

Secretary:.....

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

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26th October, 2000.
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The Secretary
Standing Committee on Communications,
Transport and the Arts,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts	
Submission No:	247
Date Received:	31/10/00
Secretary:	Janet Holmes

Dear Sir or Madam,

Greetings in the precious Name of Jesus. As a sinner who has been saved by grace, I welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Radio Industry. As a Christian, my submission will be on the basis of the standards which are required of us by God, before Whom all of us will one day stand and give account. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we consider what He has to say about the matter which we feed into our minds. If we don't feed our minds on wholesome material, our nation will be very sick indeed. It is essential that we keep our eyes on eternal values.

Now to the submission:-

1. The social benefits and influence on the general public of radio broadcasting in non-metropolitan Australia in comparison to other media sectors.

Social Benefits. This would depend largely on how one defines social benefits. In terms of eternal values, I would suggest that benefits from radio broadcasting in our area at the present time are almost non-existent.

Regarding its influence on the general public in relation or comparison to other media sectors, I feel that it is no worse than other media sectors, but that is no reason to be willing to accept what I consider to be the extremely low standards of the current programmes.

Only last week I heard foul language on our ABC local radio on a talk-back session. To my wife and I, this is totally unacceptable. On two occasions in the past I have written to our local ABC manager complaining about foul language and suggestive programmes on their station. We feel that there is a very great need to improve the standards of the programmes, as foul language, suggestive jokes, smutty material and the music which generally accompanies these kind of programmes can only have detrimental effects on the listeners.

(2)

My wife and I very rarely listen to the radio at all except to hear the news and weather forecasts. We have no desire to feed our minds on what we consider to be the garbage which is freely available on the majority of radio programmes which we sample.

2. Future trends in radio broadcasting, including employment and career opportunities, in non-metropolitan Australia.

I feel that I would not be competent to comment on future trends in radio broadcasting, other than to say that unless our country returns to Biblical standards, its outlook is bleak indeed. Christian radio is an excellent means of offering the general public God honouring, wholesome material and the Word of God which our country appears to so desperately need.

Central Victorian Gospel Radio (CVGR) was employing a technician, thereby giving him employment and a career opportunity. However, The Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) closed CVGR down on 31st March, 2000, to give the licence for that frequency (88.7 MHz) to Vision Australia Foundation (VAF) who were already covering the area of Central Victoria from their AM station 3RPH operating on 1179 KHz. We can receive the 1179 KHz transmission here in Echuca if we wanted it, but as it just seems to us to be another broadcast station with similar format to what is already available, we don't listen to it, except to occasionally check the type of programme that they are broadcasting.

My understanding of the situation is that CVGR operated for more than 15 years under the Temporary Broadcast Licences which were issued to them by the ABA and we are very pleased to say that they were meeting a very real need in our area. As far as I know, CVGR complied with all the directions that they were given by the ABA. The Lord supplied their needs throughout that time and they never needed to do advertising in order to pay their way. It was a great disappointment to my wife and I and to the listeners of our area when the ABA closed them down.

My further understanding is that the Christian radio station in Shepparton was closed down by the ABA and that the frequency for that station was given to VAF. As we can receive Shepparton and Bendigo FM radio stations here in Echuca, and as we are already able to receive 3RPH, the current situation is that we now have a choice of two frequencies to receive a programme which we don't want, and when VAF have their Bendigo station operational on 88.7 MHz we will have a choice of three frequencies on which to receive a programme which we don't want, and to give us this choice, the ABA has taken away from us the only programme we want and which is so desperately needed by the listeners of our area. I have advised the ABA of this but it appears that they are not interested in hearing it. Personally, I feel that the ABA made a very grave mistake in closing down CVGR and allocating the frequency to VAF.

3. The effect on individuals, families and small business in non-metropolitan Australia of networking of radio programming, particularly in relation to local news services, sport, community service announcements and other forms of local content.

I feel that we have only to look at the huge drug problem which we have in our land, including our country areas; the breakdown of marriages and the detrimental effect this has on the children of those marriages; the overcrowding of our prisons; the robberies, rapes, bashings, murders and vandalism which takes place almost daily in our country, to see that the entire nation is in real trouble. When the family unit breaks down, the entire fabric of society breaks down. It appears as though the authorities are endeavouring to do something to arrest the problem, but if God is left out of the solution they are endeavouring to provide, it is doomed to failure.

On the other hand, the good news is that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only power on earth that is able to take the broken parts of the human lives of those who commit these crimes, and make them whole again. This is the good news which has been broadcast by CVGR, and I understand that there have been instances when listeners to the CVGR programmes have telephoned the station in order to let them know what tremendous assistance the Christian programmes have given them. In addition, the Christian audience, including my wife and myself have been tremendously blessed and encouraged by the programmes which have been broadcast by CVGR over the years. Such programmes can only have a very beneficial effect on the listeners.

However, I feel that much of the material which is currently available on other radio programmes in our area, can only have a detrimental effect on the listeners. I have already mentioned bad language, smutty material, etc. even from the ABC, where one would expect much higher standards. It may be popular with a God rejecting society, but we need to ask, "What saith the Lord?" If we turn to His Word, we will find that He condemns it. His Word also informs us that we will reap what we sow. So if we feed the material of the gutter into the minds of our people, we shouldn't be surprised if we reap gutter-like behaviour.

Regarding networking of radio programmes, I feel that this is not desirable as we lose the local content and local input to the programmes. I would suggest that in terms of eternal value, networking of radio programmes produces very little.

4. The potential for new technologies such as digital radio to provide enhanced and more localised radio services in metropolitan, regional and rural areas.

I don't consider that I would be competent to comment on that one.

(4)

We feel that there is a very real need for the Government to take action re the quality of the radio programmes which are available in our area, and the fact that a petition has been presented to Government about the closure of CVGR indicates that there are several thousand others who have the same view.

Personally, I have written twice to the ABA asking them for a Scriptural reason for closing down CVGR and also asking them if they could please explain to me how Vision Australia Foundation came under the category of a Community Broadcasting Radio Station. As they didn't reply to either letter, I can only assume that there was no Scriptural reason for closing down CVGR, and that VAF doesn't come in the category of a Community Broadcaster.

My wife is severely handicapped physically and is almost blind, and as a result, is almost house bound. She derived tremendous help and encouragement from the CVGR programmes, so it was a very severe blow to her when those programmes ceased. The programmes currently available to us on radio are certainly not meeting our needs. As I speak to other Christian people, it seems to me that there are many others who are in a similar situation.

With warm Christian greetings.

Yours in Christ,

A. J. Dunstone.

(Mr.) (A. J. Dunstone).