Merry Christmas

From The President's Desk

The latest Community Input & Information Session was held on Saturday, 20th November and once again, community representation was low. I believe there are a number of reasons for this including, and probably most important of all, people don't want an extra trip to town, with its additional impact on the family budget. Another possibility is the community is generally satisfied with what TankFM is currently providing in its programming. The latter could be considered an egotistical attitude on TankFM's part which could lead to complacency within Tank, and that is unhealthy.

Regardless of the level of community representation at these meetings, the cost of staging them is a necessary part of being licenced as a community radio station and, continue they must.

Presenter training is an essential part of any community radio station yet, for most of the years since first being licenced, presenter training at TankFM has been less than ideal and, has been conducted in what could be described as an ad hoc manner. Nobody is to blame for this situation, one that often results from a someone with some radio background or experience imparting their knowledge on new presenters at the fledgling station at a time when the excitement of being licenced outweighs all else for a while. Realising the need for a structured training mechanism stems from the experiences gained as the station grows after it is licenced, and a changing regulatory environment.

Preparing training documents is a time consuming task that was not adequately undertaken at TankFM until about about three years ago when the first Presenter Training Manual was produced. That document was a positive step towards a structured training regime. There were other documents prior to that time that were not put into an ongoing training structure.

More recently, Rick Wilson has been re-vamping all training documentation, with input from various experienced TankFM presenters. These are at the stage where the Kestrel desk printed manual and an accompanying Power Point Presentation are all but finished and ready for distribution, and the Presenter's Training Manual is not far behind. Attention has been paid to detail in the preparation of these documents and the finished products will be a valuable aid for current and future presenters.

The finished documents and the Power Point Presentation CDROM will be provided to every presenter, both current and trainee. Printable manuals will also be available for downloading from the TankFM web site in portable document format (pdf).
From time to time an opinion is expressed that TankFM is moving away from being a community station in the time honoured sense. There's even been the suggestion that we're sounding like a commercial station.

Whilst everyone is entitled to their opinion of what the station should be, there is a need to consider why we changed from sounding like a traditional community station of yesteryear. The decision wasn't taken lightly.

From the time the licence was first granted in 1999, up until about late 2005, TankFM functioned like a traditional community station and, it was sending us broke. Business sense was outweighed by tradition and we were almost bankrupt on at least three occasions due to a lack of community support and very low sponsor support.

Radio is a very competitive market and if a station wishes to survive it has to be competitive. TankFM became competitive by moving away from tradition and into a more structured format. Sponsorships became more professional in their sound and that, and a more structured format gave rise to more community support and more sponsorships, the lifeblood of the station. We've done this and still retained the individual personality of each presenter, unlike commercial radio where audio processing technology ensures that each presenter's voice is tailored to fit the station image.

Above everything else, TankFM is undeniably a business and, if we don't have a business-like approach to what we do, we will run out of support and money.

Nothing else matters if we don't have the financial resources to stay in business, and those resources come from being competitive in a commercial (radio) world. If we have to sound commercial and professional to stay in business, that's the nature of the beast.

If you were wondering what was happening with the Disabled Parking project, it has temporarily stalled due to events beyond TankFM's control.

The principal delay until recently was a succession of tradesmen who failed to follow up after initial telephone contact. One contractor first accepted the job and then decided against it. Each of these situations left TankFM playing the waiting game.

The newest delay is TankFM's position of uncertainty at Rudder Park due to the possible closure of toilets by Kempsey Shire Council. Management is investigating possible options in that regard.

For the time being, management has decided to move the money accrued from fund raising for construction of the disabled parking bay into a dedicated bank account to ensure the money doesn't become a part of general revenue. Regardless of the way the toilet issue pans out, the money will be spent to provide improved access facilities for disabled presenters.

Another example of unreliable tradespersons was with the studio ceiling and a contractor who couldn't be pinned down to a starting date. In order to have the job finished in time to satisfy the condition that the CBF grant be acquitted by the end of November, another contractor was engaged.

The ceiling is now finished, including painting by the illustrious team of Hoffman and Kale. Thanks Bob and thanks Ted.

With Christmas almost upon us and the festive season ramping up at an incredible speed, Suzanne and I take this opportunity to wish all members and their family a safe and happy Christmas, and good health in the new year of 2011.

If you will be on the roads this Christmas season, I offer advice in the form of words from an old Road Safety campaign - it is better to arrive late than to be Dead On Time.

Ray Wells
President
ray@tankfm.org

New Program Cycle
Applications are now being received until 5.00 pm on Friday, 21st January 2011 for program slots in the next cycle that will commence on the 1st March 2011.

Applications may be hand delivered to the TankFM shop in the Centrepoint Arcade or, emailed to programming@tankfm.org

Community Broadcasting Foundation Ltd

TankFM acknowledges the financial assistance of the Community Broadcasting Foundation
I thought I would start this month’s newsletter column with a media release from the C.B.A.A. –

November 24, 2010 SYDNEY: The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) will partner with the media sales company Spots & Space to increase national sponsorship income for the community broadcasting sector in 2011 and beyond. The partnership seeks to raise awareness of community broadcasting and increase sponsorship revenue for stations.

The announcement coincides with the release of the 2010 McNair Ingenuity Research National Listener Survey results that identified 26% of Australians aged over 15 years listen to community radio in an average week. So in a typical week 4,433,000 listeners are tuned in to a community radio station with a spread across all age groups - 18% aged 15-24, 25% aged 25-39, 28% aged 40-54 and 29% aged 55 or over. This recent audience research provides a strong basis to develop national sponsorship opportunities for the community radio sector.

Spots and Space will be exclusively endorsed by the CBAA as the national sales representative for the sector."Any business or organisation that understands how valuable the community radio audience is can now work directly with Spots & Space," says Kath Letch, CBAA General Manager. "Individual stations don't have to use Spots & Space, but many stations already do. This partnership simply builds on existing relationships and is a good fit for our organisation" she says.

Tank FM have been working with Spots and Space for over two years and have had a great working relationship with this organisation.

Also an interesting fact to present to one and all, with computer technology used by many presenters I have found after consistently listening to the station during the past year that people who play Compact Discs have a better record of timing out to the news than presenters who use laptop.

And finally but not least of all, have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Until next year,

Keep Smiling,
Gary Delaforce
Committee Member
Welcome to the final edition of Tank FM’s Tech Corner for 2010.

It is that time of the year where things slowly start to wind down from the manic 100 miles an hour to a comfortable cruising speed and gives everyone a chance to ponder: Where did the year go and what have we achieved?

All in all, we’ve had a lot of highlights throughout the year on the technology front with a couple of them being -:

The deployment of the Breakaway Broadcast audio processor system. This has lead to Tank FM to produce a more consistent quality sound for our local FM listeners. It has also given Internet based listeners a better experience.

The online listeners now have better quality also via an increase of our streaming service speed.

Deployment of UPS services to provide maximum uptime in the equipment hut, as well as providing better cleaner power protection for sensitive equipment.

The successful “OB” trials of our Tieline Technology gear to provide Tank FM with the ability to host a show or provide crosses to locations away from Rudder Park.

The deployment of audio distribution services to maximise audio quality to/from external sources (such as audio programming from Satellite).

This work has been a slow - and at times - frustrating task, usually carried out during our only “real” window of opportunity where Rudder Park studio is vacant – Saturdays between 1pm and 4pm. Between work and family commitments, it is amazing what we have done in that 3hrs.

It’s certainly a team effort and I hope I have given back as much as I have learnt in the past 11 odd months from Ray Wells, as well as the ongoing support over the weekends from Gary and Bob Hoffman – and the many presenters who had to cope with the technology changes!

There is certainly tons more work to finalise over the coming couple of months. These are still ongoing and are prioritised according to their urgency or status of other work needing to be complete. Items such as -:

The construction of our radio tower located inside the tank. This will allow the Studio/Shop wireless link (network) to be completed. It will also provide a more stable platform for our existing studio transmitter link to Greenhill, as well as provide space for links to proposed translator site(s). This gives us the ability to use our own wireless link for outside broadcasts.
Planning, installation and commissioning of translator (or translators) facilities both up/down river to improve our service coverage of the Macleay Valley.
Extend our UPS capacity to provide longer “uptime” during power outages.
Review power options (Generator, Solar) at the studio and generator facilities at the transmitter site at Greenhill.

That will keep us busy for while – let alone with the unknown that may crop up in the form of new work. Items stemming from the toilets at Rudder Park are just one example! Oh well - we will get there... Slowly...

It has been a truly amazing 2010 - and we are still here, still on air and still financially sound. This is the result of management, presenters, members and sponsors of Tank FM who have offered tremendous support to the station, throughout the year!

From me and my family, may we wish everyone a rewarding and enjoyable Christmas and a safe and prosperous 2011!
Travel safely...

Until next year...

Ross Delaforce - ross@tankfm.org
Circles

The document below was reproduced from a draft copy of a 1999 Tank document titled "Handbook and Policies of Macleay Valley Community Radio." The document was due for adoption by the membership in July of that year.

When one looks down the plan it's interesting to see that most of the objectives in that document were met and here we are nearly twelve years later making similar plans again, as if we are going around in circles. Circles? Probably not but cycles, definitely yes as we continue to evolve and reach for bigger and better things.

Did you note that we were to introduce a news service? In early 1999 there was no national news. This came about in October of that year with the installation of the satellite equipment. At the same time, we started to use CBAA programs and run overnight programming from the satellite service. The satellite equipment and the DDN computer, on which CBAA programs from the satellite are stored, were both a result of CBF grants.

We did get our second studio, albeit about seven years late and at the shop. The plans referenced were for what is now the main studio at Rudder Park, which went into service in June 1999. The studio was built by TankFM members using materials donated by the Kempsey business community; about $5,000 worth, from memory.

Has TankFM progressed since 1999? The answer must be a very definite, unqualified YES!

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**MACLEAY VALLEY COMMUNITY RADIO**

**MAIN STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 1999**

**Major Project**

1. the construction and refurbishment of a second studio in the Tank at Rudder Park.
2. To develop an effective training course using the second studio.
3. To improve the quality of programming through the acquisition and use of improved broadcasting facilities.
4. To introduce a news service and external programs.
5. To resource programs through the community network which can be incorporated into current programming and to provide an overnight service which is not a repeat of other localised services.

**Stage 1**
The drawing up of plans and lodgement of plans for approval by the Kempsey Shire Council - plans lodged March 1st and awaiting approval.

**Stage 2**
The obtaining of donations from local businesses of materials for use in the construction of the second studio - commenced February 15th and 8 businesses have responded with the donation of materials. Also four people have donated their professional time for the construction and wiring of the studio meeting local building requirements. Materials have been currently donated and are stored in the tank.

**Stage 3**
Obtaining the permission of council for the removal of a small shed at the site to inside the tank to act as an equipment storage space for transmitter equipment etc. - Kempsey Council have given approval and when the construction phase starts this shed will be removed into the tank. A local crane moving company have agreed to do this free of charge.

**Stage 4**
The Macleay Valley Community Radio Association was successful in gaining an Area Assistance Grant originally to repay the loan to the Coastline Credit Union but as result of the State Government delaying the releasing of funds this grant could not be used for retrospective payments. However, because our application centred around the improvement of access of the community to use of the station we were permitted to use the funds we had been awarded to purchase new equipment and refurbish our current studio to enable us to increase our assessability. Currently the Management Committee has commenced accessing our needs in terms of equipment and a list of the necessary equipment to purchase will be drawn up. If successful with the application for satellite support the funds from the grant will also be used to effectively install the satellite equipment.

**Stage 5**
The construction of the new studio and equipping it - This will be carried out during April/May.

**Stage 6**
Implementing new training courses - this is currently being planned to enable new presenters to have access to the airwaves.

**Stage 7**
Finalisation of grant procedures under the Area Assistance Scheme.