



South Australian Association for Media Education Inc

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Submission to the Inquiry into the Adequacy of Radio Service in Non-metropolitan Australia

SAAME is a professional association concerned with media education whose membership consists of media educators from all sectors as well as industry personnel and members of the public. At our last Executive meeting we devoted some time examining the terms of reference for this inquiry and discussing the quality and quantity of radio in regional and rural Australia.

We believe that Radio is a medium that offers more intimacy and immediacy than other media and as such still has a vital role to play in contemporary Australian life. Indeed several surveys have highlighted the trend of our younger people away from television viewing towards more radio listening. Radio is indeed experiencing a renaissance as the number and type of stations on air continues to grow. While Adelaide is well served with over 20 radio stations the same is not true for our country areas. Similarly while television services have been improved particularly with the advent of Austar, there has not been a corresponding increase with respect to radio.

The role of the ABC is extremely important in providing a radio service to regional and rural South Australia that both retains links to the local community and a sense of connection with their city counterparts. We believe it is imperative that the ABC is encouraged to maintain and develop this service further. This will inevitably mean that our Federal Government must fund the ABC at higher levels than is currently the case. This is even more apparent given our national broadcaster's commitment to providing complementary online services, their readiness to embrace digital technologies and their understanding of the convergence of media. Certainly the ABC's current use of the internet to provide both visual and audio information has no rival amongst any of the commercial media. Our national broadcaster already is an important part of regional/ rural Australians' lives and must be encouraged and supported in this role.

While for the commercial media, regional/ rural Australia offers only a small market, the other growth area apart from the ABC is community radio. Again we wholeheartedly support the notion of communities becoming a stakeholder in their own media and radio is a medium that enables this. We have witnessed the many benefits that flow from community radio especially for our students who can receive training and be given a 'voice' via their community station. Therefore we would encourage the government to continue not only supporting the growth of community radio stations but actively encouraging communities (perhaps in partnership with their local school, service groups etc) to establish their own station. This may take the form of providing extra funding, personnel for technical advice etc, cheaper broadcast costs or extra support for the Community Broadcasters Association of Australia. Certainly developments in audio acquisition/ transmission technology are making community broadcasting a more cost effective exercise than in the past.

In summary, we believe that there is a need to improve the Radio Services offered to those in non-metropolitan Australia and that the way to achieve this is through the ABC and community broadcasting.

Grant Brindal
PRESIDENT