



Australian
BORDER FORCE

ABF Podcast Series

A monthly podcast series featuring different elements of Australian Border Force will be developed. The series will invite engagement with ABF by the Australian public and related government agencies, promote ABF's border security arrangements and position ABF as a policy champion. The podcast series will be developed in-house and distributed via a number of suitable podcast directories and the Border.gov.au website. The series could be promoted through LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook engagement, Border Bulletin, and the revised DIBP intranet.

Five reasons to podcast

#1: Professional Development

From Walkmans to iPods to smartphones, portable music has revolutionised the world, but in today's society people are looking to take more than music with them—they're looking for ways to learn more. Podcasts provide opportunities to learn without taking extra time in their day.

#2: Trust

Websites and blogs are a great way to give valuable information to your audience, but by delivering the same content through a podcast, you're able to use your voice to bring your content to life. You have the ability to connect with your audience on a more personal level.

#3: Mobility

According to Eddison Research, nearly two-thirds of podcast consumers do most of their podcast listening on mobile devices. With a website or blog, you are asking an audience to sit down and give you 10 – 15 minutes of their time to read your posts. By turning that same material into a podcast, you've opened up your audience from people sitting down at their desk to people in the car, jogging, and working.

#4: Networking

With podcasts, you are paving the way to connecting to other professionals and opening the door to future conversations.

#5: Reach

With podcasts, you can reach people anywhere the world.

FAQ - What is a podcast?

Some people confuse a simple audio file with a podcast. A podcast is an audio file that is automatically 'delivered' to a subscriber. It is similar to subscribing to a newspaper: the paper is delivered to you, rather than you going to the shop to get it.

Although the name was initially a combination of iPod (the hand-held digital music player made by Apple) and broadcast, podcasts can now be played on any computer, including smart phones and tablets.

Podcasting is known as 'push' technology, because once subscribed to an RSS feed, the content is 'pushed' to the user. For example, any new podcast from Emergency Management Australia (EMA) is automatically offered once the user subscribes to an initial EMA podcast. The file can be played on a computer or smart device or copied to an iPod or other digital audio player.

This is different to 'pull' technology, which requires the user to manually stream or download a file. Most podcast producers will, along with their RSS feed, have their program available to be played or downloaded directly from a webpage. In this format, they are not true podcasts, because the user manually retrieves the file.

Podcasting is a really exciting medium for the ABF. It will allow us to tell the real story of our work in new and interesting ways.

ABF podcasting protocols and guidelines

- Podcast interviews must not be "spin". They have to be balanced, newsy and interesting.
- They must be presented professionally and presented by someone with a good voice who speaks clearly and sounds interesting (radio broadcaster or television journalist experience preferred). They must feature clear, plain, interesting language.
- They must invite a two-way conversation around those stories on the full range of social media platforms.
- ABF podcasts should be about border security/law enforcement, and to maintain credibility in the format, it is essential to stick to talking about it in an accessible manner.
- The stories should not just be about the organisation's successes, but also about its challenges and struggles.

Producing an audio file

Equipment:

One of the attractions of podcasting is that it is much easier than conventional broadcasting. Anyone with a microphone, computer, recording device and an editing programme can podcast. Whether they put together a listenable podcast or not is another matter.

Recording:

There are several very good recording devices, including smartphones, which will allow you to record interviews in the field.

Software:

DIBP Production and Design retain suitable audio editing software for the manufacture of podcasts.

The end product should be produced in the MP3 format, and include descriptive ID3 tags such as episode number, track name and cover art.

What makes a podcast listenable?

Ever listened to a radio programme and started drifting off, thinking about what you're going to have for dinner? It's because it's boring. Here's how to avoid boring your audience to death.

Don't fall into the "worthy but dull" trap. Don't think "well the audience SHOULD listen to this". Avoid the "should" factor. The audience must WANT to listen. It's our responsibility to make it interesting.

What's boring?

- Long repetitive answers.
- Answers that start with "well it's a three part answer really"
- Dull subjects which just don't interest the audience.

Before you put together a podcast interview, be ruthless about it. Ask yourself "why this story, and what makes it relevant now?" In other words, is it newsworthy? It needs to have a hook, an angle.

Keep your audience in mind at all times

It's a common mistake made by even the huge conglomerates to put together a podcast revolving around the company. Our podcast interviews should be aimed squarely at the audience.

Make your story understandable

An experienced radio journalist will tell you that stories are much easier to tell if people can relate to them. So for example, you can do a very worthy story about counterfeit goods, but people may start turning off if it's too dull. It's best to relate the issue to people's lives, for example do a story on "how counterfeit goods can be harmful", because people want to know how counterfeit goods will affect their lives.

Podcast quality is important

It is essential that every podcast produced by the ABF is a quality product. Listeners expect a certain level of professionalism, and we must live up to this.

So how do you define "quality"? For a start, every podcast should be easy to listen to. The audio levels should be acceptable. Audio levels mean the recording level. If you record someone at too low a level, it can be very hard to hear the interviewee. And if the level is too high, the audio will be distorted and sound terrible.

Too many cadet journalists make the mistake of saying "it'll be right, no one will notice" but listeners DO notice, and bad levels are the obvious sign of an amateur. Bad levels and poor audio mean that your audience will assume you don't know what you're doing and they won't come back.

How long should an interview be?

Three to five minutes is optimal.

Why can't we just record an SES speech at a lecture series and put it up as a podcast?

No offence to the SES, but a 40 minute speech from a lectern can be very dull in a podcast format. There are several reasons for this. The speech was "designed" and written for the audience in the lecture room. It was probably accompanied by PowerPoint slides. The audio is likely to be "flat" in a podcast format. It would be much better to interview the SES after they step down from the lectern.

How long should the podcast be?

The ABF podcast will cover the news and issues relating to border security and the organisation, so should be long enough to serve its purpose, but not so long that we bore or lose listeners. In general, a 20-30 minute show is a good length. ABF podcast listeners might listen to a lot of podcasts. If you want the ABF podcast to be one that they listen to regularly, then we don't want to take up more of their time than we need to.

Proposed segment structure:

1. Intro Theme Song
2. Welcome
3. Announcements
4. First Interview
5. Second Interview
6. Third Interview
8. Final Comments
9. Outro Music

What should the ABF podcast be about?

The podcast must be about the ABF and our mission. No matter what the format, the presenter, the style, the common denominator must be border security. It is essential that the podcasts aren't propaganda tools or a personal vehicle or management vehicle. Podcasts aren't a way to "spin" our message, they are a window into the ABF, and should be treated with respect.

Language

Use normal words. Anything that is too technical or too "management speak" just won't work.

Don't write too formally. Avoid any talk of "stakeholders" and "synergies"! It is essential that the language used in podcasting is simple and straightforward. A script that is written (and approved) by committees always sounds that way.

Bottom line is: don't create a podcast interview by committee. There's nothing worse than a podcast interview that has clearly been edited within an inch of its life. If you find various stakeholders are trying to dissect a podcast story, it's best not to go ahead.

It is best not to rehearse or give the interviewee the questions before hand; your interview will sound too strained and formal. Give your interviewee a general sense of what you want to discuss, do the interview and see what happens.

Target audiences

- DIBP

- Australian community
- Educational institutions and academia
- Local governments
- Media
- Ministers
- Non-government organisations
- Other Australian government agencies
- Private sector organisations
- International governments
- State and Territory governments
- Technical experts and practitioners

ABF Podcast series costs	
Podcast hosting	Approx. \$12 a month for business account–unlimited storage and bandwidth, stats.
Digital Recorder	Smartphone (no cost)
Podcasting editing Software	Freeware (no cost)
Audio Royalties	Royalty free music (no cost)
Total cost of podcast production: \$12.00 per episode	

How long does it take to create a well-produced podcast?

The ABF podcast will be a quality product and require a degree of dedicated resourcing. To be successful, it is essential we have access to appropriately skilled staff capable of:

- Script writing
- Narrating
- Researching
- Identifying talent
- Interviewing
- Editing
- Post production
- Clearances
- Uploading
- Social media promotion

Once we commit, it's vital to have a regular schedule for the posting of new podcasts to maintain listener loyalty. They will know when to expect from us and look forward to our new shows.

Other noteworthy Australian Government podcasts include:

- Emergency Management Australia (AGD)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Department of Communications and the Arts



Summary

Podcasts are finally positioned to achieve mainstream penetration, mostly because of mobile phone adoption and technologies that have lowered the barrier to entry. Podcasting offers a level of engagement with audiences that is incomparable with other digital media; it thus presents a remarkable opportunity for the ABF to cultivate and build strong audience relationships.