

Radio 2RPH

2022-23 Annual Report from the Chair.

The year under review has been an outstanding one for our station, celebrating forty years of continued radio reading services to our audiences - an extraordinary achievement by a largely volunteer driven community organisation.

Throughout the forty years, an average 200 or so volunteer announcers, readers and pre-recorders produced and presented the vast array of Radio 2RPH programs, every day of every year. Many others worked hard in the background; the rostering teams and those in production roles, together with all the committee and Board members.

On 25 March 2023, our Patrons, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales and her husband Mr Dennis Wilson, generously marked the occasion with a delightful afternoon tea celebration for the Radio 2RPH community at Government House. It was an opportunity to remember and reflect on the extraordinary efforts of the founders of the station led by the indomitable Professor Neil Runcie and including Barbara Blackman, Professor Ron Postle, Joan Ledermann and Sam Gilis.

The Governor explained the basis of her support for our efforts: “Radio 2RPH is magnificent in that it has a mission, but it doesn't have an agenda. It allows people in hearing the news, the entire news articles, to think about the articles themselves, to be informed and to make up their own minds, to form their own opinions.”

In accordance with the decision taken at the previous AGM, Radio 2RPH made a small but significant change to the name of the entity that is registered under the Co-operatives National Law so that after more than four decades the station is no longer identified as “Radio for the Print Handicapped” but is simply known as Radio 2RPH Co-operative Limited. Our focus and purpose is to provide radio reading services for people with print disabilities.

In financial terms, 2022-23 was a good year. A modest surplus was achieved, following a substantial loss in the previous year. Costs were slightly reduced, with additional income gained from a one-off grant from the NSW Government and a highly appreciated bequest from the late Ian Michael Burrows, who had been a keen volunteer with us in the 1990's.

The continued support of the Community Broadcasting Foundation remains the keystone for Radio 2RPH operations, supplemented by earnings from our investment portfolio. The Council of the City of Sydney plays an important part through the lease of premises at a significantly subsidised rate. The station's sponsors and the organisations that pay for airtime also help us to continue to meet the costs of operations.

Each year the costs of Radio 2RPH increase, primarily driven by contractual arrangements for operating the AM, FM and DAB+ transmitters throughout the greater Sydney,

Wollongong and Newcastle regions, as well as salaries for the small team of paid staff. It will be critical going forward, to persuade the new State Government to continue financial support for our core activities. At the same time, we also look to on-going financial support from the Radio 2RPH community: our listeners and our volunteers.

Over recent years, gifts in wills have proven a vital income stream for the station, by enabling an investment portfolio that now produces significant, long-term revenue. In that context, we acknowledge in particular our enduring appreciation of the financial benefits received from gifts in wills from Ms Robin Potter OAM four years ago, Mr. Simon Peter van den Beld last year, and from Mr. Ian Michael Burrows this year.

Having premises that are fully accessible for people with disabilities to participate in all aspects of the station's operations remains an important goal. Unfortunately, to date we have not yet found an affordable alternative, nor does it seem to be realistic for the existing premises to be renovated to the necessary standards for accessibility. With support of Sydney City Council, we remain hopeful of finding a solution in the longer term.

Another significant challenge for the Radio 2RPH Board has been to formulate a longer-term strategic plan. It has become clear that with the increasing availability of assistive technologies, the community need for radio reading services may be declining. While it will remain an important and valued service for many people for years to come, stations like Radio 2RPH need to consider providing a wider range or scope of services to people with disabilities. With similar considerations facing our colleagues in other States, the 2RPH Board is carefully considering future directions for our broadcasting service.

It has been a great pleasure to work with the Board over the past year; Geraldine Menere has been an excellent Secretary and Deputy Chair; Robert Estcourt AM, as always, offering his expert guidance as Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee (FAC) and the Investment Advisory Committee; Vivian Schenker ably leading the Program Advisory Committee (PAC), Danielle Amos and Michele Watts chairing the Engagement Committee, Ken Bock OAM active on the FAC and PAC, Denise Alexander as a member of the FAC and forming the station's new Risk Committee and Shawn Burns also a member of the Risk Committee. My thanks to you all for your active participation in the governance of the station.

With the new demands of motherhood, Danielle Amos decided to leave the Board and we thank her warmly for her contributions. Also stepping down at the end of another term on the Board is Ken Bock OAM. A true stalwart of Radio 2RPH, Ken joined the station in 1995 and as well as announcing on newspapers shifts over several decades, Ken was the originator of a string of magazine programs, including presenting *What's the Buzz* for some 18 years. While happily continuing in other roles at the station, Ken's participation on the Radio 2RPH Board will be very greatly missed, for his financial expertise and sound advice, as well as his quick sense of humour.

2RPH is very fortunate with its highly dedicated team of paid staff. Under the leadership of General Manager Barry Melville, the team of Nicola Snell, Peter Worthington, Phillipa Ward, Julie Johnson, and Marty Peplow, have given highly competent support to the volunteers to

keep the station smoothly and efficiently operating throughout another year, which the Board has greatly appreciated.

We greatly look forward to continuing and developing our broadcast services with the ongoing support of our members, staff and volunteers.

John Martin OAM

Chair

Radio 2RPH Co-operative Limited.

Radio 2RPH

2022-23 Annual Report from the General Manager

After two years at the helm I am delighted to report for the second time as General Manager of Radio 2RPH on the course we have set and the journey so far.

I too acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the lands across which we broadcast and pay respects to the elders past, present and to our First Nations listeners and supporters.

Five years in gestation, Radio 2RPH started in earnest on 18 April 1983 as a volunteer resource radio reading service up at the top of the AM spectrum from a studio in North Sydney borrowed from 2SM. Nowadays we operate a wide-coverage Sydney AM service, a metropolitan in-fill FM service and 2 digital radio services (DAB+) whilst networking out to Newcastle and Wollongong via regional FM coverage. We also offer to listeners in a limitless range of locations a suite of streaming services, podcasts and programs on demand.

At our 40th anniversary celebration in March our Chair, John Martin OAM responded to the NSW Governor by saying that Radio 2RPH is about “the core values of access and equity, and participation.”

Robert Fitzgerald, the NSW Ageing and Disability Commissioner added to the words of the Governor and our Chair by saying how thankful he was for the voice and presence Radio 2RPH gives to those so easily excluded in our community and:

“With good grace, some government funding and a lot of community support, 2RPH will continue to flourish and thrive and as a consequence make an enormous difference in the lives of so many.”

As John Martin reports 2013 was the year we became known simply known as Radio 2RPH Co-operative Limited. After a four-year hiatus it was also the year we elected to rejoin the national sector body RPH Australia and to begin to move forward on an emerging group project, the Disability Media Project which will provide for training, employment and greater inclusion for people with disability.

Volunteers are the heart and soul of Radio 2RPH and they continue to excel in their skills, commitment and generous contributions of their time and efforts.

At their strongest, volunteer numbers in July 2022 peaked near 200 initially signalling a post-COVID resurgence. But the numbers have tended to wax and wane throughout the ensuing year or more, probably due to the pent-up desire to travel and several lesser waves of the pandemic. The availability of readers and crucially, announcers for the 38 live-reading shifts across the week was subject to seasonal variation, and intermittent absences and quite a number of short-notice program cancellation.

We are hugely indebted to our volunteer rosterers and production volunteers working tirelessly without the reward of audience recognition. Hearty thanks to Sue Jenkins and the

team Sarah Hewson, Suthee Boyd, Jeremy Leacock, Freya Shields, Con O'Donnell and Stephen Christian. We farewelled Stephen last October as he and his trusty four-legged companion, Candles hit the highway and relocated to Adelaide. And it was farewell too to Freya who went on to launch a new career.

On behalf of all the on-air personal I thank our talented volunteer production crew Katie Brooks, Brian Holdsworth, Megan Grew and Rufina Ismail.

Endless praise and thanks to our paid staff Nicola Snell, Phillipa Ward, Peter Worthington, Julie Johnson and Marty Peplow. We farewelled Gemma Purves our former Content Manager who has moved on to be a training course coordinator. In April we mourned the tragic loss of our former Communications Manager Ruth Hessey who was struck by a vehicle and passed away.

In December 2022 the Board supported a staff restructure to effect greater productivity and reduce staffing costs by 15% of the back of a significant financial loss in the 2022 financial year. The former positions of Content Manager and Communications Manager were discontinued, and the duties and responsibilities were reassigned across the staff structure which by January included redefine positions of Operations Manager, Business Development Manager, Financial Controller and Production Coordinator.

Our fundraising efforts in 2022/23 included a Christmas Appeal, a 40th Anniversary Radiothon in June and a 40th Anniversary Super Quiz event in July at the Harold Park Community Centre in June. Each of them contributed strongly to the community spirit and support that the station attracts provided a much-needed supplement to our revenues raised from grants, broadcasting sponsorship activities, donations and bequests.

2023 saw a growing commitment to volunteer recruitment, consultation and training. We instituted a series of forums that were both informative and fun to try to bolster management's and volunteers' mutual understanding of station developments and the directions we have been setting in the areas of technology, programming and support for service quality.

By mid-year our available announcers had dropped from 43 at the same time in 2022 to 39 stretching to cover 37 live shifts each week (allowing for absences). In the last quarter of 2023 we had a total of 65 regular readers and 47 casual readers to cover a total of 37 shifts each week. In the same period we had 8 emerging announcers recruited over the previous 6 months including 4 people who have recently retired from long professional careers in broadcasting.

Our deep appreciation goes out to the volunteers who research, prepare, present and record what we refer to at 2RPH as our "pre-records", the curated programs that range from excellent ground-breaking interview programs like Ablequest, Inclusive Agenda, Colours of Australia and the Antiques Radio Show. A special acknowledgement of the contribution of 2022 NSW Senior of the Year, Teresa Plane, who in her ninetieth year still compiles and presents Ageing with Attitude and Meditative Moments, regular as clockwork.

Over the 2022/23 period we launched a number of new programs including live readings of the Illawarra Mercury (launched in July 2022) and new and diverse pre-recorded offerings such as Colours of Australia (featuring interviews with Australians from diverse cultural backgrounds), the Star Observer and DIVA Magazine (representing the needs and interests

of LGBTQI+ listeners to the wider community) and we welcomed to our volunteering family proud Gamilaraay woman, Mikaela Forde (Pathways Training Manager at the CMTO) to present and pre-record the Koori Mail.

After the disruptions of COVID-19 throughout the second half of 2021 and further operational delays in 2022, we were finally able to reinvigorate our partnership with the Community Media Training Organisation (CMTO) to deliver the RPH Professional Development training package to 60 of our on-air volunteers. The sessions were presented by long-standing radio professional Lex Marinos and community radio trainer (and ex ABC and SBS producer), Anna Schinella.

In August 2022 it was announced that 6 volunteers and staff from 2RPH were finalists in the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia Awards. Natalia Shea was a finalist in the Outstanding Volunteer Contribution category, Peter Worthington and Marty Peplow were joint finalists in Excellence in Technical Services/Innovation, as were Vivian Schenker and John Berry for Excellence in Innovative Programming and Content.

In October 2022 we commenced transmission of a second DAB+ channel, identified as 2RPH_Plus with a cycling tagline on the receivers' screen display of "Well Read Radio" commenced on a technical trial basis on 28 October. Since then our new Production Coordinator, in consultation with our volunteer Program Advisory Committee undertook a review and reconfiguration of the 2RPH program grid across all our AM, FM and DAB+ services.

The most pressing challenge in 2023 was to have the financial support of the NSW State Government (CBF) restored to a sustainable level. I am happy to report that this was partially achieved, but the restoration of State ongoing government funding remains an goal into the next government funding cycle.

The best thing about having to tackle such challenges has been that I am so well supported by a talented and hard-working volunteer base, a resourceful and dedicated paid staff and a Board committed to delivering benefits to the community.

In May 2023 our Board Director Michele Watts and I represented Radio 2RPH at the annual Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities which was a great opportunity to begin to build deeper relationships with community and government representatives, advocates, academics and other specialists. We look forward to formalising the relationship in 2024.

A special thanks to our core funding organisations: the Community Broadcasting Fund (CBF); the Department of Community and Justice (DCJ); and the City of Sydney Council, whose support enables us to continue to develop 2RPH as a key source of information and as a leading radio reading service. Finally, I would like to thank the 2RPH staff for their work during the year, the 2RPH Directors for their continued guidance, our volunteers, listeners, sponsors and committees for generous support.

Barry Melville

General Manager

Radio 2RPH Co-operative Limited.