

Somali Language Radio Program

Language is not only a tool for communication and knowledge but also a fundamental attribute of cultural identity and empowerment, both for the individual and the group. Respect for the languages of persons belonging to different linguistic communities therefore is essential to peaceful cohabitation. (UNESCO, Education in a Multicultural World, 2003)

It is estimated that there are between 6,000 and 7,000 languages spoken in the world today. The importance of language, and the maintenance of migrants' mother tongues, is now widely recognised and these rights are enshrined in international law. In reality, however, there are often very few opportunities for minority language speakers to access media and information in their mother language.

Currently there are an estimated 15,000 – 20,000 Somali refugees living in Victoria. It can be difficult for Somali refugees without strong English language skills to become aware of, and connect with, the services available to them. This is due in part to the lack of Somali language information and entertainment programs easily accessible to the communities.

The 3CR Community Radio (855 AM) Somali Language Radio Program has been running for twelve years and aims to reach as much of the Somali community as possible. Abdiaziz Hersi, the show's presenter and producer, estimates that around 4000 people from across Victoria currently tune in to the program either by radio or online.

The program mixes current affairs, music, excerpts from the BBC Somali language program, youth talkback and interviews with Somali community leaders here in Melbourne. Abdiaziz, who came to Australia as a refugee fourteen years ago and has a first-hand understanding of the migrant experience in a new country, carries out all aspects of the show including research, interviews and production. Abdiaziz mixes information on a broad cross-section of issues with Somali music and entertainment.

EastWeb has funded the Somali Language Radio Program to invest in technology that enables Abdiaziz to record and produce the show digitally. This allows Abdiaziz to go into the field and interview people from the Somali community and broadcast their news and views.

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