



AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

SUBMISSION

TO THE

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORT AND THE ARTS**

INQUIRY INTO

**THE ADEQUACY OF RADIO SERVICES IN
NON-METROPOLITAN AUSTRALIA**

November 2000

INTRODUCTION

Each sector of the Australian broadcasting system brings to the system its particular strengths. The national broadcasting sector brings strengths of innovation, comprehensiveness, independence, quality, diversity, a sense of national identity and reflection of the regional and cultural diversity of the Australian community.

All Australians are entitled to the balance of wide appeal and specialised programs which enrich their lives no matter where they live.

This submission describes the role of the ABC in regional and rural Australia and its ongoing commitment to reflecting the interests of all Australians.

It outlines the ABC services that are currently available to audiences in non-metropolitan areas, with particular emphasis on ABC Radio.

It demonstrates how the ABC has, through technological opportunities, built on the strengths and community base of its regional infrastructure to expand services to local and regional communities beyond the medium of radio.

It describes how the digital environment provides an opportunity for the ABC to further enhance these services through a range of initiatives.

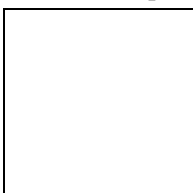
THE ABC'S COMMITMENT TO REGIONAL AND RURAL AUSTRALIA

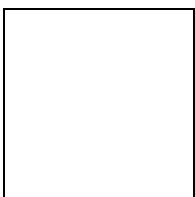
The ABC's role is to provide innovative and comprehensive broadcasting services for all Australians. Regional and rural Australians are entitled to expect the same choice and quality of ABC programming that is delivered to metropolitan Australia.

Under its Charter, the ABC broadcasts services which contribute to a sense of national identity, inform and entertain Australians and reflect the regional and cultural diversity of the Australian community.

For almost 70 years, the ABC has been a constant in the lives of Australian communities. These communities rely on the ABC to keep them informed about their region, their State, their nation and the world.

In recent years, there has been a rationalisation of a range of services including education, health care, banking and telecommunications in regional areas. Inequality of employment, income and investment between regions and between regions and capital cities has contributed to a growing sense in regional communities of disconnection from their metropolitan counterparts.





Against this backdrop, the ABC is consciously increasing its commitment to rural and regional Australia by:

- ◆ maintaining a visible presence in regional locations across the country;
- ◆ providing a vehicle for discussion and debate of local issues;
- ◆ providing avenues through which regional views and perspectives can be represented to wider audiences; and
- ◆ providing a lifeline to the rest of the world through its national services.

Despite a reduced funding base and the high cost of localism, the ABC views its responsibility to regional and rural Australia as a high priority. Expanding programs and services to local and regional communities is one of the key objectives of the ABC's Corporate Plan 1999-2002 through which the ABC aims to:

- ◆ source more broadcast quality content from regional communities;
- ◆ bring that content to the attention of the wider region and, potentially the State/Territory and nation;
- ◆ expand the media platforms upon which ABC community-sourced content is currently available, from predominantly Regional Radio to radio, online and - where appropriate - television;
- ◆ provide a richer blend of information programming to the regions.

Through its 48 Regional Radio stations, three national radio networks, a national television service and an online service, the ABC plays an important role in providing high quality programming of both broad and specialist appeal to regional Australia. This role encompasses a special commitment to localism and to providing local services that respond to the needs of the diverse audiences in each State and Territory throughout Australia.

Since its inception in 1932, the ABC as a national public broadcaster has been serving the cultural depth and geographic breadth of Australia. Its activities span the social, cultural, economic and political life of the nation, providing services of consequence to people's lives.

The ABC has a continuing role in sustaining the nation's democratic system by supporting an informed public and in nurturing the development of cultural and community identity.

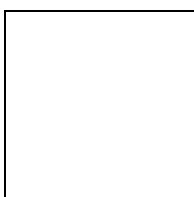
The most important aspect of the ABC in my view is that it provides a comprehensive service to all Australians. ... We are all linked by these services in spite of geographical and social differences that divide us. The ABC helps to maintain a cohesive society.

Bob Mansfield in his Review of the Role and Functions of the ABC (January 1997)

In recent years, the ABC has increased the amount of local content on radio, television and online and taken opportunities to develop new regional content for use across all ABC services.

The ABC plans to build on its investment in regional Australia by transforming its Regional Radio stations into multimedia production centres and to pursue the extension of the full package of five ABC Radio services to all regional Australians.

Recent decisions to restructure and reshape the Corporation signal a strong ongoing commitment to reflecting the interests of regional and rural Australia.



ABC Services



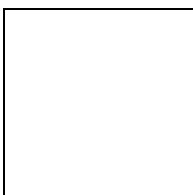
ABC RADIO

ABC Radio has a clearly differentiated package of services designed to provide programming of both broad and specialist appeal, with complementarity of network



focus. In addition to its Local (Regional) Radio service, three of the ABC's four national domestic radio networks are currently available in regional Australia.

- **Local Radio** - a network of nine metropolitan stations (in each capital city and Newcastle) and 48 regional radio studios across Australia, providing news, current affairs, information, entertainment and specialist rural, sport and events coverage to local, State/Territory and national audiences.
- **Radio National** – a national network providing news, information and in-depth analysis of national and international issues and specialist fields, including the arts, as well as performance and music programs through a range of radio forms including features, documentaries, magazine programs, panel discussion, music and performance.
- **ABC Classic FM** – a major cultural force in Australia, this national stereo FM network is devoted to classical music, jazz, drama and acoustic art, with a strong focus on Australian performance.
- **Triple J** – a national youth radio network providing new, innovative and adventurous contemporary music, with a strong emphasis on Australian music and supporting new artists, as well as news, current affairs, information and entertainment for young Australians.
- **NewsRadio** on the **Parliamentary and News Network (PNN)** – Available in capital cities and Newcastle only, this network features live broadcasts of Parliament and *NewsRadio* when Parliament is not sitting. *NewsRadio* is Australia's only continuous news and current affairs radio service. Its comprehensive and innovative programming is based on immediacy, accuracy, impartiality and reliability.



HISTORY OF ABC RADIO

The Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) was inaugurated with its first radio broadcast on 1 July 1932. At that time, the ABC controlled 12 stations – two each in Sydney and Melbourne, one each in the other capital cities and four in regional areas: 4RK (Rockhampton), 2NC (Newcastle), 2CO (Corowa) and 5CK (Crystal Brook). While 5CK was purely a relay station, the other three regional stations provided a portion of their own programming to varying degrees. Each station broadcast on average a total of 11.25 hours per day.

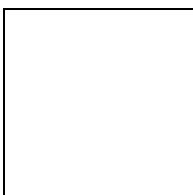
By 1938, there were two metropolitan radio stations in each capital city and 12 stations in regional Australia. In the earlier years, more serious programs of talks and classical music had been mixed with lighter programming on both the metropolitan and national networks.

As reported in the ABC Annual Report 1945/46, the Commission decided *to give to each of its programmes a distinctive character rather than to seek for a balance suited to all tastes on both networks*. The more serious programs of talk and fine music were broadcast on the *national network* and the lighter entertainment programs with more local content were broadcast on the metropolitan or *interstate network*. Composite programs continued to be broadcast on stations with regional coverage.

At the same time, the Commission articulated its hope *that the time will not be long distant when second transmitters will be erected at each regional centre to enable the same choice of programmes to be radiated by regional stations in country areas as is now enjoyed in metropolitan centres*. Little did the Commission then know it would take another 40 to 50 years for this goal to be realised.

Recognising the special needs of rural Australians, the ABC's Rural Department was established in 1945 to provide programs covering all aspects of agriculture, including marketing, rural issues and other information of value to country listeners. The *Country Hour* began (as a single networked program) on 3 December 1945 and is today, the longest running radio program in Australia. Separate programs are now produced in each State and the Northern Territory.

On 1 June 1947, the ABC's independent News service commenced, enabling the Commission to secure news from Australia and overseas through its own staff, replacing its previous News service which sourced the vast majority of its Australian and overseas content from external agencies.



SECOND REGIONAL RADIO NETWORK (SRRN)

Extensions to ABC Radio services progressed for several years under a number of Government programs and in 1986, the largest capital project in Australian broadcasting history commenced - the Second Regional Radio Network (SRRN) project.

The ABC's goal was to provide regional listeners with the same range of choice of ABC Radio services as was then available to audiences in the capital cities across Australia, fulfilling the desire first expressed by the Australian Broadcasting Commission in 1946.

The joint Federal Government/ABC SRRN initiative had two major aims:

- to replace the single, combined Regional/Radio National service with a choice of separate Regional Radio and Radio National services; and
- to provide a more focused and more localised service in many areas, with new transmitters and regional studios, as well as additional staff. For example, 3WV formerly covered all of western Victoria from studios in Horsham. In addition to Horsham, more regionally focused services were based at Mildura, Bendigo and Warrnambool.

At the same time, ABC Classic FM was being extended through much of regional Australia.

This commitment to deliver the package of radio services to all Australians recognised not only the special significance isolated listeners place on being able to receive the same information and entertainment that other Australians receive but their equal entitlement to access orchestral performances, or specialist programs such as the *Science Show*. Regional listeners' need for this specialist and cultural content is as great, if not greater than the need of more urban audiences.

Highlights of developments in regional Australia through the SRRN project included:

- 12 new individual local services in regional Australia (Refer [Attachment A](#)).
- More than 100 new positions to Regional Radio - approximately half of these from additional funding through the SRRN project and the remainder through the transfer of existing positions from capital cities, especially Sydney and Melbourne.
- Installation of an additional 332 transmitters extending ABC Radio services to regional Australia, including approximately 170 Regional Radio transmitters.
- More than \$20 million in capital expenditure to establish 20 new studios in new locations and 18 new and upgraded studios and outposts in existing regional centres. (Refer [Attachment A](#).)



- An increase of more than 30% in audience reach for Regional Radio around Australia between 1990 and 1993, when regional surveys were initiated by ABC Radio (in the absence of independent research).

Prior to implementation of the SRRN project, ABC Regional Radio was represented in 28 locations and provided local programming to regional Australia through approximately 70 transmitters.

As well as extending the Regional Radio service, an additional 99 Radio National transmitters and 16 ABC Classic FM transmitters were provided to regional Australia through the SRRN.

Today, ABC Regional Radio is represented in 48 locations and delivered throughout regional and rural Australia through more than 280 transmitters.

Post SRRN Development

The continuing expansion of the network of transmitters and the development of new and upgraded studios in regional areas remained a high priority for the ABC. Following the SRRN project, the ongoing development of Regional Radio was integrated into the overall ABC capital and operational budgets.

In more recent years, a new regional studio has been established in Esperance and new or upgraded facilities have been completed in Albany, Mackay, Orange, Coffs Harbour, Muswellbrook, Horsham, Warrnambool, Kalgoorlie, Bega, Rockhampton and most recently Bunbury (November 2000).

The ABC's national youth network, Triple J, was first established as a Sydney-based AM station, moved to the FM band in 1981 and was extended as a network to the capital cities and Newcastle by 1989.

In 1993, the Government approved the regionalisation of Triple J which is now available through 55 transmitters in regional Australia.

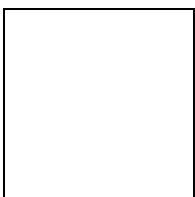
In 1994, following approval by the Parliament, the ABC introduced the *NewsRadio* service on the PNN. This service is now available in all capital cities and Newcastle, having been extended by the Parliament to Darwin in 1997.

The ABC is continuing to pursue the completion of the Triple J regional extension and the extension of *NewsRadio* on the PNN to regional Australians in a bid to achieve its long time objective to deliver the full package of ABC Radio services to all Australians. (Refer to Expanding Services to Local and Regional Communities later in this submission.)

Today, it is estimated that almost 100% of the Australian population have access to an ABC Local Radio service, 97% have access to Radio National, 95% to ABC Classic FM, 92% to Triple J and approximately 70% to NewsRadio/PNN in capital cities and



Newcastle only.

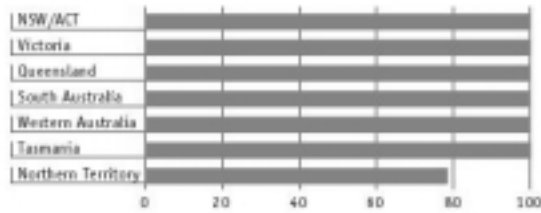


ABC RADIO — NETWORK COVERAGE

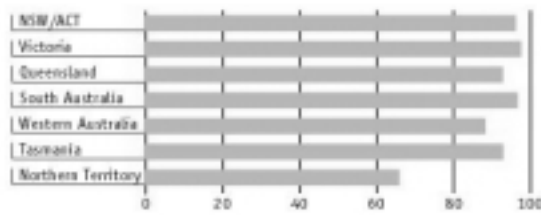
Per Cent of Population Covered

Coverage Area

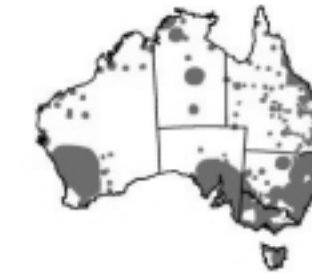
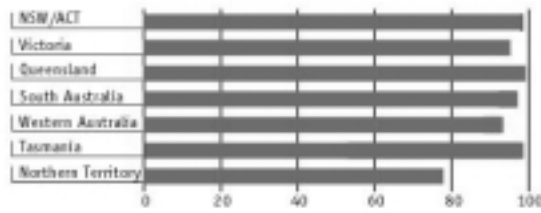
Local Radio (regional and metropolitan stations)



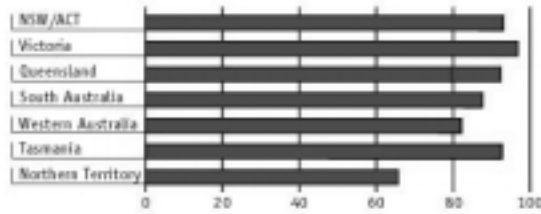
ABC Classic-FM



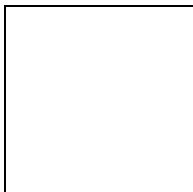
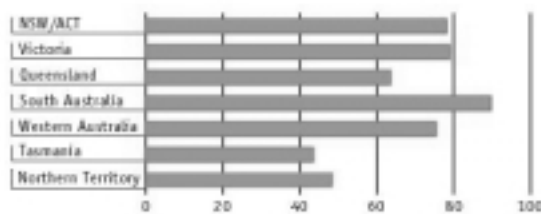
Radio National



Triple J



NewsRadio



Coverage maps of Regional Radio, Radio National and ABC Classic FM are contained in Attachment B. Similar coverage maps for Triple J are currently not available. However, the attachment includes a *National Transmission Agency (NTA)* booklet showing estimated coverage areas by region for Triple J.

ABC RADIO IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

With an increasing array of media choices, radio continues to offer immediacy, companionability, portability and accessibility (enabling people to listen while doing other things).

ABC Radio's coverage of regional and rural Australia is unrivalled. In an environment of diminishing local services, ABC Radio is the primary, and in some cases the only, source of local, State and national news and information, rural, specialist and cultural programming in regional and rural Australia.

Regional Australia surveys conducted by AC Nielsen in late 1999 and early 2000 estimated that more than 2.5 million people in regional and rural Australia listen to one or more ABC Radio service each week.

ABC Radio is valued highly in the Australian community. More than any other service, it provides the sense of intimate connection with audiences, no matter where they live in Australia. This was illustrated in a recent letter to the ABC from a listener who described a day in her life with ABC Radio.

It plays an active and valued part in the life of local and regional communities around Australia.

Let us begin when I wake each morning to the strains of...classical music from ABC (Classic) FM...When I get up my choice is 2NR for local content...the local news, local weather, local issues give me a sense that I, as a resident of the Tweed Valley, exist as an Australian citizen...perhaps hard to understand if you have never lived in a country town, but somehow we seem to be invisible - all the big events happen elsewhere...on 2NR we are "real" people with our own concerns. Driving to work my preference is Radio National...the Health Report being a particular favourite. Late afternoon I always like to listen to PM and in the evening to Background Briefing...or...Asia Pacific....
Ms Penny Watsford, Murwillumbah NSW

LOCAL RADIO (REGIONAL RADIO)

Localism is ABC Radio's biggest investment. The cost of operating and maintaining individual local services is greater than the cost of other ABC Radio services and accounts for more than half the total ABC budget for domestic radio services.

There are a dozen of us here, and we farm a Property of some 4 500 acres. We are too far from town to receive newspapers, and work hours that can range from 4 am to midnight. So we have little chance to watch TV but we have at least 24 radios, and listen wherever we are day and night. All these radios are tuned to the ABC, either the Country Service or to Radio National. Thanks to the ABC we remain informed, entertained and aware. The programmes help with our farming, our health, our travel and our dreams.
(Submission to 1997 Mansfield Review from Rural NSW)

The ABC views its local news, rural and information services as essential content areas and is committed to maintaining and developing these services as a high priority notwithstanding the difficult funding environment.

With 48 regional studios across the geographic spread of Australia, ABC Regional Radio aims to provide the highest quality local content combined with a balance of State and national programming.

Local Radio plays a unifying role in connecting regional communities and in connecting the country for issues and events of importance to all Australians. Listeners tend to tune first to their local ABC station for the latest developments in the coverage of events such as the Middle East crisis, elections, natural disasters and emergencies and for major sporting events such as the recent Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Depending on the population and diversity of activity in each region, the average staffing structure for local output of Regional Radio stations is:

- ◆ three Broadcasters (including one Regional Program Manager) producing the two local program shifts;
- ◆ one (in some cases, two) News Journalists filing stories for regional news bulletins and the wider network; and
- ◆ one Rural Reporter, contributing daily Rural Reports and other rural programming regionally and to the wider network.

Each person has daily on air and production responsibilities. A breakdown of the number of ABC staff based in Regional Radio studios across Australia is provided in [Attachment C](#).

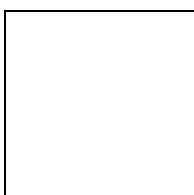
Smaller ABC Regional Radio studios are known as outposts. These are staffed by an ABC Radio News Journalist and/or a Rural Reporter. These staff file stories from the local area into the regional output of the relevant larger station and for the wider network, including ABC Online.

ABC Regional Radio stations serve many communities within each listening area. Unlike commercial radio licences for regional Australia that are based solely on a large town, the ABC provides a broadcast service to an entire region. Similarly, programming is not focused solely on the issues of the major towns. The ABC also has a large regional resource dedicated to reporting on primary industry and related issues of particular concern to Australians involved in the rural properties and industries.

While some variation occurs in programming to meet the different needs of each State and Territory, there are two key shifts for local broadcasting in regional areas: *Breakfast* and *Mornings*, or *Breakfast* and *Drive* in the case of Victoria and Western Australia. These shifts have a strong emphasis on local news, information and specialist Rural Reports. Depending on the needs of the local community and the expertise of the staff, some outposts may provide a separate local Breakfast program eg Warrnambool in Victoria and Esperance in Western Australia.



In addition to the Statewide *Country Hour*, which is broadcast also to metropolitan audiences in Tasmania and the Northern Territory, some States broadcast regional-specific programming across the State in the afternoon and other State-based programming connects regional audiences with their capital city.



A decentralised approach has been applied to programming which is networked nationally on ABC Local Radio. This approach includes programs presented from regional Australia such as, *Saturday Night Country* presented by John Nutting from Townsville and the *Weekend Evening* programs presented by John Cecil from Albany. These programs recognise the broader needs of Local Radio audiences in both regional and metropolitan areas and their interest in knowing what's happening around the country. They connect city and country, providing an avenue for geographically separate communities to share experiences of being Australian.

Generic program schedules for ABC Regional Radio in each State and the Northern Territory are provided in [Attachment D](#).

Rural Broadcasting

ABC Radio's unique and highly valued rural broadcasts are a major element of ABC Radio's output, particularly in regional Australia. The ABC's rural expertise extends to more than 50 Rural Reporters located in regional areas and capital cities, providing specialist information on primary industries and related issues.

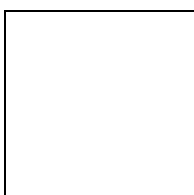
In recent years, the coverage of rural issues to urban audiences has increased on radio, television and online as part of the ABC's commitment to bridge the gap between country and city.

Rural Reporters contribute daily *Rural Reports* to local *Breakfast* programs in regional areas. These reports include market information, local primary industry and rural news and weather information. *Rural Updates* from regional Australia are provided daily for broadcast to Local Radio metropolitan audiences in most States and Territories.

State-based teams compile *Country Hour* programs including a *National Rural News* component and coverage of major State and national rural issues and events. The *Country Hour* is broadcast on Regional Radio in each State and on Local Radio to both regional and metropolitan audiences in Tasmania and the Northern Territory. *National Rural News* is broadcast daily on Radio National and NewsRadio and each weekend on Radio National, specialist news and features from rural and regional Australia are presented in *Country Breakfast* and *Rural Reporter*.

A rich and innovative rural presence is available through ABC Rural Online, a gateway for people interested in rural and regional issues, wherever they live. The site provides access to daily Rural News and related information drawn from the ABC's rural expertise across Australia. It includes feature sites for *Heywire* and *Rural Woman of the Year* and summaries and audio streaming of a range of ABC Rural programs.

In the ABC, Rural Radio pioneered online broadcasts as an adjunct to radio coverage. These have proved a valuable and effective means for providing regional Australians with access to major events of regional and rural significance around the country.



The first online broadcast was in 1998 from the *Connecting the Country* conference in Albury-Wodonga. Since then, online coverage has been provided from the ABARE (Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resource Economics) *Outlook* conferences in Canberra and most recently Mildura, the Regional Australia Summit in Canberra, the *Future of Australia's Country Towns* in Bendigo and the Isolated Children's Parents Association in Griffith and The Australian Women in Agriculture Conference in Darwin.

Online forums are frequently conducted in conjunction with the broadcasts, enabling audience participation and access to conference speakers. These online broadcasts enable the ABC to present valuable and relevant information in an immediate format to people living in rural and regional areas.

News and Current Affairs

People wherever they live, are interested in what's happening in their community, in their State or Territory, around Australia and in the rest of the world. Audiences benefit from receiving different news bulletins, ranging through the most important local, national and international news of the day sourced from all locations.

Radio News Journalists in regional areas provide the local audience with local information and feed local material into the national network, including ABC News Online. ABC Radio News audiences receive a much broader coverage agenda than that supplied by commercial broadcasters.

Regional journalists have a strong community focus. They attend council and community meetings and become specialists in issues of local concern such as regional education, agriculture, business and health. This material is delivered daily to local audiences in news bulletins during *Breakfast*, lunchtime and *Drive* periods.

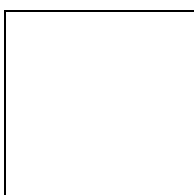
The ABC is invariably the first broadcasting organisation to file from scenes such as the Childers hostel fire and has the benefit of local knowledge. For a story such as the aircraft which flew on autopilot across three States before crashing, the ABC was able to deploy journalists across the country to give a comprehensive and accurate account of events.

Major national news and current affairs programming is an integral component of Local Radio across Australia.

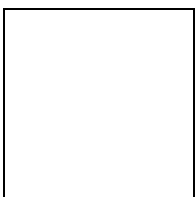
Election Coverage

The coverage of elections is a distinctive component of ABC Radio's news, current affairs and information programming throughout Australia.

The spread of Journalists and Broadcasters across Australia ensures that the public is fully informed of issues of current debate and of the position and policies of parties competing



for political office. It also enables individual regions to focus on issues of local relevance during election campaigns.



Sports Broadcasting

Australia's most comprehensive coverage of sport on radio is available to audiences across Australia through *Grandstand*. ABC Radio Sport's reputation as a leader in sports broadcasting is well recognised and was reaffirmed most recently with its coverage of the *Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games* across Australia.

Grandstand, broadcast on weekends through Local Radio, provides regional and metropolitan audiences with coverage of major sporting events including Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games, Test and One Day cricket, major national sports such as the AFL, NRL and Rugby Union and other sports including basketball, soccer, swimming, racing and netball.

In winter months, *Grandstand* is tailored differently across Australia to accommodate the audience's preference for football codes. All States and Territories receive coverage of local sport teams in the respective national competitions.

Grandstand also provides analysis and discussion of sports issues as well as coverage of sports and sporting events, some of which are not available elsewhere.

For regional audiences, *Grandstand* is the only provider of cricket broadcasts on radio. Following the acquisition by 2GB of the commercial rights to cover the National Rugby League, ABC Radio is likely to be the only provider of Rugby League broadcasts on radio in regional Australia. 2GB does not have a large number of regional affiliates (compared to the previous rightsholder 2UE) and few commercial radio stations in regional Australia are believed to have shown an interest in taking this coverage.

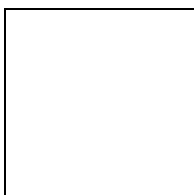
In those States where Australian Football League (AFL) is the preferred football code, ABC Radio provides diversity of match coverage, with particular focus on local teams. While commercial stations in Perth and Adelaide broadcast AFL, there is limited coverage of this sport on radio in regional Australia.

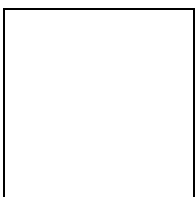
Local Radio stations across Australia provide a wide range of local sports coverage.

Role in the Community

ABC Local Radio is widely recognised as providing a unique service to regional Australia. It is an active participant in the life of each community it serves. This relationship with local communities emphasises the ABC's role as a regional as well as a national broadcaster.

Links with regional and rural communities are strengthened through local programming and coverage of local and rural issues, sport and community events.





These links are demonstrated by the ABC's:

- ◆ provision of vital emergency information at times of natural disasters in close cooperation with State and Territory Emergency Services and connecting communities in times of need;
- ◆ active participation in community events;
- ◆ broadcast of community service announcements;
- ◆ participation in community forums.

The relationship between the ABC and the community goes beyond the boundary of broadcasting. As residents of the local community, regional staff participate on local bodies which are responsible for making decisions which affect the community. They are often called upon to speak at community events and are ABC ambassadors in their region.

Emergency Broadcasts

Nowhere is the strong relationship between the ABC and local communities more evident than during natural disasters and other emergencies when Local Radio plays a critical role in disseminating essential State Emergency Services (SES) information and in providing companionship to people in times of need.

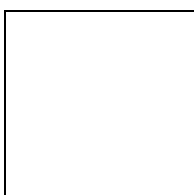
In areas affected by adverse seasonal conditions such as cyclones, ABC Local Radio provides a forum for ensuring communities have adequate knowledge about preparing for emergencies. As well as providing essential SES information, Local Radio provides entertainment and news of the outside world when communities become isolated by adverse weather conditions.

During these times, Local Radio stations maintain local programming to the community, activating Disaster Plans that enable staff to work from the studio for the duration of the crisis.

Your team helped us ensure Western Australians...were well informed of prevailing cyclone and flood conditions and the actions they should take to protect themselves and their property.

*Fire & Emergency Services Authority, WA
(March 2000)*

In the Pilbara and Kimberley regions of Western Australia for example, the ABC's buildings have been designed to withstand cyclonic conditions. The studios have the latest technology to deliver quality programs during times of emergency. Satellite telephone capacity is available in key centres to ensure availability of an external communications mechanism.



We particularly thank you...for your efforts to keep the ABC on air as the water rose... staff were obviously working extremely hard and often under great pressure – but the result was a great example of the power of the ABC in performing a vital public communications service.

Commissioner NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services (February 1998)

The value of the ABC's infrastructure and technical expertise during emergency situations was well demonstrated in Katherine in January 1998 when the town was submerged during floods and all means of communication were lost. ABC Radio staff and an NTA representative travelled to the site of the most powerful transmitter in the region and using portable broadcasting equipment were able to establish communication for the community. They conducted interviews over the UHF and HF radio with police and emergency services and kept flood bound victims company throughout the night.

ABC Local Radio also connects Australian communities at other times of need such as the Newcastle Earthquake, the Port Arthur tragedy in Tasmania, the Thredbo landslide and the recent Childers hostel fire in Queensland. ABC Bundaberg provided coverage of the Childers incident for Local Radio stations around the country and for the BBC.

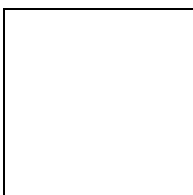
The ABC's participation in the life of Australian communities extends to helping to rebuild towns and communities in the aftermath of emergencies. After floods devastated the town of Moora in Western Australia, the ABC's Midwest/Wheatbelt *Breakfast* and *Morning* programs and the *WA Country Hour* were broadcast from the town in an effort to lift community spirits. *Australia All Over* and the ABC Rockhampton and Bundaberg stations broadcast live from Childers in Queensland as part of a community event to rebuild the town following the tragedy.

Community Events

The ABC Radio is involved in numerous community events across Australia each year. These range from events with a rural focus such as the Gympie Muster in Queensland, *Agfest* in Tasmania and the Tocal Field Days in New South Wales, to regional arts and cultural festivals such as *Arts in the Park* in Rockhampton, the Port Fairy Music Festival in Victoria and the Regional Arts Festival in Esperance in Western Australia. A full list of community events involving ABC Radio in the past year can be provided if needed.

Outside broadcasts (OBs) are an important component of ABC Radio's participation in local communities. In addition to local OBs conducted by regional and Statewide programs throughout the year, national programs travel to different parts of the country, providing regional audiences with access to presenters and programs from outside their region.

Australia All Over presented by Ian Macca McNamara regularly visits regional Australia. The popularity of this program among regional listeners is well known not only through their frequent participation in the program but through their support of *Australia All Over* regional broadcasts which attract large crowds.



Saturday Night Country presented by John Nutting from Townsville has also been broadcast from festivals in other parts of the country including the Quairading Country Music Festival in Perth, the Australian Country Music Festival in Tamworth and the Walkamin Country Music Festival in Mareeba in Far North Queensland.

Evidence of the unifying role of Local Radio was seen during the recent coverage of the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games which brought city and country together for this unique Australian experience.

Beginning at Uluru in the Northern Territory, Local Radio followed the journey of the Olympic Torch across Australia through OBs in regional communities in each State and Territory. Coverage included an interview with Jack Locket, Australia's oldest participant, in Bendigo and Norman May as he accompanied the Torch on the Indian Pacific to the west. ABC regional staff were torch bearers in many communities.

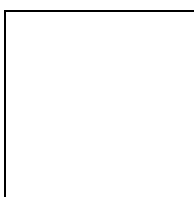
In the countdown to the Olympics, *Fifteen Minutes of Flame: 100 Days 100 Stories* gathered 100 Olympic stories from listeners in communities which played host to the Olympic Torch as it made its journey across the country. The stories were broadcast on each of the 100 days of the Torch's journey from Uluru to the Games' Opening Ceremony on 15 September.

The Backyard generated content from across the country on a daily basis during the Torch Relay for the ABC's Olympic site. *The Backyard* audio streamed outside broadcasts from ABC Darwin and ABC Capricornia (Rockhampton) as the torch passed through these centres. In what SOCOG have advised is a world first, the relay runner in Rockhampton was provided with a microphone and was interviewed as he ran past the ABC's outside broadcast location.

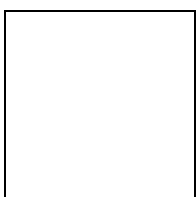
The Sydney 2000 Olympics coverage by ABC Local Radio represented the biggest continuous radio broadcast ever undertaken in Australian broadcasting. Local stations around the country broadcast more than 14 hours direct coverage on each day of competition, as well as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies. A team of more than 90 broadcasters, journalists and technical staff brought listeners live commentary and reports from every major Games event. In addition, there were regular updates of news and local information, including weather details.

A community focus to the Games was adopted by Local Radio stations around the country which featured interviews with local athletes, other members of Australia's Olympic team and volunteers from their communities. Some stations conducted competitions with Olympic themes, creating local involvement in their Games coverage.

A little over two weeks later, the Sydney 2000 Paralympics began. Local Radio across Australia provided hourly updates of events each day, two hours of events coverage each night and more than 30 hours of coverage, including finals involving Australian teams, through Grandstand on weekends.



As with the Olympic Games, Local Radio stations adopted a community focus to Paralympic coverage including participation in community fundraising activities in support of local Paralympians.



The response to ABC Radio's Olympics and Paralympics coverage has been overwhelming, particularly from regional Australia.

I am compelled to do something I rarely do – write a letter. The Olympic Games highlighted the true value of radio – spontaneity – having the ability to switch from event to event...to capture live the excitement...and the thrills. The commentators painted pictures with great skill, allowing we listeners to almost believe we were there.

Rod Kilgour, Shepparton, VIC

It truly was just wonderful and sincerely appreciated by this family and surely by all rural areas. Even at this moment the parade of athletes through the city streets is able to be enjoyed. Thanks to all concerned – we lived 'The Games' through them and are able to enjoy the 'post Olympic' euphoria.

Mrs Barbara Cherry, Bylong, NSW

From the chat with Herb Elliott in the morning to early evening...we have a feel for EVERYTHING...since moving to the country 10 years ago, I realise what an asset we have.

David & Jill Dexter, Bairnsdale, VIC

ABC Local Radio has a history of providing community service announcements on air. These announcements include information on local cultural and community events to be held in the local region. With many regional areas having access to only a weekly newspaper, these announcements contribute to fostering a sense of community and involvement by residents in local activities.

In the online environment, the ABC's tradition of extensive community links through Local Radio is being used as a building block to a vital new service. The ABC's local online gateway, *The Backyard*, encourages community organisations to post their local events in a diary for the region. Moderated by the ABC, the site allows the local community to publish its own information about local events.

ABC Local Radio also provides an avenue to debate issues of relevance to regional and rural communities. Such debates have included: *The Outback Revival* held last year in Longreach which addressed the issue of the declining population in regional Australia. The forum was broadcast on Local Radio throughout Queensland and was a precursor to the *Bush Debates* held in conjunction with the Royal Queensland Show (the EKKA) featuring five debates on the theme: *Where City meets Country*. The *Bush Debates* provided city and country perspectives on issues such as commodity prices and wool marketing schemes.

In Western Australia, Local Radio joined regional and metropolitan audiences for a full day broadcast, *Bridging the Great Divide*. Involving talent and resources from both city and country areas, the broadcast analysed challenges and opportunities facing people in all parts of the State and covered topics such as politics, transport, communications, education and employment. An interactive website was used for the first time in the State, enabling listeners to further discuss issues raised during the day. More recently, country and city audiences in the State were connected for a live one hour broadcast *What Price Petrol?* including the head of the ACCC and politicians in a Canberra studio. Strong



online participation was recorded during a web forum following the broadcast.

ABC Regional Community Initiatives

Heywire – the ABC Gives Regional Youth a Voice

This special initiative was introduced in 1998 to provide opportunities for young people from regional Australia to have their say on issues which affect their lives.

Now in its third year, *Heywire* invites young people between the age of 16 and 22, to contribute a story about life in regional and rural Australia. The ABC selects winning entries from each ABC region and produces the stories for broadcast on Local Radio (metropolitan and regional stations), Triple J and online.

Heywire winners travel to Canberra where they participate in a Youth Forum and undertake leadership training to equip them with the skills to make a difference in their community.

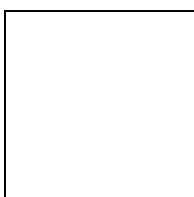
This year, *Heywire* was launched through simultaneous OBs from regional high schools in each State and Territory. The Statewide broadcasts were conducted during *Morning* programs focusing that day on young people and issues affecting them. More than 350 entries – the largest response to date – were received from across the country and this year's 39 *Heywire* winners were announced at the Northern Australia Forum in Katherine in October.

This initiative, supported by Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation and the Federal Department of Transport and Regional Services, provides the ABC with valuable program content for radio, television and online.

On the House

The valuable experience gained from earlier ABC Open Days held in metropolitan centres was extended during 1999/2000 to increase opportunities for regional communities to access the ABC. Known as *On the House*, ABC Radio, Television and Online visited Mackay, Lismore, Alice Springs and Mount Gambier.

More than 3000 people attended Alice Springs where Local Radio's Tony Delroy hosted a special Quiz Night. *On the House* in Lismore saw the first ABC Online Open Day which featured a *Backyard Breakfast* forum with a panel of Local Radio *Breakfast* presenters from Bendigo, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Darwin and Hobart answering questions about what it's like being a Breakfast presenter. *On the House* also featured free children's concerts with performances from favourite ABC Children's TV characters, including *Bananas in Pyjamas*.



NATIONAL RADIO

Through the three national radio networks currently available in regional Australia - Radio National, ABC Classic FM and Triple J - regional audiences have access to specialist information and analysis and cultural programming which would otherwise be denied them.

These national radio networks play a particularly important role in Australian intellectual and cultural life and, for many in regional Australia where media alternatives are limited, are a lifeline to the rest of the world. They also reflect regional Australia to city dwellers and promote regional cultural endeavour nationally.

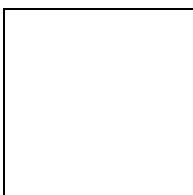
Radio National

Radio National provides regional and rural audiences with access to a wealth of information, analysis and entertainment not otherwise available on radio outside capital cities. It provides a unique forum for ideas and culture, through comprehensive news and current affairs, high quality information and analysis of current issues and an extraordinary range of specialist fields including science and health, religion, business, rural and regional affairs, history, the arts, books, poetry, media, sport, international affairs, social issues, law, the Asia-Pacific region, as well as performance and feature programs and music.

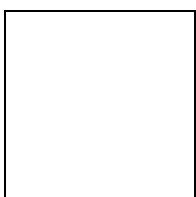
City audiences regularly hear about issues, perspectives and events from rural and regional Australia through Radio National programs such as *Country Breakfast*, *National Rural News*, *Radio National Breakfast*, *Earthbeat*, *Hindsight* and Australia's only national live daily issues-based talkback program *Australia Talks Back*. Through such programs, audiences around the country have the opportunity to hear about what's happening in other communities.

Radio National aims to provide a connection between listeners all over Australia. For example, Radio National's history program, *Hindsight* covers local histories with regular documentaries on Australian towns and cities. The *Science Show* regularly visits regional universities to cover science research and activities for a national audience. *Australia Talks Back* covers issues of direct interest and relevance to rural and regional Australia with recent topics including petrol pricing, telecommunications, banking, salinity and genetic techniques in agriculture. The environment program *Earthbeat* covers issues of regional and rural concern on a weekly basis such as forestry, salinity, conservation initiatives, water and catchment issues.

As with all radio networks, Radio National has a strong commitment to Australian content in music and performance. The network broadcasts 22 hours a week of arts and performance programming and 37 hours of music, 40% of it performed by Australians, of which 50% is produced by the ABC. Regional music and arts festivals such as the Port



Fairy and the Woodford Folk Festivals and the Byron Bay Jazz Festival are covered regularly providing a national stage for local performances.



ABC Classic FM

ABC Classic FM is committed to the recording and broadcast of Australian music and is a major cultural force in Australia. It is the only means by which listeners in regional Australia are able to hear a wide range of Australian and overseas music making, in classical and jazz genres. A third of the music broadcast on the network is performed by Australians, 90% of which is produced by the ABC.

The network maintains an extensive schedule of recording and broadcasting of music and comprehensive coverage of arts festivals across the country. Last year, ABC Classic FM recorded or broadcast more than 500 concerts by the State orchestras, chamber ensembles and soloists and some 120 jazz recordings. All the major festivals around the country - Melbourne, Sydney, Perth and Adelaide - are extensively covered, as well as special events, such as *Opera Australia* broadcasts, the Sydney International Piano Competition, the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition and the Sydney Spring International Festival of New Music. These broadcasts, many of which are live-to-air, give regional listeners access to major cultural events to which they are generally unable to travel. Similarly, concerts and festivals in regional areas such as the Townsville International Chamber Music Festival, the Port Fairy Festival, Barossa Festival, Yarra Valley Festival, Bellingen Jazz Festival are regularly brought to a national audience.

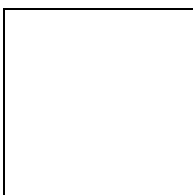
Regional and national Australian events are supplemented by approximately 200 concerts a year from overseas, including the prestigious New York Metropolitan Opera season, broadcast exclusively on ABC Classic FM to audiences around the country.

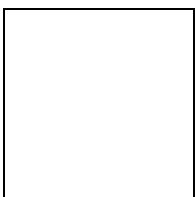
Triple J

Triple J's distinctive programming reflects youth culture to a broad-based youth audience. It provides independent news and information, champions the arts and music, and contributes to a sense of national identity in young Australia. The network provides young people with a distinctive alternative to other youth-oriented radio and plays a particularly important role in regional Australia, where media choices are limited.

Music programming highlights new, innovative and adventurous music, especially Australian music and is not subject to commercial pressures in its selection and programming, giving airplay to music which is unlikely to be played anywhere else. Triple J has a commitment to new and emerging music and artists and to extensive live music recording to expose and develop Australian music which would otherwise not be available. Of the music broadcast on the network 40% is performed by Australians, about 10% of which is produced by the ABC.

Much of this music originates in regional Australia and its broadcast on Triple J provides national exposure for regional artists which, in turn, makes it possible for them to undertake tours of other parts of Australia aware that their music is already known.





Triple J's *Unearthed* competition has specifically targeted regional Australia. It seeks out young bands and musicians in regional Australia, recording and broadcasting them nationally. Since the project's inception in 1995, Triple J has unearthed more than 53 regional centres and broadcast 76 bands from over 6,000 entrants. Regional bands, such as Killing Heidi, Grinspoon and Endorphin have achieved national success from their initial exposure through *Unearthed*.

It is the network's long-standing and continued commitment to Australian music that won it the prestigious *Ted Albert Award* for Outstanding Service to Australian Music at this year's APRA Awards.

Triple J's programming also includes news and current affairs, information features and comedy. Triple J's newsroom covers events and issues from the perspective of a youth audience and provides young Australians with news and information programming unparalleled by other youth-oriented radio. This includes extensive coverage of arts festivals such as the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, the Raw Comedy Festival, and the Adelaide Fringe Festival.

The network's information programming takes a constructive approach to social issues affecting young people. For example, a week-long series of discussions and special programs aimed at the prevention of youth suicide, culminated in a fundraising appeal which collected \$180,000 for the establishment of a youth suicide prevention website. This initiative earned the network a special commendation from the Senate.

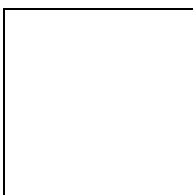
An indication of the demand for Triple J in regional Australia is the nearly 20 self-help transmitters that have been set up and funded by local communities to broadcast the network in their area. The most recent of these is planned for Longreach with an expected transmission start in early 2001.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

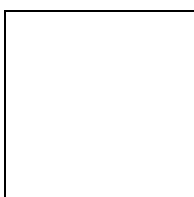
The ABC's Regional Radio stations are a main entry point to radio broadcasting in the Corporation. Broadcasters, Rural Reporters and News Journalists are most often engaged at the local level as their local knowledge and contacts are an important ingredient in their ability to report on issues in their fields of expertise.

In some areas, the ABC has relationships with tertiary institutions located in regional Australia and this may involve attachment, secondment or work experience opportunities for those pursuing a career in the fields of journalism and broadcasting.

An equitable approach is provided to the development of ABC staff across Australia. The ABC aims to provide equal access to, and delivery of, training to regional and metropolitan staff. Advantage is taken of opportunities such as the Australia-wide coverage of the Olympic Games which provide a break in the daily local broadcasting commitments for many staff to undertake training.



The upgrading of technology at ABC Regional Radio stations has enabled online training to be developed as a valuable tool in the delivery of training to regional staff.



Opportunities are provided for regional staff to work on major events coverage as part of their development. For example, Rural Reporters from different parts of Australia are assigned to the production team to cover major events such as the Regional Summit in Canberra. These Reporters file stories back to their local station and to the wider network. In addition to gaining experience in larger-scale coverage of events, these assignments expose regional reporters to a greater pool of contacts.

Since the early 1980s the ABC has also supported the development of Indigenous media in Australia. The aim of the ABC's assistance is to enable Indigenous broadcasting organisations to become independent. There are three identifiable groups of Indigenous media associations which the ABC assists: licensed groups, test broadcasters and aspirant groups. The majority of these groups are based in regional and remote areas.

The ABC has assisted or played a role in the establishment of several Indigenous media associations around Australia.

Assistance provided by the ABC to these organisations includes:

- Technical advice and training
- Broadcast Training
- Development of Media Associations
- Limited seeding assistance
- Program purchases
- Channel Sharing
- HF Shower Management
- Funding and Licence acquisition

Over the past 15 years, there has been considerable growth in Indigenous broadcasting. In 1985, three Indigenous media associations were producing two hours of discrete Indigenous programming for broadcast on ABC transmitters. In 1990, eight media associations were producing 120 hours of programming. In 1996, eight associations produced 137 hours of programming each week. This figure has reduced with the number of Indigenous media groups acquiring their own broadcast licences.

Currently, 17 Indigenous media associations hold community broadcast or narrowcast licences. A further three hold test broadcast licences. In addition, 80 Broadcast Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS) stations have been licensed around the country.

The number of broadcast licences issued has decreased the number of Indigenous media associations requiring access to ABC transmitters. The only channel sharing arrangements remaining are at Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley with Local Radio and between the ABC, CAAMA and TEABBA on the HF Shower which serves remote areas of the Northern Territory.



In recent years, Indigenous broadcasters in regional areas have undertaken placements with ABC Regional Radio stations at Mildura, Bundaberg, Karratha, Broome, Mt Isa and Cairns.

Batchelor Institute

The ABC was instrumental in developing the Broadcasting and Journalism Course offered by the Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) in the Northern Territory. Trainees from most Indigenous media associations undertake this course. ABC staff have presented units on *Australian Indigenous Media* and documentary making with ABC Indigenous staff involved in the news gathering and story collection aspects of the course. Batchelor Institute broadcasters graduate with a good grounding in every aspect of broadcasting.

EXPANDING SERVICES TO LOCAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

The ABC's plans for expanding its services to local and regional communities were included in the Corporation's Triennial Funding Submission to Government last year and continue to be high priorities for the Corporation. These plans are based on two key objectives:

- ◆ to deliver the full package of ABC Radio services equitably to all Australians and;
- ◆ to showcase regional Australia to the wider community.

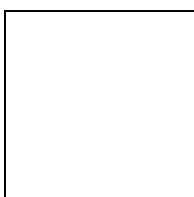
Extending the full package of ABC Radio Services

Maintaining and extending transmission services to regional Australia remains a priority. The ABC will continue to pursue funding for the completion of the regional extension of Triple J and for the extension of NewsRadio on the PNN to regional Australians. The proposed extension of these two services would see the full package of ABC Radio services delivered equitably to all Australians.

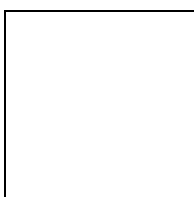
The Triple J roll out would be on the basis of towns with a population greater than 20,000 followed by those with a population greater than 10,000.

The PNN roll out would comprise two phases. The first phase would extend the service to 12 regional centres between now and 2003.

A list of target areas for extending Triple J and PNN in regional Australia is provided in Attachment E.



Under the arrangements now in place for the provision of national transmission services, the Federal Government has provided the ABC with fixed funding to enable it to broadly maintain the extent and quality of reception of existing services. The Government has also provided the ABC with a small appropriation to enable minor extensions and enhancements to its transmission network.

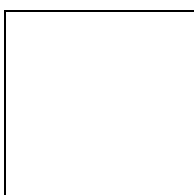


While requests for extensions and service enhancements have significantly exceeded the ABC's ability to meet them from the specific funding available, a number of priorities for regional areas have been included in the ABC's Capital Works Program over the next three years. These include:

- o The provision of a separate Radio National service for South West Western Australia (Busselton, Bunbury, Margaret River) and Western Victoria (Hamilton, Horsham, Swan Hill). These regions with populations of around 182,837 and 50,000 respectively do not receive a Radio National service. As a result, Regional Radio is required to relay Radio National programs in the evening, interrupting Local Radio programming. These regions represent the last major gaps in the extension of Radio National planned under the SRRN.
- o The provision of an ABC Classic FM service in Roma and Emerald in Queensland, providing Roma with the full compliment of ABC services available in regional Australia and Emerald with access to Regional Radio, Radio National and ABC Classic FM. Provision of these services is dependent upon Ministerial Reservation and the ABA planning suitable spectrum. If this is received, these services should be available in 2001.
- o The establishment of a second Local Radio satellite service to provide a more relevant local service to remote communities in Central Western Australia. Currently receiving programming via satellite from Karratha in the northwest, a second satellite service will enable these communities to receive the more relevant program from Kalgoorlie. This service is expected to be in operation by late November.

A Federal Government pilot program to provide more relevant local programming to Northern Queensland includes the endorsement of a second Local Radio satellite service in Far North Queensland. Communities in this region currently receive programming via satellite from Longreach. A second satellite service will enable them to gain access to the more relevant local ABC service from Cairns. This service is expected to be operational in December.

The Government pilot program also includes a proposed Local Radio Self-help Subsidy Scheme for Cyclone Incident Areas. This Scheme is designed to assist community groups to establish their own ABC Local Radio transmission services. This component of the program is subject to Government confirmation.



Showcasing Regional Australia to the Wider Community

Radio has traditionally been seen as the most appropriate medium for disseminating local news and information to regional Australia. Over the years, the limitation of a single national television schedule and the high cost of television infrastructure have led to a centralising of television production activities.

The development of online as a platform for local material, including text, audio and video and the lower cost of television production equipment have challenged this view and provided real opportunities to improve the range of information services delivered to regional Australia.

In September 1999, the ABC launched its local online gateway *The Backyard*, giving ABC Regional Radio stations a localised website and providing an important platform for the ABC to develop new regional content. *The Backyard* represents the first step in the ABC's goal of transforming its Regional Radio stations into wider content providers for local audiences and for the range of ABC national outlets.

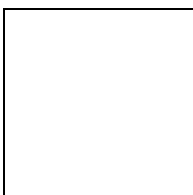
The ABC in Western Australia developed a television series focusing exclusively on regional areas of the State. *Radio Pictures* told the stories of seven regions in Western Australia through the eyes of the people who live in these communities – the ABC's Regional Radio broadcasters. The final three programs in the series and a 'best of' program are currently being broadcast weekly in Western Australia. Video copies of the West Australian *Radio Pictures* programs are included for the Committee.

The ABC believes that stories about regional communities told by those communities should be available and accessible to all Australians. Adapting the Western Australia model, a new weekly *Radio Pictures* series showcasing regional Australia is now in production for broadcast on the ABC's main television channel from July 2001. *Radio Pictures* will feature a number of regions throughout Australia each week, using the ABC's Regional Radio broadcasters as storytellers.

Sourcing content from regional and rural Australia

The ABC has made a significant investment in its 48 Regional Radio stations. The property, including the buildings, infrastructure and most importantly, the staff in each location, provide tangible proof of a strong commitment to regional and rural Australia. The content generated by these stations is unique - no other broadcaster provides the type of services delivered via Local Radio to regional Australia.

A major initiative of the ABC as part of its digitisation strategy, is to increase the range and amount of program production in regional areas and, by enhanced communications links, make more regional program content available for interchange between regional stations and for inclusion in Statewide and national programs on a range of delivery platforms.



With this in mind, the ABC's regional production infrastructure has been strengthened particularly over the past three years. Communication links have been upgraded providing all regional sites with internet and ABC intranet capabilities and ITS networking, allowing the sharing of program materials, transcripts and other information. Regional entry points for ABC Online have been established through the local online gateway, *The Backyard*.

The ABC's digitisation strategy (outlined more fully below) will enable the ABC to transform its 48 Regional Radio stations into multimedia production centers, enabling material to be used across a variety of outlets in different forms including online, digital television and datacasting.

The ABC's capacity to progress this transformation is reliant upon at least one additional position being established at each regional station to increase the amount of regional material for both local consumption and the wider ABC and to preserve the integrity of the existing local Regional Radio service.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES IN A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

The digital age will bring new and different media services for Australians, both free-to-air and subscription, with increasing availability of enhanced and niche services on television, datacasting, radio and online.

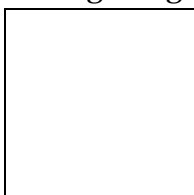
Exciting as this prospect is for both broadcasters and audiences, there are some inherent dangers against which Australia should guard, such as the marginalisation of regional and rural Australia and radically increased internationalism of new services, with much of the new content coming from overseas.

In this digital environment, the ABC's continued commitment to its Charter obligations is more important than ever. The ABC role will be to continue to inform, entertain and educate with a comprehensive mix of innovative, quality programs of specialised and broad appeal. It must continue to reflect the cultural and regional diversity of Australia and contribute to national identity, through strong Australian and local programming, and to promote and encourage the arts.

The ABC's strengths of localism, comprehensiveness, quality, independent news and current affairs, specialist and cultural programming and Australian content will distinguish it from increasingly internationalised services.

The ABC believes that all Australian communities should benefit from digital broadcasting and online technologies, through increasing services which meet their needs and ensuring that ABC programming reflects the widest possible expression of the diversity of Australian culture and society.

The digital age offers opportunities for the ABC to better serve the diverse needs of its



audiences and extend the ABC's relevance to Australian communities: better reception of existing broadcasting services and their extension to all Australians; new means of distribution and expanded choice; and to improve the services on offer to particular segments of the audience.

Digital Production

The ABC is in the process of installing more than 260 PC-based Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) in all Regional Radio studios around Australia, replacing obsolete and unreliable equipment, such as reel-to-reel tape and cartridge machines, as well as studio-based minidisk editors and players that had provided a cheap interim measure.

This major investment in regional infrastructure, scheduled for completion by April 2001, is a very significant project in the move to digital production for the ABC as a whole and represents a major step forward for staff in the Corporation's 48 regional locations. Once completed, production facilities in the ABC's regional studios will be at least as good as those in capital cities and, in some cases, better.



The DAW is revolutionising the way radio programs are produced and presented in the ABC's regional stations. There are many features of the DAWs that save time, such as editing and program assembly, relieving staff of repetitive tasks and allowing them to devote more time to improve the range and quality of the programming, in particular to better cover stories and issues of local significance and to tailor them for the broader audiences of national and Statewide programs.

The DAWs are also able to take advantage of the improved connectivity of upgraded computer networks, transferring audio material via file transfers throughout the Corporation on Local and Wide Area Networks. They are a critical linchpin in the move to digital production that will enable much greater flexibility and use of audio material.

The DAWs project is integral to the ABC's goal of transforming its 48 Regional Radio stations into multimedia production centres. It is one of the cornerstones of the advance to cross-media production, enabling material to be used across a variety of outlets in different forms, from multiple radio outlets through to online, digital television and datacasting. Multimedia adjuncts, currently being developed for the DAWs systems, allow material to be automatically uploaded to web servers and incorporated in internet publishing systems.

DAWS also have the potential to radically change the way in which radio archives are collected, managed, stored and accessed in the new digital domain. Because of the large amount of output, there is currently no simple mechanism to capture archives-quality material from the ABC's regional stations. The need to do so is going to increase with the enhancement of news-gathering capability and additional broadcasting at a local level. The DAW has the potential to greatly increase the amount of regional material able to be collected and its future value to the Corporation as a whole.

Digital Radio Broadcasting

The ABC is supportive of the introduction of Digital Radio Broadcasting (DRB) in Australia to enable it to better serve its local, State and national audiences.

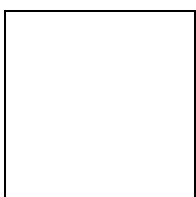
DRB offers CD-quality sound and far more robust reception than current AM and FM services. Through single frequency networks, it offers the ability to automatically tune to a selected service as the listener moves from one reception area to another. However, coverage of individual DRB transmitters will not be as great as that from current high powered FM and AM transmitters, particularly if the L-band is used.

As well as new audio services, DRB provides opportunities for ancillary program information, currently characteristic of internet-style multimedia, with text and visual information, especially graphics but also still photographs.

Like digital television, DRB also has the potential to offer broadcasters and narrowcasters a number of opportunities to extend programming beyond current services, including niche services, to meet audience needs currently not fully met by broad-based analog



services. Niche programming appears to be having some success overseas.



Reduced transmission costs, due to the sharing of transmission facilities, may reduce entry costs to the market and allow more niche services to develop. This may enable existing narrowcasters to extend their services to wider audiences. The challenge for the radio industry is to develop new and viable niche services that find a resonance with the audience.

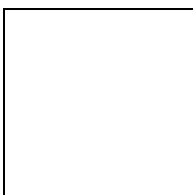
As already noted, the ABC's existing five radio networks (Local Radio, Radio National, ABC Classic FM, Triple J and NewsRadio on the PNN) are not all available throughout Australia. Digital radio and the economies of operating a single multiplex instead of a number of transmitters may provide some opportunities to increase the access of Australians to the full complement of ABC Radio services.

The ABC would seek to have five DRB channels in each licence area to accommodate the existing radio services and to extend them to all regions of Australia. The critical issue will be the ability to plan services in regional areas that replicate the existing AM and FM coverage. Many people in remote and rural areas receive fortuitous (ie unplanned) reception of particularly AM services which will be almost impossible to replicate with DRB.

Initial ABC planning for DRB assumes that the existing five radio services will anchor the ABC's ongoing identity as a radio broadcaster. Digital radio broadcasting will enable our current services to be more narrowly focused when necessary and provide additional services to meet audience needs not fully met by current services. The flexibility of the digital spectrum would enable the ABC to 'channel-split' - run different programs simultaneously on the one frequency - in order to more sharply focus its existing services.

Depending on spectrum availability, ABC priorities for channel-splitting might include:

- simultaneous delivery of general talk/information programming on Local Radio during sports broadcasts or other specialist coverage;
- simultaneous coverage of Rugby League and AFL;
- separate livestock market information in different areas of the one region, where appropriate;
- the simultaneous delivery of NewsRadio programming during broadcasts of Parliament on PNN;
- the delivery of specialist information/analysis programming while music or performance programming was broadcast on Radio National;
- the maintenance of classical music programming on ABC Classic FM while jazz or performance programming was being broadcast; and
- the maintenance of general programming on Triple J while specialist music programming was broadcast.



Subject to spectrum capacity, the ABC would also explore opportunities to provide new services to meet the needs of audiences that are not fully served by existing networks, especially under-15 year olds and those aged between 30 and 45.

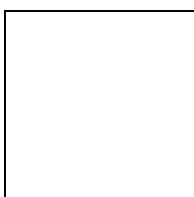
CONCLUSION

The ABC has a very clear and strong commitment to regional Australia.

It is committed to maintaining a visible presence in regional Australia and continues to play an active and valued part in the life of regional communities around Australia. The ABC provides a vehicle for discussion and debate of local issues and an avenue through which regional views and perspectives can be represented to wider audiences and a lifeline to the world through specialist and cultural programming.

Technology and opportunities in the digital environment has enabled the ABC to develop a strategy for regional Australia which aims to increase the amount of material sourced from regional and rural communities and to represent regional Australia to the rest of the nation and the world.

The ABC's strategy will allow regional Australia to be a central part of the digital revolution and keep pace with rapidly changing audience needs.

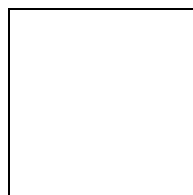


ATTACHMENT A

ABC RADIO IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

DEVELOPMENT UNDER

SECOND REGIONAL RADIO NETWORK (SRRN) PROJECT



JOINT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT/ABC SRRN PROJECT

12 NEW ABC LOCAL SERVICES

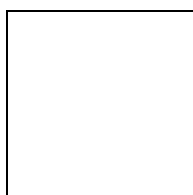
Dubbo	Warrnambool
Wagga Wagga	Mt Isa
Broome	Bundaberg
Karratha	Gold Coast
Bendigo	Maroochydore
Mildura	Port Lincoln

NEW ABC REGIONAL RADIO LOCATIONS

Armidale	Port Augusta	Shepparton
Dubbo	Broome	Warrnambool
Lismore	Kununurra	Bundaberg
Wagga Wagga	Karratha	Mt Isa
Nowra	Mildura	Gold Coast
Muswellbrook	Bendigo	Maroochydore
Port Lincoln	Traralgon	

NEW STUDIOS AND UPGRADED FACILITIES AT EXISTING LOCATIONS

Cairns	Gladstone	Port Pirie
Maryborough	Alice Springs	Kempsey
Toowoomba	Mt Gambier	Grafton
Longreach	Geraldton	Tamworth
Rockhampton	Sale	Wollongong
Townsville	Renmark	Burnie

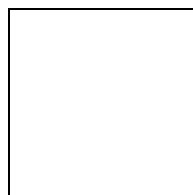


ABC RADIO COVERAGE MAPS

REGIONAL RADIO
RADIO NATIONAL
ABC CLASSIC FM

National Transmission Agency (NTA) Booklet

Broadcasting Coverage Maps
TRIPLE J



Australian Broadcasting Corporation



ABC RADIO COVERAGE MAPS

The maps in this attachment were prepared in February 1993 and show indicative coverage of ABC Regional Radio, Radio National and ABC Classic FM (formerly Fine Music) on a State by State basis.

Map Interpretation

1. Coverage information was obtained from field Strength Contour Maps supplied by the National Transmission Agency (NTA).
2. Coverage shown includes all existing ABC services together with most new services where NTA planning had been completed.
3. Because Licence Service area information is not available for most national services, the maps are based on field strength information. They are considered to be a reasonably accurate pictorial guide to the extent of current and planned ABC services. However, the following should be noted:
 - a. Because the maps are based on field strengths they basically represent daytime coverage. They may also be optimistic for some higher power AM transmitters. The maps are a less accurate representation of night time coverage.
 - b. Some shaded areas on the maps will not offer adequate reception because of geographic and/or other conditions. This is especially so for larger communities towards the edges of AM transmitter services areas.
4. The maps do not include BRACS and SBRS transmitter coverage.
5. A list of the transmitters included on each map can be provided by the ABC if required.

Footnotes:

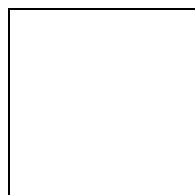
- i. Field Strength maps and relevant NTA planning information were not available in a few instances. In these cases, estimates of coverage have been used. Larger areas affected by this include Renmark (SA), Mt Gambier (SA), Bunbury (WA), Wagin (WA) and Albany (WA).
- ii. At the time the maps were prepared, the means of providing adequate Radio National and Regional Radio coverage for Western Victoria as part of the SRRN project was unresolved. As a result, possible coverage information was indicated on the relevant maps for Victoria using dotted lines. However, due to a range of circumstances a separate Radio National service has not been achieved to date. This service is expected to be available in 2001.
- iii. The map indicating the coverage of Radio National in Western Australia includes the service being available in the South West (Busselton, Bunbury, Margaret River). However, due to a range of circumstances this has not been achieved to date. This service is expected to be available in 2001.

Att/
- Maps



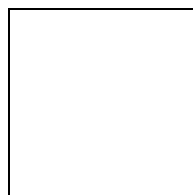
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

- NTA Booklet



Australian Broadcasting Corporation

ABC REGIONAL RADIO LOCATIONS
& FULL TIME STAFFING

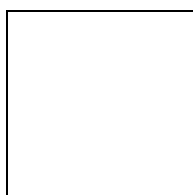


ABC REGIONAL RADIO LOCATIONS AND STAFFING (FULL TIME)

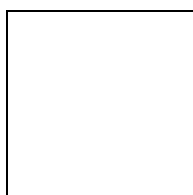
REGION	LOCATION	TOTAL STAFFING		
		Reg R	News	Rural
<u>NEW SOUTH WALES</u>				
Mid North Coast	Kempsey	3	1	1
	Coffs Harbour		2	
New England North West	Tamworth	3	2	1
South East	Bega	3	2	1
Illawarra	Wollongong	3	2	
	Nowra		1	
Central West	Orange	3	2	1
Western Plains	Dubbo	1	1	1
North Coast	Lismore	3	2	1
Riverina	Wagga Wagga	3	2	1
Upper Hunter	Muswellbrook *	2	1	1
Statewide Regional/ <i>Country Hour</i> (Rural) Sydney				
* administered by ABC Newcastle		4		6
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		28	18	14

TOTAL NSW REGIONAL RADIO: 60**QUEENSLAND**

Wide Bay/Burnett	Bundaberg	3	2	
	Maryborough			1
4RK Capricornia	Rockhampton	5	2	1
	Gladstone		1	
Far North Queensland	Cairns	3	3	1
North Queensland 4QN	Townsville*	4	2	1
Outback Qld Carpentaria	Mt Isa	3	1	
Tropical North	Mackay	3	2	1
Gold & Tweed Coasts	Gold Coast	8	3	
Sunshine Coast	Maroochydore	3	2	
Southern Queensland 4QS	Toowoomba	3	2	1
Western Queensland 4QN	Longreach	3	1	1
Statewide Regional/ <i>Country Hour</i> (Rural) Brisbane				
*including presenter of national program		7		2
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		45	20	9



TOTAL QUEENSLAND REGIONAL RADIO: 74



Australian Broadcasting Corporation

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Far West NSW 2NB	Broken Hill *	3	1	
North & West 5CK	Port Pirie	3	2	1
	Port Augusta		1	
Eyre Peninsula/West Coast 5LN	Port Lincoln		1	1
South East 5MG	Mt Gambier	3	1	1
Riverland 5MV	Renmark	3	1	1
Statewide Regional/ <i>Country Hour</i> (Rural)	Adelaide	9		2
* administered by ABC South Australia				
		<hr/>		
		21	7	6

TOTAL SA REGIONAL RADIO: 34

VICTORIA

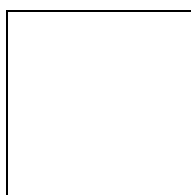
Central Victoria/Goldfields	Bendigo	3	2	
Western Victoria 3WV	Horsham		1	1
Western Victoria 3WL	Warrnambool	1	1	
Goulburn Murray COFM	Wodonga	3	2	
	Shepparton		1	1
Gippsland GIFM	Sale	3	2	1
	Morwell		1	
Sunraysia	Mildura	2	1	
Statewide Regional/ <i>Country Hour</i> (Rural)	Melbourne	7		2
<hr/>				
		19	11	5

TOTAL VIC REGIONAL RADIO: 35

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Central Australia	Alice Springs	6	2	1
Territory-wide <i>Country Hour</i> (Rural)	Darwin			1
<hr/>				
		6	2	2

TOTAL NT REGIONAL RADIO: 10



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Kimberley	Broome	2	1	
	Kununurra	1		1
North West	Karratha	3	1	1
Midwest Wheatbelt	Geraldton	3	1	1
Goldfields	Kalgoorlie	3	2	
	Esperance			1
South West/Great Southern	Bunbury	3	2	1
South Coast	Albany*	3	2	1
Statewide Regional/ <i>Country Hour</i> (Rural)	Perth	5		2
*including presenter of national program				
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		23	9	8

TOTAL WA REGIONAL RADIO: 40

TASMANIA

Northern Tasmania	Launceston	7	5	1
	Burnie	1	1	1
<i>Country Hour</i> (Rural)	Launceston			1
	Hobart			1
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		8	6	4

TOTAL TAS REGIONAL RADIO: 18

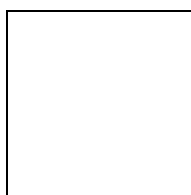
TOTAL ABC REGIONAL RADIO FULL TIME STAFF: 271

Local (Regional) Radio - These figures do not include casual staff employed in most Regional Radio stations to present Saturday morning programs and/or provide specialist reports such as sport or gardening.

Regional Radio is administered by a Manager Local Radio in each State and Territory, who has responsibility for both the ABC's metropolitan and regional stations in their respective State/Territory.

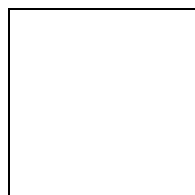
Rural Radio - In addition to the above regional-based and *Country Hour* staff contributing directly to ABC Regional Radio, the following staff contribute to rural and regional coverage on ABC Radio and ABC Online:

- o a National Rural Reporter based in Canberra, reports on issues and debates of relevance to regional and rural Australia from the nation's political capital;
- o five reporters based in Melbourne provide the daily *National Rural News* to the *Country Hour* and Radio National and present and produce *Country Breakfast* and *Rural Reporter* on Radio National;



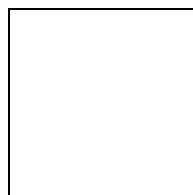
o a Heywire Co-ordinator is based in Melbourne.

Rural Radio is managed by the Editor, Rural who is based in Melbourne.



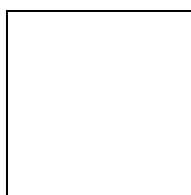
PROPOSED EXTENSION OF TRIPLE J & PNN
TO REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

TARGET AREAS



Analog radio service: Proposed extension

PNN	TRIPLE J
NEW SOUTH WALES Wollongong Lismore Tamworth* Dubbo Orange* Wagga* Albury/Wodonga*	NEW SOUTH WALES Central Coast* Bateman Bay/Marouya* Bathurst* Upper Hunter Valley* Deniliquin* Lithgow* Bourke/Brewarrina
VICTORIA Sale* Ballarat* Bendigo* Shepparton Mildura Warrnambool	VICTORIA Horsham* Bairnsdale* Portland*
QUEENSLAND Cairns Townsville* Rockhampton* Toowoomba* Longreach (not Mt.Isa) Gold Coast Sunshine Coast Hervey Bay	QUEENSLAND Gladstone* Gympie* Bowen* Longreach Thursday Island
SOUTH AUSTRALIA Whyalla Riverland Broken Hill Mt.Gambier*	SOUTH AUSTRALIA Port Lincoln/Tumby Bay* Ceduna/Smoky Bay
WESTERN AUSTRALIA Geraldton Kalgoorlie* Albany (not Bunbury)	WESTERN AUSTRALIA Karratha* Port Headland* Broome Esperance Carnarvon Kununurra Exmouth
TASMANIA Launceston*	TASMANIA Burnie*
NORTHERN TERRITORY Alice Springs*	NORTHERN TERRITORY Katherine



	Tenant Creek Nhulunbuy
--	---------------------------

* denotes priority areas. *(From ABC Triennial Funding Submission December 1999)*

