

Ms Christine McDonald

Secretary

Senate Standing Committee on Environment & Communications

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms McDonald

While I totally support the points raised by Minister Vowles on this subject, I would like to add to them.

Firstly, the shortwave broadcast service is utilised by many more folk in remote areas than just the Northern Territory. I personally have benefitted from it all through the Little & Great Sandy Deserts in WA, the Great Victoria Desert in SA/WA, and the Simpson Desert in NT/Qld, most importantly to obtain weather reports. World and Local news was also appreciated, as was the broad range of local programs. On one occasion we were six weeks straight where this service was our only reliable source of up to date information, other than a time signal. I'm sure there are plenty of others who could better this.

On another occasion I was working alone approx. 10 days on/4 off for 12 months in not quite as remote areas of the NT, again the SW broadcast was my only source of reliable information, and helped keep me sane as well!

I have spoken to numerous folk who have had similar experiences, all over Australia and offshore, who listened in to the ABC Shortwave service broadcast from the NT Centres, as their only reliable source of critical information. Some of these folk are bushwalking; on camels or pushbikes; in a small or large fishing or pleasure boat, or in remote and sometimes lonely workplaces - not just cattle stations or communities, but also prospectors, miners, oil rigs, roadtrains, tourists, modern day swaggies, you name it. They will all be let down if this deplorable decision is allowed to go ahead

In the early nineties I spent three years living on a boat in Port Adelaide SA, and would every morning tune in to the Alice Springs SW Broadcast of the breakfast program to find out what was going on "at home".

Secondly, it is quite flippant to be told by some ABC spokesman that "Shortwave is (100 yr) old technology" and therefore past its use-by date"! Short Wave radio signals have been around since the big bang, and will be for a long time to come. The technology we employ to utilise this part of the spectrum has always been the latest technology of the day, if it were valves and pedal power in boxes the size of a couple of eskies, as my mother operated, or the beautiful transistorised Sony multiband receiver that would slip into my shirt pocket, or the digital SW receivers of today. The significant point here is that Short Wave transmission is a very reliable "platform" that punches through all sort of weather phenomena, and hence has been utilised for so long, and will be for a long time in the future, hopefully by the ABC as well.

(Our family business still utilises Short Wave two way radios for long (and not so long) distance communications, only using far more fickle and expensive Sat Phones to ask home to "get on the radio".)

Thirdly, every morning not long before daylight, I hear the ABC AM radio tell us how the ABC is "Our Emergency Broadcaster". If the SW broadcast service is axed as proposed, for many many Australians, the ABC won't be anything.

Lastly, I don't think those that made this decision have any concept of the real world the other side of the Great Dividing Range. I fail to see how they could possibly possess any empathy for the substantial number of Australians who live, work, play and just exist in the rest of Australia.

Sincerely

Rod Cramer