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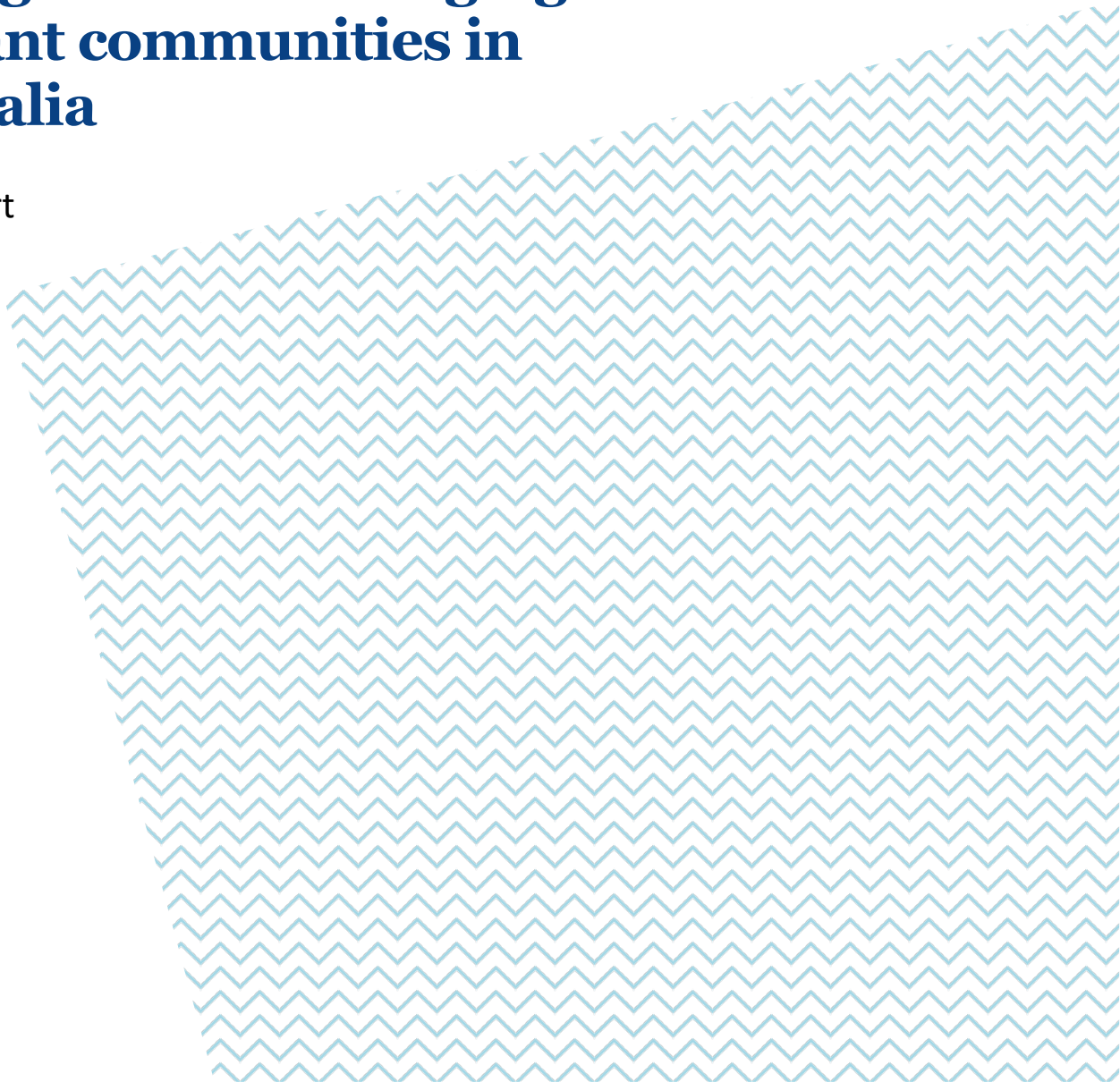
**CAWRI**

Creativity and Wellbeing Hallmark Research Initiative

# **Communities over the airwaves: How the creativity of community language radio promotes wellbeing among new and emerging migrant communities in Australia**

Final report

23 January 2023



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## Project summary

Australia's multicultural diversity is greater than ever before with the ongoing arrival of new and emerging migrant communities from Africa and Asia, alongside earlier established migrant communities. Members of these communities have the opportunity to be involved in a publicly-supported outlet for oral creativity through participation in Australian community radio. This project examined the involvement in radio of members of new and emerging as well as other communities, and explored how this can promote individual and community wellbeing. Findings reinforced the role of radio in providing a creative outlet in which presenters could determine the content, format and language of their program according to personal preferences and skills, and in order to meet the needs of their community—including during times of community crisis, such as was caused by COVID-19. An unexpected finding was the activation of a different kind of creativity, through the problem-solving mechanisms adopted by individual presenters in order to overcome the broadcasting challenges posed by COVID-19. This evidence demonstrates the critical role of radio in enhancing wellbeing for individuals and communities by facilitating and stimulating different types of creativity, and points to a need for ongoing support of community radio in the Australian context.

This project ran from September 2019 to November 2022.

## Research team

John Hajek	Faculty of Arts – School of Languages and Linguistics
Amanda Krause	Department of Psychology, James Cook University
Anya Lloyd-Smith	Faculty of Arts – School of Languages and Linguistics
Greg Wadley	Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology – Computing and Information systems

## Partners

John Giles	Manager, 3ZZZ radio station (to January 2022)
Jon King	Manager, 3ZZZ radio station (from January 2022)

## Acknowledgements

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# Background

## Research context

Community radio provides Australian communities an accessible means of creative expression, provides vital social connection for their members, and supports broader social cohesion (Forde et al., 2009; Kwong, 2012). Community radio serves an essential function for communities whose needs are not met by mainstream (public or private) broadcasters. In Australia, there are more than 450 community radio stations with 97 of those broadcasting in languages other than English on either a part-time or full-time basis (National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council, n.d.).

There is an increasing body of research which highlights the benefits of community radio. These can be broadly grouped under themes of maintaining and representing culture (Meadows et al., 2007; Milan, 2008; Purkarthofer, et al., 2008; van Vuuren, 2002), creating a sense of community (Milan, 2008; Purkarthofer et al., 2008; van Vuuren, 2002), empowering individuals and communities (Meadows et al., 2007; Oliviera, 2013), and enhancing the emotional, social, and physical wellbeing of its listeners (Kwong, 2012; Meadows et al., 2007; Oliveira, 2013; Order, 2017).

Although the positive benefits specifically of community language radio for community building and cultural maintenance have been well-documented, the creativity aspect of community language radio, and its connection to wellbeing, have not been fully explored. With this project, we aimed to explore the link between creativity and wellbeing in the community language radio context via a case study of 3ZZZ. Based in Melbourne, 3ZZZ began broadcasting on a regular basis in 1989 and currently reports broadcasting in over 70 languages for over 60 ethnic groups (3ZZZ, n.d.). With such a large number of languages and cultures represented—both established communities as well as new and emerging communities—the station presents an ideal site for examining a range of approaches to programming and the impact that the programs themselves have on the wellbeing of various communities.

## Project aims

Framed by four research questions, this project aimed to examine the relationship between creative radio practices, individual wellbeing and social wellbeing for members of Australia's many migrant communities, including those that are considered to be from new and emerging communities (NEC) having only settled in Australia in more recent decades.

1. What are the various radio production practices of language groups, especially if NEC, within the community broadcasting sector in Australia today?
2. How do radio presenters and listeners understand the creative role of radio, its adaptability to cultural forms of expression, and its role in today's technologically connected landscape?
3. What are the characteristics of the creative process of radio production for these communities which enhance presenters' and listeners' experiences of social connection and wellbeing?
4. How can we develop an effective, evidence-based resource which will promote and enhance individual and community wellbeing for migrant communities, especially NECs, through radio broadcasting?

## Methodology

We adopted a community-based participatory research paradigm that placed radio personnel at the heart of the work, as collaborators. A mixed-methods approach was utilised, which spanned three stages. These were originally planned as: (1) interviews with 3ZZZ management and staff, and brief questionnaires completed by presenters from across the station's language groups; (2) focus groups with presenters and listeners representing a small number of communities which were selected in consultation with 3ZZZ staff; (3) collation and dissemination of findings through development of a resource (fact-sheet) for stakeholders, scholarly articles and presentations, and a one-day public symposium. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and extended lockdowns and other restrictions, significant adaptation of our approach was required, including the revision of focus groups of presenters and listeners to instead take place as one-on-one online interviews with presenters only, and the cancellation of the public symposium. We in turn increased our focus on the research element of the project.

## Key findings

Our project results confirm the primary characteristics of community (language) radio as being both accessible, enabling members of migrant communities, and especially new and emerging communities, to participate—and adaptable, meeting the varying needs of individuals and communities, including during times of crisis.

Presenters reported wellbeing benefits not only for themselves, but also for their listeners and their communities. These benefits included (1) the distribution of news and information, (2) the provision of entertainment, (3) the fostering of community pride and cultural identity, and (4) the maintenance of presenters' personal/social connections with listeners. Furthermore, our findings highlighted how community language radio allows presenters to have their needs of autonomy, relatedness and competence met, and how the process of preparing and presenting programs is creative in nature, driven by explicit consideration of their listening communities and—as COVID-19 brought into sharp relief—the need to overcome challenges in order to continue to deliver programs to the communities who rely upon them.

While creativity was understood by participants in a broad fashion, one key element of it identified by them was autonomy with regard to broadcast content – both in preparing it and presenting it. From a stricter, genius (“Big C”) perspective on creativity, the presenters' behaviors may not be deemed creative; however, the presenters' actions suggest mundane, everyday (“little c”) creativity. That is, creativity by ordinary people displayed during work and leisure activities throughout everyday life. Importantly, it is not only about the product, rather “little c” creativity is also about the process.

Presenters showed remarkable creativity and resilience in face of the unexpected challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic – driven by the need within a very short and unplanned timeframe to maintain communication with their listeners to support their needs and wellbeing. The pandemic also triggered other unexpected challenges particularly with respect to technology, given the need to record offsite and adopt other new methods of broadcasting during extended lockdowns—which our participants also had to deal with in a creative fashion.

The creative value of community language radio was confirmed in the results of our personnel survey – in which participants rated most highly the ability to be creative. They also noted the fact that community language radio allowed them to feel more connected to their communities, while at the same time also developing a sense of belonging, friendships and new skills. Wellbeing effects for presenters were also found to be significant – improving mood and positivity, as well as connectedness not only to their own communities but also to the wider Australian society.

Overall, community language radio is recognised as a valuable element in supporting the creativity and wellbeing of presenters and listeners, and their communities.

## Project outcomes

### Journal Articles

- Hasnain, A., Krause, A. E., Hajek, J., Lloyd-Smith, A., & Lori, L. (2022). Broadcasting during COVID-19: Community language radio and listener wellbeing. *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 20(2), 227-247. [https://doi.org/10.1386/rjao\\_00061\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/rjao_00061_1).
- Krause, A. E., Lloyd-Smith, A., & Hajek, J. (2020). The role of community language radio for understanding creativity and wellbeing in migrant communities in Australia. *International Journal of Well-Being*, 10(5), 83-99. <https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v10i5.1495>
- Wadley, G., Krause, A., Lloyd-Smith, A. and Hajek, J. (in prep.) Community language radio and the challenge of technology during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Grant Applications

- Hajek, J., Krause, A. E., & Lloyd-Smith, A.. Listener perspectives on the role of community language radio in enhancing individual and community wellbeing in multilingual Australia. The Hoso Bunka Foundation. Japan, USD 50723 (unsuccessful)
- Hajek, J., Krause, A. E., Lloyd-Smith, A., & Lori, L. Communities on-air: The role of community language broadcasting in enhancing individual and community well-being. University of Melbourne Faculty of Arts Inter-Faculty Incubator Grant (A\$25,893).
- Krause, A. E., & De Almeida, I. Radio engagement for older adult well-being, The Hoso Bunka Foundataion. 4,906,601 JPY (under review)

### Conference papers

- Krause, A. E., Lloyd-Smith, A., & Hajek, J. (2021, June 22). *Understanding creativity and wellbeing in migrant communities by examining the role of community language radio in Australia*. Paper presented at Culture, Heath, and Wellbeing - International Conference 2021. [Virtual].
- Krause, A. E. (2022, October 26). Broadcasting during COVID-19: Community language radio and listener well-being. Presented for The University of Melbourne's Creativity and Wellbeing Hallmark Research Initiative's (CAWRI) Lunchtime Webinar Series 1. [Virtual].

### Non-traditional research outputs

- Krause, A. E. (2021). Community language radio, creativity, and wellbeing. CAWRI blog - <https://www.cawri.com.au/posts/community-language-radio-creativity-and-wellbeing>
- A number of on-air radio interviews by the researchers, including on Radio Adelaide, about wellbeing mentioning this and other research, 2022-2023
- Fact-sheet for stakeholders: *Creativity and wellbeing in community language radio* (See Appendix to this report)

## Discussion, implications and future directions

Community language radio plays a vital role in enhancing both the physical and mental wellbeing of listeners and presenters. This role was strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the need to convey critical information in linguistically and culturally appropriate ways became clear (and was widely recognised). With this in mind, a number of recommendations can be made to radio stations which broadcast in community languages in order to enable them to continue to support migrant communities. These include:

- Continuing to encourage listeners to become involved in the creation of radio programs.
- Supporting the addition of programs in new languages, as well as the continuation and expansion of existing ones.
- Working alongside community members to increase understanding of the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse listeners.
- Creating plain language instructions for remote broadcasting using common technology such as smartphones, in order to equip presenters with skills to prepare programs confidently outside the studio.

The project points to a number of directions for further research. Firstly, the results were limited by a small sample size and single case study design. A larger sample size across multiple community radio stations around Australia would enable a broader examination of trends and facilitate a focus on new and emerging community languages not represented in this case study. Secondly, a widening of the study to include commercial and private radio stations would provide valuable insight into the role of different categories of the broadcasting sector for migrant communities.

Thirdly, it may be fruitful to examine the types of problem-solving practices that are utilized by community language groups when broadcasting during emergencies (e.g. pandemics, bushfires, floods), and to frame this through the lens of creativity.

Finally, although listener perspectives were intended to be explored as part of the project, the pandemic created logistical impediments to data gathering. It is important that future research includes listeners' perspectives to further understand how presenters are able to enhance listener and community wellbeing. For instance, research could examine how the interaction between presenters and listeners (such as during talkback segments) enables listeners to feel a part of the creative process, and enhances their sense of competence, relatedness, and autonomy—thereby promoting their wellbeing.

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# Creativity and wellbeing in community language radio

## Connecting communities

*How community language radio empowers both listeners and station volunteers*

Community language radio is, for many multilingual communities, a place to express both cultural identity and the self. This representation is often unique to radio, which is an important source of traditional music, news and language for members of migrant communities. It helps listeners to maintain a connection to their cultural community, as radio often acts as a noticeboard for community events. The boundaries between presenters, producers and listeners are fluid; unlike commercial or public stations, community radio stations actively encourage listeners to get involved in the process of creating radio.

## Providing opportunities for creativity

Being involved in radio programming is an important creative outlet for volunteers. They have the opportunity to:

- determine the content of their own programs, including the format, music and radio guests.
- decide what language/s to use. Presenters often use a mix of English and their home language to cater for the varied preferences of their listeners.

(Krause et al., 2020)

## Enhancing wellbeing

Community radio has been shown to have a positive effect on the wellbeing of both listeners and presenters. It has the potential to:

- Reduce loneliness, depression and feelings of isolation
- Help listeners stay informed about public health notices
- Contribute to a sense of belonging to culture and community
- Help maintain migrants' connection to their home language

(Forde, 2009; Krause et al., 2020; Hasnain et al., 2022).

**“Community radio, including specifically community language radio, has been found to enhance the emotional, social and physical wellbeing of its listeners.”**

**(Krause et al., 2020, p. 86)**

**“Radio [is] ...‘a companion’, a direct voice speaking into listeners’ homes which enable[s] them to feel less alone”**

(Hasnain et al., 2022, p. 19)

## Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the vital role of community language radio in protecting both the physical and mental wellbeing of listeners and presenters. Going forward, stations which broadcast in community languages should continue to support migrant communities by:

- Encouraging listeners to get involved in the creation of radio programs, whether as presenters or as part of the production team.
- Fostering a supportive and discrimination-free environment for volunteers, where everyone’s voice is equally valued.
- Supporting the addition of programs in new languages, as well as the continuation and expansion of existing ones.
- Working alongside community members to increase understanding of the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse listeners.
- Creating plain language instructions for remote broadcasting using common technology such as smartphones, in order to equip presenters with skills to prepare programs confidently outside the studio.
- Staying up-to-date with emerging technologies and best presenting practices in the radio sector, which in turn will provide important and engaging learning opportunities for station volunteers.

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Krause, A., Lloyd-Smith, A., & Hajek, J. (2020). The role of community language radio for understanding creativity and wellbeing in migrant communities in Australia. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 10(5), 83-99.

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## More information

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For more information about CAWRI, visit <https://research.unimelb.edu.au/creativityandwellbeing>