

Broadcasting Northcliffe's Genius to the World

CRC Manager, Graham Evans, was asked to give a presentation about the CRC's Mini Broadcasting Studio to the CRC State Conference in Mandurah in June 2022. This article is based on his speech.

Amongst my generation the TV show *Northern Exposure* in the early 1990s created a fantasy of a small town with a radio station at the heart of the community. The CRC has often been approached asking if we could do similar for Northcliffe but community radio was not viable for us.

Another way small towns build identity is via local papers. However a significant proportion of under 60 year olds ignore both legacy media forms of radio and newspapers.

For many in the community **Facebook** is the new town square.

For those younger still even Facebook is a legacy platform. In late 2021 Facebook's 'daily active users' declined for the first time ever. Younger users turned to **Instagram**, **TikTok**, **Twitch**, and **YouTube**, with video and podcast content increasingly dominant.

While I was thinking about ways to help Northcliffe come to grips with these sorts of changes, I went to a conference in 2020. Futurist Gilan Perera spoke and my half-baked ideas grew into something I was ready to share with my community and my committee. So on my return I published an article advocating we create a mini podcasting and video broadcasting studio in the old Library office. The article concluded "*Northcliffe residents could broadcast their genius to the internet.*"

A month later Minister MacTiernan announced \$10,000 CRC Technology and Innovation Grants from the WA Government and the committee decided to back the studio project. We added in a grant from the Shire of Manjimup, and funds the CRC managed to save from Covid assistance. The total cash investment, not counting staff wages, has been \$25,000.

The design of the studio allows for up to three people to be recorded in discussion with one another, filmed from multiple camera angles. We have microphones and headphones, a mixing panel, green screen, sound absorbing curtains and flexible studio lighting. Software we're using includes DaVinci Resolve, OBS Studio and Audacity.

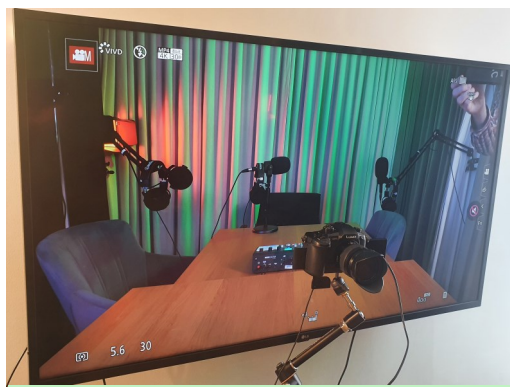
Results so Far?

While I'd love to be screening amazing footage we've published, we're not quite there yet. COVID delays hit us in a number of areas including the need to design, fund and install a silent studio ventilation system - only just completed.

During COVID we were able to deliver video conferencing, and rent out our new equipment. There are now a number of online videos from early users of the facilities and equipment.

What Did We Learn?

The project required a DIY ethic, personal time invested to research what is necessary and designing and building our own solutions rather than trusting external suppliers.



"High quality video content can be rich and engaging. We wanted to help our community share their passions in this rich and engaging way."

Mistakes in equipment and design choices were inevitable and extra budget and time was needed to tweak things and get them right. For us this included changing our video editing software, redoing studio and lighting arrangements, purchasing an additional camera, upgrading a graphics card, and installing a ventilation system.

We planned our project to create valuable outcomes, even if our broadcasting plans proved too ambitious. If we achieve nothing else we now have video-editing capabilities, a professional standard video conferencing facility, much better internet speeds, and a bank of equipment for hire and use.

Another way we insured our project from failure was making the CRC the first and primary user of our studio for the foreseeable future. By doing this we will be able to master the technical aspects of media creation, lure people in and show off the potential of the facility.

The palette of potential new activities for the CRC is large. We're planning *The Northcliffe Naturally Show*, a magazine show of local content which has become a passion project for staff and committee. We have been writing scripts, doing video vox-pops outside our General Store, and editing together video submitted by the community. This will be put together with a live music performances, interviews, discussions, and footage from gardens, kitchens and sheds of locals.

We'll be sharing the video link for our embarrassing first efforts in the next month or so.

Our hope and expectation is that this facility will be regularly used and rented out and we are building our ability to support that. There are other outcomes which are unplanned and serendipitous. We have used these blue-sky outcomes to interest our community and funding bodies including:

- community short film projects screened in our own cinema
- live streaming of local events
- YouTube content with statewide, national or global appeal
- users achieving financial success as internet broadcasters

The final message is familiar, but highly relevant in this case:

Literally the only way to get good at creating broadcast content for your community is to start badly and get better.

Graham Evans

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 10am to 5pm • Thursday, Friday 10 am to 6pm



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