

Secretary:

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATIONS TRANSPORT AND
THE ARTS

SOUND OF THE SHIRE
2SSR - FM
99.7 STEREO

House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Communications,
Transport and the Arts

Submission No: 173

Date Received: 21/11/00

Secretary: Janet Holmes

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30th October 2000

House of Representatives Communications
Transport & the Arts Committee
Attention: Ms Janet Holmes

**Submission to Inquiry into radio services in non-metropolitan
Australia**

Dear Ms Holmes,

2SSR FM is a submetropolitan station whose coverage area comprises the second largest local government area in NSW.

Our Shire is characterised by poor public transport, and areas that are prone to flooding, bush fires and other potential disasters along our beaches and around Botany Bay. Isolated communities can only benefit from the services provided by local radio.

Over the past decade there has been a proliferation in commercial broadcast services in the metropolitan area, also a steady growth in the number of community stations receiving licences.

When 2SSR was licenced in 1992, there were around 100 licenced local stations. This number has since expanded to approximately 200, and could increase in the foreseeable future to 300.

At the same time as commercial stations have become dominant, overall funding for local broadcast services has remained fairly static. In fact despite the fact that costs of broadcasting have increased, the level of funding has decreased in real terms since 1996, which would have a very negative impact on non-metropolitan community stations as well as metropolitan ones.

With an increasing trend toward overseas ownership such as the DailyMirror Group, increased pressure from commercial stations and a decreasing funding base relevant to the number of local stations that need some core funding, the very existence of many of these local stations is likely to be threatened.

Local stations exist to serve their respective local communities. They contribute to the principle of diversity through fostering local talent, promoting independent music and the arts, and by responding to the needs of their communities, strengthening communities by their support.

While most stations obtain the major part of their income from sponsorship and fundraising, there is a need to maintain an adequate source of base funding for the community sector.

If this funding is not available there is a temptation for stations to survive by means such as riding on the coat-tails of commercial broadcast services, which would be an abrogation of their "charter". This would be particularly disappointing in rural areas where it is crucial for local stations and their communities to control the content and identity of local broadcasting.

We therefore recommend that the committee examine the need for an increase in base funding for local broadcasters consistent with the number of licenced stations.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Capare
Administration Manager

M. Capare

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