

Executive Council of Australian Jewry Inc.

הוועד הפועל של
יהודי אוסטרליה

The Representative Organisation of Australian Jewry

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8 December 2016

SBS Radio Consultation 2012
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Dear Sir/Madam

Re: SBS Radio Consultation 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Selection Criteria (published by SBS on its website at <http://www.sbs.com.au/radio/consultation>, accessed on 8.12.2016), upon which SBS proposes to determine the language programs to be included in its new analogue (AM/FM) radio schedule.

We make this submission on the basis of feedback we have already received from within the Australian Jewish community, of which our organisation is the peak national representative body.

The proposed new criteria

We note that the proposed criteria take a very similar form to the currently-operating criteria, except that it is proposed that:

1. the minimum population number for the "Large Languages" category will be increased from 20,000 to 25,000;
2. the number of language groups to be accommodated in the "High Needs Languages" category will increase from 10 to 15; and
3. the weighting to be given to household resources in the "High Needs Languages" category will decrease from 20% to 15%.

We have no issue with these proposed changes.

Retention of “Special Criteria” category

We welcome the fact that SBS is proposing to retain the “Special Criteria” category, which will apply to “a sizable ethnic community if its needs are significant but not adequately captured in the Large Language or High Needs Selection Criteria”, for example, due to:

“Discrimination/Vilification: where a group is subject to frequent discrimination or vilification in Australia based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin”.

This category applies squarely to the Australian Jewish community, and it is on this basis that we seek a continuation in the new program schedule for SBS radio of the existing Jewish community radio program in its current time slot on Sundays.

The retention of the “Special Criteria” category, which has both a community focus and a language focus, is in accordance with the SBS Charter which provides that:

*The principal function of the SBS is to provide multilingual **and multicultural** radio and television services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians, and, in doing so, **reflect Australia's multicultural society**.*¹ (Emphases added).

If the mere provision of multilingual broadcasting services were to be considered sufficient to fulfil the function of providing multicultural broadcasting services, the words “and multicultural” in the Charter would have no work to do and their addition by Parliament would have been unnecessary.

The Jewish community in Australia is recognised in the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics,² and judicially,³ as a distinct cultural and ethnic group in Australia’s multicultural society. Yet for a range of historical reasons, the Jewish community is not associated with a single non-English language, whether spoken at home or used in other social or family contexts. Jews in Australia come from many countries and speak many languages and the community cannot be defined in terms of a single language.

Population numbers of Jewish Communities in Australia

Australia is one of only six countries in the world in which the Jewish population is increasing.⁴ There were 97,335 Australians who identified as Jewish in the 2011 census, an increase of 9.58% over the 2006 Census figure of 88,831.⁵ However, the question on religion in the Australian Census form does not provide a box to be checked for “Jewish” or “Judaism”. A person wishing to

¹ Subsection 6(1) *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991* (Cth).

² ABS catalogue number 1249.0.

³ *Miller v Wertheim* [2002] FCAFC 156 at paras 13-14.

⁴ The others are Israel, Germany, Canada, Hong Kong and Panama: Information from demographer, Professor Sergio Della Pergola, chairman of the Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, cited in http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/world-jewish-population.htm#_ftn3

⁵ Joshua Levi, ‘Census shows Jews are on the move’, *Australian Jewish News* 29 June 2012: <http://www.jewishnews.net.au/census-shows-jews-are-on-the-move/26637>

identify as Jewish must write in the word “Jewish” or “Judaism” to be counted as such. For historical and cultural reasons, rather than write-in the word “Jewish” or “Judaism”, Jews are more likely to skip the question on religious affiliation than are other respondents. For example, conceptually, the question on religion refers to belief and religious affiliation. However, there is a difference between ‘being Jewish’ and ‘adherence to Judaism’ (Judaism being one of the ‘Other’ options suggested in the religion question). It is not necessary to observe Judaism in order to identify with the Jewish people. In that sense, identifying as Jewish is for many people an expression of national/ethnic/cultural attachment in addition, or as an alternative, to religious attachment. The current question is therefore difficult to answer for some members of our community who have nowhere else on the form to indicate that they are Jewish other than ‘by religion’. The ancestry question also creates difficulties because of the narrowness of the concept of ‘ancestry’, among other reasons.

Demographers have agreed that the census therefore under-counts (‘under-enumerates’) the number of Jews in Australia. Based on births, deaths and marriages data, it is estimated that the true number of Jews in Australia at the time of the 2011 Census was 112,000, up by 6% from the estimated 2006 figure of 105,600.⁶

We are confident that once the results of the 2016 census are made public, they will show a further increase in the Australian Jewish population.

On any view, therefore, the Australian Jewish community meets the criterion of a “sizable” community.

It is also noteworthy that Australia’s Jewish population has an older age structure than the general Australian population. Some 4.2% of Australian Jews are aged over 85 years – and likely to be traditional, long-standing radio listeners - compared to 1.9% of the general Australian population.⁷

Frequent discrimination and vilification directed at the Jewish community in Australia

The 12 month period ending 30 September 2016 saw a 10% increase over the previous year in reported antisemitic incidents in Australia involving threats or acts of violence.⁸ The ECAJ, Jewish community roof bodies in each State, and other Jewish community groups logged a total of 210 antisemitic incidents during the period, including physical assaults, abuse and harassment, vandalism, graffiti, hate and threats communicated directly by email, letters, telephone calls, and leaflets. This compares to a total of 190 such incidents logged by the same sources over the preceding 12 month period.

Physical assaults and abuse/harassment of Jews comprised 45% of the incidents. These included incidents motivated by racial hatred where Jews were punched and kicked.

⁶ David Graham, *The Jewish Population of Australia: Key Findings from the 2011 Census*, (Darlinghurst: Jewish Communal Appeal, 2014), p.2

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 15.

⁸ ECAJ Annual Report on Antisemitism in Australia 2016: <http://www.ecaj.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ECAJ-Antisemitism-Report-2016d-WEB.pdf>

There was a marked increase in the form of assault known as ‘egging’ - targeting and assaulting Jews by throwing eggs at them. Eggings occurred predominantly as Jews walked to and from synagogue on Friday evenings and Saturdays in Melbourne. Attacks (assault, abuse, vandalism, and graffiti) accounted for 70% of the total number of incidents, with 149 incidents. Threats (email, letters, telephone, leaflets) accounted for 30% of the total number of incidents, with 61 incidents. There is also much anecdotal evidence of incidents which go unreported.

The report also noted an increase in vandalism, graffiti, hate emails, and antisemitic leaflets. There was a decrease in face-to-face verbal abuse/harassment of Jews, although the frequency of this type of incident tends to fluctuate from year to year.

Although Australia remains a stable, vibrant and tolerant democracy, where Jews face no official discrimination, and are free to observe their faith and traditions, antisemitism persists. There are segments of Australian society which are not only hostile towards Jews, but also actively and publicly express that hostility with words and threatened or actual violent acts. As a result, and by necessity, physical security remains a prime concern for the Jewish community.

The Jewish community is the only community within Australia whose places of worship, schools, communal organisations and community centres need, for security reasons, to operate under the protection of high fences, armed guards, metal detectors, CCTV cameras and the like. The necessity is recognised by Australia's law enforcement agencies and arises from the entrenched and protean nature of antisemitism in aspects of traditional western and Muslim culture, resulting in a high incidence of physical attacks against Jews and Jewish communal buildings over the last three decades, and continuing threats.

Radio programming for the Jewish community to date

Radio programs specifically for the Jewish community have been broadcast in Sydney and Melbourne since the inception of ethnic radio in June 1975 and have for many years also been broadcast nation-wide. The languages used have been English, Hebrew and Yiddish.

Following a review in 1994, SBS recognised that Jewish Australians constitute a distinct cultural and ethnic community who, unlike other such communities, do not speak only one language other than English.

Accordingly, unlike other non-English language programs, programs in Hebrew and Yiddish were permitted to devote a part of their allocated time to broadcasts in the English language. The Jewish community program on SBS Radio on Sunday between 11:00am and 1:00pm continues to accommodate all three languages. This nation-wide program has become well-known and widely listened to in the Jewish community, as this time slot has been used for Jewish community radio programs since inception in 1975. It is therefore essential to maintain the programs in its existing free-to-air analogue format, rather than digitally, especially given the older age profile of the Jewish community compared to the general community.

It should also be recalled that prior to 2003 there were six hours per week of Jewish community radio programming on SBS. This was reduced that year to four hours per week, the same number

of hours allotted to much smaller communities. Since 2012, it has been two hours per week. Ideally, a return to four hours a week should be accommodated. But there can be no case for a further reduction in hours or any rescheduling.

The importance of the current program to the Jewish community

Members of the Jewish community, as a recognised ethnic and cultural group in Australia, have a continuing need for the kind of analogue radio programming that has been provided to the community to date. Existing programs have a loyal following within the community because they include:

- (a) news about events within the Australian Jewish Community which often relates to or affects them and family members personally, as well as information about art, cultural and entertainment activities;
- (b) information and preparations for upcoming Jewish national and religious holidays and festivals;
- (c) messages from Jews overseas seeking lost relatives;
- (d) messages and information bulletins issued by organisations and individuals;
- (e) interviews with local, visiting and overseas guests;
- (f) Hebrew and Yiddish programs for those who understand or are currently learning those languages (whether they are spoken at home or in other contexts);
- (g) detailed and quality news stories from Israel (including domestic Israeli politics) where a very high proportion of Australian Jews have family relatives;
- (h) terrorism and security alerts, which can at times be critical, not only because of the need to protect the community from physical threats but also to calm and reassure members of the community in appropriate circumstances. The persistence of antisemitism is a sad fact of life in Australia, as documented in the annual reports on Antisemitism in Australia published by our organisation since 1989.

Conclusion

It remains the principle function of SBS under its Charter to provide multicultural, and not only multilingual, radio programs. The Australian Jewish community meets the criteria of a sizeable community with special needs arising from the fact that the community continues to face high levels of discrimination and vilification, as defined in the proposed criteria.

As such, our community remains both eligible and entitled to make a call upon SBS for a fair share of its resources, to which our community's taxes contribute, for a continuation of the existing Jewish radio program.

We wish SBS well in conducting its review and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anton Block", followed by a small comma.

Anton Block
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P.S. Wertheim".

Peter Wertheim AM
Executive Director