



THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENT
HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORT AND THE
ARTS COMMITTEE
MEDIA RELEASE

29 January 2001

The adequacy of radio services in regional Australia

The House of Representatives Communications Committee will take to the air this week in order to visit a number of regional areas to start testing the evidence it has received in submissions for its inquiry into the adequacy of radio services in regional Australia.

'There have been significant changes in the radio industry in recent years and we have received an enormous amount of conflicting evidence in submissions about the impact of these changes. It is critical that we get to the bottom of it so we know exactly what is going on', said Mr Paul Neville, Chair of the Committee.

Changes in the regulatory environment and developments in technology have led to substantial changes in the ownership of radio. One of the main results has been the growth of commercial radio networks.

'There are some very strong claims that these changes have led to the loss of localism in radio. This is of great concern in itself as radio occupies a unique and important place in rural life but in some cases it can be life threatening. We have evidence from the NSW State Emergency Services, the Bureau of Meteorology and the County Fire Authority in Victoria which indicates that they are having more difficulty in getting early warning and other announcements broadcast since the networking of stations. We will be hearing from all of these bodies in the public hearings this week but we will also be giving broadcasters the opportunity to respond to such claims.

'We will be taking evidence from Austereo, the Broadcast Operations Group, DMG, Bathurst Broadcasters, numerous community stations, many individuals with a background in regional radio, and as many individual radio listeners as possible.'

'This is not a witch hunt into any particular broadcasters. We are really looking at whether the changes brought about by the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 have benefitted the industry and the community and if they haven't, why this is the case and what should be done to improve the situation.'

'As with most things it is a question of balance. We will be looking for solutions which provide the right balance between providing an environment that both recognises the reality of the commercial and other considerations faced by all sectors of the radio industry and that ensures the community has access to a diverse range of quality radio services,' said Mr Neville.

The program for the public hearings this week is as follows:

Tuesday 30 January Melbourne

Wednesday 31 January Tamworth

Thursday 1 February Bathurst

Friday 2 February Townsville and Longreach

For comment, please contact Mr Paul Neville MP on 02 6277 4940 or
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Public hearing program attached.