

## POLITICAL SPONSORSHIP

### *Background*

**On 25 June 2020 the Federal Government's Parliamentary Business Resources Regulations 2017 were amended to allow regional MPs to use their office expenses to pay for the production or placement of content for broadcast on community radio within their electorate.**

This change was made in response to the impact of COVID-19 on regional media and to enable members in regional areas to continue to communicate with their constituents.

Regional MPs will be able to broadcast sponsorship to their constituents where there is crossover between that station's licence area and the MP's electorate.

In response to the legislation change, a quorum of the 2020/2021 Committee of Management (CoM) decided by majority vote that Alpine Radio can accept paid political sponsorships at any time, subject to agreement with Alpine Radio policy and procedures around "Paid Political Sponsorships" (PPS).

PPS by the sitting member is allowed under the amended legislation in addition to regular scheduled appearances by the politician, enabling the station to be a conduit between a politician and the community.

At all times, Alpine Radio has the right and obligation to exercise editorial control over what it broadcasts and when.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of Alpine Radio's Political Sponsorship Policy ('the policy') is to ensure Alpine Radio does not enter lightly into a PPS and that the terms of political engagement are properly considered, agreed and approved.

When a politician purchases sponsorship minutes, this acknowledges that Alpine Radio, in its role as a rural/regional media platform, will help connect its listeners to what happens in federal Parliament.

### *POLICY*

1. PPS content will be included in the five minutes limit in any hour. Refer to the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 Sch 2, Part 5 clause 9 (3).
2. Every PPS announcement will be clearly "tagged". Refer to the Broadcasting Services Act Sch 2, Part 1, clause 2 (2)b.
3. There must be a bona fide financial relationship between the sponsor and the station or program.

Political sponsors will be treated no differently than any other sponsor. In line with the community broadcasting code of practice (Code 6), Alpine Radio will ensure that:

1. Sponsorship will not be a factor in determining access to broadcasting time.
2. The content and style of individual programs is not influenced by the sponsors of programs.
3. Overall programming of community broadcasting stations is not influenced by sponsors.

Further information on sponsorship requirements is available from the ACMA's document, 'Sponsorship Guidelines for Community Broadcasting Services', which can be found at [www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au).

Also see Alpine Radio's Sponsorship Policy (refer to section *Related documents and links*).

#### *Political Sponsorship Sub-committee*

A Political Sponsorship Sub-committee was convened to write the PPS policy and facilitate the review and approval process with the CoM. The Political Sponsorship Sub-committee will be responsible for reviewing the PPS policy annually, and at a point in time when required by the CoM.

#### *Political sponsorship outside elections*

1. Outside election time, a PPS voiceover must not promote the politician's policies or highlight the party's, or incumbent's, policies or what they have done for the community, but mainly be about contact details, phone numbers, websites, social media pages, a community event, etc. This is mainly so the incumbent cannot gain an advantage by having their political message broadcast.
2. Each new PPS will be assessed, and a determination made by the Political Sponsorship Sub-committee that by accepting the PPS Alpine Radio will not be in breach of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992.
3. Alpine Radio Sponsorship Officer will review the content of PPS voiceovers on a case-by-case basis, for the purpose of identifying political and election matter contained in the messaging (see Appendix What is political matter?) and obtain Political Sponsorship Sub-committee review of the content and CoM approval of each and every PPS. The requirement to obtain CoM approval does not apply to non-political sponsorships.
4. Sponsorship Officer will advise the proposed sponsor with assurance that their application for PPS will be considered by the Alpine Radio CoM and that they will receive a response within an agreed timeframe.

5. Alpine Radio reserves the right to review the policy in the light of any complaints or negative comments about and approve the script of PPS's. Should Alpine Radio receive complaints, these will be handled in terms of Alpine Radio's Complaints Policy.
6. Having a paid political sponsorship does not make Alpine Radio beholden to the payer in any way – there is to be no political interference with Alpine Radio's policies, procedures, daily working, etc. as a result of any PPS.
7. Any perceived interference or influence of Alpine Radio's policies or procedures as a result of a PPS shall result in consideration by the CoM of cancelling the sponsorship concerned.
8. Alpine Radio is not affiliated with any political party, and this policy will not change that status.

#### *Disclaimer*

1. A disclaimer will be played at least once a day, but no more than twice a day.
2. The intent of the disclaimer is to make clear that Alpine Radio is editorially independent and that any political discussion and/or paid political sponsorships, whether at election times or outside election times does not imply that Alpine Radio is affiliated with any political party.
3. The wording of the disclaimer will be written by the PPS Sub-committee in consultation with Station Manager. Station Manager is responsible for production and including in log sheets.
4. Disclaimer will not be played every time a PPS announcement is aired (e.g., if a PPS is a weather outro) as the disclaimer could be perceived as adding to the message.

#### *Political sponsorship during elections*

1. The Broadcasting Services Act 1992 and resulting Codes of Practice create a number of rules specifically for broadcasting during election periods. The exact timings and rules for elections vary from state to state. Local governments exist as part of state government legislation and the way they are structured differs from state to state.
2. During the Blackout period, broadcasters are prohibited from broadcasting state or federal election advertisements from the end of the Wednesday before the polling day until the close of the poll on polling day<sup>1</sup>. Refer to: <https://www.cbaa.org.au/article/political-matters-election-coverage>

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<sup>1</sup>This does not apply to online services and print media.

3. During election time, paid political sponsorships by all candidates can promote policies and what the person has done for the community, but cannot be used to denigrate others, or mention other people in a derogatory way.
4. See section 'Related documents and links' in this document for information about political engagement during election time.

### *Interviewing politicians*

1. Interviewing politicians outside an election is different from the style of political interviews at election time. CBAA's Political Engagement Toolkit encourages community radio stations to consider scheduled appearances of their local politician to, "...cement your station as a conduit between a politician and the community. Even occasional news interviews will help connect your listeners to what happens in state or federal parliament. Politicians may purchase sponsorship minutes to promote their activities (depending on your station's sponsorship policy)."
2. Interviewing the local member is a vehicle for them to engage with their constituents and listen to what people are concerned about, hear their views and ideas. It is also an opportunity for Alpine Radio to suggest ways that local politicians may be able to advocate for the station and the community.
3. Interviews with politicians, in particular the local member (Federal, State or Local Government) can occur with or without a PPS outside election time and are not included in the five minutes limit in any hour.

### *Presenter Procedures*

Presenters will be briefed and trained in the terms of political engagement for PPS outside and during elections. CBAA provides training materials, webinars and a political engagement toolkit, which will be used as a resource for presenter training.

1. Alpine Radio representatives, members or volunteers are not to accept gifts or gratuities from any PPS (paid political sponsor).
2. PPS announcements are not to be read directly to air by any presenter; only pre-recorded voiceovers are permitted, and these will be provided by the politician's media office and be appropriately tagged.
3. Station Manager will ensure the PPS announcement is recorded in program log sheets in the same way as non-political sponsorships.
4. Presenters under no circumstances are to introduce or elaborate on any PPS announcement or to endorse the content of the PPS announcement. Please remember not to mention anything about the sponsor announcements or embellish in any way the sponsor's message. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask the Station Manager.

*Related documents and links*

*Legislation*

- [CBAA news article: Regulation change allows regional MPs to reach constituents in their electorate via community radio, 16th July 2020](#)
- [Parliamentary Business Resources Regulations 2017](#)
- [Broadcasting Services Act 1992](#)
- [ACMA Political and election matter guidelines, May 2023](#)

*Alpine FM policies*

- [Alpine FM Sponsorship Policy](#)
- [Alpine FM Complaints Policy](#)


*CBAA Political Engagement Toolkit*

- [CBAA Political Engagement Toolkit](#)

*Sponsorship Guidelines*

- [Community Broadcasting Sponsorship Guidelines 2008 \(ACMA\)](#)
- [CBAA Codes of Practice, Code 6, Sponsorship](#)

*Policy updates*

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Version 2.0	17 August 2024	Linda Parkinson
Version 1.0 Authorised by Dick Puttyfoot, Vice President	26 March 2021	<i>Political Sponsorship Policy Sub-committee:</i> Linda Parkinson Craig Vine Christine Riches Keith Pike
<b>Authorised by (name and position):</b> Michael Ahearn, Station Manager	<b>Signature:</b> 	
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## *Appendix – What is Political Matter?*

The following extract can be found on the CBAA website at:

<https://www.cbaa.org.au/article/political-matters-election-coverage>

'Political matter' is defined very broadly in the Broadcasting Services Act (clause 1 of Schedule 2) to mean 'any political matter, including the policy launch of a political party'. Guidance as to the sort of material that may constitute political matter is provided primarily through the ACMA's decision-making, reflected in reports of political matter investigations.

What is political matter is an objective test and must be determined on a case-by-case basis. The balance can be a fine one.

The ACMA determines whether broadcast material is political matter by having regard to:

**The content of the broadcast** - Does the content convey a message about matters that are or could be the subject of public political discussion? It is not necessary for material to explicitly promote a political party, candidate or policy for it to be political matter. The content need only engage with a matter of public contention or discussion, in a meaningful way that objectively seeks to influence the audience's position with respect to that matter.

**The overall presentation of the material, including the tone, style and emphasis** - Material may be political matter if it seeks to persuade the audience to a political point of view, even if at the time there is no public proposal to change the law about the issue or if the broadcast is likely to influence the audience about a political issue, regardless of the intention of the person requesting the broadcast of the matter. It is also not essential that the approach be express, rather than indirect, for the broadcast to be political matter.

**The nature and style of accompanying audio or visual material** - Political matter may include individual components that contribute to the communication of a political message.

**The context surrounding the broadcast** - It is not necessary that there be a high level of current public discourse at a government level about a matter for it to meet the threshold of political matter. The content need only engage with a matter of public contention or discussion in a meaningful way that objectively seeks to influence the audience's position with respect to that matter.