; ABT, 1983). It sought to ascertain the extent to which a homogenous 'global' youth culture based on the music of the USA and UK had developed, and was also designed to provide data for use in the *Australian Music on Radio* inquiry. In addressing this issue, *Young Australians and Music* adopted the position that youth was an important lifecycle stage marked by the formation of what would be enduring cultural tastes, while also highlighting the commercial nature of this cultural identity formation—a similar position to that which informed commercial radio programmers in the early 1980s (as discussed in Section 1 of this chapter). The authors of *Young Australians and Music* argued:

It is well known that adolescence and early adulthood are times of heavy use of radio and of involvement in music and other expressions of a 'youth culture' that may be seen as somewhat different from the cultural experience of other phases of the life-cycle. Youth is the stage of life when musical tastes are being formed and young people comprise the major part of the popular music record manufacturer's market (Agardy et al., 1985, p.3).

With regards to radio, the *Young Australians and Music* inquiry, which consisted of a series of focus groups and structured face-to-face interviews with 666 people aged 12 to 20 years living in Melbourne in 1984, found that radio listening represented 'the most universal type of exposure to music' for young people, and commercial radio was a 'major determinant and reinforcer of musical taste' (Agardy et al., 1985, p.7, p.13). At this time, with 3XY programming Top 40 and EON-FM adopting structured playlists that had not yet drifted too far into album music and nostalgia programming, the study found a strong connection between radio and youth,

particularly commercial radio (very few participants indicated they listened to national or community broadcasting) (Agardy et al., 1985, pp.25-33). By the late 1980s the regulator would change its mind about this connection.

The ABT's formulation of the radio-youth policy problem first emerged from analysis of a system of local music production and commercial radio playlist monitoring it had established in the wake of the failed directives of the quota inquiry. Through a series of quarterly reports, compiled by ABT researcher Ed Jonker and released in 1989 and 1990, the regulator produced a detailed examination of the demographic basis of Australian radio formats, drew out implications of the changing landscape for youth audiences and, in turn, for the exposure by commercial radio of new music, specifically new Australian music.

The regulator found that the dominant Adult Contemporary format targeted the 25-39 age group with a focus on those in their early to mid-30s, while the Contemporary Format, taken up by the metropolitan FM stations, had a target ranging across 18 to 39 year-olds, but focused on listeners in their mid to late 20s (ABT, 1990c: 2-3). It argued that, as a result of the demise of Top 40, there was not a single station targeting people under 18 years of age and linked this to a lack of airplay for a number of new international and Australian artists, particularly in certain musical styles—an analytical frame to which the regulator would return with greater insight in later reports (ABT, 1989, p.9; ABT, 1990c, p. 12). For instance, the September 1989 report noted:

There is currently no radio format that caters for the 10-18 demographic. There are a number of artists of international standard who have racked up platinum record sales that appeal to this audience but receive negligible airplay on Australian radio in the absence of an appropriate radio format. They include overseas acts such as Prince, Madonna, Michael Jackson, Bros and Bon Jovi. Australian performers are smaller in number but increasing. They include Kylie Minogue, Jason Donovan, Collette

and more recently Indecent Obsession, Mortal Sin and Roxus
(ABT, 1989, p.9).

In August 1990, Jonker produced a special report for the ABT titled *Comprehensive Coverage: Music on Commercial Radio* (ABT, 1990c). This report signalled a new approach to the issue of local content support that leveraged the government's long-standing objective of ensuring the provision of adequate and comprehensive broadcasting services⁴³ and highlighted commercial radio's deficiency in both comprehensive music coverage, particularly with relation to new music and by extension new Australian music, and comprehensive audience servicing, particularly with relation to youth. Given a revision to the Broadcasting Act in 1981 had introduced a new directive requiring broadcasters to make a written undertaking at licence renewal that they meet an obligation to provide adequate and comprehensive service, in the same manner as they were required to explain the nature of their support for local talent (as noted above), it was not surprising that the regulator's new approach to local content analysis was drawn into the licence renewal process to which the metropolitan FM stations were subject in 1989-90 (Broadcasting and Television Amendment Act (Cwlth), 1981, S83(5)).

Appendix D of the metropolitan FM licence renewal report, *Licence Renewal Inquiries: Capital City Commercial FM Radio Services*, applied and extended the analysis of comprehensive programming developed in the August report (ABT, 1990d, Appendix D). The regulator argued that assessing station music playlists was important in judging comprehensive service provision since these 'represent the core of programming for music stations' (ABT, 1990d, p.105). Using a three month sample of playlist data for metropolitan FM Stations the regulator defined and examined a range of programming indicators including: the number of additions to individual station playlists, variety and overlap of additions between stations, variety and overlap of additions between stations in the same city, additions by record label

⁴³ The government had recently recommitted itself to the imposition of an adequate and comprehensive requirement on individual broadcasters, abandoning its 1988 NRP proposal to assess licensee programming on an area basis (Evans, 1988h).

type (major or independent), new music additions, and the audience serviced by the additions. It was the manner in which the last two of these indicators were defined on the basis of an intersecting cultural analysis of music styles that the link between new music and youth was reinforced and commercial radio's deficiencies exposed.

The ABT established that new music should not simply be defined as all new playlist additions (ABT, 1990d, p.110-112). Responding to the emergence of music radio formats that privileged music familiarity, the regulator felt that the definition of new music should take into consideration the vintage of the performer (how long the individual or band had been established for) and the vintage of the music style (whether the style accords with the 'mainstream' music that currently dominates playlists or is an emergent style). Although recognising the subjective nature of judging the latter, the regulator settled on a measure that included tracks by artists that had not experienced previous chart success and/or exposure on commercial radio and tracks that were 'alternative' and 'non-mainstream' in style. It was through a similar cultural assessment of music styles that the regulator approached the issue of the audience serviced by commercial radio.

In its August report the regulator mapped out links between music styles and the audiences they primarily served (ABT, 1990c, pp.12-13). It identified teen pop, heavy metal, dance and alternative as musical styles that appealed primarily to 10-17 and 18-24 year olds; jazz, folk, blues, country, middle of the road and classical as generally appealing to those over 25 years of age; and mainstream rock as a style appreciated by those in the broad 18-39 year age range. In essence, many of the non-mainstream musical styles that would constitute new music under the ABT's definition were also styles that primarily appealed to youth. Where non-mainstream styles of music were absent from commercial radio the ABT could almost certainly conclude that both new music was not given adequate airplay and youth were not adequately served. New music and youth were mutually constitutive under this system.

The metropolitan FM playlist analysis conducted by the ABT as part of the licence renewal inquiry found that mainstream rock was the dominant musical form, with limited playlisting of teen pop, heavy metal and alternative music, and almost no playlisting of dance music. The ABT also found that tracks from the mainstream rock style added to playlists tended to be by artists who had a track record of radio and chart success. The regulator did not seek to disguise its interest in comprehensive service provision as a means of ensuring appropriate local content support, suggesting that, in accordance with its combined artist and musical style vintage definition, just 12 new Australian artists received airplay on metropolitan FM stations during the three month data period (ABT, 1990d, p.113). As such, the ABT concluded that metropolitan FM stations were not providing the type of comprehensive service that would support ‘the development of a healthy broadbased Australian music industry’ (ABT, 1990d, p.113). This was, according to the ABT, ‘no doubt the result of the pre-occupation of the Contemporary format with the upper half of the 10-39 age group’, and thus also reflected a lack of adequate services for younger audiences ‘which they [metropolitan FM stations] are attracting almost by default, in the absence of alternative formats more appropriate to that audience’ (ABT, 1990d, p.113, p.110).

Interestingly, the ABT sought to explain how commercial FM stations had operationalised their discrimination against youth audiences through the call-out research system. Instead of simply posing the ‘familiarity’ argument suggested by Turner (1993, p.151) and others (as described in Section 1 of this chapter), the ABT revealed that the callout samples of many of the commercial FM stations seeking licence renewal were weighted to include only a small number of young people (ABT, 1990d, p.3). While the regulator commended stations for undertaking research to inform their service provision it concluded that ‘there is a need to test whether significant groups on the fringe of the core audience, particularly the younger demographics, are being well served’ (ABT, 1990d, p.4). Framing the diminished radio-youth relationship as a shift in core audience programming to older target groups was important since it pre-empted the counterpoint that young people

continued to be attracted to commercial radio in large numbers and the time they spent listening had, at least by the early 1990s, not shrunk substantially (cf. Peters, 1989). Of course, as noted in Chapter One, Top 40 itself had been framed as a youth format in a similar way despite its ratings success across a broader age profile.

The ABT were not alone in emphasising the aesthetic rather than empirical nature of the shift. In his examination of teenagers as 'radio's lost market' De Bono (1990, p.16) was surprised to find that metropolitan FM stations with both Contemporary and Adult Contemporary formats tended to attract a major share of the 10-17 audience and concluded, 'it appears that in the absence of any station specially aimed at the younger end of the surveyed market, stations whose main concern is an older generation are collecting the teenagers of the late 1980s'. This is a point that commercial radio programmers of the period were also at times happy to concede—particularly when there was no threat of immediate action by the government to ensure comprehensive broadcasting service provision. For instance, asked about teenage listeners, Triple M Sydney Program Director Charlie Fox told de Bono that his station was 'picking them up by default' (de Bono, 1990). Similarly, Austereo Program Director, Greg Smith, explained how teenagers were approached as a secondary market for his stations:

Our audience is basically under 40 years. The problem lies in the fact that while under-17s enjoy a particular type of music, this has a turn-off factor for older age groups. In the meantime if we program music aimed at the older age groups, the under-17s don't mind it either (Davis, 1989c).

The ABT's quarterly local content reports, its special *Comprehensive Coverage* report and the commercial FM licence renewal report each identified commercial radio's diminishing relationship with youth and expressed this as a policy issue in terms of its impact on radio's role in supporting the development of the Australian music industry. While the ABT did not explicitly suggest a response to this diagnosis in these reports, an article subsequently published by the author of much of this

material, Ed Jonker, provides some insight into the possible responses circulating in policy circles (although not representing the official views of the ABT) (Jonker, 1992).

Jonker concludes that commercial radio's lack of exposure of new Australian music was caused by commercial pressures that were unlikely to change. As such, he suggested, 'there are no easy solutions, short of the introduction of licences that are format and/or demographic specific: for example, there are no commercial radio stations that specifically target the under 18s, who tend to be more receptive to new music than older age groups' (Jonker, 1992, p.30). Since it was clear by this time that the special interest commercial licences proposed by Willis were not going to eventuate, such an intervention was only likely to be generated in the community broadcasting sector. Indeed, the issuing of licences for youth community broadcasters as a response to commercial radio's lack of effectiveness in supporting the development of the local music industry would be explicitly proposed by the Communications Minister in 1995—an event discussed below. In the intervening period, the issue of radio's disconnection from youth continued to gain momentum as a policy problem, especially in the context of the government's comprehensive broadcast spectrum review that accompanied the revision of broadcast legislation in 1992, and the ongoing lack of a system of local content regulation to mandate airplay for new music.

Broadening the Youth Radio Policy Problem

Following the introduction of the Broadcasting Services Act in 1992 the government directed the regulator (reformed under the new Act as the Australian Broadcasting Authority, ABA) to complete a nationwide review of available broadcast spectrum and to determine where new commercial and community licences might be issued. This process is examined in some detail in Chapter Four. Here, I simply highlight how arguments about radio's diminished servicing of youth intensified following the introduction of the new Act, emerging from the research conducted by the regulator as part of the spectrum review and from youth radio advocates seeking to establish

a strong position from which to lobby government in anticipation that the spectrum review would make new licences available.

The Act directed that in planning spectrum use the ABA have regard not only to technical matters, but consider the 'number of existing broadcasting services and the demand for new broadcasting services within the licence area, within neighbouring licence areas and within Australia generally' (Sheldon et al., 1995, pp.viii-ix; Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992, S23(c)). In response to this directive the regulator initiated an extensive community consultation process as part of its nationwide spectrum review. By 1994 it had received almost 4,000 written submissions, the call for which was advertised in local print media; distributed kits containing preliminary reports and microfiche summaries of all submissions to each participant, as well as current and aspiring licensees, parliamentarians and public libraries for further comment; and had held public seminars and meetings in metropolitan, regional and remote Australia—a process that continued through the 1990s (Raiche, 1993; Sheldon et al., 1995, p.ix; Communications Update, 1993). Recognising that these mechanisms did not necessarily reflect a 'representative measure of demand', and in accordance with its broader statutory responsibilities, the ABA decided to implement a more structured program of listener research (Sheldon et al., 1995, p.ix; ABA, 1994e, p.10). The specific objectives of this research are listed in Figure 2.3.

The *Listening to the Listeners* report released in August 1995 provides a comprehensive report of the ABA's resultant activities (Sheldon et al., 1995). This included 17 focus groups conducted in metropolitan and rural communities; a nationwide face-to-face survey, the design of which was informed by issues raised in the focus groups and administered to a sample of 3,217 people aged 14 years and over; and an analysis of radio and television ratings data from 1993 and 1994 that was being independently compiled for issue 4 of the regulator's occasional paper series *Trends and Issues* (Sheldon et al., 1995, p.vii, p.x, p.4; ABA, 1996c).

Figure 2.3 Objectives of the ABA's *Listening to the Listeners* research, 1995

The objectives of the *Listening to the Listeners* were to:

- (1) explore community attitudes to radio services currently available, including people's satisfaction with existing music and program formats;
- (2) examine the demand for services by category of service;
- (3) compare the demand for city wide services (community and commercial) with the demand for services covering a sector of the city;
- (4) examine the demand for services by format type, including new and diverse services, and the extent to which special interest groups are adequately served by existing formats; and
- (5) gather information about listening behaviour.

Source: Sheldon et al. 1995, p.x.

Although at the time the ABA simply stated that the research was conducted with a representative population sample, a later report, which focused specifically on youth, noted that in designing the *Listening to the Listeners* research the regulator was concerned to ensure strong representation from groups generally excluded from commercial listenership research. In accordance with the conclusions reached by its predecessor in the 1989-90 commercial FM licence renewal inquiry (see above), teenagers were considered a group 'often excluded from such studies' (Cupitt et al., 1996, p.14). To compensate, in the *Listening to the Listeners* research 'almost half of the focus group participants were teenagers . . . [and] 301 respondents in the national survey were aged between 14 and 19 years' (Cupitt et al., 1996, p.14). Certainly, the report provides substantial detail about the attitudes of young people to radio, and a comparative analysis with other age groups.

The ABA's research revealed that 'radio played an important role in the lives of all respondents, being the most extensively used electronic media', but a perceived weakness of the medium was that 'the majority of radio is seen to cater for those aged 18-40 years old, and not for those in older or younger age groups' (Sheldon et al., 1995, p.5). This weakness was borne out in both focus group and survey data on age-based levels of satisfaction with existing radio services. Metropolitan and rural listeners aged between 30 and 45 years old were generally happy with local radio stations, believing that they catered well for the audience, while older and younger

people expressed greater levels of dissatisfaction (Sheldon et al., 1995, p.5, p.6, p.8, p.25, p.29). Young people in rural Australia were particularly dissatisfied with the service they received from radio which they felt was designed to address adults and which, with the exception of irregular Top 40 countdown programs, made 'little attempt to cater to their needs' (Sheldon et al., 1995, p.7, p.28). According to the research, in metropolitan areas younger respondents were better catered for, but even so they 'expressed a desire for a wider variety of radio than was currently available to them' (Sheldon et al., 1995, p.8, p.27). In the survey research, young people indicated that radio could be improved by providing a 'better choice of music', while in the focus groups young people noted particular difficulties in accessing 'alternative' music'; a point reflecting the conclusions the ABT reached about youth and new music in its local content reports of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Sheldon et al., 1995, p.xii, p.8). Unlike the research from that period, the ABA now found that ratings data revealed a decline in radio listening by young people.

In *Listening to the Listeners* the regulator made an assessment of ratings data for the years 1993 and 1994. Although it warned that 'one year is too short a period to establish any conclusions regarding listening times', it released findings that indicated a decline in average time spent listening by young people:

10 to 17 year olds listened to the least amount of radio in all markets and, the amount of radio they listened to declined in all markets (except Adelaide) from 1993 to 1994 . . . Average listening time declined by more than 1 hour in Sydney and Canberra for this age group and by 53 minutes in Melbourne and 51 minutes in Newcastle (Sheldon et al., 1995, p.xvii).

The ABA made more substantiated claims about youth listening trends in its *Trends and Issues* paper released in February 1996. This paper revealed that average time spent listening by 10-17 year olds had declined every year from 1990 to 1994 and was the only demographic division in which this had occurred (ABA, 1996c, p.20).

Unlike the work of the ABT that exclusively considered the demise of Top 40 youth radio in terms of its impact on the development of the local music industry, in

discussing how young people used radio as an accompaniment to social activities, homework, and as a form of company, *Listening to the Listeners* foregrounded other ways of problematising the radio-youth disconnect (Sheldon et al., 1995, p.15). In a manner, *Listening to the Listeners* represented a pivotal point in discussions of the role of radio in youth identity formation and peer group identification by the regulators of Australian broadcasting. In the report *Young Australians and Music*, released in 1985 when the regulator maintained that radio still had a solid connection with youth, the ABT emphasised aspects of how that connection functioned in terms of youth peer group formation, noting:

A need to be part of a shared subculture of music provided by a few selected stations seems to outweigh any exploratory tendencies, especially in the younger age groups. The exclusion of other types of music and other stations from experience may be just as important for a sense of peer group belonging as listening to the 'right' stations (Agardy et al., 1985, p.14).

Listening to the listeners intimated that this function could be undermined as young people became less satisfied with radio and began to turn off, while later reports by the regulator provided a more thorough and integrated discussion of the socio-cultural importance of music and radio for young people and the diminishing relationship between radio and youth. Indeed, concerns about the impact of shifting patterns of radio programming on both the development of the music industry and the social and cultural lives of young people would inspire the regulator to conduct three specific studies dealing with youth radio in the second half of the 1990s—*Music, new music and all that: teenage radio in the 90s*, *Youth and music in Australia: a review*, and *Headbanging or Dancing: youth and music in Australia* (Cupitt et al., 1996; London and Hearder, 1997; Ramsay, 1998a). Notably, apart from a study of families and electronic entertainment (Cupitt and Stockbridge, 1996), these were the only studies conducted by the regulator dealing with a particular radio broadcasting audience segment in the 1990s.

During this period the ABA's research priorities were influenced by the spectrum review and the desirability of having an empirical basis to support the licence allocation process. While the results of the *Listening to the Listeners* study pointed to youth as an audience that may be inadequately serviced, the process through which youth became the focus of further research also involved more general discussions within the regulator's research team and with the government-appointed ABA Members, especially Deputy Chairman and experienced commercial broadcaster Bob Scott (Cupitt, 2007). The context in which these discussions were taking place was important. Although ABA researcher Margaret Cupitt cannot recall a clearly articulated line of causation, interest in youth was undoubtedly stimulated by the impact of on-air tests conducted by aspirant youth community broadcasters on radio markets in the early 1990s and consequent public statements of youth radio support by the Minister for Communications and the Arts, Michael Lee (primarily driven by concerns to rekindle radio's role in supporting local music industry development) (Cupitt, 2007). Before discussing the ABA's specific youth studies I will examine these key framing events.

Testing the Waters: Youth Community Radio Trials and Ministerial Support Signals

From the early 1990s, in anticipation that the national spectrum review would make new permanent community broadcasting licences available, a range of community groups applied to the regulator for permission to begin test broadcasting. This process is described in detail in Chapter Four. Over 90 days from 8 December 1993, HITZ FM, an aspirant community broadcaster that identified youth as its community of interest, conducted a test broadcast in Melbourne. Its aim, according to a promotional pamphlet produced at this time, was to establish 'a full time 'All Hits' format radio station' (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 1992b). Although, Counihan (1996, p.21), who chronicled the impact of this broadcast, indicated that the station did not reinstate Top 40 in its traditional sense, he suggested it did 'reinvent teen radio according to its own dance-mix logic'. The station combined the type of teen-pop fan culture only found in magazines at that time with the music of dance clubs and raves, mixing pop chart three minute singles found on Saturday morning 'video

hits' television with extended dance mixes (Counihan, 1996, p. 21). Station manager, Anton Vanderlely, revealed that the station 'wanted to present new music . . . the stuff on the Top 40 and the dance club charts' (Johnston, 1994, p.42). One important element the station shared with the defunct Top 40 format was its focus on new music. HITZ tended to play tracks that were less than 12 months old and actually banned songs that were more than five years old (London and Hearder, 1997, p.24; Johnston, 1994, p.41). Actually, since HITZ concentrated on dance music which fell outside the 'mainstream' rock genre that dominated commercial radio, pretty much all of the music it played was new under the 'time- and genre-based' definition suggested by the ABA's predecessor. The impact of the coincident rise in popularity of electronic dance music in Australia and the prospect of new radio licences, as well as the rise of HITZ as an aspirant broadcaster and its impact on the development of similar services is discussed in Chapter Four.

HITZ's mix of dance and commercial pop chart music quickly captured the attention of young people. Counihan (1996, p.18) notes that the station was registering up to 1500 phone calls per day in addition to listener faxes and mail. Although only on air for 90 days, the station had a significant impact on the radio ratings, taking young listeners from Melbourne commercial stations Fox FM and Triple M and also from the ABC's Triple J youth radio network (the establishment of which is described in Chapter Three) (Johnston, 1994). The 'Other FM' category, in which HITZ's listenership results were included, increased its audience shares in the 13 to 17-year-old category from 1.8 per cent to 15.1 per cent and from 3.3 per cent to 12.8 per cent in the 18 to 24-year-old category (Counihan, 1996, p.18). This rapid and significant shift in youth audiences confirmed the regulator's suspicion that commercial radio was picking up youth by default in the absence of a more appropriate alternative. Commercial broadcasters had recently backed away from admitting this in response to potential new competition under the revised broadcasting legislation. Now they argued that metropolitan commercial broadcasters go to 'extraordinary lengths' to research 'the needs and interests of listeners and potential listeners' and 'respond in their programming to results of

that research' (FARB, 1992, p.11). But as Counihan (1996, p.20) notes, while this argument has frequently been subject to criticism, 'rarely has its utter silliness been so emphatically demonstrated as it has been in the HITZ case'.

The manner in which HITZ was able to engage with youth also captured the attention and support of the public, the media, politicians and even the minister. As the end date of its temporary broadcast permit approached a 'Save HITZ' campaign was launched. A petition calling on the government to grant the station a permanent licence gained more than 30,000 signatures and the station recorded a further 5,000 telephone support calls (Ackland, 1994). Melbourne's *Herald Sun* newspaper published a multitude of articles and editorials on the station and its plight and even printed a save-HITZ coupon that readers were urged to send to the minister (cf. Herald Sun, 1994a; Herald Sun, 1994b; Counihan, 1996, p.17).

Conservative politicians, including Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett and the Federal Shadow Minister for Communications, Richard Alston, made their support known, and a motion introduced into the Senate by the Australian Democrats called on the ABA to grant HITZ a permanent licence (Johnston, 1994, p.40; Spindler, 1994).

The music industry was vocal in their support for the station. Music industry identity Molly Meldrum and other representatives of the industry waxed lyrical about HITZ's successful rekindling of the radio-recording industry relationship (Counihan, 1996, p.17; Johnston, 1994, p.40). This was evident, according to Chris Johnston of *Rolling Stone Magazine*, as HITZ 'single-handedly rocketed a clutch of dance-pop singles into the Victorian charts'; a point later confirmed by music chart analyst Gavin Ryan (Johnston, 1994; Adams, 2003). Through AUSMUSIC, the industry presented its case to the Minister for Communications and Arts, Michael Lee, that he 'should either exercise his power under clause 84(1) of the Broadcasting Services Act and direct the ABA to give licence allocation priority to community youth and new music stations based on the HITZ model or, if reluctant to do this, he should at least advise the ABA that such allocation would substantially further the range of government policy objectives' (Counihan, 1996, p.27). Lee, who had invited a delegation from the station to Canberra to discuss the issue, indicated that he would not override

the ABA planning process (Herald Sun, 1994b; Counihan, 1996, p.17). But, he did recognise that stations like HITZ could play a role in supporting the development of the local music industry given that the commercial radio quota system, despite being revised following the introduction of the new Act, had not solved the new music issue. Indeed, with the introduction of a self-regulatory code of practice for local content in 1993 the industry had even managed to reduce the quota for the majority of stations, since new format-specific quotas directed Adult Contemporary/Gold stations to ensure a minimum of 15 per cent of broadcast music was Australian (FARB, 1993).

Lee made his frustration at not having the tools to ensure commercial radio responded appropriately to the government's desire to develop the local music industry clearly known. Between September 1994 and April 1995 he made a series of widely reported statements criticising the conservative nature of commercial radio programming (Seccombe, 1994; Pottinger, 1994; Dale and Sharp, 1995; Lee, 1995a; Sanders, 1995; Jellie, 1995), including the following to federal parliament:

The radio industry's increasing adoption of 'hits and memories' formats has provided reduced opportunities for new and emerging Australian artists. In my opinion, and in the government's opinion, there is a challenge for all broadcasters to see whether they can do more to encourage new and emerging Australian artists (Lee, 1995b).

But it was at the government's first *Contemporary Music Summit* held in Canberra in April 1995 that Lee, who was already a keen supporter of the expansion of the ABC's Triple J youth radio service, clearly connected this critique to the possibility that he would encourage licensing youth community broadcasters as a direct solution to the problem, or that such a possibility, given the ratings success of HITZ, might be a large enough threat to encourage greater cooperation from the commercial sector (Matchett, 2011). In his opening address Lee referred to his recent 'pot shots at research driven golden oldies programming on radio' and the need for 'all broadcasters to give new and emerging Australian artists a better go'. Once the ABA

completed its planning process for capital cities 'in the not too distant future' he would 'need to decide whether to reserve frequencies for national or community stations. If the commercial broadcasters have not been able to respond by then, the case in favour of using youth format community radio licences will be greatly enhanced' (Lee, 1995a).

Similar criticism was leveled by a range of Summit participants including, AUSMUSIC, the Australian Professional Recording Society, the Society of Australian Songwriters, Midnight Oil via manager Gary Morris, and musician Peter Dinklage (see submissions collated in Rix, 1995b). ARIA, like Lee, directly linked this to youth radio developments, recommending that since 'commercial radio broadcasters are not servicing the youth demographic . . . the government should give preference to new city licensees who will provide for this sector' (Candi, 1995, p.11). When the organisers reported back to the minister after the summit they highlighted a general view that 'alternative radio outlets' needed support and 'the establishment of new national or community youth radio stations' would help to develop the local music industry (Rix, 1995a). This message from the Summit captured the attention of the media: international *Billboard Magazine* reported that the Australian music industry was pushing for radio spectrum to be allocated to youth stations (Eliezer, 1995; Thomas and Farouque, 1995). It was also a message received by the ABA, as highlighted by Andrew Poole in the regulator's newsletter *ABA Update - Newsletter of the Australian Broadcasting Authority* (Poole, 1995).

Reviewing and Expanding the Evidence

In 1996, the ABA generated further documentary evidence that youth were a group underserved by Australian radio and drew out concerns for the promotion of new music and the socio-cultural connection of young people with the medium. In *Music, new music and all that: teenage radio in the 90s* the ABA analysed data extracted from the face-to-face interviews and focus group research conducted for *Listening to the Listeners* study and material from its *Families and electronic entertainment* project, and combined this with interviews with representatives of

the radio industry and a review of some recent academic literature (Cupitt et al., 1996; Cupitt and Stockbridge, 1996). Drawing heavily on the work of Turner (1993), the authors concluded that 'teenage radio in Australia was a lot stronger in the 1960s and 1970s' since the fundamental aim of commercial radio had turned to maintaining adult audiences even at times when teenagers were most likely to be listening (Cupitt et al., 1996, p.vii, p.24). While the ratings, survey and focus group results the authors carried over from *Listening to the Listeners* emphasised the decline in average time spent listening to radio by youth and their dissatisfaction with the current choice of stations, the ABA maintained that radio continued to 'play a significant role in the daily lives of teenagers' (ABA, 1996b). Radio was the primary source of music information for young people, who were significantly more interested in such information than older people; young people maintained an emotional connection with radio stations and radio also played an important role in the formation of collective peer connections by young people (Cupitt et al., 1996, pp.47-51, p.55, p.56). In particular, the study found that:

Radio has many unique characteristics that teenagers enjoy and which set it apart from other media. These include radio's capacity to provide cheap, easy access to new music, information about music, its portability and the way it can be used alongside other media and other activities (Cupitt et al., 1996, p.xi).

In examining how the relationship between radio and youth might be strengthened the authors pointed to a number of new developments including the extension of the Triple J network and the service provided by HITZ (Cupitt et al., 1996, p.26). Certainly, the regulator hoped that the national spectrum review would yield opportunities for further youth radio developments. Releasing *Music, new music and all that* ABA Deputy Chairman Bob Scott noted that the new national, commercial and community radio stations proposed under the ABA's radio planning and allocation process would increase opportunities for broadcasters to cater specifically for teenagers' interests (ABA, 1996b).

In 1997, the ABA initiated a further two-part research program focusing on youth, music and radio. The program was jointly sponsored by ARIA and the Australia Council—a clear indication of the connection between broadcast planning and licensing and broader popular music policy. In the introduction to *Youth and Music in Australia*, which reported on the first part of this research, the regulator indicated that the program of research aimed to explore in detail the role music plays in the lives of youth, and recognised the ‘cultural and economic influence of contemporary music’ (London and Hearder, 1997, p.v). Each of the research partners had a particular interest in this objective: the Australia Council would use the study to inform ‘policies for youth arts and explore the issue of funding for contemporary or popular Australian music’; ARIA to inform its advocacy efforts on behalf of the recording industry; the ABA to inform its spectrum planning and licensing process, particularly with regards to community broadcasting services (London and Hearder, 1997, p.v).

Youth and Music in Australia provided a comprehensive review of literature that examined youth and music in Australia. In reporting on literature dealing with young peoples’ access to music, there is a significant focus on radio. Here the authors refer to the preceding ABA reports, *Listening to the Listeners* and *Music, New Music and All That*, to make the point that radio is an important factor in the relationship between youth and music, and raised concerns about reduced listening patterns (London and Hearder, 1997, pp.19-20). The review traces out the causes of radio’s diminishing relationship with youth by referring to the work of Turner (1993), Shoebridge (1989), Counihan (1996) and Jonker (1992), as well as its own recent studies (London and Hearder, 1997, pp.20-24). The ‘distinct lack of radio programming which is aimed at young people’ is largely problematised in terms of reduced opportunities for the music industry to use radio in the promotion of new music (London and Hearder, 1997, p.33). The ABA, like its predecessor, intimates that in defining new music the date of production is not sufficient, and points to genre vintage as an important factor. The authors conclude that ‘the lack of opportunity for new music on radio has forced promoters of *these styles* to seek

other means of exposure' (London and Harder, 1997, p.33 - my italics, but note that no styles are listed as such). This is further tied to the lack of appropriate mechanisms to support the development of the local music industry, with the authors noting that the Australian music quota 'does not stipulate that a proportion of music played be by new Australian performers' (London and Harder, 1997, p.57). As with, *Music, New Music and All That*, the regulator pointed to the potential for rekindling the relationship between youth, new music and radio through an expanded Triple J network and, referring to HITZ, community broadcasting (London and Harder, 1997, pp.24-25).

In 1998, the ABA reported on the second part of the collaborative research program under the title *Headbanging or Dancing: Youth and music in Australia*. This extensive study reviewed and updated the conclusions reached in what was now an extensive body of previous policy literature dealing with the youth-music-radio issue. It drew on interviews with key stakeholders representing the radio and record industries, youth organisations, academics and musicians; fourteen focus group discussions with people aged 12-24 years in various locations around Australia; and a national survey of 1,085 people aged 12-24 years (Ramsay, 1998a, p.9). The study identified and explained the continuing absence of a substantial connection between radio and youth since the demise of the commercial Top 40 format and drew out the impact on new music under a genre vintage definition as follows:

The commercial radio sector has continued to argue that certain economic imperatives influence their programming. In order to attract revenue through advertising they target adult audiences because of their larger disposable incomes. This situation has deterred any commercial station from following a prevalent top 40 format catering to teenagers and also limited the extent to which commercial stations play specific styles of music popular amongst many young people such as rap, hip hop, techno and grunge music (Ramsay, 1998a, p.29).

The ABA also argued that commercial radio played little new music, if new music was defined as ‘artist vintage’. Of the top 20 most broadcast artists in 1997, less than a third had emerged since 1980 and only one ‘new’ Australian artist made the list (Ramsay, 1998a, p.29). While the regulator suggests this is a problem for those that wish to hear new music—essentially youth—another substantial concern relates to the impact on the local music industry (Ramsay, 1998a, p.26). The inability of the quota system to address this new music issue according to the ABA had ‘continued to be controversial’ (Ramsay, 1998a, pp.25-26). While a review of the quota system due to be completed by the end of 1998 was again considering ‘new music’ refinements⁴⁴, the regulator was not about to divert its attention from addressing the problem, now, after a decade of structural reforms, interpreted as a ‘youth radio’ problem. As such, the regulator reinforced its support for the Triple J network and suggested ‘future developments may also provide opportunities for new radio services which will improve the overall choice in radio for young people such as the allocation of new services through the ABA’s current licensing process’ (Ramsay, 1998a, p.30). One model was provided in the community broadcasting sector by HITZ and other stations that ‘targeted young people or concentrate on specific music genres popular amongst younger audiences such as dance music’ (Ramsay, 1998a, p.31; Ramsay, 1998b, pp.49-50).

Headbanging or Dancing was the final policy report on the issue of youth, music and radio released before additional metropolitan commercial and community broadcasting licences were issued under the new Act. It represented the culmination of more than a decade of policy work in which concerns about the impact changes to commercial radio formats were having on the development of the local music industry were transposed into concerns about the diminishing relationship between radio and youth⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ In 1999, following the review, and after more than a decade of lobbying, the new music issue by the local content code of practice (Grainger, 1999; FARB, 1999b, p.12). Stations deploying the most popular formats must now ensure a mandated portion of the Australian music played (15-25 per cent) has been released in the previous 12 months (FARB, 1999a, 4.3b).

⁴⁵ The opening to Chapter One of the report provides the most clearly articulated discussion of how the regulator conceived of this transposition: ‘A number of the challenges facing the music and radio

Conclusion

This chapter provided an account of the demise of the Top 40 commercial radio format in Australia over the course of the 1980s and its impact on the broadcasting and popular music policy spheres. As discussed in Chapter One, the Top 40 format that dominated commercial radio during the 1960s and 1970s had brought youth to the centre of commercial music radio's programming aesthetic and to the centre of what was a broadly defined target audience. The aging of the baby-boomer cohort that had grown up on Top 40 and their continuing importance to consumer markets in the 1980s shifted the focal point of commercial radio's broad target audience and new research mechanisms sought to establish commensurate changes to radio's aesthetic. Fundamentally, the approach of commercial music radio programmers in seeking to address baby-boomers was shaped by the theory that musical taste cultures are fashioned during youth and move with a person into adulthood, and this yielded new music radio formats that focused on the past rather than the present. Disruptions to the radio landscape caused by the introduction of commercial FM radio in 1980 increased the pace of Top 40's demise, while government deregulation of the broadcast sector through the mid to late 1980s led to trading uncertainty, high levels of debt and ownership consolidation, thereby encouraging conservative program strategies targeted almost exclusively at baby-boomers through the 1980s and 1990s.

The demise of Top 40 radio and its articulation as radio's disconnection from youth became the subject of vigorous research and policy debate. While a range of concerns were raised, it was the disconnection between radio and new music that, in the context of the rising political stocks of the local popular music industry, drew

industries in Australia also relate to the subject of young people and music. The first relates to the promotion and support for Australian music, especially whether new and emerging Australian artists are receiving adequate airplay on radio and whether record companies are fulfilling a role in encouraging new Australian talent. Over the last decade, questions have also arisen as to whether young people are adequately catered for by radio, and also whether certain music formats favoured by some young audiences are being ignored by mainstream radio. These two issues are inter-related because if commercial radio is catering predominantly for an older audience, many new and emerging Australian artists are less likely to be broadcast because the music they play may not be consistent with existing station formats' (Ramsay, 1998a, p.23).

the issue into the policy arena. By the early 1980s commercial radio had been required to ensure a designated portion of the music they put to air was Australian as a means of supporting the development of local creative talent for forty years. An inquiry into this local content quota system at this time found that the changes to commercial music radio formats had reduced its impact since stations were now privileging the music of established rather than emerging artists. Attempts to adjust the quota in this period of deregulation proved unworkable and so the regulator and advocates from the music industry sought other mechanisms to support music industry development.

While deregulation worked against the revision of specific content regulation, it did open up possibilities for structural intervention as the government sought to liberalise market access by releasing new broadcasting licences. However, the government and the regulator were not confident that the commercial sector could be expanded sufficiently to guarantee market provision of a greatly diversified set of services that might include stations with a commitment to playing new Australian music. As such, the government looked to address the local content issue by expanding the national and community broadcasting sectors where it had greater influence over the nature of service provision. This was not a straightforward task. These sectors had traditionally been framed to address the needs of particular audiences rather than to transmit particular content, and the notion that they be promoted as instruments of industry policy did not sit comfortably with their perceived independence from the market.

It was by carefully reframing the new music problem as radio's disconnection from youth through an accumulating set of studies conducted between the late 1980s and the late 1990s that an appropriate policy language was found to facilitate solutions in the non-commercial broadcasting sectors. Indeed, while Lyn Dunlevy writing in *The Age* in 1992 argued that the Prime Minister 'may be able to offer young people more education, training and even jobs but it is unlikely he can restore to them the other casualty of the recession, top-40 commercial radio', it was exactly

this type of socio-cultural problematisation that was leveraged to provide the political rationales for restoration attempts outside the market (Dunlevy, 1992).

The following two chapters examine how radio's relationship with youth was substantially rekindled outside the commercial radio sector where it had first emerged.

Chapter 3

Networking Triple J

Introduction

This chapter examines how the ABC's Triple J youth radio network emerged as a substantially new articulation of the relationship between Australian radio and youth following the demise of the commercial Top 40 format. The network, which was announced in 1988, operating in all Australian state capitals by 1990 and rolled out to much of regional Australia in the decade that followed, is often presented as a rather unproblematic extension of the ABC's existing Double J/Triple J⁴⁶ youth service that had operated in Sydney since 1975. But, as discussed in relation to formation of Double J in chapter one, the development of additional ABC broadcast outlets is complex. It involves the negotiation and settlement of internal ABC organisational priorities and, since additional broadcast outlets require an allocation of new spectrum, the provision of transmitters and, usually, additional funding to cover operating costs, all of which are controlled by the federal government, an intersecting settlement must be reached with the government of the day. I argue that the settlement reached in the case of the network was based on rationales substantially different to those underpinning the existing Sydney Triple J service and so generated a substantial backlash from existing Triple J staff and its Sydney audience as it was rolled out. The result was a type of hybrid service combining 'alternative' and commercial chart music and sought to engage with youth as politically engaged citizens, an audience the ABC must reach to meet its obligation to provide comprehensive services, and as a market for new music.

The chapter is divided into three sections. Section 1 examines the manner in which the commitment to establishing a youth radio network emerged within the ABC. I agree with a number of scholars that the review of the ABC conducted under the

⁴⁶ Until 1980 when the station moved from the AM to FM band its callsign was 2JJ (Double J).

chairmanship of Alex Dix in the early 1980s was important to the formation of the Triple J network since it highlighted the national broadcaster's general deficiency in servicing young people and problematised this in terms of the objective of comprehensive service provision as well as the potential that a generation of listeners and viewers may become forever disengaged from the national broadcaster. However, the detailed examination of the inquiry presented in this section reveals that the Dix Committee did not translate this into support for the development of a national youth radio network. To the contrary, the Committee specifically recommended against this move and also sought to have the existing Triple J service reformatted to become a general, rather than youth-oriented, service. I argue that it was only through a change of federal government and corporatisation of the ABC in 1983 that the Dix Committee's specific youth radio recommendations were passed over and a youth radio network tentatively proposed in the ABC's first corporate plan released in 1985 as a response to the inquiry's identification of the deficiency in servicing youth.

Section 2 of this chapter examines the federal government's decision to facilitate the initial development of the Triple J youth radio network in 1988 and its expansion during the 1990s through the provision of FM spectrum and transmission equipment. A national youth radio network certainly complemented the ALP government's significant commitment to youth welfare priorities announced in 1985, however, it was not until issues of broadcasting diversity and support for new local music were identified and linked to the government's emerging policy interest in the popular music industry that the government made its commitment to networking Triple J. While diversity and local music industry development were the fundamental rationales deployed by the government to justify the allocation of broadcasting resources to ABC youth radio, I argue that the announcement of the Triple J network was also made politically palatable since by 1988 the government had already facilitated broadcasting service improvements in regional Australia and the network was incorporated into the NRP which offered a range of new opportunities for commercial broadcasters.

The final section of this chapter explores how the Triple J network was constructed in light of the objectives of the ABC and the federal government. In contrast to the formation of the Sydney Double J service in the mid-1970s, designed as a counterpoint to commercial youth culture, the Triple J network was conceived, in part, as a reinvention of it. As such, tensions between the counter-cultural position of many existing staff and the station's Sydney audience and the more populist position invoked by ABC management boiled over during the network's formation in 1990. The Triple J network that emerged was not a simple expansion of the Sydney-based service but a hybrid formation combining the popular and the counter-cultural.

Section 1: The ABC's quest for youth

In 1975, at the 'unofficial' request of the Whitlam federal government, the ABC established the Double J youth radio station in Sydney under the guise of an experimental service that made use of the ABC's backup AM transmitter. The establishment of this station as a counterpoint to existing commercial Top-40 youth stations is described in Chapter One. As noted in that chapter, by the end of the decade the station had not moved far from its experimental roots. Despite the efforts of Moss Cass, Minister for the Media in the twilight of the Whitlam government, the station remained outside the national broadcaster's radio network structure. Although relayed overnight to Canberra and Newcastle, the station remained a Sydney-based service and even there transmission issues meant reception was limited to certain parts of the city. The reception problem was solved when it moved to the FM band in 1980 and was renamed Triple J, however questions remained about the station's role in an organisation that was supposed to provide national services. This left the station exposed to institutional or government review, a process that might as easily provide opportunities for its development as force its closure (Harding, 1979, p.38). In late 1979, such a review was initiated as part of a more extensive assessment of the ABC.

The Dix Inquiry

In November 1979, with the ABC 'under mounting criticism from many quarters in regard to its general broadcasting performance', the government announced a review of the national broadcaster's activities (Brown, 1982, p.9; Dix, 1981a, p.xiii). The subsequent inquiry by the Committee of Review of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, known as the *Dix Inquiry* after its Chairman Alex Dix, was considered the most thorough and important assessment of the state of the ABC since its establishment (Hawkins, 2001, p.182; Craik and Davis, 1995, p.120). The Dix Committee received more than 2,200 submissions, while 380 independent and institutional representatives participated in public hearings that took place in 44 cities and towns around Australia and yielded over 5,500 pages of testimony (Brown, 1982, p.9). When the Committee's final 5 volume report was released in May 1981 it included 273 recommendations (Dix, 1981b).

The future of the Triple J service, which the committee described as a service that did 'not strictly constitute part of the ABC's 'networks'' but 'formed part of the expansion of national broadcasting services, some of which was experimental in its objectives, during the 1970s', was considered at length (Dix, 1981b, para 8.59). Some authors, including Andrews (1992, p.95) and Albury (1999, p.56), have linked the *Dix Inquiry* to the eventual networking of Triple J. Taken summarily, the Dix Committee did suggest that the ABC needed to attract younger audiences, and the corporate planning process that Dix recommended did yield a decision to form a youth radio network when it was undertaken between 1983 and 1986 (Dix, 1981a, p.8). However, it would be a mistake to consider the Dix Committee as responsible for the development of the Triple J network. To the contrary, the Committee took a largely unfavourable view of Triple J's existing activities and its engagement with youth and presented a vastly different future for the station than that which would eventuate. Given a lack of clarity around the treatment of Triple J in the *Dix Inquiry*, it is worth considering the issue at some length.

In its general assessment of the performance of ABC programming, the Dix Committee found that the ABC clearly lacked appeal for young people in their teens and early twenties (Dix, 1981b, paras 11.202; 11.228). The Committee had employed the services of ANOP Market Research to undertake a survey of audience satisfaction with ABC services and the programming needs of the community, as well as a survey of the perceptions of ABC personnel with regards to programming. ANOP reported that the ABC was not appealing to under 25 year olds through either its radio or television services, with younger people perceiving the ABC to be an 'older person's medium' (Dix, 1981c, p.211). In its analysis of particular audience programming demands ANOP identified insufficient programming of popular music as a major cause of this problem. This was also the perception of programming staff, with ANOP reporting that, 'the main reasons given for the ABC not attracting more young people are that, with the notable exception of 'Countdown', it does not provide the type of programs (for example pop music) nor has the image that appeals to young people' (Dix, 1981c, p.153).

This posed a problem for the Committee as they were also swayed by the argument of the broadcasting regulator at this time that a considerable portion of the programming of commercial media was comprised of popular music that is targeted at young people. The ABC, the Committee argued, could 'hardly claim to present adequate and comprehensive programs unless it is catering for this age group: yet to what extent should it attempt to provide material of proven appeal to young people when it is available from other sources?' (Dix, 1981b, para: 11.230). Of course, this was an issue that extended beyond youth programming. At its core was the question of the role the ABC should play in the multi-sector Australian broadcasting landscape, a role that remained unclear since, from the late 1940s, Australia's broadcast legislation required both the ABC and commercial broadcasters to provide 'adequate and comprehensive services' (see Chapter One). In practice, commercial broadcasters spent little time ruminating over this directive or their role—adequate and comprehensive service provision was simply the outcome of seeking to attract a mass audience and was driven by the desire to maximise return on investment

(Davis, 1988, pp.21-22). For the ABC, determining its programming offerings had long caused more consternation, particularly in relation to whether it should interpret the adequate and comprehensive directive independently, or have regard to the mass-appeal programming space occupied by the commercial sector. In its broad ranging inquiry, the Dix Committee deliberated at length over whether the ABC should play a complementary role, effectively defining itself as a minority broadcaster in a bid to ensure that the Australian broadcasting system catered for most tastes, or itself seek to provide mass-appeal output to satisfy a large portion of the population, duplicating and competing with some of the offerings of existing commercial broadcasters⁴⁷. In relation to youth programming the issue was further complicated since the ABC also had to consider the issue of audience renewal. Without developing consumption habits in young people the Committee feared that the ABC might 'lose a whole generation of potential listeners and viewers' (Dix, 1981b, paras: 11.230; 11.231).

The Committee concluded that the ABC would have to find a way to provide a balance of both minority programming and programming of mass appeal, of delivering comprehensive services while taking account of the broadcasting services provided by the commercial and community sectors (Dix, 1981b, p.52). This position was supported by the government that received the Committee's report, with an acknowledgement that this would generate a degree of competition with commercial broadcasters, and was incorporated into the organisation's charter when it was corporatised in 1983 (Brown, 1982, p.10; Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act (Cwlth), 1983, S6; Craik and Davis, 1995, pp.120-121). The Committee decided that it was vital that the ABC attract a youth audience but, leaning towards a complementary role, suggested it seek to do so through special programming aimed at those young people identified by the ABT as having 'tastes separate from, or in addition to (popular) material [and] (who) are not widely catered for' (Dix, 1981b, para 11.233). All of this should have augured well for

⁴⁷ Attitudes had clearly changed since the Minister announced in 1934 that the government thought of the commercial sector as providing a supplementary service to the ABC (Mackay, 1957, p.116).

cementing the position of Triple J. In its submission to the inquiry the ABC emphasised that Triple J (then Double J) offered a special service to young people, and highlighted the role of the station in introducing a wide variety of seldom-heard album tracks and alternative forms of contemporary music. In providing an alternative youth service the ABC argued that Triple J had attracted a portion of the audience away from commercial stations while also leading commercial stations to reappraise their 'top-40 formula programs' (ABC, 1980, p.9). The Committee accepted this evidence and commended 'the ABC and the successive personnel associated with 2JJJ's operation for the services the station has provided to young people in Sydney, despite the vicissitudes they have faced with such technical questions as the low operating power of its transmitters' (Dix, 1981a, para 8.61). According to the Committee, the station 'had some success in attracting a young audience to the ABC's services, a deficiency in the ABC's overall program services in radio' (Dix, 1981a, para 8.61). The Committee also noted that, although it did not feature in the written submission, they were aware that there was the potential for, and an ABC wish to, expand Triple J into a youth radio network (Dix, 1981a, para 8.59; 8.60).

However, despite its commendation, detailed in Recommendation 39, the Committee did not support the expansion of Triple J as a solution to the ABC's youth problem. It felt that, even taking into account the station's technical difficulties, Triple J had not generated an audience of significant size (estimated at 29,000 by the ABC), nor was its popularity increasing; an indication of the Committee's position that complementary services should still meet minimum audience thresholds. The Committee claimed audience research, undoubtedly the ABC's 1976 qualitative study discussed in Chapter One, 'suggests a relatively small number of patrons for the service, and what trends there are seem to suggest a contraction of interest in 2JJJ's programs' (Dix, 1981a, para 8.62; ABC, 1976). The Committee were also critical that the station had strategically 'played-down its relationship with the ABC to its listeners, essentially undermining the ability of the ABC to develop a relationship with the younger listeners it had attracted (Dix, 1981b, 8.61). The Committee felt

that Triple J, like the rest of the ABC, was unable to effectively engage the youth audience. So, instead of focusing on an individual programming mechanism (like a Triple J network), the Committee recommended a broader approach to the youth problem. It suggested the ABC establish, in conjunction with appropriate government departments and youth organisations in all states, advisory and consultative mechanisms to assist it in developing youth program policies⁴⁸ (Dix, 1981b, Rec. 73 - p.15). It was this approach that was favoured by the government according to the Minister for Communications that received the report (Brown, 1982, p.14).

The Committee, having decided that Triple J would not evolve into a radio network, were still faced with the question of where the station would fit within the ABC, if at all. To this end the Committee looked to the station's 'experimental' rather than 'youth' origins, identifying its premise as one of discovering 'new forms of communication' in accordance with the objectives of national broadcasting to be innovative, fill a gap in broadcast services and challenge prevailing broadcasting service providers to review their program practices and formats (Dix, 1981a, para 8.63). Having shifted the focus of the station from 'youth' to 'experimental programming', the Committee then argued that the experimental services Triple J had been providing to youth were no longer required 'especially in the light of developments in commercial AM and FM radio'—likely a reference to Free-Form experimentation conducted by the new commercial FM stations discussed in Chapter Two (Dix, 1981a, para 8.63). As such, Triple J would be maintained as an experimental outlet, but this was not synonymous with being a youth outlet. The committee outlined a new role of Triple J as follows:

We consider that scope exists for the ABC to look to the 2JJJ outlet as a piloting medium for experimental programming concepts in program areas such as spoken word, radio drama, news and information, and for particular target audiences, such

⁴⁸ There is some evidence that this occurred with *Scan* reporting that the ABC's New South Wales Advisory Council held a youth forum in 1985 (Calluy, 1986b)

as newly-arrived migrants, blind people or other groups. One condition of its use in such ways would be that no one experimental 'cycle' should be carried for long enough to become 'institutionalised'. If a particular program concept showed promise in this test-bed phase it could be given air-time on one of the three 'networks'

...

Used in this experimental and constantly dynamic way 2JJJ would comprise a valuable resource for the existing network in the establishment of the Contemporary Radio Unit: its positions would continue to be occupied on a temporary basis and its staffing would reflect the interests and specialisation required for the particular experimental approaches being applied (Dix, 1981b, para 8.64).

Further emphasising its stance against a youth radio network, the Committee noted that as a result of Recommendation 40 which directed the ABC to 'review the role and functions of 2JJJ along the lines of it playing a piloting or 'testbed' role for innovative program concepts and formats', there was no need 'to decide whether it should be regarded as the beginning of a new ABC network' (Dix, 1981b, para 8.65). Interestingly, the Committee went on to note that further experimental stations may at some time be established by the ABC, but this should not be given a high priority, since priority must instead lie with the provision of a greatly improved national radio service to Australia's rural areas (Dix, 1981b, para 8.65).

Indeed, quite apart from considering whether Triple J's programing and ratings performance made it an appropriate base for a new radio network, the Dix Committee had to determine where ABC radio network resources should be allocated. The Committee noted that a second regional radio network (SRRN) had been proposed and prioritised by the ABC since at least the early 1970s, but had been continually overlooked as other services, especially those benefitting the metropolitan population were developed (Dix, 1981b, para 8.67; Harding, 1979,

p.189). The Committee made it quite clear that ‘the highest priority must be the provision to the country areas of the range of program choices heard on the two national radio channels’ (Dix, 1981a, p.4). In responding to this recommendation the communications minister, Neil Brown, indicated that ‘the Government has agreed that a second network of outlets for ABC radio in regional and outback areas should continue to be given the highest planning priority for the ABC’ (Brown, 1982, p.17).

Following the release of the report of the Dix Committee in May 1981, the recommendations relating to Triple J were the subject to criticism from the ALP federal opposition (Button, 1982). The ABC journal *Scan* also reported criticism from within the ABC by the controller of Radio 1 and Triple J, Arthur Wyndham, and assistant general manager of radio, Keith Mackriell, as well as from the Friends of the ABC lobby group (Aarons and Clark, 1982b; Aarons and Clark, 1982a). But the federal government supported the Committee’s recommendations and sought to press the issue by leveraging their control over ABC transmitters.

During the *Dix Inquiry*, the federal government had indirectly indicated to the ABC that it did not favour an expansion of Triple J into a new ABC radio network. In reply to a request by ABC chairman John Norgard that the department help alleviate transmission problems that had continued to limit the reception of Triple J in some areas of Sydney (despite the move to FM), the department wrote in October 1980, ‘The basic question on which an attitude is required is whether the Commission sees 2JJJ-FM as a single station or as the first in a network of JJJ FM stations in capital cities’ (Aarons and Clark, 1982b). In December 1980, ABC general manager Sir Talbot Duckmanton responded, providing the department with a clear rationale and outline of the ABC’s desire to network Triple J. Duckmanton wrote that the ABC’s existing radio networks:

cannot generally satisfy the listening needs of under 25-year-old audiences. This inability to provide a sustained service for the younger audience—and the resultant tendency of ABC programming to appeal primarily to the older age group—has

been a matter of continuing concern . . . The most recent decision of the Commission envisages 2JJJ-FM as part of a future national network, each station in which would have coverage virtually identical to ABC-FM. I would be grateful therefore if planning could proceed on this basis (Aarons and Clark, 1982b).

However, since the ABC did not make an actual request for additional spectrum and transmitters, there was no further action at this time.

In May 1982 the ABC made a specific request to relay the Triple J service overnight on the Wollongong ABC transmitter, as it had done in Canberra and Newcastle since 1975. Duckmanton wrote to the department: 'I should be grateful if the Minister could be formally advised of the Commission's decision [to relay JJJ to Wollongong], and I look forward to your confirmation that there is no objection to our beginning night-time service on Thursday, July 1—the ABC's 50th birthday' (Aarons and Clark, 1982b). On July 7, having delayed making a decision until after the ABC's birthday, the Department of Communications confirmed the minister's decision to refuse the relay of Triple J to Wollongong. With the *Dix Inquiry* report now in hand, the department indicated that the 'Minister would, however, be interested to consider ABC proposals for the future of 2JJJ presented in the context of the Dix recommendations' (Aarons and Clark, 1982b). While the minister reversed his decision on the Wollongong relay in September, he emphasised that the relay did not signal 'a new network for the ABC' (Scan, 1982). The Coalition government that had initiated and seen the *Dix Inquiry* through to its conclusion was clearly in favour of a Triple J future in line with the recommendations of the inquiry and, since it controlled the ABC's access to transmitters, it would at the very least ensure the station was not networked. In 1983 two elements would open up new opportunities for Triple J: the coming to power of a federal ALP government that had been critical of the Dix Committee's recommendations relating to the ABC's youth station and the implementation of an ABC corporate planning process that would review existing and potential services.

A New Corporation: Plans for a Youth Radio Network

In its response to structural changes proposed in the *Dix Inquiry*, the Coalition government introduced new legislation that reconstituted the ABC as a corporation from July 1983. In March 1983, while the legislation was before the Senate, the Coalition lost office. The incoming ALP government oversaw the proclamation of the new Act and appointed the Corporation's first Board of Directors, headed by chairman, Ken Myer. The new Board employed Geoffrey Whitehead, previously director-general of Radio New Zealand, as the Corporation's first managing director. With a new government, a new Act, a new Board, and a new managing director on the way (Whitehead arrived in January 1984), the ABC Radio Division took the opportunity to produce a discussion paper proposing new directions for its services. The head of the Division, Keith Mackriell, presented the paper to the ABC Board in December 1983.

In reviewing the entire gamut of ABC radio services, the paper proposed the formation of a youth radio network as a response to the ABC's inability to attract and cater for younger audiences—a rationale that corresponded to the position held by the previous ABC Commission. The argument that the ABC should establish a separate radio network to cater for one segment of the population accorded with the radio division's analysis of narrowcasting tendencies within the broader radio landscape. While the division determined that the ABC should not pursue narrowcasting to the extent evident in the commercial sector, the plan was to ensure each of the ABC radio services had a distinct identity (Inglis, 2006, pp.91-92). The paper argued that 'the ABC has no lesser responsibility to the younger audience than it has for the older age group to which its programs primarily appeal' (Lucas, 1984, p.4). Furthermore, the radio division argued that a range of alternative lifestyles and value systems had emerged amongst young people, partly as a result of continuing unemployment, and these had been all but ignored by existing broadcasters, principally the commercial sector. This position reflected the more politicised notions of 'alternative' youth culture and youth radio that had informed the establishment of Double J, as discussed in chapter one, and corresponded with

some of the founding popular music policy work emerging at this time within the ALP which sought to use popular music as a mechanism for engaging with young people as social and civic actors (as discussed in Chapter Two). However, the radio division, perhaps wary of the concerns raised in the *Dix Inquiry* that the Triple J service had not attracted a sizeable youth audience and its reference to ABC research which had revealed that many young listeners were turned away by the critical stance of the station's DJs, also presented a more populist position. It argued that stations within a youth network 'should not be seen as directing their output to a particular section of the younger audience but should seek to attract a wide base of popular support with that group overall' (Lucas, 1984, p.4).

The paper pressed the Board to formulate a public policy position on the issue. Rehashing Dix, and the position adopted by the previous minister, the radio division paper made it clear that 'the decision facing the Corporation seems clear – either 2JJJ remains as a single, one-off station, or the Corporation adopts as policy the development of a network of stereo FM stations to major metropolitan and, ultimately, regional centres' (Lucas, 1984, p.4). The radio division clearly understood that previous attempts to secure agreement from Dix and the federal government on this issue had been partly undermined by the notion that it reflected a continued prioritisation of metropolitan audiences. Thus, while the division sought agreement from the Corporation that Triple J would be networked, their timeline scheduled this to take place over the period 1990-2000, and following the establishment of the SRRN and improvements to all other ABC radio services that were to be pursued during the remainder of the 1980s.

Incoming managing director Geoffrey Whitehead was supportive of the plan for a youth radio network as it reinforced his position, and the balanced programming position recommended by Dix, that 'the corporation be seen to be serving more Australians, of wider age groups and social backgrounds than had been the case in the past' (Whitehead, 1988, p.72). Whitehead was confident that a publicly funded broadcaster could reach a youth audience. As director general of Radio New Zealand in the late 1970s he had achieved ratings success with younger audiences through

that organisation's ZM stations (Whitehead, 1988, p.72). Whitehead, however, was critical of the 'pessimistic' timelines presented in the radio division paper. He also indicated that the plans would need to be more thoroughly developed during the process of creating the ABC's first corporate plan (Phillipps, 1984, p.1; Whitehead, 1988, p.61). In July 1984 the radio division held a planning conference in Sydney to do just that.

At the 1984 radio conference, convened by Mackriell and attended by 80 staff from the radio division, the plan for a youth radio network modelled on Triple J was again proposed in response to concerns that 'ABC radio should play a part in the lives of young people, for many of whom the knowledge of the ABC was restricted to 2-JJJ [as a Sydney station]' (Bennett, 1984; Davis, 1985, p.38). One option put forward was to facilitate the creation of a youth network using existing resources by having it replace the ABC-FM classical music service (Bowery et al., 1984). Leaked to the press, this option generated a deal of public outrage and resulted in both an affirmation of the public support for the ABC's Classical music service and, by emphasising that it was serious about the need to establish a youth network, helped ABC management make the case that this would best be served through the allocation of new resources to the national broadcaster.

At the ABC Board meeting that followed in August 1984, a decision was made to establish the youth network as an additional service (Whitehead, 1988, p.71; Department of Communications, 1985, p.9). This was announced to the media in September by ABC chairman Ken Myer following a three day meeting with the ABC's newly appointed executive directors. The document Myer presented to the media affirmed the Corporation's commitment to maintaining and developing ABC-FM as a fine music and cultural network and indicated that 'in principle the ABC should develop a radio service for young adults on a separate and additional FM network, subject to satisfactory cost/benefit analysis and funding' (Scan, 1984a). The radio division responded quickly to this announcement, with Triple J co-ordinator Marius Webb revealing that by November the head of Victorian ABC Radio, Peter Loxton,

had organised a staff meeting to discuss the networking of Triple J and subsequently appointed a co-ordinator to cost and plan for the station (Webb, 1984).

In July 1985, the ABC released its first corporate plan. Covering the period 1985 to 1988, it reaffirmed the ABC's support for the addition of a radio network that targeted youth. Despite the responsiveness of the radio division in seeking to develop cost estimates for a new network, the plan maintained some of the caution of Myer's statement of September 1984, indicating the 'possible introduction of a young adult FM service' (ABC, 1985b, pp.4-5). The tentative nature of the ABC's position on a youth network is a point largely overlooked in existing accounts. For instance, Inglis (2006, p.93) states that the Board endorsed a plan for Triple J to 'become as soon as possible the nucleus of a national network for young adults'. Instead, as per Mackriell's paper to the Board in December 1983, the plan pointed to more immediate priorities for the radio division, particularly the rollout of the SRRN. As it was for the Coalition government who had received the Dix Committee recommendations, the SRRN was the ALP's top priority and carried the personal endorsement of Prime Minister Bob Hawke (Whitehead, 1988, p.95). The corporate plan did shorten the timelines for reforming ABC radio from those originally outlined by Mackriell, and referred rather ambiguously to the development of 'a major initiative in Radio services for youth' during the 1986-7 planning cycle (ABC, 1985b, p.17).

While the corporate plan responded to a range of recommendations of the *Dix Inquiry*, the establishment of a youth network was a direct contradiction of Recommendation 40—a situation the ABC seemingly wished to conceal. In a document that accompanied the publication of the plan in 1985 titled *ABC Achievement and the Implementation of Dix*, summary statements for 271 of the 273 recommendations are listed sequentially with an accompanying description of the implementation actions undertaken by the ABC (ABC, 1985a). Recommendation 39 is summarised as 'commendation of 2JJJ', with an action statement that reads:

As it does with all programming the ABC continues to examine
2JJJ's programming in the light of audience responses and current

developments within the industry as a whole. JJJ may provide a model for future stations in other cities. (ABC, 1985a, p.15)

If you are not reading carefully you may overlook the fact that Recommendation 40 is actually missing⁴⁹. Since some recommendations are listed with an action that simply reads 'No action required', the document certainly presents itself as a comprehensive coverage of the recommendations; it would seem that Recommendation 40 was not overlooked on the grounds that the ABC had no actions to report.

Although it may not have acted on Recommendation 40, the national broadcaster was taking seriously the Dix Committee's assessment that it did not sufficiently engage with the Australian population in aggregate or with a number of its constituent groups, of which youth were a group specifically singled out (Whitehead, 1988, p.72). Like the Dix Committee, the ABC executive was also not entirely sure whether Triple J was an appropriate model for expanding its engagement with youth. The corporate plan made it clear that Triple J and any future ABC youth radio network would be expected to deliver a substantial youth audience—success would no longer be exclusively gauged in terms of innovative programming and audience loyalty (Whitehead, 1988, pp.71-72; Whitehead, 1986). While the audience goals of other ABC radio outlets were initially articulated in broad terms, Triple J and the proposed youth radio network were the only services given specific ratings targets—asked to deliver 'significant audience share and reach in the 18-24 age group' (Whitehead, 1988, p.71, p.94; ABC, 1985b, p.17; Scan, 1985, p.7). Considerations of market share/ratings and the deployment of specific ratings targets was an innovation for the ABC. The tendency had been to focus on audience reach figures measuring the number of people who had sampled a station's output over a week, and to consider figures for all age groups rather than disaggregating data by age (Inglis, 2006, p.69). The ratings targets to be applied to the ABC's youth services reflected Whitehead's commitment to rolling out a range of measures to

⁴⁹ The only other recommendation skipped over in the document is number 81. This asked the ABC to 'act firmly in accordance with the Government's National Employment Strategy for Aboriginals in the Australian Public Service' (Dix, 1981b). It is unclear as to why this may have been passed over.

assess the relationship of the Corporation with its audience, including those widely utilised by the commercial sector (Whitehead, 1988, pp.71-72; Andrews, 1992, p.96). They also reflected the ABC's increasing commitment to mass-appeal programming as a response to the *Dix Inquiry*⁵⁰ (Hawkins, 2001, p.183).

According to Whitehead, to achieve ratings success the youth network would need to produce 'popular, good quality programs with spoken elements as well as music carefully selected and presented in a way appealing to the lifestyle of young people' (Whitehead, 1988, p.72). He noted that moving into younger markets would increasingly bring the ABC into competition with commercial broadcasters and he expected complaints from that sector. But Whitehead rejected the idea that the ABC be limited to providing complementarity services, and suggested that by targeting youth 'all we would be doing would be to establish the market share this Board considers necessary to demonstrate the ABC's ability to attract a wide range of Australians' (Phillipps, 1984, p.3).

Whitehead also argued for a youth radio network on the grounds that without attracting youth the Corporation would find it difficult to renew its audience, an argument advanced by ABC's radio controller Arthur Wyndham during the establishment of Double J in 1974, an issue raised during the *Dix Inquiry*, and one that would remain a 'compelling sub-plot for ABC management' during this period (Davis, 1984, p.39; Debrett, 2010, p.90). Whitehead extended this argument by suggesting that attracting young people to the service would also be important for maintaining favour with future governments. Without a means of connecting with young people, Whitehead felt that 'a future generation of public servants might well emerge in Canberra sometime in the 1990s, who had never found much relevance in the ABC to their own lives . . . [and] this could well colour the advice they gave ministers about future funding options' (Whitehead, 1988, p.72). Influencing decision makers in Canberra was certainly considered important at this time, with

⁵⁰ The Dix Committee made a number of recommendations relating to the ABC's understanding of its audience engagement performance, calling for: audience research officers to be attached to each ABC state office (Recommendation 21) and the development of an alternative audience research measurement system (Recommendation 18) (Dix, 1981b).

the Corporation developing a specific advertising campaign aimed at improving its image among this group (Aarons and Clark, 1984; Scan, 1984b).

The Corporate Plan outlined a number of changes to the existing Triple J service that seemed to be in preparation for its potential role as the base for a youth radio network. The plan noted that the station's transmitter would be upgraded, and live stereo broadcasts from Brisbane, Canberra, Perth and Hobart would be introduced using the new AUSSAT satellite in which it had invested. The station, which had developed a distinctive set of structures and processes that had isolated itself from its organisational host, was to be reintegrated into the ABC, especially with regards to 'decision making and information sharing, exchange of personnel, and liaison . . . with News and Current Affairs, Broadcast Music and the Comedy Unit' (ABC corporate plan 1985-1988 reported in: Scan, 1985; Phillips, 2006, p.222).

But Whitehead was cautious about the model Triple J offered for a future youth network. In addressing the ABC Radio Managers Conference in 1986 he told his staff:

I'd like to see you give more thought in the coming 12 months to the possible introduction of a young adult network, with some provision for local 'windows' – although for financial reasons this may not be possible in the initial stages. While, quite naturally, many people turn to 2JJJ as a model, I would urge that you also take a completely fresh look at the various possibilities

(Whitehead, 1988, p.71; Whitehead, 1986).

Whitehead suggests that he considered it only prudent to consider various possibilities within the interactive corporate planning process that was occurring at this time, but concedes that although he had no issue with the Sydney Triple J model, he did feel that it may not be so welcome in other parts of Australia. He concluded that for the station to be networked some 'fine tuning' was more likely than not' (Whitehead, 2012). The process of fine-tuning is discussed in Section 3 of this chapter.

Whitehead asked the ABC Radio Division to commit to plan the youth radio network during 1986, but he was conscious that the SRRN was the prime radio development objective and a tight federal government budget was likely to impede the plans of the ABC (Whitehead, 1986). Although the ABC had not been provided with a direct commitment from the ALP federal government to develop a youth radio service at this time, as clearly noted by the Department of Communications in its 1986 report *Future Directions for Radio*, there were some positive signs emerging from within the ALP (Department of Communications, 1986a, 2.47). At the biennial ALP Conference held in July 1986 an amendment to the proposed Communications Platform introduced a resolution in support of an ABC youth radio network. It read that the ALP in 'recognising the special media needs of young Australians and the quality service the ABC has provided for young people, ensure adequate funding for the relaying of ABC radio station 2JJJ to States other than New South Wales' (ALP, 1986b, p.22; ALP, 1986c; ALP, 1986a).

While there was some indication that the government might allow a relay of the Triple J service to Melbourne by December 1986, even this was not to be (Whitehead, 1988, p.72). Indeed, declining economic conditions had led the Prime Minister to deliver an address to the nation during which he indicated that fiscal discipline would need to be accepted by all levels of government (Hawke, 1986). A tight federal budget was tabled on 19 August 1986, and a further mini-budget delivered in May 1987 also cut government expenditure (Davis, 1989b, p.83).

As a Corporation, the ABC had never really fared well in budgetary terms. The 1985-86 federal government allocation required the ABC to absorb some new capital costs (including AUSSAT and the SRRN) through a diversion of operating finances which led to programming and job cuts and contributed to a destabilisation of Corporation management and Whitehead's resignation toward the end of 1986 (Inglis, 2006, chapter 8). Federal allocations fell in this year and again in 1987-8, the first budget after Whitehead's departure. In 1988, the Minister for Transport and Communications, Gareth Evans, confirmed that the absence of new policy approvals for the ABC during this period had been a function of the pressure which had been

applied universally to government departments and agencies during this period (Evans, 1988b, p.14).

While finding federal government support for the development of a youth network was still proving difficult, the ABC's resolve remained firm under new managing director, and former ABC chairman, David Hill. Appointed in September 1986 and remaining in the role until November 1994, Hill oversaw an aggressive restructuring of the organisation (Inglis, 2006, chapter 10, chapter 23). He accelerated, and according to some overemphasised, the ABC's engagement in mass-appeal programming in a bid to increase audiences as had been advocated by Dix and initiated by Whitehead (Hawkins, 2001, p.182; Inglis, 2006, Dix - chapters 6-7; Hill - chapters 13-14; Craik and Davis, 1995). In this context Hill was emphatic that Triple J be transformed into a youth radio network (Albury, 1999, p.56).

In the first five years of the Corporation the prospect of an ABC youth radio network had certainly improved. The Corporation had ignored recommendations from the Dix Committee that it reorient its existing Sydney-based youth station to fulfil a broader experimental remit and to focus on enhancing the ABC's ability to attract a youth audience by formalising youth advisory and consultative mechanisms. The Corporation publicly documented what were the rather muted opinions of the previous ABC Commission that the national broadcaster should establish a dedicated radio network to service youth on the FM dial, and built a rationale for a popularly programmed service that would attract a significant share of the youth audience in order for the Corporation to meet its obligation to deliver comprehensive services and facilitate audience renewal. But, given its priority of expanding rural broadcasting services (a situation clearly favoured by the federal government), the ABC was rather cautious about detailing what a youth network might look like and when it might appear.

During this period the federal government had made no public commitment to an ABC youth network, although the ALP had passed a resolution that favoured its development. In part, this was because the government had tightened the ABC

budget, leaving little room for new capital outlays. But a youth radio network would not only be a major federal government resource commitment, it would also be a political one. When Double J was formed in the mid-1970s the government had to deal with a powerful commercial broadcasting lobby upset by the additional competition, especially in what was traditionally a commercial demographic. An ABC youth radio network was likely to generate even greater backlash. It was not until 1988, under the ministerial leadership of Senator Gareth Evans, that the federal government found a way to overcome the resourcing and political impediments to the development of an ABC youth radio network, and was motivated to do so by identifying its own set of objectives for such a network.

Section 2: The Federal Government Provides a Space for an ABC Youth Radio Network

In August 1988, the Minister for Transport and Communications, Senator Gareth Evans, announced that as part of the NRP the federal government would provide the necessary FM frequencies for the ABC 'to progressively develop an ABC Youth Radio Network based on station 2JJJ-FM in Sydney' (Evans, 1988g, p.1). Evans described 2JJJ as: 'primarily a music station which places special emphasis on providing a flexible and innovative contemporary music program and promoting new and local talent', while also providing 'an independent, youth-oriented news and current affairs service' (Evans, 1988g, p.1). The government would initially clear and allocate frequencies in the mainland state capitals, with a commitment to consider later approaches by the ABC to extend the network into regional Australia (Evans, 1988g, pp.1-2). Evans recognised that the plan to establish an ABC youth network had been in development for some time and 'it was only a matter of the Government and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) between them finding a way of implementing it' (Evans, 1988a). Of course, the ABC had long indicated a preparedness to create the new network and it was really the lack of commitment from successive federal governments that had delayed the rollout. Under Evans' ministerial direction the government found ways of overcoming the financial and political hurdles that hampered the moves of its predecessors.

During his term as Minister for Transport and Communications, Evans took a strong interest in ABC affairs. Almost immediately after being appointed in July 1987 he began a review of national broadcasting policy, releasing a volume of information and policy discussion papers that sought to stimulate debate about the objectives of national broadcasting services in February 1988 (Inglis, 2006, pp.155-156; DOTC, 1988; Evans, 1988b). He also pushed the ABC in more pragmatic ways 'to focus more effectively on its managerial shortcomings', particularly in light of what looked like ongoing federal budget constraint (Fell, 1988, p.6; DOTC, 1988; Evans, 1988b). While Hill and the ABC were less than welcoming of the advice, they did take it. In September 1987, Hill established a 'futures taskforce' to conduct a resources review (Inglis, 2006, p.168).

The resources review required the head of each ABC division to 'come up with plans for increasing both output and audiences while living on lean rations' (Inglis, 2006, p.168). A range of actions across TV, radio and infrastructure were presented when the review was finalised on 25 May 1988 and included the extension of Triple J 'from Sydney first to Melbourne and then beyond, to become a youth network' (Inglis, 2006, p.168; ABC, 1988, pp.5-6). To pay for these developments without an increase in funding, the ABC planned to rationalise, centralise and subcontract a range of programming, borrow against the sale of properties and, fundamentally, shed staff. Following the review, the ABC took its Triple J plan to the ALP caucus policy committee, indicating that it could fund a AUD\$2 million expansion over a number of years (ALP, 1988d, p.413). The prospect of a budget neutral Triple J expansion was clearly persuasive, with Evans taking the time to point out in his media release that announced the network that 'the ABC has wanted to develop a Youth Network for some time and, in its recent Resources Review, has indicated that it could finance the establishment of the network from within its existing resources if appropriate frequencies could be made available' (Evans, 1988g, p.1).

It was technically straightforward to make the required FM frequencies available for a new ABC network⁵¹ but, given that the metropolitan commercial radio sector had consistently lobbied for increased access to the FM band, it was a politically sensitive issue that had the potential to generate substantial backlash. Evans found a way to diminish this prospect by incorporating the development of an ABC youth radio network into a broader restructure of metropolitan radio services that provided new opportunities for all three broadcast sectors (Evans, 1988d, p.1; Evans, 1988f, p.2). This was certainly a political strategy appreciated by the ABC. Marius Webb, who had remained almost constantly involved in Double J/Triple J operations since its founding in 1975, and was appointed the Triple J Network Manager, explained that:

Gareth did a terrific job. He resolved a whole lot of political things that had been hanging there. I guess while you are in the Ministerial seat you're always very careful about resolving those difficult problems because of the flak that is likely to fly. Gareth . . . came up with a workable plan that provided the best political solution (Communications Update, 1990b, p.8).

The pursuit of metropolitan radio expansion through the NRP was itself made politically palatable since the government had by 1988 already facilitated an expansion of both commercial and National broadcasting services in regional Australia, the importance of which was highlighted by the Prime Minister in his 1987 election policy statement (Hawke, 1987, pp.33-34). In terms of radio, this included the ABC's SRRN and the programmed release of regional commercial FM licences, which Hawke noted was the 'largest expansion of commercial radio since the Second World War'⁵² (ABC, 1988, p.46; Brown, 1989, p.473; Duffy, 1987; Hawke, 1987, p.34).

⁵¹ Although it did require the relocation of television channels assigned to the FM VHF Band II to other parts of the spectrum and this did take some time to arrange (Evans, 1988e; Commonwealth of Australia, 1989).

⁵² Even then, the federal opposition pointed to the creation of the youth network as an example of continuing prioritisation of metropolitan communities (Blunt, 1988).

The main feature of the NRP in which Triple J's networking was incorporated was the release of additional metropolitan FM spectrum for commercial radio. Initially, two existing AM stations in each mainland capital would be able convert to FM where the incumbents, who had been licensed eight years earlier, had established themselves as the dominant force in commercial broadcasting (see Chapter Two). Stage two of this plan would encompass the release of two additional commercial FM licences in each of these markets. Had the FM ABC youth radio network been introduced without an expansion of commercial FM offerings the new ABC service would have been one of only two or three metropolitan FM services taking advantage of the quality advantages offered by this band for the presentation of contemporary music. The previously dominant AM music stations claimed that the advantage of FM had drawn their audiences away and they lobbied hard through the mid-1980s for the ability to shift bands. The introduction of a new FM competitor operated by the ABC without the provision of commensurate opportunities for the AM commercial music stations to join the FM band would not have been well received.

The reforms to commercial broadcasting proposed by the NRP, including the planned introduction of additional services and changes to the way in which new licences were to be allocated, also diverted the attention of commercial broadcasters away from the development of the ABC youth network. Indeed, the commercial radio sector was unusually quiet about the ABC's new network. It was left to the Hon. Alexander Downer to raise concerns that the proposed Triple J network would compete with commercial stations. Drawing on an example from his home state as part of his contribution to the House of Representatives debate on the National Metropolitan Radio Plan (NRP) Bill, Downer suggested that 'the market that JJJFM would wish to carve out for itself in South Australia is a very similar market to that which at the moment is held by SAFM' (Downer, 1988). Downer argued that like the BBC's *Radio One* pop station, the Triple J network would compete directly with commercial services and not provide a 'unique . . . culturally superior service to what the market might naturally provide' (Downer, 1988). This

call to complementarity played off a broader debate occurring at this time regarding David Hill's push to make the ABC more popular—with the federal opposition directly making the case that the Triple J Network was an initiative driven by the ABC's 'chase for ratings' (Lewis, 1988a). But Downer's argument was not pursued beyond the parliament. In fact, some major commercial radio operators publicly highlighted that the Triple J network would diversify the radio landscape, arguing that its introduction meant issuing new commercial licences under the NRP would not be in the public interest (Light, 1988). At least with regards to commercial radio offerings, the government confidently promoted the development of the Triple J network as an initiative that diversified broadcast offerings.

Indeed, quite apart from establishing conditions that were conducive for the ABC to realise its goals through the establishment of a youth radio network, the federal government also identified and articulated how the development of such a network would meet its own distinct objectives related to broadcasting diversity and, in particular, the development of the local popular music industry. The manner through which these objectives became tied to youth radio was established in Chapter Two. Of course, as noted by Davis (1990, p.357), ALP media policy during this period was driven by the imperatives of electoral politics as well as governance and, while my focus is clearly on the latter, I certainly acknowledge that there is evidence that the government had considered the political gains that might be made by establishing a youth radio network, as Webb argues the ALP had when prompting the formation of Double J in the 1970s (ABC Triple J, 2005a).

The ABC directly sought to leverage the political advantages of the youth network, with Inglis (2006, p.204) indicating that 'as the 1990 election approached, the minister, Ralph Willis, responded cordially to counsel from Malcolm Long [ABC Director of Radio] that action on the project [of networking Triple J] would be popular among young voters'. The ALP government's interest in the network as a vote-winner did not abate once the major metropolitan areas were covered (Walsh, 1995). According to Stuart Matchett, who was Triple J Program Director from the establishment of the network and through the 1990s, when new services were

launched in regional areas, the ALP was emphatic that it be represented, even to the point of suggesting that the rollout schedule be amended accommodate such representation (Matchett, 2011).

Broadcasting Diversity

The government recognised that the introduction of a youth radio network would diversify the ABC's broadcast offerings, with Evans indicating that he was satisfied that the ABC would now be able to offer a mix of radio services that included 'up-market music FM [and] down-market youth FM' (Fell, 1988, p.6). But, in accordance with its commitment to deregulation, that emphasised structural rather than direct programming intervention (discussed in Chapter Two), the government also realised that the development of such a network would contribute to meeting its policy objective (and an enduring objective of Australian broadcast regulation), of ensuring programming diversity across the entire broadcasting landscape.

Maximising 'diversity of choice in radio and television services' was one of two central aims that the Hawke ALP government had 'consistently pursued in its broadcasting policy'; the other being to limit concentration of media ownership and control (Kerin, 1988; see ALP communication policy platform - ALP, 1988a). It was 'through a significant expansion of existing services and through the introduction of new, competitive services' that these objectives were pursued (Kerin, 1988). The NRP was one such initiative, with Evans foregrounding in his media announcement that it had been designed to provide 'greater diversity of radio services to people in mainland capital cities' (Evans, 1988f, p.2).

The case that a youth radio network would diversify radio services emerged from an analysis of changes to commercial music radio formats over the 1980s which came to be expressed in terms of radio's abandonment of youth as argued in Chapter Two. However, it is important to note that when Evans committed the government to facilitating the Triple J network in August 1988, changes to commercial music radio formats had been clearly identified but the argument that these translated into a gap in youth service provision was in its infancy. In fact, the development of

an ABC youth radio network further contributed to this translation (A point the ABC itself reinforced: ABC, 1989, p.5). So it was that Evans argued that the Triple J network was to be developed in order for the government to meet its broadcasting diversity objective by providing programming elements that had become absent from Australian radio and indirectly implied rather than explicitly stated that youth were underserved. Evans told the federal parliament:

The theme of JJJ is, of course, rather unique although it overlaps in a number of ways with, at face value, the kinds of services that are provided by other broadcasters. The concept is one that focuses on innovative, contemporary music, promoting, in particular, new local talent as well as mixing it up in a way that is quite unusual with independent youth oriented, news and current affairs services. What we have is a distinctive mixture of broadcasting which, we believe, will supplement rather than undercut or undermine the kinds of broadcasting services that are delivered by other people in other ways (Evans, 1988a).

This position was also supported during the passage of the NRP Bill through parliament by the Australian Democrats, with Senator Janet Powell drawing out the distinction between Triple J and its commercial counterparts—a point discussed with regards to popular music policy below (Powell, 1988).

There were some concerns expressed in the parliament and beyond that the new network would compete with, and adversely affect, some community broadcasters. Liberal Party Senator Austin Lewis revealed during the parliamentary debate that he had received complaints from a number of community broadcasters about the lack of consultation regarding the Triple J extension and expressed his concern that ‘the extension of the ABC's youth network could destroy the viability of certain public broadcasters’ (Lewis, 1988a). Lewis detailed the argument of Adelaide community broadcaster 5MMM who claimed that the Triple J service would duplicate a service already provided in most capital cities by relatively self-sufficient community radio stations. Lewis asked if the ‘Government [was] intending to allow JJJ to go into

competition with MMM⁵³ in Adelaide?', and more broadly questioned whether the ABC's Triple J was to 'compete with public [community] broadcasters who are already providing a service to the youth in our capital cities' (Lewis, 1988a; Lewis, 1988b). In response, the Hon. Ralph Willis, who had taken over the Transport and Communications ministry from Evans, argued that in Sydney the service already comfortably coexisted with community broadcasters that have a 'rock music base' and 5MMM had been the only station that had complained despite a number of community stations targeting a similar audience (Willis, 1988a). Although the issue dissipated when Triple J was networked with a significantly different programming approach to that of its Sydney-based origins (as discussed in the next section of this chapter), tensions between the Triple J and community broadcasters would at times re-emerge, as will be explored in Chapter Six.

Popular Music Policy

While the government included the national youth radio network in its plan for a diversified radio landscape, its primary objective for establishing the network, as identified by the minister, was to support the local popular music industry. This was an industry the ALP government had targeted for assistance through a range of policies as discussed in Chapter Two. Indeed, the overall media statement released by Evans to announce the NRP indicated that one of the 'problems and issues addressed by the Plan' is 'the need, in association with other recent moves to support the contemporary popular music industry, to respond to the long-standing claim by the ABC for an extension beyond Sydney of its 2JJJ youth station' (Evans, 1988d, p.1, p.2). The accompanying media statement titled *National Plan for the Development of Metropolitan Radio Services: Way Clear for Establishment of ABC Youth Network* was specific about the popular music support provided by government and the role it expected the Triple J network to play:

⁵³ The callsign MMM that was held by a community broadcaster in South Australia at this time was later transferred to a commercial service owned by Austereo. The community station was renamed 3D Radio.

The announcement that frequencies would be made available for the JJJ Network is the second recent Hawke Government initiative for the development and promotion of contemporary popular music.

The first was the creation of the Australian Contemporary Popular Music Development Company [AUSMUSIC] announced by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, John Dawkins, on 27 June.

The two initiatives complement one another, as the Youth Network will provide an outlet for the skills and products developed under the auspices of the new company.

The Government hopes and expects that both the Youth Network and the Company will work in tandem to boost the exposure and sales of contemporary, locally produced music within Australia and on the export market (Evans, 1988g, p.2).

Evans was likely to have been well informed about the relationship between Triple J and popular music policy by his ministerial advisor, Peter Wilenski. Dr Wilenski had been involved in the establishment of Double J while an advisor to Whitlam and a contributor to youth policy that formed the basis of early popular music policy engagement by the ALP (Fell, 1988, p.6; Davis, 1984, p.38; Breen, 1999, p.14, p.19). In the lead-up to his August 1988 NRP announcement, Evans was also directly engaged in public discussions linking the expansion of Triple J to popular music policy developments. At the biennial ALP Conference, held in June, this discussion, driven by Senator Chris Schacht, with support from Peter Steedman (a key player in the development of popular music policy and AUSMUSIC's first Executive Director), involved the reinstatement of the ALP's 1986 Resolution in support of a Triple J network which had been removed from the draft 1988 ALP Communications Platform (ALP, 1988d, pp.412-415).

Schacht argued that since Triple J had been successful in promoting 'Australian composition and Australian musicianship amongst young people . . . it should be

expanded to be available around Australia' (ALP, 1988d, p.413). He presented a detailed case for the development of the Triple J network to Evans and the conference delegates pointing to the government's recent investment in the popular music industry, and the inability of commercial radio regulation to ensure support from that sector. He noted:

. . . [An] advantage of this proposal is that recently the government has established a contemporary music corporation in Australia which is aimed to promote and assist young people in being producers, performers, composers, lyricists, in contemporary Australian music . . .

I think it's all very well to encourage the young musicians to produce their music and their songs etcetera, but if they've got no place to play it, it's not much use. Having a network like 2 triple J spread round Australia, there will be an excellent opportunity for that music to be given time on air which it normally wouldn't get.

Unfortunately, many commercial radio-stations in Australia do not give new emerging Australian musicians in the contemporary area adequate time, even though they've got to meet Australian content rules. They keep playing songs or music from Australia that's already been proven to be popular. It becomes a bit of a vicious circle (ALP, 1988d, p.414).

Steedman also commended the resolution to the conference, reminding Evans that the network would 'greatly assist in supporting the Prime Minister's election policy speech at his last election where he said he would establish such a company [AUSMUSIC] to assist young people'; a development that had been approved by Caucus (ALP, 1988d, pp.414-415). Evans agreed with Schacht and Steedman and the 1986 resolution was reinstated as resolution 22 (ALP, 1988c, p.19), while a similar resolution was also passed as part of the Youth Platform (ALP, 1988b, p.381; ALP, 1988c, p.231).

Subsequently, as the Broadcasting (National Metropolitan Radio Plan) Bill moved through both the House of Representatives on November 2 and the Senate on November 22 (Bill Second Readings) the link between Triple J and the government's investment in popular music policy was reinforced (Kerin, 1988; Richardson, 1988). It was not just the government that made the case for a Triple J network on these grounds in the parliament. In supporting the Bill in the Senate, Australian Democrats Senator Janet Powell drew attention to the role Triple J had played in 'breaking new ground and boosting the development of the Australian music industry', while also suggesting that Triple J, and by extension the new Triple J network would overcome shortcomings of the commercial radio sector of the type highlighted in chapter two. Triple J she noted, 'stands out in very stark contrast to the bland offerings of the formats of so many of the commercial networks which never seem to expand their horizons and encourage innovation, particularly innovation from the Australian music industry' (Powell, 1988). In the Senate, Evans, in part responding to criticism that the new network might undermine the impact of community broadcasters on local music development provided a nice overview of the government's intentions for Triple J:

A lot of the existing public stations or commercial stations, more particularly the public ones, have targeted local bands. But they do not have the same capacity that JJJ will to give national prominence, identity and momentum to new bands and music groups coming onto the scene which deserve that kind of exposure. This is where JJJ has been so successful in this industry in the past. So JJJ will, by virtue of going national, give a significant boost, we believe, to the contemporary music scene which is not only culturally important to the younger generation but also commercially and economically very important, as we have seen when things really do take off (Evans, 1988c).

The diversification and popular music policy objectives that underpinned the federal government's commitment to establishing an ABC youth radio network, like the

ABC's own objective that such a network deliver a substantial share of the youth audience in order to meet its comprehensive service obligation and to facilitate audience renewal, influenced the articulation of youth radio that emerged as Sydney's Triple J became the Triple J network. This transformation was more than geographic since the counter-cultural position that underpinned the design of the Sydney service in the mid-1970s as a counterpoint to Top 40 radio and commercial youth culture and which largely continued to inform its operation, was incompatible with both the ABC's desire to attract a substantial youth audience and the government's push for the network to meet diversity and music industry objectives in the context of the demise of commercial Top 40 youth radio. The final section of this chapter describes the process through which Sydney station was transformed into the Triple J network and explores tensions between the counter-cultural position of many existing staff and the station's Sydney audience and the more populist position invoked by ABC management that boiled over as the *Free the Jays* campaign in 1990. I argue that the Triple J network that emerged in the early 1990s was a hybrid form that combined the popular and the counter-cultural.

Section 3: The Triple J Network as New Articulation of ABC Youth Radio

It took some 12 months from the time the Triple J network was announced by Evans for the Department to provide final approval for the first spectrum allocations (ABC, 1990, p.14). The rollout was then further delayed as a result of a lack of available transmitters, with the government holding firm against the ABC's desire to transfer some of the transmitters earmarked for the SRRN to facilitate the more immediate development of the network (Commonwealth of Australia, 1989). The Triple J network finally came into being on 22 October 1989 when the new Melbourne transmitter was switched on (ABC, 1990, p.14). This was followed by Perth on 29 October. During 1990 the rollout of Triple J to the major metropolitan centres was completed with transmitters switched on in Adelaide (25 February), Darwin (30 March), Hobart (27 May), Newcastle (1 July), Canberra, (1 August) and Brisbane (26 November) (ABC, 1991, p.37). The introduction of Triple J into regional Australia began in 1995, following the ALP's 1993 election commitment to extend the

network to 44 regional centres. The initial regional rollout was complete by 1996, with additional regional expansion following (Commonwealth of Australia, 1993; ABC, 1993, p.38; ABC, 1997, p.35; McMullan, 1995; ABC, 2006, p.70).

In the gestation period between Evans' announcement and the rollout of the network, the ABC overhauled the management structure of Triple J, creating a model that resembled a commercial station (Davis, 1989a). The dual-coordinator system that had been in place since 1975 was replaced by a single station manager, a role to which Andy Nehl was appointed. The station appointed its first executive producers for general programming, Malcolm Duxbury, and music and presentation, Stuart Matchett (Davis, 1989a). Marius Webb, one of Double J's two founding station coordinators, was employed as project director to oversee the development of the network.

Despite significant pressure to attract larger audiences under the ABC leadership of Whitehead and Hill during the 1980s, the Triple J service that the new management team inherited had not strayed too far from the counter-cultural position that Webb had helped formulate in the mid-1970s (Andrews, 1992, p.97). It remained committed to servicing a select audience that had been marginalised by Top 40 commercial radio, an audience, explains Turner (1993, p.151), that 'would not have been seen dead buying a charting single, saw rock music as an ethical and political force rather than a medium of entertainment, and wanted a radio station which catered for a range of specialized but related tastes'. According to Chris Winter, who was one of Triple J's two coordinators through most of the 1980s, this meant the station was not 'as comfortable to listen to as the commercial stations' but strived to strike a balance between having enough listeners to make it worthwhile for the station and for taxpayers but 'not to totally bland out' (Calluy, 1986a, p.10). At times tensions rose with regards to the balancing point but, since most programming decisions were devolved to individual announcers and they simply ignored central directives, this tended to play-out as interpersonal conflict rather than generating broad changes to station programming (Phillips, 2006, p.222; Albury, 1999, p.58; Anthony, 1998, pp.63-64).

Andrews (1992, pp.96-97) suggests that most Triple J staff believed that networking the station would simply expand the geographic area over which its existing alternative music, news and information programming would be disseminated, thereby providing an even 'greater opportunity to 'educate and broaden people's perspective on life''. But the new management were less sure that this type of programming would meet the objectives the ABC had identified for the network, particularly since it was now the 'chart-watching teenager' that was perceived to be the marginalised youth audience (Turner, 1993, p.151). As such, they undertook a general review of the station to 'to determine policy to capture target audiences and to steer the station towards becoming a national broadcaster' (Davis, 1989a). Nehl explained that this assessment included the 'music the station plays; attitudes the station has in its talk on air, not just content, but actual attitude and presentation and looking [at] how the station is marketed and how it is promoted and the kind of image it is promoting' (Davis, 1989a).

The review revealed that the existing format of the station was failing to reach 'some of the segments of the market' management thought it should be addressing and Nehl noted that it was no longer 'in touch' with youth (Davis, 1989a). The station had twice as many male listeners as it had female, four times as many listeners from Sydney's more affluent inner eastern suburbs than the more working class western suburbs, and few listeners under 18 years of age (Davis, 1989a; Albury, 1999, p.56). These findings supported the argument increasingly circulated by commentators inside and outside the ABC that Triple J 'had become elitist' with an audience characterised as a '24-year-old inner-city male, tertiary educated and wearing black' (Albury, 1999, p.56).

There was certainly a perception amongst some in the music recording industry that Triple J programming had been 'running too wild' and was at times 'too far out and unlistenable', resulting in a diminished listenership and impeding the ability of the station to promote new Australian music (McClymont, 1989; Tulich, 1995). In fact, one of the controversial findings of the review challenged the widely held belief that Triple J was structured to support local music. Unlike commercial radio, Triple J is not

required to meet a local music content quota and thereby did not need to deploy a system to record local content levels. Because programming was decentralised, developing and administering such a system was relatively difficult and it was only through the substantial effort invested in an on-air monitoring-based assessment conducted during the review that management was able to establish that 'in various shifts Triple J was not getting anywhere near' the 20 per cent quota that applied to commercial stations (Anthony, 1998, p.64; Matchett, 2011).

Triple J's management were aware that support for the local music industry was an important objective of federal government investment in the network (Matchett, 2011). Webb was also reminded of this during the network planning process when he received a visit from the ABT's Ed Jonker, the author of some of the key government reports that had joined up discussions of popular music policy, local content and youth radio. Jonker's file notes from the meeting with Webb indicate he discussed 'the proposition that, given the present AM/FM position and the lack of competition in the FM band there was a great opportunity for the JJJ network to win significant shares of the 10-17 and 18-24 demographic groups in all capital cities, with some attention to formatting'⁵⁴ (ABT, 1989, Attachment 2).

In light of the review, the ABC was determined that Triple J be remodelled during its transformation from station to network. In terms of the target audience, Nehl made it clear that the station would be paying 'a bit more attention to providing programming and doing things for the younger end of the audience' and the ABC Board concurred, noting in its 1989 annual report that the bottom end of Triple J's target age range had been revised down from 18 to 15 years (Davis, 1989a; ABC, 1989, p.5). The Board indicated that Triple J would address this younger audience in a manner that compensated for the demise of the commercial Top 40 format. It would not only fill 'a gap in ABC radio services' but also diversify the broader radio landscape by 'reaching an audience . . . increasingly being abandoned by commercial radio services' (ABC, 1989, p.5).

⁵⁴ Although he suggested implementing a system of genre-based block programming rather than the development of a continuous music station format.

Unsurprisingly, the suggestion that Triple J speak to a younger audience previously addressed by commercial radio was resisted by the existing Triple J staff. Even within the new management team it seemed that Webb was one of the 'ageing pioneers' of Triple J that Inglis (2006, p.335) argued had sought to sustain the station's traditions. Webb could not seem to adapt to the need to adjust the station's focus and, despite admitting that the position might be construed as elitist, he continued to insist that the target audience be defined as 'intelligent youth' (Communications Update, 1990b, pp.8-9). In terms of programming, Webb suggested that although 'critics from the music industry side of the equation would like [Triple J] to play more teeny bopper stuff, more Kylie Minogue and Jason Donovan, because commercial radio as a whole has deserted that teeny bopper market, [Triple J was] never a teeny bopper station' and would have a 'fundamental difficulty' in deploying such programming because of its 'commitment to a wide and varied play list, as opposed to the narrow formats of commercial stations' (Communications Update, 1990b, pp.8-9).

Despite Webb's position, as management sought to gain some control over Triple J's programming by instituting a centralised playlist, they did introduce more mainstream popular music to address a general youth audience (Elder, 1995; Matchett, 2011). However, the playlist was as much influenced by the station's alternative past as it was a more mainstream future. It was anything but a return to the narrow musical offerings and very high repetition of commercial Top 40. Instead, Triple J music programming was redesigned to cover a 'wider territory' generating a hybrid playlist that incorporated 'neglected but still Top 40 teen acts (such as Kylie Minogue, for instance) and alternative, particularly Australian, bands whose material is simply not commercial enough for other FM stations' (Miller et al., 1993, p.164). Genres were not divided into programming blocks, as was common with community radio and had tended to occur when individual announcers had programming control at Triple J, but instead blended within the playlist so as 'independent rock, rap, dance, metal and house tracks [were] played one after the other', in a manner that has been referred to as 'indie Top 40' (Potts, 1992, p.66;

Ackland, 1993; Milesago, 2002). New music and Australian music featured heavily and there was a strong argument that through the more controlled exposure and repetition made possible by a centralised playlist the impact on the local music industry would be greater (Chamberlain and Jurman, 1990).

Generating a centralised and revised program strategy and method was only the first hurdle faced by the new management. Given the station's history of taking a more deliberative approach to programming decisions, the results of which were often not comprehensively implemented due to the control individual announcers had over what they put to air, rolling it out would prove incredibly difficult.

Announcer Tony Biggs complained that at a station where there was once no playlist, disc jockeys were suddenly restricted to playing one or two songs of their choice each hour and he feared centralised 'total programming' (Jurman, 1990). Biggs was one of a number of announcers that just wouldn't 'follow directions' with regards to the new programming (Chamberlain and Jurman, 1990; see also Creswell, 1990, p.11; Dempsey, 1990; Matchett, 2011). Indeed, tensions between the on-air staff and Triple J's management would escalate during the network's first year and were only resolved after a number of existing staff were replaced. The process through which this settlement was reached is worthy of some attention, both because it generated what is regarded to be Australia's largest public protest over radio programming and popular music, and because existing explanations of it are inadequate (Chamberlain and Jurman, 1990; Walker, 2012, p.33).

Free the Jays

In late 1989, as part of the first networking phase, and in accordance with broader ABC policy, all Triple J staff positions were spilled and staff asked to reapply for their positions (Chamberlain and Jurman, 1990; Albury, 1999, p.56). The re-appointment process took more than six months and made the concurrent resistance of on-air staff to programming changes a pertinent factor in management decisions. In May 1990, the conflict over Triple J's programming reached a crescendo as a result of a decision taken by management to remove the NWA track *Fuck tha Police* from the

playlist and issue a directive to staff that the network would be giving the track 'a rest' (Simpson and Hughes, 1990; Chamberlain and Jurman, 1990; N.W.A., 1988). Triple J had started playing the song in 1989, one of few stations in the world to do so, and it was five months before the ABC received complaints from a South Australia parliamentarian and the West Australian police force and it was removed from the playlist; a move that generated staff claims of censorship (Clark, 1990; Simpson and Hughes, 1990; Jamrozik, 1990; ABC Triple J, 2005b). Triple J's Nick Franklin defied the directive by incorporating parts of the song into a documentary on bad language and was subsequently suspended from duty. This sparked nine days of industrial action, including an announcer walk-out, and the broadcast of another NWA song *Express Yourself* on continuous loop for 24 hours (Chamberlain and Jurman, 1990; Jamrozik, 1990; ABC Triple J, 2005b).

Some commentators, such as Tracee Hutchinson (2013) (one of the announcers that went on strike and chose to resign over the issue), have suggested that the *Fuck tha Police* incident directly resulted in a number of announcers losing their jobs. While the event undoubtedly influenced management in its decision against re-hiring some announcers as part of the restructuring process, this played out some months later and was part of ongoing issues around staff compliance with programming directions that sought to ensure the station addressed the 15 to 24 year old target audience (Jurman, 1990; Creswell, 1990, p.11). It was not until Friday 24 August 1990, four months after the *Fuck Tha' Police* incident that management completed the staff restructure replacing 3 permanent and 2 freelance announcers (Jurman, 1990).

There was a passionate public response to the restructure. A *Free the Jays* group formed and organised a rally outside the Triple J offices on Tuesday 28 August, with the 400 strong crowd storming the Kings Cross studios, and taking over a program for 20 minutes to voice their concerns (Chamberlain, 1990; Chamberlain and Jurman, 1990). On 10 September they organised a second rally, this time attracting more than three thousand people to the Sydney Town Hall (Walker, 2012, p.33). While the group denounced the manner in which the announcers were sacked, the

dominant issue was changes to the station's programming. Incorporating more popular music into the station's alternative music mix offended the sensibilities of listeners who insisted that 'JJJ has to be an alternative, it has to be radical' (Chamberlain and Jurman, 1990). The call for the station to play a counter-cultural role remained fundamental for a segment of the listenership. This is neatly illustrated, in a letter to the editor published in *Rolling Stone Australia* in November 1990, that in language not dissimilar to Rosenbloom's 1976 description of the station as a 'deconditioning agent', referred to the station as 'the most effective agent we have for focusing the energy of dissent within the community' (Crelley, 1990, p.7). Protesters were also aggrieved by the loss of localism resulting from networking the station, and in particular the reduced support available for the local music scene (Holmes, 1993, p.53; Walker, 2012, p.34).

In response to the rally, Triple J staff held a meeting and endorsed a motion of no-confidence in Nehl, threatening to strike if he was not removed (Casimir, 1990). Nehl remained in place and scrutiny of his role in the changes occurring at Triple J diminished, at least publicly, since ex-commercial radio manager, Barry Chapman, who had taken up the position as Triple J network manager on the Monday following the staff restructure, proved a much better target (Albury, 1999, p.56; Kruger, 2002). Chapman, who had been program director at Top 40 stalwart 2SM during its heyday in the late 1970s—the very station Double J was designed as a counterpoint to—arrived at Triple J with the right mix of bluff and bluster to personify all that was going wrong at the network for the aggrieved (Milesago, 2002).

It became common for media commentators to revise the timeline of the restructure so as to characterise Chapman as its mastermind. For instance, Chamberlain and Jurman (1990) reported that 'Chapman has big plans. He wants to attract more women to JJJ, which has about twice as many male listeners, and more people in the target 15-24 age group, almost ignored by other stations', plans that look remarkably like those that had been formulated through the station review conducted more than a year before his arrival. With the passing of time Chapman

was even made responsible for the staff restructure, with Zuel (2000) explaining that Triple J lost its radical edge when 'former commercial radio boss Barry Chapman, came in to "organise" the notoriously loose station. In came playlists and programming, new announcers and homogeneity; out went announcer-driven song selection, the unexpected and the idiosyncratic'. Such confusion has also crept into the academic literature with Griffen-Foley (2006, p.141) completely inverting the narrative to suggest that in the process of networking Triple J 'a new general manager was recruited from the ranks of [commercial FM station] Triple M, senior staff were sacked, and the station set out to target 15-24-year-olds'.

In time the protests died off, with some loyal listeners, like Anderson (1991) who penned an obituary for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, accepting the death of 'our station'. While some of those that had managed to move on from Triple J busied themselves establishing FBi as an aspirant youth community station that was permanently licensed in 2001, Chapman and the Triple J team went about relaunching the network in July 1991 with a new branding campaign to change the lingering perception held by school-aged young people that Triple J was for 'lefties, weirdos and dropouts' (Fairchild, 2012, p.116; Watson, 1991b; Matchett, 2011). Within a year the network achieved its highest ratings in Sydney since its inception, attracted more than one million listeners nation-wide, and won favour with the ABC managing director and executive team (Watson, 1992; Holmes, 1992).

Despite the network's growth it remained subject to criticism that the hybrid pop-alternative programming strategy it deployed in an attempt to broaden its audience to include school aged young people had both alienated existing post-school listeners and failed to impress the new audience it chased (Wark, 1990, p.6). This criticism was not only levelled by those that bemoaned the loss of Sydney's Triple J. For instance, aspirant youth community broadcaster HITZ FM argued in 1993 that 'Triple J—designed to target young people—fail[ed] to attract that market due to excessive alternative music content' (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 1993c, p.15). In 1994 AUSMUSIC also argued that Triple J 'plays a greater range and volume of new music but it also programs for a rather older audience . . . and remains more

committed to alternative music than to mainstream pop' (Counihan, 1994, p.2). In 1995, former Triple J manager Stuart Matchett admitted that, although the audience target was 15-30 year olds the network put a specific emphasis on those aged over 20 (Sternberg, 1998, fn7). Certainly these arguments played into the policy discourse that continued to express concerns about the relationship between radio and youth even after the networking of Triple J was well advanced in the 1990s.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined how the ABC's Triple J youth radio network emerged in the late 1980s as a substantially new articulation of the relationship between Australian radio and youth. I argued that the ABC supported the development of the network in order to overcome a general deficiency with regards to its engagement with youth. While some scholars have pointed to the important role the Dix committee inquiry of the early 1980s played in Triple J's formation by identifying this deficiency, I have clarified the limits of the committee's impact, revealing how the committee specifically argued against the formation of a youth radio network modelled on the existing Triple J Sydney station as a means of addressing the youth issue. It was only through the corporate planning process conducted in the mid-1980s that a commitment to forming a youth radio network to attract young people was made explicit by the ABC. Even then, the ABC remained cautious about the Triple J model and still had to wait for the federal government to commit resources to the project.

Faced with lean economic times and a commercial radio sector that might prove hostile to the idea of an ABC youth radio network the federal government took its time clarifying its position. Although a youth radio network was well aligned with the government's commitment to youth welfare support, it was the government's concern to increase broadcasting diversity in light of the demise of Top 40 commercial youth radio and support the local popular music industry which provided the key rationales for investing in the network. The fact that the government had already addressed some key regional broadcasting issues and

incorporated the Triple J announcement into a more extensive metropolitan radio plan that offered a range of new opportunities for commercial broadcasters made its youth radio commitment more politically palatable.

It was inevitable that tensions would arise as the existing Sydney Triple J service, which had been designed as a counterpoint to commercial youth radio in the 1970s, was transformed to meet the ABC and federal government's objectives that in part sought to reinvent the connection between radio and youth that had been lost when commercial radio had abandoned the Top 40 format in the early 1980s. Although the reformulated programming of the network drew as much from its alternative past as it did a more mainstream future, generating a kind of hybrid music playlist, this was a step too far for some existing staff and listeners. Some staff could not reconcile themselves with the transformation and, following a period of disobedience, were replaced. When this occurred the issue boiled over and listeners organised a number of public protests that denounced the manner in which staff were treated, but particularly the restructuring of the station's programming. Over time the protests of those used to a counter-cultural service would fade, and new criticism from listeners seeking a more mainstream service would emerge. As such, despite the rollout of Triple J, concerns about the relationship between radio and youth continued to emerge in policy discourse throughout the 1990s and provided an evidence-base that facilitated the development of youth community broadcasting developments in the early 2000s as discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Youth Community Broadcasting

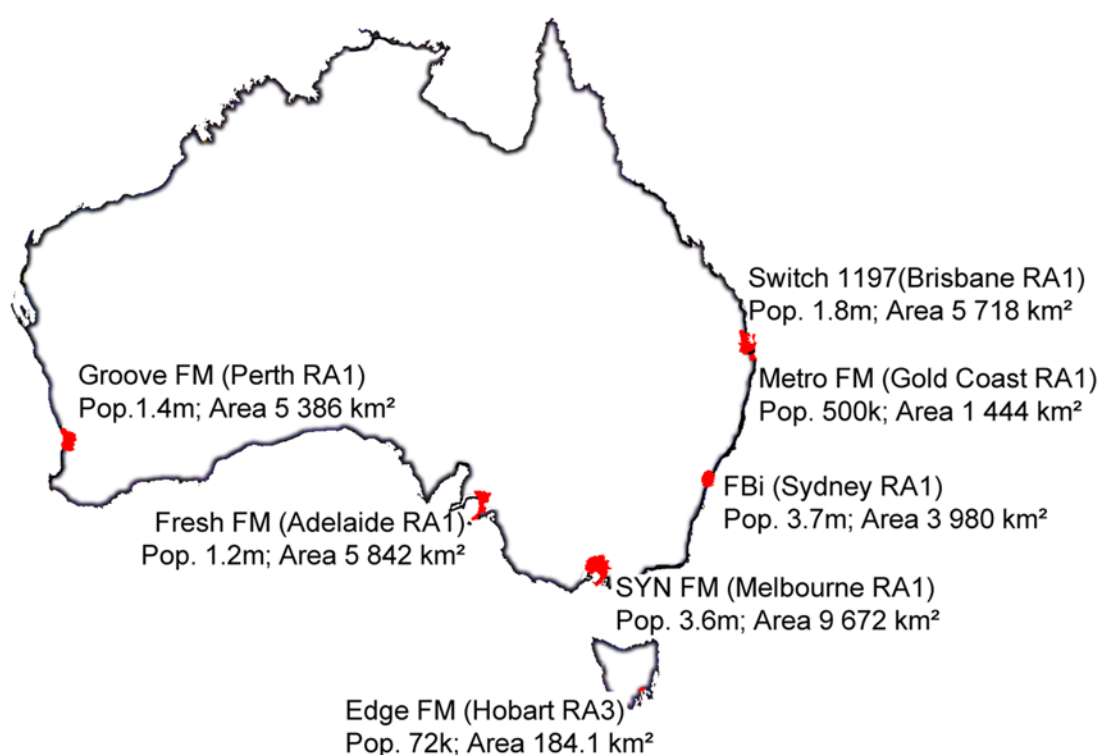
Introduction

In the early 2000s a new articulation of Australian youth radio emerged in the community broadcasting sector. The connection between community broadcasting and youth dates back to the emergence of that sector in the early 1970s. But, as discussed in Chapter One, this was circumstantial rather than premeditated, with the higher-education stations licensed by the Whitlam government providing the conduit for the involvement of young people. While many of these stations did expand their programming beyond education-based content, they tended to be identified as either general community broadcasters appealing to a wide variety of interest groups, or ‘alternative’ services that, although rising out of the counter-cultural student politics of the 1970s, engaged with a broader and aging audience (Whitford, 1992, p.55; Warne, 1987, pp.181-182). As such, during the nationwide broadcast spectrum review undertaken by the regulator in the early 1990s only one existing metropolitan service was identified as having a youth orientation—the ‘alternative’ youth oriented service’ of Melbourne’s Triple R, with Brisbane’s similar service, 4ZZZ, described as a source of ‘alternative radio programming’ (ABA, 1993b, p.92, p.87). Similarly, youth did not appear as one of the seven interest groups Moran (1995) identified in his academic survey of the community broadcasting landscape at this time.

It was the allocation of community broadcasting licences in 2001/02 to stations that specifically identified youth as their community of interest in each of Australia’s six state capital cities and the Gold Coast metropolitan area that substantially altered the community, and broader, radio landscape. Although this was a period of expansion for community broadcasting generally, half of the 14 community licences made available in the core metropolitan areas of Australia at this time were

allocated to youth stations⁵⁵. This was substantially more than received by any other community of interest, despite significant competition, and represented a substantial investment of broadcast spectrum. These stations had a broadcast catchment of over 32,000 square kilometres containing 61 per cent of the Australian population (see Figure 4.1). In this chapter I examine the conditions that made this possible.

Figure 4.1 Youth community broadcasters, mid 2000s



Source: Developed from ACMA Broadcast Licence Area Maps with population data based on ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006 (ACMA, 2014)

It is important to clarify at the outset that the consolidated and substantial investment of broadcast spectrum in community youth radio was not the result of the minister exercising his power to set aside licences for a particular community of interest (despite Minister Michael Lee's 1995 comment that this might align with the popular music policy objectives of government, as was discussed in Chapter Two).

⁵⁵ This includes metro-wide community licences only; in some cities sub-metro licences were also issued.

Nor do I dispute the regulator's claim that it independently assessed each licence application it received according to criteria set out in the Act. Instead, in the absence of government directive, I argue that the establishment of community youth broadcasting at this time was facilitated by the existence of a contemporary evidence base that indicated youth were a legitimate radio community no longer adequately addressed by Australian radio services—evidence that aspirant broadcasters and the regulator drew into the merit-based licensing process. This evidence, which the regulator itself helped compile, had emerged from concerns about the impact of the demise of commercial Top 40 radio in the 1980s. The chapter develops this argument in three sections.

Section 1 examines the introduction of the 1992 Broadcasting Services Act which underpinned the development of new community broadcasting opportunities. To this point the sector had grown in a steady but ad hoc manner since its introduction in the 1970s (Moran, 1995, p.148; Tanner, 1999, p.3). While the ALP that had held federal office since 1983, were clearly committed to the expansion of the sector (Walsh, 1987; Evans, 1987), it was the new Act, and the nationwide spectrum review and planning process it mandated, that identified, promoted and technically facilitated new broadcasting service opportunities through the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Section 2 of this chapter explores how a cohort of aspirant youth community broadcasters were formed during the nationwide spectrum planning period to take advantage of the new broadcasting opportunities made possible under the Act. I argue that the drawn-out nature of the planning process was fundamental to the emergence of youth community broadcasting. It provided time for youth aspirants, who had few existing community broadcasting models from which to draw, to experiment with their services; for vanguard groups, in particular Melbourne's HITZ FM, to inspire the formation of further aspirants; and consequently, to ensure that when the regulator initiated the licensing process there were generally a number of robust youth aspirants vying for the available licences.

An important driver of youth community radio experimentation during this period was the increasing popularity of a broad range of electronic dance music (hereafter referred to as dance music) amongst young people and the lack of a radio outlet for this type of music. The lines between stations that identified youth and dance music as their community of interest was often blurred in public discourse (cf. Young, 1996, p.104, who refers to EDM station KISS FM as a youth station) and, as such, I have included some references to these stations in my discussion. The commercial potential of this new type of popular music as well as the commercial potential of youth as a consumer market would ensure that aspirant youth stations generally had a solid financial base. But, as was the case when Triple J was networked, stakeholders who viewed youth as civic and politically engaged actors were decidedly uncomfortable with these new developments in youth community broadcasting. While youth aspirant Wild FM would be very publicly exposed as exploiting the commercial opportunities in a manner that contravened the regulations, the programming of commercial popular music by youth stations was itself not considered problematic by the regulatory authority. Indeed, the large number of youth aspirants playing such music that appeared during this gestation period, and their success in capturing a significant portion of the youth radio audience, fed into the evidence-base the regulator was accumulating about the gap in provision of radio services for young people.

In the final section of the chapter I examine the licensing process undertaken by the regulator in 2001 and 2002 through which seven aspirant youth stations obtained permanent licences. This was a tightly contested process, with substantially more aspirants seeking licences than those made available. Drawing on the licensing reports made publicly available by the ABA (that of Sydney and Melbourne), a sample of licence applications made available by aspirant youth stations⁵⁶, and interviews with representatives of the former ABA, I show how evidence generated by the regulator and other policy stakeholders in the 1980s and 1990s that youth

⁵⁶ Applications of youth stations SYN FM, Hitz FM, KIX FM, Fresh FM, and Groove FM were consulted. Applications of EDM stations KISS FM and PDNI were also examined.

were had become an underserved radio community in a post-Top 40 era was drawn into the licensing process. I argue that despite assurances from the regulator that it assessed each applicant against the same set of parameters, this evidence provided youth stations a clear advantage over other aspirant broadcasters.

Section 1: The 1992 Broadcasting Services Act and New Radio Opportunities

A New Act and the National Spectrum Review

In 1992 the Labor government's long anticipated revision of broadcasting legislation finally came to fruition with the introduction of the Broadcasting Services Act (Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992). The existing legislation had last been overhauled when television was introduced in 1956 and since that time stop-gap amendments had created an unwieldy and out-dated legislative framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992, p.2). The Labor government simplified the Act's provisions, reformed the regulator, which was renamed the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA), and, in accordance with its desire for a more co-ordinated expansion and diversification of services, directed the new authority to initiate an integrated nationwide spectrum review and planning process. This process was designed to identify capacity and demand for new services and to inform the subsequent release of new licences across each of the three broadcast sectors (ABA, 2003, p.1). But the new Act and the spectrum review and planning process not only measured demand for new licences, it also generated it, particularly in the community sector. It did so by promoting new licensing opportunities, especially through the extensive community consultation process rolled out in local communities across Australia, and, as a result of inadvertent delays, by providing the time necessary for new groups to form to exploit these opportunities.

During the legislative process itself the government made it clear to groups aspiring to engage in broadcasting that the Act was designed to provide new licensing opportunities. The explanatory memorandum that accompanied the Bill into parliament noted that through the new legislation:

It is intended that barriers to entry to the broadcasting service industry be minimised, and that competition in the provision of such services be facilitated through the quicker introduction of extra services (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992, p.29).

According to ABA Chairman Brian Johns, whose organisation was charged with accommodating demand for new licences, passage of the Broadcasting Services Act was successful in creating 'widespread expectations of liberalised licensing arrangements for all types of broadcasting' (Johns, 1994, p.1).

The government was committed to expanding all sectors under the new Act. It would be used to facilitate the delivery of its existing National and commercial sector plans, including the regional extension of Triple J (first proposed in 1988—see Chapter Three) and licensing new metropolitan commercial FM stations to finalise Stage two of the NRP (a process discussed in Chapter Five). The government also signalled its intention to enable substantial growth in community broadcasting.

In a letter to the ABA in October 1992, publicised in the regulator's planning priorities report of 1993 and its 1992-93 Annual Report, the minister advised that 'the Government is of the view that there should be provision for at least one community radio service in every Licence Area' (ABA, 1993b, p.7; ABA, 1993a, p.27). Under Section 31 of the Act the minister is empowered to direct the regulator to reserve capacity for a specified number of national and community broadcasting services. In his 1992 letter the minister asked that during the national spectrum review the ABA investigate the 'need and community support' for community services and to brief him so he could make an informed decision about capacity reservation at the appropriate time (ABA, 1993b, pp.6-7). He also asked the ABA to investigate whether more than one community licence should be reserved in any given area (ABA, 1992b, p.16).

The national spectrum review and planning process conducted by the ABA was one of the most substantial and complex ever undertaken by a national government. Never before had a government attempted to coordinate the planning of broadcast

spectrum use over such a large area (ABA, 2003, p.ii). Also, unlike previous planning, which was conducted as an internal process of the relevant federal government department, the new Act required the regulator to open the planning process to 'wide public consultation' (ABA, 1993b, p.9). As ABA Chairman Brian Johns told audiences at public seminars held in each of the mainland state capitals to mark the start of the review in late 1992:

Gone are the days when planning decisions are made behind closed doors and the first news of a new licence invitation was the Minister's notice and press release. The Act requires us to undertake our work in a very public way. Decisions have to be made to allow progress, but these decisions should be self-evident conclusions of the consultation process, not a surprise (ABA, 1992d, p.13).

Johns was emphatic about the ABA's commitment to the consultation process, suggesting to seminar attendees, '[i]f you leave this seminar with only one message, that message should be that 'the ABA wants to hear your views'. You can talk to us. You can write to us. We will listen to you' (ABA, 1992d, p.13). There would be plenty of opportunity for them to do so, with the Act requiring consultation at each of three planning stages detailed in sections 24 to 26 (Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992, S27(1)).

The first planning stage required the regulator to outline priorities determining the order in which broadcast planning would take place in different parts of Australia and different parts of the broadcast service bands (Section 24). The regulator was then to prepare a frequency allotment plan (FAP) that identified spectrum channel capacity which could be used to provide new broadcast services in regions of Australia (Section 25). Finally, in accordance with the priorities determined in stage one, the regulator was to prepare Licence Area Plans (LAPs) that set out the number and characteristics of broadcasting services to be made available within local areas (Section 26). It was only once a LAP was complete that the regulator could initiate the process for licensing new services (ABA, 1993b, pp.5-6). This staging generated

three cycles of public consultation with refined levels of geographic specificity, facilitating an awareness of new community broadcasting opportunities across a broad population, while repeatedly reinforcing this message to interested parties. Extensive delays to the completion of LAPs, particularly acute in metropolitan areas, provided sufficient time for interested parties to emerge and prepare themselves to take advantage of these opportunities.

It was not until 30 September 1993, having dealt with more than 800 submissions from two calls for public comment, that the ABA completed the first stage of the planning process. The *Planning Priorities* report grouped existing licence areas into 23 radio zones and assigned these into five priority groups (ABA, 1993b; ABA, 1994a, p.22; see Appendix 2 for a full list of radio planning zones). In determining that it should be mindful of the objective of the Act 'to promote the availability to audiences throughout Australia of a diverse range of radio and television services offering entertainment, education and information', the ABA prioritised those radio zones that had fewer existing services (ABA, 1993b, p.60). As such, once the stage 2 frequency plan was released, scheduled for the end of 1993, the planning of LAPs was to commence in the poorly serviced zones of remote and regional Australia (ABA, 1993b, p.3, p.53). Based on this timing, the regulator anticipated Group 1 LAPs would be complete in the first half of 1994 with licences issued thereafter (ABA, 1993b, p.53). Just under half of the 23 radio zones were to be planned prior to the LAPs for state capitals, with mainland capital LAPs to be complete by the end of 1995 and Hobart's delivered in the first half of 1996 (see Table 4.1).

However, the ABA did not anticipate the volume and significance of the public responses it would receive to the draft frequency plan it released in May 1993 (ABA, 1994b, p.6). Almost 200 written submissions were received, some of which raised issues that were 'fundamental to the preparation of the FAP and required more comprehensive treatment and discussion' (ABA, 1994b, p.6). After the second exposure draft released in December 1993 attracted close to 100 public responses, further revisions were required, delaying the release of the final plan until August 1994, seven months behind schedule, and after the scheduled completion of Group

1 LAPs (ABA, 1994b, p.6). By this time the ABA was already feeling the pressure to complete the planning process and begin issuing new licences.

Table 4.1 Scheduled LAP release

Priority Group and Geographic Focus	Scheduled LAP completion
Group 1 (Regional and remote)	June 1994
Group 2 (Regional)	December 1994
Group 3 (Regional and ACT)	June 1995
Group 4 (Gold Coast, Mainland State Capitals, Regional)	December 1995
Group 5 (Hobart and Regional)	June 1996

Source: Developed from ABA, Planning Priorities 1993 (ABA, 1993b, p.53, p.55).

In June 1994, the minister, Michael Lee, had written to the ABA Chairman, highlighting the government's frustration that the 'intent of the legislation to facilitate diversity through the introduction of new services' was not being achieved since the new regulator had not, in the 20 months since its formation, issued a single commercial or community broadcasting licence under the new legislation (Lee, 1994). In reply, Johns indicated that he was confident that the timetable would be brought back into alignment, with metropolitan planning completed on schedule by the end of 1995 (Johns, 1994, p.2). However, at this time, the regulator had only just commenced public consultation for Group 1 LAPs and it was not clear whether the six months allocated for the development of LAPs for each priority group was sufficient. It wasn't.

The regulator knew the LAPs were 'likely to be seen by the public and aspirant broadcasters as the most important of the ABA planning documents' and would require 'extensive consultation' including a call for public submissions, public meetings, exposure draft preparation and assimilation of feedback (ABA, 1992b, p.17; ABA, 1993b, p.5). In Group 1 licence areas this process involved 41 public meetings and yielded more than two thousand submissions (ABA, 1994a, pp.7-8). As it turned out, the LAP development process took substantially longer than six months. Although all Group 1 LAPs were scheduled for completion by June 1994,

only one LAP had been prepared by July 1995 (ABA, 1995a). The delays accumulated as each priority group went through the LAP development process. As a result, the first of the Group 4 capital city LAPs was not released until December 1999 and the entire process was not complete until December 2001—five and a half years behind schedule (ABA, 2003, p.4).

Temporary Community Broadcasting

Awareness of new community broadcasting opportunities resulting from the extended planning and public consultation process translated into the emergence of an ever increasing number of aspirant community broadcasters. One member of the ABA staff involved in the community broadcast licensing process during this period suggests that ‘there was an awareness that licenses were going to be made available or potentially made available and so people were really gearing up to provide services when and if they did become available’ (Oakes, 2007). In 1999, the ABA General Manager, Giles Tanner, concluded that as a result of delays to the planning process, ‘the major development of the nineties . . . [was] the phenomenal rise of the on-air aspirant broadcasting sector’ (Tanner, 1999, p.3).

The regulator further aided this growth by liberalising the temporary transmission licensing regime at the outset of the planning process in order not to ‘unnecessarily constrain the development of new participants’ (ABA, 1995b, p.12; Tanner, 2011). While aspirants could conduct test broadcasts for a period of up to 28 days per year under the old legislation (in blocks up to 14 days), in February 1993 the ABA decided that up to 90 days of testing could be conducted annually by aspirants using Open Narrowcast licences (ABA, 1992c, p.10; ABA, 1993a, p.32). In addition to greater broadcast periods, Open Narrowcast licences carried fewer restrictions and allowed aspirants to fund test broadcast activities through the sale of airtime. Initially, advertising on services operated by aspirants was virtually unregulated. However, following complaints from commercial broadcasters, aspirants, from December 1994, were restricted to four minutes per hour of sponsorship which applied to permanent community broadcasters; they were also limited to taking their 90 day

annual broadcast allotment in maximum 30 day continuous blocks (ABA, 1994f; ABA, 1994c).

Table 4.2 reveals that even immediately after the inauguration of the new Act, there was a great deal of test transmission activity and this grew at an increasing rate until 1997. This was despite the progressive release of permanent community licences following the completion of LAPs (the first licences were issued in Mildura in October 1996 - ABA, 1996a).

Table 4.2 Temporary licensing, aspirant community broadcasters 1992-1997

Year	Temporary licences granted
Nov 1992- July 1993	151 (est. annual adjustment = 201)
1993-94	239
1994-95	295
1995-96	398
1996-97	494

Source: Developed from ABA Annual Reports, 1992/3-1996/7.

In 1997, having received information from the regulator that the planning process would not be complete before 1999, the federal government sought to provide greater certainty to aspirant community broadcasters by amending the Act to enable them, where practical, to operate continuously⁵⁷ (Smith, 1997). The Communications Legislation Amendment Bill (No 1) 1997 substantially altered the Act by creating the Temporary Community Broadcasting Licence (TCBL), a new class of licence which the ABA could allocate for a maximum period of one year without recourse to the Act's planning provisions (Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992, Part 6A). Where there was more than one aspirant in a licence area, test frequencies continued to be shared (ABA, 1998). Interest in the uptake of community licences continued to grow under this new regime and at the end of the decade the ABA's

⁵⁷ By providing annual coverage the new system substantially reduced the number of individual temporary licences issued, breaking the continuity of the temporary licensing dataset utilised in Table 4.2.

Giles Tanner (1999, p.5, p.6) noted that there were ‘nearly as many temporary services as . . . permanents’.

Tanner (1999, p.5) found that general wide-purpose broadcasters formed the largest part of the TCBL sector, as they did the permanent sector, but there was a substantial increase in demand from religious and Other Specialist aspirants for permanent licences (see Table 4.3). A further breakdown of the 30 Other Specialist aspirant broadcasters operating at the end of 1999 reveals that 10 were youth broadcasters (see Table 4.4). Tanner (1999, p.6) described this as a new source of demand for community licences. In fact, over the entire period between the release of the new Act and the completion of the metropolitan licensing process in 2002, some 15 aspirants targeting youth conducted test broadcasts (see Figure 4.2). We might also add the three stations that emerged to service the dance music community since these were often referred to as youth aspirants in public discourse during this period.

Table 4.3 Permanent and temporary community broadcasters in 1999

	Permanent		TCBL	
	n	%	n	%
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	14	8	7	5
Ethnic	5	8	5	4
Religious*	16	9	26	19
Radio for the Print Handicapped	10	6	1	1
Other Specialist (See Table 4.4)	14	8	30	22
General	112	65	66	49
TOTAL	171	100	135	100

* Permanent (All Christian), TCBL (23 Christian, 3 Muslim)

Source: Developed from Tanner (1999).

Table 4.4 ‘Other’ specialist TCBLs in 1999

	number	%
Arts	2	7
Comedy	1	3
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender	4	13
Music	6	20
Seniors	2	7
Students	5	17
Youth	10	33
Total	30	100

Source: Adapted from Tanner (1999)

Figure 4.2 Timeline - first test broadcasts of metropolitan youth aspirants

Year	First on-air test broadcast
1992	HITZ FM (Mel)
1993	
1994	KIX FM (Mel)
1995	Metro (Gold Coast)*; KISS (Mel)[EDM], New Wave (Syd)[EDM], FBI (Syd)*
1996	RMIT – SRA (Mel), HITZ FM (Syd); 3TD (Mel)
1997	Wild FM (Syd)
1998	Fresh (Adel)*; Wild FM (Bris), DEX – UBI (Syd)
1999	Switch (Bris)*
2000	Dance100 (Adel)[EDM], SYN FM (Mel)*
2001	
2002	Groove FM (Perth)*; Edge FM (Hobart)*

*Stations that received permanent licences

[EDM] Electronic dance music community of interest but often considered youth stations.

FBI identifies its community of interest as ‘youth, arts and emerging culture’.

Source: Developed from ABA Update; ABA Annual Reports; Licence Applications.

The following section examines the rise of this aspirant youth community broadcasting cohort. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the institutional history of each aspirant and not doing so does not diminish the central work of tracing the conditions that facilitated the development of youth community broadcasting. Undertaking detailed histories of youth aspirants is a worthy task and

one that, to date, has only been undertaken for SYN FM by Rennie (2011; 2009); with some examination of HITZ FM conducted by Melbourne Youth Radio Inc. (2000b) and Counihan (1996), and some analysis of FBi by Fairchild (2012). I will draw upon this material, while also contributing some new material to the institutional history of HITZ FM.

Section 2: The Emergence of Aspirant Youth Community Broadcasters

The combination of extensive public consultation and extended delays in the ABA planning process may have enabled the development of aspirant broadcasters representing a range of communities, but it was vital for the emergence of youth community broadcasting. As shown in Figure 4.2, only two of the seven youth community broadcasting aspirants that received permanent licences in 2001-2002 (FBI and Radio Metro) had emerged as aspirant test broadcasters by the time the city LAPs were scheduled to have been completed in late 1995. Unlike the interest shown at the start of the planning process by religious groups, which would also emerge from the process with a substantial share of permanent licences, there was little initial interest shown by groups representing youth. While the regulator identified more than 40 religious groups in 16 of the 23 planning regions seeking to provide new community broadcasting services during Stage 1 consultations in 1993, just four youth services were proposed in three planning regions⁵⁸ (ABA, 1993b, pp.60-61; pp.62-108).

The ABA found that on the NSW Central Coast (Region 8) the Camden Youth Outreach Program was interested in providing a youth radio service to Camden and Narellan, while Gosford Youth Services Inc. wished to provide a similar service for Gosford and Wyong (ABA, 1993b, p.90; Camden Youth Outreach Program, 1993; Gosford Youth Services Inc, 1993; see Appendix 2 for a full list of planning regions). In Perth (Region 22), Drew Pike, Youth Officer at the City of Belmont, 'made

⁵⁸ In addition, the regulator identified demand (rather than proposed supply) for the introduction of the ABC's Triple J youth service in five of the 23 planning zones (R2, R5, R6, R7, R17), and demand for an unspecified (commercial or community) FM service targeting the 15–35 age group for the Gold Coast in Region 5 (ABA, 1993b, p.88).

submissions in the first and second rounds [of consultation] on behalf of an interest group requesting priority for a community radio service targeting youth for Belmont, East Fremantle' (ABA, 1993b, p.96; Pike, 1993). In Melbourne (Region 15), Melbourne Youth Radio Inc., operating as HITZ FM, indicated their interest in providing a service to 'Melbourne youth, targeting the 13 to 21 age group' (ABA, 1993b, p.93). As it turned out, only the Gosford and Melbourne services would be developed, although the Gosford service was quickly transformed into a broader 'minority group' aspirant (Pike, 1993; Youth Action and Policy Association NSW, 2013, ABA Update analysis 1992-2003).

It is perhaps not surprising that it took some time for a cohort of youth aspirants to emerge since, unlike religious services for instance, there was not a clear existing community broadcasting model upon which they could draw. The traditional education-institution framework that had facilitated the connection between youth and community radio in the 1970s was one path that was pursued in Melbourne and Tasmania. However, it was not this model that drove the development of the aspirant youth community broadcasting cohort. Few aspirants based on this model made it to the licence application phase, although two were successful—Melbourne's SYN FM (a product of RMIT's Student Radio Association and Thornbury-Darebin Secondary College) and Hobart's Edge FM (based at the University of Tasmania). Instead, the extended planning process provided sufficient time for experimentation with new youth radio models and for vanguard groups to encourage the formation of further aspirants, building momentum within and across cities. While this experimentation and knowledge transfer process involved a growing network of parties, I will centre my analysis on Melbourne's HITZ FM—the first youth aspirant to successfully develop a station to the test broadcast stage and a station that according to the ABA's Giles Tanner (Tanner, 2011), was 'quite revolutionary' and 'absolutely critical' to the development of youth community broadcasting.

In Chapter Two I drew upon the work of Counihan (1996) to illustrate the impact of HITZ FM's 1993-94 test broadcast on the local content debate. Here, I explore how

HITZ FM emerged as a sophisticated broadcaster that capitalised on the potential of dance music programming to attract a large youth audience and volunteer base and provide substantial income-generating opportunities to underwrite its ongoing activities. In doing so, it established a model that would both directly and indirectly influence the development of further youth aspirants.

HITZ FM and the Rise of Electronic Dance Music in Australia

The idea for HITZ FM emerged in March 1992 when a group of young people, including an experienced community radio volunteer and a number of youth workers, established Melbourne Youth Radio Inc. in the outer South-East Melbourne suburb of Chelsea (RWHC, 2013). The group was frustrated at the lack of radio broadcasting that engaged with young people in Melbourne. As they explained in the first edition of their newsletter, *Hitlist*, 'Melbourne as a city is host to many radio broadcasting stations . . . [but] there is not one which directly involves young people and presents a programme format appealing to young people under 21 years of age' (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 1992a, p.1).

To identify just what was lacking in youth radio, the group undertook an extensive consultation exercise through 1992. It contacted government and community agencies, held a series of regional engagement meetings across Melbourne and distributed a *Build your own radio station* survey to young people through schools and the Brashs music retail chain (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 1992a, p.3). This showed the highly organised and sophisticated approach of the group, evident also in the group's 1993 submission to the Stage 1 Planning Priorities consultation which, at 120 pages, was one of the most comprehensive received by the ABA (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 1993c; ABA, 1993c).

Based on its consultations, the group developed a program mix that included a youth issues talk component and a selection of music that privileged Top 40 pop and 'Hot Hits (new music rising within the chart)', but also included some Heavy Metal, Alternative and 'Dance/Disco/Techno' (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 1993c, p.20, p.30, p.94). What was particularly interesting about the group's approach to

programming design was that they took their cues from commercial radio and the continuous music format rather than community broadcasting which generally deployed a segmented schedule of thematic or music-genre specific programs. Furthermore, the rationale of music selection within each program hour seemed to draw from the approach adopted by commercial radio in the days of Top 40. The group explained that:

Similar to formats on mainstream radio stations (mainly but not exclusively commercial), each song within the format is placed in rotation system, permitting repetition at a rate which balances the desire to play a wide variety of music, and the necessity to present favourite music by contemporary popular (charting) artists/performers (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 1993c, p.20).

HITZ FM trialled this continuous music format during a nine day test broadcast from John Gardiner Secondary College (Hawthorn) in December 1992 (HITZFM.net.au, 2013). According to the group, this and a second trial conducted over 16 days in July 1993 from Xavier College (Kew), provided ‘an opportunity to test various programming ideas and principals [sic]’ which were then critically assessed, including through structured feedback interviews conducted with young people calling the station to make music requests (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 1993a; Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 1993b; HITZFM.net.au, 2013). More than 1200 of these calls were received during the first broadcast.

When HITZ FM went to air with a refined format over the summer of 1993/94 its impact on radio ratings would be such that youth radio would become a public, and broadcasting policy issue (see Chapter Two for details). Counihan (1996) provides a detailed examination of the impact of this test on the radio and popular music policy landscape. While, like Johnston (1994, p.41), he recognised the importance of the station’s refined commercial dance music ‘Dance Pop’ programming, without the benefit of a longer range analysis he could not have appreciated the impact that dance music more generally would have in redefining the landscape of commercial

popular music in Australia during the 1990s and the important role this would play in the rise of aspirant youth community broadcasters (Counihan, 1996, p.17).

First referred to as House music (emerging in Chicago in the early-1980s) and Techno (emerging in Detroit in the mid-1980s), dance music would come to include a range of musical styles (including acid-house, drum 'n' bass and trance) that shared electronic production techniques, a range of technical music characteristics (such as rhythm and meter), and distinctive forms of consumption (Butler, 2012; Butler, 2006, chapter 1; McLeod, 2012). While it may have originated in the United States, dance music first became widely popular in the United Kingdom in the late 1980s (Butler, 2006, pp.33-34; Straw, 2001, p.158, p.172). In the following decade it rose to prominence across the industrialised world, with Brabazon (2012, p.27), in her survey of the trajectories of Western popular music, concluding that during the 1990s 'dance music became popular music'. The crossover of dance music into the mainstream is generally considered to represent a significant disruption to the rock foundations that had underpinned popular music for decade, with some commentators pointing to this disruption as marking a new generational divide (Bennett, 2000, p.35; Fornas, 1995, p.113, p.119; Reiner, 2003a, p.221; Reiner, 2003b, pp.251-252; Reiner, 2003c, p.246; Reynolds, 2012, introduction; Straw, 2006, pp.383-384).

A series of large dance parties in the late 1980s and early 1990s marked the 'flowering of electronica culture en masse in Australia' and 'the acceptance of dance music into the Australian music market' (Harley and Murphie, 2008, p.101; Murphie and Scheer, 1992, p.177). These events 'provided the critical mass via which electronica entered mainstream popular music culture', generating a 'market to be tapped by a proliferation of labels and artists in the second half of the 1990s' (Harley and Murphie, 2008, p.102; Whiteoak and Zumeris, 2003, p.537). Dance music, according to Montano (2007, p.54), quickly filtered 'into the commercial pop charts, and numerous clubs and record stores catering for an increased consumer demand'. Indeed, by this time Australia's founding dance music retail outlet and record label, Central Station, had opened stores in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and

Adelaide in response to what it called the 'rising out of the underground' of dance music (Central Station Records, 2013).

While dance music may have had a well-established live and recorded music market in Australia by the early-to-mid-1990s, it had not gained a substantial foothold on radio. In 1989 the ABT had reported that 'because of a lack of airplay for local (and imported) dance music, Melbourne club DJs have formed an association to promote product which is not being heard on radio . . . for similar reasons, Melbourne independent record label Central Station, is seeking its own radio licence'⁵⁹ (ABT, 1989, p.4). The focus on classic rock by commercial stations during this period, meant that most 'simply refused to play electronica or dance music' (Harley and Murphie, 2008, p.102). Indicative of this position, and reflecting the wedge that dance music was driving through popular music's past and future, the Program Director of Sydney's Triple M commercial FM station told the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1990:

Triple M has been, and always will be a rock 'n' roll station and, I mean, why should we change it? We don't bow to trends. The whole acid-house thing is fading now, and the dance music that we play seems to be less and less well-received (Danielson and Casimir, 1990, p.177; cited in Murphie and Scheer, 1992).

The ABC's Triple J was more amenable to dance music and increased its airplay in the 1990s, but the national youth network remained under pressure to continue to service listeners wedded to the rock and rock-based indie music that had been central to its Sydney-based 'alternative' past⁶⁰ (Harley and Murphie, 2008, p.102; Plate, 2003, p.20; Ellicott, 1996; Schubert, 1999). Reflecting this type of counter-cultural position, alternative community broadcasters, such as Melbourne's Triple R,

⁵⁹ This never eventuated, but it is interesting to note that Central Station was one of the record companies that provided an interest-free loan to help establish youth community broadcaster Wild FM in Sydney in 1997 and was also involved in the activities of Perth youth community broadcaster Groove FM (ABA, 2001b, p.26; ABA, 2004c, p.46).

⁶⁰ Triple J would later admit that niche format Dance Music stations (particularly in Melbourne and Sydney) had between them taken two per cent off the station's ratings (Dent, 2000).

provided 'young DJs and other electronica artists with an opportunity to both develop their skills and promote electronic music in new and more experimental ways' but did so to 'smaller . . . 'serious', audiences', thereby ignoring the burgeoning mainstream dance music market (Harley and Murphie, 2008, p.102).

The coincident rise in popularity of dance music (particularly amongst young people), the ignorance of this musical style by existing radio services, and the availability of free, large-area, temporary radio licences in the early 1990s would prove to be a dynamic mix that would drive the development of aspirant youth community broadcasters and the eventual legitimisation of a new articulation of Australian youth radio in that sector. The ability to amass a sizeable audience (and volunteers), as illustrated by HITZ FM over the summer of 1993-94, tells only part of the story in terms of the opportunity that this mix provided to inspire the formation and maintenance of youth aspirants. Being the 'mainstream alternative', as HITZ FM referred to itself, 'a revolt in favour of commercial pop-chart music rather than against it' according to Counihan (1996, p.19), also yielded substantial income-generating opportunities. Although, like permanent community broadcasters, aspirants were required to operate as not-for-profit organisations, the prospect of having a sound financial base would be one less barrier to establishing and maintaining a service.

Record companies, thrilled by the prospect of being able to promote their commercial mainstream product on radio, were quick to provide financial and non-financial resources to HITZ FM, as they would to later youth aspirants (Guilliatt, 1996; Johnston, 1994, p.41). One arrangement that HITZ FM and many other youth stations would enter with record companies involved the production and release of compilation CDs featuring tracks played on the station and carrying the station brand in exchange for a proportion of sales revenue (ABA, 2001e; ABA, 2001c, p.48, p.52). The magnitude of up-front support the music industry was prepared to offer youth broadcasters is perhaps best illustrated by reports that the AUD\$150,000 used to establish Sydney youth aspirant Wild FM was borrowed from two record companies (Devine, 1997; Hubble, 1997b). The payoff for all parties could be

substantial. Wild FM's compilation CD was the biggest-selling CD in the country over Christmas 1999 with 160,000 sales (Carr, 2000). During Wild's time as an aspirant youth station more than 1.3 million Wild CDs would be sold (Molitorisz, 2003).

The 1993-1994 HITZ FM test would also illustrate the potential to earn income from advertising sales (Ackland, 1994; Guilliat, 1996). Aspirants, like permanent community broadcasters, were allowed to carry a limited amount of advertising (known in the sector as sponsorship). Youth had long been identified as a valuable consumer market segment and, with companies bemoaning the lack of opportunities to target them through commercial radio at this time, it was not surprising that HITZ and many later youth aspirants would generate substantial sponsorship income (de Bono, 1990, p.23). Major national and international companies who were not typically sponsors of community broadcasting, including Coca-Cola, McDonald's and Hoyts, were amongst the early clients of HITZ, and reflected the group's 1993 projections that it could raise up to AUD\$350,000 per annum (80 per cent of its income) from such activity (Guilliat, 1996; Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 1993c, p.43). This figure would turn out to be quite conservative, with some later youth aspirants projecting advertising income in excess of AUD\$2 million per annum (ABA, 2001d, p.97). With a sponsorship schedule that was at times completely pre-sold prior to beginning a test transmission, Sydney's Wild FM projected annual revenue of AUD\$4 million in 2000 (Wright, 1997; Carr, 2000).

HITZ and the Proliferation of Aspirant Youth Community Broadcasters

Having established a substantial following and solid financial position in Melbourne during its 1993-1994 test, HITZ FM began exploring opportunities to expand its youth radio activities interstate. In 1996, the group established Sydney Youth Radio Inc., conducting a test broadcast between 6 November and 5 December (Scatena, 1996). In 1997, the Sydney-based HITZ FM group relaunched the station as Wild FM, a call-sign under which they would continue to conduct regular broadcasts until 2000. In 1998, Wild FM itself expanded interstate. It formed Brisbane Youth Radio Inc. and, under the Wild FM call-sign, became the first youth aspirant to appear in

that city⁶¹. It even released a television commercial to announce this first broadcast (Wild FM Brisbane, 1999). Brisbane's Wild FM would be regularly on-air through 1998 and 1999.

Apart from establishing 'franchises', HITZ FM also committed itself to assisting other groups to establish their own youth stations. One of the stated aims of the organisation was 'to promote the benefits of youth broadcasting in other centres within Victoria and Australia and where possible to provide assistance, whether direct or otherwise to non-profit organisations providing such opportunities for young people' (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 2000a, p.7). Other youth aspirants would also adopt this position, for instance Melbourne's SYN FM provided advice to Youth Media Society as it sought to establish Groove FM as a youth community broadcasting service in Perth (ABA, 2004c, p.74, p.162).

Even within its own licence area HITZ FM was not opposed to the development of other youth aspirants. For instance, two HITZ FM volunteers founded another Melbourne youth aspirant KIX FM in 1994 (New-Gen Radio Incorporated, 2000). While HITZ FM knew that it would at some point be competing with all other Melbourne aspirants for a licence, it adopted the position that in the interim a proliferation of youth services might help build the case for issuing at least one licence to a youth service. This strategy was explained in a short documentary made by the station and is worth quoting at length as it provides an insight into the collaborative approach taken by a number of youth and dance music stations:

Presenter: Well HITZ may have been off air but radio for young people by young people certainly wasn't and it was at this point that Melbourne's radio and music industries were about to change forever.

Andrew Gyopar (HITZ FM President): I guess when KIX started and subsequently KISS we were never competing with them on

⁶¹ Hitz and Wild were not the only aspirant community broadcasters to conduct activities in more than one city, Sydney's 2 Groove, which targeted 25-45 year olds, established 2 Groove Qld and conducted test broadcasts in Brisbane (Scoop News, 2001, ABA Update Analysis).

air timing-wise, we were never on at the same time, but what it meant was that young people in Melbourne had more excuses not to listen to standard commercial radio.

Darryl Rae (former HITZ FM Program Director): It definitely sent a message to the big boys that we are not just on for 90 days. Here are a whole lot of kids who could keep the thing going for long periods of time in the year, and yes, it helped each other.

Julie Doyle (Former HITZ FM Vice President): When other stations followed, KIX and KISS and the other string of aspirants that have followed, I think that has shown that this community radio movement now is so strong that little obstacles that are thrown in our way by the commercial radio stations aren't going to stop the aspirants from broadcasting (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 2000b).

Of course, the influence of HITZ FM on the further development of the youth aspirant cohort was not limited to direct knowledge transfer. The station's successful model was presented on-air to inspire and inform others for more than 650 days during 17 tests between 1994 and 2001 (calculated from HITZFM.net.au, 2013). In January 1997 four friends on holiday in Melbourne from Adelaide tuned into the station's tenth test broadcast and were inspired to start their own station when they returned home. In October that year they formed Fresh Broadcasting Incorporated and in March 1998 initiated their own test broadcast (Adelaide Advertiser, 2000; Fresh Broadcasters Inc, 2001). On 23 August 2002 Fresh FM received the only permanent city-wide licence made available in Adelaide (ABA, 2002c).

Even those who didn't, or couldn't, tune-in to HITZ FM could easily gain an appreciation of the possibilities of youth community broadcasting that it exemplified through the media's extensive coverage of the station's activities. Media interest in the station peaked during the 1993-1994 breakthrough broadcast, when, in addition press coverage, the station was featured on Melbourne commercial television news bulletins and the current affairs program *A Current Affair*, and discussed by Molly

Meldrum during his 'Molly's Melodrama' a segment on the popular national variety television show *Hey Hey Its Saturday* (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 2000b). But coverage across a range of media would continue throughout the 1990s and early 2000s (cf. Aston, 1995; Byrne and Goodman, 1998). Between its launch in 1992 and the issue of licences in the Melbourne licence area in 2001 HITZ FM was featured in more than 90 articles published in Australia's major newspapers (Factiva newspapers database analysis 1992-2001). Although coverage was mainly in Melbourne and Sydney, some national coverage was achieved through *The Australian* (cf. Ellicott, 1996; Day, 2000). One of the most interesting media developments emerging from HITZ FM was the creation of the 13 part ABC drama series RAW FM that was televised in 1997 and 1998 (Macgillicuddy and Tamir, 1997). 'Publicity surrounding the rise of Hitz in 1993' was the catalyst for the program, which focused on a youth radio station trying to get a full-time licence (Dowsley, 1997).

Youth, Commerce, and Community

With a mix of commercial dance pop and broader dance music, HITZ FM and a number of the other aspirant youth community broadcasters that emerged in capital cities across the country managed to engage a substantial audience and establish a relatively stable financial base in preparation for applying for permanent licences. Their focus on new music, which had reinvigorated popular music charts and 'changed the way record companies operate, now they . . . [had] an on-air market for their commercial dance music', also made them the darlings of the music industry and those with a stake in popular music policy (Devine, 1997).

Music industry representatives like Molly Meldrum, who was a major supporter of HITZ FM during its breakthrough broadcast and travelled to Sydney to launch Wild FM's second test broadcast in 1997, continued to emphasise the importance of issuing youth aspirants permanent licences (Hubble, 1997a). The regulator and other music policy bodies continued to amass evidence of the positive impact these aspirants had on broadcasting diversity and the development of the local music

industry. With jingles like '[w]hile other stations are playing songs your parents love to hear, we're just playing today's hottest hits', which HITZ FM used to launch its first Sydney test broadcast in 1996, it is no wonder that aspirant youth community broadcasters were viewed as a means of reinventing the radio-new music connection that had been lost when commercial radio abandoned the Top 40 format in the 1980s (Guilliatt, 1996). But connecting community broadcasting to commercial popular music and associated mainstream youth consumer culture was not well received by everyone.

The commercial radio industry may have been wedded to the baby-boomer audience but they were not keen on losing the younger segment of their audience to youth community broadcasters. So, while HITZ FM were lobbying to remain on air beyond their allocated 90 days at the end of the 1993-94 summer, commercial radio's representative body was preparing a legal case against the regulator's use of narrowcast licences for test broadcasting to reduce test broadcast time allocation. It successfully argued that '90 continuous days on air is too long to constitute a 'limited period' as that term is used in the definition of narrowcasting' and thereby ensured that aspirant community broadcasters could never again be on air for such a long period and have the type of ratings impact as HITZ had (ABA, 1994d; ABA, 1994f, p.8). Commercial station representatives were careful in their public statements to emphasise that they supported community broadcasting generally (cf. Ellicott, 1996; Chapman, 1996), but simply wished to ensure that the youth aspirants were committed to community radio's goals, which included being complementary and supplementary to commercial radio (as noted in Chapter One). For instance, on the eve of the regulator's hearings into the allocation of permanent community licences in Sydney in 2000, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Brad March, group managing director of Austereo, had indicated that his radio network was supportive of community stations offering diversity, but:

it certainly appears that Wild is basically a pseudo-commercial operation, targeting a mainstream format which is already catered for by stations like [Austereo's] 2Day FM and [ARN's]

9inety6ix.1 FM. They operate in a very commercial way and they don't provide the diversity of programming which the big stations just cannot provide. There are some applicants who would provide diversity, truly serving niche formats. Wild is certainly not a niche format (Chapman, 2000a)

Even after the allocation of permanent licences, youth community broadcasters, like Perth's Groove FM, would remain subject to critical attention from the commercial radio industry (as is discussed in Chapter Six).

It was not just commercial radio that was concerned about youth aspirants adopting continuous dance pop and dance music formats. There was also a substantial backlash against such stations from within the community broadcasting sector itself. Writing about HITZ FM's 1993-94 breakthrough broadcast, Counihan (1996, p.19) pre-empted rising tensions within the sector, noting that 'the HITZ ethos seemed as hostile toward the minoritarian, anticommercialism of the older community stations as it was toward the sound of commercial radio'. While Counihan explained that in a period when commercial radio had shunned new commercial popular music, HITZ FM was a legitimate 'mainstream alternative' as well as a 'community-radio alternative to alternativeness' there were some within the sector who could not accept this position (Counihan, 1996, p.19; Guilliat, 1996; Holmes, 1997). Quite apart from operating a 'seamless pop format [that was] the antithesis of traditional community radio', these youth aspirants that sought to engage 'mainstream youth out in the suburbs with mum and dad', attracted a different set of sponsors than was typical of community radio, and particularly metropolitan community radio (Guilliat, 1996; Devine, 1997). Unencumbered by the type of selective sponsor policies characteristic of community broadcasters aimed at inner-city alternative populations, these stations were free to present sponsorship messages from major national and international brands, such as McDonald's and Coke, which generated substantial income and accusations from some within the sector that they were 'prostituting' themselves (Devine, 1997).

While the youth aspirants operated within the community broadcasting regulatory framework, arguments that they were not acting in the spirit of community broadcasting (cf. Ethnic Broadcaster, 2000; Chapman, 1996) sounded like conservatism or, in a financially strapped sector, envy. Such charges did not seem to diminish the broad public and government support for these aspirants. But, as the first metropolitan community licensing decisions were imminent, complaints about Sydney youth aspirant Wild FM's 'commercial activities' were very publicly aired on the ABC's *Media Watch*, leading to an investigation by the ABA. The investigation found that because the station was an 'integral part of an enterprise relating to the production and sale of CDs bearing the Wild name and logo' it was operating as 'part of a profit-making enterprise' and was therefore in breach of the Act (ABA, 2001e, p.6; ABC, 2000). Although Wild FM was not considered an unsuitable applicant for a community broadcasting services licence under the Act, the regulator indicated that it would take the findings of the investigation into consideration when making its licensing decisions (ABA, 2001e, p.6; ABA, 2001a). The Wild FM case exposed the dangers of record company–community broadcaster relationships. While this was enough to damage the licensing opportunities of some youth aspirants, as will be show in the next section, it was not enough to dampen the regulator's general enthusiasm for youth community broadcasting.

Section 3: Legitimising Youth Community Broadcasting

In December 1999 the ABA completed the first of its much anticipated capital city LAPs, that of Sydney. It was followed by Melbourne in June 2000, Brisbane and the Gold Coast in early 2001, Adelaide in mid-2001, and Perth and Hobart toward the end of 2001. Over a relatively concentrated period, these LAPs made 14 citywide community licenses available, attracting interest from a total of 59 aspirants (See Table 4.5). Overall, 11 youth aspirants submitted applications. Other applicants sought to service a range of communities including: General (9), Christian (8), ethnic (7), Islamic (4), dance music (3), gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender-GLBT (3), seniors (3), print handicapped (2), the arts—comedy and theatre (2), indigenous (2), country music (1), students (1), fine music (1), Generation X—born 1960s-1970s (1),

and the socially marginalised (1). Melbourne and Sydney were the most tightly contested LAPS with 20 aspirants vying for three licences in Melbourne and 18 aspirants vying for three licences in Sydney. The planning review had revealed that spectrum was close to capacity in these cities. The ‘frontier’, as the ABA’s Giles Tanner (1999; 2011) described it, was closing—amplifying the importance of this round of licensing. As the ABA’s Donald Robertson, told the Sydney Morning Herald, ‘These are the last available slots . . . [and the] groups realise it's now or never’ (Nicholls, 1998). It was the ABA that was charged with responsibility under the Act to determine which aspirants would receive permanent licences. The Act set out the matters which the ABA was to consider when allocating a licence as well as aspects of the process by which it was to proceed.

Table 4.5 Citywide metropolitan community licences made available under LAPs and number of applicants 2001-2002

	Successful Youth Stations	Citywide licences Issued	Total applicants	Youth applicants
Melbourne	1	3	20	3
Sydney	1	3	18	3
Gold Coast	1	3	7	1
Brisbane	1	2	5	1
Adelaide	1	1	5	1
Perth	1	1	2	1
South Hobart	1	1	2	1
Total	7	14	59	11

Source ABA Update (various); ABA media release (various)

In deciding whether to allocate a community broadcasting licence Section 84 of the Act directs the regulator to have regard to six matters (See Figure 4.3). As the basic unit informing evidence gathering, reporting and assessment these matters represent distinct criteria, although the weight given to each and consideration of the interplay between them by the regulator reflect the context in which individual licensing decisions are made. The criteria may be used to compare aspirants, but

they are also threshold conditions—even when there is just one aspirant applying for a particular licence the regulator must be satisfied that they can adequately meet all six criteria. In the case of the youth community broadcasters licensed in 2001-02 each were engaged in a competitive process and so had to both meet the threshold and be considered more effective in doing so than at least one other aspirant. In the analysis of this competitive process this thesis focuses on the three criteria that relate to the community of interest to be served by a licensee (criteria 2a, 2b and 2c). Before proceeding to this analysis I will make a few remarks to justify the diminished attention paid to the other three criteria (criteria 2d, 2e and 2f).

Figure 4.3 Broadcasting Services Act 1992, Section 84

Section 84 of the Act states:

- (1) The minister may give directions to the ABA to give priority to a particular community interest or interests, whether generally or in a particular licence area, in allocating community licences that are broadcasting services bands licences.
- (2) In deciding whether to allocate a community broadcasting licence that is a broadcasting services bands licence to an applicant or to one of a group of applicants, the ABA is to have regard to:
 - (a) the extent to which the proposed service would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the community within the licence area; and
 - (b) the nature and diversity of the interests of that community; and
 - (c) the nature and diversity of other broadcasting services (including national broadcasting services) available within that licence area; and
 - (d) the capacity of the applicant to provide the proposed service; and
 - (e) the undesirability of one person being in a position to exercise control of more than one community broadcasting licence that is a broadcasting services bands licence in the same licence area; and
 - (f) the undesirability of the Commonwealth, a State or a Territory or a political party being in a position to exercise control of a community broadcasting licence.

Source: Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992)

Criteria 2e and 2f will not feature in my analysis since they pertain to parameters regarding the controlling interest of an aspirant organisation which is rather easily determined and essentially acts to qualify the aspirant for further assessment by the regulator. All 59 aspirants met these criteria⁶². Criteria 2d requires the regulator to

⁶² There was some discussion with regards to indigenous aspirant Gadigal and its relationship with Commonwealth Authority ATSIC (ABA, 2001d, p.19).

assess the capacity of the aspirant to provide the proposed service, including ‘such matters as the management, financial, and technical resources available to an applicant for the purposes of the proposed service’ (Broadcasting Services Act 1992 explanatory memorandum, cited in ABA, 2001c, p.19). There were a range of aspirants unable to demonstrate this capacity in a number of licence areas, but the extensive testing conducted by almost all youth services meant they were well placed to do so. Indeed, just one youth aspirant failed to meet criteria 2d—Underground Broadcasters Incorporated (UBI) in Sydney⁶³ (ABA, 2001d, p.21). Despite a reduction in the field following the regulator’s assessment of criteria 2d, all LAPs remained competitively poised with more aspirants than licences (for instance, 11 groups were considered capable of providing their proposed service in Melbourne where three citywide licences were available). As such, it was the three community of interest criteria that I argue determined the licensing outcomes.

In relation to these criteria, the ABA outlined a particular reasoning process. It concluded that before assessing criterion 2a—the extent to which the service proposed by each individual aspirant ‘would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the community within the licence area’—it was best to have reached a judgement with regards to criteria 2b and 2c which were determined for the licence area overall (ABA, 2001d, p.15; ABA, 2001c, p.16). In this way, the regulator would first assess whether each of the communities that the suite of aspirants in the licence area proposed to serve could be adequately defined in terms of a set of shared practices and/or values and their size gauged as a proportion of the licence area population. Then it would assess how well each of the communities could be reached through radio, and the extent to which their media needs (including but not limited to radio) were adequately met by existing outlets⁶⁴. The latter criteria reflects the role of community broadcasting as providing ‘complementary and

⁶³ Sydney dance music aspirant New Wave also failed to meet this criterion.

⁶⁴ The Explanatory Memorandum indicates that paragraph 84(2)(c) ‘enables the ABA to consider the whole range of broadcasting services available in a licence area, to assess whether there is a need in a community which is not being served, and which may appropriately be served by a community broadcasting licence’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992, p.48).

supplementary' services to those of the commercial and national sectors, as explained in chapter one. It was only once it had considered these elements and identified the community interests that were not currently well served that the ABA felt it could 'make an informed finding about the existing and perceived future needs of the community within . . . [a] licence area' and thereafter judge individual claims made by aspirants in relation to criteria 2a (ABA, 2001d, p.16; ABA, 2001c, p.17).

The regulator's assessment against criteria 2a of each aspirant's capacity to respond to its community's media needs through appropriate programming, active participation in the service and the use of mechanisms that would ensure it continued to meet these needs was clearly important in regards to individual licensing outcomes. However, I argue that the success of specific aspirants representing youth to gain licences in each state capital city and the Gold Coast metropolitan area was underpinned by the ability of all youth aspirants to meet the prerequisite criteria 2b and 2c by drawing upon an independent evidence base compiled over the previous decade, much by the regulator itself, that lamented the disconnection of Australian radio from youth. While the ABA may have had 'an open mind on demographic or religious or sexual or any other category you could think of', youth aspirants were well equipped to respond to what were considered fundamental questions by the regulator of: '[w]hat's your evidence? What's your case? What material have you got to bring before [us] to satisfy there's a demographic community of interest here?' (Tanner, 2011). In Chapter Two I examined how this evidence emerged from concerns about the development of the local music industry, in what follows I show how this material was worked into the licensing process.

The Licensing Process and ‘Independent Evidence’

It was the seven government-appointed Members of the ABA⁶⁵ that were responsible for making licensing decisions. The Members were assisted by a public sector staff that compiled and furnished them with a report assessing the aspirants using the six criteria and sometimes including a recommended outcome (Oakes, 2007; Gordon-Smith, 2011). Although these reports were not published, the ABA’s decision to hold public hearings in the highly competitive Sydney and Melbourne licence areas and the Act’s requirement that it publish reports of all hearings ensured that at least two examples of the process by which the ABA conducted community licence assessments at this time were publicly documented (Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992, s. 199). Following discussions with former ABA licensing team staff and ABA Members, I have no reason to believe that the process implemented in Sydney and Melbourne are not indicative of that of other metropolitan licence areas (Oakes, 2007; Gordon-Smith, 2011). I draw heavily upon these reports in addition to a sample of licence applications made available by aspirant youth stations.

Submitted Form 32 licence applications, in which aspirants responded to 75 questions, provided the regulator with a substantial set of material upon which to base their assessment (ABA, 2000a). There was no limit to the amount of detail aspirants could provide in response to individual questions and they could also append supporting documents. These tend to be lengthy documents. Those I have obtained run to an average of 90 pages. Section 5 of the form asked for a range of details about the proposed service in order to elicit specific information pertaining to the community of interest criteria. Applicants were asked to identify and describe in detail the community their proposed service is intended to serve (Q28, Q29i); to describe the existing and perceived future needs of that community in relation to community broadcasting (Q29ii); and to identify the extent to which existing media services (radio, television, print and other relevant media) meet the needs of the

⁶⁵ The Act declares that a maximum of seven members may be appointed, of which there will be a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson (Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992, S155).

identified community (Q31, Q32) (ABA, 2000a, Section 5). A number of these questions specifically directed the aspirant to provide evidence to support their claims and the Sydney and Melbourne licensing reports indicate such evidence was important, noting, for instance, that the ABA considered 'in relation to each applicant . . . the evidence supporting the existence of the claimed community interest' (ABA, 2001d, p.16; ABA, 2001c, p.17). These reports emphasised that 'independent evidence' was of great value (cf. ABA, 2001d, p.53, p.59; ABA, 2001c, p.100).

However, the ABA was not limited to making its assessment on the basis of Form 32 applications and the evidence contained therein. The Authority also made the licence applications available at local public libraries and called for public comment upon them and in Sydney and Melbourne, as indicated above, it held public hearings. Importantly, the Act provides the regulator with extensive information gathering powers, allowing it to assemble its own independent evidence. Section 169 states that 'in making a decision on any matter, the ABA is not limited to a consideration of material made available through an investigation or hearing conducted in relation to the matter, but may take into account such other matters as it considers relevant, including the knowledge and experience of its Members (Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992, S169). In its Melbourne licensing report the ABA revealed that it had consulted a range of sources including:

- Census data . . . ;
 - information provided by applicants for the available licences;
 - information contained in the Melbourne LAP, and the draft Melbourne LAP and Discussion Paper;
 - public submissions to the Melbourne community licence allocation process;
 - ABA research monograph 8: Youth and Music in Australia and Headbanging or Dancing; and
 - ABA study Listening to the Listeners: Radio Research.
- (ABA, 2001c, p.16; ABA, 2001d, p.15)

The Sydney report mirrors this list but omits *Listening to the Listeners* (ABA, 2001d).

What stands out is that the only community-specific material consulted by the ABA was its own youth research monographs *Youth and Music in Australia* and *Headbanging or Dancing*. It is not surprising these studies were consulted. The preface to *Youth and Music in Australia* noted that the research ‘will inform the ABA’s spectrum planning and licensing process, especially in relation to community services in capital cities where there may be opportunities for broadcasting services which address the needs of local youth through youth-oriented services’ and a similar statement appeared in *Headbanging or Dancing* (London and Hearder, 1997, p.v; Ramsay, 1998a, p.17). But, the absence of specific studies on communities served by other aspirants (even the more general report *Listening to the Listeners* was designed to foreground the attitudes of young people to radio), suggests that youth aspirants had a clear advantage over their rivals—particularly with regards to linking their community of interest with patterns of media consumption. As described in detail in Chapter Two, these reports argued that youth had been central to the considerations of metropolitan radio programmers during the 1960s and 1970s but this had changed sometime during the 1980s and, while young people continued to listen to the available stations, their specific needs were no longer addressed. The ABA Members did not overlook the independent evidence these reports provided for youth aspirants to meet criteria 2b and 2c.

In discussing the role of the regulator’s youth studies in reducing uncertainty in the resource allocation process, ABA Member Michael Gordon-Smith notes:

I think that the work on youth music was to that extent useful as a way of at least doing something to ask the questions about the relationship between young people and radio and for me I guess those reports probably did help give me an idea about the important role of music in for some people . . . I’m not going to make any kind of huge quantitative or empirical claims, but I think it did demonstrate that for some people, that period of life is an important one in terms of identity formation and that the gradual formation of taste around music is an important part of

that process itself, the definition and the way in which people find the music that they like and the people who like that music and the way in which those tastes are communicated and so on, it's an important part of life of young people (Gordon-Smith, 2011).

The youth aspirants also drew on these reports as independent evidence to support their claims. Indeed, almost all of the applications I have from youth aspirants refer to *Youth and Music in Australia* and *Headbanging or Dancing*. The ABA's other youth radio study, *Music, new music and all that: teenage radio in the 90s*, is also widely cited, as is the work of music industry bodies, such as AUSMUSIC, that had problematised the declining relationship between radio and youth in the 1980s and 1990s. While Adelaide's Fresh FM sparingly referred to the ABA's youth reports as an important source of research on the needs of its community of interest, Melbourne's SYN FM dedicated three pages to discussing these studies (Fresh Broadcasters Inc, 2001, p.40; SYN, 2001, p.40-42). SYN FM noted that *Music, New Music and all that* presented the case that while 'a strength of radio is its ability to connect with youth and students . . . youth radio was a lot stronger in the 1960s and 70s' (SYN, 2001, p.41-42). To reinforce the latter point SYN FM cited evidence from the *ABS Radio and Television Services Australia* report for 1996 that found that just '6 per cent of radio stations were aiming for people within the 18-24 brackets and a miniscule 1 per cent for the 17 and under market' (SYN, 2001, p.41-42).

In its application, HITZ FM not only referred to the ABA's reports as evidence that youth was a legitimate community of interest currently underserved by metropolitan radio services but, since the success of its own test broadcasts had been documented in these reports, pointed to them as evidence that the regulator already understood the 'influence HITZ has had on broadcasting' (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 2000a, p.79). HITZ FM also drew the regulator's attention back to the issue that drove much of the government's interest in youth radio's declining fortunes: the development of the local music industry. They referred to a report by AUSMUSIC (which they attached as an appendix to their application) that claimed

‘awarding a licence to HITZ would be the single most positive and economical way of addressing the need to encourage Australian artists’ (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 2000a, p.79; Counihan, 1994). This report also distinguished between the youth service proposed by HITZ FM and that of the ABC’s ‘alternative music’ Triple J service (Counihan, 1994, p.2).

The treatment of the ABC’s national youth network in the licensing process was somewhat unusual. HITZ FM was not the only youth aspirant to suggest that Triple J’s programming was ‘alternative’ and did not meet the needs of younger audiences. SYN FM, for instance, argued that the alternative programming of Triple J ‘caters for a demographic that includes aging trendies’ (SYN, 2001, p.45, p.39) Adelaide’s Fresh FM, referred to the comments of respondents to the ABA’s own *Headbanging or Dancing* survey as evidence that ‘JJJ did not cater to all young people’s musical tastes’ (Fresh Broadcasters Inc, 2001, p.35). While the regulator had identified Triple J’s alternative programming tendencies and deliberated over the impact of this on its engagement with youth (Cupitt, 2007; Ramsay, 1998a, p.86), it was the argument posed by many youth aspirants (including HITZ FM, KIX FM, Fresh FM and Groove FM) that as a ‘national’ service Triple J could not meet the needs of local youth that was more influential (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 2000a, p.39; New-Gen Radio Incorporated, 2000, p.22; Fresh Broadcasters Inc, 2001, p.35; YMS, 2002, p.29). Indeed, despite Criteria 2c explicitly directing the regulator to take account of national broadcasting services that are available within a local licence area when making its determination about radio service supply and demand, it seemed loathe to do so. The regulator determined in its Sydney (and Melbourne) report that Triple J is ‘a national, rather than a Sydney, service, and that its programming is therefore not specifically oriented to the Sydney licence area’ (ABA, 2001d, p.26; ABA, 2001c, p.31).

Apart from research relating to patterns of media provision and consumption, youth aspirants could draw upon a rich array of evidence from the social sciences to underpin their claim that youth was a distinct community. Youth was a well-established site of government investigation and intervention across a range of

policy fields in Australia, as elsewhere (for a broad introduction to youth studies in Australia see Irving et al., 1995; Bessant et al., 1998). SYN FM, for instance, pointed to research on youth education participation, while Groove FM presented data on youth indigeneity, ethnicity, unemployment, and household status from the ABS (SYN, 2001, p.38, p.43; YMS, 2002, p.19, p.23).

Youth aspirants were also well furnished with independent evidence of the size of the youth community since they all, at least partially, defined it in demographic terms and could therefore utilise population data from the ABS (cf. SYN, 2001, p.37; YMS, 2002, p.19, p.23; Fresh Broadcasters Inc, 2001, pp.40-41; New-Gen Radio Incorporated, 2000, p.18). Even in Sydney, where aspirant broadcaster FBi defined its community of interest as '[y]outh, arts and 'emerging culture'' that is not 'defined by age but rather by an interest in new and innovative cultural expression', drawing on the psychographic conceptualisation of youth, the ABA reported that it had relied on 'statistical information, which states there are 677,513 persons within the age group of 15-24 years in Sydney' to press its claims (ABA, 2001d, p.73). Where youth aspirants did not clearly quantify the size of their community themselves the regulator itself stepped in, independently consulting ABS statistics (ABA, 2001d, p.24; ABA, 2001c, p.28).

This advantage was not limited to youth. Some other aspirants, including those focused on religious, indigenous, and ethnic communities, could utilise this type of data to reveal the size of their communities, and the ABA also independently obtained and consulted ABS data on these communities (ABA, 2001d, pp.23-25; ABA, 2001c, pp.23-28). As the subject of ongoing government interest, the nature of these communities, like youth, had been subject to extensive investigation. While they generally did not have had the benefit of government-sponsored media studies, they were in a better position than a range of aspirants targeting communities for which there was little independent evidence with relation to size, nature, or media demand. The difficulty these aspirants, including those representing Generation X, socially and economically marginalised, theatre-going, country music and dance music communities, had in convincing the ABA that they

met criteria 2b and 2c is well illustrated in the Sydney and Melbourne licensing reports.

In Sydney, 2Groove identified its community of interest as Generation X—people aged 25-40 years which it claimed had a set of preferred musical tastes, lifestyles and cultural experiences. Despite being able to easily quantify the size of this group using ABS data, the ABA had strong reservations about whether a group of people aged between 25 and 45 had specific needs and interests that would constitute a community interest for the purposes of the allocation of a community broadcasting licence (ABA, 2001d, p.59). The ABA concluded that:

in the absence of any *independent evidence* provided to the ABA by 2Groove to suggest otherwise, such an undifferentiated group may constitute a market or, more simply, an aggregation of tastes or preferences in relation to such things as music and lifestyle. However, the ABA is not persuaded that 25 to 45 years olds as such constitute a community interest (ABA, 2001d, p.59, my italics).

In Melbourne, Street FM claimed to primarily represent marginalised groups in the general community, with ‘the mainstream community who are on the fringe of, or who are most at risk of, becoming marginalised’ identified as a secondary audience. When questioned about the size of its target audience by the ABA, Street FM estimated that its dual communities were growing in size. But the ABA did ‘not accept Street FM’s estimate, firstly because no evidence was provided to justify the assumption made aside from a list of claimed marginalised groups in the community, and secondly because Street FM is unable to identify its secondary audience’ (ABA, 2001c, p.71).

Melbourne aspirant Showbiz Radio, which claimed to represent a community interested in theatre, cinema and film music, could call upon survey research by Roy Morgan Research that quantified the theatre going community but did not have access to specific media consumption research. As a result, the ABA rejected their

claims about the size of the community, noting that the group had ‘not provided any evidence to indicate that people who attend the theatre would necessarily be interested in participating in, or listening to, a broadcasting service focused on theatre and film music and information’ (ABA, 2001c, p.75).

Nu Country, a Melbourne country music aspirant, also struggled to convince the ABA of their community of interest claims. The ABA acknowledged the popularity of country music, but had difficulty in identifying listeners as a community of interest and disputed Nu Country’s claim that country music attracted ‘disadvantaged’ and ‘health for living’ communities, noting: ‘there is no evidence of a need for programming aimed at these communities as proposed by Nu Country’ (ABA, 2001c, p.65). Similarly, aspirants claiming to represent the dance music community found it difficult to convince the regulator of the cohesiveness and size of their community.

Sydney dance music aspirant New Wave admitted at the licence hearings that there was no accurate way to ascertain the size of its target audience. It estimated that 30,000 to 40,000 individuals attend dance clubs on a weekly basis and this provided a base figure for listenership (ABA, 2001d, p.55). In Melbourne KISS FM pointed to the attendance figures at major dance music festivals, and to rising sales of dance music CDs (KISS FM, 2000, p.42). But the ABA was unconvinced. In its Sydney report it noted that there is:

little evidence to show that dance music is a community interest in terms of the matters set out in s.84 of the Act, *other than the submissions of applicants for the community licences*, including New Wave. These submissions relate particularly to sales of CDs and expressions of support for their services. However, while the ABA accepts that there is a market for dance music, it does not accept that a market demand for dance music equates to a community need, and does not in itself amount to a community interest (ABA, 2001d, p.55, my italics).

The regulator's treatment of dance music aspirants is particularly interesting in light of the centrality of such programming to a number of aspirants that identified youth as their community of interest. During the test broadcasting process a number of youth aspirants themselves realised that youth would be accorded greater governmental legitimacy as a community of interest than one bound by an apparent interest in a specific type of music that the regulator might, and according to Gordon-Smith (2011) did, view as a type of content that might not sustain a community of interest in the long-term. Although HITZ was celebrated by AUSMUSIC (1994) and others (cf. Johnston, 1994) for its commitment to dance pop as a form of dance music, and had itself expressed the continuity benefits of having similar youth and dance music services test broadcasting when it was off air, as the initiation of the licence process neared it began to emphasise its youth focus and distance itself from dance music aspirants. In 1998, *The Age* reported that station manager Andrew Gyopar was 'confident HITZ can win a full-time licence in Melbourne . . . [since it] differs from stations such as KISS FM or KIX FM, because it is youth-focused and not just a dance music station' (Farrant, 1998). HITZ FM reinforced this in its actual licence application, noting that, unlike KISS FM, its own programming was 'much broader than simply playing a particular style of music' (Melbourne Youth Radio Inc, 2000a, p.44). In Adelaide, youth aspirant Fresh FM, which like HITZ was also known for its dance music programming, made a similar move in its application. It claimed that the aims of rival aspirant DANCE100 (PDNI) 'appear to be only to broadcast dance music whereas . . . [its own] management made a decision to focus on Youth by incorporating the policies necessary to adequately service the youth community' (Fresh Broadcasters Inc, 2001, p.41).

Such differentiation did not always go unchallenged. Although Sydney aspirant Wild FM claimed in its application 'that it is first and foremost a youth station and secondly a dance station', a public submission received by the ABA argued that it 'does not represent their [youth] community but rather is a dance music station with very little other content' (ABA, 2001d, p.40, p.9). The regulator would later concur with this claim noting that although 'dance music is a style of music which is

currently popular amongst some proportion of young people, it is not popular to the exclusion of a wide range of other styles of music' and, as such, Wild did not service the youth community of interest (ABA, 2001d, p.41). Alert to this issue, the ABA pursued a line of questioning at the Sydney licensing hearings that elicited an admission by youth aspirant UBI which had claimed to target 'all aspects of a youth-based lifestyle' that 'its programming had been almost exclusively targeted at those interested in dance music' (ABA, 2001d, p.57). Interestingly, the position of the regulator, that Wild and UBI were too narrowly programmed, directly contradicted the argument made by commercial broadcasters that these stations were too broadly programmed and not niche formats (see Brad March's comments above). This is a point to which I will return in more detail in Chapter Six.

Youth Community Broadcasting Licensees

Having been able to mount a compelling and evidence-based case that youth was an identifiable and sizeable community with particular media needs that were unmet by existing services, individual youth aspirants then needed to convince the regulator that the service they proposed was the best way to address these needs in accordance with Criteria 2a. In Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Gold Coast, and Hobart there was just one youth aspirant and so Criteria 2a was assessed as a threshold measure which each aspirant subsequently met. In Sydney and Melbourne the ABA had to decide which youth service better met Criteria 2a. Here, the publicly exposed case of Wild's commercial dealings clearly worried the ABA.

Wild, given the adverse findings of the ABA's separate investigation, were unlikely to have received a licence. But this case also generated 'nervousness' from some ABA Members that 'some of the youth aspirants were tending towards being commercial ventures, or at least ventures that would result in the financial gain of a small number of individuals . . . even if not the organisation as a whole' (Gordon-Smith, 2011). This was reflected in the licensing outcomes in Sydney and Melbourne, where aspirants playing more commercially-oriented music, such as dance pop, were overlooked, and the rationales advanced in support of these outcomes. Both

the Sydney and Melbourne licensing reports made it clear that the Authority 'is satisfied that there is a significant community need for a service which gives youth . . . access to programming which covers a wide range of *non-commercial* and *non-mainstream* interests' (ABA, 2001e, p.41; ABA, 2001c, p.59, my italics). More specifically, in explaining why SYN FM received its licence to serve youth ahead of both HITZ FM and KIX FM in the Melbourne licence area, the ABA stated that it was concerned about 'Hitz's previous CD contracts with a record company' and similar arrangements entered into by KIX which might conflict with the 'representation of the music interests of their respective communities' (ABA, 2001c). As a result, the services licensed in Melbourne and Sydney, SYN FM and FBi, certainly looked more like existing 'alternative' metropolitan community broadcasters such as 3RRR and 2SER, than some of the more commercial dance-pop oriented youth services licensed in other cities.

Conclusion

In this chapter I examined how a new articulation of Australian youth radio emerged through the licensing of youth community broadcasters in each of Australia's state capitals and the Gold Coast in the early 2000s. I argued that this new articulation was made possible through the expansion of community broadcasting opportunities that followed the introduction of the 1992 Broadcasting Services Act and subsequent nation-wide spectrum planning process. It was the drawn-out nature of this planning, which took almost all of the 1990s, that was particularly important for youth aspirants. These aspirants had few existing community broadcasting models from which to draw so the protracted planning provided them time to experiment with their services and for vanguard groups, in particular Melbourne's HITZ FM, to inspire the formation of further youth services. The rising popularity of dance music amongst young people during this period, which had largely been overlooked by existing radio services, provided a sound point of difference, while the commercial opportunities of this new mainstream music, and youth as a consumer market generally, provided a solid financial basis for many youth aspirants. As more youth aspirants emerged over the 1990s, the regulator's existing perception that youth as

an underserved radio community was also reinforced. When the planning period was finalised and the licensing process initiated, there were generally a number of well-established youth aspirants vying for the available licences. In what was a highly structured, evidence-based process, the extensive research produced by the regulator and other government-sponsored organisations on the deficiency of existing radio services to engage with youth provided youth aspirants with a clear advantage over many of their rivals. I argue that this made it possible for youth aspirants to obtain what might be considered a disproportionate number of community broadcasting licences at this time.

While the 1992 Broadcasting Services Act and the spectrum planning process may have yielded youth radio services that accorded with the desires of the local music industry in the community broadcasting sector, it would also facilitate a return of commercial youth radio by making new metropolitan commercial FM licences available. In the following chapter I examine the rise of Nova FM as a commercial youth radio service during the early-to-mid-2000s.

Chapter 5

Nova FM and the Return of Commercial Youth Radio

Introduction

This chapter examines the return of commercial youth radio to the Australian broadcasting landscape in the form of the Nova FM metropolitan radio network established by the Australian subsidiary of UK media group the Daily Mail and General Trust plc in the early 2000s. Although DMG Radio Australia (DMG) did not present the network to the market as targeted at youth and, in a move that paralleled that of the American creators of Top 40 radio in the 1950s, took very definite steps to emphasise that it aimed to attract a broad audience, I present evidence that it clearly came to be accepted as an articulation of youth radio in public discourse.

In this chapter I trace how Nova's youth radio credentials were initially established in the media and trade press before entering academic literature and eventually government discussions—where it impacted on the facilitation of non-commercial youth radio provision (see Chapter Six). I argue that the identification of Nova as youth radio was fundamentally enabled by synergies between Nova's programming innovations (and DMG's explanation of them), and the causes and symptoms of changes to commercial radio formats in the 1980s that had been identified and transposed into the youth radio policy problem outlined in Chapter Two. In terms familiar to those that bemoaned the sector's lack of interest in youth, DMG characterised the existing commercial radio landscape as being composed of stations that largely imitated each other, played a narrow range of familiar music as a result of an overreliance on conventional research tools that did not adequately identify listener preferences, and, in the absence of radio alternatives, attracted many listeners by default. Likewise, the elements of Nova's programming promoted by DMG, particularly the multi-genre music playlists and support for new music and

new Australian music, matched those that had been identified as having been lost when commercial radio moved out of the Top 40 youth radio format.

This chapter is divided into four sections. Section 1 describes changes to the regulation of Australian broadcasting that enabled the coordinated and sizable entry of DMG into the Australian radio market in the early 2000s. Section 2 details how DMG presented Nova FM to the market, highlighting specific programming innovations that it suggested constituted Nova as a highly distinctive service that would change the commercial radio landscape. Section 3 provides evidence that, despite DMG's insistence that Nova was targeted at a broad under 40 year-old audience, the popular media and trade press, and later academic and government commentators, came to commonly refer to Nova as youth radio. The final section of the chapter documents how this association was formulated as Nova's programming innovations were discussed in terms of youth or 'youthfulness' in the general and trade press.

In forming the core argument of this chapter I systematically collated and examined material from Australia's two central media and marketing magazines, *Adnews* and *Broadcasting and Television (B & T) Weekly*; Australia's two national newspapers, *The Australian* and *Australian Financial Review*; and all Metropolitan daily newspapers in each city in which Nova operates. Together, I take these as representative of broad national public discourse. I have attempted to refer to material published in each of the cities in which Nova operates to reinforce the national aspect of the network and its reception, but references to sources from Sydney and Melbourne outweigh those from other states. These are the first two cities in which Nova was launched and in relatively quick succession and so where the novelty of the station's format was first explored in detail, yielding much illustrative material.

Section 1: The Rise of DMG

In addition to the making provision for new community radio services, as described in Chapter Four, the 1992 Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) and national spectrum

planning review it mandated, also facilitated the release of new commercial licences in both regional and metropolitan markets. Plans for an expansion of metropolitan commercial radio had previously been outlined in the NRP released in 1988 (see Chapter Two). While the first stage of this plan was to facilitate the move of two existing commercial AM stations in each of the mainland state capitals onto the FM band, the second stage made provision for two new FM stations in each metropolitan market (Evans, 1988e). By the end of 1989, eight AM conversions had occurred, but here is where the plan stalled. A significant economic downturn after 1988 put a halt to the AM conversions and in 1990 the Minister for Transport and Communications announced that stage two was to be delayed until 1993 to allow industry consolidation (Griffen-Foley, 2009, pp.94-95; Beazley, 1990, p.10; for a data picture of the downturn see: ABA, 2000b). In 1992 the minister agreed that the release of new licences should be further delayed to allow metropolitan commercial operators to consolidate their market position—a consolidation enhanced by the new Act's relaxation of metropolitan ownership limits which now allowed owners to control two rather than just one station in each city (DMG, 1999, pp.8-9).

Despite these delays, the government maintained a clear commitment to expanding the metropolitan FM radio opportunities it had first outlined in the NRP and subsequently reinforced as part of the diversification objective of the BSA. To help facilitate metropolitan radio development the government relaxed foreign ownership restrictions (Collingwood, 1997, p.5). They did so in light of local capital shortfalls that had undermined the first phase of the NRP⁶⁶—when five out of fourteen metropolitan stations defaulted on their FM conversion (Randall, 1992; Miller, 1995).

In the mid-1990s the Daily Mail and General Trust plc (DMGT), a major British newspaper group with a history extending back to launch of the *Daily Mail* in 1896, began to strategically diversify its media holdings (DMGT, 2009). In 2009, DMGT

⁶⁶ Collingwood (1997, p.5) notes that the removal of foreign investment restrictions was principally motivated by concerns about access to capital. However, it was also seen to have international trade ramifications as it demonstrated Australia's commitment to reducing barriers to entry in a significant sector of the media industry.

Chairman, Viscount Rothermere, explained that his predecessor had 'made a decision some 15 years ago to diversify the group away from the UK newspaper market into other media less dependent on newspapers, advertising and the UK' (DMGT, 2009, p.2). Appreciating the new prospects emerging in the Australian radio market, DMGT established an Australian subsidiary, DMG Radio Australia (DMG), and in February 1996 announced plans to establish a new Australian metropolitan radio network. It expected to complete the network within three years (Bawden, 2002; Eliezer, 1996).

DMGT appointed highly experienced radio network architect Paul Thompson as DMG CEO to build its Australian network. Thompson had started his radio career as a DJ in the mid-1960s before moving into programming and then station management in the early 1970s. In 1980 he became part of the Austereo consortium that acquired Adelaide's first commercial FM licence and established SAFM (Schulze, 2002b). By 1984 SAFM was Adelaide's top rating station and in 1986, under Thompson's leadership, the company began acquiring FM stations in other states, in doing so it developed Australia's first metropolitan commercial FM radio network. Thompson remained at the helm of Austereo until 1995 when it was purchased by network rival, Village Roadshow (Bawden, 2002; Eliezer, 2001). The day after the expiration of his one-year 'non-compete' agreement with Village Roadshow, Thompson joined DMG, the parent company of which he knew well having enlisted its support in a bid to stop the Village Roadshow's takeover of Austereo in 1994 (Schulze, 2002b). The experience Thompson brought to DMG and his impact in the role cannot be overstated. Even before the Nova network was complete he was being referred to as 'the father of commercial radio in Australia' (Adams, 2001). When he stepped down from the role of DMG CEO in 2008 Michael Bodey in *The Australian* concluded that 'Thompson's influence on the medium has been immense' (Bodey, 2008).

In announcing DMG's network ambitions, Thompson indicated that he may need to purchase some existing metropolitan stations, but he also anticipated bidding for new licences. Capital was seemingly not a problem, with Thompson telling the

press: '[I]et's just say we aim to achieve a significant national presence—resources will not be an obstacle' (Eliezer, 1996). As it turned out, Thompson would have few opportunities to spend DMG's money during the three year period in which the company had planned to have completed its network (Canning, 2003).

Following consolidation in the early 1990s, the metropolitan FM radio market had become highly profitable and there was little incentive for existing players to put stations on the market (Sexton, 1994, p.70). Consolidation had yielded efficiency gains, while expanded revenue opportunities emerged from station networking (DMG, 1999, pp.8-9). In relation to the latter, BRW noted that a key competitive advantage for Austereo was that 'it was the only company that could offer advertisers the chance to promote their products over a national network' (Thomson, 2004, p.35). Capital city commercial FM radio advertising revenue grew at an exceptional average annual rate of 6.1 per cent between 1993-4 and 1997-8 (Productivity Commission, 2000, p.131). Aggregate metropolitan radio PBIT to tangible assets ratios (a typical measure of financial performance) rose from approximately 20 per cent in 1993-4 to 30 per cent in 1997-8 (ABA, 2000b, p.12).

The release of new metropolitan licences promised under the NRP had also been further delayed as the process was subsumed within the broader, complicated, and time-consuming, national spectrum planning process. This was being undertaken by the newly formed ABA in accordance with the 1992 Act. As detailed in relation to Community Broadcasting in Chapter Four, metropolitan planning and licensing was a low priority. This accorded with a recurrent political interest in improving rural broadcasting services also discussed in relation to the NRP and Triple J rollout in chapter three. But, by 1994 frustrations at the delays in metropolitan planning and licensing were beginning to be voiced at the highest level. As noted in Chapter Four, the Minister for Communications having asked the ABA to explain the delays was assured that metropolitan planning would commence in June 1995 and be complete within one year (Johns, 1994). It was thought that new commercial licences would be released in 1996 (Sexton, 1994, p.71). But this was not to be.

Faced with these ongoing metropolitan planning delays, DMG looked for other Australian investment opportunities (Schulze, 2002b). In 1997 it began acquiring regional stations from Rural Press and the Broadcast Media Group and by 1999 was Australia's largest regional radio proprietor⁶⁷. But the company remained frustrated by the lack of metropolitan options (Collingwood, 1997, p.20; DMG, 1999). In its submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry into broadcasting, DMG argued that despite the prerequisite condition of market consolidation having occurred and plans that new licences be determined no later than 1995-96, 'potential investors . . . [were] still waiting' in 1999 (DMG, 1999, p.9). DMG considered the delayed release of new licences an 'appalling situation' and a one that created an 'artificial state of the market' in which two companies owned all of the commercial FM licences in the state capitals and enjoyed absolute dominance in terms of audience penetration, revenues and profits (DMG, 1999, p.7).

It was not until 2000 that the first new metropolitan commercial radio licences became available. As previously mentioned, in December 1999 the ABA had completed the Sydney LAP. This initially made provision for the release of one additional commercial FM licence. In May 2000 the licence was auctioned. It was acquired by DMG, outbidding rivals RG Capital, the Lamb family (owners of Sydney AM station 2UE that had pioneered Top 40 programming in the 1950s) and US media group Second Generation (B&T, 2003c). DMG paid AUD\$155 million for the licence, an amount that made little sense as a stand-alone venture, but was a vital first stage in DMG's networking plans, and a move that diminished the enthusiasm of other groups that may have had network ambitions⁶⁸ (B&T, 2003c, p.17; Schulze, 2002b; Luker, 2002). Over the next four years DMG would, either independently or in partnership with the Australian Radio Network (ARN), acquire all of the new licences made available under the finalised capital city LAPs (see Table 5.1). Outlays on these licences amounted to a total of AUD\$579 million.

⁶⁷ In 2004 DMG sold most of its regional holdings to the Macquarie Bank (Schulze, 2004).

⁶⁸ Executive Chairman of Austereo Peter Harvie was critical of the amount paid by DMG. He told trade magazine *B&T Weekly*, 'The Sydney market is worth \$170m and when you've got someone paying \$155m for one licence, then the numbers just don't really add up' (B&T, 2000).

Table 5.1 DMG metropolitan FM radio involvement

City	Licence Date	Cost \$mil	Station	Debut
Sydney	May 2000	155	Nova	April 2001
Melbourne	Dec 2000	70	Nova	Dec 2001
Perth	Feb 2002	25	Nova*	Dec 2002
Adelaide	Oct 2003	24	Nova	Aug 2004
Brisbane	Apr 2004	80	Nova	April 2005
Brisbane	May 2001	67	97.3FM#	Sep 2001
Sydney	Apr 2004	106	Vega	Aug 2005
Melbourne	Aug 2004	52	Vega	Aug 2005

* Joint venture with ARN, operated by DMG

Joint venture with ARN, operated by ARN

With its initial Sydney licence acquisition, DMG launched the first station in what would become its Nova FM network. Nova stations would subsequently be rolled out in Melbourne in December 2001, Perth in December 2002, Adelaide in August 2004 and Brisbane in April 2005, at a total licensing cost of more than AUD\$350 million. Overall, Nova's signal would extend over more than 30,000 square kilometres, a footprint covering approximately 60 per cent of the Australian population (ABS, 2001; ABS, 2006b). Upon their launch, Nova stations generally achieved substantial ratings success. Reflecting upon early ratings results in Sydney and Melbourne, *The Australian* journalist Andrew Dodd reported that the debut of these stations was 'one of Australia's most successful media brand launches ever' (Dodd, 2002). With the network rollout complete in 2005, Zonneveldt reported that DMG's rise had 'sent shockwaves through the \$850 million radio industry' indicating that Thompson's desire for 'a significant national presence' may have seemed 'a big call' in 1996, but a decade on the 'Nova juggernaut controls the airwaves' (Zonneveldt, 2005a; Zonneveldt, 2005b).

Indeed, the size of the financial investment in the Nova network, its significant geographic and population coverage, and its ratings success, underpinned discussions that the Australian radio landscape had been substantially altered by its emergence. That this discourse would come to refer to the change, to Nova, as the

return of commercial youth radio, was not a position promoted by DMG. DMG did not refer to Nova as a youth format, nor did the company refer to youth as the target market of the station. What DMG did do was generate interest in Nova as a radio format significantly different to existing commercial offerings that had, by the 2000s, long been associated in the media and trade press and policy discourse with an aging audience.

Section 2: Introducing Nova FM

On 25 March 2001, DMG launched Nova FM in Sydney. It was Sydney's first additional commercial radio service since commercial FM was introduced twenty years earlier. In fact, this two decade hiatus in commercial radio expansion was broken by Nova in almost all markets it entered. Simply by breaking this drought the station was always likely to generate substantial interest. Given both the massive fee DMG had paid to enter the market, and the sure-footed nature of existing commercial FM players—some commentators considered market-leader Austereo's position as 'impregnable'—the company could have rested upon this element of novelty and taken a conservative approach to programming (Javes, 2003a; Celmins and Buchanan, 2005, p.225). Certainly, critics had drawn a link between the financial risks taken by radio proprietors during the market reshuffle of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the trend towards conservative and homogenous programming. As discussed in Chapter Two, this had been drawn into the argument that radio had abandoned youth.

Graeme Turner suggested people in the industry were aware that conservative, duplicated programming was becoming a problem but no one was 'prepared to be the first to break the mould, change to a more adventurous format, and risk taking a bath in the ratings' (Turner, 1993, p.144). Indeed, as early as 1991, Hobart's TT FM commercial station General Manager, Mark Robinson, had openly declared that 'a lot of people are just flabbergasted that there is so much copying going on in the market' (Ad News, 1991). The Campaign Palace advertising agency made it clear in a piece published in *Ad News* in 1991 that they felt the focus of the two major

networks was, 'more towards copying and counteracting each other rather than towards developing something new for consumers' (Campaign Palace, 1991). When Thompson announced DMG's network intentions in 1996, he made it clear that DMG was an industry player who also understood the need for a new approach to programming. He suggested that DMG would be 'heading down somewhat original paths' and creating a radio format that is 'very much based on what the audience needs and isn't getting now' (Eliezer, 1996).

Five years later, when their opportunity finally arrived, DMG had apparently become no less adventurous. Thompson told the trade press that DMG were 'looking forward to providing Sydney listeners with a fresh new alternative to the existing commercial FM radio stations' (B&T, 2000). In fact, to position Nova in the market DMG employed a public relations campaign that leveraged off existing criticisms of the homogenous and conservative nature of commercial FM programming, reworking the evidence that had been previously been deployed to suggest that radio had abandoned youth.

DMG consistently presented an argument to the popular and trade press that a particular FM music radio formula and a small number of stations had been allowed to dominate Australian radio, leading to 'predictability in the whole radio world' (Schulze, 2002a). The company argued that with so few players in the market there had been little incentive for stations to try anything too far outside the formula (Schulze, 2002a; Javes, 2003a; Sutton, 2003). Existing stations had become complacent—comfortable just tweaking playlists and presentation styles, and closely monitoring and responding to similar adjustments made by competitors (Adams, 2001). Listenership may not have dropped, but with few alternatives under this regime, DMG suggested that for listeners 'a certain boredom, an acceptance' had set in (Sutton, 2003). With the focus on simply responding to competitors, commercial stations had neglected their listeners, capturing them by default rather than through genuine engagement; a formulation that had specifically been used to describe radio's relationship with youth in the post-Top 40 era, as noted in Chapter Two. Comments from the executives of these stations seemed to support the

conclusion that the audience was thought of in a rather detached manner. For instance, discussing the impending entry of Nova into the Melbourne market in December 2001, the Program Director of Melbourne's Fox FM, Brian Ford, indicated that Nova was 'coming after an audience we have a lot of, so you could call it a war' (Adams, 2001).

DMG's counter position was that it would create a station that reflected the demands of listeners not competitors. Throughout the development of the network the company maintained a strong public position that it did not discuss or even listen to other stations. For instance, just after the launch of Nova in Melbourne, Station Manager, Ronnie Stanton was asked about the impact the station was having upon the programming of its competitors. He told the *Sunday Herald Sun*, 'I really don't listen to them . . . we run our own race here and take no notice of what the others are doing' (Stewart, 2002). Before Nova launched in Perth *The West Australian* reported that Managing Director Gary Roberts had specifically asked his staff to stop listening to other stations; with Roberts arguing that 'we're not going to sound different if we're listening to what other stations are doing'⁶⁹ (Irving, 2002). Paul Thompson told *The Australian* at this time, 'We don't even allow discussion about our competitors internally at DMG' (Schulze, 2002b). He later emphasised in Sydney's *Sun Herald*: 'competitors are entirely irrelevant', since DMG 'focus only on the listener' (Sutton, 2003).

So it was that DMG would claim that the key elements of Nova's format had emerged from listener research conducted in the lead-up to the station's launch in Sydney. Instead of employing 'conventional research tools', such as auditorium music tests and perceptual studies, which they viewed as contributing to the reinforcement (and stagnation) of existing commercial programming—again a critique levied by those that sought to explain the demise of commercial youth radio through the 1980s and 1990s—DMG's programmers sought to be 'more inventive

⁶⁹ As it turns out Perth's Nova would be listening to other stations quite intently, at least to community broadcaster Groove FM (see Chapter Six).

with research methodology'⁷⁰ (Celmins and Buchanan, 2005, p.232). Although the details of the methodological innovations are not clear, DMG have indicated that they spent eight months conducting interviews with over 4,000 Sydney FM radio listeners under 40 years of age (B&T, 2001; Williamson, 2001a; Celmins and Buchanan, 2005, p.225; Bawden, 2001c). DMG claims that such extensive interviewing was replicated throughout the spread of Nova services as they sought to understand nuances of local markets, and that it subsequently maintained an ongoing program of market research in each city. It does seem, however, that the core features of the format were derived from the findings of the initial Sydney research (Sutton, 2003; Salmons, 2001b; Schulze, 2002b). These findings challenged a number of established radio programming conventions, and would inform three elements that DMG presented as fundamental to the design of the Nova format (Celmins and Buchanan, 2005, p.232).

Firstly, DMG found that listeners were aware of the commercial imperatives of radio and did not dislike commercials per se. But listeners disliked the volume of ads and the way radio programmed them in large blocks. This disrupted the flow of their listening and led to turn off or station switching (Celmins and Buchanan, 2005, p.226; Jacobs, 2003a; B&T, 2001). As an early indication to the audience that Nova would take a new approach to commercial programming, the station carried no advertising at all during its first two weeks on air in Sydney (Bawden, 2001b). When the commercials did arrive they came at a much lower volume, just 4 minutes per hour (less than half that of other commercial FM stations) and they never came in blocks of more than two in a row (Bawden, 2001c; DMGT, 2001).

This advertising strategy represented a substantial modification to the existing commercial programming and business model. DMG would accommodate a low advertising inventory by charging premium prices on the basis that advertisers were

⁷⁰ There are claims that DMG CEO Paul Thompson was a pioneer of market research for radio in Australia. As a programmer in the late 1960s he began sending teams of people to local record stores to see what music was being purchased and the demographics of the purchasers (Schulze, 2002b). Actually, this had been a method informing Top 40 programming from the late 1950s as discussed in Chapter One.

appearing in a more exclusive and less cluttered environment. They would also allow advertisers flexibility in terms of the number of ads booked, their duration and where they appeared on the hot clock (Carbone, 2001a). The novelty of this model was heavily promoted by DMG who claimed that Nova carried fewer commercials than 'any other commercial radio station in the world' and that their premium pricing business model was a world first⁷¹ (O'Riordan, 2002a; Appel, 2005; B&T, 2001).

Nova's competitors suggested that the strategy was a gimmick to attract listeners and would quickly come to an end. But once Nova was on air DMG commissioned and publicly released research from the University of South Australia that indicated the effectiveness of the strategy for advertisers when compared with established practices (Riebe et al., 2002). Indeed, DMG set about challenging the fundamental aspect of radio advertising strategy which had emerged with spot advertising in the 1950s: the idea that advertising frequency was pivotal to effectiveness (Jones, 1995, p.69; Walker, 1984, p.122). DMG claimed that its commissioned research found the impact of frequency was substantially undermined by the clutter caused when advertisements appeared in large blocks. In taking this research-based position, DMG indicated a clear commitment to the low advertising volume strategy and it was maintained by the company for the best part of a decade (Olszewski, 2010). According to DMG, so different was this new commercial formula that it put them completely outside the commercial radio landscape of their competitors (in some sense an extension of the notion that they were unconcerned by the actions of the competition). Asked about Nova's role in Perth's radio advertising battle by the *Australian Financial Review*, Nova Managing Director Gary Roberts replied, '[p]lease don't attempt to draw us into their [other FM stations] campaign; we are not in the business of selling traditional radio' (Klinger, 2002).

A second element of the Nova format that DMG claimed had emerged from its research was the use of fresh on-air talent (Williamson, 2001b). Thompson indicated

⁷¹ The idea of low volume but premium position high impact advertising to some degree reflects that promoted by radio during the pre-television period (Walker, 1984, p.122; Crawford, 2008, p.79).

that it would have been 'disappointing for everyone' if the station 'had announced that we'd recycled all these personalities that have been around for a decade or more' (Williamson, 2001b). So, when Thompson announced the station's line-up of presenters prior to the station's Sydney launch most of them were unknowns, an on-air selection policy promoted by DMG as they rolled out the network. For instance, in Perth, Nova Station Manager Gary Roberts told the press that in establishing the station he would be steering clear of 'known names' and 'won't be recycling the same old talent that's been in the marketplace for a long period of time' (O'Riordan, 2002b; Irving, 2002).

Although it would be their first time on commercial radio, one well-known set of presenters that would form part of Sydney's Nova team were the drive-time presenters of the ABC's Triple J youth radio network, Merrick & Rosso (Sutton, 2003). They would present the breakfast shift, fitting Nova's demand for a team that would bring 'something new and young and funny' to the most important commercial radio day-part (Javes, 2001e). As with the advertising strategy, DMG publicly emphasised how their recruitment and presentation of new talent, especially Merrick and Rosso, placed Nova outside the context of traditional radio. This point was made clear by Programme Director Dean Buchanan when explaining the impetus for the Merrick and Rosso breakfast show to *The Australian*:

We realised we couldn't have a traditional product, with traditional breakfast announcers, because there were already traditional radio stations who were really good at that . . . We loved the fact [Merrick and Rosso] were green and had never worked in commercial radio before (Jackson, 2003b).

As discussed below, the comparison of Nova with Triple J and the impact on its listenership would reinforce perceptions that Nova represented a return of commercial youth radio.

The third programming direction identified by DMG through its listener research related to the most fundamental concern for commercial FM stations: the selection and repetition of music. Larry Bruce, NOVA's general manager, indicated that DMG

had found evidence that contradicted the assumption held by ‘traditional Australian FM stations . . . [that] people liked only one type of music’ (Bawden, 2001c; Celmins and Buchanan, 2005, p.225). Nova General Manager Fiona Cameron explained that this assumption had led to homogenous playlists based on a particular target audience, with stations choosing to do ‘pop for girls or rock for boys or oldies’ stuff’ (Adams, 2001). In contrast, Nova would present ‘extreme musical variety’, quite deliberately deciding to ‘clash contemporary music styles together for the greatest effect’, generating what they called ‘train-wreck programming’ (Thomson, 2001, p.40; Miller, 2002; Irving, 2002; Casey, 2003b).

Programmer Dean Buchanan suggested that the way in which Nova put together music that the audience indicated it liked ‘irrespective of genre or style’ made it distinct from radio programming ‘anywhere else in the world’ (Celmins and Buchanan, 2005, p.226; Chapman, 2001). Actually, in some ways this appeal to genre-neutral popularity programming reflected the position taken by Todd Storz in developing Top 40 in the 1950s—a point not lost on *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist Bernard Zuel (2001a - see discussion below). The result, in the early 2000s was not rock’n’roll radio, but according to Paul Thompson ‘alternative-style contemporary rock and dance music’ radio (Thomson, 2001). This was a format description that also sounded a lot like the type of genre mixing that had become typical of the Triple J network as described in Chapter Three.

DMG emphasised that NOVA would also play more new music than had been the recent trend in commercial radio. Paul Thompson reiterated what had been clearly established by the local music industry, their supporters and the broadcasting regulator: commercial radio was at this time ‘not a medium that launched new music but recycled music that had been exposed by other media’ (Frew, 2004). While an overuse of traditional research methods had led to a privileging of the familiar and caused commercial radio to miss the boat on new music trends, DMG claimed that its broader audience research had revealed listeners ‘wanted radio to balance new music with familiar, but whatever was new, they wanted it now, not six weeks later when the radio station decides’ (Celmins and Buchanan, 2005, p.227).

Nova's Melbourne Program Director Dan Bradley said the station would honour such preferences, noting 'if we get a great song in, we'll put it to air straight away' (Adams, 2001). Listeners would not even have to wait for the station to have considered it at a weekly music meeting according to Bradley. Paul Thompson later claimed that 'what the Novas did was to bring new music back to commercial radio and re-establish[ed] it as a platform for new music in Australia' (Frew, 2004).

According to DMG, new local music was to be accorded particular support by Nova since they had found that playing new local music, especially when it was closely identified with a region or suburb, was an important differentiation strategy (Celmins and Buchanan, 2005, p.227). DMG were to heavily promote such localism, aware of its public and policy importance, and using it to criticise its established opposition⁷². DMG Program Director Dan Bradley made the case in Melbourne's highest circulating newspaper, the *Herald Sun*:

We've looked at Melbourne bands we can support . . . we're going to try to embrace Melbourne bands as much as we can. Melbourne people have said they're over commercial radio ignoring great Melbourne bands (Adams, 2001)

Bradley was supported by Melbourne station manager, Ronnie Stanton, who claimed that Nova supported local musicians, including those not signed to major labels, by playing new local material throughout the day, while other commercial stations tended to play local material at 3am when nobody is listening (Stewart, 2002). This was an effective, yet somewhat spurious argument as the *Australian Music on Radio* inquiry of the 1980s had addressed this issue by mandating that the 20 per cent music quota be applied between the hours of 6am and midnight, and this was subsequently adopted as the 'Australian Performance Period' in the

⁷² DMG were acutely aware of the policy and commercial importance of localism. In the 1990s a series of bogus letters written by Austereo's public relations consultant to newspapers, and state and federal politicians blamed DMG for a loss of localism in regional radio, sparking a federal parliamentary inquiry into regional radio (Marriner, 2001a) Thompson said, as a consequence DMG 'were being damaged at the regulator level, at the government level, at backbench level, at the advertiser level' (Frew, 2004) In 2001, DMG settled court proceedings with Austereo over the matter.

Commercial Radio Code of Practice that applied when Stanton made his comments (ABT, 1986; ABT, 1988c; FARB, 1999a).

Section 3: DMG Sets out Nova's Target Audience, but is Anybody Listening?

While DMG had been quite detailed in their description of the Nova format and the rationales that underpinned it, they were less nuanced about the audience the service was seeking to attract. In the lead-up to Nova's Sydney launch, DMG revealed that the target audience would be the under 40 demographic (cf. in the trade press, B&T, 2001; cf. in the popular press, Chapman, 2001). They maintained this broad audience identifier as the Nova brand was rolled out in other state capitals (cf. Brygel, 2001 - Melbourne; Irving, 2002 - Perth; Bawden, 2004 - Adelaide; Chalmers, 2004 - Brisbane). Such broad market aggregation had long been a feature of Australian commercial radio, enabled by a regulatory system that limited the number of competing commercial services and, until the 1992 Broadcasting Services Act, legislatively required individual stations to provide a comprehensive service.

Following the release of Nova's first rating results in Sydney in mid-2001 Thompson disaggregated the audience slightly, suggesting Nova was strong in 'the traditional demographics of 18 to 24 and 25 to 39' (Salmons, 2001b). This disaggregation accorded with industry standard calculative demographic categories. Interestingly, the standard 10 to 17 demographic did not figure in Thompson's description here and generally the under 18 population did not figure in DMG's discussions of Nova's under 40 target audience. Although this seems to reflect a position that younger population segments are less attractive to advertisers, DMG were certainly not disinterested in attracting younger listeners, even under-18s. They are counted in ratings surveys and thereby contribute to the aggregate under 40s result used to promote Nova to advertisers. As traditional demographic segments, particularly 18-24s, they are often highlighted in media reports on rating results, sending a very public signal to advertisers. As will be made clear in chapter six, DMG take competition for younger segments seriously and would act against stations who threaten to diminish their ratings by attracting younger listeners. This was

particularly the case in the early stages of Nova's development when DMG considered younger segments more susceptible to station switching, an argument also examined in more detail in Chapter Six (Javes, 2003a).

The point is, to maintain Nova's general appeal, DMG were careful not to overtly privilege any segment of the under 40 audience. For example, prior to Nova's launch in Melbourne, General Manager Fiona Cameron said the station:

was targeting everyone who likes a variety of music, but its main demographic was the 15 to 39 age group. No doubt people in their 20s are going to be more enthusiastic about it than most, but there certainly is a much broader audience (Green, 2001).

DMG had to work hard to maintain this position, not only against the media's general discussion of Nova's 'youthfulness' (as illustrated below), but also against misrepresentation of its more calculative demographic target. For instance in the piece 'Fountain of youth for Nova', published in *The Australian* on 22 June 2001, Sophie Tedmanson, writes: '[w]ith its slogan, 'sounds different', Nova has marketed itself to the *10-24 age demographic*' (Tedmanson, 2001, my italics).

It is not surprising that six months after the launch of Nova in Melbourne, DMG took the opportunity to alert the media to research from AC Nielsen that revealed the average age of Nova's audience, like that of Melbourne's FM stations generally, is over thirty. This research showed Nova's average listener to be aged 32.9—older than Triple J's 32.2, but also older than Austereo's Triple M (31.5) and Fox FM (31.3) as well as ARN's Mix FM (32.0) (Farouque, 2002e). Commenting on these results, Global Media Analysis director Bob Peters noted that they reveal the 'broad appeal' of FM stations, an argument DMG was clearly attempting to draw out by promoting this research to the media. Interestingly, similar moves to publicly emphasise the broad nature of their audience was made by the initial Top 40 stations in the United States in the early 1950s to counteract claims they were a niche broadcaster only attracting an audience of low market value (as discussed in Chapter One).

Responding to reports comparing the ratings results of Nova and Triple J, Dean Buchanan, Nova's Group Program Director, also emphasised the broad nature of Nova's target audience, pointing out that Nova's target audience is the under 40 demographic, and is therefore 'young at heart rather than young' (Brook, 2002). His reference here to a psychographic conception of the audience as youthful was perhaps intended as a compromise, given the call to comment on a very specific empirical comparison. Although not a position promoted by DMG, it is an important point. It was this process of discursive formation, largely unencumbered by empirical reference points, and contradicting those promoted by DMG, that would enable Nova to come to be viewed as a youth radio network and would return youth to prominence in dialogue about commercial radio.

The media began to connect Nova and youth even prior to the official launch of the station in Sydney on 1 April 2001. In the lead up, Australian Associated Press (AAP) reported that the 'station's focus will mainly be on youth', a conclusion they had drawn from statements by Dean Buchanan that actually accord with the broader target identified and presented by DMG. Buchanan had told AAP that 'a lot of our research has been centred on what people actually want, regardless of what their age is. But fair to say, we'll be a younger-focused radio station, under 40 (years-old)' (Australian Associated Press, 2001). In Adelaide, where DMG has its headquarters, *The Adelaide Advertiser* carried a small piece indicating that the Sydney service would launch the following day with a 'focus mainly on youth' (Adelaide Advertiser, 2001). On the day of the launch, Sydney's *Sun Herald* ran a piece titled 'FM wasted on young: Mulray' in which radio personality Doug Mulray stated that 'Nova FM are going for the youth end of the market' and reporter Christine Sam concurred, suggesting Nova's breakfast presenters will be engaged in a 'key war for the morning youth market' (Sams, 2001).

Media references connecting Nova and youth did not abate once the Sydney station began transmissions. When Nova's first full-survey rating results were released in July 2001, Jane Schulze of *The Australian* referred to 'DMG Radio Australia's new youth-oriented Nova FM station', a descriptor she would employ prior to the launch

of Nova in Melbourne later that year, which she expected to be ‘youth-oriented in the same vein as Nova 96.9 [Sydney]’ (Schulze, 2001b; Schulze, 2001a). Indeed, Schulze would be a keen purveyor of the youth moniker, generally referring to Nova as ‘youth-oriented’, but also using the terms ‘youth-targeted’ and ‘youth station’, in more than 20 articles published in *The Australian* from the launch of the first Nova station in 2001 until the network was completed in April 2005 (articles sourced from Factiva database, 2012). Schulze was not alone in using the somewhat distinctive ‘youth-oriented’ formulation at *The Australian*. Her colleague, Amanda Meade, in a piece titled ‘Nova FM music to young ears’ that examined Nova’s early Sydney ratings, noted that ‘the youth-oriented station was the biggest winner in the survey’ (Meade, 2001).

References to Nova as a youth service were also not limited to *The Australian*. For instance, during the establishment of Nova in Sydney Cosima Mariner reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that Nova ‘is pitched at the youth audience that advertisers love’ (Marriner, 2001c). In Melbourne, even prior to the launch of the local Nova service, Richard Salmons referred to Nova as a ‘youth-oriented’ service in the local broadsheet *The Age* (Salmons, 2001a). Similar descriptions that connected Nova and youth appeared in other capital city papers prior to the launch of local Nova services and established the language with which to describe the station when it did arrive (cf. Courier Mail, 2003; Torpy, 2002).

After 2002, when Nova stations had been launched in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, references to a Nova as a ‘youth network’ began to appear alongside those of ‘youth station’ (Frew, 2003a; Dow Jones Newswires, 2004). Despite Nova’s broad market impact, which has included at various times leading, or coming very near to leading⁷³, the ratings in each capital, references to it as a youth service did not cease

⁷³ Nova first took leadership of the market in Melbourne in 2002, Sydney in 2004, and Brisbane in 2006; and was second in Adelaide by one percentage point in 2006. In Perth in 2005 it was equal third in the market and has at times led the under 40s demographic. But Nova has struggled against significant commercial competition in Perth. Indeed, in 2010 Perth’s Mix 94.5 became the most successful radio station in Australian history by leading the ratings in 87 consecutive survey periods hatch, a run that has continued into 2012 (Hatch, 2010; West Australian, 2012).

through the 2000s (cf. Charles, 2005; Fewster, 2006; Courier Mail, 2007; Bodey, 2008; Oaks, 2009; Canning and Chessell, 2010).

By 2004, Nova's positioning as commercial youth radio had moved beyond the media and into academic and government discourse. Dr Gail Philips (Murdoch University) with Des Guilfoyle (ABC) presented a paper at the 2004 Australia and New Zealand Communication Association conference on the introduction of Nova to Perth in which they noted that the station had 'its eyes firmly set on the youth segments of the market' (Phillips and Guilfoyle, 2004, p.2). In an investigative report on Perth community youth station Groove FM released by the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) in 2004, the Authority referred to Nova as a 'youth oriented service' (ABA, 2004c, p.6). The use of the distinctive 'youth oriented' phrasing by the ABA seems to confirm the effectiveness of the media in drawing out the relationship between Nova and youth and consequently between commercial radio and youth. Given the position advanced by the regulator and other cultural policy actors since the mid-1980s that commercial radio had become disconnected from youth, the ABA's statement regarding Nova was an important shift in thinking with significant implications for the radio landscape as discussed in Chapter Six.

The following section draws out how the media constructed the association between Nova and youth, outlining how the prominence afforded to this new form of commercial youth radio was driven by broader public interest in Nova's programming and business model and concurrence with DMG's assertion that Nova was highly distinctive and a major disruption to the Australian radio landscape. It provides an overview of the media's discussion and acceptance of Nova's programming novelty and highlights the interplay between such apparent innovations and 'youth' or 'youthfulness'. Radio survey results also proved an important conduit for reportage associating Nova with youth, as did comparisons between Nova and the national youth broadcaster Triple J.

Section 4: Sounds Different, Sounds like Commercial Youth Radio

Despite claims by Austereo Executive Chairman Peter Harvie that Nova offered nothing 'significantly different from incumbent broadcasters', the type of format replication critique that had been levelled at stations converting to FM during the 1990s did not take hold (Browne, 2003). For most commentators Nova reflected the 'Sounds Different' tagline it had adopted to promote the station. The features of the format promoted by DMG, particularly its advertising strategy and music programming, were considered highly distinctive. Even DMG's argument that legitimate listener consultation set Nova apart from the incumbents gained a foothold. For instance, Dion Appel reporting on Nova's approach to the market for *The Age* in 2005 suggested that it was 'staggering that it took radio broadcasters so long to switch roles and listen to their audience' (Appel, 2005).

It was Nova's advertising strategy and business model that attracted substantial media attention. Cameron Adams (2001), writing in the *Herald Sun*, argued 'it is the advertising, or lack thereof that sets Nova apart', while others reported that it was 'unique' (Schulze, 2001b), 'revolutionary' (Burbury, 2002) and an 'entirely different business model' (Maiden, 2002). Research released by DMG challenged established media-planning approaches and generated a great deal of debate. Counterclaims from competitors, who had solicited their own research, continued to draw attention to this feature of the Nova service (cf. Jacobs, 2003b; Riebe et al., 2002; O'Riordan, 2002c; Carbone, 2002a).

Although not a prominent feature of the media discussion of Nova's advertising strategy, there has been some reference to the attractiveness of low advertising radio environments to youth generally (Economou, 2003). Dion Appel writing for *The Age* is one commentator who made a direct connection between Nova's advertising approach and youth, noting that since the station runs so few commercials, 'it's no wonder then that the station continually rates highly among its young demographic' (Appel, 2005). It is not clear where this assumption emerges

from. It may, in part, relate to the advertising-free environment of the national youth broadcaster Triple J.

Nova's introduction of new and young on-air talent was also an element recognised by the media as distinctive, and discussion of it further contributed to building the link between the station and youth. In the lead-up to Nova's Sydney launch, the *Daily Telegraph* published the article 'New star on the air—Young guns ready for broadcast battle' in which it revealed the average age of the presentation team was 25 years (Williamson, 2001b). Heather Chapman in the *Sydney Morning Herald* noted that the team recruited for DMG's new Sydney station were 'fresh young presenters mostly new to Sydney listeners' (Chapman, 2001). Although he had just turned 41, the *Adelaide Advertiser* had no qualms in referring to Nova's first drive host and former 2Day FM announcer Ugly Phil O'Neil as a 'teen guru' (Adelaide Advertiser, 2001). But it was the appointment of former Triple J presenters Merrick and Rosso that generated more extensive discussion of Nova's connection with youth. *The Sun Herald* referred to Merrick and Rosso as 'youth broadcasters' (Sams, 2001). Sally Jackson, in a feature on Merrick and Rosso for *The Australian*, posed the question: '[a]re they the voices of a generational change on the national airwaves?' (Jackson, 2003b). Pointing to the duo's ratings success and the departure from opposition breakfast show line-ups of Andrew Denton and Wendy Harmer, two radio personalities that had dominated during the 1990s, Jackson concluded as much. With regards to ratings, she noted that the team's strongest results were amongst the 18-24 age group, followed by the 10-17s and 25-39s, with significantly fewer listeners in older age groups—another indicator of the apparent generational basis of their appeal.

Nova's diverse music programming was also widely reported to have distinguished it from existing commercial music radio stations. Adams (2001) reported in the *Herald Sun* that through its extreme musical variety Nova had breathed life into Melbourne airwaves. While fellow *Herald Sun* writer Luke Dennehy, noted that 'Nova has dumped stale formats to create a widely varied and sometimes risky playlist' (Dennehy, 2002a). In *The Australian*, Andrew Dodd claimed that Nova's early ratings

success 'was likely to jolt [its] entrenched rivals into changing safe, staid music formats' (Dodd, 2002). Indeed, Bernard Zuel reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that Nova's emphasis on programming diversity was influencing the playlist of established FM rival 2Day FM (Zuel, 2001b). Music industry identity Molly Meldrum was quoted in the *Herald Sun* as referring to the station as 'a breath of fresh air . . . [that] has certainly shaken up playlists in this town [Melbourne]' (Stewart, 2002). He also told *The Australian* that Nova was successful because of its 'very open music playlist' (Dodd and Meade, 2002).

Although not a comparison widely reported, Bernard Zuel, writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, described Nova as type of reinvention of Top 40 AM radio:

Nova FM's launch offers a musical selection that brings to mind something most of its target audience of under-30s wouldn't even know. That is, '70s AM radio.

Before FM music stations and playlists determined by pinheads with marketing degrees, before specialisation and programmers more afraid of turning off one listener than missing out on the next big star, there was a strange beast called diversity. You could hear a middle of the road pop song, a guitar driven rock song and a song whose only aim was to make you dance (Zuel, 2001a).

Malcolm Maiden of the *Sydney Morning Herald* also suggested that the way in which Nova programmed its commercial content was similar to pre-FM music radio (Maiden, 2002). Such programming comparisons extended naturally into notions of youth radio given the accepted association between Top 40 and youth as discussed in Chapters One and Two.

It was not just Nova's musical variety that was noticed by the media. Nui Te Koha writing for the *Herald Sun* reported that 'experts say Nova FM's bold playlist policy and the local industry's aggressive approach to breaking acts have cemented Melbourne's reputation as a new music frontier' (Te Koha, 2002). As the Nova network expanded so too did references to its support for new music. When Nova was introduced into Adelaide in 2004 *Adelaide Advertiser* Music Writer Lauren

McMenemy praised the station's music programming, suggesting that 'for too long Adelaide radio has been complacent, lagging behind the rest of the country in song additions and breaking new music' (Yeaman, 2004b). In 2004, international music newsmagazine *Billboard* carried comments from the Sony Music Australia CEO suggesting that the Nova 'youth radio network' had 'forced the other major networks to play new music' (Eliezer, 2004).

Importantly, one type of new music that Nova was clearly recognised as having embraced was dance music—an emergent genre clearly associated with youth that had been largely ignored by existing commercial music stations. Indeed, in recounting the history of dance music in Australia, Central Station Records note that, 'when Nova launched dance music wasn't getting played on commercial radio, there was a gap ready to be filled' (O'Murchu and Mason, 2006, 35 mins). Outside the commercial sector, this gap had clearly been addressed by a range of aspirant youth community broadcasters in the 1990s and early 2000s, including HITZ FM and Wild FM. In the wake of their demise, Nova stepped in; not only recruiting former DJs from these stations, including Wild FM music director Jimmy Z, but also seeking to utilise the *Wild* brand to promote its Saturday night dance music program (Jones, 2004; Hobart Mercury, 2000; Day, 2001). In Melbourne, media reports of Nova's outstanding early ratings suggested that these were in part the result of its ability to pick up 'devotees of the defunct community stations Hitz FM and Kiss FM' (Carbone, 2002c; Wehner, 2005).

Nova's claim that its support for emerging local artists distinguished it from other commercial stations was also a position that had some cut-through with the press and music industry stakeholders. McCabe wrote in Sydney's *Sunday Telegraph* that 'Nova's aggressive policy towards Australian artists has been welcomed by record companies that have invested millions of dollars in recording and marketing new local releases' (McCabe, 2001). Paul Stewart, writing in Melbourne's *Sunday Herald Sun* soon after Nova's launch in Melbourne noted that 'the apparent success of Nova, which gives airplay to emerging local musicians and lesser known international acts, has forced the more established FM stations to alter their

formats' (Stewart, 2002). In the same piece, veteran local song writer Greg Macainsh praised Nova for having "the vision' to play more local material'. In an extended analysis of the Australian music industry published in *Bulletin* magazine in 2001, Craig Mathieson wrote that Nova was considered 'a positive, if unexpected, new factor in helping develop and break Australian artists' (Mathieson, 2001). Mathieson reinforced the relative importance of commercial radio in supporting new music, suggesting that even Triple J, which is 'considered influential', has 'rarely been able to deliver the sales the record companies desire in the way commercial FM can'.

As outlined in Chapter Two, it was the 'recycled music' approach of FM stations, particularly in relation to Australian music, which generated a key rationale for recreating youth radio outside the commercial sector in the 1980s and 1990s. This rationale was based on a conceptualisation of 'youth' and 'youthfulness' as an inclination for early take-up of new or emergent cultural forms—with the (re)introduction of youth stations viewed as a solution to commercial radio's disinclination to expose new music, particularly from new Australian artists. Claims that Nova had bucked this trend had implications for how that service would come to be described as a youth offering and undermine the rationale for allocating non-commercial spectrum to achieve local content objectives. Certainly Nova's programmers promoted the notion that 'innovation and freshness, which was not something for which commercial radio in Australia at this time was known' was something that 'young adults tend to seek' (Celmins and Buchanan, 2005, p.227).

As noted above, the process through which the media formulated the description of Nova as youth radio has been largely unencumbered by empirical reference points. The station has led a number of markets in which it operates and at various times during its history, including early in its establishment. Indeed, Nova became the top rating Melbourne station after just 15 weeks on air (although it did not maintain this position) (Dodd and Meade, 2002; Dennehy, 2002b). Such broad market impact does not accord with the youth moniker as a particular market segment.

However, some early ratings results did indicate Nova's strength in the 18-24 demographic segment and this facilitated some discussion of the station's youth orientation. Schulze (2001a) notes that 'DMG Radio Australia's new youth-oriented Nova Station had an unremarkable impact on the overall market in its first Sydney survey but did well in the 18-24 category. Following Nova's first Adelaide survey results, Simon Yeaman of the *Adelaide Advertiser* who referred to Nova as a having a young adult music format, reported that 'they seemed a pretty contented bunch at baby FM broadcaster Nova yesterday with the station No. 1 among listeners aged under 25' (Yeaman, 2004a) In Melbourne, Luke Dennehy of the Herald Sun, suggests that Nova's strong rating result with the 'younger market' sent 'a clear message to station and network chiefs—young Victorians want innovation and risk' (Dennehy, 2002a). In *The Age* article 'Youth radio loses ratings perch to the sentimental favourite', Christian Catalano reported that 'youth-focused Nova 100 . . . still holds a strong lead in its key 18-24 age bracket in Melbourne and Sydney' (Catalano, 2003). But even with regards to Nova's younger demographic ratings the 'youth' descriptor can be somewhat incongruous. Farouque, reporting for *The Age* in a piece titled 'Young groovers keep Nova in top spot' points to the station's impressive share of the 18-24 audience, but also to its dominance of the older 25-39 category, and its loss in the 10-17 category to established competitor Fox FM (Farouque, 2002d).

One mechanism through which the perception that Nova was youth radio developed was public discourse that drew comparisons with the ABC's designated youth radio network. Even before its launch there was some speculation within the industry that the station might emerge as 'a commercial version of Triple J' (Javes, 2001c). It did not take long for references to Nova as 'a commercial Triple J' to appear once the station launched in Sydney, and these were set to continue (Carbone, 2001b). For instance, in 2003 Sally Jackson writing in *The Australian* likened the Nova stations that had at that time been launched in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, to a cross between Triple J and commercial station Triple M (Jackson, 2003c). In his history of the ABC Inglis concluded that Nova had a 'format similar to the ABC's own youth network' (Inglis, 2006, p.538).

In part this was driven by similarities in the music programming. According to Nick Miller of *The West Australian*, the ‘trainwreck’ music programming model adopted by Nova clearly borrowed from the programming approach of Triple J which had ‘built a national youth audience with a more adventurous song mix’ (Miller, 2002). DMG’s Paul Thompson himself made the comparison between Nova and Triple J’s music programming in relation to exposing new music (Mason, 2002). This was a point further drawn upon by Stephen Brook who reported in *The Australian* that both Nova and Triple J were ‘irreverent, focus on new music and have very little advertising’⁷⁴ (Brook, 2002). Triple J Director Ed Breslin also weighed in to discussions that compared the stations. He called Nova’s music mix ‘clever’, suggested the station sounded like ‘a much safer, less adventurous version of Triple J’, and conceded that ‘Triple J probably has the most to lose [from Nova’s introduction]’ (Javes, 2001b).

Such references were reinforced by survey data that pointed to Nova taking listeners from the public broadcaster’s youth network. Referring to Nova’s first rating results in a piece titled ‘Fountain of youth for Nova’, Sophie Tedmanson reported in *The Australian* that the station ‘took a bite from Triple J’s youth market (Tedmanson, 2001). Likewise, Cosima Marriner reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that ‘on face value it would seem that Nova has lured listeners away from public youth broadcaster Triple J’, as did Brooke Williamson in the *Daily Telegraph*, and Jane Shultze in *The Australian* (Marriner, 2001b; Williamson, 2001c; Schulze, 2001a). Tedmanson provided the names of some of those lured away—describing the altered listening habits of 20 year-old university students Alice Denney and Noni Williams who ‘after listening to Triple J since they were teenagers . . . wanted to tune into something a little different’ (Tedmanson, 2001). Indeed, Denney and Williams told Tedmanson that most of their friends had also switched to Nova that offered a good mix of music and ex-Triple J announcers Merrick and Rosso.

⁷⁴ In terms of advertising content, I assume Brook is making that point in terms of low ‘promotional content’ since the ABC does not run advertising.

The ABC itself publicly conceded that its youth radio network was under threat by Nova's new service. In its 2002-03 annual report the ABC made it clear that its research showed that the entry of a 'competing youth service', Nova, into the Sydney, Melbourne and Perth markets was the primary cause of the decline in Triple J's audience (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2003). Further, it conceded that this decline was likely to continue as new commercial licences were made available in Adelaide and Brisbane and, through a second release of licences, in Sydney and Melbourne. The impact of Nova on Triple J's audience and the broader conceptualisation of Nova as a comparable youth service would have significant ramifications at the ABC as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter I established how the Nova FM radio network emerged in the early 2000s as a new articulation of the relationship between Australian radio and youth. Re-establishing commercial youth radio was not an objective of Nova FM owners DMG. Indeed, the company focused its attention on promoting a distinctive programming and business model based on less commercial content, a diverse music mix that was continuously expanded through the addition of new and untested tracks to the playlist (including those by emerging Australian artists), and new, and relatively young, on-air presentation teams. The company continually emphasised that through this programming it was seeking to attract a broad audience, under 40 years of age, and shied away from privileging any segment of this audience. It was cautious in referring to calculative demographic indicators, including younger splits, such as 10-17s and 18-24s, and where necessary discussed youth as a psychographic state. Despite this, and from the launch of the first Nova station in Sydney 2001, discussion in the trade and popular press of Nova's program innovations (particularly around music), audience ratings results, and comparability with other services (particularly Triple J), has contributed to its popular description as a youth radio service. As the network expanded into each of Australia's mainland capitals over a period of three years, with DMG acquiring each of the new commercial FM radio licences made available through spectrum replanning

conducted under the new Broadcasting Act (1992), there was broad consensus that the Nova service had changed the Australian radio landscape, and in a manner conceived as a return of commercial youth radio.

Chapter 6

Too Many Grooves?

Introduction

In the mid-2000s there came a point that the radio landscape in each of Australia's mainland capitals included three stations that either purported to be, or were broadly recognised as, youth radio. The ABC's Triple J service had been networked across the capitals since the early 1990s and by the turn of the century also reached into the heart of regional Australia. By 2003, seven metropolitan youth community broadcasters were on air, having been licensed as a result of the nationwide spectrum review and planning process which followed the introduction of the Broadcasting Services Act in 1992. The new Act and subsequent review also enabled DMG to acquire new commercial FM radio licences to establish the Nova FM network in all mainland capitals by 2005. Despite being targeted at a broad under-40 audience the network came to be widely identified as a new articulation of commercial youth radio. The radio landscape now looked a lot different to that of the 1980s when, following the sudden demise of commercial Top 40 stations, radio was viewed as having nothing to offer youth.

It had taken years for an appropriate rationale centred on youth to be composed to enable the government to intervene to fill the gap left by commercial radio's abandonment of Top 40. While different regulatory and institutional frameworks enabled this rationale to be drawn upon by both the ABC and community broadcasters, allowing them to acquire the necessary resources to articulate this government intervention as youth radio, there have been tensions as, in the face of intermittent arguments about service duplication, each sector has sought to claim ownership of the youth moniker to maintain its resources. For instance, youth community broadcasters have often claimed that, since it captures few listeners under 17 years of age, Triple J is only an 'alleged' youth service (Ackland, 1994; Johnston, 1994, p.40; Ellicott, 1996; Guillatt, 1996; Byrnes and Sams, 2000). In the

early-to-mid 2000s it was claimed that Triple J's policy of seeking promotional exclusivity when sponsoring youth events was an attempt to monopolise the non-commercial youth radio landscape (Hubber, 2005; Hubber, 2006). While there is always likely to be some tension between these sectors, the primary concern for both is to maintain a broad rationale for public intervention in the provision of youth radio services. The situation for the commercial sector is significantly different.

When commercial radio made their exit from Top 40 they did so rapidly, and when DMG established Nova FM as a reformulation of it to attract an under 40 year old audience (and initially 18-24 year old listeners), it did likewise. For DMG, existing services that attracted listeners in this age bracket were competitors and they would utilise the resources at their disposal to acquire them. Equally nimble-footed commercial stations were able to respond by rapidly altering the market they targeted to protect their overall market share. But the policy-dependent Triple J and youth community broadcasters were not designed to do so. Suddenly they found themselves in a new youth radio landscape that threatened to take their listeners. Furthermore, since Nova was increasingly referred to as youth radio in public discourse (including that of the broadcasting regulator), and the commercial broadcasting lobby has been relatively successful in arguing that the national and community sectors exist only as a corrective for market failure, the very rationale for investment in Triple J and youth community broadcasters has been challenged.

In this chapter I examine three flashpoints that emerged in the new multi-sector youth radio environment, with a focus on relations between commercial and non-commercial services. The first relates to the impact that the introduction of Nova FM had on Triple J and the response from the ABC to restructure its youth broadcaster in mid-2003. The second, and most extensive case study, examines the use of the regulatory system by DMG to silence Perth youth community broadcaster Groove FM which it viewed as a competitor to its Nova FM service. The final case study in the chapter examines how DMG and the commercial radio lobby seem to

have been successful in utilising the Groove FM case to undermine the rationale for youth community broadcasting investment in Perth and beyond.

Section 1: Triple J Disrupted

In 2000, the 25th anniversary of Triple J (as an extension of Sydney's Double J) not only inspired a public celebration of the network's past, but also raised questions about its future. Triple J's manager, Ed Breslin, was not overly optimistic (Dent, 2000). Along with the lure of new media technologies, Breslin argued that new metropolitan community and commercial stations to be licensed following the completion of the regulator's nationwide planning review were likely to take listeners from the network⁷⁵ (Dent, 2000). If Triple J could maintain 'something like a healthy audience and still have the trust and cachet with the youth of Australia' after the introduction of these new services, he felt that it would have done 'a pretty damned good job' (Dent, 2000). Breslin had some sense of the impact that new community services were likely to have on Triple J. He had calculated that during on-air tests aspirants with what he carefully called 'niche formats, such as dance music stations' (lest his network lose its rhetorical monopoly on youth radio), had collectively taken about two per cent off the network's metropolitan ratings (Dent, 2000). But, he could not have foreseen the establishment of a youth-oriented commercial FM network. Any confidence he may have had that he had adequately insulated the network, and himself, by warning those above and around him of the likely impact of new competition quickly dissipated when audience ratings were released after the introduction of the first Nova station in Sydney, followed by Melbourne and Perth in the subsequent 18 months.

The Challenge from Nova

Nova began operating in Sydney in April 2001, but it was some months for its impact on listenership to be registered empirically as the official ratings surveys conducted by AC Nielsen run over a ten week period. At the request of commercial radio's peak

⁷⁵ Given that Triple J played a significant role in the lives of young people in regional Australia (cf. Albury, 1999; Ames, 2004), Breslin's comments seem rather short-sighted.

body, AC Nielsen shortened the lead time by including Nova mid-survey cycle, a move that would initially under-rate the station (Bawden, 2001a). Although this survey, which was released in June 2001, reported that Nova had debuted with a modest 4.7 per cent audience share compared with the established Austereo FM stations 2Day and Triple M, which recorded 14.8 per cent and 11.3 per cent shares, it was Triple J that had clearly suffered, with its audience share falling 1.3 points, from 6.1 per cent to 5.4 per cent (Salmons, 2001b). Results from the full-survey that followed in August revealed that Nova's share had risen 2.6 points to 7.3 per cent while Triple J's slide continued—the station dropping a further 1.3 points to an audience share of 4.1 per cent (Marriner, 2001b). Despite a slight recovery at the end of 2001, Triple J would not register a share over 5 per cent in Sydney during 2002⁷⁶, the year when audience data for Nova's new Melbourne service first became available and reinforced the national broadcaster's troubles.

In Melbourne, Nova shocked the market by debuting with a 10.5 per cent share in the February 2002 survey. With Nova's rise came Triple J's fall; its audience share fell from 4.8 per cent to 2.9 per cent (Carbone, 2002b). As in Sydney, Triple J made a slight recovery in the months that followed, but it did not register an audience share above 3.5 per cent for the remainder of 2002⁷⁷. For Triple J, more bad news followed in 2003 with the arrival of Nova in Perth. Triple J had rated very well in that city through the 1990s and into the early 2000s, at times amassing 10 per cent of the radio audience (Jackson, 2003c). In the December 2002 survey, prior to Nova's debut, Triple J captured an 8.7 per cent share (Pratley, 2002). But, when Nova debuted with a 10.8 per cent share in the February 2003 survey, Triple J's share fell to 5.5 per cent, and in the following survey (April, 2003) Triple J captured just 5.2 per cent of the audience (Taylor, 2003a; Jackson, 2003a). It would be some time before Nova services would be established in Adelaide and Brisbane—and in the intervening period Triple J would take stock of the impact of the new commercial network.

⁷⁶ AC Nielsen Data Triple J overall audience share as reported in the press, Factiva Search 2002.

⁷⁷ AC Nielsen Data Triple J overall audience share as reported in the press, Factiva Search 2002/03.

The extensive media coverage generated by the entry of Nova into Australia's metropolitan radio markets, and the emphasis placed on the move of audiences from Triple J to the new service as an indicator of the return of commercial youth radio, as discussed in Chapter Five, made Triple J's rating decline a very public concern. Initially, Triple J's management responded to media interrogation by complaining that Nova had duplicated the Triple J service and had greater promotional resources at its disposal to attract listeners. It was not surprising that Triple J had suffered, Ed Breslin explained, 'when you consider Nova poached Triple J's two drive stars, derived half their music from the Triple J playlist and haven't started running a full quota of commercials' (Javes, 2001d). By the end of 2001 he was emphasising that 'Triple J exists not just to chase the ratings but to push new talent and current affairs for the youth of the day' (The Australian, 2001). In May 2002, Brook, reporting for *The Australian*, indicated that Breslin 'sounded under pressure when he spoke to the media' after another set of radio survey results for Melbourne and Sydney that looked anything but healthy (Brook, 2002). Breslin denounced 'the focus on ratings, and the battle with NOVA' and emphasised that 'the design of Triple J is that, in the end . . . [it] isn't a ratings-driven radio station' (Brook, 2002). But his position, and the somewhat recurrent theme that Triple J could have a 'disregard for ratings', was not one shared by those that ran the national broadcaster (Wilson, 2001).

The ABC has a history of measuring the success of the Triple J service in terms of ratings. As noted in Chapter Three, when a youth network was proposed as part of the ABC's first corporate plan in 1985, it was the only ABC radio service that was assigned a specific ratings target (Whitehead, 1988, p.71). David Hill, who oversaw the rollout of the network in the late 1980s and through the 1990s, was 'openly committed to making the ABC popular, to attracting bigger audiences' (Hawkins, 2001, p.182; Moore, 1989, pp.95-98; Hill, 1994). Although he realised that not every program could be high rating, he pointed to the success of Triple J in delivering a larger audience (Hill, 1994, p.29; Holmes, 1992; Lyons, 1989; Albury, 1999, p.56).

Jonathan Shier, ABC Managing Director when Nova was launched in Sydney and for most of its first year (he left the ABC on 31 December 2001), was also committed to a national broadcasting service that rated well; a result which he suggested could be achieved through 'better scheduling, better promotion and 'by being innovative'' (Overington and Wilmoth, 2000; Inglis, 2006, p.470). His supporters suggested that ratings were an indicator of the ongoing relevance of public broadcasters (Overington and Wilmoth, 2000). In 2000, prior to the launch of Nova, the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Jackie Dent suggested that Shier was likely to be pleased with Triple J which 'manages to pull in good ratings and make money for the ABC' and Breslin was, at this time, happy to talk to about the station's recent 'strong ratings success' (Dent, 2000; Byrne, 2000). His reluctance to talk about ratings after Nova's launch would have come as no surprise to Shier who had once told staff that, in relation to ratings, 'public broadcasters that get them are happy to talk about them and the public broadcasters that don't get them aren't happy to talk about them' (Inglis, 2006, p.470).

It was also the case, as Inglis (2006, p.538) points out, that Nova's impact on Triple J's ratings 'intensified traditional conflicts about how distinctive Triple J should sound and how it was to remain perennially young'. Such conflicts, as was evident when the station was networked (the previous major flashpoint), were as likely to be initiated by those within the ABC as they were by the public. So, it perhaps comes as little surprise that as Breslin was pointing to the role that new technologies and new stations would increasingly have in distracting the youth audience from tuning to Triple J in 2000, some of his own current staff, and number of experienced former staff including executive producer Craig Donarski, and presenters, Peter Castaldi and Michael Tunn, instead suggested that it was him and the station management that had put Triple J 'in danger of losing touch with its audience' (Shiel, 2000).

Triple J's ratings had been gradually falling since the mid-1990s, and there was evidence that the audience it maintained, like its own management, were aging with the station (Shedden, 2003). To maintain the legitimacy of the network's youth

credentials, and perhaps their own, Triple J management, which in 2000 included Ed Breslin (aged 44), Stuart Matchett (aged in his mid-40s), and Arnold Frolows (aged 50), had sought to emphasise the agelessness of youth. Breslin suggested that Triple J did not wish to lock itself into the 18 to 24 age category but instead viewed youth in psychographic terms as 'more of a lifestyle choice than an age choice' and suggested that 'you can be 43 and still keep abreast of cutting-edge music' (Ellicott, 1996). But the fact that the network was shedding younger listeners, a process exacerbated by the arrival of Nova, suggested that the boundaries of Triple J's youth definition were not ageless but aging (Chapman, 2000b). With Nova out-rating Triple J in the younger demographics and gaining public recognition as a youth network, it became legitimate to ask 'if the commercial stations are catering for Australia's youth, is Triple J still necessary?' (Platt, 2003). Staff at the network thought so, but not a Triple J run by 'middle-aged men' who had 'run out of ideas' of how to connect with young listeners (Shiel, 2000; Javes, 2002b; Javes, 2001a). The ABC executive eventually agreed.

The ABC Responds: Restructuring and Reinvigorating Triple J

Early in 2002, with new commercial licences still to be granted in Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane and a second round of licences to be released in Sydney and Melbourne the ABC's head of radio, Sue Howard, had seemingly run out of patience with the 'wait it out' approach to the Nova problem and with Triple J's management (Javes, 2001a). Even after experiencing the launch of successive Nova services, the network's managers were seen to be at a loss as to how to respond. They were further undermined as other ABC radio services which had also been exposed to greater competition had responded 'creditably', and it was Triple J that the ABC blamed for overall audience losses in this period (ABC, 2003a, p.22). In April, Stuart Matchett, who had been Triple J's Program Manager since 1989 and a member of the Triple J staff at varying intervals and in varying roles since 1978, was re-assigned to run the ABC's internet radio station (Javes, 2002a; Anthony, 1998). Linda Bracken from ABC radio in Newcastle was brought in to replace him as acting Triple J program manager; later she was appointed Triple J manager, with Casey (2003a)

reporting that, at 34 years of age, she was the 'youngest Triple J manager in more than a decade'.

Following Bracken's arrival the input of Ed Breslin, who had been Triple J network manager since 1995 (having replaced the somewhat controversial Barry Chapman), was reduced and he 'found himself increasingly isolated' (Squires, 1995; Javes, 2002a). Breslin had survived Shier's restructure of radio network management in 2000 to be appointed in the expanded role of Head of National Music Radio, responsible for both Triple J and Classic FM, but he would not survive the impact of Nova (Davies, 2000). In early August rumours that 'the ABC powers' were 'less than pleased with the performance of the 'youth' network' began to surface along with speculation that Breslin would be removed—even the minister was made aware of Breslin's looming dismissal (Farouque, 2002c; Javes, 2002c). By the end of August Breslin was gone, a consequence of the 'perception that Triple J was not delivering in the ratings' according to *The Age* and ending, in the words of a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'months of tension with the head of radio, Sue Howard' (Farouque, 2002b; Javes, 2002a). In October, Howard appointed experienced broadcast manager Kate Dundas to replace Breslin (Farouque, 2002a). Dundas had previously run the ABC's metropolitan radio stations and, having also managed the ABC's Radio Marketing and Audience Research unit, was well equipped to identify and address Triple J's audience problems (ABC, 2003b).

The new management team of Dundas and Bracken emphasised the importance of responding to Nova's entry into the radio landscape, made it clear that ratings were an important measure of the station's relevance, and wanted to return Triple J's audience to its pre-Nova level (Casey, 2003a; Javes, 2003b). Bracken told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that she welcomed the challenge:

The competition is making us look at what we're doing and what parts create a point of difference. We are not selling advertising to listeners, so we can be brave enough to offer programming that can sometimes be confronting and challenging. We can talk about issues that are very important to young people. That might

be youth suicide in regional areas, for example, an issue Nova wouldn't want to touch (Javes, 2002b).

Dundas, having been given a clear agenda to revitalise Triple J, revealed that for staff 'watching the station go down has been very demoralising' and the new management would be able to harbour the 'enthusiasm inside the station for change' (Javes, 2003b).

Dundas and Bracken consulted a range of quantitative and qualitative research conducted by the ABC's Audience Research team to identify the causes of Triple J's declining audience and to 'highlight avenues for addressing it' (ABC, 2003b; ABC, 2003a, p.27). This research confirmed the impact of Nova while also revealing that Triple J's audience was aging, reflecting the 'broadening of Australian 'youth culture' to include people in their twenties and thirties' as well as the changing radio use patterns of the core 18-24 target demographic in response to the emergence of other media technologies (ABC, 2003a, p.27). Unlike previous management, Dundas and Bracken decided that it was unacceptable to explain the aging issue away—it needed to be addressed as part of the strategy of increasing listenership. Dundas argued that it was not simply the case that loyal listeners had stayed with the network and aged the audience but that the station had failed to adequately address its core 18-24 year-old audience and as such there was a 'whole generation of younger listeners who haven't got . . . [Triple J] on their radar' (Jackson, 2003c). The network would be re-focused on this core 18-24 year-old age group, with Dundas emphatic that '50-year-olds still listening to Triple J are going to have to come with us, or leave' (Javes, 2003b). Where they could go, according to Dundas, was the other ABC networks which were specifically targeted at older audiences (ABC, 2003b).

Dundas and Bracken developed a range of 'short and long term strategies to regain audience' which, in keeping with the apparent new patterns of content demand from its core 18-24 year old audience, included developing innovative multiplatform content delivery (ABC, 2003a, p.27; ABC, 2004, p.22). It was a reinvigoration of its broadcast activities in the first half of 2003, however, that was fundamental. While

this included some changes to the on-air presentation line-up, the removal of heavier current affairs elements, the introduction of some new specialist programs, including *Home and Hosed*, a new weeknight all-Australian music program and *The Chat Room*, a program encouraging young people to talk on the radio about the issues in their lives, the most important change was to the musical direction of the network (ABC, 2003b; Phillips and Guilfoyle, 2004, p.6). In May, Arnold Frolows, who had been music director of Triple J for 18 years⁷⁸, and had suffered criticism for some years for being too old to program a youth station, resigned from the role and was replaced by Richard Kingsmill, a respected Triple J announcer in his late thirties (Jinman, 2003). Although Frolows and Dundas maintained that his decision to quit was entirely his own, in explaining the decision Dundas told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that 'Arnold . . . has decided that now is the time for a different perspective on the musical direction of the network' (Jinman, 2003). When asked about his vision for Triple J on its 25th anniversary in 2000, Frolows had been dismissive, stating 'I'll worry about it when we start losing, when the ratings start looking dodgy' (Dent, 2000). Clearly that time had arrived.

An increasingly prevalent criticism of Triple J under Frolows' music direction was its lack of dance music and hip-hop programming. While in 2000 Danny Keenan, editor of key music journal *Music Network*, felt that Frolows remained a good music director he conceded that 'electronic music is just not his bag' (Shiel, 2000). This was proving a problem since at this time Elissa Blake, editor of *Rolling Stone*, argued that 'dance and hip hop are the alternative sounds of the moment, 'where the underground is coming from', but Triple J is not seriously with the new groove' (Shiel, 2000). The aspirant youth broadcasters had clearly illustrated that dance music was popular with younger audiences and with Nova successfully attracting parts of Triple J's audience by adding dance music and hip hop into its programming mix, the deficiency of music programming was increasingly obvious. Dundas revealed that under Kingsmill the 'new era in musical direction' would include

⁷⁸ Like Matchett, Frolows' relationship with the network extended back to the 1970s. In fact, Frolows was the station's first employee in 1975 and responsible for setting up the music library (Anthony, 1998, p.62).

substantially more of these genres which she noted were ‘aimed squarely at the Triple J demographic’ (Shedden, 2003; ABC, 2003b). Not only, would these genres form an increasing part of the Triple J playlist but the Friday and Saturday night simulcasting of television music video program *Rage* was to be replaced by a dedicated dance music program called *The Club* (ABC, 2003b).

In response to the changing radio landscape of the early 2000s, which raised questions about the ongoing relevance of a national youth radio network, the ABC had overhauled Triple J’s management, returned young people to its conceptualisation of ‘youth’ and subsequently implemented substantial changes to its programming and investment in multiplatform content delivery. In July 2003, the ABC spent AUD\$500,000 on a marketing campaign to relaunch its reinvigorated Triple J. The campaign, timed to coincide with the school holidays, was the biggest in the network’s history and, according to Dundas, ‘designed to give the station a fresh market position and increased visibility at a time of greater competition’ (Plaskitt, 2003; Gotting, 2003; Brook, 2003).

While the establishment of Nova had forced the ABC to act to ensure Triple J remained a relevant youth radio service, it was DMG who took action to counter threats to Nova’s younger audience segments by Perth youth community broadcaster Groove FM.

Section 2: Nova and Youth Radio in Perth

In a joint venture with ARN in February 2002, DMG paid AUD\$25 million for the only new commercial FM licence that would be made available through the regulator’s Perth licence area plan. The station was to be managed by DMG as its third Nova FM service. Despite the relatively trouble free and successful launch of Nova’s services in Sydney and Melbourne, DMG were not approaching Perth with any sense of complacency. Unlike Triple J, Nova’s commercial competitors, most of which operated multi-city radio networks, were not taking a wait-and-see approach to the new station. Having closely observed DMG’s activities in Sydney, Melbourne’s FM music stations were better prepared for the newcomer, with Austereo even making

a pre-emptive strike by adopting Nova's 'Sounds Different' positioning statement for its Triple M service⁷⁹(Ligerakis, 2001). DMG knew that the competitive environment would be no less fierce in Perth where Austereo, which owned the two highest rating FM stations, had been 'shoring up defences for months in preparation for the new station and . . . made it clear it [was] prepared for a tough fight' (Irving, 2002; O'Riordan, 2002b; B&T, 2003b).

While the Perth Nova service would incorporate the fundamentals of the format that had been developed and successfully deployed in Sydney and Melbourne, it would also respond to nuances of local listener demand and existing radio services⁸⁰ (Jackson, 2002; Roberts, 2010; O'Riordan, 2002a). It would be well equipped to do so since DMG had appointed and given 'free reign' to launch and operate its new enterprise to Gary Roberts, ex-Austereo manager and Perth's most experienced commercial FM broadcaster (Irving, 2002; Roberts, 2010). In 1980 Roberts had successfully launched Perth's first FM station, 96FM, and during his tenure it was market leader for a record 34 consecutive ratings surveys (Irving, 2002). Through the 1990s and into the early 2000s Roberts managed MIX 94.5 and 92.9FM, stations that from 1997 were owned by Austereo. He took these stations to the two top rating positions before resigning and being recruited by DMG in 2002 (Irving, 2002). Roberts brought both extensive local market knowledge to Nova, and, having been director of the commercial radio's peak industry body for eight years, a strong understanding of the national radio market and regulatory environment (Smith, 2013a; Smith, 2013b).

When Roberts launched Nova in Perth on December 5, 2002, he did so with a clear strategy to carve out a place in the local radio landscape using a distinctive programming and business model (Roberts, 2010). The station also had two initial

⁷⁹ In 2003 DMG and Austereo went to court over the use of this type of guerrilla marketing (Frew, 2003c).

⁸⁰ When networks have attempted to impose standard programming developed in other states into the Perth market they have rarely been successful. For instance, Gary Roberts notes that 96FM was rebranded for a short period to fit in with the Triple M brand of its parent company, with a devastating impact on the station's ratings (Roberts, 2010).

market advantages that were likely to have underpinned Roberts' confidence that it would have 'a dramatic impact on [the] marketplace when it's introduced' and would be profitable within its first year of operation (Irving, 2002; O'Riordan, 2002b). Firstly, Roberts could expect many listeners to sample Nova's offerings since there was considerable public interest in the station's launch as it had been 22 years since the last new commercial station had entered the Perth market, and more than a decade since the FM band gained a new commercial service⁸¹ (Casella, 2003; Phillips and Guilfoyle, 2004, p.3). Secondly, since the 18-24 year old demographic segment were a key component of Nova's broader under-40s target, and this group were considered less 'committed to one particular radio station' and, according to Roberts, easier to move around than older groups, Nova's early sampling advantage would be reinforced (Javes, 2003a; Bawden, 2004; Roberts, 2010). Targeting younger demographic segments during a start-up phase to drive initial ratings growth before broadening program offerings to cut into the slightly older core audiences of competitors was a strategy DMG's CEO Paul Thompson had employed when he developed the Austereo network in the 1980s and analysts expected him to deploy a similar strategy with Nova (Schulze, 2002b; Javes, 2003a).

Roberts, and his counterparts at Austereo and Southern Cross Broadcasters (the owners of 96FM, Perth's other FM music station) realised that, as was the case with the launch of Nova in Sydney and Melbourne, Perth's new station was likely to have a 'honeymoon period' where ratings spiked before the 'newness' faded, the station became 'part of the landscape' and the market settled into a new pattern (Phillips and Guilfoyle, 2004, p.3). The longer the station could maintain the perception that it was new, especially amongst younger listeners, the greater the base level audience it was likely to maintain as the market resettlement took place. Roberts may have been well prepared for the marketing and programming moves that the existing commercial stations were likely to make to disrupt Nova's market entry and

⁸¹ Perth AM stations 6KY and 6PM had moved from the AM to FM band under the NRP in the early 1990s.

shorten its honeymoon period, but he, like the market analysts⁸², was not prepared for the impact that a youth community broadcaster that had coincidentally entered the market would have on his station, nor was he prepared to accept it (Roberts, 2010).

Groove FM and the Challenge to Nova

In October 2002, Groove FM, operated by the Youth Media Society of Western Australia (YMS), became the sixth of the seven youth community broadcasters licensed in the wake of the nationwide spectrum review and planning process (ABA, 2002b). On 1 March 2003, just three months after Nova's launch, Groove FM took to Perth's airwaves with a continuous 'electronic' music format incorporating the 'dance/R&B/Hip-Hop' genres that reflected the type of programming pioneered by the mainstream alternative youth aspirant HITZ FM, and further popularised by Wild FM, from which DMG had also drawn in developing the Nova format (YMS, 2002, Appendix 34; Prior, 2003; Kent, 2002; ABA, 2004c, p.171). While the city's youth seemed happy with the new station, as indicated by the sheer number of text and email music requests it received, and the station had broad public support, with its founder Raphael Niesten honoured as West Australian Young Citizen of the Year for 2003, DMG were clearly not pleased that a community station's 'meteoric rise in popularity with the youth market' might diminish Nova's, particularly during the station's honeymoon period (Pitsis, 2002; Kent, 2002; Murdoch University, 2004; Prior, 2003; Buggins, 2003). As Anthony Gherghetta, Manager of Sydney's Wild FM, had anticipated, 'whoever pays big money [for a new commercial FM licence] won't want a youth station chipping away at the lower end of its demographics' (Day, 2000). Indeed, Roberts made it very clear that DMG 'were a little pissed' with the

⁸² Gail Phillips and Des Guilfoyle conducted an analysis of the Perth radio market in the period leading up to and just after Nova's launch to establish how existing stations and Nova were adapting to the new marketplace. In February/March 2003 and then one year later they interviewed Program Directors from each commercial FM station and the station manager of Triple J. On neither occasion was an interview conducted with Perth's youth community broadcaster, Groove FM, nor was this station mentioned in the conference paper that resulted from the analysis (Phillips and Guilfoyle, 2004).

entry into the Perth market of what they perceived to be a commercially-oriented youth community broadcaster (Roberts, 2010).

Despite having already established Nova services in Sydney and Melbourne, DMG had not had to contend with the type of continuous-music mainstream alternative youth community broadcasters that its commercial compatriots had encountered in the 1990s. In Sydney and Melbourne the issuing of temporary broadcasting permits had ceased by the time the Nova services began in 2001, the youth services that were permanently licensed in those cities, FBi and SYN FM, would take more than 12 months to come on air, and they were also designed in the more traditional segmented-schedule mould that incorporated discrete thematic or music-genre specific programs spread throughout the day. Even in his former role at Austereo, Roberts had never had to deal with this new type of youth community broadcasting in Perth. There had been no test broadcasting by youth aspirants, or aspirants of any type, during the spectrum review period in Perth until Groove and over 50s broadcaster Capital City Radio (CCR) went to air in 12 hour shifts on the same frequency in July 2002 (CCR, 2011). This was only months before Nova's launch and hardly a threatening configuration. When Groove was awarded the permanent licence in October, Roberts may well have examined the service it proposed in its publicly available licence application but, given this was largely a duplication of SYN FM's application (a situation discussed below), felt that it posed a minimal threat. He would later suggest that 'if they [Groove] had adhered to what they initially proposed, we [DMG] would never have had a problem with them' (Roberts, 2010). Instead, DMG responded to the problem posed by Groove, as the commercial stations in Melbourne had when they first encountered youth community broadcasting through HITZ FM, by turning to the regulatory system.

Although the regulatory authority is charged under Section 5 of the Broadcasting Services Act with responsibility 'for monitoring the broadcasting industry, the datacasting industry and the Internet industry' it does not have the resources to do so in a comprehensive manner, and so deploys a system of complaint-based regulation (Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992, S5). As the former deputy-chair

of the authority, Lyn Maddock, explained, 'the whole system depends crucially upon what you might call outsourcing the compliance, the monitoring, to the public so that the public have an active role in complaining and advancing those complaints' (PCA, 2006a, p.29). For broadcasters, this approach means that 'if no-one complains about you . . . the regulator generally leaves you alone', but it also provides a tool that can be wielded by competitors to tie up financial and administrative resources (PCA, 2006a, p.20; van Vuuren, 2006, p.33). Complaints can be made by members of the public or by organisations, including commercial broadcasters, and the regulator is required to investigate where there are allegations of breaches to the Act, or where breaches to the self-regulatory code of practice are deemed not to have been adequately resolved by the station itself (Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992, S147; S148).

Commercial broadcasters, having the greatest interest in monitoring market activity and the resources to do this, as well to engage legal assistance to mount substantial complaints, may exert pressure on what are generally poorly resourced community stations through this complaints-based system. This was recognised as an issue during the 2006 parliamentary inquiry into community broadcasting (PCA, 2006a). The regulator's then General Manager, Giles Tanner, suggested in relation to complaints made by commercial broadcasters against community stations:

We do sometimes see a situation where one individual or group is responsible for a large number of complaints about a particular service. I can see that that puts the service in question under a lot of pressure. Under the present law we do have an obligation to investigate every time. We have discretion not to investigate a complaint which is frivolous, vexatious or an abuse of process, but those are very high tests (PCA, 2006a, p.30).

What's more, the parliamentary inquiry also subtly raised concerns that commercial broadcasters may be able to exert pressure on the regulatory authority itself through the complaints system (PCA, 2006b, pp.7-10). Investigations are resource intensive for all parties, including the regulatory authority. It is not unreasonable to

suggest that the regulator may feel pressured to resolve complaints by commercial entities quickly and definitively in order to avoid ongoing complaints or legal challenges from organisations that have a substantial resource base and motivation for action.

I argue that DMG used the complaints system to exert pressure on both Groove FM and the regulatory authority, undermining confidence in the capacity of YMS to provide a community broadcasting service and ultimately leading the regulator to decide against renewing its licence in 2008. It is not my intention to suggest that the complaints made by DMG were unwarranted, my primary concern is with the interactions between stakeholders in a new cross-sector youth radio landscape. But a few comments on the circumstances that created weaknesses in the corporate and financial governance, and misunderstanding about Groove's programming, which I have examined in detail elsewhere (Wilson, 2011), are warranted.

The regulator's findings and Roberts' opinion that the President and Secretary of YMS were unfit to manage a community broadcasting service given that they had orchestrated a number of YMS contractual arrangements (including with Central Station Records, the company that had been at the centre of the investigation into Sydney aspirant youth community broadcaster Wild FM⁸³) the nature and legality of which were unclear, are certainly not unreasonable (Roberts, 2010; ABA, 2004c, p.47, p.51, pp.57-58, p.173). But it is also the case that deficiencies in the service were as much the result of naïvety and mismanagement as they were misappropriation. Given that before being awarded a permanent licence YMS had practically no broadcasting experience this is not surprising. It was just nine days

⁸³ Central Station Records had also entered agreements with HITZ FM in Melbourne and Free FM in Sydney. Like Wild, Free FM was subject to investigation by the ABA in 2000-2001 and also failed to secure a permanent licence in Sydney. HITZ failed to gain a licence in Melbourne. In its report the ABA noted its concerns about HITZ's previous CD contracts with a record company (ABA, 2001, p.48).

into its first test broadcast when applications for the permanent licence made available through the Perth LAP closed⁸⁴ (ABA, 2002a; YMS, 2002, p.16).

Test broadcasting provides a key mechanism for aspirants to bring their community of interest together, explore and gauge interest in various programming possibilities and build enthusiasm and commitment from volunteers. It can also provide aspirants with some appreciation of the financial requirements of establishing a permanent station. The licence application process, which should have provided a mechanism for YMS to translate such experience into a plan for the service, instead became a paper-test. YMS looked to successful youth community broadcasting models to help pass this test, naïvely duplicating whole sections of SYN FM's licence application (SYN, 2001). Without knowledge of this duplication it was easy to conclude, as Roberts (2010) did, that the group had cleverly and mischievously concocted an application to fool the regulator into giving them a licence. However, the fact that whole slabs of text were copied suggests the group had taken a desperate rather than considered approach to the task.

In not taking a considered approach, YMS made the mistake of suggesting in its application that it could implement a similar programming schedule to that of SYN FM. SYN's sophisticated schedule, which included more than one third of broadcast time as talk programming, had been developed through thousands of hours of test broadcasting, and YMS' inability to replicate it would later be viewed as a major weakness by the regulator (SYN, 2001, pp.23-25). YMS also copied SYN's pledge to encourage 'diversity in programming' and to ensure that 'no particular music genre will dominate airtime' and only provided a more accurate description of the 'predominantly 'electronic'' music it intended to offer in an appendix to their application (YMS, 2002, p.8, Appendix 34; SYN, 2001, p.8). While the programming proposed in licence applications does 'not strictly bind the licensee' the regulator expects that broadcasters will not to simply abandon such proposals (ABA, 2004c,

⁸⁴ The only other applicant for the licence, Capital City Radio (CCR), had not been on air at all. This raises questions about whether the regulator may have, in light of the delays to the spectrum review, acted too hastily in initiating the licence process.

p.168). It may not have powers to enforce compliance with proposed programming, but the regulator can, and did in the case of YMS, trace programming inconsistencies to a failure of the broadcaster to continue to service its community of interest, a breach of the Act and an area in which it can intervene (Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992, S2, P5, Clause 5).

In their licence application YMS also indicated that they would rely on the financial and technical support of Curtin University, but when this failed to materialise they had no contingency plan (YMS, 2002, p.39; Kent, 2002). The group's subsequent trouble in acquiring start-up and ongoing resources reflected the broader revenue and resource issues experienced by the community broadcasting sector during the 1990s and 2000s. The federal government may have been enthusiastic about expanding the sector to achieve its broadcasting diversity objectives, but it made no concurrent commitment to expand the provision of resources to the sector⁸⁵, undoubtedly contributing to the type of marginal financial activities that YMS engaged in, such as maxing-out credit cards to pay for broadcast equipment (CBF, 1999; ABA, 2004c, p.122; Thompson, 1999; Forde et al., 2002, chapter 8; van Vuuren, 2006; Rennie, 2006, chapter 4).

YMS had little opportunity to work through its governance, financial and programming issues and to establish a sound knowledge of broadcasting law and regulation (which most community broadcasters find complex), as it very quickly came under the gaze of DMG and the regulatory authority. This scrutiny was ever present through the station's history, even after the President and Secretary, who the regulator viewed as primarily responsible for the group's initial problems, were replaced (Poznanovic, 2010). Unlike other new community broadcasting licensees, YMS did not have the benefit of addressing its indiscretions privately as either a test or permanent licence holder.

⁸⁵ The 2006 parliamentary inquiry made a series of recommendations relating to increased financial and training support.

Nova Responds: Regulating the Competition

Four months after Groove went to air full-time Nova began the process of exerting pressure on YMS through the regulatory system. Roberts explains that DMG had sent unofficial 'signals' to YMS that they were not happy with what it perceived to be the engagement of a community broadcaster in commercial activities. Having failed to get an adequate response to these 'warning shots across the bow', and with things getting 'worse and worse' Roberts says that 'it got to a stage where we went, all right we are coming after you big time' (Roberts, 2010).

On 30 June 2003, DMG representatives met with members of the ABA to outline their complaint against Groove (Figure 6.1 provides a detailed timeline of events). They presented the ABA with a letter and detailed submission titled *Background Information Relating to Groove FM Perth* (ABA, 2004c, pp.6-7). With a clear understanding of the complaints process, DMG were careful to raise concerns relating to breaches of the Act that required direct intervention by the regulator. DMG suggested that the ABA investigate such issues as whether Groove provides a service for community purposes, is operated for profit or as part of a profit-making enterprise, does not broadcast advertisements, continues to represent the community of interest that it represented at the time when the community radio broadcasting licence was allocated to it and encourages members of the community that it serves to participate in the operations of and the selection and provision of programs by the station (ABA, 2004c, pp.5-6, p.153). Additionally, DMG asked the regulator to investigate 'whether the service provided by and the activities of Groove FM and its associates do not fulfil and are not consistent with the representations and other commitments made in its application for a community broadcasting licence given to the ABA' (ABA, 2004c, p.6). This pressed the regulator to investigate aspects of the Groove service that were otherwise compatible with both the Act and the code of practice.

Figure 6.1 Timeline Groove FM and Nova in Perth

Year	Date	Action
2001	29 June	YMS registered under Associations Incorporation Act 1987 (WA)
	1 October	Perth LAP completed
2002	14 February	DMG & ARN acquire Perth commercial FM licence for \$A25m
	12 June	Perth Community Licence Process Activated (closing 10 July)
	2 July	YMS temporary broadcast (12 hour timeshare with CCR)
	8 July	YMS submit licence application
	24 October	YMS allocated licence for 1 March 2003 – 28 Feb 2008
	5 December	Nova begins Perth Broadcast
2003	1 March	Groove begins full-time broadcast
	30 June	DMG complaint against YMS - submissions to the regulator
	12 August	Ratings show Nova Perth decline in 18-24 demographic
	14 August	DMG monitor Groove broadcast (14 August - 13 September)
	28 August	DMG submission - 14 August monitoring
	25 September	DMG legal representatives call for YMS licence cancelation
2004	2 April	ABA circulates draft investigation report
	21 July	YMS' President and Secretary resign
	4 August	ACMA final Investigation Report
	19 November	ACMA finalises YMS conditions imposed from 1 January 2005
	December	YMS seeks AAT review of conditions
2006	April	ACMA and YMS reach agreement - conditions imposed 1 May
	23 August	ACMA receives complaint against YMS
	16 September	ACMA monitor Groove broadcast 16-19 September
2007	6 July	ACMA finds YMS in breach of licence conditions
	December	ACMA preliminary licence non-renewal view
2008	21 February	ACMA board meet to discuss YMS renewal submission
	22 February	ACMA Media Release - Non renewal
	28 February	YMS licence expires and Groove goes off air

To support its complaint DMG furnished the regulator with a programming log that incorporated a track-by-track listing of Groove's broadcast based on monitoring between the hours of 6am and midnight over seven days (ABA, 2004c, p.6). An analysis of this log detailed inconsistencies between the station's proposed and actual programming, and in particular highlighted the smaller percentage of Australian music presented by the station than proposed. Local content was an issue

that continued to have substantial policy traction and a poignant one in this case since, as I have argued, it provided one of the fundamental rationales for licensing youth community broadcasters like Groove. The analysis also established the extent of music crossover between Groove FM and the Nova FM service—a point I take up in Section 3 of this chapter.

The extensive list of concerns presented by DMG on 30 June 2003, some of which were highly speculative (as is clear from the concise treatment they received in the ABA's inquiry report), and DMG's initial commitment of resources to monitoring the Groove FM service, sent a clear message to the ABA about the seriousness with which DMG were treating the issue and flagged that without swift resolution the issue could tie up significant investigatory resources. Roberts has revealed that DMG itself spent 'a lot of money legally and a lot of man hours internally putting together the case' (Roberts, 2010). DMG kept the pressure on the ABA by following up their 30 June submission with further representations on 1 July and 8 July (ABA, 2004c, p.8). The regulator responded by commissioning its own monitoring of Groove broadcasts in early July and on 31 July announced that it would conduct a formal investigation, issuing *Terms of Reference* that essentially mirrored the concerns which had been raised by DMG in its original submission⁸⁶ (ABA, 2004c, p.6, Appendix A).

The regulator has a range of powers at in conducting an investigation (Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992, S173-177). During the Groove investigation the ABA asked YMS to provide a range of financial, programming, and sponsorship documents, sought documents from organisations that had relations with Groove, and conducted hearings with key members of the Groove committee of management (ABA, 2004c, p.10). The Act does not limit the regulator to a consideration of material it has actively sought, but allows the regulator to take into account 'such other matters it considers relevant' (Broadcasting Services Act (Cwlth), 1992, S169). While this enables the broadcaster being investigated to more

⁸⁶ These were subsequently revised on 11 September and 6 November, 2003 (ABA, 2004c, p.6).

openly contribute to the process—in this case, YMS made a number of submissions—it also enables external parties to engage in the investigation (ABA, 2004c, pp. 8-9). DMG took full advantage, making three unsolicited submissions during the investigation, having already contributed three prior to its initiation (ABA, 2004c, p.8).

Any notion that DMG would allow the investigation to simply run its course was completely shattered soon after it began. AC Nielsen ratings for Perth released on 12 August 2003, the fifth set of figures since Nova began, revealed that the station had suffered a major decline in its target 18-24 demographic and, consequently, its overall audience share. According to the survey, Nova's share of the 18-24 year old listening audience had dropped 10.3 points from 25.2 per cent to 14.9 per cent, a drop that took Nova from market leader to fourth in that segment (Taylor, 2003b). This ratings decline was widely reported and Nova's competitors seized on the opportunity to promote the new station's waning fortunes (B&T, 2003a; WA Business News, 2003b; WA Business News, 2003a). While Roberts questioned the validity of the results given the volatile fluctuation in the data⁸⁷, DMG CEO Paul Thompson accepted the figures but told trade publication *B&T Weekly* that Groove FM was to blame and implied that this problem would be resolved when the ABA concluded its investigation into that station's activities (Luker, 2003; Prior, 2003; Sprague, 2003a).

It is not possible to make a clear assessment of the extent of Groove's impact on Nova's audience since the ratings information on Groove gathered independently by DMG were not made public (Prior, 2003). But the fact that the station immediately committed further resources to monitoring Groove's service (14 August), the analysis of which they presented to the ABA on 28 August, indicates that it was not insignificant (ABA, 2004c, p.8). Certainly, claims made by DMG managing director Kathy O'Connor that Nova's complaints about Groove were somewhat altruistic, 'not

⁸⁷ Roberts may well have been correct given that when the survey 5 sample was no longer included in the rolling survey results in Survey 8, the station returned to market leadership in the 18-24 demographic. (WA Business News, 2003c; WA Business News, 2003d; Sprague, 2003b)

about Nova but about Australia's radio laws and their requirement that community radio stations service their audiences', seemed increasingly implausible (Prior, 2003).

Soon after the poor ratings results, DMG's lawyers, Mallesons Stephen Jaques, sent a submission to the ABA arguing that 'YMS had breached the Broadcasting Services Act in a number of ways and because of this the ABA should cancel YMS's licence' (ABA, 2004c, p.8). The ABA was acutely aware that DMG were prepared to legally challenge its interpretation of the Broadcasting Services Act. Earlier in 2003 it had infuriated DMG by announcing a review of its plan to auction additional commercial FM licenses in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney⁸⁸. In their submission to the regulator's review, DMG declared that any alteration to the process 'would be in breach of the law and . . . we would challenge that outcome through the courts' (DMG submission cited in Frew, 2003b).

In April 2004, the ABA released its draft investigation report for comment and concluded the investigation with the release of a final report in August (ABA, 2004c). Although the regulator agreed with DMG's lawyers that YMS had breached the Broadcasting Services Act in a number of ways, it concluded that, with assurances from YMS that the group's President and Secretary had resigned and would 'have no further association with YMS or Groove FM in any way whatsoever', it would impose a series of conditions on YMS' licence rather than terminating it (ABA, 2004c, pp.1-4). According to former ABA General Manager, Giles Tanner, DMG were not pleased with this outcome and 'were frustrated that the ABA were so slow to do what they wanted, which was just to turn Groove off' (Tanner, 2011). DMG subsequently kept up the pressure on YMS and the regulator as the licence conditions were negotiated, responding to the draft conditions that had been released with the final report, suggesting in a submission relating to proposed changes to the Perth LAP that 'in light of the recent findings of the ABA that Groove FM has committed multiple serious breaches of the broadcasting laws' technical changes to the Groove

⁸⁸ DMG required licences in Brisbane and Adelaide to complete its capital city Nova network.

FM service outlined in the LAP revision be denied for 12 months (ABA, 2004b; YMS, 2004; DMG Radio Australia, 2004).

Some of the final licence conditions released in November 2004 and scheduled to commence on 1 January 2005 were designed to remedy YMS's corporate and financial governance issues. Other conditions related to programming. As Lyn Maddock, Acting ABA Chair, further explained:

YMS was allocated a licence to provide a service for all the youth of Perth, not just for those interested in urban and dance music . . . the conditions will ensure that YMS provides a diverse range of music and talk programming, that it continues to play a high level of local and Australian music, and that it actively invites Perth youth to participate in the service—not just as volunteers, but as members of YMS who can be involved in decision making about the future and direction of both Groove FM and the licensee association (ABA, 2004a).

The conditions required YMS to call for and facilitate greater public participation in the service, ensure talk programming came to account for the 35 per cent of broadcast time as detailed in its licence application, and increase its Australian music output to 35 per cent of broadcast music. No specific conditions were imposed to change the musical offerings of the station—the authority trusting that by increasing community participation that would result naturally.

Unhappy with the conditions, YMS lodged a stay order and initiated a review of the ABA's decision by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) (ACMA, 2006a). YMS felt particularly aggrieved that the ABA had made changes to the conditions initially proposed in accordance with a letter of recommendations from DMG (YMS, 2004). Despite assurances made by members of the ABA that regulatory decisions were not influenced by DMG or other commercial broadcasters, YMS had serious grounds for concern. The proposed Australian music content condition issued in August directed YMS 'to increase its Australian music content to not less than 40% of all programming (in line with its proposal in its licence application)' (ABA, 2004b). The

final condition directed YMS 'to increase its Australian music content to not less than 35% of all music items broadcast between 6.00am and midnight' (ABA, 2004a). The new percentage undermined the rationale that YMS should honour its licence application, but it is the added timing points that were of more interest to YMS. These timing points had been suggested by DMG and, according to YMS, adopted without adequate independent consideration by the ABA (YMS, 2004). The ABA could reasonably claim that the proposed condition required a period over which compliance could be measured, as is the case with the Australian music content requirement codified in both the commercial and community sector Codes of Practice. But the choice of the 6am-midnight point is telling since this matched the Commercial Radio Code of Practice (CRA, 2004) and not the Community Broadcasting Code of Practice which, since the inception of the codes in 1995, has been calculable over a one month period. It would seem likely that the regulatory authority heeded the advice of DMG, who themselves may not have been familiar with the different monitoring periods of community broadcasting.

The regulatory authority, which on 1 July 2005 was reformed as the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), were reluctant to allow matters to get to the AAT. As Tanner told the 2006 parliamentary inquiry into community broadcasting, the threat of AAT review was something the regulator tried to minimise:

There is a very real risk that if we push a station too far over a condition, it will challenge it in the AAT. It will get bogged down there for years, potentially, and we may have our decision overturned. And it is quite resource intensive, not just for them but for us (PCA, 2006a, pp.26-27).

In the YMS case, the process did get bogged down for more than a year, but in April 2006, almost three years after DMG's original complaint, ACMA and YMS struck an out-of-court agreement on a set of remedial licence conditions to come into effect on 1 May (ACMA, 2006b).

On 23 August 2006, just four months after the new conditions came into effect, DMG filed a complaint against YMS claiming a breach of all of the new on-air conditions, and furnished the regulator with copies of Groove's 'broadcasts for the period 4 July-10 July 2006 and tables in which this material was analysed for its Australian music content, talk programming and on-air announcements inviting listeners to participate' (ACMA, 2007, p.2; Roberts, 2010). ACMA launched an investigation and itself recorded Groove's broadcast between 16 and 19 September (ACMA, 2007, p.3). In its inquiry report, released in July 2007, ACMA found that YMS had breached three of the five relevant conditions. Such indiscretions were rather minor and it would be unfair to conclude that YMS were not acting in the spirit of program diversification, local content support and community participation that they were designed to achieve. But the investigation further undermined the regulator's confidence that YMS had the capacity to provide a community broadcasting service.

In July 2007, as the investigation into YMS's breach of additional conditions was being finalised, YMS were in the process of applying to ACMA for a renewal of their licence⁸⁹, the term of which was to expire in February 2008. Despite YMS establishing a partnership with the YMCA (a group with whom it was co-located since March 2007) and assurances from the Western Australian Community Broadcasting Association that it would play a hands-on role in improving the governance and administration of YMS, and further support from the CBAA, the regulator released a Preliminary View in late 2007 that it would not renew the licence. On 22 February 2008, ACMA officially announced that the licence of YMS would not be renewed, arguing that 'YMS does not have the management capacity to provide the service . . . and did not adequately meet the needs of the broader youth community of Perth as its music programming is too narrow' (ACMA, 2008a). In March 2008 Groove FM ceased broadcasting, undoubtedly to the relief of DMG.

⁸⁹ ACMA writes to community licensees 58 weeks before the expiry of their licence requesting that they submit an application to renew no later than 52 weeks before the expiry date (ACMA, 2008a).

While the demise of Groove made Perth the only state capital without a youth community broadcaster, it also fuelled a broader argument emerging from the commercial radio sector that may well have closed off the possibilities of youth community broadcasting, if not entirely, at least in cities where DMG operates a Nova service. The final case study in this chapter examines that argument and how it, in combination with DMG's strategy of complaint-based pressure, seemingly gained purchase with the regulator and led to its decision not to licence Hype FM, an aspirant youth community broadcaster formed by Perth's YMCA in the aftermath of Groove's demise.

Section 3: Sectoral Demarcation: Youth Community Broadcasting in Perth and Beyond

During the 2006 parliamentary inquiry into community broadcasting⁹⁰ the commercial radio industry's peak body mounted a case that community broadcasters should not be licensed to service youth and other demographic-based communities or general interest and geographic communities. Commercial Radio Authority (CRA; formerly FARB) argued that such broad communities contain many subgroups with different interests and needs and this 'has the effect of forcing the relevant licensee to focus on the types of programming that appeals to large aggregate audiences (in the same way that commercial radio stations do) rather than focussing on specialised needs of a community of interest which are not being met by other broadcast services in the licence area' (CRA, 2006, p.7). Such moves by the commercial broadcasting sector to encourage the government to strictly define the programming space of community broadcasters as that left over from where commercial broadcasters choose to operate is a recurrent one that extends back to the development of the sector in the 1970s (Rennie, 2006, pp.100-102).

The introduction of community broadcasting, as briefly outlined in Chapter One, was a haphazard affair that through opportunism and commercial and political pressure led to a highly restrictive special purpose licensing regime. Commercial

⁹⁰ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts inquiry into community broadcasting in Australia—2006.

radio was naturally opposed to the introduction and expansion of the new sector and called on the regulator to enforce licensing conditions restricting opportunities for the special purpose education stations to broadcast material of general interest or music (Tebbutt, 1989, p.135). In a bid to appease the commercial stations, in 1978, the community broadcasting sector's peak body adopted the position that the programming of community stations would be 'complementary and supplementary and not seek to compete with existing services' (Law, 1986, p.33). This idea was enshrined in the government's 1979 community broadcasting policy, which stated that the new sector 'must be *complementary and supplementary* to the national and private sectors' (ABT, 1979b, p.3 - my italics; Rennie, 2006, pp.100-102).

The complementary and supplementary framework has proven to be an instrument through which commercial broadcasters have pressed their claims. Almost immediately after it was pronounced some commercial stations argued that community broadcasters should not be allowed to broadcast material of any kind 'which ever or even might be heard on national or commercial stations' (ABT, 1979b, p.11). Although it took a dim view of such an extreme position, the regulator provided little advice as to how distinctive community broadcasting programming should be (ABT, 1979b, p.11). The commercial broadcasting sector has regularly sought to impose its own definition of distinctiveness in order to widen its territory and diminish that of community broadcasters.

In seeking to excise youth from the sphere of community broadcasting CRA claimed that programming aimed at this demographic group was already provided by the Nova FM commercial youth radio service, the establishment of which was part of a proliferation of new commercial services that it claimed had diminished the need for community broadcasting generally. CRA drew upon evidence from DMG's case against YMS that revealed 'high levels of overlaps in the music broadcast on 6YMS [Groove FM] with that broadcast on DMG's Perth station [Nova FM]' (CRA, 2006, p.7). During the 2003-04 investigation DMG had continually pressed the regulator to examine the crossover issue. In its very first submission it provided an analysis of the Groove FM service that estimated the 'level of cross-over between Groove FM and

DMG's Perth youth oriented service Nova 93.7FM (that is, music played by both Groove FM and Nova FM during the period)' (ABA, 2004c, p.6). Each time it made a monitoring-based submission it did this (ABA, 2004c, p.8). DMG first claimed that there was a 75 per cent overlap between Groove and Nova's playlist⁹¹, this rose to 85 per cent in a subsequent submission, before DMG settled on a figure of 49.5 per cent (ABA, 2004c, pp.73-74). Even at this level, DMG CEO Paul Thompson clearly felt that Groove's content is 'head-to-head with Nova' and, calling up the complementary and supplementary provision, argued that this was 'not permitted under its community station charter' (Luker, 2003). Interestingly, when the distinctiveness of Nova had been challenged in a crossover analysis conducted by ARN and Austereo, DMG's group program director argued that even with 60 per cent crossover Nova represented a unique format (Browne, 2003; Jacobs, 2003a).

Regardless of the extent of the overlap, the regulator chose not to pursue this line of inquiry, perhaps realising the political risks of making it more evident that the inquiry was a demarcation dispute driven by commercial radio. Instead, it buried the crossover issue by considering it as part of the more general, and easily dismissed, question of whether Groove was operated as a commercial radio service (ABA, 2004c, pp.171-173). Here the ABA sought to determine if Groove's programming 'when considered in the context of the service provided, appears to be intended to appeal to the general public' and concluded that 'although it might be expected that some of the songs featuring on Groove FM's programming would also be played on commercial radio broadcasting services in the Perth area, Groove's music programming appears more specialised than a commercial radio service' (ABA, 2004c, pp.171-172). In fact, the issue for the regulator was not that Groove's music programming was too broad but too narrow. It wanted YMS to diversify its music and increase its talk programming to meet the diverse interests of youth that it had identified in its licence application.

⁹¹ Despite submitting logs that clearly compared Groove and Nova's playlists, DMG at times referred to the crossover as being between Groove FM and that 'of a Perth *commercial* station' (ABA, 2004c, p.73).

In its submission to the 2006 parliamentary inquiry CRA agreed with the ABA's ruling that YMS and all community broadcasters comply with the programming and other commitments they have made during the application process, but felt that Groove's programming should not be broadened as it was already encroaching on the programming territory of its commercial constituents. Indeed, CRA blamed the regulator for having facilitated this encroachment by licensing Groove FM and the other youth stations. The investigation into YMS, CRA argued, 'points to a more fundamental problem—i.e. that the ABA's decision to allocate the licence to the applicant in the first place was questionable' (CRA, 2006, p.6). According to CRA, the ABA should have realised from the description YMS had given of the youth community it intended to serve in its licence application as being 'very diverse . . . with many subdivisions which have their own unique needs', that the station it was likely to develop would be so broadly programmed as to compete with commercial services (CRA, 2006, pp.6-7). Interestingly, YMS had essentially copied this description of the youth community from SYN FM, so the argument put forward by CRA was not aimed just at the more music-oriented youth services like that of Groove FM but also youth stations operating in a more traditional community broadcasting mode.

To ensure that the regulatory authority does not make the mistake of licensing services that may compete with commercial stations in the future, CRA suggested that the Broadcasting Services Act be altered so as to prescribe designated categories of community interest that can be served by community broadcasters. Youth would not be one of these categories, although a station could be licensed to serve a 'specific youth interest, not catered for by other broadcasting services' (CRA, 2006, p.7). The general manager of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA), Barry Melville, told the inquiry that the proposition of the CRA was self-serving, with commercial broadcasters trying to scotch what they perceived to be the competitive threat of an increasingly popular community broadcasting sector; elsewhere calling the move 'blatant industry protectionism' (PCA, 2006b, p.8; Robinson, 2006). The proposition would also 'result in community broadcasting

resembling narrowcasting’ and, given that a separate licensing regime for this under had been introduced in the Broadcasting Services Act which could be utilised by both commercial and non-commercial groups, potentially undermine the rationale for investment in community broadcasting⁹² (PCA, 2006b, p.8).

While the parliamentary inquiry panel did not pursue the CRA’s proposal further, and it was not even considered in its final report, there was some discussion during the inquiry that the regulatory authority may have been influenced by the types of arguments being put forward at this time by commercial radio with regards to how community broadcasters define their communities (HOR-SCCITA, 2007). Melville told the inquiry that ‘there is an emerging culture in ACMA of wanting to make stronger interventions at the station level about the community purpose’ and suggested that it was unclear whether this was being pursued independently by ACMA or in response to representations by the commercial sector (PCA, 2006b, pp.7-8). Certainly there is evidence from this period that CRA was putting a case to ACMA for restricting the communities that community broadcasters should be allowed to service and specifically with regards to youth (CRA, 2007, pp.4-5).

ACMA clearly had a heightened awareness of the regulatory issues of youth community broadcasting at this time. During the inquiry hearings ACMA deputy chair Lyn Maddock drew almost exclusively on examples of youth community broadcasters, and Groove FM particularly, to discuss recent regulatory interventions (PCA, 2006a). These interventions had resulted from inquiries driven by complaints from commercial broadcasters and in particular DMG, clearly suggesting demarcation issues. By this time the regulator had itself acknowledged that Nova FM was a ‘youth oriented service’, an admission that undermined the argument that Australia lacked local youth radio services which was a key part of the licensing of youth community broadcasters (ABA, 2004c, p.6). The regulator was also clearly rethinking whether popular music programming, again a fundamental part of the argument for licensing youth stations, posed a risk to the sector. In describing the

⁹² The community broadcasting sector had long been concerned that introduction of narrowcasting licences would undermine their sector (Thompson, 1996).

‘various ways that community services can go bad’ at the inquiry hearings, ACMA general manager Giles Tanner, suggested that community broadcasters can:

get into financial difficulty; they become excessively dependent on what is basically advertising, on sponsorship announcements; and they begin to mould their format so that it is consistent and rates and enables them to sell advertising. What you find in that sort of business is that it is a spiral which ends up with the original community purpose largely lost and very little scope for the community to really participate unless they are prepared to be part of a *popular music format*. That is one of the dangers (PCA, 2006a, pp.14-15, my italics).

It seemed that since the introduction of the Nova FM service the tide was turning against youth community broadcasting and the popular music programming rationale that underpinned its development. In 2009, this proposition was tested when a new aspirant youth community broadcaster, Hype FM, applied for the permanent licence previously held by Groove FM.

Hype FM: A Test of New Youth Radio

In the final months of Groove FM’s existence, the YMCA had stepped in to assist YMS improve its management and administration processes. While their assistance was not enough to convince ACMA that Groove’s licence should be renewed, the YMCA decided that it would itself seek to obtain a temporary community broadcasting licence to utilise the 101.7 MHz spectrum vacated by Groove to establish a new youth community broadcasting service. In January 2009, the YMCA’s new aspirant youth station, Hype FM, went to air on a time-share basis with a programming model that YMCA chief executive Ron Mell described as being very different to Groove FM and incorporating ‘a very mixed sort of music genre and a lot more talkback’ (YMCA, 2009; Sonti, 2009). Six months later, on 23 June 2009, ACMA initiated the process of permanently allocating the 101.7 MHz for community broadcasting. Along with the YMCA there were two other applicants for the licence,

country music station Phoenix, and CCR, the senior citizens service which was passed over for this spectrum when Groove was licensed in 2002 but had since been allocated a City and middle ring suburbs licence (ACMA, 2009; ACMA, 2008b).

Applications for the new Perth community broadcasting licence closed on 9 August, 2009. In September, prior to when ACMA planned to meet with applicants to discuss their Form 32 applications, the regulator received a submission from DMG 'making adverse claims with regards to YMCA's temporary community broadcasting service, Hype FM, relevant to YMCA's application for a long-term community broadcasting licence in Perth' (Fong, 2009; Roberts, 2010). The submission included a number of claims about the programming of the service and, like those made against Groove, were based on systematic monitoring of the Hype FM broadcast (over 7 days, 19-25 July) (Fong, 2009). The submission sent a clear signal to both the YMCA and the regulator that DMG were not interested in having any youth community broadcaster in its market, no matter how different from Groove in terms of programming or management, and would pursue a similar approach to that which tied up substantial investigative resources when Groove was on air.

Given the pressure from DMG it comes as no surprise that the YMCA was not allocated a permanent licence to operate the Hype FM service. ACMA decided to instead move CCR's service from the limited Perth City and middle suburbs licence area to the broader Perth licence area, a move that did not increase broadcast diversity (ACMA, 2009). However, the primary reason provided by the regulator for not making the allocation is telling. ACMA 'noted that YMCA's proposed service would have a large component of popular/chart music in its programming, similar to that which is being provided by other broadcasting services in the licence area' (ACMA, 2009). The very deficiency in commercial broadcasting that had been problematised in such a manner (including by the regulator) so as to build a substantial part of the case for government investment in Triple J and youth community broadcasters had now apparently been addressed from within the commercial sector through the development of Nova FM. This eliminated the need

for youth community broadcasting in Perth, and one can conclude, every state capital in which Nova FM service operates.

Conclusion

In the mid-2000s the radio landscape in each of Australia's mainland capitals included a station licensed in each of the three broadcasting sectors that were either licensed to service youth, or were broadly considered to be youth radio. In this chapter I have examined three flashpoints that emerged in this new multi-sector youth radio environment, with a focus on relations between commercial and non-commercial services. I argue that while it had took years for a rationale centred on youth to be composed to enable the government to intervene to fill the gap left by commercial radio's abandonment of Top 40 popular music radio in the 1980s, it took little time for DMG to establish its Nova FM as a new form of commercial youth radio that undermined this rationale and challenged the existing non-commercial services to justify their existence. Triple J responded by significantly restructuring its service to maintain its legitimacy as a youth broadcaster. Youth community broadcasters have fared less well. DMG managed to use the complaints-based regulatory system to ensure Perth no longer has a youth community broadcaster that might compete with its Nova FM service and seems to have convinced the regulator that the gap in popular music programming that provided the rationale for licensing youth community broadcasters is now filled.

Conclusion

This thesis has addressed two primary and interrelated aims. First, to determine how a radio settlement was reached in each of Australia's mainland state capitals in the mid-2000s that included three stations, each licensed in a separate broadcasting sector, which either purported to service youth or was widely perceived as doing so. Second, to identify and examine all of the key manifestations of youth radio in Australia's broadcasting history and in doing so generate the first analysis of the ways in which the relationship between radio and youth has been formulated and reformulated in Australia, modulating through time and across sectors.

In accounting for the development of the multi-sector youth radio settlement of the 2000s, the thesis focused on the intersection of technical affordances, including technological, legislative and regulatory conditions that govern the use of radio spectrum, and the discursive formulation of rationales that made it possible to both conceive of a specific relationship between radio broadcasting and youth and established the desirability of maintaining such a relationship. Drawing on this conceptual framework, I argued that the presence of multiple youth radio outlets in metropolitan Australian radio markets was primarily the result of policy work undertaken through the 1980s and 1990s that was initiated by music industry stakeholders concerned about the economic and cultural impact on the music industry of the shift of commercial stations out of the Top 40 radio format which had long played a key role in the ongoing cycle of new music diffusion and into formats that privileged music from the past.

The thesis traced out how, having failed to address new music concerns using existing regulatory tools in the context of the government's commitment to moving away from restrictive content regulation and towards intervening in market structures by releasing additional licences in each of the three broadcasting sectors, music industry stakeholders reframed their concerns about commercial radio programming changes in terms of a diminishment of the relationship between radio

and youth. This transposition, which was theoretically straightforward given the widely held conception of youth as a predilection for new and emergent cultural consumption, would prove to be highly effective. Not only did it activate powerful and well-established governmental vocabularies relating to youth that extended beyond the cultural sphere, but it better matched a key objective of the national and community broadcasting sectors to service disenfranchised audiences, and it was in these sectors that structural interventions to address the new music policy issue were always most likely to play out. Furthermore, it was the broadcasting regulator a key player in spectrum planning and licensing that, having failed in its bid to renovate the local music quota, took the lead role in the transposition process. Through the 1980s and 1990s it released a series of research reports articulating the policy story that youth had become inadequately serviced by radio and which in turn drew from and informed discussions of the radio-youth disconnect by the media and cultural policy studies academics.

When the federal government technically afforded new radio broadcasting opportunities to the ABC in 1988 as part of the National Metropolitan Radio Plan and to the community broadcasting sector in the early 2000s as an outcome of the 1992 Broadcasting Services Act nationwide spectrum review process, a highly refined policy story, supported by an extensive and diverse evidence base, existed that would facilitate, if not encourage, the use of these new broadcasting resources to service youth. While I do not dispute that the Triple J youth radio network and the seven youth community broadcasters that were established through these affordances arose from a complex array of institutional investments and negotiations by the ABC and the registered not-for-profit community groups that underpinned the youth community stations, I have clearly shown in this thesis that the youth radio policy story was fundamental in the allocation of broadcast spectrum to these organisations to realise their youth radio ambitions.

This thesis also presents the case that elements of the youth radio policy story so effectively deployed to facilitate non-commercial youth radio developments also played a role in conceptualising the emergence of the Nova FM network as a return

of commercial youth radio to the metropolitan radio landscape through the first half of the 2000s. While DMG Radio Australia (DMG) did not identify the network as targeted at youth, I have argued that both the manner in which it discussed the network's programming and descriptions offered by the media highlighted a range of elements that had featured in the youth radio policy work conducted over the previous two decades and this contributed to its recognition as a manifestation of youth radio in public discourse. This recognition, which also came to be held by the broadcasting regulator, undermined a key component of the rationale for the allocation of resources to non-commercial youth radio services, and I have shown how this contributed to tensions between the institutions offering youth radio services in each of the broadcasting sectors.

In addressing the first aim of this thesis it became apparent that the technical and discursive underpinnings of the metropolitan youth radio settlement of the 2000s drew from and could only be understood in relation to the history of the government of broadcasting in Australia, and to the manner in which the relationship between radio and youth has been variously understood and described as manifestations of youth radio. As such, this thesis meets a second aim of tracing out the emergence of all of the key manifestations of youth radio in Australia's broadcasting history.

I have argued that although distinct music and variety programs targeting young people had been incorporated into the segmented programming schedules that constituted Australian radio in the pre-television period, these were limited in number and radio was essentially focused on adults. As such, I consider that the emergence of the first substantive articulation of youth radio in Australia to have occurred when the Top 40 radio format was adopted by a substantial number of metropolitan commercial stations in the early 1960s. The commercial sector lost its youth radio monopoly in the mid-1970s as the Whitlam ALP government facilitated the development of the ABC's Double J youth radio station in Sydney and licensed 'educational' community broadcasters that were closely aligned with student/youth interests. While these alternative youth services were innovative, they did not have

a substantial impact on the youth audience captured by commercial radio, nor did they greatly alter the public perception that the relationship between radio and youth was one formulated on the basis of the consumption of commercial popular music. As a result, they did not feature in discussions of radio's diminishing relationship with youth in the 1980s and 1990s. What they did do was provide a precedent for hosting youth radio services in the non-commercial sectors, and this would be called upon by those seeking to find new parts of the broadcast landscape in which to regenerate Top 40 youth radio after its demise in the 1980s. This thesis has examined this process in detail, highlighting how it yielded the ABC's Triple J network youth radio, which was rolled out from 1989, and youth community broadcasting, manifested by seven community broadcasters receiving licences to service the youth community in 2001-2002. Finally, I have argued that the Nova FM network rolled out to Australia's mainland state capitals in the first half of the 2000s represented the return, after the best part of two decades, of youth radio to Australian commercial radio.

Contribution to Australian Media History Scholarship

This thesis has addressed a gap in how we understand the connection between radio and youth in contemporary and historical Australian radio broadcasting landscapes. In addition to providing a unique genealogy of the structure of mainland capital city radio markets in the mid-2000s, each of which included three youth radio stations, it has contributed new material on a range of under-researched issues in Australian media history.

First, this research provides a detailed analysis of one of the most extensive official inquiries in Australian broadcasting history, the Australian Broadcasting Authority's *Australian Music on Radio Inquiry*. While the inquiry has been subject to some discussion in the local content and popular music policy literature (Breen, 1990; Breen, 1993; Breen, 1999; Counihan, 1991; Counihan, 1992a; Counihan, 1996; Jonker, 1992), this thesis provides the first comprehensive analysis of its establishment, execution and impact.

Second, this thesis provides the first substantial analysis of the complex institutional and political environment in which the ABC's Triple J was transformed in the process of expanding from being a stand-alone Sydney youth station to a national youth radio network. In particular, it provides the first detailed examination of the *Dix Inquiry's* assessment of Triple J in the early 1980s and the manner in which that inquiry's recommendations impacted on the formation of a national ABC youth radio network.

In providing the first examination of the licensing of youth community broadcasters in Australia's capital cities in the early 2000s as a subset of the community broadcasting sector, this thesis makes a third important contribution to the Australian media history field. In examining this development it is one of the few studies to address the impact of the spectrum planning and licence allocation processes mandated by the introduction of the 1992 Broadcasting Services Act on the expansion of the community broadcasting sector in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Fourth, this thesis provides the only scholarly examination of the rise and demise of Perth youth community broadcaster Groove FM. This is a particularly interesting case in Australian community broadcasting history and Australian media history generally. Groove FM is one of the few community stations to be removed from the airwaves, and its demise highlights key issues including resources strain and exposure to regulatory pressures that continue to impact on the community sector. The case of Groove FM has also fuelled broader discussion of the lack of clear demarcation between broadcasting sectors in Australian broadcasting policy.

Fifth, while Nova FM has been the subject of some programming analysis and single-outlet research, this thesis provides the first detailed examination of the entry of DMG into the Australian radio market, its establishment of Nova FM as a mainland capital city radio network, and its reception and impact.

Finally, this thesis presents the first scholarly discussion of the Whitlam government Department of Media's 1974 plan to create a 'young style' radio sector. This policy

idea has, despite the interest of some scholars in the development of the ABC's Double J youth radio in this same period, been overlooked. While it is a small feature of this thesis, it is one of the issues that I believe worthy of further investigation.

Issues for Further Investigation

This thesis is broad in scope. It synthesises a large amount of empirical material on developments in policy and practice in each of Australia's three radio broadcasting sectors over a period of more than eighty years. In doing so it maps the trajectory of all of the major articulations of Australian youth radio and illustrates the connections between them. Compiling this map has highlighted a number of places in Australian radio history worthy of further and more focused exploration and some contemporary issues in media and communications policy that could profit from further inquiry.

While the research draws on a range of primary and secondary material to broadly outline the importation of the American Top 40 format to Australia's 2UE in 1958 and its subsequent adoption by other metropolitan radio stations, it is clear that this fascinating transposition needs further investigation. It would be particularly worthwhile to assemble and examine newspaper and magazine news, advertising and opinion pieces dealing with this transposition in the late 1950s and early 1960s and to combine these with text and audio archives held by the NFSA, CRA/FARB, private institutions and individuals, and stakeholder interviews to generate a more nuanced picture of how Top 40 arrived on, and spread across, Australian radio. More generally, there exists little historical or contemporary scholarly analysis of the impact of American and international radio innovations on Australian radio programming. The generation of new work on this topic could contribute to broader discussion of media innovation and diffusion.

Given its substantial contribution to the Australian cultural landscape and its internationally distinctive articulation of national (public service) broadcasting it is remarkable that the ABC's Triple J (and former Double J) youth radio service has not

been subject to substantial academic investigation. In 2015 the ABC's youth radio service will turn forty. Hopefully this milestone will inspire interest in investigating Triple J from a range of disciplinary perspectives. In addition to substantial deficiencies in our knowledge of the institutional/administrative and governmental/policy history of the service, its programming features, including news and current affairs, comedy, promotions and competitions and music, and its place in a convergent media landscape has also received limited scholarly attention. Certainly, it would be wise to expedite research on the service's 1970s Double J articulation given the current age of those who were involved with the service in this period. Given the precariousness of text, audio, and visual material produced by/about Triple J prior to the development and adoption of archival digitisation, it would also be sensible to undertake research on the service's development through the 1980s and 1990s without substantial delay.

A third topic worthy of further investigation identified in the process of conducting this thesis is the temporary community broadcasting sector that emerged as a result of the spectrum planning process initiated following the introduction of the 1992 Broadcasting Services Act and remained a substantial feature of the Australian radio landscape until the late 1990s. With almost 500 temporary community broadcasting licences issued in 1996/97 to services trialling everything from Over 50s to GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender), indigenous to comedy, and Muslim to dance music programming, this could well be the most dynamic and innovative period in Australian radio broadcasting history. Yet, apart from some of those lucky enough to receive one of the small number of permanent licences on offer and to have captured the attention of scholars, we know little about the organisations that participated in this temporary sector.

One set of temporary community broadcasters operating in the 1990s that would benefit from further research are dance music stations. As discussed in chapter four, the rise to popularity of electronic dance music in Australia coincided with the nationwide spectrum review and planning period in which temporary community broadcasting licences were made available by the regulator. A number of groups in

Australia's mainland capital cities took up the opportunity to trial electronic dance music radio services and this type of music was also central to a number of services that identified youth as their community of interest. While the emergence of dance music as a new component of the cultural industries in Australia during this period has received some scholarly attention, to date no research has been conducted on the interplay between the temporary dance music radio services and other parts of the industry such as DJs, record labels, retail outlets, and nightclubs.

Examining the fate of those temporary community broadcasters that missed out on permanent licenses would also be a very worthwhile research project, likely to provide important insights into innovation and adaptation processes in the media industries while also shedding light on the role that the spectrum planning process played in community development. In the process of conducting this thesis I found that KISS FM, a dance music station that missed out on a permanent licence in Melbourne, had secured access to a number of FM narrowcasting frequencies in various parts of Melbourne, regional Victoria and Queensland to create a relayed service and used a satellite service to distribute programming elsewhere in Australia and in New Zealand (Mitchell, 2006; Radio Info, 2006; KISS FM Australia, 2014). KISS FM also established a live-streaming online radio service. In fact, it was Sydney temporary community broadcaster, Wild FM which had pioneered online radio in Australia in 1997, viewing it as an alternate means of distribution should it fail to secure a permanent licence (Scatena, 1997). Although Wild FM did not maintain its online service for long as a temporary broadcaster (Jackson, 1999), and did not reinstate it when it failed to secure a permanent licence in 2001, the Wild FM brand seemingly remained strong, with reports that the station would be relaunched as an online service in 2013 (Radio Info, 2013). Investigating the role of temporary community broadcasters in the development of online radio services in Australia would contribute to emerging scholarship in this area, such as that by Baker (2012).

An investigation of the impact of new forms of digital and online radio-like services on the accessibility of Australian music to local audiences and how this is regulated would also be a valuable contribution to Australian media studies scholarship and

cultural and media policy development. This thesis has examined how mechanisms deployed by the federal government to support local music distribution and development were revised to deal with changes to analogue commercial radio formats in the 1980s and 1990s. A pertinent question now is whether technological changes under the broad umbrella of media convergence require new regulatory approaches. The 2012 *Convergence Review* conducted by the federal government's Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy raised such questions and received a substantial number of submissions on the issue. But the review committee's recommendations essentially take a 'wait and see' approach (Boreham et al., 2012) and the report suggests little empirical investigation of these issues has taken place. Indeed, participants at the Music Council of Australia *Music and Media Symposium*, which was convened to discuss the Convergence Review in 2012, identified significant gaps in our knowledge of convergence and music consumption (Letts, 2012).

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Document and multi-media archives consulted

Archives Consulted and Research approach adopted - Directed Search (DS) and/or Comprehensive Scanning (CS)	Research approach
Communications Update 1980s- (newsletter of the Media and Communications Council)	CS
SCAN (ABC staff journal), 1977-1990 [all volumes until ceased]	CS
Broadcasting and Television Magazine 1980-2008	CS
AdNews 1980-2008	CS
Factiva Australian electronic newspaper archive (1986-, [Major Australian Publications: BRW, Business News, Canberra Times, Daily Telegraph, Herald-Sun, Hobart Mercury, Northern Territory News/Sunday Territorian, Sun Herald, Sunday Age, Sunday Mail, The Advertiser, The Age, The Australian, The Australian Financial Review, The Courier-Mail, The Advertiser, The Age, The Australian, The Australian Financial Review, The Courier-Mail, The Sunday Mail, The Sunday Times, The Sydney Morning Herald, The West Australian])	DS
National Archives of Australia (1970—)	DS
Parlinfo (contains all post-federation parliamentary proceedings and documents, including House of Representatives and Senate Hansard)	DS
National Film and Sound Archives (1923—)	DS
Broadcasting Magazine USA (1950-65)	DS
Population statistics – ABS (3105.0.65.001)	DS
ABCB, ABT, ABA & ACMA annual reports, news/media releases (1949—)	CS/DS
ABC annual reports (1974—) material on JJ and JJJ	CS
CBF annual reports [1999-2009]	CS
ABA Update (Nov 1992, vol 1—May 2003 [post-YCB])	CS
Evans archive (1970s—80s)	CS/DS
Community Radio Licence applications (2000s)	CS
Groove FM and Hype FM archive—Joana Poznanovic (2000s)	CS
ABT Australian Music on Radio Quarterly Reports, Ed Jonker (1989—90)	CS
Australian Music on Radio Inquiry (reports, transcripts, ABT and FARB submissions) (1980s)	CS

DS: Directed Search

CS: Comprehensive Scanning

Appendix 2: Interviewees

Name	Organisation	Date
Gary Roberts	Nova FM	16 June 2010
Giles Tanner	ABA	14 September 2011
Gavin Oakes	ABA	19 December 2007
Margaret Cupitt	ABA	19 December 2007
Michael Gordon-Smith	ABA	12 September 2011
Barry Melville	CBAA	18 December 2007
Cameron Woods	CBAA	18 December 2007
Joana Poznanovic	Groove FM & Hype FM	10 June, 2010
Mel Page	Edge FM	04 February 2008
Bryce Ives	SYN FM	18 May 2010
Wayne Regan	Street Radio	20 December 2007
Stuart Matchett	Triple J	14 September 2011
John Staley	Youthworx	4 December 2007
Lee Burton	Youthworx	31 January 2008
Craig Campbell	Brunswick Youth Services	4 December 2007
Justin Smart	Radio Metro	19 September 2012

Appendix 3: ABA determination of priorities - preparation of licence area plans, Sept.1993

Priority Group	Planning Zone	Description
1	R1	Remote Australia
	R21	Central and South West Western Australia
	R23	Darwin and Top End
2	R7	Central NSW
	R11	Albury, Shepparton and Wangaratta
	R16	Central Victoria and Central Murray
3	R2	Northern Queensland
	R3	Central Coast Queensland
	R4	Darling Downs
	R6	Hunter and Northern NSW
	R9	Illawarra, South East NSW and Australian Capital Territory
4	R5	Brisbane, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, Richmond/Tweed & Gympie
	R8	Sydney and Central NSW Coast
	R15	Melbourne and Geelong
	R19	Adelaide
	R22	Perth
5	R10	Murrumbidgee/Riverina
	R12	Gippsland
	R13	Northern Tasmania
	R14	Hobart/Southern Tasmania
	R17	Western Victoria
	R18	South East South Australia
	R20	Spencer Gulf

Source: Developed from ABA, Planning Priorities 1993 (ABA, 1993b, p.55)

Appendix 4: Ethics Clearance and Compliance Declaration

From: Keith Wilkins
To: Podkalicka, Aneta
Date: 9/8/2010 9:37 am
Subject: SUHREC Project 2010/191 Ethics Clearance for Extended/Modified Project (Continuation of Project 06/36)

CC: Ellie Rennie; Meredyth, Denise; Wilson, Christopher

To: Dr Aneta Podkalicka, ISR

Dear Aneta

SUHREC Project 2010/191 Youthworx: Youth Media and Social Enterprise

Dr A Podkalicka, ISR; Dr E Rennie, Prof D Meredyth, Mr C Wilson et al

Ethics Clearance Extended to 01/06/2013

[Originally Approved 01/06/2006 as Project 06/36; Modified February 2009. Renumbered Continuing Project: Modified September 2010]

Thank you for the progress report for the above project emailed on 27 August 2010 with attachments. The report included a detailed request for clearance for a modified protocol: an expanded/extended project including overseas involvement, change of research personnel and supervised student research activity. The documentation was put to a delegate of Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) for consideration and positive recommendation put to the Chair of SUHREC. Due to the project extending beyond 5 years, the project has been renumbered.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, the modified/extended project has approval to proceed in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions here outlined.

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the current *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.

- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator/supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.

- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/ clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project.

- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact me if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance and if you need a signed ethics clearance certificate, citing the SUHREC project number. Copies of clearance emails should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the continuing project.

Yours sincerely

Keith Wilkins
Secretary, SUHREC

Keith Wilkins
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I hereby declare that all research in this project and all other aspects of the production of this thesis have been conducted in accordance with the approval given and conditions imposed by the Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee, Project 06/36 -2010/191



Chris K Wilson

Project Publications

Wilson, CK 2013, 'Youth, Radio and Australian Popular Music Policy', *Perfect Beat: The Pacific Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture*, vol.14, no.2, pp.100-119.