



NORTHERN TERRITORY CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION INC.

Advancing and protecting the interests of cattle producers in the Northern Territory

Member - National Farmers' Federation & Cattle Council of Australia

10 January 2017

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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

Dear Secretary,

Inquiries into the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Measures) Bill 2017

The Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association (NTCA) is the peak body representing, promoting and protecting the interests of Northern Territory cattle producers. As such, the NTCA actively participates in rural, regional and remote Australian environments when engaging with and advocating on behalf of its members.

The NTCA is a firm believer in the roles played by rural, regional and remote Australians, and that those roles are currently under-represented and misunderstood, and, at times, misrepresented in the Australian media landscape.

Our members live and work in areas not serviced by mobile coverage and rely on radio or satellite transmissions for news, weather, current affairs and emergency broadcasting. While our local ABC stations and staff are highly valued by our members, Sydney-based decisions and attitudes by the national broadcaster have shown little understanding or empathy of our situation, and have had severely negative impacts on our business and quality of life over recent years. Our submissions to the national broadcaster have been met with disinterest at best, and derision in real terms.

The removal of the shortwave radio service in the Northern Territory and elsewhere has effectively alienated listeners in large swathes of remote Australia, and the urgent need to upgrade AM coverage to replace it is essential if the ABC is to be considered a national broadcaster. The NTCA made a thorough and detailed submission to the Senate Inquiry on the shortwave issue.

The Bill's intention to amend the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) Charter to include senses of geographic, regional and rural identities when creating content and broadcast coverage is positive, will enhance the feeling of diversity, and promote greater understanding and acceptance of rural and regional life within the national psyche. Changing the requirements of the composition of the ABC Board such that two non-executive Directors must be significantly involved with rural and regional Australia is appropriate and justifiable, and in keeping with the Bill's theme of augmenting the ABC's purview to better provide for rural and regional Australia. However, the NTCA submits that one of the two proposed Directors should be specifically from "remote" Australia. Given the definition of "regional" in statistical terms the majority of the continent could still be unrepresented under the proposed amendment.

The ABC has the potential to be a stronger and better-informed organisation as a consequence of the proposed Rural and Regional Measures Bill. Northern Territory pastoralists, and indeed Australia as a whole, will benefit from an



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improved ABC with a geographically diverse and regionally representative Board, which has a deeper understanding of the perspectives, views and needs of rural and regional Australia.

The Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association supports the Bill because of its potential to enhance the ABC for the benefit of the NTCA membership, but submits that one of the two Directors should be from remote Australia.

Yours sincerely,