

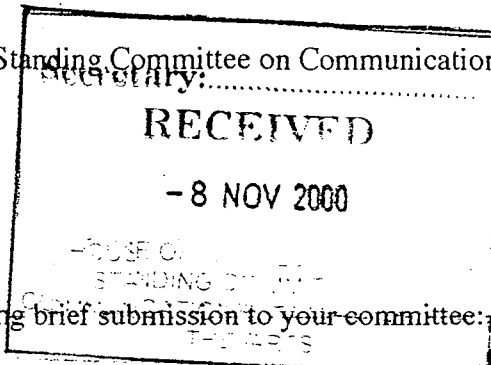
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To the Chairperson,  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport  
and the Arts  
Parliament House,  
Canberra, ACT 2600



Dear Mr Neville,

I wish to make the following brief submission to your committee:

I am not qualified to comment on the technical aspects of this inquiry, particularly in regard to the 'new technologies', but - as a one-time resident of a small town in Tasmania and, for the past fifteen years, of a small town in South Australia - I am acutely aware of (and fully qualified to comment on) the value of *non-commercial radio services* in country Australia. This experience is from time to time reinforced as I travel by road between Adelaide and Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane.

Thus, I want to challenge the assumption embodied in the Minister's remarks, on his introducing the inquiry, to the effect that it is 'particularly *commercial* radio' that plays 'a vital role in regional life' in Australia. In my experience, local commercial radio does no more than reinforce parochial values (including insularities and prejudices), whereas the services provided by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (local radio, Radio National and ABC FM) is often the only source of national and international information and opinion - at least in any depth - and including all media.

It is almost exclusively to the ABC that country communities look to providing them with anything beyond local gossip, advertising and sporting results. Broader cultural values are becoming more important in country areas as children these days usually learn more about them at school than their parents did. One reason why young people are leaving country towns for the big cities is that their broader cultural needs are rarely met adequately at home. With increasing leisure-time become available to all of us, aspects of culture beyond sport are being demanded more. Providing them via radio and television programmes will undoubtedly help control the vandalism and drug-taking perpetrated by frustrated youth (not only in country towns, of course).

I know a number of country people who praise ABC radio highly. It is a common practice for farmers working agricultural machinery from dawn till dark to tune in to ABC radio programmes for the whole time. They get not only relaxing entertainment and education from these programmes, but also up-to-date commercial and other information they would otherwise never receive.

I hope that the above will be of value to your committee.

Yours faithfully,

*Donald Rich*

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