



Bruce Billson MP

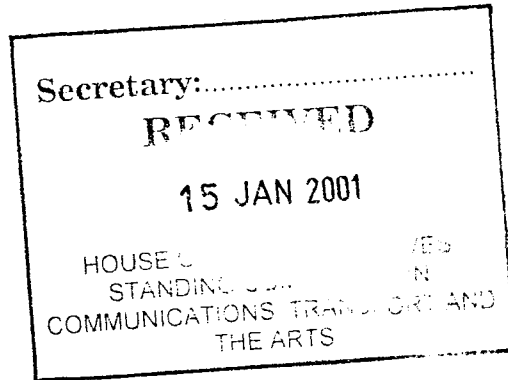
YOUR FEDERAL MEMBER FOR DUNKLEY



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Our Ref: 11950/bfb
January 10, 2001

Ms Janet Holmes
Committee Secretary
House Communications Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Ms Holmes,

ENQUIRY INTO THE ADEQUACY OF RADIO SERVICES IN NON-METROPOLITAN AUSTRALIA

I refer to the September 19, 2000 letter of invitation from Committee chair, Paul Neville MP, and my telephone conversation today with your Inquiry Officer, Rachel, and provide the following input the Committee's enquiry into the adequacy of radio services in non-metropolitan Australia.

I draw to the Committee's attention the current deficiency in information services for sight impaired people not able to access other convenient means of communication because of their disability.

For some time I have been working with Vision Australia Foundation to advance a project that would expand the services of Radio for the Print-Handicapped via the usage of satellite services transmittable to base stations in rural and regional population centers for rebroadcasting via local community FM radio transmitters.

In a nutshell, the proposal would involve transmitting a generic national service via the satellite-delivered community broadcasting capability provided by pay tv operators as part of their license conditions. This generic programming would be received by a dish located in the rural or regional population center and retransmitted by a low cost low power FM transmitter ordinarily used for tourist and community information services. Where the local community was able to support the presentation of its own local content, ie, a reading of the district newspaper etc, this would be "cut into" the generic national service in a manner suited to and resourced by the local community.

Notwithstanding the obvious merit of this proposal, an obstacle we need to overcome that may be of interest to your enquiry is the need to be able to readily secure community broadcasting license approval over a large number of geographic areas. This license approval would preferably relate to a single frequency that can be readily promoted and recognised by the sight-impaired community.

I am able to supply additional information if you consider this issue to be within your enquiry's terms of reference and of interest to the Committee.

Yours Sincerely,

BRUCE BILLSON MP
Federal Member for Dunkley

House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Communications,
Transport and the Arts
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Secretary: Janet Holmes

Copy: Vision Australia Foundation