



RADIO INDUSTRY INQUIRY

BY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

SUBMITTED

BY

*Isolated Children's Parents' Association
Western Australia State Council*

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Radio coverage to many remote and rural users in Western Australia is limited. Little appears to have changed since 1998 when an extensive report on this topic was carried out by Brian O'Brien.

The installation of satellite for home television use has solved part of the problem for those that have them installed but this only gives radio coverage to the immediate house area i.e. if you are in a vehicle, no reception is possible. As much of the area with poor or no reception covers users involved in primary production, this means that if people are out working their properties, they have no access to radio until they return to the house complex.

People living in the bush rely on the ABC radio coverage for news, weather, entertainment and cultural programs. Many places do not have access to daily newspapers. Some do not have television services. The only means by which they can hope to be kept informed of current happenings is by access to a radio service. This also applies to travellers moving through Western Australia's vast outback areas.

Some of our children receiving their education by distance education are based in itinerant camps. They also rely on ABC radio as a means of keeping up to date with current affairs so they can actively participate in School of the Air lessons that may involve current affairs or involve them in having to write about current affairs topics. If access to radio is a problem and no papers are available, where does one get the information from and have the chance to be an informed person?

The Managing Director of the ABC, Jonathon Shier, recently indicated that part of the revamping of ABC Radio would be to have it extend into education. It will be another backward step for rural and remote residents if they are unable to take advantage of educational programs because of where they live i.e. outside the reception area.

Vast areas south of Nullagine to south of Meekatharra including areas out from there, have no radio reception at all. Travel along that highway and it is an information desert. It is imperative that all areas are at least covered by a radio service both for education (provision of current news information) and safety reasons (current weather information e.g. cyclones, road conditions).