



Australian
Communications
and Media Authority

Investigation Report no. BI-767

Summary	
Licensee	Meander Valley Community Radio Inc.
Station	MVFM 96.9
Type of service	Community broadcasting
Relevant legislation	<i>Broadcasting Services Act 1992</i> (BSA) > Paragraph 9(2)(c)(i) of Schedule 2 to the BSA [encourage community participation in the operations of the service] > Paragraph 9(2)(c)(ii) of Schedule 2 to the BSA [encourage community participation in programming].
Decision	The Licensee: > Did not breach paragraph 9(2)(c) of Schedule 2 to the BSA

Background

On 22 June 2026, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (**ACMA**) received a complaint about Meander Valley Community Radio Inc. (**MVFM**) / (**Licensee**).

The complaint raised allegations which suggested that the Licensee was failing to comply with licence conditions in the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (**BSA**).

On 21 July 2026, the ACMA commenced an investigation under the BSA into the Licensee's compliance with the licence conditions to:

- > encourage community participation in the operations of the service (paragraph 9(2)(c)(i) of Schedule 2 to the BSA).
- > encourage community participation in programming (paragraph 9(2)(c)(ii) of Schedule 2 to the BSA).

The Complaint

In summary the complaint raised allegations that the licensee:

- > had a small management committee that met infrequently, had a limited role in governance, strategic direction or accountability and was not representative of the community
- > was broadcasting pre-recorded and automated content only, mostly music and sponsorship announcements, with no live weather updates, time calls or live local content
- > was dismissive of a local community member who recently expressed interest in presenting
- > had a concentration of control due to the President making all programming and operational decisions with limited encouragement of broader community participation, and
- > operated a station website as a 'smoke screen', creating the impression that opportunities for community engagement exist when they do not.

The Licensee

The Licensee has held temporary community radio broadcasting licences to represent the general geographic community interest in the Meander Valley RA1 licence area since 2011.

The service operated by the Licensee is 'MVFM 96.9'.

The expiry date of the Licensee's current licence is 21 March 2027.

Meander Valley RA1 is located in northern Tasmania, with key towns being Deloraine, (where the station is located), Westbury, Meander and Mole Creek. The licence area overlaps Devonport RA1 licence area which has no current community broadcasting services and Hobart RA4 licence area where there is one community broadcasting licensee providing a service tailored to people with a print disability. Launceston RA1 and Launceston RA2 which has 2 community services, also both partially overlap Meander Valley RA1.

With reference to the Meander Valley local government area, the region has an estimated population of 21,739.¹ The population is a predominantly English speaking, Australian born regional community with strong levels of volunteerism and community involvement.²

Assessment and submissions

This investigation has considered the:

- > Complaint received by the ACMA on 22 June 2026 (**the Complaint**).
- > Information provided by the licensee annually since 2011 with respect to applications for temporary community radio broadcasting licences.
- > Licensee's submissions and documentation received on 12 August 2026
- > MVFM's Rules of Association, as revised September 2024.

Other sources are identified in this report where relevant.

Issue 1: Is the Licensee encouraging community participation in operations and in the selection and provision of programs?

Relevant licence condition

Schedule 2

Part 5 – Community broadcasting licences

9 Conditions applicable to services provided under community broadcasting licences

(2) Each community broadcasting licence is also subject to the following conditions:

[...]

(c) the licensee will encourage members of the community that it serves to participate in:

- (i) the operations of the licensee in providing the service or services; and
- (ii) the selection and provision of programs under the licence [...]

Finding

The ACMA is of the view that the Licensee is encouraging members of the community that it serves to participate in the operations of the licensee in providing the service and the selection and provision of programs under the licence and accordingly has not breached paragraph 9(2)(c) of Schedule 2 to the BSA.

Reasons

Relevant guidelines

The ACMA's Community Broadcasting Participation Guidelines³ (the participation guidelines) require community broadcasting licensees to encourage members of the community they

¹ [Estimated Resident Population \(ERP\) | Meander Valley Council | Community profile](#) accessed 13 August 2026

² [2021 Meander Valley, Census All persons QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) accessed 13 August 2026

³ <https://www.acma.gov.au/publications/2010-06/guide/community-broadcasting-participation-guidelines>.

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serve to participate both in the operations of the service and in the selection and provision of programs. Community participation is not demonstrated by a single initiative, and licensees are expected to use a range of measures to ensure they meet the community participation requirements. The participation guidelines provide that licensees encourage community participation in their operations when they:

- promote the service to the community and are open and accessible to the community
- make the community aware of opportunities to participate in the service and invite the community to participate in the service, value, and promote membership and volunteering, including by promoting the benefits to the communities they serve.
- have sound corporate governance practices, including
 - having measures to prevent the concentration of control and procedures for complying with regulatory requirements
 - having an effective and transparent committee structure, so the community can have a say in the running of the service
 - having procedures for complying with regulatory requirements including the obligations that apply to companies and incorporated associations under relevant Federal, State and Territory legislation for holding meetings, keeping records, and lodging documents.

Licensees encourage community participation in the provision of programming in two distinct areas, program selection, and program provision and do this by providing opportunities for members of their community to have a say in programming decisions. A common way to encourage collective decision making about programming is for licensees to establish a program committee with unrestricted membership, to have a publicised procedure for making programming applications, to accept and consider programming applications and to collectively decide the programs that best reflect the needs of the community based on the identified needs and preferences of the community served.

Sound corporate governance practices that promote membership and volunteering, together with transparent committee structures, support transparent decision making, promote accountability and give communities confidence that their community broadcasting services are managed appropriately. These practices include having in place measures to prevent the concentration of control, policies that require office holders to declare any potential conflict of interest and procedures for complying with regulatory requirements that apply to the service and its organisational structure.

A transparent committee structure can be achieved by aiming to have a range of committees, making their members aware of how to nominate for committee positions, having their committees meet regularly and by keeping appropriate records.

Valuing and promoting membership and volunteering can be achieved by offering a range of ways in which people can participate in the service, having open membership (meaning licensees may only refuse membership on the basis of specific, transparent, and reasonable criteria, and should have adequate grievance or review mechanisms) and providing appropriate training and fair treatment.

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If a licensee's policies, or failure to follow them, impacts participation or accountability to staff, volunteers, members, or the community, this may affect compliance with community broadcasting licence conditions or provisions of the Codes.

Relevant information

In submissions dated 12 August 2026 the Licensee acknowledged deficiencies in record keeping and organisational resilience and advised that it is actively pursuing governance reforms through improved documentation, clearer delegations and succession planning.

The Licensee provided a copy of its Revised Rules of Association (dated September 2024) (the Rules) and a draft Governance and Volunteer Manual, (the draft manual) that, if adopted, will better define authority, accountability, controls, risk management and decision making responsibilities.

The Rules

The Licensee's governance framework is set out in the Rules. Members elect a Committee that exercises broad management powers and is supported by an Executive Committee and any sub-committees it creates.⁴ The Committee consists of a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and up to six ordinary committee members.⁵ Committee members are elected annually at the Annual General Meeting (AGM),⁶ and officers serve until the next AGM.⁷ The Rules

- require the AGM be held each year within 3 months of the end of the financial year and that a quorum for the AGM is 7.
- provide that committee meetings must be held at least every two months⁸,
- that three committee members constitute a quorum.⁹
- require committee members to disclose any conflicts of interest.¹⁰

Organisation structure

The Licensee advised that

- it has no paid staff
- all governance, operational and administrative functions undertaken by unpaid committee members, office bearers, presenters and other volunteers
- governance oversight is provided by the Committee of Management (the Committee), with day-to-day administration, programming, technical operations and community liaison activities carried out under the Committee's authority.

⁴ Rule 28

⁵ Rule 23.1

⁶ Rules 11.5(c), 23.1 and 24.

⁷ Rule 22.3

⁸ Rule 26.1

⁹ Rule 26.4

¹⁰ Rule 27

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Although Committee members are elected annually¹¹ the current Committee has a high degree of continuity, with members having served between 1 and 16 years.

Although the complainant alleged that the President makes all significant operational and programming decisions, the investigation did not identify evidence demonstrating that governance authority is vested solely in the President or exercised contrary to the Rules. The Rules provide management responsibility to the Committee as a whole and allow for annual election of committee members. While the President plays a significant operational role, particularly in a small volunteer-run organisation, the available information does not establish that community participation opportunities have been removed or that governance functions are exercised by the President alone.

Committee meetings

The Licensee provided a copy of the minutes of a Committee meeting held on 8 July 2026 and advised that despite reasonable searches it had been unable to locate two earlier sets of minutes as was requested by the ACMA. The Licensee acknowledged this administrative deficiency and attributed record continuity to a change in secretarial arrangements. The Licensee also provided a copy of the President's Annual Report to the 2025 AGM (the President's report) and a report detailing the handling of a recent complaint.

Review of the minutes of the 8 July 2026 Committee meeting indicates that the Committee discussed a range of issues including financial matters and technical problems.

The President's report to the AGM on 4 September 2025 highlighted major achievements including technology upgrades, website migration, communications, the Licensee's financial position, broadcast reach and sponsorship opportunities, program growth, and operational issues.

The inability to locate two sets of Committee minutes, together with the Licensee's acknowledgment of deficiencies in record keeping, supports the conclusion that weaknesses exist in the Licensee's administrative record management practices.

Membership

The Licensee advised it promotes membership opportunities via its website, in newsletters and in recorded broadcast announcements. The recorded announcement, submitted by the Licensee, includes a call out of volunteers, membership and sponsors, as well as contact details for the Licensee.

The Licensee also supplied copies of news articles encouraging volunteers discussed in more detail below.

The Rules provide significant discretion to the committee in relation to the admission of new members and do not provide procedural protection for applicants whose membership applications are rejected.¹² An applicant is required to be endorsed by an existing member and then referred to a committee.¹³ Rules 33 and 34 provide procedural fairness for

¹¹ In accordance with Rules 22.3 and 23.2

¹² There is no requirement that the committee give reasons for rejecting an application or that the applicant has a right of appeal or access to a dispute resolution process if a membership application is refused.

¹³ Rule 5.2(a) and Rule 5.4

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expulsion of members including the provision of written notice, a right of appeal, and an opportunity to be heard.¹⁴

Staff reviewed the Licensee's website on 14 August 2026 and observed that the link to the membership application form on the 'Become a Member' page was broken¹⁵ and that the Help and FAQs page was blank.

Volunteering and community engagement

In submissions dated 12 August 2026 the Licensee informed the ACMA

- it is an entirely volunteer-run community broadcaster operating from a small studio at the rear of arts and craft studio in Deloraine and that the lack of street frontage, restricted opening hours, limited space and distance travelled by some volunteers constrains face-to-face participation
- the Licensee uses telephone, email, social media, home recording, remote presentation and arranged studio access to facilitate the involvement of community members
- it is reviewing a draft governance and volunteer manual that is intended to improve role clarity, delegations, record keeping, complaints handling, volunteer support, safety and succession planning.

The Licensee advised that during the preceding 12 months it had engaged with its community through broadcasting, direct correspondence, membership and volunteer invitations, newsletters, local print media, its website and Facebook page, and relationships with community organisations and sponsors. The Licensee stated that its website, newsletters and recorded announcements invite community members to join, vote, nominate for committee positions, present programs, record announcements and undertake other volunteer work.

To support those claims the Licensee also provided a copy of an article published in The North & Coast Post on 8 March 2025¹⁶ titled "Meander Valley FM wants you to help keep the airwaves buzzing". Whilst the central focus of the article is the station manager, it also explains that the Licensee is facing challenges recruiting and retaining volunteers and that it is actively seeking volunteers to present radio programs, assist with administration, help with promotions and undertake other station activities, informs potential volunteers they can contribute as much or as little time as they wish and that training is available for those interested in broadcasting.

A further undated article titled Meander Valley FM rebuilds website for the community, (written by a current committee member), announces the redevelopment of the Licensee's website to improve community engagement and accessibility. The article explains the role of the Licensee, highlights the ongoing reliance on volunteers and encourages community members interested in radio, music or community engagement to become involved, whether through presenting programs, assisting behind the scenes or helping at events.

The Licensee provided a copy of its Volunteer and Contributor Agreement demonstrating it has a formal policy governing volunteer participation and covering recruitment, training, supervision, workplace protections and compliance with broadcasting legislation.

¹⁴ Rules 33.3, 34.1 and 34.3(c)

¹⁵ [Page not found - MVFM 96.9](#) accessed 1 September 2026

¹⁶ [Meander Valley FM wants you to help keep the airwaves buzzing - The North & Coast Post](#)

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While the volunteer manual is not yet finalised and does not reflect past practices, it demonstrates the Licensee's commitment to improving volunteer support, training and governance arrangements. Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that the Licensee has taken reasonable and ongoing steps to encourage volunteers and engage with the community.

Programs

The Licensee provided a copy of its weekly program schedule, that also appears to be published in the local paper. The Licensee provided a program schedule detailing each program, its presenter, content source and production method. The schedule distinguished between locally produced, home recorded, syndicated and repeat programs, and identified the volunteer responsible for compiling music playlists where no individual presenter was associated with the content.

Consistent with the participation guidelines, the Licensee advised that community members may propose programming through a range of channels including by email, telephone, social media, through an existing member, or by arranging a visit to the station, and that committee membership is not a prerequisite to suggesting a program or contributing material. The Licensee advised that the program approval process is:

1. Enquiry or proposal - the proposer discusses the idea, format, intended audience and availability with the President, Station Manager or another authorised station contact.
2. Initial assessment - the proposal is considered for community relevance, licence and legal requirements, available airtime, presenter capability, technical feasibility and available volunteer support.
3. Sample, induction or trial - where appropriate, the proposer supplies a sample or undertakes induction, technical training, supervised practice or a trial recording.
4. Decision and scheduling - an acceptable proposal is approved and allocated an available timeslot, or is deferred while training, facilities or a suitable timeslot are arranged. Matters requiring governance consideration are referred to the Committee.
5. Review - programs are reviewed through presenter contact, listener or community feedback, operational monitoring and compliance requirements.

The Licensee advised that in the 12 months to August 2026 it had received 4 program proposals, one that has commenced and three that are in various stages of the process outlined above.

The Licensee supports community involvement by allowing program proposals through a range of channels and by maintaining a structured assessment and approval process. The weekly program schedule also reflects participation by local volunteers in the presentation and production of content, indicating that community members play an active role in the selection and provision of programs under the service. The information provided demonstrates that the Licensee encourages community members to take up opportunities to participate in the selection and provision of programs.

Analysis

The available information indicates that the Licensee has taken active and sustained steps to encourage community participation in both the operation of the service and the selection and provision of programs under the licence. Community members contribute across governance,

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operational and broadcasting functions, and participation opportunities are promoted through the Licensee's website, newsletters, local media, social media and on-air announcements.

The licence condition does not require a licensee to demonstrate best practice governance, nor does the existence of governance shortcomings alone establish non-compliance. The relevant question is whether the Licensee is encouraging members of the community to participate in its operations and programming. While the investigation identified deficiencies in record keeping, limitations in membership accessibility and opportunities to strengthen governance arrangements, the available evidence demonstrates that participation opportunities continue to be promoted and utilised by community members through volunteering, membership, committee elections, program proposals and on-air participation.

The weekly program schedule further demonstrates community involvement in the service with a substantial proportion of programming presented and produced by local volunteers, and program proposals received and considered during the relevant period.

The ACMA considers the evidence shows not only that participation opportunities are made available, but that community members are actively taking up those opportunities. The Licensee operates entirely through volunteers who perform governance, administrative, technical and broadcasting functions. Community members currently contribute to the presentation and production of programming, and the Licensee advised that it received four program proposals in the previous 12 months, one of which had commenced broadcasting and three of which remained under active consideration. These outcomes indicate that participation mechanisms are functioning in practice and are resulting in measurable community involvement in the operation of the service and the provision of programming.

The Licensee has introduced formal arrangements to support volunteer participation, including the use of Volunteer and Contributor Agreements. Although the governance and volunteer manual remains in draft form, its development reflects a proactive approach to strengthening training, and guidance. The proposed measures are directed toward improving volunteer support and the Licensee's ability to meet its governance and operational obligations over the longer term.

The Licensee's Rules have some limitations within the membership framework that may constrain the openness of community participation. The requirement for membership applicants to obtain endorsement from an existing member and subsequent committee approval, introduces a level of subjectivity that may restrict accessibility when compared to a model based solely on transparent and objective eligibility criteria. The absence of a review mechanism for unsuccessful applications and issues such as the broken membership application link may also create barriers to participation. While there is no evidence that these arrangements have resulted in complaints, they do have the potential to limit broader community access to membership and are best addressed by the Licensee to avoid adversely affected applicants in the future.

The Committee includes a number of long-serving members. While good governance practice generally benefits from opportunities for renewal, succession and the introduction of diverse perspectives, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the current governance arrangements are a significant barrier to community participation. The Licensee has demonstrated a clear commitment to involving community members in the operation of the station, maintaining multiple avenues for volunteer engagement, participation in governance, and contribution to programming.

While improvements to governance processes and membership accessibility would strengthen the effectiveness of these arrangements, the available information indicates that community members are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in both the provision of the service and the selection and provision of programs it broadcasts.

Accordingly, the evidence supports a finding that the Licensee is encouraging community participation, despite identified areas where its practices could be further strengthened.

Conclusion

Based on the above reasons, the ACMA is of the view that whilst some administrative weaknesses were identified the Licensee maintains governance arrangements that support community participation in the operations of the licensee in providing the service and in the selection and provision of programs under the licence and has not breached the relevant licence conditions.