3C22 Community Broadcasting and Place-based Media Experience (ComCom) Room:
B.202

Chair Susan Forde

Papers

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Community Radio in an Australian City: The Melbourne Experience

Melbourne is Australia's second most populated city and in many ways a microcosm of broader Australian society. As a city, Melbourne is the proverbial 'melting pot' of cultures. This diversity is evident in the breadth of community radio stations which service the Melbourne community. From 'generalist' stations serving a plethora of marginalized audiences, to ethnic stations, youth stations, seniors and Indigenous stations, Melbourne community radio is a vibrant and active mix of much that represents Australia – and the contemporary global condition. This paper draws on data collected during two national studies of Australia's community media sector (Forde et al, 2002; Meadows et al, 2007) which focused on stations and subsequently their audiences. The research used a mixed methodology of surveys, focus groups and interviews to build a picture of the role these stations perform for individual participants, local community groups, businesses and other organizations and of course, audience members. This paper analyses the Melbourne fieldwork from these national studies, offering an analysis of community radio in an Australian metropolitan centre. While not without its problems, Melbourne's community radio stations and their audiences have created and developed a space and place for diverse groups to connect in ways which foster the sense of belonging so central to the well-being of individuals and their communities. In this way, these stations perform a particular role in metropolitan Melbourne by combating the sense of isolation and anonymity characteristic of the urban experience.