

# Jon Bisset - CBAA - Business and Community Roundup

2 Oct 2024

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**Barry Green:** [00:00:00] Snow Patrol and chocolate on talk of our Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup Community Radio. My next guest is Jon Bisset, who is the CEO of the Community Broadcast Association of Australia. CBAA to which DBCR belongs. G'day, John.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:00:18] Hi, Barry. How are you?

**Barry Green:** [00:00:19] I'm well. Thanks. Now, we we met about 2014, I think, when you visited Donnybrook. And at that stage we were an incorporated body, but not broadcasting. We've been broadcasting since 2016. But this this conversation was prompted by a good old fashioned letter we received from CBAA about the 50th anniversary of community broadcasting in Australia. Do you want to talk a bit about that?

**Jon Bisset:** [00:00:49] Definitely. Look, it's interesting you mention a letter. It was, you know, we decided to give it. It was a 50th anniversary that it would be great to send out a hard copy letter to everyone. And there's an interesting process. I'm sure some of my younger staff have never actually put a stamp on a letter. Um, but yes, it's had some fantastic, um, uh, some fantastic feedback to use such a method to communicate with people. Look, I think, you know, it's 50, 50 years since and I think it was last Monday, a Monday a week ago that, um, the government of the time, um, first, uh, passed the legislation to create the community broadcasting sector. And there was 12 stations that went on air at that point in 1974. And it's, um, really interesting to read the some of the government documents at that time that talk about what they would like to see from a sector, and they talk about, um, you know, local content and local voices and putting people to air and authenticity. And it's really quite amazing that 50 years on, um, the

sector we have around Australia, um, and stations like yours are exactly what was envisaged at 50 years ago. We've actually achieved what the government at the time set out to achieve.

**Barry Green:** [00:02:19] And I think it's become even more important because especially in the regions, what's happened, the the radio, TV and print in the regions has largely been bought by corporations and shut down. And I was part of it. I was a gwn television for 14 years. We used to broadcast all over regional Western Australia, but that's all essentially been shut down. The transmitters are still there, but we've lost our local content, which makes it especially in the regions. It makes community radio so vital.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:02:51] Look, it does. And I think, um, uh, you know, regional community radio is thriving across the country. Um, uh, stations are doing some fantastic things. And to to an extent, you know, we're seeing, um, areas that used to have a very local commercial radio station, um, where that station has moved to more networking, bringing in content from capital cities that the, the community station is, you know, performing a really important role and to some degree, doing what some of those other stations used to do in the past, you know, um, keeping the content local, putting people on air, talking about local things rather than, you know, what's happening in the entire state or what's happening in the capital city when it may not be relevant at all.

**Barry Green:** [00:03:36] Absolutely. And I think, you know, what's happened in the commercials. They've become efficient to the point of inefficiency, and they've lost the way in terms of what they were here for. And we talked about the the letter that Cbaa sent out, and I read it because it was a hard copy. And, you know, we're so besotted by digital technology and we've got this mad Bill out there, the misinformation and disinformation bill that the government's proposing, as if, as if digital was the only way people got information. But of course, um, there's still hard copy and things like the, Light Australian newspapers, hard copy and community radio. While the radio is old technology, we can stream and we can post these conversations online. So we're combining the, the, the, the benefits of the old technology with the new technology look.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:04:29] Exactly. And I think, um, you know, we're seeing community radio stations embrace all sorts of ways of communicating to their audiences, whether

it's, you know, Am or FM in capital cities. It might be, you know, newer technology like Dab+ as well as the Am or FM streaming. You're right. Podcasting, um, even email newsletters and hard copy newsletters. I mean, I still get it. This morning I got a magazine in the mail from an organization I belong to, and it's quite nice to get something in the mail box that's not a bill.

**Barry Green:** [00:05:03] Yep. And, you know, the hard copy. Maybe I'm old school, but I got a hard copy, and I sit down and read it. I'm sick of looking at stuff on the screen. So I get you get so much email newsletters that simply aren't read. So they're incredibly efficient delivery. But if nobody's reading them, they're not a lot of good. But in terms of this misinformation and disinformation bill, the government's proposing, does CBAA have a position on that?

**Jon Bisset:** [00:05:31] Look, we don't um, we're our role is to sort of get involved in things that are particularly of interest to community broadcasters. Now, there is an element of that bill that is very important to community broadcasters. And that's, um, there's a clause in it that exempts media or media organizations. Which basically means that the way the misinformation and disinformation bill would work is that a social media company would need to take down certain content. Um, the what the exemption basically means is that they don't need to take down media organization content. So our position on the bill is that community radio community broadcasters, which includes television and community television as well, needs to be part of that exemption so that, um, because we are bound by a code of practice, which is government, um, required, and government, it's put together in collaboration with government. Um, we're bound by that. We shouldn't be bound by a social media organization's code. So we are hopeful That community radio, alongside all media organizations, will be exempt from that Misinformation and Disinformation Act legislation. Now, that doesn't mean we don't have an obligation to manage misinformation and disinformation. We would have that obligation. We currently have that obligation. Um, and but that would be managed through our code of practice, not through, um, another piece of legislation or or decided by another organization.

**Barry Green:** [00:07:20] Yeah. I guess that leaves the question who decides what's mis and disinformation? Um, for since early 2022, I've been talking to doctors about the Covid injections, and a lot of those conversations would have been considered

misinformation at the time. They're still online. So while we were exempted on the broadcast, I sort of wonder where I stand when I post those that content online. And a few. A few weeks ago now, I broadcast a segment of Russell Broadbent, member of House of Representatives, talking to Professor Angus Dalgleish about issues around the injections. And I posted that online. It's still online, but Facebook decided that it didn't meet community standards. So when a foreign company acting as a guest in this country decides that a federal MP talking to a highly esteemed professor of medicine doesn't meet community standards, you've got to sort of wonder what's going on there.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:08:13] Yeah. And look, I'm, you know, hopefully things like the work that government's doing, um, you know, can address some of the questions around who makes those sort of decisions, which is very unclear at the moment. Yeah.

**Barry Green:** [00:08:26] Because the ability to question government is fundamental to a democracy, isn't it. If we if you can't question the government, you know, we're not a democracy.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:08:38] Oh, look, you know, holding government, you're right. Holding government to account is a really important role of media generally. Yep.

**Barry Green:** [00:08:46] Yep. And of course, the media and community radio is no different. We we need to have a business model to pay our way. So I'll just run a few sponsor messages to pay our bills, John. And we'll come back and continue the conversation afterwards.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:09:01] Great.

**Barry Green:** [00:09:01] Barry you're listening to Dbca.

**Sponsor Message:** [00:09:04] This station thanks the following sponsors events West John Bailey of Balingup, Donnybrook, panel beaters, Solar Fruit and Rita Winkler, jewellery artist.

**Sponsor Message :** [00:09:15] At Amcal Donnybrook. Our new free app can help you easily order prescriptions, organise medications or access your prescription history. You

can even pay in advance to minimise the time you need to spend in store. Download the Amcal app free from the App Store or Google Play, or call 97311016 for more information. Amcal pharmacy, Donnybrook 78 Southwest Highway station sponsor.

**Barry Green:** [00:09:50] Eric Carmen and make me lose control on DBCR talk of our Shire. Sponsored by the Donnybrook-balingup Chamber of Commerce. My guest this morning is John Bisset, the CEO of the Community Broadcast Association of Australia. And we're talking about 50 years of community broadcasting and a letter that CBAA sent to broadcasters. And there's a line there, the diversity of voices and the creative, unique, specialist and hyperlocal content that broadcasters amplify remain key to CBAA. So that's the that's an important statement, I think, John, and the importance of local community broadcasting.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:10:30] Look, it is. I mean, community broadcasting since its inception has been about local participation. Um, you know, it's whether, like you, you know, a local broadcasting on air, talking about local in local issues, whether that's local council issues or, um, other any other type of local issue. Um, that's, you know, that's a real key. And, you know, there's other stations. You talked about regional stations before, but you look at capital city stations, there's specialist music stations, there's all sorts that might not be talking to a local community, but they're talking to a community that has a really specific interest in in what that station is Broadcasting.

**Barry Green:** [00:11:11] Yep. And I think, you know, there's probably a big difference between community radio in the cities and in the in the regions, because in the cities they tend to be a specific demographic, whereas in the regions the demographic is the people who live in that region.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:11:28] Look, I think it differs um, it differs a little bit. But, you know, if you talk generally, you're right about that. You know, regional stations are very much about geographical areas and the people that live in those areas. And you see across the country different focuses by regional stations depending on what their community looks like. You know, there's some regional communities that are very multicultural, so there's more of a multicultural content on those stations. There's some that are less. So there are some that are, um, you know, are are a lot of farms, for example, a lot of or others that are, um, you know, in more remote areas where it's a different composition

of people. So it's really station. The successful stations are really the ones that understand their local area and their local community and provide content that's relevant to that local community or the people that they're broadcasting to. Yeah.

**Barry Green:** [00:12:27] And given that, do you suspect that there's any opportunity for support, more support for And community stations in the regions, especially areas that have lost their their their commercial media.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:12:42] Yeah. Look, I hope so. We've been um. Um, the current government, federal government, has been undertaking a review into the sustainability of community broadcasting over the last few months, which was a promise of Minister Rowland in the last election campaign. And, you know, certainly my organisation, CBAA, is the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia is calling for a doubling of funding, um, uh, for the sector from, um, essentially 40 million to \$80 million and with a real focus on, um, the opportunities in regional and rural areas. And I think that's, you know, the areas that are losing their, their, their commercial media, um, more quickly or in the case of those areas, too, where the ABC is, you might talk to the whole of south western WA. It doesn't focus on Donnybrook or Bunbury or or any of those specific towns. And that's, you know, that's just by necessity. I mean, they can't, um, they can't break that down by specific towns. So that's the gap that community radio can really fill. And, um, you know, whilst I think you're playing a sponsorship, um, spots will need to continue once the stations are really, really important. And I'm hoping there's some significant additional money to help stations as well.

**Barry Green:** [00:14:13] Yeah. Because that local sponsorship is actually local program content. And you talk about the ABC and, uh, you know, the trouble with as the emergency broadcaster and I think, you know, there's a real place for community radio in the emergency broadcasting sphere, because that when there's a lot of fires about, the ABC is almost like the boy that cried wolf because they're continually talking about fires. In most instances aren't relative to relevant to people in specific areas.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:14:43] No, exactly. Look, there's some, um, uh, fantastic examples, particularly in the the Black Saturday bushfires, the bushfires in sort of 2018 and 19, um, uh, 20 in on the sort of East Coast where um, radio stations played such a significant role in, in providing local information and keeping local communities. You

know, the ABC can't, um, tell the local community that there's a fire down the end of Money Lane. This is a real story. Um, but the local the local station, you know, knows that area. The presenters in that case were on air. Um, you know, pretty much for 14 days straight, keeping the local community informed and being able to say, you know, there's a fire down the road near Farmajo's House or the end of Money Lane or, or um, you know, there's two roads named the same thing. Well, it's actually on the Northern Road. You know, those sorts of things are is the role that community radio can play in emergencies.

**Barry Green:** [00:15:52] Absolutely. And support the importance of local knowledge, which I think accountants often don't understand. And and it really gets back to the the people that Aboriginal people say country needs people. So we need people in these areas that know the area.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:16:08] Yeah, exactly. And that's, you know, that's the beauty of community radio and involving the local community in what's going on. And, you know, you're saying off air, you, you know, interview the local mayor or the local general manager or the local council at least, um, every few weeks. And, you know, that's a really important role. Again, that's not going to happen on ABC or commercial media. Commercial radio. There's a real opportunity there for those sorts of things.

**Barry Green:** [00:16:36] Yeah. And the emergency broadcaster thing, that's something that we're sort of hoping to move towards. But to really fill that role, we've got to have battery backup systems and we're sort of investigating that to do that economically. And hopefully we can find some funding to do that, because at the moment if the lights go out, so do we, which is about as much use as I say in hip pocket in England in an emergency broadcasting situation. Yeah.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:17:01] And look, emergency broadcasting is, you know, a serious decision that a station needs to make if they're going to go down that route, because there's obviously the the need to have batteries and technology that can survive the disaster. Um, but there's also a human, a human cost. And, um, you know, the bushfires in Mallacoota a couple of years ago, the the community station played an extraordinary role in helping to evacuate the local community, and even some of the community broadcasters ended up on the ABC because, um, they were the only ones. It's only

media in town that could get there and and provide information. But, you know, they've suffered a human toll. Um, you know, those those people have burnt out and some of them lost their houses whilst they were on air. And, you know, there's decisions to be made, particularly when you're volunteers around. Can you actually can you actually man the station? Um, uh, when there's a, when there's a bushfire or a flood or a I guess that's what a disaster happening.

**Barry Green:** [00:18:09] That's what's made regional Australia is the volunteers and, and these people have a vested interest in these things. So we've I think it's so important to to have volunteers and support them because, they can be more independent. Anyway, John, thanks for taking the time to talk to us today.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:18:31] Not a problem at all. Barry always great to be on air, and nearly ten years ago, or maybe ten years ago that I last visited, um, down to the station. So, um, I should head back that way at some point. With 300 stations a year, 300 stations now members, it's really hard to visit everyone all the time. But it'd be great to come down and see you again.

**Barry Green:** [00:18:53] Well, we we did have a visit last year from Declan, and lady's name escapes me, and that was really great. That was after the conference in Adelaide which I attended and we had them on air. And so it was really great to sort of for them to see how we operate. And uh, yeah. So it's all good. Wonderful. Terrific. Thanks. Thanks, John. Thanks to you.

**Jon Bisset:** [00:19:11] No problem.

**Barry Green:** [00:19:13] Well, I've been talking to Jon Bisset, the CEO of CBAA the community broadcast association of Australia.

Reference was made to the following.

Broadcast with Russell Broadbent MP :

- 1) <https://soundcloud.com/dbcommunityradio/russell-broadbent-mhr-misinformation-bill-and-more-talk-of-our-shire-25-september-2024>



- 2) <https://soundcloud.com/dbcommunityradio/russell-broadbent-mhr-prof-angus-dalgleish-kesh-cafe-tiffneys-talk-of-our-shire-12-june-2024>

The Light Australia Newspaper <https://thelightaustralia.com/>