



"Cairns to Cardwell"

Secretary:.....

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

The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Communications Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
27/10/00

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

Submission No: 160

Date Received: 27/10/00

Secretary: *June Holmes*

Dear Sir

I have been in Commercial Radio for 30 continuous years. The last 24 in management. I have been and still am actively involved on a daily basis in all facets of running a small to medium sized regional Radio station. Apart from general management my daily involvement includes on-air work, sales, technical work and commercial production. I am also a director and shareholder in our Company. We operate 4KZ, KOOL-FM (4ZKZ) and 4AY which is a high power AM open narrowcasting service. For the past 4 years we have also been Internet Service Providers.

Certain aspects of the recent de-regulation of Commercial broadcasting have been most welcome. I refer to annual returns, licence renewals and the like. The lack of red tape in our obtaining several translator licences has greatly benefited our listeners and clients.

However I am extremely critical of the former and present Federal Governments for the damage they have allowed to occur to regional commercial Radio. I refer firstly to foreign ownership. Companies such as the British-owned DMG Group have reduced once proud commercial stations such as 4CA, 2WG, 4ZR, 4GC (to name but a few) to little more than relay stations with a skeleton staff. I am of the opinion that 4GC has no staff. Drastic staff cuts have not been in the public interest as all localism has been destroyed. I can recall lying on a beach on the Queensland Sunshine Coast in glorious sunshine listening to a "N.S.W. sheep weather alert" on local station 4GY. I could cite numerous other instances heard on North Queensland stations 4CA and 4AM but will refrain from doing so as they are neighbouring stations to ours and it could be considered as "sour grapes".

The broadcasting of generic satellite-relayed programmes outside prime times has been a fact of life for country Radio for around 15 years. We too have also used satellite programming at night on 4KZ due to the fact that there is very little advertising at night. In very small markets such as ours our supplementary s39 station is also forced to use a considerable amount of automated and satellite programming while it continues to grow to a full-service Radio station such as 4KZ. However, I can not see why major market

stations should be allowed to run on satellite during the day just to save a lousy \$15 an hour in wages.

In conclusion may I say that we regard our Broadcasting Licence as both a business and a precious public trust. Balance and accountability have to be brought back to the Radio industry. An absolute ceiling on the number of stations that can be commonly owned must be brought in immediately. Station owners must be asked to demonstrate their service to the local community. By this we don't mean how many 30 second community service spots were broadcast each year.

It is my belief that the ABA is totally out of touch with real people working in real Radio stations. I also believe that Professor Flint should go. There should definitely be an enquiry into the ABA. If this were the case, my submission would run into many pages.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Al Kirtton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

AL KIRTON
Director & General Manager