

Dear Sen. Georgia and a Christine McDonald

Thank you for your reply

Can I add this last piece of information from the 2015-2017 Senate Inquiry.

It could make the Senators job a lot easier if the April 2017 Final Report into EMERGENCY BROADCASTING was taken into account. To this date there has been no response by the ABC to the Numeralla/ Monaro (Snowy Monaro Regional Council)situation, which still exist.

The previous 5 submission are still valid today in regard to Emergency broadcast over the Snowy Monaro Regional Council areas (THE MONARO)

Also Telstra has Co- located a new Mobile Phone Base Station on an NBN tower on opposition, to cover the Numeralla Village ONLY, 200 residents. The preferred local community site of HANGMAN Peak View 2630 was ignored.

Hangman would have given Mobile Phone Coverage for 30-40 Km, including the whole of the Numeralla Region, 200,000 acres plus a the whole of Cooma North where they receive only a 1 bar Mobile Phone reception.

This is contrary to Prof. Waller opinion and the Dean Lynch submission. In the 2017 Final report.

Yours truly

Brian Curzon

Emergency broadcasting services

2.77 The committee's interim report highlighted the importance of the ABC during emergencies and disasters; communities turn to the ABC to provide accurate and timely information as events unfold and there is a prevailing community view that the ABC is the national emergency broadcaster.[\[93\]](#)

2.78 The ABC also plays a role in building community resilience following emergencies and disasters. Professor Waller commented:

In times of emergency, as communities, media has a really important role to play in bringing us together, and that is about more than information; that is about the community-building capacity of local ABC in particular...That is a very important role that the ABC plays, not just during disasters but at all times, and we are very keen to see that upheld.[\[94\]](#)

2.79 However, submitters argued that the ABC's role during emergencies has been compromised through the decrease in some local services, including the termination of shortwave transmission in the Northern Territory. Where available, some communities are now relying on broadcasts from metropolitan or larger regional centres. As a consequence, sometimes vital information is not received or audiences have difficulty in understanding information as towns and place names are pronounced incorrectly.[\[95\]](#)

2.80 **Another matter highlighted in the evidence was the impact of blackspots for both mobile and radio transmissions. It was argued that radio blackspots compromise emergency broadcasting capabilities. The committee received evidence about blackspots from Gippsland in Victoria and the Monaro and Numeralla areas in New South Wales and areas in the Northern Territory which had received shortwave broadcasts.[\[96\]](#)**

2.81 **It was also noted that there is poor mobile coverage in some rural and regional areas, thereby increasing the importance of radio broadcasts of emergency**

information.^[97] **The Snowy Monaro Regional Council**, for example, commented that there is neither mobile phone coverage nor ABC radio reception over most of the area.^[98] The Monaro is a very large region with Professor Waller commenting that 'it really brings home to you how important this issue is to big areas of the country. We are not talking about tiny little communities or small areas.'^[99]

2.82 Given the importance of emergency broadcasting, some witnesses supported an amendment to the Charter to recognise the ABC's role as emergency service provider.^[100] Ms Sinddy Ealy, CPSU, commented that if emergency broadcasting was seen as a role of the ABC and therefore included in the Charter, it would be necessary to ensure that funding is available to deliver that service.^[101]

2.83 While noting that there is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for emergency broadcasting, ABC Friends commented that this activity could well be included in the Charter.^[102]

The ABC's response to issues raised in evidence

2.84 The ABC's submission provided comment on its role in times of emergency and stress and stated that the ABC 'provides a vital connection between residents and authorities'.^[103] In addition, in its submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts inquiry into broadcasting, online content and live production to rural and regional Australia, the ABC noted that it trains employees in emergency broadcasting. ABC staff also monitor the environment and work alongside emergency agencies to refine and develop communication systems. **It is the only radio broadcaster in rural and regional Australia undertaking this task. The ABC concluded that emergency broadcasting is 'an essential part of the Corporation's commitment to servicing rural and regional Australians'** and has a long history of assisting emergency agencies by broadcasting education material.^[104]

2.85 In an answer to a question on notice, the ABC added:

The ABC is committed to providing accurate and timely information to its audiences across appropriate platforms, including ABC Local Radio and ABC News 24 television during emergency events. The ABC is an emergency broadcaster in all Australian states and territories, but does not regard itself as the exclusive broadcaster of emergency information.^[105]

2.86 Mrs Reynolds noted that the ABC has a number of MOUs across the country with different emergency services. In relation to the evidence given about the ABC's role as an emergency broadcaster at the committee's estimates hearing on 28 February 2017, Mrs Reynolds commented:

I think there is some confusion arising out of estimates last week about whether we are an emergency service broadcaster. Again I sit back, look at that and say: 'We do emergency broadcasting. You know we do it all the time.' We are currently covering Cyclone Blanche...and we covered Cyclone Yvette in Darwin last year. We have covered emergencies right across the country.^[106]

2.87 **In relation to concerns about blackspots, Mrs Reynolds commented that there are vast parts of the country that do not receive transmissions because of the difficult topography. Mrs Reynolds went on to comment:**

We cannot provide an AM-FM service to every Australian. We are faced with some tough decisions about how we are going to fund all of the services that audiences are demanding; this is where the decision came in. I totally understand. As I said, I am not a Northern Territorian and I am not a cattleman, so I do not pretend to know exactly how they live their lives. I just know that we have pockets that we cannot broadcast to.^[107]

2.88 The ABC also responded to the suggestion that an obligation to be the emergency broadcaster should be contained in the Charter. Mrs Reynolds did not support this approach and stated that emergency broadcasting is carried out by the ABC as part of its core obligation to communities:

I do not think it needs to be written into the charter. The charter could be absolutely every single possible thing that we do. But I think it is there as a vital service, as an obligation

and as a personal commitment from the teams who are working on the ground. We are not the only ones who provide that. Commercial operators now provide around the country emergency broadcasting.[\[108\]](#)

2.89 Mrs Reynolds went on to emphasise that staff of the Regional Division were committed to providing services to their communities, including during emergencies.[\[109\]](#)

Committee comment

2.90 The evidence received by the committee clearly indicates that there are significant community expectations that the ABC will provide information and warnings during emergency situations. Indeed, many submitters consider that the ABC is the national emergency broadcaster and view this service as being a core function of the ABC.

2.91 Submitters considered that in many rural and regional areas the ABC is not undertaking this role appropriately. The committee received evidence that emergency information is sometimes not adequate with submitters particularly concerned that emergency information is being broadcast from major centres with an emphasis on cross-state emergency broadcasts. This has resulted in intermittent references to local events, mispronunciation of names, lack of timely alerts and lack of relevant information critical to communities.

2.92 **The committee considers that, given the importance of the ABC as an emergency broadcaster and community expectations, this role should be consolidated and formalised**