

Email Bulletin #1 April 2020

Coronavirus Update

The coronavirus pandemic continues to spread dramatically across the globe causing many deaths and vast numbers of cases of infection and illness. Medical experts, epidemiologists and health practitioners are working as hard as possible to contain the virus, testing to detect the presence of the virus, treating people affected by the virus and to develop a vaccine to eliminate or minimise the effects of the virus. Governments have been exercising emergency powers to enforce measures designed to prevent transmission of the disease through close social contact and quarantine of those people who have contracted the disease or who have been in contact with people who may have the disease.

Many organisations, public institutions, schools, companies and small businesses have been locked down or severely affected by the measures taken to control the virus and it has put enormous strain on our health care system. Governments are announcing policies providing for substantial assistance to businesses other organisations and workers who have lost their jobs to protect them from the social and economic effects of the pandemic.

There have been some tentative suggestions that the rate of increase in cases in Australia has slowed. It is to be hoped that this trend continues. Nevertheless, at this stage, there is no end-point in sight.

Coronavirus Preventive Measures

The bottom line for the Board was to ensure that no-one volunteering at the station would be put at risk. In the early stages of the pandemic, the Board's initial response was to actively monitor the advice/directions from Government and authorities while ensuring that presenters:

- did not come into the station if they felt unwell,
- did not come in if they have had close contact with people who have tested positive or may be at risk (eg. recently back from overseas travel)
- practised "social distancing": - no handshaking, avoiding direct physical contact, avoid being in large groups (eg. theatres, concerts, etc)
- practised frequent handwashing with soap (especially before and after using the console, microphones, etc)
- avoid touching, rubbing, scratching your face while presenting (need to concentrate for this because it is such an unconscious habitual behaviour)

At the station we sought to ensure that:

- the microphone socks were kept clean, disinfected and replaced regularly.
- all touchable surfaces (consoles, desks, computers, keyboards) are kept clean.

(These personal measures remain as important as ever for all of us in our daily living)

As time progressed, daily government announcements were being made regarding the rapid acceleration of the virus and increasingly strict measures to enforce home isolation and shut down potential hotspots such as theatres, hotels, and many businesses where close contact occurred. In response to this rapidly emerging situation, the 3BBRFM Board decided that continuing with our live presenter broadcasting exposed the team of presenters and other volunteers to an unacceptable level of risk.

For this reason we decided to shift our broadcast on to our automated playlist system complete with sponsors messages and community service announcements and any pre-recorded programs. This "lockdown" took effect from 12 midnight 23/03/2020. What does "lockdown" mean to us? Basically the building is closed to everyone except a few (four in fact) to maintain broadcast output, programming and importantly VERY STRICT HYGIENE PROCEDURES (as per above).

The 3BBRFM Program - it's not all bad news

Reports from the Production and Programming Team (John Beauchamp, Andrew Clinkaberry and Tom McGhee)

Soon after 23 March, we were subjected to quite a few of government announcements, both State and Federal. These were put into the system for broadcast on an almost instant response. However, things from the government departments seem to change on a daily basis and so do their announcements. Some sponsors needed their announcements altered to reflect changes to their trading procedures. We sincerely hope our sponsors can continue trading through this crisis. The Board is considering options to support sponsors eg. free extensions to their sponsorship contract. There will an effect on our income. Some of the Board will be investigating our eligibility for financial assistance.

We are definitely trying to make the best of a bad situation.

Initially we relied on computer generation of our playlists. We are slowly finetuning the output and some innovative home produced programming is enhancing this! For example, the Gippsland Regional News team are using phones, make shift microphone stands and an array of accessories to create their daily broadcast. We will contact presenters (only) in a separate letter where we can help them produce one or more programs for transmission! The OTS computer is running everything at the moment, so some of the music still needs refining but we will have to do that as we go. It's a learning process for us all, and we are doing the best we can. The important thing is we are still trying to respond as best as possible to feedback from our listeners and we are trying to support presenters in their endeavours to keep broadcasting. Tom McGhee is always good at helping people, and both JB and Clinkas can throw their hats in the ring to do that as well, if needed. At this time the emphasis should be on "having a go" rather than worrying about "quality" per se.

Shows currently being produced at home by different presenters include:

- Golden Megamix (no change)
- Echoes of Italy (no change)
- WG Country (Sam Nicita resurrecting some old programs he did)
- JB has done a couple of programs
- Clinkas is producing his regular programs
- Harvey Scott has sent in Turn Up Your Radio
- Russel Blanchard has sent his "Family Time at Calvary" and "Gospel Sounds of West Gippsland"

- GRN is going to air Monday to Friday (not quite their normal schedule but we may be able to remedy that soon!)
- There is one "Jazz at Oak Street" that will play next week.

Additionally, I believe Wayne Pemberton may be experimenting. And Rod Wellard is going to give it go with "Adventures in Rhythm"

Things in the pipeline:

- Modification of the music output
- Inclusion of more presenter produced program recordings
- Remote access to the station computers to reduce site visits
- Listener requests via Google Forms

All of this means quite a bit of work for the 3 Amigos on the Production team but so far everything is going well.

Notes from the Board

The Board meeting scheduled for the 25th March was abandoned because our normal meeting venue was closed as part of the shutdown of Libraries in the Shire. As a consequence there are range of matters which the Board has not had opportunity to discuss. These include:

- Programming content policy
- Covid-19 response - policy review
- Refund/support policy for sponsors
- Arrangements for GRN delivery
- Disinfection of the station premises
- Membership approval procedure
- Presenter Training policy and procedure
- SWOT analysis, strategic plan update and policies review
- Some items of correspondence

Some of these points are important and urgent so need to be considered quickly. In the first instance we will need to conduct this discussion by email however I am investigating possible applications software for a telephone or video hook-up for the next Board meeting.

Big Thank You

A very big thank you to all our members and listeners who have continued to support the station in these trying times. We will try to be a source of comfort and entertainment when confined at or wherever you may be. Please stay with us as we try to weather this storm and come out stronger on the other side however long it takes. We continue to strive to be the radio station of choice for our members and listeners - *THE Community Radio Station of West Gippsland*

To our presenters who, while unable to fulfill their role because of the shut-down, remain committed to the station, and in particular those that are

trying to pre-record their programs so that our listeners hear real familiar voices playing their favourite music.

To our production and programming team: John Beauchamp, Andrew Clinkaberry and Tom McGhee for keeping 3BBRFM alive under difficult circumstances.

To our sponsors most of whom have continued to support the station notwithstanding the difficult times they have been experiencing.

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Please check our website: 3bbrfm.org.au

Should you have any questions or comments please contact me or use the email address: info@3bbrfm.org.au

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