

CRA announces evolution of GfK radio ratings to hybrid audience measurement system



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Australian metropolitan radio ratings will undergo a major evolution in response to the rapid digitisation of audio consumption in Australia, with live streaming data to be integrated into a new multimillion dollar hybrid measurement system.

The Radio360 system will see the industry transition from paper surveys to the majority use of e-diaries and integrate live streaming data to provide more information on the size and profile of audiences listening across digital platforms.

A panel of 2,000 consumers will also be asked to wear an electronic watch meter that will detect when the wearer is in listening range of a radio broadcast and will provide encrypted anonymised information, to be used to validate and ensure the streaming data is accurate and deduplicated.

Industry body Commercial Radio Australia will partner with leading global research firm GfK to roll out the new system in measured stages, commencing in late 2021 and accelerating through 2022.

CRA chair and Southern Cross Austereo CEO, Grant Blackley, said with growing audiences across digital devices including mobile phones and smart speakers, the onus was on the radio industry to meet the market with measurement that reflects the modern radio listener.

“After consultation with key industry stakeholders, in recognition of the changing behaviour of our growing digital audiences and the need to accurately capture and report on this increasing consumption, the industry has moved forward with GfK in developing a hybrid measurement system,” he said.

“Australians are increasingly consuming radio through digital platforms. More than 2.7 million people are listening to radio each week through their smartphones¹. The industry’s investment in a hybrid measurement system will allow advertisers to connect to known, targeted audiences at scale.”

The integration of streaming audiences will commence early in 2022 via server logs and the GfK Sentic Tag. Panels of 400 consumers in each of the five metro markets will also be asked to wear next-gen watch meters to calibrate, validate and ensure the streaming data is de-duplicated. Streaming data will then be integrated with broadcast audience data, accredited via Gold Standard radio analysis software, and made available as part of regular ratings reports in mid 2022.

The announcement comes as part of an ongoing review and modernisation of radio ratings being undertaken by CRA in partnership with GfK, which will place Australia at the forefront of radio measurement innovation globally.

GfK Managing Director, Australia and New Zealand, Dr Morten Boyer, said: “GfK is excited to partner with CRA to make hybrid radio audience measurement a reality following a rigorous and thorough testing and development period. Australia is one of the strongest radio markets in the world and the first to embrace this exciting approach, both from a methodological and data science perspective.”

As part of the process, the transition away from paper diaries to a stronger focus on e-diaries will continue this year. The proportion of survey respondents using an e-diary will be steadily increased from Survey 6, 2021, making the system more resilient to disruptions such as COVID, while maintaining the annual sample size at 60,000.

CRA chief executive officer Joan Warner described the changes as a necessary and natural response to an evolution in listening habits. “The overhaul of the radio ratings will future-proof the system and better capture listening everywhere, on every device. Digitisation and innovation adopted across the radio sector have removed any limitations to listening – radio is now genuinely ubiquitous, and we need a measurement system capable of capturing that,” she said.

“By putting the right technology and methodology in place, we are ensuring that we are able to do justice to the full scale and opportunity of our audience in the eyes of advertisers, now and into the future.” Warner said the CRA would continue to collaborate with key industry stakeholders throughout the transformation process.

Peter Horgan, Omnicom Group CEO and Chair of the Media Federation Australia, said the industry would welcome the hybrid system. “We welcome CRA’s move to evolve radio audience measurement to better reflect listening behaviour. As radio consumption becomes increasingly sophisticated, it makes sense that measurement follows suit. This will allow agencies to make more informed media planning and buying decisions on behalf of their clients, ultimately improving radio campaign effectiveness,” he said.

MFA chief executive officer Sophie Madden said: “The MFA fully supports this exciting direction for radio audience measurement and the goal to develop new best-practice solutions.”

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¹ Source: GfK Radio Ratings, SMBAP, Survey 5 2021, Total Radio Listeners, Cume (000), Mon-Sun 12mn-12mn, All People 10+

About Commercial Radio Australia

Commercial Radio Australia is the peak industry body representing the interests of commercial radio broadcasters throughout Australia. CRA manages industry codes and standards, regulatory and legislative matters, metropolitan and regional audience measurement surveys, revenue reporting, industry innovation including the automated trading platform RadioMATRIX, RadioApp, the Australian Podcast Ranker, consumer research, marketing and industry training and development programs. CRA also hosts the Australian Commercial Radio Awards and the Siren Creative Awards.

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