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 House of Representatives Standing Committee on
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House of Representatives Standing
 Committee on Communications,
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Submission No: 161

Date Received: 27/10/00

Secretary: Janet Holmes

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The House Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts.
 Parliament House
 Canberra

Dear Sirs,

Radio Industry Enquiry

We wish to put before you for your consideration the following matters pertaining to public radio broadcasting in this part of Australia.

For some fifty years up until 1994 the people of the northern parts of Western Australia relied entirely upon the shortwave radio service VLW6 for news reports, sports, entertainment etc. In 1994 the ABC advised rather cursorily that the station was to be "shut down for a trial period". It transpired, after exhaustive enquiries, that the "trial closure" was brought on by a number of factors, including, the equipment was old and was too expensive to replace, the television reception for the good people of suburban Perth who lived around the transmitter was being compromised by the emissions from the station, not sufficient people responded objecting to the closure and a number of other fairly spurious, but no doubt well documented, arguments as to why it should cease.

When the aggrieved and newly dispossessed people of these parts began to protest it was quite alarming to find that many of the broadcasting fraternity were unable to grasp the notion that residents in remote homesteads, mining camps, mustering camps, etc, did not have unlimited 24 hour access to 240 volt AC power. The advice they were receiving from the broadcasting people was to the effect... buy a dish and a decoder, plug it into the power and you're away! One group of visitors from Sydney left this district in a jet aircraft quite unconvinced that all the names of station homesteads on their map were not, in fact, well

populated towns of some regional significance all connected to some sort of regional power grid!

We were given an undertaking at one stage that the shortwave station, if it was not restarted, would be replaced by a substantial ABC AM transmitter located fairly centrally in Western Australia.

In the end, of course, the people of this area were dudded by the broadcasting professionals, the shortwave transmitter was not re-activated and no new AM transmitter arrived. It was seemingly an exercise in cynicism from the outset.

We ask very simply, and with respect, - Is it possible that either one of these services could be brought into being for the benefit and well-being of the people of central and northern Western Australia?

Yours faithfully,

M.T. Howieson.
Chief Executive Officer.

October 24, 2000

Shire of Meekatharra
PO Box 129
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October 24, 2000.