Regional radio in the spotlight in 2016

Radio broadcasters will conduct ratings surveys in at least 20 key regional centres across Australia in 2016 in a move to put regional radio in the spotlight and demonstrate radio’s power to reach audiences outside the metropolitan capitals.

Industry body Commercial Radio Australia said the NSW cities of Griffith and Dubbo will be the first regional markets to be surveyed, with research also planned for the centres of Bendigo, Shepparton, Cairns, Toowoomba, Wagga Wagga and others through the year.

CRA also announced today that four companies have been certified as Regional Gold Standard software providers, and will be able to access the data from the regional radio surveys to produce reports for stations and advertisers.

CRA chief executive officer Joan Warner said the new audience research and Regional Gold Standard would be vital in demonstrating radio’s unique reach in regional communities.

“Thirty-three percent of Australia’s population live in regional Australia and locally-produced, free-to-air commercial radio remains one of the best ways to reach these audiences,” Ms Warner said.

“There are more than 200 commercial radio stations broadcasting to regional communities and having up-to-date and consistent data on listeners will better equip them to compete for advertising revenue.

“The surveys will also provide businesses and government bodies with valuable information so they can better plan their marketing campaigns and use their advertising dollars more effectively.”

The companies that have been accredited as Regional Gold Standard software system providers are Walk Creative, Landsberry & James, Total Exact Solutions and Roy Morgan Research.

Radio stations and agencies that subscribe to the surveys data can select one of these accredited software providers to access the data using a common calculation base and standard industry terms and parameters. Other providers can also apply to be certified through CRA.

“The Regional Gold Standard process ensures that subscribers can use the software system of their choice, and provides better access and more flexibility in using the survey data,” said Ian Garland, Managing Director of Milton Data and administrator of the Gold Standard.

The audience measurement research is expected to be of strong interest to agencies and advertisers as some markets have not been officially surveyed for more than 10 years.

CRA has appointed Xtra Research as the sole provider of regional radio surveys from January 2016 for all markets except the Gold Coast, Canberra and Newcastle, which will continue to be surveyed by GfK. Under the agreement, commercial radio stations can commission Xtra to undertake surveys in conjunction with public broadcasters in their licence area.

The surveys in Griffith and Dubbo are expected to be in market in February, with other markets to follow soon after.

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Commercial Radio Australia is on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.