

Ethnic radio will benefit both migrants and Australians

Press Release

Minister For Immigration And Ethnic Affairs, The Hon M J R Mackellar

February 1977, IEA 12/77

Both migrants and Australians would benefit from the development of ethnic radio, the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, the Hon. M.J.R. Mackellar, said today.

“It will fill a void in established radio services and benefit hundreds of thousands of people,” he added.

Mr Mackellar said that until the advent of ethnic radio, less than one broadcast hour in 500 was being devoted to a language other than English.

There had in fact been a steady decline in foreign-language content on established commercial and national radio channels. At the same time there had been a large increase in the non-English speaking population of Australia.

“The government has pushed ahead with ethnic radio,” Mr Mackellar said. “It is convinced it will be a vital information, entertainment and educational facility.”

He said ethnic radio would operate under broad, flexible guidelines.

These were:

- To assist national groups to preserve their cultures in harmony with the total Australian community, and at the same time assist other Australians to appreciate those cultures and to encourage them to learn other languages:

- Provide information and advice on their rights and responsibilities of residence in Australia and on other matters:
- To help those who cannot speak English to settle speedily, happily and successfully:
- Encourage and facilitate the learning of English:
- Provide as adequately and equitably as possible for all ethnic groups including those which are numerically small:
- Assist in promoting mutual understanding and harmony between and within ethnic groups and between ethnic groups and the English-speaking community:
- Avoid political partisanship:
- Avoid institutionalisation of differences while maximising the participation of ethnic groups and individuals in the operations of ethnic radio.

“I believe ethnic broadcasting holds enormous benefits both for migrants and the Australian community generally,” Mr Mackellar said.

“For example it has vast potential as a language-teaching device.

“With over 350,000 Australians studying languages other than English, hearing a language in its natural context must be a significant learning aid.”

Mr Mackellar said the Commonwealth government had assured migrant groups of participation in ethnic radio.

It had created the National Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Council (NEBAC) which consisted

mainly of prominent members of migrant communities, and had called for nominations for membership of associated State Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Committees (SEBACs).

“Placing ethnic radio under the ABC’s control and guidance will further ensure that ethnic broadcasting in Australia is a sound, proficient and professional service,” Mr Mackellar said.

The Liberal and National Country parties promised to further the potential of ethnic radio. They are keeping that promise.”