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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATIONS TRANSPORT AND
THE ARTS

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26th October 2000

The Committee Secretary
Radio Industry Inquiry
House Communications Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA 2600

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts	
Submission No:	227
Date Received:	30/10/00
Secretary:	A. [Signature]

Dear Sir/Madam,

I just wish to put the opinion of a listener to the Inquiry from the perspective of a resident living in the North Coast area.

Personally I prefer to listen to ABC National in the daytime and ABC News Radio at night. I don't watch much television as too much rubbish is on it, which I call an insult to human dignity, decency and integrity. It is shown under the ruse of so-called freedom of art and what any so-called enlightened can watch if they wish to.

It seems that those old timers, if I can call them that, complained so much about the loss of their type of music that ABC Classic radio was set up for them, which of course was still not their type of music but it was what the ABC thought was what they wanted. Many people prefer melodious and harmonic music. It seems to me also that when the older generation lost or had their type of music taken from them that they lost part of their soul. From the ABC figures few listen to it though. If they do ratings it seems to me that the researchers have an agenda and are parochial with their questioning and only ask the younger age groups. Various letters I wrote on these points to the Editors were never published. There are and were many of this same sentiment.

It seems no one ever asks listeners what they would like on their radio, and then tailor programmes which would suit the majority. I don't know if radio even does ratings in the country like they do for television. They don't care what they put on the radio if there is only one or two stations. You like it or lump it attitude.

I used to listen to Paul Tolley on *Australia Tonight* in the evenings for nearly four years, when he changed over from being the midnight to dawn jock. It was gradually expanded out of Tweed Heads, which used to be 2MC Murwillumbah before it was moved many years ago, and no longer picked up direct from Lismore and Casina as it used to be even during the nineteen forties. It went to quite a lot of stations, I think 4GY Gympie, 2LM Lismore, 2MG Mudgee, 2PK Parkes are

some I remember but there must have been lots more because there were callers from all over New South Wales and Queensland and even a couple from Victoria.

I do think Paul Tolley was unjustly treated, and so were his listeners, and I hate injustice. I doubt we will get him back, but can only wait and see. He had a lot of listeners.

Over three years ago I did a few days research out of personal interest to try and find out what was the percentage of evening listeners. I sent the results to Paul. I kept no figures for myself. I spoke to pedestrians in Lismore where I lived then. Very few disliked him. He was only about four months in the job. It was very surprising how many didn't listen to 2LM then because of the music they played, which I couldn't tolerate either.

He was pretty raw and had been thrown into the job unexpectedly. Some regarded him as an arrogant Kiwi, and some of the listeners complained. He used to say 'pity help the nationalities who cannot laugh at themselves' then when someone told a Kiwi joke said he had heard them all. I wrote and told him of the fact and I believe he took it to heart. I mentioned some further points and asked him to give some thought to them, I don't hold grudges. But he was learning on the job. He mellowed over the years, especially as more and more stations were added to his programme and he got more callers, and learned more about the country.

He did have some city habits, and sometimes liked to take over an issue if the caller was expanding and was a bit slow getting to the point, but I don't suppose that is any different to some of the city presenters. He was sometimes facetious but I suppose that going on air night after night regardless of how you are feeling, and not having any help in the studio at all, having to answer the phones, read the weather, and deal with studio problems all on top of preparing for the programme with all the reading he did, it is hard to not be human too.

During the time of One Nation there were many abusive calls to him, both on and off air, and a lot of personal threats. I suppose he would feel very vulnerable working in a studio at night by himself and having to leave when the programme finished to get into his car in a dark side street all alone, and he certainly sounded upset and angry about some of the calls, which were pretty nasty to the worrying degree. It was lucky the station did not have a woman presenter, because it could have been dangerous.

In the early days a lot of the listeners from overnight followed him to the evening show which helped brighten up the programme and helped get him off the ground, because the station had a bad experience with an awful presenter which ended up very messy and they had lost a lot of listeners.

A lot of listeners sent in research for him on the programme when a topic came up that they knew about. I gave Paul the debates on the Presidium type of

Government, C.I.R., Emmaville Panther and numerous others. Issues all of interest. Plus some old yarns and history which he used.

I was raised on farms around Tamworth and on the coast then moved to Port Kembla with my parents in 1960. I have been a salesman, had a business and my own driving school in PK, so I do know what living in cities is like, and living among foreigners because there were lots of them at the steelworks there.

The ABC has had some debates in recent years which I think they shouldn't talk about. Bob Menzies said that Australians had it too easy and should welcome these foreigners. That is why I started the C.I.R. and Presidium debate.

The listeners to Paul Tolley used to say he was biased because he didn't have Liberal people on the programme. But he said only Labor, One Nation, National and Democrats would come on. He tried to get Liberal but the Prime Minister or other proper people wouldn't talk to him. So that made it seem like it was Labor, but I don't think that is a fair analysis, because he gave all the others a fair go, both State and Federal. I don't think I could tell what his politics were, which is not the case with the station now. It seems to be having a drive against the National Party especially, and seems to have Labor politics. I think radio should not express personal opinions but give rounded interviews.

Paul had some excellent interviews with stockbrokers and economic people, and specialists when all the GST debate was going on. I think his listeners knew more about it than most of the people. The caravan park question came up very early on the programme, and we only heard about it months later in the city press. He had lots of 'intellectual innings' I suppose, but I didn't always agree, and told him so, on air and in letters.

I was listening to an interview on 6PK with a new talk back host recently and the interviewer 'mentioned' [they usually have pre-set questions so you never know how genuine these things are] 'I suppose radio talkback is the radio equivalent of Letters to the Editor'. The interviewee replied that letters are edited or culled. Those redneck talkback programmes need controlling for intelligence'. He was editor of a Perth newspaper.

That sounds like censorship to me, when we have a right of freedom of speech. Apparently only if it is suitable. I don't mean bad language. I know that the city radio culls callers to their point of view. I have experienced it and when I say what I want to speak about, they say it is not acceptable and hang up on me. That is very dangerous and very powerful. To be fair to Paul Tolley, and I didn't always listen to his programme, I don't believe he ever banned a caller, however tedious, obnoxious within reason, or disagreeable they might be with his point of view. He never asked what you were going to talk about, so his programme was a bit like 'russian roulette' with its topics until he switched to you and found out what you were going to say. It actually must be pretty stressful being a presenter like that for twenty five hours a week, week after week.

Unfortunately our society is slipping into one of a greater proportion of 'brain washed, easy come easy goers' average of 'common stupid' which the media is creating and feeding. There will be, of course, a great renaissance but I suspect not until the lessons of ethics and morality have been learned, and not in one sense of the word but all the definitions. To be fair to Paul Tolley, he was very big on compassion and morality. He did have some innuendo but it never got smutty, which I hear a lot on the radio today, and it is even worse on television.

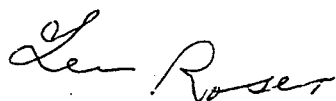
'Political correctness' has gone insane. Women have had their identity taken away from them, and what is wrong with femininity. Or what is wrong with fisherwoman or fisherman? 'Fishers' just makes it all blokes. It is just stupid.

I was not an avid listener to Paul Tolley, but it was usually the only time I listened to commercial radio, as it had moments of intelligence. I was not a frequent listener to John Laws but did put it on sometimes. I think Ray Hadley was a better substitute. He doesn't flog himself all the time, and was a better interviewer. What the station has on now is pathetic and not worth listening to. But the evenings are a lot more boring and I spend more time in the garden or reading now. Don't bother turning it on anymore. They are not really interested in listeners or callers to talkback. Just want to make money and don't care about people. Stupid advertisers should realise this and not waste their money as no one listens.

I have a 'relation' who works in Canberra and they told me that Paul Tolley was deliberately removed from radio because his programme was 'too dangerous and was getting too many listeners'. That could well be true, but I hope that is not what this country has sunk to. It sounds like how the Communists work.

This is my submission about country radio.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Len Roser". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Len Roser