

The House Committee  
Enquiry into Broadcasting  
Parliament House,  
Canberra,  
ACT 2600.

Representatives Standing  
Committee on Communications,  
Transport and the Arts

Submission No: ..... 242 .....

Date Received: ..... 3/11/00 .....

Secretary: *Janet Holmes* .....

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30th October 2000

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COMMUNITY RADIO.

I wish to add my support to a submission which you have already received from Councillor Richard Mutton of Dubbo City Council. Councillor Mutton has a far greater knowledge of commercial radio in Australia than I, but having lived in Dubbo for the past 10 years I can confirm his conclusions about the degeneration of radio coverage over that period, particularly in subjects relating to local events and news.

I feel, however, that I have a relevant contribution to make in the specialist field of community radio.

In 1976, during a visit to the UK to discuss political issues, I was invited by the Home Office to consider becoming involved with a proposed network of community radio stations. This was thought, correctly, by the Home Secretary, Merlyn Reece, to be a suitable way in which to foster a community feeling in New Towns which had been developed from a wide variety of decrepit areas in deprived Metropolitan slums. The need arose from the fact that construction of decent housing had not taken account of the multiplicity of differing regions within the adjacent City areas. This resulted in lost community support and a neighbourhood identity which were an integral component of inner City living.

The first such area for which a license was issued was at Thamesmead; a development which at the time housed some 50,000 people. The residential buildings were very good, but there were few shops and no recreational facilities of any sort.

The alienation of residents was both pathetic and incipiently dangerous. There were 3 churches and a clergy team of only six. There was but one comprehensive school in what was to become a township of 75,000. There were, somewhat predictably, two 'pubs'

which were the bane of the local police.

The clergy team went well beyond normal religious parameters and had introduced a local newspaper in a pastoral attempt to relieve some of the many tensions but had insufficient resources to do more than this. The first six months of operating the licence were a physical challenge to me and to a junior member of the clergy team, but over this period there was a gradual and accelerating involvement by local residents. Thereafter, and for a similar period, the workload lessened on me, and the problem gradually moved away from the number of participants and towards a lack air time for those able to make a permanent commitment from the target community. A good problem to have.

At the end of the first year the station was able to sustain a regular 12 hour program. It was a great relief to me in terms of live broadcasting. I was able to concentrate on the vital task of making the station self-funding, and indeed to begin to show an increasing surplus, while training a growing number of volunteers in the techniques of broadcasting - of which I had gradually acquired some skills. I was also able to spare time to examine and negotiate the acquisition of superior equipment and putting together a simple set of practises which condensed the extensive requirements of the Home Office regulations. The license (and those which followed) was a full commercial and the regulations were comprehensive.

By the end of 1978 we were, with help from the Greater London Council, able to move into two 3-bedroom adjacent houses, with a number of garages which housed almost 100 young recipients of the unemployment benefit, of which more later. The problems of radio Thamesmead had moved from not having enough voluntary staff to one where it was difficult to find air time!. No-one was allowed to participate without a test and a full understanding of the legislation in place. from both the Home Office and our domestic rules.

The Home Office showed a degree of leniency which was the envy of the commercials and BBC radio London, It was the latter which made available most of the hardware that was needed. Thanks to the entrepreneurial skills of our salesman, Sir Robin Phillips, all our permitted advertising time was sold. The BBC was impressed with the fact that by a close liaison with us they had access to a region averaging 40% ratings where hitherto they were restricted to less than 10%.

There were volunteers from all over metropolitan London, but we used very few. Those of our young unemployed who passed a fairly stringent radio course became the backbone of the station, in particular as panel operators and editors. We kept 10 of them on the radio project, and 18 months later three had well paid jobs in either commercial radio, or in "BBC radio London and radio Thamesmead" - a call sign I still treasure!

The funding for the increasing number of school-leavers who worked within and outside of the station were funded at about \$10 above the rate of the unemployment benefit. Each group of 10 had the services of an appropriate tradesperson who was funded by the Manpower Services Commission as part of the budget which was available to Norman Tebbit (the employment Minister), later Lord Tebbit. The instructor was normally taken from the ranks of the vast number of unemployed. MSC funding emphasised advice to young unemployed school-leavers to *enabled them to be reconciled to a lifetime of unemployment*. I believed this to be, at best, immoral, and the great majority of our young people were taught a trade with an end objective. For instance, in a population starting at about 20% more than the population of Dubbo, and growing, the GLC employees were unable to keep up with repairs caused by the ravages of young hoons to houses temporarily unoccupied, and with abnormal growth of weeds in the same gardens, and in the large number of crevices in footpaths, pavements, etc. As soon as the 10 in the maintenance group had proved their worth, this unpopular job was 'tendered out' by Council, and in a few months the group were in charge of a profitable contract negotiated with GLC by me. Another problem arose with the careless disposal of large household items such as old furniture, electrical goods and so on. This waste was collected in another group's donated lorry driven by their instructor. This was either disposed of at the nearest tip, again under contract to GLC, but the furniture - if repairable - was made sound and upholstered within our garage complex, and then re-sold. Once again the group had a viable business to move into.

I mention these SPRINGBOARD options as one of the by-products of a well-organised Community radio station. I would be glad to enlarge on the spread of this sort of activity if required.

This sort of community asset was adopted in the formation of new stations in all New Towns - in Basildon, Tower Hamlets, Slough, Milton Keynes - and now all over the country.

These initiatives, of course, take time - usually about 18 months. All were successful, and my self-regulation was accepted as a norm.

The primary business from which they emanated were the community radio station, which went from strength to strength. At Thamesmead and Basildon, since programs also went out on cable where this was available, I had the absolute right, granted by the Home Secretary, to break in to ALL channels, both radion and TV, to report on civil disturbances - in particular in the case of Thames flooding to which both were imperilled - as both were increasingly flood-prone, being on the wrong side of the Thames barrier at Greenwich. I employed this unique right once a year as a practise exercise. I do not recommend this function unless monitored.

I agree entirely with Councillor Mutton's submission, particularly as it affects the local news content. Our stations were within the GLC or other Council areas, and it was clearly desirable to use whichever local BBC or major commercial station was most supportive of community radio, but our own young interviewers sought (and got) material which was appropriate to our region. This was usually edited in our studios, but occasionally went to air live with a 7 second delay. I had the pleasure of interviewing visitors such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Liverpool (once captain of an Englisg Test side - we talked about cricket, not God), Burl Ives, Timothy West, Richie Benaud (who seldom did anything for nothing!) and our local MPs (we taked about God, not politics).

We aired regular slots for political talk-backs, and offered the same air time to Conservatives, but because our two constituences were solid Labour, I acquired significant funding from 'Red' Ken Livingstone, the head of the GLC at County Hall.

I also agree with Mr Mutton on the question of locally appropriate content, and rather more strongly about the granting of frequencies to a narrow, minority religious body - a case of preaching to the converted *and no-one else*. There is room for a 3 to 5 minute Godspot on Sundays, always within a Gospel music bracket. This, too, must be rotated between the local Churches. Thamesmead's Church leader was wholly supportive, and there were two benefits which flowed from his involvement: a 50% increase in congregation attendance - and Jim Thompson is now the Bishop of Bath & Wells.

END

Frank G Warren.





RJH:pmc

July 22, 1976

Mr. Frank Warren,  
2/32 New South Head Road,  
VAUCEUSE, N.S.W. 2030

Dear Frank:

Many thanks for your letter and for your good wishes to Hazel and the family.

You know, I am sure, that I am willing to assist you wherever possible within the limits of the demands made upon me from elsewhere.

The simplest solution in the circumstances would, I believe, be to refer prospective clients to my office, and I will be only too glad to meet any enquiries which may be made regarding your current status with ACTU-New World Travel.

Look after yourself.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

*RJH*

R. J. HAWKE  
President

*I.E. I would endorse directly to them your authority and my support for your husband.*  
*RJH*

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- III. Number of Licence 001



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- V. Address: Sudan Airways, Khartoum.  
The licence holder should record here any permanent change of address.

- VI. Nationality: British.  
Date of birth: 22nd. June, 1919  
Place of birth: London, United Kingdom.

VII. Signature *Warren*

Page One

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VII. Signature *Warren*

Page One

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