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The Secretary  
House Communications Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2000

**RE: INQUIRY INTO THE ADEQUACY OF RADIO SERVICES IN NON-METROPOLITAN AUSTRALIA**

The Friends of the ABC Castlemaine (FABC) has a number of concerns about the adequacy of ABC radio services in the Central Goldfields (Daylesford/Castlemaine/Bendigo) area which it would like the House of Representatives Communications Committee to consider.

Of primary concern is the increasing diminution of rural and regional broadcasting and the increasing centralisation of ABC radio, particularly in the area of news and current affairs. Certainly people in non-metropolitan areas need to be able to access the best of national and international news and current affairs, but of equal importance is access to local news and issues. ABC radio must have a real presence in country Australia. Its role is vital in the dissemination of information and the provision of entertainment; but it should also be a key provider of employment and training in country areas sorely lacking in both.

Another major concern is the poor and uneven reception of ABC radio in the area. A recent survey conducted by FABC in the Central Goldfields area found that reception of ABC radio varied greatly. While most respondents reported excellent or good reception of the local Central Goldfield station (91.1fm), many had only adequate or poor reception of the other ABC stations: Classic FM (92.7), Triple J (90.3), Radio National (6.20am) and 774 Melbourne (7.74am). By far the worst reception was that of Radio National. This is a major concern since Radio National is the most important media resource in the country. It is ironic that residents of Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory should have excellent reception of Radio National while people in some areas of the Central Goldfields, less than 180 kilometres from Melbourne, should have very poor reception.

All these concerns raise the issue of funding. The Committee must consider the obvious inadequacy of ABC funding and the consequent rationalisation of services that marginalise

rural and regional areas. ABC radio plays such an important role in promoting a sense of national unity through diversity that the Committee must ensure that its funding is commensurate with the quality expected of the national broadcaster in non-metropolitan areas.

Yours truly,

Karin Moses