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DAB+ digital radio reaches 3.5m listeners

DAB+ digital radio is continuing to grow in popularity, gaining 168,000 listeners to reach 3.52 million in the five metropolitan capital cities, according to the latest digital radio report by GfK, released today.

Peak industry body Commercial Radio Australia said the numbers were helped by solid growth in in-car listening, with another 91,900 new vehicles sold with DAB+ installed in the first quarter of 2016.

“Over 30% of new cars sold in the 12 months ending March were fitted with DAB+ digital radio, and the good news is we are now seeing digital radio available in more mass market cars and not just in the luxury end of the market,” said Joan Warner, chief executive officer of CRA.

Honda has become the 28th car brand to support digital radio in Australia, including DAB+ for the first time in the new Honda Civic released in mid June.

The total number of vehicles sold to date in Australia with DAB+ radio has now reached 553,000.

Honda Australia Director Stephen Collins said: “We included digital radio in the new Honda Civic because car buyers increasingly expect higher quality entertainment choices in the car, and we felt the superior sound quality and extra choice of stations would appeal to our market.”

Ms Warner said she expected listeners would continue to upgrade from analogue to DAB+ digital radio because of the better audio quality, the ease of use and the fact digital radio was now being integrated into more Hi-Fi and home theatre systems.

The GfK report showed that 26.3% of Australians had listened to radio via a DAB+ digital radio in the first three radio survey periods of the year. Of these, 2.62 million had tuned into DAB+ simulcasts of AM and FM stations and 1.42 million had listened to digital-only stations.

Digital radio was most popular in Melbourne, where 1.17 million people or 27.5% of the population tuned in, followed by Sydney with 1.11 million listeners, or 25.8% of the population.

The top five highest-rating commercial DAB+ only stations during the period were: Coles Radio, Triple M Classic Rock, Edge Digital, Buddha and The 80s iHeartRadio (formerly Pure Gold 80s).

“We’re seeing broadcasters try new formats and explore new business models, and that’s good for innovation and good for listeners,” Ms Warner said.

Recent developments include the launch of a Greek-language station in Melbourne called Rythmos, Southern Cross Austereo’s launch of two new stations - Oldskool Radio and Easy Radio; and the announcement that it will partner with the Seven Network to create a new DAB+ pop-up station for the Olympic Games called 7 Rio Live, which will run live audio simulcast during the event.

Glenn Wheatley will also launch EON Sports Radio on DAB+ in July. Australia’s first 24/7 digital sports radio network, EON will broadcast major sports such as the A League and NBL, plus will be the exclusive Australian audio broadcaster of the English Premier League. The station will be available in the five capital city markets.

GfK releases Digital Radio reports four times each year. The latest report is based on average results recorded across GfK’s three most recent radio ratings surveys – Surveys 1-3, 2016. The report can be found [here](#).

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