

BATHURST BROADCASTERS PTY LIMITED – iPART SUBMISSION

REVIEW OF RENTAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNICATION TOWERS

Introduction

Bathurst Broadcasters first signed an agreement to locate a facility in the Ovens ranges in 1996. This fee was \$4,160. In 2004 through Government assistance to establish “Blackspot Transmitter locations” for the Bathurst radio licence area, Bathurst Broadcasters signed an additional agreement to include our new Mount Ryan facility which is located 65 kilometres from Bathurst (15 of these kilometers are unsealed roads). Our lease for both properties in 2005 was \$7,769. CPI increases were applied throughout the following years up until 2012 when our leases amounted to \$9,503.

New Occupation Permits (October 2012)

In October 2012, we were advised that in accordance with the Ipart Schedule of fees our rates would increase to \$14,097, plus GST of 10% and a 10% road maintenance levy, taking our 2013 total beyond \$17,000. Associated e-mails are included below.

History

2BS Bathurst has been the local commercial AM radio station servicing the Bathurst radio licence area for more than 75 years. In the 2000’s the Federal Government granted Bathurst Broadcasters three “blackspot fm transmitter sites” located at Blayney, Mt. Ryan, Sofala and more recently a fourth site at Oberon to cover small outlying areas. This has resulted in additional leases and electricity costs. At Blayney and Oberon as a service to local ratepayers we have agreements with the local Councils and they have co-operated with keeping lease costs at a manageable level as there is very little financial return for these services.

Mt. Ryan Facility

The 2BS broadcast facility at Mount Ryan is simply a small shipping container with one rack of equipment; a small FM transmitter (the size of a clothes dryer), an FM exciter to tune the signal to the frequency, a point to point studio transmitter link, a car radio to listen to the program, a computer and air conditioner. This is a very basic operation.



The Future

With increases such as those suggested and the potential for these to increase further it is quite likely that we will have to turn this service off. I have had many discussions with one particular resident at Mount Ryan who is extremely appreciative of our effort to provide a radio service to his remote area that receives very few signals and most of these offer terrible reception. Our 88.1 MHz Burruga frequency is the exception.

Conclusion

Much of this submission has focused on the cost of operating our “blackspot transmitter locations”. However we were shocked by the increase in the lease for our 99.3 B-Rock FM transmitter site in the Ovens Ranges near Yethome, an increase of more than 90%. Given that previous increases since 1996 have fallen into line with CPI increases.

We would respectfully request a continuation of the occupancy permit that we had prior to October last year.

Alternatively as Mt. Ryan is 65 kilometres from Bathurst and Mt. Ovens is 23 kilometres from Bathurst we believe we are on the low end of the Recommended Fee Schedule (\$7,244). In this instance we would also respectfully request that the Minister exercise his discretion in offering an explicit rebate at Mt. Ryan in the event that we are found to be an eligible user. As mentioned above there is no further benefit to our operation in running this service. We simply choose to make sure each of the listeners in our licenced area receives the radio services they are entitled to, even in remote areas.

Today I have had discussions with the Member for Bathurst, Paul Toole and he has indicated that he will also make representations on our behalf.

We appreciate your consideration on all of the above.

Yours sincerely

BATHURST BROADCASTERS PTY LIMITED

Phil Cole

GENERAL MANAGER