

Enacting cultural diversity through multicultural radio in Australia

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Abstract

Australia is second only to Israel in being the world's most culturally diverse nation, based largely on high levels of immigration in the second part of the 20th century. From the 1970s onwards, Australia formally recognized the massive social changes brought about by postwar immigration, and provided legislation to incorporate cultural diversity into everyday lives. One such 'legislative' enactment saw the establishment of multicultural broadcasting in Australia, as arguably a world-first, both in its comprehensiveness and diversity. Today, Australia has a public sector corporation, the Special Broadcasting Service, administering five radio services in 68 languages. Also, the Community Radio sector produces multicultural programming in 100 languages through a number of its 330 broadcast and 207 narrowcast stations. This article examines the relationship between radio and its communities. It argues that despite the 'profile' of SBS television, radio is much closer to its constituent communities, and therefore plays a greater role in enabling those communities to speak their own histories, beyond the confines of a consensual Anglophile paradigm.

Keywords: cultural diversity, radio, democracy, community, broadcast policy

Introduction

Australia is a multicultural, multilingual nation. A total of 40% of the Australians (7.5 million people) were born overseas or had at least one parent who was born overseas. 14% of the entire population (2.5 million people) were born overseas in a non-English speaking country and 16% of Australians (3 million people) speak a language other than English at home. Around 100,000 migrants arrive in Australia each year, including

a number of refugees who face particular settlement difficulties due to war, dispossession, and poverty (NEMBC, 2001a: 6).

Since its inception in 1980, SBS television's performance as a multicultural broadcaster has been under close scrutiny and almost constant criticism. Being partly public and partly commercial (it was required in 1991 to include advertising in its schedule), the television service has had to straddle the often contradictory demands of providing niche language programming in up to 68 languages and competing for audiences in the general media marketplace. SBS radio, on the other hand, stands as a beacon of linguistic and cultural diversity. Originally conceived to provide information on settlement issues for immigrants (Jakubowicz, 1994: 46), SBS radio has remained true to its charter. Then there is the community sector, even more tightly aligned to its communities.

This year marks 30 years of official multicultural radio broadcasting in Australia. Although forms of broadcasting in languages other than English (LOTE) have been around a lot longer than that, multicultural broadcasting began as an important part of Australian social policy in 1975 as an initiative of the Labor government of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. Whitlam was anxious to reach non-English speaking Australians with information about government services, namely the popular national medical scheme Medicare, introduced by his government (Arena, 1985: 97). But along with experiments in community broadcasting – another one of Whitlam's initiatives – multicultural broadcasting soon spread quickly, as it was clear there was a broader range of community needs which required urgent address. Some of this history will be outlined below.

Currently, multicultural broadcasting is provided through the same two sectors established in 1975. First, the state-funded public service broadcaster, the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), which provides a national television network with a number of separate cable and digital services, five radio services, and an online service. The other sector is represented by the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA). The CBAA consists of more than 500 separate broadcast and narrowcast services operated mainly by volunteers on a partial government subsidy, 100 of which provide 'ethnic' broadcasting, who in turn are represented by the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC), which was set up within the CBAA in the mid 1980s to better represent their special needs (Lawe Davies, 1996; Lawe Davies, 2002a). There has also been a small but growing commercial radio sector in specialist language programming since the deregulation of the media market in the early 1990s (Lawe Davies, 2002), and a narrowcasting sector, both of whose foci, in the view of the peak ethnic broadcasting body, NEMBC, do not necessarily fit social policy objectives and orien-

tation (Productivity Commission, 1999). The broadcasting organizations that are most closely aligned to social and broadcasting policy objectives – SBS radio and the NEMBC community radio sector – will be the main focus of this paper. Both have played a significant role in strengthening the political and social savvy of former migrant communities.

The five radio services of SBS maintain programming in 68 languages, reaching about one million people each week (SBS, 2003a: 2). The community radio sector, on the other hand, claims it is much bigger, being constituted by 100 stations providing programming in 100 different languages (NEMBC, 2004: 16), and reaching about 2 million people a week (NEMBC, 2001b: 13). In broad terms, both sectors, in their own way, have close links with their communities, and as such satisfy government policy objectives of maintaining social equity and harmony across all language groups (NEMBC, 2001a; SBS, 2003c: 1).

Some history

Multicultural broadcasting services in Australia for the various diaspora communities of post World War II immigration did not arise out of a ‘natural’ desire by governments to provide integrated specialist services as part of its migration program, but came some thirty years after the first migrants arrived in the late 1940s, along with a range of other ‘welfarist’ services, most likely as an act of political expediency. That is, within the Australian context, broadcasting was a vital part of social policy, particularly since the mid 1970s (Grassby, 1973; Galbally, 1978; Connor, 1985). And the issues which dominate the living conditions of migrants continue to be directly linked to broadcast policy and procedure. For example, SBS and NEMBC periodically revise radio program schedules as a response to changing immigration patterns, reducing the hours of some language groups, dropping some entirely, and adding new language programming for the so-called ‘emerging communities’ (SBS, 2004a: 24; NEMBC, 2004b: 2).

Explaining why specialist broadcasting services for migrants took thirty years to develop is a complex task. Clearly, over that time there were distinct changes in attitude towards immigrants, signified in broad terms by the shift from assimilation to integration and eventually multiculturalism (Morrissey, 1984: 75). Michael Morrissey has suggested the difference between assimilation and multiculturalism is that within the former regime all social adjustment is required of the migrant; culture is defined in terms of food, clothing, traditional dress, and language, and is seen as a ‘colorful’ variant of the host culture, which is largely left unaffected. In the latter, the host culture is required to make social and political adjustments which fundamentally change it (Morrissey, 1984:

75). And at the beginning of the 21st century, Australian society has arguably changed, signified most obviously by the continuing strong growth and support of an already large and vibrant multicultural radio sector. Arguably also, changes in attitudes towards how migrants fitted into an Australian social context have not been solely local responses to local conditions, but have occurred within a more global context of 'late modern' social change (Giddens, 1990: 176). In Anthony Giddens' terms, late modernism is characterized by a rupturing and decentering of cultural continuities, and a displacement of cultural 'certainty' by 'doubt' (176). In Australia's case, the certainty which preceded multiculturalism was the dominance and 'continuity' of British founding and colonial occupation. Clearly there were a number of incursions into that powerful social mythology, postwar immigration being one of them.

When postwar immigration began in 1947, Australia saw itself placed in the position to expand manufacturing and overcome its dependency on primary resources exports. Europe had trained labor pools willing to join 'new world' growth economies. From 1947 to 1973, European and British immigration supplied 50 percent of labor force growth, the highest increase rate in the OECD (Castles, 1992: 24). Elevated by the low status of immigrants, Australian-born workers gained improved pay and conditions, and verbally asserted their social superiority through the pejorative categories of 'dagos', 'refos', and 'wogs' (24). In Morrissey's terms they were barely tolerated; or if they were, it was by becoming 'new Australians' who were assimilated rather than integrated into mainstream society.

As an ideology, assimilation continued to dominate government policy into the early 1970s. The first official rejection of assimilation came a quarter of a century after postwar immigration had begun (Castles, 1992: 59), when in 1973 Whitlam's then Ethnic Affairs Minister, Al Grassby, referred to 'multicultural Australia' as the 'national family' (Grassby, 1973). Grassby was the first public figure to use the term 'multiculturalism', even though during the postwar period Australian immigration averaged levels second only to Israel (Castles, 1992: 25). In acknowledging the contemporary state of affairs, Grassby's 'family of the nation' speech, as it became known, was inclusive and accepting of the diversity and differences of its members. But Grassby was ahead of his time, at least in the Labor Party. 'Multiculturalism' never entered official parliamentary discourse (the Hansard index) until March 1977 (Castles, 1992: 59), thirty years after the immigration expansion began.

The end of that decade saw a major investigation into government services for migrants (Galbally, 1978) and the establishment of SBS radio and television. In the early 1980s, there was a major inquiry specifically into multicultural broadcasting services (Connor, 1985), which led to an

invigoration of community ethnic broadcasting. During the same decade, migrant communities formed themselves into state and national lobby groups (EECs and FECCA), and took up key new roles in the administrative structure of State and Federal governments (EACs and OMA respectively). Most importantly, LOTE community broadcasters, frustrated by the Anglo-centric tendencies of their umbrella organization, the Community (Public) Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA), formed their own radical interior group, the National Ethnic Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC), which finally gave them influence and greater financial security (Lawe Davies, 1996).

This shift by former migrant communities from marginal to more central positions in Australian governance and cultural significance becomes a backdrop against which the various modes of Australian multicultural broadcasting can finally be assessed, and questions of Australian national identity worked through.

Beginnings: Ethnic and commercial radio 1948–1975

Ad hoc radio broadcasts in languages other than English (LOTE) began in Australia in 1948 (Patterson, 1988: 88), the year after Calwell's immigration push. But it was a tentative beginning, due largely to the fact that it was an add-on program category to existing English-language commercial radio services. There was also a high degree of suspicion about broadcasting in languages most of the population did not understand. Consequently, in 1953 restrictions were imposed on LOTE broadcasts, limiting them to 2.5 per cent of transmission time, on the condition that all foreign language material was re-broadcast in English (SBS, 1979: 10). Even advertisements had to be translated (Leong, 1983: 7). There were exceptions. Sydney radio 2CH broadcast in LOTE up to 17 hours a week (10 percent of its airtime) until 1972 (Leong, 1983: 7). At the end of 1973, 19 of the 118 commercial stations carried regular broadcasts in LOTE (SBS, 1979), based largely on programming supplied by individuals or ethnic communities, who would buy airtime, make the programs, and sell the advertising – much like current arrangements on community radio. Pino Bosi (who was later to become chair of the NSW State Ethnic Broadcast Advisory Council) was one of these early entrepreneurs. Immigration Minister Al Grassby, also a former migrant, had broadcast to the large Italian community in Griffith, NSW (Thompson, 1994).

The general restriction on LOTE broadcasting stayed in place until 1974, when it was lifted by the Whitlam government (Patterson, 1988: 85). However, this produced no apparent increase in commercial ethnic broadcasting (89). One of the explanations for this lay in the changing

commercial radio market, which by the late 1960s and early 1970s was demanding tighter, top-40 formats, and narrow audience definitions (Thompson, 1994; Turner, 1993). There was also considerable pressure coming from the communities themselves to move away from commercial broadcasting. The 1972 Migrant Workers Conference in Melbourne had raised the issue of government-funded ethnic broadcasting as a political demand. The government responded in terms which clearly reflected radio's importance as social policy.

Early SBS – 2EA and 3EA

By 1974 Grassby, now as Commissioner for Community Relations (Leong, 1983: 7), pressured the Treasury for money to set up directly funded ethnic radio. Grassby's concern was that a great number of Australians were beyond reach of existing media, because their English was not sufficient. A Health Insurance Commission report claimed there were 2.5 million of them in Melbourne and Sydney alone (Arena, 1985: 97). Using the need to sell the government's newly introduced Medicare health system to people of non-English speaking backgrounds (Thompson, 1994), Grassby's aim was for ethnic radio 'to reach the unreachable' (Arena, 1985). Grassby got enough to set up largely volunteer broadcasters in Sydney and Melbourne (Arena, 1985). The money was used to hire broadcast facilities and to fund an audience survey (SBS, 1979: 14). Besides the need to promote Medicare, the government was also anxious to reward ethnic communities for the massive support they had given Labor by voting for Whitlam in 1972 (Leong, 1983).

Radio Ethnic Australia (2EA and 3EA) came into being, not as fully licensed stations, but under special ministerial arrangement. They went on air in June 1975 under provision of the Wireless and Telegraphy Act (1905), which allowed special-case broadcasting (SBS, 1980: 14).

Community ethnic radio

While Community Relations Commissioner Grassby had been lobbying hard for the state-run EA stations, Media Minister Moss Cass set up a working party into Public (Community) Broadcasting, including the broadcasting needs of ethnic communities (Patterson, 1988: 89). The 1974 McLean Inquiry and the first Public Broadcasting Conference the same year, had led to the establishment of public broadcasting stations, one of which, 5UV in Adelaide, went on air in March 1975 (Patterson, 1988: 97) and ran ethnic programming as part of its access policy. Others followed. By 1978 the ethnic broadcasters at 5UV split off and formed the first specialist public ethnic radio station to be granted a license,

5EBI. But it was not the first to go on air (*Ethnic Voice*, 1979). Brisbane's 4EB claims it was in fact the first 'self-run ethnic [community] station to go to air' on 1 December 1979 (1), beating 5EBI by two weeks (7). Patterson notes that in 1986, 21 community radio stations carried LOTE programming. By the early 1990s there were at least sixty community radio stations with significant levels of ethnic broadcasting. Five of them were full community ethnic stations (Community Broadcasting Foundation, 1994). By 2004 the figure was more than 100 (NEMBC, 2004a: 16).

ABC's 3ZZ experiment 1975–77

In terms of community engagement, the most significant early experiment with multicultural radio was with the short-lived community access station 3ZZ. Radio 3ZZ went on air in a somewhat tenuous atmosphere in May 1975, for only five hours a night. The reasons for limited night programming were to do with time available for working broadcasters and audiences, but also underlined the 'threat' posed by enthusiastic amateurs broadcasting in languages the mainstream did not understand.

Situating 3ZZ as a regional service within the national public broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) was a 'least risk' option for government, but it was also something of a hasty compromise. The rush to get on air in the increasingly controversial political atmosphere of 1975, Whitlam's last year as it turned out, meant that government ethnic radio 2EA and 3EA opened at almost the same time as ABC access radio 3ZZ. On the surface the two broadcast experiments were supposedly unrelated. 3ZZ was technically an access station, available to any community group, but it became largely dominated by ethnic broadcasters. This was not by design, but simply because the demand was there (Zangalis, 1994). The simultaneous establishment of 3EA in Melbourne, therefore, meant the government had unwittingly set up two similar concepts in competition. One of them was bound to fail. The fact that 3ZZ was shut down two years and two months after it had opened, and 3EA went on to become one of the SBS stations, was a source of considerable anger to the many people involved at 3ZZ (Dugdale, 1979). The government had effectively asked hundreds of volunteers to dedicate their lives to radio, only to snatch it away when the experiment was over. The broadcasters appeared to be losers in a cat and mouse game. But it was not quite so simple. There was a change of government in little over six months after the stations had opened, and although the conservative Fraser government was attributed with a dislike and distrust of the 'leftist' foreign language broadcaster 3ZZ, even before it came to power in December 1975 (Patterson, 1988: 133), Dugdale (1979: 82) claims that Labor too was looking for ways of shutting it down. It is perhaps the

nature of governments, even the social reformist Whitlam's, to want a certain measure of control. Both sides of politics saw 3ZZ as out of control, in languages few of the 'Anglo' governors could understand. But there is a more important issue at stake: The nature of the social ideologies suggested by the contrasting 3ZZ and 3EA models.

Communities 'out of control'

There is a distinct possibility that 'out of control' meant a group of 'new Australians' actively involved in broadcasting were using the airwaves to work out their political and social context. As new arrivals, diaspora, absentees from home cultures, strangers in strange lands, and without a voice, they were understandably experimenting with radio and with their own lives. According to Zangalis (1994), the ABC's Assistant General Manager Radio, Keith Mackriell, was intrigued as he was "horrified by the diversity and the liveliness" of the new amateur broadcasters. Undoubtedly this was also happening to some extent in the EA stations. Both stations had similar structures: a few paid production staff members, usually 'Anglo', and a great number of unpaid or low-paid 'ethnic' on-air announcers. But the difference between them was the degree to which the 3ZZ paid staff members came within the ambit of the volunteer station management, and together they worked out how things should be done. The paid staff members were actually ABC employees on secondment. However, they were subject to a board and management that included people who only held their positions by dint of their community status, that is, their ethnicity. Their ethnicity had given them a certain power differential, 'equalizing' them with broadcast 'experts'. Within Giddens' terms this was a significant social development in Australia. Just a few years away from assimilationist and Anglo-centric marginalizing of LOTE migrants, it would have been easy to simply ignore the demands of ethnic broadcasters. But clearly society *had* changed. The old power structures rested on 'uncertain' (Giddens, 1990: 3) premises, and the persistence of new citizens, speaking new languages, had broken through. Dugdale suggests that by the end 3ZZ had worked out a neo-egalitarianism, which probably would have scandalized wider society. The fact they did much of their 'working out' in public attracted the usual public scorn of divisiveness.

By the end of the 26-month life of 3ZZ, relations between the amateur ethnic broadcasters and their ABC professional mentors was fairly amicable. Indeed, as a mark of their loyalty to the 'access' concept, four of the ABC employees resigned from the Commission in protest when 3ZZ was closed (Dugdale, 1979: 187). Many of the community broadcasters went to the community station 3CR.

Joan Dugdale comments:

In 1975 3ZZ began a modest effort to make radio more democratic and more relevant. It challenged the platitude of free speech and tried to give it meaning. In 1977 the Government destroyed 3ZZ because it was beginning to succeed. The Australian public did not see the implications of that destruction ... (Dugdale, 1979: 189).

With 3ZZ closed in July 1977, the two EA stations went on to become SBS radio in 1978. Community ethnic radio continued to grow, but was not a financially secure and recognizable sector until the establishment of the NEMBC in 1984 (Lawe Davies, 1996). Thus, the two sectors, the public funded SBS network, operating only in Melbourne and Sydney, and the largely volunteer NEMBC community radio sector, operating everywhere else, became the 'hybrid solution' to the federal government's potentially expensive political and social policy issue of providing radio services for LOTE communities.

Hybrid solutions: The economics of multicultural radio

From its beginning, publicly funded ethnic and multicultural broadcasting was an expense governments reluctantly had little choice about carrying (Kerkyasharian, 1990: 4). The 1978 Galbally Report had recommended SBS be expanded beyond Melbourne and Sydney. However, as Kerkyasharian points out, the government and bureaucracy decided it could not afford to keep the current 2EA and 3EA stations going, let alone expand them; but equally, politically there was no option to close them down (Kerkyasharian, 1990: 4). The solution pushed by the then Minister, Tony Staley, was to expand community ethnic radio into smaller cities and regional centers, leaving Sydney and Melbourne to SBS. It was seen as a short-term and far cheaper option, delivering a hybrid system to the politically important ethnic communities. Government funded only the two SBS stations, leaving the rest to the community sector staffed largely by volunteers.

However, former head of SBS Radio, Stepan Kerkyasharian, argued the hybrid solution would stifle the development of SBS radio and produce "the predictable and inevitable consequence of rivalry" between the SBS stations and community sector (Kerkyasharian, 1990: 5). To some extent both have occurred. The figures in Table 1 suggest, for example, that in the 25 years between 1979 and 2004 the hours of broadcasting within the NEMBC community sector have increased more than 15 times; SBS radio, on the other hand, has expanded by a little over two times. But while increased hours of broadcasting indicates massive ex-

Table 1. *Hybrid economies.*

	1979–80		2003–04	
	SBS	Community	SBS	Community
Ave hours Weekly	126*	105	285**	1632 ⁺
Number of languages	41–47#	26	68	100
Costs or Government Subsidy	\$2.2 m	\$0.2 m	\$33.8 m	\$2.5 m (12.5 m)##
Ave cost per hour	\$168	\$37	\$2,280	\$32 (147)##
Number of listeners			1 m	2 m
Ave cost/listener/week			\$0.65	\$0.02 (0.16)##

From: AIMA, 1982: 293; SBS, 2004a: 118; SBS, 2003a; NEMBC, 2001a: 3; NEMBC, 2001b: 13; CBF, 2004b

* This figure is for 2EA and 3EA separately, and is doubled for the cost per hour figure, assuming the two stations are on air 18 hours average a day with non-replicated programming.

These figures are for 2EA and 3EA respectively.

Figures in brackets are total budget: government (20%) plus station generated (80%).

** This represents a median 8 hours a day of non-replicated programming over five networks.

+ These are non-replicated hours of original programming (NEMBC, 2001b: 4).

pansion in one sector and moderate expansion in the other, this is not the end of the story.

Table 1 also shows that the savings for the government over 25 years have been substantial. The Community sector claims it has achieved an audience reach of 2 million a week (NEMBC, 2001b: 13) at an estimated cost to government of about 2 cents for each listener. SBS on the other hand reaches about half that number (SBS, 2003a: 2) with estimated costs of about 65 cents a listener. With the costs for running SBS radio so much higher than those of Community ethnic radio there is little question services would have been restricted if SBS radio had been the dominant player, in order to save costs. As it is, SBS has become the ‘minor’ player, with the low-cost community sector taking up most of the expansion, as there have been virtually no (cost) barriers to that growth. Over the years, this has led to a certain level of resentment between the community and SBS radio.

The NEMBC claims its cost to the government per hour is about \$32 in 2003–04 (Cassidy, 2005), which is an effective budget reduction. However, NEMBC executive officer Darce Cassidy says the figure is likely still similar to the \$38 from 1979, but the rapid expansion of the sector has meant the hours of broadcasting are expanding more quickly than the budget’s ability to keep pace. The increase rate of the community sector budget is about 12.5 times. The increase rate of the SBS budget is about 15 times since 1979, which is roughly equivalent, but still

favoring SBS. However, the proportional size of the SBS government appropriations over that of the community sector is 13.5 times in 2004 and was only 11 times its size in 1979. All this suggests SBS is increasing the distance, in funding terms, between itself and the NEMBC community sector. Given also that the community sector broadcasts nearly six times the number of hours SBS does, in 50 percent more languages, and with government appropriations (not budget) which are nearly one-fourteenth the size of the SBS, the cost to government per hour of SBS radio is likely to be exponentially greater. It is little wonder when the budget is being negotiated that the community sector asks for more.

Not only is community radio a cheap solution to a pressing social and political need, but as a targeted advertising medium it also provides direct financial savings for governments, which, of course, was the original intention of Al Grassby's 'EA' experimental licenses. George Zangalis, Chairperson of 3ZZZ and President of the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council, explains:

Less than half the money required to run community ethnic broadcasting comes from government, yet it extensively advertises government services (Zangalis, 1994).

In summary, the 'exponentially' cheaper community radio sector has delivered important social policy objectives at increasingly greater rates to Australia's multicultural society. The hybrid model works, it might be claimed, and it delivers good economics and good social policy. However, at the same time, the question must be raised about the relative value of the contribution of each sector. To what extent does SBS warrant such a massively greater budget?

Certainly it services the large urban centers of Melbourne and Sydney, and delivers a national FM signal. But the hybrid model, originally conceived and expanded to maintain a complementary relationship between SBS and NEMBC stations, now shows signs of significant overlap. The NEMBC stations are no longer just servicing regional areas and cities outside Melbourne and Sydney. The biggest community ethnic station in Australia, 3ZZZ, is in Melbourne (Productivity Commission, 1999: 830); and Sydney is also well serviced with Radio 2000. The basic premise of the hybrid model would appear to have shifted from a complementary relationship between SBS and community radio, to a competitive one, which is something Kerkyasharian had always predicted (1990: 5).

When industry representatives are asked how the massively greater budget for SBS is justified, inevitably, claims about its professionally polished on-air performance are wheeled out. But little more justification than that is given¹. This hardly seems sufficient to justify the difference.

However, this is not to say that SBS radio is not justified. This is not being argued. For one thing, SBS radio supports professional salaries and conditions, with well developed access and equity policies, which in turn require heavy compliance costs such as Human Relations departments and Finance sections (Lawe Davies, 1996; Ingram 2005); and if these are growing as an expense item that cannot altogether be a bad thing for former migrant communities. It is just that there is a marked funding difference between the two sectors, and it is increasing.

Radio and its communities

At the same time, however, there is a growing sense that the community sector has such a strong relationship with its community that government funding no longer entirely reflects the level of activity. NEMBC President George Zangalis claims government funding provides about “20% of all money required to run ethnic community broadcasting,” adding, “this subsidy is absolutely crucial to the very existence of ethnic broadcasting” (*The Ethnic Broadcaster*, 2004). Even though this is a significant proportional drop from public funding support of about 40% in the 1990s (Zangalis, 1994), there is no rancor in Zangalis’ 2004 article. But to make a more meaningful comparison with SBS radio, ‘cost per hour’ would need to be recalculated. Many of the NEMBC figures used in public representations (and Table 1 above) are based on the assumption of government costs, not total sector budgets. This is reasonable when the NEMBC community stations are speaking in a policy context. However, to take another comparative snapshot of the sector costs, if the government appropriations represent about 20% of the budget (see Zangalis 2004 above), this would bring the total NEMBC service delivery cost to something more like \$12.5 m (see Table 1 above for second figures in brackets, marked ##). Arguably, the value of the volunteers in the community sector would be something between the 15 cents per listener of the NEMBC sector and the 65 cents a listener of SBS.

Evidence presented at the Productivity Commission hearings into broadcasting legislation, held in Sydney in 1999, claimed that there is not only a strong volunteer culture supporting community radio, but sponsorship of five minutes an hour and community support through ‘radiothons’ are increasingly underwriting their activities. For example, ‘radiothons’ pay for about one-third of the running costs of Melbourne’s 3CR, (Productivity Commission, 1999: 839), a station which incidentally is so well supported by its community that it refuses to run sponsorship announcements on air (834). It is a general broadcaster which airs high levels of ethnic material in Melbourne, running off donations and ‘radiothons’ which ensure it is controlled by its community (834).

The irony is that SBS runs ‘radiothons’ too, but not for its financial survival. It gives the money away to ‘development projects,’ and has raised \$5.5 million since the mid 1990s (SBS, 2004a: 28; Ingram, 2005). That is, as a government-funded broadcaster, it carries some of the load of community relations expected of governments. As one industry figure has pointed out, SBS remains important because it ‘has the ear’ of government, and being well-resourced is in a position to fund community activities through advertising, sponsorship, and other forms of support¹.

But there is another sense in which the hybrid model operates beyond the expectations of its early short-term solution: Since the Howard government came to power in 1996, government funding has increasingly attached conditions to its appropriations to the Community sector, but not to SBS. That is, the community sector has roughly maintained its level of funding over the thirty years of its existence (1975–2005), but it is increasingly becoming an arm of government through budget allocations tied to specific projects. NEMBC President George Zangalis sees a danger in this, in that it undermines the principle of community control, passing some of that control to governments (*The Ethnic Broadcaster*, 2003). The areas where the government requires the funds to be spent are giving increased access to young people, and training members of new and emerging communities in radio skills. In essence, this is simply an extension of the very sound principle upon which ethnic community broadcasting was established: as part of social policy producing a more equitable society by inclusion of LOTE communities. But the community sector, particularly through its NEMBC and 3ZZZ President, and former head of the ground-breaking 3ZZ of 1975–77, George Zangalis, sees it differently:

Ethnic community broadcasters can be proud of their record in this regard ... the major ethnic station in the capital cities broadcast nearly twice the hours in these categories [youth and emergent communities] as do their SBS equivalents.

... We will be happy to adhere to strict standards of financial probity for the use of all public money, but we will not be happy to abandon the principle of community control of community broadcasting (*The Ethnic Broadcaster*, 2003: 6)

Community training, young people, and emerging communities

The Australian Ethnic Radio Training Program (AERTP) was set up in 1993 by the Keating Labor government. After ten years it had trained 3,000 ethnic community broadcasters in radio skills in 82 different lan-

guages (Cassidy, 2003: 27). While the original intention was to ensure an adequate supply of broadcasters to the cost effective hybrid model, with both the community and SBS radio sectors in mind, it was also an important recognition of the professionalism of NEMBC members. The cash it injected into the budgets of NEMBC members would also have been useful. But as well as training people in broadcasting, it also led to the accreditation of trainers. Many people who start work in community ethnic radio are there by dint of their ethnicity, not their broadcasting qualifications. Clearly, the sector has played a broad role in not only getting language 'out there' but in legitimating and empowering former migrants. Then there have been various spin-off projects such as an oral history program looking at the contribution made by migrant women to the workforce: "It is Australian voices talking about their experiences that shed light on where we have come from and who we are now as a nation" (NEMBC, 2001b: 8–9). Indeed, the extension of community ethnic radio enables the whole question of Australian national identity to be interrogated, reinterpreted, and enunciated through new and unfamiliar voices. In the words of George Lekakis, President of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECC, the state-based versions of FECCA):

Immigration does not finish when your feet touch land. Included into a person's journey to Australia is their learning of 'the Australian way of life'; of their making a home, and how they merge their past with their future (NEMBC, 2001b: 9).

The very act of starting a new program imposes coherence on a community where it might not otherwise exist. In a funding submission to the Federal government, the NEMBC points out:

To be effective, broadcasters must have strong connections to and involvement in their local community. This takes time and energy. Programs need music, resources such as computers and internet access, tape stock, phone calls, faxes, travel etc ... programmers also provide stations with their principle source of income through fund raising ... (NEMBC, 2001b: 8–9)

All of this forces people to work together in ways that they would otherwise not.

The 2003 conference of the NEMBC saw the establishment of an NEMBC Youth Committee. Youth broadcasting has become a vital means by which not only community radio is increasingly becoming an arm of government policy, but ironically it is probably by default also connecting the sector more closely to its communities.

Already, the organization lobbied for and gained funding to train more second and third generation migrants, particularly women. The women's programs cover issues such as domestic violence, disability, and health. The Community sector boasts that 15 percent of their broadcasters are young people, and half the AERTP trainees were women (NEMBC, 2001a: 13). In 2003, two new youth radio stations were established in each state (NEMBC, 2004: 11), and it is hoped there will be high levels of LOTE involvement.

In stressing the importance of drafting second and third generations into broadcasting in their heritage languages, the NEMBC is not only ensuring active communication between the generations within and across families, but is also maintaining services for older citizens into the future, who rely increasingly on their first language as they age. In a submission to the Australian Cultural Ministers Council, the NEMBC stressed the importance of intergenerational language use:

For second and third generation Australians learning their parents' and grandparents' first language is important as a means of communication, a way of understanding their identity as Australians and is an important ingredient in fostering intergenerational understanding. As migrants age they become increasingly reliant on their first language for communication (NEMBC, 2001b: 6)

The submission reported that in the preceding four years, forty new language communities had launched programs for the first time over community broadcast stations (7). One of the means of providing that new programming is to draft young people into the AERTP project, and thereby draft them into their heritage language communities.

The number of languages is also expanding. In the past four years, the Community sector has added forty languages to broadcast schedules which are going to air for the first time. At the same time, 64 percent of general community stations are reporting increases in the amount of LOTE programming (7).

Three years ago, SBS commissioned some major social research titled *Living Diversity: Australia's multicultural future* (2002). The report ranged across the social and media context of contemporary Australia, and was generally optimistic. It found that, while use of LOTE radio services varied between communities (people of Vietnamese heritage were heavy radio users), the average difference within LOTE communities of radio listening between first and second generation was 52 percent and 32 percent respectively (59).

SBS radio has also been seeking ways to increase the involvement of younger people, in broadcasting as well as audiences. Its specialist youth

programming is still running, but the network is of the view that it needs more radio stations to expand into new markets. In youth programming and involvement, NEMBC claims it is doing better than SBS (Cassidy, 2003: 3).

But perhaps the most volatile and interesting aspect of multicultural radio in Australia concerns the issue of emergent communities. Both SBS radio and the community sector have responded in their own ways.

After extensive community consultation in 2003, SBS radio dropped a number of language groups, largely Celtic language communities, from its schedule. This was done in order to add new languages such as Malay, Somali, Amharic, and Nepalese, as the numbers in these communities had grown significantly, and had identifiable information and settlement needs. Also, more time was given to Cantonese, Mandarin, Hindi, Filipino, and Arabic languages, with reduced hours for Maltese, Portuguese, Yiddish, Turkish, Hebrew, and Finnish (SBS, 2004a: 24).

In contrast, the NEMBC sector launched a project to train and get new and emergent communities on air. They recognized 85 new and emerging communities as being under-represented in the media. Within little more than a year, 36 emerging and 16 new groups were on air; 18 were in the wings waiting for program allocation (NEMBC, 2004b: 2). Among the emerging communities were the following language groups: Indonesian, Farsi, Bosnian, Thai, Arabic, Cambodian, Amharic and Somali, Ethiopian, Haarari, Oromo, South Sudanese, Kurdish, Eritrean (Tigre and Arabic), Afghani (Pashtu and Hazara), and many others. New communities, not yet emerging but with new settlement needs (but often in familiar languages), include: Brazil, East Timor, Kuwait, Slovakia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and many others (4–14).

In many ways this highlights the difference between SBS radio and the NEMBC sector: In order to have its schedule to better reflect the changing needs of the community, SBS radio, with its finite number of broadcast outlets, must drop language groups before it can add new ones. The community sector is more flexible in that it broadcasts out of 100 locations and can respond to very localized changes in circumstances, as it has 100 schedules, not five.

In terms of flexibility, Forde, Meadows, and Foxwell (2003: 248) cite the example of two community stations' responses to the arrival of Albanian refugees in Australia in 2000 escaping the Kosovo conflict:

Radio 3ZZZ in Melbourne arranged an Albanian language program to be delivered each day to inform the refugees of happenings in their home country as well as their status in Australia. In the Tasmanian capital, Hobart, radio station 7THE responded to the needs of Albanian refugees and found Albanian journalists within the refugee com-

munity. Volunteers from the station drove forty minutes each way to pick up the Albanian journalists to enable them to deliver their programs.

In the face of an ever-expanding community ethnic sector, SBS is simply stuck. It has not really moved in a decade. Its only solution is to expand its own services through digital multi-channeling, in a bid to now catch up with the community sector. Ironically, this claim goes to the heart of the hybrid model, and, depending on how sympathetically SBS is heard, may indeed be a sea change for the balance between SBS and Community broadcasting in the delivery of this important aspect of multicultural social policy. However, the great advantage the community sector has is its flexibility in its multi-site production output. Even if SBS radio gains its second national signal and third Melbourne and Sydney services, it will still only have eight production studios compared with the NEMBC's 100. NEMBC representative Bruce Francis told the 1999 Productivity Commission hearing into broadcast regulation: "Our interests are about providing communities with voices, not necessarily individuals with voices" (Productivity Commission, 1999: 835).

But quite clearly SBS radio is staking its future on digital, which it expects to be delivered within the 2003–06 triennium. The SBS submission states:

Many new and emerging communities have no access to SBS Radio programs at all because the available schedule is full – even in Sydney and Melbourne ... Language communities outside Sydney and Melbourne continually raise the perceived discrimination and inequity of the present system (SBS, 2003a: 9).

According to the head of SBS radio, Quang Luu, SBS radio, as well as more signals, needed to extend its geographical reach by having more transmitters to reach people in rural and regional Australia (Productivity Commission, 1999: 353).

In order to keep pace with community needs, SBS radio meets with community representatives frequently. During 2002 it carried out more than 630 community consultations in preparation for rescheduling new language communities and dropping the old ones, a controversial task. The outside broadcast units also traveled to 62 cities and towns nationwide (SBS, 2003b: 31).

The criteria for the allocation of airtime for each community take into account its size and English proficiency, unemployment levels, the proportion of people aged over 55 years, and the proportion of new arrivals (SBS, 2003b: 26). Representativeness of communities is largely

a question of joint planning and negotiation between SBS and language groups in the community. Indeed, within SBS, staffing is organized into language groups. The programming area at SBS Artarmon is a hive of work booths: one per language group. Rather than programming being a centralized and professionalized activity, as it is in television, the organization of radio is a mirror image of the audience. Or rather, as with Community Radio, the broadcasters and audience have less ‘professional distance’ between them; they are essentially the same people.

It is especially interesting to note that each language group can contain a number of different cultures, often throwing together former colonizers and colonized. That in itself is a micro-multiculturalism, suggesting again that common language does not equate with common culture. For example, the Spanish group includes representatives from 25 nations, including Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and El Salvador; the Portuguese group also come from East Timor, Brazil, Macao, Angola, Malaysia, and Cape Verde Islands; the Arabic program serves people from 21 different countries, from Lebanon to Armenia and Kurdistan (*Going National*). These people have to work together. And there is apparent harmony. That is, formerly colonized and colonizers are thrown together in a new and different context, with the old boundaries and routes of dominance disrupted.

Summarizing, SBS radio appears to operate a ‘counter assimilation’ in at least three senses. First, through English language programs, SBS is re-introducing second and third generation young listeners to their forgotten heritage. Secondly, through heritage language programming, SBS radio is drawing a common sociality around former colonizer-colonized language groups. Thirdly, the structure of employment and consultation in SBS radio keeps a very close alignment with audiences. These claims for SBS radio must be considered in the light of the case that can also be made for community ethnic radio, which arguably has a closer community alignment than does SBS radio. However, in the final analysis it is a question of degree: the extent to which a professional broadcast organization with permanent staff and career structure can ‘involve’ its audience. In these terms, SBS radio is probably getting about as close as it can.

Then there is the more general case of the community connectedness of radio contrasted with television, a contrast underlined particularly well within the SBS organization. In a sense, radio, through its multilingualism, is more ‘ethnic’ than television; its mode of delivery directly involves many more people behind the microphone: announcers in 67 LOTEs each week in each city (SBS, 2004b). Television has only six broadcasters speaking in English (SBS, 1994b: 121–122). Its multilingualism is usually translated through subtitles but is most often brought

in from other cultures. SBS radio is largely produced in Australia by Australians. Its schedule is also 'pre-set' into language groups, not program genres; and there is some consultation in the allocation of time to each language community.

Finally, the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA), the peak migrant lobby group, is now working with both the NEMBC community sector and SBS radio. Formerly conservative, FECCA is now more involved in media, lobbying general media, and providing prizes for journalism dealing with issues of multiculturalism. It promotes "multiculturalism as a core value that defines what it means to be Australian in the 21st century" (NEMBC, 2004a: 13). To some extent, attitudes towards multiculturalism are constantly changing (see SBS, 2002). However, FECCA is now more involved with the media, and both SBS and Community sector LOTE broadcasters are making a strong push towards attracting youth audiences, particularly in the second and third generation groups. This suggests that multiculturalism has become important enough to LOTE communities, so that it is now they rather than governments alone who are taking it in their own hands to promote and ensure its survival.

Conclusion

There is little question that the beginnings of multicultural radio in Australia contained the seeds for the democratization of difference. While the execution and delivery of that democratic participation have changed in many ways, the principle issues have not. For both the Whitlam and Fraser governments, the ethnic sector constituted a potentially dangerous political development. The enthusiasm with which LOTE communities had taken to 3ZZ suggested that the 'new Australians' had become a neo-democratic movement with few formal controls lying between their energetic and jostling strangeness and the protocols of Anglo-Celtic governance. There were few figures either government could look to for ordered and calm policy development. Outside the realm of 3ZZ, which the ABC seemed either unwilling or unable to control, governments co-opted conservative people to control and articulate the broadcasting needs of ethnic communities; yet their very acceptability to Anglo-Celtic governments meant they were largely strangers to the grass roots ethnic communities.

This paper has traced the beginnings of ethnic broadcasting in Australia, within a climate of rapidly changing political, social, and budgetary conditions. In its early stages, along with a range of other post-migrant services, broadcasting appeared as a persistent need, but without clear policy or infrastructure. What is particularly interesting is how

the relative 'failure' of 3ZZ and 'success' of the EA stations encapsulated issues which continued to dominate ethnic broadcasting over the next twenty or thirty years. It has been argued that their significance as 'models' of ethnic broadcasting lay in the markedly different levels of control of programming that each allowed its constituent communities: from almost total autonomy (3ZZ) to almost none (2EA and 3EA). After the closure of the 3ZZ access ethnic broadcasting found its voice through the community radio sector, leaving 'professional' ethnic broadcasting to SBS as a 'hybrid' solution. Yet this contest of 'access' versus 'professional' broadcasting was not simply an issue between community ethnic radio and SBS; within SBS too, ethnic communities were struggling against a kind of colonial control by Anglo governments and their managers. In one form or another, this struggle has still not abated, only now it is in the hands of the communities themselves (Lawe Davies, 1998).

Morrissey's idea that multiculturalism is about a host culture's willingness to make social and political adjustments which will fundamentally change it (1984: 75), is central to this paper's attempt to link issues of immigration, media, and national identity. This in turn raises questions of agency: "how and where people do make history under conditions not of their own making" (Grossberg, 1989: 15). Multicultural broadcasting is centrally implicated as an agent of social change, in providing the means whereby a cultural vocabulary becomes available, and through which changing social conditions are articulated (Hall in Grossberg, 1986). Placed within these wider debates about history and cultural identity, multicultural broadcasting moves from being a sectional voice, cut off from mainstream media, to a central and influential means by which all Australians can gain a sense of their history beyond the confines of 'Anglo-centric' accounts.

While institutions such as NEMBC, SBS radio, and other sectors of multicultural broadcasting may be minority-focused, they are not socially marginal. They have a cultural resonance that exceeds their institutional power. Ideally, they are part of and operate within a milieu of 'uncertainty', characteristic of late twentieth century industrial societies (Giddens, 1990: 3), whereby the old sedimentations of cultural authority are facing a more complex set of power relations, not all of which are fully understood by them nor under their control (3).

This new complexity of power is not so much premised on notions of centers and margins, as the spaces between: What Bhabha argues is a culture's potential hybridity (Bhabha, 1988: 22). Immigration to some extent and multicultural policy in particular are therefore seen as contingent on a shifting power relationship between migrant communities and the host culture.

Note

1. There are several industry sources who asked not to be named.

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