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

February 7, 2017

**RE: Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment
(Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015**

Dear Committee

Roper Gulf Regional Council represents about 7100 residents in a Local Government Area that covers 186,000 square kilometres of some of the remotest geography in the Northern Territory.

Like many organisations, the Council was extremely disappointed by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) recent termination of its shortwave radio service and apparent furthering disinterest in meeting the needs of those living outside of metropolitan areas.

The decision to turn off the shortwave radio service represents another blow for the Council's residents and staff, who already have to contend with substandard telecommunications options like hundreds of kilometres of radio and mobile telephone black spots, and appallingly slow internet speeds.

Traditional radio services are not available in much of the Roper Gulf region, so there was a reliance on the shortwave radio service to communicate essential emergency management information to those living in communities and outstations subject to flooding and cyclones.

Without the availability of the shortwave radio service, many living and working in the Council's Local Government Area now have limited real-time access to critical information on natural disasters, road conditions and disruptions to electricity supply.

It is a situation urban Australians would neither find themselves in nor tolerate, yet one their rural and regional counterparts have been forced to accept with minimal consultation as the ABC turns its back on providing an equality of service and shows its hand that it is not planning for a long-term future outside capital cities and regional hubs.

In its charter, the ABC states one of its key functions is to "provide within Australia innovative and comprehensive broadcasting services of a high standard".

By terminating its shortwave radio service and removing access to reliable broadcasting for so many Australians, the ABC has failed to achieve this core function of its operation.

On behalf of the Council, I implore the Committee to give serious consideration to the ramifications the ABC's decision to abandon its shortwave radio service will have on the lives and safety of rural and regional Australians, including Territorians living in some of the most isolated parts of the country.

Yours sincerely

Tony Jack
Mayor
Roper Gulf Regional Council