



GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

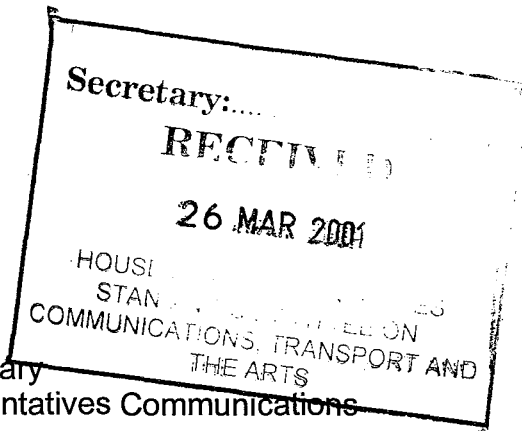


GASCOYNE
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Our Ref: C1.2

20 March 2001

Ms Janet Holes
Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Communications
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts	
Submission No:	283
Date Received:	
Secretary:	

Dear Janet

RE: Radio Broadcast Reception Inquiry

Please accept this submission on behalf of the Gascoyne Development Commission to the House of Representatives Radio Broadcast Reception Inquiry.

The Gascoyne region of Western Australia extends more than 600km along the Indian Ocean coast from the Zuytdorp Cliffs to the North West Cape and more than 300km inland to Mt Augustus. The 136,110 square kilometre land area of the Gascoyne is about twice the size of Tasmania and represents about five percent of Western Australia's total area.

The comments presented in the submission from Mr David Priestley capture most of the issues applicable to the Gascoyne region. In short, these are:

- 1) The withdrawal of short wave radio transmission services in April 1994 has created radio reception blackspots, particularly in the hinterland.
- 2) Effective radio communications are of great importance to the Gascoyne region, affecting our growing tourism industry, resident quality of life and of particular importance during natural disasters.
- 3) The value of digital radio is limited without substantial support for associated infrastructure.

Further to Mr Priestleys submission and comments raised from the floor at the meeting in Geraldton on 12 March 2001, the Commission has the following comments.

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Content of ABC Radio in the Gascoyne region.

Most ABC radio received in the Gascoyne is transmitted from the Karratha studios. The Commission and wider Gascoyne community have fostered good relationships with staff and management of ABC Karratha over a period of years and to a point where ABC Karratha has a good understanding of issues pertinent to the Gascoyne region. There has been a move within some sectors of the Carnarvon community to acquire ABC reception from Geraldton, however the wider community and indeed most government stakeholders have not been informed. The Commission believes a change to Geraldton ABC content is not in the best interest of the wider Gascoyne community.

Travellers Radio 88FM

Travellers radio 88FM is currently proposing to broaden its format to include urgent and changeable community announcements and roll this out across 88FM's transmitters servicing the north-west of WA. This would suit locally tailored messages such as road safety, road closures, weather forecasts and driver reviver campaigns. During the devastation at Exmouth by Cyclone "Vance" in 1999, the State Emergency Service utilised the 88FM transmitter to broadcast messages and update information to the local community at least twice daily. This proved extremely effective. 88FM is seeking support from the Government to roll out an upgrade to existing infrastructure to the cyclone prone north-west of Western Australia.

Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Telescope

The Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Telescope is the "next generation telescope" designed to study objects in space at a sensitivity 100 times more powerful than current technology. The project is valued at US\$600m (A\$1B) and is being planned by an international consortium of stakeholders encompassing eleven countries. This project has enormous potential benefit for the Gascoyne region.

SKA Timescale

1998 – 2008	Research Phase
2005	Site Selection
2010 – 2020	Construction

Unlike dish-type telescopes, the SKA consists of flat receptor plates and will appear inconspicuous in the landscape. It will have a total collecting area of one square kilometer distributed across an area of diameter 1000km in clusters of small antennas.

From an original six (6) sites in the Gascoyne Murchison regions, the study area has been narrowed down to three (3). The location of sites is confidential and are generally located in the areas:

Mileura Station
Mt Witenoom
Muggon (between Geraldton and Carnarvon)



Part of the criteria for site selection is freedom of radio interference.

It is crucial that any plans for changes to current radio transmissions are examined in relation to the impact on the SKA project.

The principle point of contact for this project is:

Dr Bruce Thomas
Australia Telescope National Facility
CSIRO
EPPING NSW 1710

Ph: (02) 9372 4100
Fax: (02) 0372 4310

From the Commission's point of view, if the Gascoyne/Murchison or any other part of Western Australia is successful in attracting the SKA development, the State will reap the benefits for the next two generations in terms of lucrative construction and maintenance contracts, education and training, employment generation, improvement of communications infrastructure and tourism growth.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this submission. If further information is required, please contact Mr Carl Barrett at the Commission on (08) 9941 1803.

Yours Sincerely



Joan Roberts
Chief Executive Officer

