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**Australian Communications  
and Media Authority**

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Australia's regulator for broadcasting, the internet, radiocommunications and telecommunications

[www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au)

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# Community Broadcasting: Guidelines for Requests for a Change of Community Interest

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Canberra Office  
Purple Building, Benjamin Offices  
Chan Street, Belconnen  
PO Box 78,  
Belconnen ACT 2616

Tel: 02 6219 5555  
Fax: 02 6219 5353

Melbourne Office  
Level 44, Melbourne Central  
Tower  
360 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne  
PO Box 13112 Law Courts  
Melbourne Vic 8010

Tel: 03 9963 6800  
Fax: 03 9963 6899  
TTY: 03 9963 6948

Sydney Office  
Level 15, Tower 1 Darling Park  
201 Sussex Street, Sydney  
PO Box Q500  
Queen Victoria Building NSW  
1230

Tel: 02 9334 7700, 1800 226 667  
Fax: 02 9334 7799

## **GUIDELINES FOR REQUESTS FOR A CHANGE OF COMMUNITY INTEREST**

Community broadcasting licences are subject to the licence condition that the licensee will continue to represent the community interest that it represented at the time when the licence was allocated or was last renewed. (Clause 9(2)(b) of Schedule 2 to the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*).

The licence condition recognises that a community broadcasting service should be able to evolve with the community. It also enables the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), when renewing a community broadcasting licence, to consider a request from a licensee that the community interest it represents has evolved since the licence was allocated or was last renewed.

### **Lodgment of requests for change of community interest**

Licensees must lodge requests for change of community interest *more than 26 weeks before the expiry date of the licence* to allow time for community consultation.

However, if possible, ACMA asks that licensees lodge such requests with their applications for renewal of their community broadcasting licence with ACMA. This will ensure the efficient assessment of a licence application and the request for change of community interest.

Except in special circumstances, ACMA **will not** consider requests for change of community interest made within 26 weeks of the expiry date of the licence. Lodging a request at that stage will not allow time for community consultation.

### **Evidence to support a request for a change of community interest**

In accordance with the provisions of section 90(1A)(b) of the Act, ACMA currently requires licensees to lodge the application for renewal of their licence 12 months prior to the expiry date of the licence. Section 2 of *Form ACMA B66 Application for the renewal of a community radio licence* asks licensees to provide information about the community interest they serve, and provides licensees with an opportunity to request a change of community interest. A licensee requesting a change should complete the relevant parts of Section 2 of Form ACMA B66 and include in its submission:

- how a proposed service with the changed community interest will meet the existing and perceived future needs of the community in the licence area;
- any research or evidence to demonstrate how the community has evolved, or will evolve, over time;
- evidence to demonstrate how the licensee will represent the proposed changed community interest; and
- letters of support and any other evidence it has to demonstrate that its members and the general community support the proposed change.

### **Public consultation**

ACMA publishes all applications for the renewal of community broadcasting licences on its website and invites public comment on those applications. ACMA may take the following steps to assist it to consider requests for change of community interest:

- publication of the request on its website;
- seek submissions from the local community on the proposed change through advertisements in relevant local media;
- seek submissions from other broadcasters in the licence area.

ACMA may also take other appropriate steps, such as holding hearings or public meetings about the proposed change.

### **Decision making**

When deciding whether or not to approve a request for a change of community interest ACMA will consider the request with the licensee's application for renewal of its community broadcasting licence having regard to the following matters set down at section 84(2) of the Act:

- the extent to which the proposed service would meet the existing and perceived future needs of the community within the licence area;
- the nature and diversity of the interests of that community;
- the nature and diversity of other broadcasting services (including national broadcasting services) available within the licence area; and
- the capacity of the applicant to provide the proposed service.

### **Note**

These guidelines are provided to assist licensees wishing to change their community of interest. ACMA will consider each request on its merits and is not bound by them.