

RADIO TIMELINE

1923 – PUBLIC RADIO BEGINS

Radio hit the Australian airwaves in a very classy way 100 years ago, on 23 November 1923. It all began in Sydney, from the studio set up in the national weekly tabloid Smith's Weekly, owned in part by Clyde Packer (James Packer's great-grandfather), journalist Claude McKay and Joynton Smith, a racecourse owner, hotelier, President of the NRL for 18 years and the ex-Lord Mayor of Sydney.

Radio's first station transmission from call sign 2SB (2 for NSW and SB for Sydney Broadcasters Limited) featured the St Andrew's quartet with soprano Miss Deering, bassist Sydney Pick, contralto Miss Druitt, baritone Mr Saunders and Mr Thorpe cellist.

And 12 days later, 2FC came on air, playing a musical comedy. The station was started by the retail institution Farmer & Co in arrangement with The Evening News, The Sydney Morning Herald, J. C. Williamson's, J. and N. Tait and Dalgety and Co.

Stations at first transmitted to 'sealed radio sets' which people bought to listen to a single station. Listeners paid for the content by subscription, rather than advertising by the stations. In 1924 an Open system was adopted, with Class A stations raising revenue from subscriptions and some advertising and Class B stations with revenue from advertising only.

1924 - LISTENERS TUNE IN ACROSS AUSTRALIA

- In Victoria, Melbourne listeners awoke to the delights of radio. 3AR went to air on 26 January and 3LO on 13 October 1924.
- South Australia's first radio station 5C went to air on 20 November 1924.
- Western Australia's first radio station 6WF (established by Wesfarmers) went to air on 4 June 1924.
- Tasmania's first radio station 7ZL went to air on 18 December 1924, broadcasting from the Mercury's offices in Launceston. Tasmanians could also receive 3LO from Melbourne.
- Queensland's first radio station 4QG in Brisbane went to air in July 1925 and was followed a couple of weeks later by Toowoomba's 4GR.
- Canberra's first radio station 2CA went to air on 14th November 1931. It was built and operated by (AJ) Jack Ryan at the rear of his radio store.
- The Northern Territory's 5DR (Darwin Radio) went to air 11 February 1944. The station was operated by the Army to entertain troops during WWII.

1932 – THE FIRST RATINGS AND THE ABC BEGINS

Two hundred housewives were surveyed by Bill McNair, who worked at J Walter Thompson, in Australia's first ratings survey. McNair carried out six separate surveys between 1932-1936, using telephones, mailed questionnaires and house-to-house calls.

The Australian Broadcasting Company is nationalised by the Australian Broadcasting Commission Act (1932). The ABC has 12 stations while the commercial sector has 43 stations.

1934 – RADIO FOR ALL PEOPLE NO MATTER THEIR SITUATION

The Wireless House built in Glebe, Sydney, with a radio donated by Grace Brothers department store, so that the many unemployed working-class people of the area who could not afford to buy radios might sit in the park and listen to the programs of the period. It operated from 10 in the morning until 10.15 every night. It is thought to be the only building of its kind in Australia and possibly in the world.

1944 – SYDNEY RATINGS SURVEYS STARTED BY GEORGE ANDERSON

George Anderson undertook an investigation of Sydney listener habits over 14 consecutive days, with 22 interviews carried out each day over 12 different zones.

1953 – THE FIRST ON-AIR IN-AIR NATURAL DISASTER REPORT

Bruce Rogerson, from 2KO Newcastle, created history by being the first announcer to cover a major emergency on air from a plane, when he combined his radio skills and private pilot's licence to describe the devastating 1953 floods of Maitland. Bruce was an inaugural inductee into the Commercial Radio Hall of Fame in 2002.

1957 – RADIO GETS PORTABLE

Advances in technology releases radio listeners from their living rooms and kitchens, with the advent of the portable transistor radio.

1958 – TUNING INTO THE TOP 40

The Top 40 chart is launched on Sunday 2 March 1958. Imported from the US, where young people listening to jukeboxes in the day took the family transistor into their bedrooms, 2UE launches the format with a daily feature and a weekly chart. John Laws, Bob Rogers, Gary O’Callaghan and Russ Walkington were among the first top 40 DJs. The format took off across Australia.

1967 – LISTENERS BECOME A PART OF THE STORY WITH TALKBACK RADIO

Until 1967, talkback radio was illegal as the broadcast of telephone conversations was prohibited. On April 17, 1967 the restrictions were lifted and a few hours after midnight, talkback radio began in Australia. The format soon proliferated with radio listeners being part of the content for the first time, covering topics like politics, sports, religion and health. Some of the original talk personalities included Mike Walsh and Ormsby Wilkins.

1972 – A FREER MARKET FOR BROADCAST MEDIA

Household radio and television licences abolished.

1974 – FM RADIO JOINS THE AIRWAVES

FM radio starts as 2MBS Sydney commences broadcasting, playing classical music 24 hours a day.

1975-1980 – MORE AM STATIONS BROADEN LISTENER OPTIONS

The first new commercial AM Radio licenses released in more than 40 years. These included 2CC Canberra in 1975, 3MP Melbourne in 1976, 2WS Sydney in 1978 and 2 Double O Wollongong in 1979.

1980 – SIX FM STATIONS LAUNCHED

The first commercial FM radio stations are launched: Eon FM and Fox FM in Melbourne, Triple M and 2Day FM in Sydney, FM104 in Brisbane, SAFM in Adelaide and 96FM in Perth.

2009 – INNOVATION WITH DIGITAL RADIO

Digital radio is launched in Australia. Sitting alongside AM and FM as an alternative transmission platform, there are now around 200 DAB+ stations in Australia, reaching 67% of the population. 5.5 million listeners tune in weekly and DAB accounts for 20% of all radio listening. The wide variety of station choice has made DAB popular with younger Australian audiences, with 54% of 10-24 year olds listening in the last week.



2010 ONWARDS

Podcasting starts in Australia.

The podcast ranker launched in 2019.

One in 10 Australians listen to a podcast every day.

GfK becomes the official supplier for Commercial Radio & Audio of radio ratings surveys for the five major metropolitan markets in 2014.

Radio 360 launched in May 2023, providing details on streaming listening for the first time.

**COMMERCIAL RADIO IN AUSTRALIA CELEBRATING 100 YEARS
AND WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED!**

100
YEARS OF RADIO



100
YEARS OF RADIO

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