

**Holmes, Janet (REPS)**

**From:** Gary McQuade [g.mcquade@cfa.vic.gov.au]  
**Sent:** Friday, 9 February 2001 1:45 PM  
**To:** janet.holmes.reps@aph.gov.au  
**Subject:** CFA's Broadcast Inquiry submission

Hello Janet,

Further to your letter of 5 Feb, following is an electronic version of CFA's original submission to this Inquiry.

As per your instructions, I wish to point out that your Committee already has a hard copy of this submission.

Thank you very much for the opportunity of presenting CFA's case to this vital inquiry.

Kind Regards,

Gary McQuade

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26 October 2000

Dear Committee Secretary

RE: Radio Industry Inquiry

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) welcomes the opportunity to present a submission to this inquiry about an issue, which we regard as critical to community safety.

Official CFA policy recognises the media as an essential service in all emergencies.

CFA depends heavily on country radio to notify the general public about emergencies in their local area, such as major bushfires, gas leaks, chemical spills, road accidents and rescues.

Radio has played a key role in providing pre-summer safety messages and on extreme fire danger days, the notification of Total Fire Ban declarations. No other media has the flexibility to reach the local community as quickly as radio.

In our experience, getting this vital information to the public via local radio is often difficult if not impossible because of networking of local radio stations or automation. This prevents the inclusion of live, localised information at short notice.

From CFA's perspective, it is imperative that local radio stations announce Total Fire Ban declarations because an individual's failure to carry out this directive could result in fines, a jail sentence and the potential loss of life.

CFA has already seen a major reduction in radio services across Victoria, especially in regional areas where many radio stations are automated or networked from other stations, often from Sydney. It is common for the radio station's phones to ring out because no staff are on the premises. Other times, station personnel are not on-air broadcasters and lack the experience and skills necessary to deal with emergency information.

We believe this trend poses a great public safety risk. Not only is it difficult to alert a particular community to an emergency but the ongoing supply of vital information during a crisis is also inhibited.

As a consequence CFA is very concerned about the substantial reduction in the quality and quantity of regional radio services in Victoria and would welcome the opportunity to present these concerns in person to your inquiry should this meet with the committee's approval.

Yours sincerely

Donna Martin  
Manager,  
CFA Corporate Communications