



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

## Official Committee Hansard

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORT  
AND THE ARTS

**Reference: Adequacy of radio services in non-metropolitan Australia**

FRIDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 2001

LONGREACH

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORT AND THE ARTS**  
**Friday, 2 February 2001**

**Members:** Mr Neville (*Chair*), Mr Gibbons, Mr Hardgrave, Mr Jull, Mr Lindsay, Ms Livermore, Mr McArthur, Mr Mossfield, Mr Murphy and Mr St Clair

**Members in attendance:** Mr Hardgrave, Ms Livermore, Mr Mossfield, Mr Neville and Mr St Clair

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on the adequacy of radio services in regional and rural Australia and the extent to which there is a need for the Government to take action in relation to the quantity and the quality of radio services in regional and rural Australia, having particular regard to the following:

- The social benefits and influence on the general public of radio broadcasting in non-metropolitan Australia in comparison to other media sectors;
- Future trends in radio broadcasting, including employment and career opportunities, in non-metropolitan Australia;
- The effect on individuals, families and small business in non-metropolitan Australia of networking of radio programming, particularly in relation to local news services, sport, community service announcements and other forms of local content, and;
- The potential for new technologies such as digital radio to provide enhanced and more localised radio services in metropolitan, regional and rural areas.

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**Committee met at 4.05 p.m.**

**CHAIR**—This is the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts inquiry into the adequacy of radio services in regional Australia. This particular inquiry was called after a number of members of parliament of all three major political parties expressed concerns at the way radio was tending to go—the perception that country stations were being bought up by networks, that staff were being reduced and that services were going with them.

Senator Alston gave us four terms of reference. Put loosely they were: what part does radio play in the fabric of country life; what effect does radio have on employment within the industry itself and what impacts does it have on employment in its communities; and, most importantly, to what extent have new movements in radio affected localism—local news, local sport, talkback, community announcements and the like—with particular reference to the effects of networking on regional radio. Finally, he asked us to look into the possibilities with digital radio, which will be on us in the next decade.

Let me explain that a parliamentary committee is a bipartisan organisation made up of all the political parties in the parliament. This particular committee is made up of four Liberals, four Labor members and two Nationals. We are a committee that ranges over three portfolios—transport, communications and the arts—and as part of our arts activities we had a look at the Stockman's Hall of Fame today. We are doing an outreach whenever we can to all of the museums and art galleries of Australia so that we are equipped to handle problems that might arise in that field as part of our portfolio responsibilities.

We came here for a second reason, and that was that we promised to come here on a previous inquiry. With the East Timor situation, we lost our jet. The RAAF could not provide transport and we had to cancel. I made a promise—I think it might have been on the ABC here—that were we able to we would bring the next inquiry out to Longreach. So this fulfils that promise. The third reason is that if we are doing an inquiry into what part radio plays in the fabric of country life then it is incumbent upon us to go to where that actually occurs, that is, the country.

There are five stages to this process. The first one is that the minister gives us terms of reference. They are advertised extensively in the national newspapers and also in any trade magazines for that particular industry. In this case that is the broadcasting and various magazines that deal with the television and radio industries. People then make written submissions, and we received 280 of those. That is the second stage.

The third stage, which we are in now, is going out and looking at those submissions and testing the evidence that is in those submissions. That can be done by way of an inquiry-type process or it can be done, as we are doing it today, in a seminar-type process—a less formal way of doing it. Let me say that it was very much a case of 'guts on the table' at Townsville earlier today—a much more robust type of inquiry.

The fourth stage of the process will be our sitting down after this outreach, which involved Melbourne, Tamworth, Bathurst, Townsville and Longreach. We have another outreach to south-eastern Queensland in a fortnight. Then we are planning for about two or three weeks after that a trip probably to the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia. We

have not got that nailed down quite yet, but we will do yet another outreach. We will then sit down, look at all the evidence—written and verbal—and write a report. The secretariat will prepare the drafts. The members will be involved in it. We will then write a report. Then we will make a series of recommendations to the parliament, and through the parliament to the government, and through the government to the minister. That will be tabled in the parliament and debated in the parliament. Hopefully the minister will react to our recommendations and, if he sees fit, it might well be that there are changes made to the Broadcasting Services Act 1992.

This process is one of backbenchers. You often say, ‘The backbenchers don’t have any influence in parliament. The ministers and the shadow ministers really do all the running.’ To a certain point that is true on policy issues. But when it comes to the nitty-gritty, the backbenchers have a vital role to play. This is an opportunity for backbenchers, both in opposition and in government, to make a contribution to policy and to see that things are done. Some of these committees are very effective. In the eight years that I have been on this committee we have not had a vote. We have always reached consensus and respected each other’s views. We have had only one dissenting report, and that did not come from an opposition member; that actually came from a government member. So that shows that you there is a fair degree of unanimity in our views.

Today we would like to hear from you. We would like to hear from the commercial radio station, the ABC, any people who have ambitions for community radio in this area and people who want to complain about networking—about what extent localism affects you in Longreach and the immediate surrounds in this central western part of the Capricornia region. So we thank you for coming this afternoon. We will have a roving microphone which we will hand around. Put your hand up if you would like to speak. As you get up to speak, state clearly your name and any organisation with which you are associated, if you are speaking for or working for an organisation. If you are appearing as a private citizen, just state what your purpose is. You must address your comments through the chair. If you address your comments through the chair, you are covered by parliamentary privilege. You have the comfort of knowing that the things you say in this forum today, from when I open it to when I close it—although I will not be allowing any hairy-chested statements; I am not going to allow any defamation—are privileged.

On that note, perhaps we might start the batting. Would the managers of the two radio stations like to give us five minutes each on what part radio plays in this community and what difficulties they have seen in their respective fields?

[4.15 p.m.]

**ALLEN, Miss Elizabeth, Service Officer, Agforce**

**ANDREWS, Mr Peter, Chief Executive Officer, Stockman's Hall of Fame**

**BLACKWOOD, Mr Victor, Managing Director, Glowweir Pty Ltd (4LG WEST FM)**

**CREMIN, Mr Lawrence, Chief Executive Officer, CWQ Remote Area Planning and Development Board**

**HAMILTON, Miss Amanda Catherine, President, Triple J trans-MISSION**

**HARWOOD, Mr Thomas Charles, Regional Program Manager, ABC Radio**

**PIDGEON, Mr Garry (Private capacity)**

**Mr Blackwood**—You mentioned that there was blood on the table in Townsville. What was the thrust of that? I know the networks would have been there, but were there any private individuals there?

**CHAIR**—Yes, the private individuals were quite good. For example, just to give you the flavour, we had two of the networks there. RG Capital had a very robust view that the Commonwealth government has allowed too many licences; that that has meant cutting back services and networking to deliver competitive programming. As you know, there is litigation going on between Austereo and DMG and we had to clarify a number of issues there. Some comments were made about this committee that I wanted clarified. We then had two individuals, with one from Charters Towers complaining that the Charters Towers station had been totally networked, that it does not even have a 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. program. That is a source of some angst to a community of 14,000 people. And then we had a lady from the Burdekin Development Council. They lost their station 4AY. It first went into Townsville to try to grab a share of the Townsville market and then was snapped up by 4TAB and they no longer have their own identifiable station. Not that it was totally Ayr oriented in its last days, anyhow. Nevertheless, they do not have a separate and individual outlet. So that was the flavour of this morning.

In Bathurst it was a different dynamic. We saw a particularly well-run private radio station. We have talked to the Caralis network in Tamworth. Longreach is a bit of an icon. It is indicative of western Queensland and New South Wales at least. That is why we want to hear from you. Where do you think radio is going? What are the problems for you?

**Mr Blackwood**—Radio 4LG is owned by a company called Glowweir Pty Ltd. We also operate another service called 4LRE, which is the call sign, which is aimed at the youth market. I guess before we get started on what we do I would like to reflect on something that was mentioned to me earlier today. We were having a discussion earlier today, in the main street actually, and the thought occurred to me then that there are very few robust communities left in the outback, particularly in western Queensland. Longreach seems to be one of the ones that is.

If you look at two of the pieces of infrastructure here, there is a local paper, which has been going for longer than most can remember, and there is a radio station that has been going since 1936. Both of those organisations are privately and locally owned and operated. I believe, from what I know of the radio industry, there is only one mum and dad owner-operated resident radio station in Queensland, and that is ours. There are a number of other privately owned radio stations as distinct from network owned radio stations, but all of them bar ours are operated by people who are not the owner-operators or they do not live in the area on a permanent basis. I guess that makes ours rather unique.

The things that are important to us are being contactable and providing a localised service. It also happens, because of the convenience of the area in which we live, that my colleague at the end of the line here, Tom Harwood from the ABC, and also Brian Reynolds, the operator of the local paper, and I have no animosity or contentious issues between any of us, because we all believe we have a place to fit into the overall scheme of things with regard to information and we endeavour to provide that to the best of our ability.

I guess what also makes radio 4LG unique is that as of next Monday we will be taking two hours of the John Laws show only and all other programming is generated in Longreach—two hours per day Monday to Friday. So it is probably the last organisation that I know of that is providing a completely local service in a local area.

**CHAIR**—So you do your own programming from what time—5.30 or 6 a.m.?

**Mr Blackwood**—Twenty-four hours a day, bar the two hours of John Laws.

**CHAIR**—In the other hour of the morning program do you do a talkback?

**Mr Blackwood**—It is not talkback as such. For instance, today was a particularly heavy time for us because of the upcoming state election whereby I had an eight-minute interview with the local member, Vaughan Johnson, and I had about a seven and a half minute interview with Tony McGrady, the member for Mount Isa, whose electorate has just been changed to include an area within our service area. So I guess 17 or 18 minutes of talk with politicians and me this morning would make you tend to think it is talkback. But talkback as such, as you would expect from, say, the John Laws show, does not work in this area because people are so recognisable. People are not identified by us, but they know they will be recognised so they are reluctant to take part in talkback.

**CHAIR**—What do you do from midnight to dawn?

**Mr Blackwood**—It is an automated shift, but it is generated locally.

**CHAIR**—You do it locally? You do not take the BBC or anything like that?

**Mr Blackwood**—Sorry?

**CHAIR**—You do not take the BBC?



**Mr Blackwood**—We certainly do not. We have up until last night for the last six or seven months been taking a networked program from Sydney. We have decided to abandon that for a number of reasons. One was a series of listener comments—

**CHAIR**—They have a thing called barter where they provide the program and then they take a proportion of the advertising. What proportion do they take from you?

**Mr Blackwood**—We do not have any barter programs. Sorry, we do have probably one barter program on 4LG. We have a number on our youth service, 4LRE. We have probably four on the FM station.

**CHAIR**—How much local stuff do you do on your youth service? How many hours a day?

**Mr Blackwood**—Twelve hours a day—6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**CHAIR**—And then you take the networks at night?

**Mr Blackwood**—No, we automate. It is very different on FM, because the bartered programs that are available are only available on weekends. So we take Saturday night and Sunday night bartered programs live off the satellite from Melbourne. But during the week it is completely local Monday to Friday during the day.

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—A lot of the evidence we have had before us has included a lot of comments about what happens when something extraordinary happens in a district—an emergency of some description. The cyclone response was handled extremely well in Queensland. I am from Brisbane so I am well aware that the ABC and commercial radio and communities understand their responsibilities in respect of cyclonic storms. But down south there are a lot of problems with bushfires and floods and so forth. What happens at your station, given that you have this huge commitment to live and local, when you are on the automated system? Is somebody there? Do you get a call at home and you have to break yourself out of bed and hit a computer keyboard in your lounge room? What happens?

**Mr Blackwood**—Yes to all the questions—absolutely in every case. Basically, the way we operate is that there are no secrets made of phone numbers in our organisation. My breakfast announcer Monday to Friday is behind us. His number is well known around town. Organisations such as Ergon Energy, which supply electricity in this region, have both of our mobile phone numbers—the police, emergency services, SES, the local councils. In terms of things as everyday as funeral announcements or things as extreme as floods, people in this area know how to contact both of us. Immediately behind me is my daughter, who is one of our salespeople. She also does on-air work on the radio station. There are four or five of us here normally 24 hours a day.

The difference between an automated program here and a network program is that even though we do a fair degree of automation we have a five-member staff and 15 computers in the office. That may give you some indication of how much technology we use to produce the radio programs. But the substantial difference is that the people who are broadcasting are actually still here whilst we are automated.

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—This is a close-knit community; that is obvious. It is small enough to be a close-knit community. What is your view of a community, say, five times larger than this having those sorts of problems of contact during storms and floods and finding out that information is not being passed through? You are a radio man. I am sure you can give me a view on what radio should be doing, even in a larger community.

**Mr Blackwood**—I believe what we have is, to a large extent, the best service we can possibly provide. I am reasonably well known in the industry and throughout the region these days after having moved here nearly nine years ago, so most people are aware of what we do and how we do it. Our reputation has spread far and wide, both in terms of the technology we use and in terms of the program we provide. When I go to other centres close to here with much more substantial populations, the comment is, ‘How can you guys do it when the others can’t? We wanted to have a campaign to promote X, Y and Z, and the network station has said that we cannot do that because we do not have staff there at that time of the day and, even when we do have the staff there, it does not fit their program format so we cannot do it.’

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—How do you do it? How do you return a dollar? How do you hire five people and 15 computers and still have a relatively sane look about you? How do you do it?

**Mr Blackwood**—I am glad you said ‘relatively’. Simply, if I can be a little more personal, Matt, who is sitting behind me, came here five years ago next month. He was going to be here from three to six months at the absolute outside to get a bit of experience and move up the ladder. He is still here. He loves the place. He works harder than I do. Basically, both of us put in an incredible or ridiculous number of hours a day.

Even Matt’s son, who turns one this month, does a bit of work on air. So basically it is a mum and dad’s radio at its worst and best. We are here all the time. We do go away on holidays one at a time. When we do, we call into every radio station in creation. So I am very aware of how all the others work. As I said, I am fairly well known in the industry, so lots of people want to ask questions, and I similarly ask questions of them. The comment I get from businesspeople in other areas is, ‘Why can’t we have a service similar to what you provide?’ I guess that is my criticism of network stations. Whilst I understand why they are doing it, I do not have to agree with the outcome, which is a non-local formatted radio station. You mentioned a classic. Charters Towers has had no announcers that I know of for about 18 months or two years. That is a pretty ordinary situation for a town double the size of Longreach.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—One of the problems that we have come across with individual radio stations in centres is their economic viability. How are you affected that way, particularly relating to advertisements and local businesses? Do you find that local businesses respond to your advertising?

**Mr Blackwood**—In answer to your question, yes, they do. It is all conditional. If you provide a service that is acceptable to the area, then the people will support you, given that some of them are in a similar situation to us. It is borderline a lot of the time. This will be the first February ever that we will make a profit, given the figures that we are trading on today. As I said, we have lots of technology so we have the latest systems in place, which allows us to be aware of where we are at any moment of the day or night financially.

One of the comments I have had from one of our businesspeople in town, who is not represented here is, 'What Vic is providing is perhaps better than we've ever had before.' I am not saying that to indicate how clever we are, but we are very interested in and receptive to comments from people. We have changed the overnight format from taking 2UE mid-dawn to doing a locally generated music program, because people said that they did not like the talk program at night because they could not get to sleep. They would much rather listen to the music that we used to play. So we have pulled the pin on the network program and replaced it with a locally generated program. Even though it is going to be automated, the consensus around town is that that will be more acceptable to them.

Your finance question brings me to a point I wanted to raise, and I have listed it on my sheet. I have in my hand page 7 of last week's Longreach *Leader*. On the right-hand side of that page at the bottom, where I have it folded, is an advertisement for this meeting tonight. The thing that intrigues me about Commonwealth government spending and state government spending, particularly during the Christmas-New Year period, when I went away, is that in New South Wales the Roads and Traffic Authority spent what must have been many millions of dollars running a road safety campaign on radio which, funnily enough, reaches people when they are sitting in the driving seat. To my mind that would have been very successful. It was a brilliantly put together campaign and it ran on every station I listened to. I drove from here to Charleville, down to Burke, down to Canberra, back to the coast, up through Sydney, up to Rockhampton and back here. Every station in New South Wales had that campaign running, but no stations in Queensland were running a road safety campaign to get people in the car whilst they were listening and driving.

Similarly, money was spent with our local paper on page 7 last week to advertise this meeting, but nothing was spent on radio. To my mind, partly in answer to the last question, how can radio survive in an area like this when even an inquiry into the very industry does not advertise on the medium concerned?

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—Good point.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—The other problem that independent radio stations seem to have in fairly small locations is the number of licences that exist in each particular location. People say that it is at a saturated stage. Is that affecting you at all?

**Mr Blackwood**—At the present time, this service area has only the ABC and us in mainstream broadcasting. We have ABC Fine Music, the local ABC AM station and Radio National, and I believe we are soon to have Triple J. We also have a Christian broadcasting FM station that I personally sold the licence to about a month ago, so I can hardly complain about that one. We have a tourist radio licence which we operate in Longreach, Barcaldine, Blackall, Tambo, Winton and various other places. In answer to your question, in mainstream broadcasting there is only us and the ABC. Given the population base, I would be horrified if there were ever any attempt to increase that.

That brings me to a couple of other points that I really would love to bring to your attention. The first of those is that, under the old Broadcasting Act, under the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal before the Australian Broadcasting Authority it was incumbent on broadcasters—and I am old enough to remember—to provide an adequate and comprehensive service. That was the

wording of the old act. I believe that if that were reintroduced and, more importantly, defined, that would overcome the entire problem we are sitting here talking about today. If we do not provide an adequate and comprehensive service, I will happily hand our licence back in, but I believe we probably provide more than an adequate and comprehensive service. That is what we do and that is what we like doing. The only reason we are sitting here and working here is that we happen to love what we do. Although we do make a profit and have done for the last three years, the first five years of our existence was entirely funded by our back pockets. That was a very difficult situation.

The other thing I would like to address is a ceiling on the numbers of broadcast licences owned. Again, in the communication industries it would be impossible for me to own an AM licence, an FM licence and a newspaper in this area—not that I want to, because broadcasting is what I am interested in. But there is no such restriction on the number of commercial licences that are able to be bought by the DMGs and RG Capitals of this world. Mr Packer cannot buy more than a certain number of television stations, but it seems that radio licences are open slather. From an owner, operator and accountant point of view I can understand that that is very attractive for making a profit. I also know that it does not necessarily make very good radio.

**Mr St CLAIR**—You have answered my questions. How big is your catchment area, in terms of both people and physical area?

**Mr Blackwood**—In very easy to understand terms, it is about twice the size of Victoria. In resident people at an absolute peak it is 16,000. How do we make a profit out of 16,000 people? That is a very good question.

**CHAIR**—What is your nearest station?

**Mr Blackwood**—The nearest to here is Emerald, which is 400 kilometres away. We change over at Alpha between the two services. There is really very little interchange between the two. In other words, there is no overlapping because they are so far apart.

**CHAIR**—What about to the north and the west?

**Mr Blackwood**—The Charters Towers repeater in Hughenden is probably the closest. Again, it is about 400 kilometres away. We get up towards Cloncurry, which of course is fed from Mount Isa. We also go towards Tambo, which is halfway between us and 4VL in Charleville, which is also a privately owned station.

**Mr St CLAIR**—So, as you say, it is a small catchment in a sense. Businesses are obviously supportive.

**Mr Blackwood**—I guess that is so for two reasons, although there are probably a number of reasons and it would be up to them to tell you what those reasons were. From my perception of it, we support the area and are involved in as much as we possibly can be. In past years, when the football organisations here were much more buoyant than they are now, we used to call local football every weekend. When you consider that there are only five of us working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, that was a fair sort of a commitment to go and do that. We used to travel to the other towns. Of course, if somebody in Sydney was to think about going to cover

the football and had to do a 600-kilometre round trip in a car, I know what the answer would be: 'Unless you pay \$10 million we won't be doing it.' We used to do it because it was good for business—good to be seen—and it is also good radio.

**Mr St CLAIR**—Do you get much national advertising, or generic advertising?

**Mr Blackwood**—In the last 12 months we have had a dramatic increase in national money. Before that, I would say that for six years maybe five per cent of our income was from national sources. Those of you on the Right side of the house would be pleased to know that the changeover took place at the time of the GST announcement. Fairly obviously, the GST had to be promoted, without being flippant, and radio and television were very good ways to do that. So the national spend from that time on has at least quadrupled.

**CHAIR**—What about commercial national as distinct from government national?

**Mr Blackwood**—Absolutely. The same thing has applied, but only from that time onwards. People such as pay TV operators are big spenders at the present time because they are trying to increase their penetration into these markets. In answer to a previous question regarding population, the other thing which benefits this particular region tremendously is tourism. I do not know whether the committee is aware of this, but last year the income for Longreach shire from pastoral pursuits was about \$24 million and income from tourism was \$48 million. So tourism plays by far the most major role in the income of this area. It is a vital industry and, fairly obviously, we aim a lot of our advertising thrust towards reaching that market. Peter from the Hall of Fame would be far more qualified than I to tell you, but as an indication it has been probably 300,000 visitor bed nights a year. Given that we cover the entire highway area, we attract those people whilst they are in their cars, which is probably the best time to reach them anyway. So our thrust is twofold: one is to reach the locals where they work, live and travel; the second, equally importantly, is to reach the tourists as they pass through the area.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—You have covered all my specific questions. I will now ask you to speculate a bit. You were talking earlier about spending time in other radio stations. I just wonder whether you have any anecdotal evidence. In a lot of the submissions from the big companies, the big networkers, they continually defend their approach to broadcasting by saying, 'This is what our audiences want. We are just giving our audiences what they want.' When you are travelling around having a cuppa with the people who work at these network stations, are you picking up a different view from the people there?

**Mr Blackwood**—I will divide my answer into two parts, if I may. There has been a division made between what are called these days by the DMG network—I think it is a wonderful term—heritage stations versus youth stations. That is a very valid thing. If you equate this to Townsville, you are talking about 4TO being the heritage station and HOT FM being their youth oriented station. The feedback I get is that the FM station's programming to a younger audience, who are requiring more music and entertainment than information, is very acceptable on a network basis. The comment I get very strongly is that the lack of localism in the AM market is particularly noticeable—although I cannot really say 'AM' because, as you know, 4TO and 4CA are both FM now. But the heritage stations, as distinct from the juvenile stations, are trying to disseminate information as well as news and current affairs, and those stations by necessity have to have localism. If they do not, there seems to me to be little point in pumping out a

jukebox from a remote point, supposedly providing information and entertainment but really fulfilling almost none of the obligations to provide information.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—I take you back to the point you made earlier about the service being adequate and comprehensive. Under the act as it is written now, while you have got your AM or heritage stations providing that information, HOT FM or whoever gets to say, ‘There is an adequate and comprehensive coverage, so we can just pump out the jukebox and leave it at that.’

**Mr Blackwood**—Let us narrow it down a little bit. An AM program generated in Townsville by the DMG group reaches places as far afield as Mount Isa, Charters Towers, Mareeba, Emerald, Roma and Gladstone—all generated from the same studio. Is an event which happens at 8 o’clock at night in Gladstone of any interest to a heritage station audience in Cairns and vice versa? By necessity the programming is very much more broad than narrow and focused on the area it is trying to reach from a traditional radio point of view.

**CHAIR**—There is a question I was going to ask in Townsville but we ran out of time. I would be interested to hear your comment on it. Even if you accept that some of the networks do their own research and that perhaps generically they have got the feel of what people are looking for, how can you be sure that the program you choose is going to be accepted in a Townsville, a Longreach, a Toowoomba, a Coffs Harbour and a Gladstone? And in Tamworth it might be different again. Does one size fit all? Even if you take the local announcements out and look at just the musical choice, how can you say definitively and with great certainty that what you choose on a survey is going to fit all those markets?

**Mr Blackwood**—I believe it is totally impossible. Can I give you one quick example on this? There have been three pushes to get Triple J, the ABC’s youth radio, into Longreach. I have spoken against it on every occasion, but it will happen—and it will happen quite shortly, because funding has been granted for that to happen. I am against it because of the programming content and because it is a dilution of this market. You asked earlier if there were any people involved in a community type radio service here. Any further dilution of this market will make us unviable financially. It would be a shame for something that has been going for as long as we have not to exist in the future. Whether it is run by us or by somebody else is unimportant from the point of view of providing the service.

The example I was going to give you is: one of the local high school teachers who was very vocal about providing a Triple J service said he was astounded when he let kids loose in the computer room at the school. One minute they would be playing headbanging music of a very current genre, and the next minute they would be playing a Garth Brooks country song. So in answer to your question, it is impossible to provide an adequate service from a very great distance, compared with what can be provided by localised product.

**CHAIR**—We might move on a little bit. Mr Harwood, do you have something to say about this?

**Mr Harwood**—We overlap with Vic’s area. We actually cover a much larger slab of the state. We cover about three-quarters of the state. We have a 10-kilowatt transmitter here in Longreach and another 10 in Charleville. We also feed a satellite service which goes to remote centres scattered around the north of the cape, down to Taroom and out to western Queensland—Camooweal, Birdsville, Bedourie and Tambo. We cover about three-quarters of the state’s area.

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oweal, Birdsville, Bedourie and Tambo. We cover about three-quarters of the state's area. So we have about a 60,000- or 70,000-person audience overall. I guess we have the problem you talked about of trying to be local for all people.

Fortunately, we have a very enthusiastic staff. We have five people on board. It means real concentration and effort in making sure that you are trying to keep in touch with what is happening throughout the entire region, which means regular contact with people. We do everything over the phone because you simply cannot get out there. But it means being regularly in touch with all of those people and trying to be aware of what is going on. You have to accept that there will be times when you will be broadcasting material which may be relevant to people in Birdsville, for example, and which is not going to be relevant in Normanton.

Recently, a second satellite has gone up for the northern part of the state, but most of the towns and communities have stuck with us at this stage. So we must be doing something that satisfies them fairly well. In terms of contact, our phone numbers are in the book. I have made a point of trying to get my phone numbers—my mobile and home numbers—out to people around the place: the SESs, the fire services, the councils, the police and those sorts of people. We do not have local broadcasting on Sunday morning, for example, but we had a case not long ago where a small child wandered off from home early on a Sunday morning. The police found him, they rang me at home and I went in and broke into Macca's program and broadcast the details of the child. We kept that sort of service up until the parents were located. So, even though we are networked, like 4LG we are able to break into the program and get that essential information out when necessary.

On a personal level, I would like to commend Vic on what he has done, because he came in and took on a heck of a challenge with that place. I started off with 4VL and 4LG back in the days—25 years ago—when they were part of the same network. So I have a soft spot for that station.

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—Colour radio.

**Mr Harwood**—Colour radio days. That is the one. Somebody remembers us. Crikey! But I have a feeling for 4LG, having been part of my early upbringing, almost, in this industry. I believe Vic should be commended on the effort that he has put into that place and what he has done to keep that station local and to make it work.

**CHAIR**—How many staff have you got?

**Mr Harwood**—We have five.

**CHAIR**—Do you do your own local news?

**Mr Harwood**—Yes, we do. We have a journalist. Jodie is sitting down the back at the moment. She does three bulletins in the morning.

**CHAIR**—Do you take any Rockhampton feed?

**Mr Harwood**—We take a state feed, the current affairs feed from Rockhampton, yes.

**CHAIR**—You do not take the Central Queensland feed at all?

**Mr Harwood**—No. The staff in Rockhampton produce a package of state stories each morning, which they feed out to all the regional stations in the state. It is up to us to choose whether we use it or not.

**CHAIR**—What about your rural program? Where does that come from?

**Mr Harwood**—The rural program is based here. We have a rural reporter who covers essentially the entire region that we do. Jodie shares the region with Megan McGill in Mount Isa. So we have two journalists to cover the whole area, we have one rural reporter and we have two broadcasters working on the morning program, which is essentially an interview program. We have had the same problem with Vic with talkback. It just does not happen because people are too shy. Then I look after the breakfast program and try to run the station. That takes care of the five of us.

**CHAIR**—There is just one question that we have come across—I would just like a quick comment from you and I do not think that either of you should be worried about losing too much audience to it, nevertheless it has been asked. Have you ever had any pressure here for the P&N network, because we have had submissions on that. People say that if you want to listen to the parliamentary and news program, you should be able to do it in the country in much the same way you can do it in the capital cities.

**Mr Harwood**—I have never had any approaches in the 10 years that I have been here.

**CHAIR**—Have you ever had any?

**Mr Blackwood**—No.

**CHAIR**—We know that it does not have to go west of the range, then.

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—Would you concede that the expectations of the ABC are different, though, from the station clearly identified as 4LG Longreach? Would people expect the ABC to cover a broader area and, in fact, would they not be at all offended by the fact that you tell them about what has happened at Birdsville or what has happened at Bedourie or what has happened at Charleville while they are sitting in Longreach?

**Mr Harwood**—To some extent, that is correct. But, by the same token, people like to believe that it really is their local ABC that they are listening to. One of the reasons we have taken on the satellite service, which used to come out of Townsville, is that people in the southern half of the state—in places like Birdsville, Bedourie and Boulia—complained that the program they were getting from Townsville, which was fairly generic at the time, was not relevant to them. The reason the second satellite has been launched now to cover the northern part of the state is so that, if people wish to, they get their programming from Cairns. That means that that cape and gulf area may relate more to Cairns as a community of interest.

**CHAIR**—How do you pull that signal down, by the way?



**Mr Harwood**—I beg your pardon?

**CHAIR**—How do you put signal down? Can you pick it up on conventional radios?

**Mr Harwood**—No, it is fed through satellite receivers and then retransmitted in the towns. People on the properties have their own satellite receivers.

**CHAIR**—I see. You retransmit it to your own property; is that the idea?

**Mr Harwood**—Yes. We feed a landline to Brisbane. It goes up to the satellite and when it comes down, local communities—usually quite often the councils—actually have satellite receivers.

**CHAIR**—A bit like on top of the TABs?

**Mr Harwood**—The same sort of thing, yes.

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—Can I just try that question from another point of view. What about somebody in Charleville? Do you get feedback from there that they do not have what Longreach has? Do you see what I mean? I am just wondering if, yes, Longreach has all the spoils of earth here by the look of it and isn't that wonderful, but is the same true for the other centres that the ABC covers, for instance?

**Mr Harwood**—I suppose the way we avoid problems there is that we do not go out of the way to identify ourselves as the Longreach ABC station. We are western Queensland. That is our identification. We are ABC western Queensland. While we talk about Longreach, we talk about Charleville and we talk about Boulia. We do not say, 'We are here in Longreach and too bad for you out there.' We see that as part of our community and we try to locate ourselves there as much as we do here.

**Mr St CLAIR**—What time do you stop your local broadcasting?

**Mr Harwood**—AT 11 in the morning. We are on local from five to 11 each day.

**Mr St CLAIR**—That is the same with most ABC stations.

**Mr Harwood**—It is standard ABC hours.

**Mr St CLAIR**—There is a standard system that operates.

**Mr Harwood**—That is right.

**Mr St CLAIR**—You were talking about talkback. I am just interested. Why has it not gone? I have it in my area for the New England north-west, which is all of the north-west of New South Wales, and the usuals are on there every day having their session, of course. But there never seems to be anyone who is backward in coming forward in wanting to have their say.

**Mr Harwood**—I have been here for 10 years. We have tried it for 10 years in all sorts of different ways with all sorts of topics—serious, nonsense, the works. Pauline Hanson attracted a good crowd and they all loved her. When there were changes being made to the wool industry, with the reserve price scheme going out, we got a good discussion going on that. Native title attracted a fair bit of interest. But generally speaking, the feedback I get time and time again is, ‘No, people will recognise us.’ You go and talk to community groups and, wherever you go, it is the same thing every time. We say, ‘Look, we do not identify you. We will not identify you.’ They say, ‘No, people will recognise our voices.’ It is the shy thing.

**CHAIR**—I was listening to a late night ABC talkback program once a few years ago and this very vibrant politically sounding person was holding forth on an issue. I picked it in one. It must have gone statewide and after it had been going for a while the next person who came on was Angus Innes, who was one of the Liberal state members in Brisbane. He said, ‘John Smith from Charters Towers sounds suspiciously like Bob Katter to me.’ So there is an element of truth in it. Everyone picks up the voice. We have got some other people here. Amanda Hamilton, you would like to say a few words?

**Ms Hamilton**—Thank you. I have been involved with a group that is working towards getting Triple J here in Longreach. It is well on its way. We have put in a funding application and have received money to purchase the equipment. So in the next couple of months we hope to have, or we will definitely be having, Triple J retransmitted here in Longreach.

**CHAIR**—Would that be the whole ABC western zone or just a more—

**Ms Hamilton**—No, it is just a local service, so it will service Longreach.

**CHAIR**—Will it be run by the ABC or will it be a community one by permission of the ABC?

**Ms Hamilton**—No, it is networked. It is a national broadcast.

**CHAIR**—I know the program, but will the host organisation be responsible for retransmission or will the ABC?

**Ms Hamilton**—The host organisation will be, yes.

**Mr St CLAIR**—I have to ask you, Amanda: why do you want Triple J?

**Ms Hamilton**—Because.

**Mr St CLAIR**—Because?

**Ms Hamilton**—Because it is a fantastic service that is tailored specifically for youth.

**CHAIR**—What is wrong with your local service?

**Ms Hamilton**—There is nothing wrong with our local service.

**CHAIR**—You want two?

**Ms Hamilton**—Well—

**CHAIR**—Are you greedy?

**Ms Hamilton**—No, I do not think we are greedy at all. While West FM does offer a very quality service for youth, it is a different service from that of Triple J. If there is a chance for that service to be offered here, why knock it back?

**CHAIR**—I see.

**Ms Hamilton**—It is just providing people with another choice. I am speaking from a service user's point of view. I am a consumer and if I have the choice of another radio station, then I am more than happy for that to happen.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Would you favour, say, the ABA conducting a hearing to enable you to justify the need for another radio station in this area? Would you be prepared to put your arguments and have the ABA make a decision, bearing in mind that you could undercut existing radio stations and one could actually go out of operation as a result of a new one coming in? How do you feel about that?

**Ms Hamilton**—I think that is fair. The local radio station obviously has concerns and they do need to be addressed. From the group's point of view, when we first decided to commence this project, a public meeting was held and all residents in the community were invited to attend. Vic and his family attended as well and raised their issues. Our views towards that are that, while they are providing some services that overlap—some of the music is the same—it is a completely different service in the end in that Triple J is not commercial. There is no advertising. There is no way that we will be detracting from advertising revenue that the local station would have been receiving. The only thing is that there may be a swap over from listeners.

**CHAIR**—But you will dilute their audience?

**Ms Hamilton**—Possibly, but if you offer a quality service your people will stick with you.

**CHAIR**—Did you have to raise money to get that re-transmission facility?

**Ms Hamilton**—Yes, we fundraised some money ourselves, but we have also put in a funding application to the Jupiters Casino gaming community benefit fund.

**CHAIR**—How much will it cost you to do that?

**Ms Hamilton**—The equipment is \$10,000. Then there is probably another \$2,000 in legal costs, licence applications and things like that.

**CHAIR**—So it is about a \$12,000 package?

**Ms Hamilton**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Now, could I speak to Lawrence Cremin?

**Mr Cremin**—I actually did not intend speaking. I just put my name down in case I did. I am from the Remote Area Planning and Development Board. As I said, it was not my intention necessarily to speak—I just put my name down in case I did—but, as I have got the microphone, I better say something, I suppose. I am supportive of everything that has been said by the two proponents here—the ABC and the commercial station.

To answer your question, as well as the disinclination of the public to speak because of being recognised there is also the fact that during any talkback program in the morning—between five and 11—most of them are out in the paddock. They have got their radios, but they are not in a position to make a phone call. I know that happens to me sometimes, too, in the car. I will be driving along and something will really get up my nose, but there is nothing I can do about it because I am too far away.

As for the coverage and the use of the radios that we have got out here, I have some very strong feelings about that. They are absolutely necessary to our communities. The thought that our commercial station may be lost because of an extension of licences or a broader pattern frightens the life out of me, too. That radio is extremely valuable to us out here.

With regard to the extension to Birdsville that Tom touched on, because the regional board that I run covers the area out as far as Birdsville—that is virtually the same area that Vic is covering with his radio station and almost the area that is being covered by the ABC—it came as a bit of a shock to me to think that people were looking at it from a Longreach point of view. I have always seen both of these stations as being regional stations. I think the Birdsville people see them that way, too. I do not think you would go into Windorah and hear them say, ‘No, that’s got nothing to do with us. That’s the Longreach station.’ We do get parochial out here, but I have never seen the radio stations in that light. That is really all I have to say.

**Mr St CLAIR**—At night-time, do you get a feed in from Brisbane, Sydney or somewhere else? Does that happen out in this country?

**CHAIR**—Gratuitous coverage?

**Mr St CLAIR**—I find that out in the country late at night in my car I can turn my radio on and pick up Sydney or wherever—1,500 kilometres away.

**Mr Cremin**—I avoid driving at night now that I am getting older, for a start. If I am at home I am probably watching the TV set. The radio becomes important to me from the hours of 5 a.m. until probably about 6 p.m. So I really cannot comment on the night programs.

**CHAIR**—Are there any other services you want or are there any other services you want from your existing providers? You must sit back sometimes and say, ‘Gee, I wish we had a such and such.’ It might be a book reading. It might be a review of the books available in the book stores of Longreach. I would not know. In our area—I do not go for it in any big way—a

woman comes on who is a clairvoyant. I think it is all mumbo jumbo, but a lot of people like it. Are there any programs that either of the two stations could provide that you would like to see?

**Mr Cremin**—No, I believe the service we are getting at the moment is fairly comprehensive. I am not going to get involved in whether the races should be called on Saturday or not but, no, I find the programs comprehensive. I do spend a lot of time in a car or in an aeroplane and I can change over to 540 in the aeroplane if I need to. I find the services totally comprehensive. If there is a fault it is not with the radios. One of the things we have out here is misinformation being fed in, particularly during wet periods, when the RACQ is about two weeks out of date with the information that they have given us.

**CHAIR**—That is the sort of thing we want to hear.

**Mr Cremin**—There are issues like that, but it is not the fault of the radio.

**CHAIR**—In terms of the emergency service response that we saw in New South Wales, while we acknowledge that the cyclone response is a well-oiled machine, what about bushfires, road conditions, floods, road closures and accidents on highways? Is the mechanism good enough?

**Mr Cremin**—No, but, once again, it is not the fault of the radio stations. It is the information that they are being fed. The local government councils out here own these.

**CHAIR**—Is there an RACQ office here?

**Mr Cremin**—No.

**CHAIR**—Tom, do you only take that afternoon feed on regional radio? If there are a lot of road conditions, do you do a separate in-house one?

**Mr Harwood**—Yes. If there is something dramatic happening we do it local. When we had the flooding in February we were on air all night locally. We had one other person with us and we stayed on air throughout the whole night. The problem we had, as Lawrie has alluded to, was getting accurate and worthwhile information. The flood desk at the weather bureau, for example, closed down overnight. This is when the water in Longreach was approaching its record height.

**CHAIR**—Which office do you come under?

**Mr Harwood**—The bureau in Brisbane. It was closed for the night. We were there, ready to broadcast information and to keep people informed, and we made a point of staying on air all night. But the last river height reading we had was from 9 o'clock at night. This is at 3 o'clock or 4 o'clock in the morning. We could get nothing more until 6 o'clock in the morning. Similarly, we gave up on the RACQ road report because, in spite of all of the talk about how it was going to be improved and be so much better, we still found that they were running two weeks behind. You would have conflicting reports. One part of the report would say that the road was open, the next part would say that it was closed and the next part would say that it was open.

**CHAIR**—We will talk to the bureau about this. I have been monitoring this at home in recent times just to see how good it is. On the Internet the Bureau of Meteorology offers the BoM service. You can click onto ‘radar’ and see all of the storms and rain depressions in your immediate area. But do they have an automatic river height as well?

**Mr Harwood**—They have river height bulletins, which are updated every hour. It depends. Some places take manual readings; some places take automatic.

**CHAIR**—Automatic readings?

**Mr Harwood**—We have found in the past that the difficulty with the manual readings is that a person on a property who is responsible for taking the reading—say, Rhonda White at Retreat on the Barcoo—can take, when it is really wet, more than an hour to get to the river and more than an hour to get back home again to make that phone call to report the height. So you cannot be expecting people to be out there every hour doing the latest updates. By the same token, if there are people whose job it is to get that information out and to analyse what is available—

**CHAIR**—But could you not put on the computer the time of the last reading, even if it was automated and was running through Brisbane through the Bureau of Meteorology?

**Mr Harwood**—We tap into it through the Internet. That is no problem. The bulletins are there—they happen automatically—but the information is not being updated. As I say, with the Thompson situation in February we knew the water was rising but we did not know by how much or how fast.

**CHAIR**—We will take up that point with the bureau—it is a good point—and with the RACQ. We will ask them to comment.

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—What was the other organisation? You said something that the councils control?

**Mr Cremin**—The board that I run belongs to the local government council. I was just having a bit of a shot at the information they occasionally do not provide, too. That is one that we can handle locally. But the RACQ one borders on dangerous at times. I was in Cloncurry during the flooding at the beginning of last year and I was getting constant reports that the Richmond to Winton road was open. That goes right across a blacksoil plain. We had had about three inches of rain. A tourist not aware of the local situation who tried to get through that road could have spent the next fortnight there and nobody would have known they were there. It borders on dangerous when we get reports that are so out of date.

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—How do we fix this? I felt, until I had been told the weather bureau’s information desk closed down overnight during a flood here, that the weather bureau was as virtuous as the driven snow and it was the dreadful syndicated radio stations that were failing the system. But you are telling me that there is a problem here. How do we overcome this? Have we not got enough weather spotters, or river spotters or whatever, on consignment? This is a side issue to the inquiry, but it is very important.

**Mr Cremin**—I think it is a matter of staff training and making them familiar with areas. My wife rang up from Windorah about three or four years ago and said, ‘I have just had a problem with my car. Can you tell me where the nearest RACQ point is?’ She was wondering if there was a garage in Winton, or something. They said, ‘Yes, there is one in Quilpie if you could go down there.’ Quilpie is 200 kilometres away. It is lack of training in the centres where this information is being referred to. They do not realise the consequences of not relaying appropriate information.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—There is another angle to this. At Bathurst, I think it is, they have what they call a local emergency committee, which consists of people from the local radio station, police and other organisations. If there is any breakdown in communications, that group sorts it out. Maybe something like that here would be appropriate.

**CHAIR**—Do you have one of those here?

**Mr Blackwood**—We do indeed: there is a counter-disaster organisation and the SES who meet very frequently here during times of difficulty. The chairman mentioned before bushfires and those sorts of emergencies, but by far our greatest need is during times of flood. Tom alluded to it earlier. The information that we get from listeners we find to be far more accurate and more useful to other people listening than that which comes from a statewide organisation. So simply the advent of mobile phones, which Laurie’s organisation has had a lot to do with—the installation in all of our towns out here—has meant that people can come to a difficulty on the roads and ring both of us. In fact, that happens on a very frequent basis—to both the ABC and us—and we can disseminate that information immediately.

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—Do you also feed it back down the line to the RACQ and the weather bureau? You do not do that?

**Mr Blackwood**—No. I know what Tom does and I will let him answer that question, but we are involved with buying a news program from Sky Radio, which is the owner of 4BC in Brisbane. We take their news service from 5 a.m. until 10 p.m., which is a Brisbane based or Queensland based service. Whenever an event of national or statewide importance takes place here, we feed that information to them and they disseminate it, which is far more effective in getting the message out. I suspect Tom will tell you exactly the same story.

But I will answer just two other questions before I hand over to Tom. Stuart asked a little earlier about gratuitous or fortuitous coverage. Yes, it does—overnight. For instance, 4RO in Rockhampton—990 AM—is as listenable in Longreach after the sun goes down as our signal is, and that is 700 kilometres away. I would love to know how they do it.

**Mr St CLAIR**—That takes your market?

**Mr Blackwood**—Not really. It is an overnight service and most of our advertising revenue is generated between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. So, no, it does not, but it is available. Who cares? It is another opportunity for people to listen to outside news.

**CHAIR**—I will have to close this down. We have got a problem. My colleague Mr Mossfield is governed by the night curfew in Sydney. If our plane does not take off from here at 10 to six,

he spends the night in either Brisbane or Canberra, which he does not want to do. So on that note, I will ask for our last speaker, Elizabeth Allen, to make her presentation.

**Miss Allen**—I am like Lawrie; I put my name down but I was not expecting to talk. I work for Agforce, Queensland, and we are an agropolitical organisation. We represent sheep growers, cattle growers and grain growers across the region.

**CHAIR**—What is the name of your organisation?

**Miss Allen**—Agforce. I cover an area from Blackall to Weipa. I have to commend, first of all, both Vic and Tom for the excellent service that they provide. I think a lot of people in this area really take for granted the kind of service that they get, because they cover a hell of a lot of area, and you do not get it up in north Queensland, that is for sure. But I know, having come from a property background, how much we rely on the radio service, because you are gone from 5 o'clock in the morning and are at home at half past seven. You never see a newspaper and you are lucky to read the *Country Life* maybe seven or eight days after it has been published. So you rely for 90 per cent of all of your information on the radio service, whether it is—

**CHAIR**—What are the specifics that you would like to see improved: (a) at a national level, and (b) at a local level?

**Miss Allen**—In my job now, I think it would be the weather and especially the road closures. Because I am on the road all the time, I am also awaiting what is open and what is not. I have been turned back many a time when I have heard the road is open when, in fact, it is not and I have had to detour maybe 700 or 800 kilometres to get home when I could have taken another route. So I think, from my own job perspective, that is especially important for me.

**CHAIR**—Can we get a letter from you on that to the secretariat?

**Miss Allen**—Sure.

**CHAIR**—We need to tie these things down. I do not think you need to repeat what Mr Cremin has said. We got the message, but I would like you to document some of your experiences in one or two pages to the secretariat. Jan will give you the address before she goes.

**Miss Allen**—Yes. From a local perspective, I think it is important to know what is going on in local meetings—even employment opportunities. Whatever goes on in this community, Vic covers on the radio. You do not need to go anywhere else to get any information, because you can guarantee that you will hear it on the radio.

**CHAIR**—Do you do the CHR program and things like that?

**Miss Allen**—Yes. And we put on all of our local meetings so you know what is going on. So you do have the opportunity, even if you have not read a paper, to know what is going on. It is an absolutely vital service, I think, especially for those people who live on properties.

**CHAIR**—All right. We have got two minutes left.



**Mr Pidgeon**—Can I just add something about the floodwaters?

**CHAIR**—Just a quick one. We have two minutes left, then we really have to go.

**Mr Pidgeon**—I was on holidays on the coast for five weeks over the Christmas break. For the whole five-week period, all I heard was the flood warning for the Thompson River. For five weeks. Longreach was not flooded for five weeks. So that was totally inaccurate. But it was also accurate: the Thompson River was flooded but the Thompson River is a big river. So by saying a flood warning for the Thompson River, it is fairly imprecise.

**CHAIR**—In other words, that could be damaging to the community.

**Mr Pidgeon**—Absolutely. No-one would travel through Longreach while—

**CHAIR**—We just heard the Stockman's Hall of Fame tell us, when we were doing our arts outreach this afternoon, that they had a very bad January.

**Mr Pidgeon**—On the coast you are hearing that there was a flood warning for the Thompson River for the whole time I was away.

**CHAIR**—And it was not specific enough to which area.

**Mr Pidgeon**—That is correct.

**Mr Andrews**—Can I just add to that. I was away during the period of that flooding out here. I was looking at the web site every day to see what was going on and the web site says, or the weather reports say, 'Thompson River flooded.' The Thompson is a big river and it does carry a long way. You do not know whether it is up Muttaborra way or here.

**CHAIR**—We will raise that with the Bureau of Meteorology.

**Mr Andrews**—It needs road closure information, not 'Thompson River flooded'.

**CHAIR**—And the RACQ. On that note, I regret having to do this—

**Mr Pidgeon**—I have just one more comment. I know the dreaded Triple J is probably going to come to this community. Can I add a comment. The language on that program is atrocious. What makes the outback unique is we have certain jargon and a way of speaking. It is certainly not portrayed on that program. That program uses the foulest language I have heard in stockyards, meatworks and shearing sheds. I think it needs to be cleaned up.

**CHAIR**—On that note, could I thank the Longreach Shire Council for the use of its premises here today. I thank Rosemary Champion, who helped put this together today. I thank the members of the public, in particular the two radio stations for making themselves available. We will take on board what you have said. It helps colour what we are doing. It fulfils our promise to come back to Longreach.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr St Clair**):

That the committee authorises publication of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 5.15 p.m.**