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Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
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The capacity of communication networks and emergency warning systems to deal with emergencies and natural disasters.

With the Committee to hold two days of hearings into the above, having read through the submissions lodged, the quality of detail within them is worthy of further comment but the evidence that will be provided to the Committee will also be interesting.

However, one could note some disappointment that the Australian Communications and Media Authority ACMA hasn't lodged a submission as per the Committee's website.

The Authority is the "regulator" of the Radio Spectrum and yet, it has allowed the operations of the UHF Citizen's Band Radio Service CBRS and the VHF Marine Service to be of a lesser standard and where VHF Marine Channels are under severe pressure and of the International Distress Channel 16.

I have mentioned where some channels within the CBRS UHF allocation were used by the Queensland Police Service as their own network was under some strain. However, I'm also aware of the Queensland Volunteer Marine Rescue Service being involved with flood relief here in Brisbane and from this, raises the possible threat to those VHF Marine channels that they operate on including the Brisbane Water Police..

From this, it lends support to my concerns re the "mounting" problems for operators of VHF Marine radio and the CBRS -UHF. The ACMA and the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy have allowed both of these Services to reach the stage where "additional" resources and "enforcement" is now required.

The Federal Government with its "obsession" with the roll-out of the Digital TV Service and the National Broadband Network, must also shoulder a great deal of blame for it's lack of funding to the Australian Communications and Media Authority via the DBCDE but more could be said on this.

Since this Committee was given some very interesting Terms of Reference by the Senate, this country has again seen Severe Weather taking place and possibly more within the next 48/72 hours on the Eastern Seaboard via another East Coast Low off the southern part of NSW. Western Australia, Tasmania and South Australia have also experienced the same. Tasmania has in place at present various warnings and they're looking at possibly a further 200mm over the next couple of days.

The Australian Broadcasting Commission ABC has again activated its Emergency Radio Service and on this item, it will be interesting to read/hear of what the Commission's response will be before the Committee via its additional evidence.

Social sites such as the Twitter and Facebook have provided in recent months, some excellent coverage and the NSW & Qld Police Services are using both and the providing of information relating to road accidents including fires.

Technology has advanced rapidly since 1996 but taking into account the submissions lodged to the Committee, one must note the silence from government and Energy Suppliers.

There's much more that I could provide via my submission but again, what is the Australian Communications and Media Authority going to do to remove the "non-emergency" traffic taking place on the UHF CBRS Emergency Channels –where repeaters are in use and the mounting threat to the operation of the VHF Marine, International Distress Channel -16.

Even today, I'm aware of problems across these channels and the operation of the Authority via its obligations under the Radio Communications Act 1992 and as amended will need to be further considered by the Senate and this Committee or other during Senate Estimates.

As Emergency Communications is a major issue and needs ongoing consideration, I would request of the members who make up this Committee to consider re-opening its submission period and; b) seeking an extension of time before the Senate receives the Report from this Committee.

David Tones.