

**Submission regarding the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment
(Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015**

By Philip Brennan,

30 January 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. The recent sad experience of Northern Territory (NT) residents confirms that the ABC Charter needs to be strengthened in order to protect the interests of rural and remote populations across Australia.

Tomorrow, 31 January 2017, the ABC will close down the NT's shortwave service. This closedown has been undertaken without prior consultation with people affected by this decision. The ABC claims audience numbers are small and the service is "outdated". This is despite the ABC undertaking no survey of audience numbers and shortwave remaining the cheapest and most effective technology for receiving ABC radio broadcasts across the outback.

The ABC has offered a variety of other alternative technological solutions to NT people. Most of these rely upon a decent internet connection or a satellite connection. Internet connections in the NT bush are notoriously unreliable and a VAST satellite system costs a minimum of \$500. A shortwave radio can be purchased for as little as \$50 and can be used anywhere at anytime. The ABC cannot offer an alternative mobile technology to replace the shortwave service.

The loss of this service will mean that isolated NT rural people will lose a vital link to the outside world. This is not just in relation to emergency broadcast information, which is vital for station people, Indigenous rangers and travelers, but also the important social links provided by ABC radio.

The most disturbing part of this sorry episode has been the absolute intransigence of ABC management and its refusal to listen to the concerns of the NT population. There have been numerous representations by NT politicians (of all parties) to the Board and the Managing Director and a well publicised campaign among members of the public. However, ABC management has refused to change its position. The Charter needs to ensure that people in rural and remote locations are guaranteed ABC services. It is the "national" broadcaster after all.

Philip Brennan