

Ms Christine McDonald

Secretary

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms McDonald

I have just been speaking live on ABC Radio Alice Springs about the need for shortwave radio to continue broadcasting. It is very nerve-wracking going on air but I feel that this is just another instance where bush people are losing out, and I needed to have the ABC hear my voice.

I have since discovered that you are conducting an inquiry into the issue, and am therefore writing to you to reiterate my points.

I can see where the ABC is coming from, shortwave radio is mostly listened to on the old portable shortwave sets. Today's cars don't all receive shortwave. HOWEVER, we are at Gemtree, an outback caravan park in Central Australia, and our customers, mostly grey nomads, listen to portable radios as they travel around Australia. There are thousands of nomads on the road, some full time. AM radio is not reliable.

Here at Gemtree we do receive AM radio broadcasts, but not all the time. It depends on the weather and the time of day. Sometimes it is better on a portable transistor shortwave radio. Good old fashioned radios WORK in the bush!

What about the people in stockcamps on isolated cattle stations? What about my Dad or my brother, working on bulldozers, camped in the middle of nowhere in a swag under the stars? What about those crossing the Plenty Highway, the Gibb River Road, the Tanami, the Outback Way?

Once the government COMPLETES the mobile blackspot program, once the NBN Actually WORKS for people in the bush, once we have access to telecommunication EVERYWHERE, then decisions like this could be made... perhaps.

Terminating the shortwave broadcast is a grossly premature move. Australia is a dinosaur when it comes to telecommunications. We need this service to fill in the blanks. We lost the Tennant Creek Radar, what else will we lose? Taking, taking, taking from people in the bush.

ABC said they only received twenty official complaints, but each complaint may have represented hundreds of people. Aussies (particularly outback Aussies) take their time to respond - like buying ball tickets, they wait until the very last minute! They wait until the panic sets in before they react. We need to lodge our voices on the record so the ABC can have the real data. Then they can accurately identify our point of need. To be held accountable, the ABC needs numbers to crunch. We need to show them our cards, make them listen and make them hear!

Thank you for the chance to be heard.

Kate McMaster

Gemtree Caravan Park

(no mobile number because it doesn't work out here)