

House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Communications,
Transport and the Arts

Submission No: 254

Date Received: 31/1/01

Secretary: Peter Greenaway

Representation to

Inquiry into Regional Radio Services

PUBLIC HEARING

at

TAMWORTH

Country Music Capital

31/1/01



Presenter: *Peter Greenaway*

Contents

1. Background of presenter & general comments.
2. Centralised ownership / 45+ not catered for.
3. Community Service in Emergency situations.
4. Rural downturn / Tourism ramifications
5. Summary
6. Appendix
7. Letters to the Editor

Background of Presenter: *Peter Greenaway*

This representation is done as a private citizen, who has a ten year background in the aggregated television market, since its inception in both regional Queensland & Northern, New South Wales. With this background and my involvement in Tourism as a Board Member of Tourism Tamworth, Past Board Member of the Australian Country Music Foundation, & committee member of the Tamworth Country Theatre, I feel that I have some comments, thoughts and experience that can contribute to this inquiry.

The information included in this submission isn't directed toward the local stations or their staff but to the system that has evolved.

Clearly we are being treated as second class citizens with radio services.

1. The quality in regional radio has dropped off markedly. Since networking began last February.
2. We are being fed information & content that is city based that is neither representative of our rural cultural environment or is our choice.
3. We have no professional commercial alternative.
4. We are entitled to the same services and standards that are available to every Australian. Currently with radio we are not receiving those services.

As stated earlier we are being treated as second class citizens by the commercial provider

Key points are outlined in the following - for the enquiry.

Centralised Ownership

The allowance of ownership of both commercial stations i.e.; AM & FM is neither competitive or conducive to programming. Listeners and advertisers do not have a commercial choice. This should be addressed by A.C.C.C.

The following chart indicates our New England / North West ownership position.

Town/City	AM	FM
Armidale	2AD	2NEB
Grafton	2CLR	2GF
Dubbo	2DU	2ZOO
Mudgee	2GEE	2MG
Inverell	2GEM	2NZ
Gunnedah	2GGG	2MO
Newcastle	2HD	2NEW
Taree	2MVB	2RE
Murwillumbah	2MW	2ZZZ
Parke	2PK	2ROK
Tamworth	2TM	2TTT
Moree	2VM	2NOW
Gympie	4GY	4NNN

Target Demographics

It is widely accepted that the FM stations attract the under 25/30 years age group.

When the Tamworth station justified the dropping of Country Music Radio, they stated that they were not interested in the demographics beyond 45 years. (see appendix 1)

Clearly the age group was not going to be catered for by the local FM or local AM stations.

“Mr Morrison said the decision to drop CMR was made because the format was considered incompatible with network plans to target listeners 18-45 years in Sydney, Newcastle and country areas of NSW and southern Queensland.” NDL: 1/1/00

This in effect removed 40% of people aged 45+ from receiving music to suit their taste.

Community Service in an Emergency

It is documented that many towns have been saved from disaster or assisted in the reduction of disasters because of the local radio stations.

The ABC recently in David Evans, Saturday Magazine recorded the history of 2VM Moree & how it was born out of floods.

A group of concerned citizens applied for & built that station because of devastating floods that hit Moree the previous year.

Inverell 2NZ has long been regarded as a station that has saved life & assets over the years because of rapidly rising water levels that the station regularly updated

2TM was in the same category until it began networking out of Sydney.

In the recent floods at the start of the floods over the weekend, their Sydney newsroom put the weather reports to air indicating that "Tamworth would have light showers tomorrow", No one was present in the 2TM/Fm newsroom to indicate otherwise. No flood warnings were given as the flood waters rose and engulfed the town.

In earlier press releases & information to media the locals were assured this would not happen. I would suggest that the inquiry check Media Monitoring Services for the flood period in question & marry them up with flood situation at the same time. The earlier assurances by Broadcasting Operators Group were not being met.

The S.E.S also indicated in some quarters that they gave up on 2TM because they couldn't get through to the Sydney Newsroom. Further clarification should be sought from the S.E.S, If the information isn't already to hand. Surely the local station has a duty of care to the local community and to interstate truck drivers going through the area.

My understanding is that the local radio station original license was given on the basis of community service in emergency situations. The lack of early action by 2TM didn't meet this condition (if it is part of their license.)

Rural Downturn / Tourism Ramifications

Northern NSW, New England Tablelands & Tamworth in particular, have been hit with a rural downturn.

The regional centres of Tamworth, Armidale, Glen Innes, Tenterfield (the home of Federation) & Gunnedah have been looking to Tourism to arrest this down turn & hopefully assist in the turnaround.

90% of tourists to these areas choose to drive to their new found rural tourism areas. They want to experience the rural & regional atmosphere. With the Broadcasting Operations Group owning all the commercial stations in the area all they receive is the culture they are trying to get away from.

On Moree/Inverell/Armidale/Tamworth/Gunnedah, basically we get;

- Monday to Friday, 9am to 12pm – Sydney radio
- Monday to Friday, 6pm to 6am – Sydney/Newcastle radio
- Saturday, 12noon to midnight – Sydney/Newcastle radio
- Sunday, midnight to 6am Monday – Sydney/Newcastle radio

The ABC isn't much better with the feeds from 12 midday till 6am. Again we don't have a choice for professional, quality & a demographic suitable station.

In the case of Tamworth – the Country Music Capital – one of the principle reasons people come to Tamworth, you can get a spasmodic fix of Australian Country Music from the local community stations. If you are lucky enough to tune into them at the right time. But they are only within the confines of the town boundary. You have to go back to the ABC or BOG stations where you have the choice of more Sydney / Newcastle & little of the local culture you were hoping to find.



Summary

In summary I would ask that these points be addressed in your review.

1. The monopoly of the Broadcasting Operators Group with commercial stations in the Northwest & New England, should be addressed & rectified.
2. The situation of two commercial radio stations AM/FM should be brought into line and modelled with television stations. i.e.; have 4 or 6 commercial licenses to stimulate competition. Three AM / Three FM.
3. Licenses should be granted on a basis not to disenfranchise people 45+ as has happened with B.O.G
4. Local & regional content should apply to a license. Television was correctly forced to have 55% Australian content. Local radio stations should have to air 55% local & regional content. Regional being New England North West – geographical area. If this isn't in a license it won't happen. Cheap Sydney / Newcastle talk-back will prevail.
5. Licenses have to have an emergency service requirement for local communities with contractible requirements. A local duty of care responsibility has to be included because of the nature of rural & regional life.

→ The industry wait
out itself out.
Regulation is needed.

→ ownership should be
Australian.

Appendix

going with own programming, music program is too costly an exercise to support from this station on its own.

"It's just not possible for a network to isolate stations and let them run their own programs," he said.

In the process CMR presenters Nick Erby, Brian Howard and Garry Coxhead were told that as of yesterday they were out of a job.

"It's hasn't been a good couple of days," said an emotional Mr Erby during the announcement at 2TM yesterday.

Mr Morrison said the decision to drop CMR was made because the format was considered incompatible with network plans to target listeners 18-45 years in Sydney, Newcastle and country areas of NSW and southern Queensland.

The restructuring of the Broadcast Operations Group will see all areas of operations streamlined within the 30 strong station network, however, Mr Morrison said there would be no more redundancies.

"This program has been dropped because over the last decade it has become increasingly unviable," Mr Morrison said.

"Staff and operational costs have increased substantially, while advertising revenue has diminished to the point where the program generates insuffi-



2TM station manager Bill Morrison and the face and voice of Country Music Radio, Nick Erby (right), break the news at a press conference yesterday. Country music, which has been an important part of 2TM for many years, has been axed.

cient revenue to cover even the smallest portion of its own costs," he said from a prepared statement.

He said night-time radio did not attract any particular advertising clientele with some of the major sponsors such as Shell having dropped off over the past six to seven years.

Mr Erby presented a brave face to the press yesterday saying he planned after 12 years simply "to pack up and move out".

He admitted he had been aware of the pending loss with yesterday's announcement being a "formalisation of plans".

"It's been really emotional, this is my life, I've been to every festival, weathered all the debates, discussions, highs and lows.

"It's an emotional time from the point of view of having been a part of this place for a long period of time.

"Obviously I'm going to sit down and work out what I'll do with my life, but it will involve the promotion of country music.

"I see it as when one door closes another door opens," he said.

Mr Erby said while he was not disappointed or distressed about his personal future he was concerned about the future of country music.

"It's a wait and see situation, country music is ever evolving, it may look slow but it's established and comfortable," he said.

Mr Morrison said he did not believe the loss of CMR would have a great effect on the success

or otherwise of the annual Country Music Festival. He said from a personal point of view there would be a "gap" there.

"I'm a realist and the reasons for the demise are quite valid," he said.

"The decision was not taken until Australia Day and the particular presenters were not made aware of their future until yesterday (Sunday morning).

"It was important that any announcement we made did not overshadow the success of the Festival," he said.

Mr Morrison said that although 12 hours of daily programming and Saturday and

Sunday afternoons would now be replaced by a relayed service from Sydney, it would not affect the station's role in providing "localism".

"Local programming like regional news, weather, community service, and emergency services support will always be of paramount importance and will in no way be diminished by the current changes.

"There are no more plans to source other programs through 2SM, we will be able to retain all of our staff and there will be no more redundancies.

Continued page 2

COMMUNITY REACTION: INSIDE

THE THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR

Rene Russo
Pierce Brosnan

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but they don't deliver a lot of promises.

"Unless he comes up with a plan, it's all rhetoric and the bush is sick of

"It has had a negative impact in the bush in regards to jobs as Telstra jobs have vanished," she said.

rats in the Senate won't support it, is also saying 'if we don't sell Telstra you can forget it,' he said.

While Mr Howard promised

had contracted his deputy, John Anderson, who "has gone to great lengths to deny any loss of Federal Government services from regional Australia," Mr

row" was more about the general than the specifics. Country people don't want pity but they do want equity and fairness."

RADIO NETWORK SHAKE-UP

Shock and horror show

By SHARON HALING

SHOCK, horror and disbelief were the common reactions to news yesterday that 2TM had axed Country Music Radio from its program schedule.

Country music promoter and recording artist Desree-Iona Crawford said the fans she had spoken to about the demise of CMR (formerly Hoedown) felt it was a "terribly rude" way for the station to go about it.

"After years of listening they weren't given the courtesy of being officially told until it was too late to do anything about it," Ms Crawford said.

Ms Crawford said she felt it would be detrimental to the country music industry to lose yet another outlet for performers' music to be played.

"All we have now are the satellite stations and the community FM stations. Most community stations' signals aren't strong enough to cover a wide enough area," she said.

"Who now is going to cover the Awards? Who will cover Star Maker? Who will cover Buttercup Open House?"

Tamworth Songwriters' Association president Bev Daniel expressed similar concern for both country music fans and artists.

"I'm actually horrified because I don't know if they intend to play any country music at all," she said.

"When people come here they expect to not only see the shows but turn on the radio and hear country music. It almost seems as if someone is trying to take our country music image away," she said.

Homegrown performer Felicity reacted to the news with disbelief. "It just can't be

possible. We have to have it because Tamworth is the country music capital," she said.

She said the program had always been supportive of her music and it would be a loss for the whole industry.

"I grew up listening to Hoedown at nights. I hope they can sort it out," she said.

Nash Chambers, formerly of the Dead Ringer Band, also expressed disappointment.

"Anything like that is a loss and it's very hard to get country music played on the radio as it is," he said.

Local country music photographer June Underwood said the move was "a step backwards" for country music and the city as a whole.

She said the program's popularity was evident in comments of users of her website.

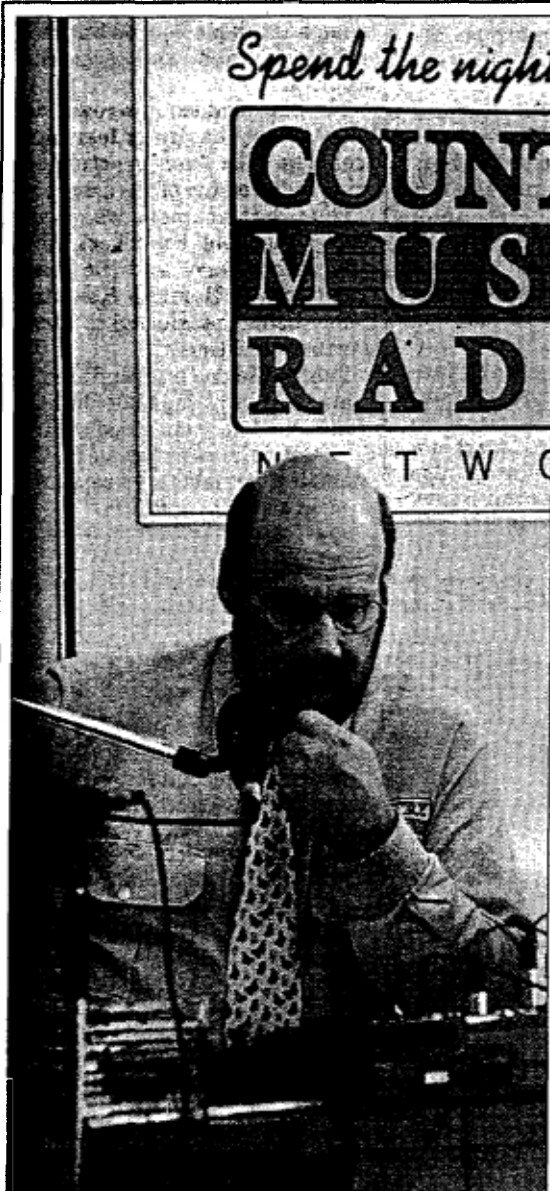
"I had 179 people log onto the website last night. Old people say that they can't sleep at night and turn on the radio to relax, and others right out west tune in and listen to Nick Erby."

Ms Underwood said the success of her country music calendar this Festival could be also largely attributed to support from CMR.

"The calendar went crazy this year because of feedback from CMR. But it's not just about me; we're taking away part of the teamwork that's made Tamworth so successful," she said.

"I am very, very sad."

Tamworth mayor James Treloar described the closure as a



Nick Erby, a passionate promoter of country music, in action during one of his radio shows during the country music festival.

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2TM decision 'great blow'

Story: GARY RUDDICK

ONE of the giants of country music said yesterday he was "extremely disappointed" that Tamworth radio station 2TM had severed its ties with country music.

The legendary Slim Dusty was commenting from his Sydney home about the shock announcement on Monday, January 31 by 2TM general manager Bill Morrison that the night-time program Country Music Radio had been killed by parent company 2SM.

Slim, the chairman of the Country Music Association of Australia, said the decision was a "great blow" to the many thousands of country fans scattered throughout Australia.

"It proves the danger of monopolies having such control . . . now big companies like 2SM with all their country outlets can pipe their metropolitan programs through to the country," he said.

Slim said that when he was a young boy and later when he and wife Joy McKeon launched their career in 1954, local radio stations such as 2TM were "the window to the outside world" and were often extremely keen to promote country music.

"2TM used to play country music

five or six days a week and so did the Grafton station," he said.

While not optimistic that militant action would achieve much, he thought those companies which advertised on 2TM could "have a rethink" about where their advertising dollars should be spent.

"Local advertisers should try and fight back and withhold their advertising," he said.

However, he said he could not blame Mr Morrison or anyone else at 2TM as the decision had been made by 2SM, owned by Bill Caralis.

"But I knew about it four days before the announcement was made because I was out at 2TM being interviewed in the last week of the festival and after the taping ended, I was told something like: 'Well, that's it . . . it'll soon be all over'," Slim said.

"I was very disappointed the listeners weren't told officially - before the plug was pulled - that Country Music Radio was finished on 2TM. I think the fans deserved better."

He believed it was "maybe possible" that a powerful FM station would "pick up" on country music because there was a ready-made audience of tens of thousands of fans who would respond with great enthusiasm.



Happier days . . . Slim Dusty receives another Golden Guitar.

DLWC in strife with councillor

QUIRINDI Shire



Police call for update

BUSINESS keyholders have been asked to update records in response to legislative

... heavily on syndicated programming from its sister station 2SM in Sydney.

Company director Mark Chapman Smith said yesterday he would like to see a third commercial radio licence introduced and two more narrowcast licences in Tamworth.

He said 4GG Heartland FM's low powered narrowcast signal, transmitted from West Tamworth, could be picked up within a 2km boundary of the city but due to its strength was being interfered with by the TAB station on the next frequency (87.6 FM).

Mr Chapman Smith said the station required between 250 to 2000 watts of power (as provided with commercial licences) to penetrate buildings and to reach "the nooks and crannies".

"The only option is for Tamworth to stand up and ask for three commercial stations and five narrowcast stations," Mr Chapman Smith said.

Meanwhile, Tamworth's community radio station 2YOUFM 88.9 has been angered by claims Tam-

... commercial licences available in Tamworth.

"For the last 50 years the ABA has refused to issue new licences and Tamworth has been left with a one watt country music service.

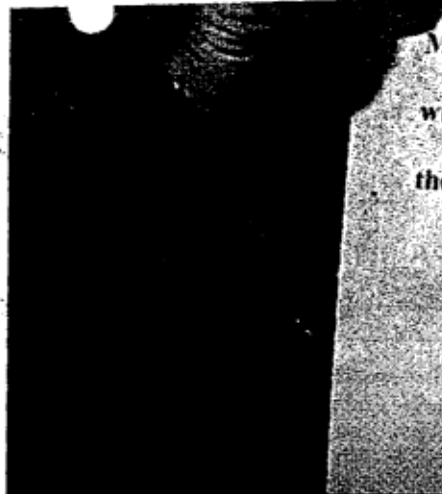
"This is all the Australian Broadcasting Authority can authorise to new service providers of different styles (in our case country music)," he said.

4GG Heartland FM broadcasts on a narrowcast low frequency signal alongside two other narrowcast FM stations, TAB 87.6 and Western Visitor 88.0 FM.

"People in most suburbs should be able to hear 4GG Heartland FM if they tune to 87.8 with a digital radio but in the centre of town, the TAB signal will probably over power it," he said.

"We have only one watt and cannot provide enough coverage to justify paying a presenter of Nick Erby's (ex-CMR presenter) level, it's not viable."

• **Unhappy listeners.**
See Letters, pages 10-11.



Manilla and District Country Music Association Inc president Kerry Blinman with the petition protesting about the axing on Country Music Radio.

Manilla protest about axing

Story: MEGAN DIXON
Photo: ROBERT CHAPPEL

MANILLA and District Country Music Association Inc is not taking the axing of Country Music Radio from the airwaves lightly.

The group has rallied together to send a message expressing members' anger and concern direct to the management of Radio Station 2TM.

As early as Tuesday a petition was

being distributed throughout Manilla and was met with encouraging support from shop owners and business people. The group has also begun to approach Tamworth City Council to stage a free concert in Bicentennial Park as a people's protest against the decision.

When Manilla and District Country Music Association Inc president Kerry Blinman listened to her favourite radio station 2TM in the car on Monday night,

she sensed something was wrong.

She thought to herself "who's that on the radio" when she didn't recognise the announcer's voice and after hearing a couple of songs that "weren't country" the penny dropped.

A friend hinted that radio 2TM may pull out of country music just the day before, but she didn't expect the change so soon.

Continued next page

SEATS TO THE SYDNEY OLYMPICS: FIND OUT HOW? SEE PAGE 3

THE THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR

Rene Russo
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Sydney traffic? Who cares

NO PRIZES for guessing what the hot topic of discussion is in Country Music Capital this week, folks.

The Sydney Morning Herald's page one story on Wednesday, February 2, said it all: Monday was the day Country Music Radio died in Tamworth.

Meetings have been conducted all over the city since the long-running radio program's fate was seemingly sealed with Nick Erby's grim announcement on Sunday night last.

Turning on the radio after 6pm this week was like a blow to the heart for so many listeners who have enjoyed the program since the days it was known as Hoedown and magnificent people like John Minson and Bob "Catfish" Corbett were welcomed into our homes, cars and trucks, via the radio and that freakish signal of 2TM.

Petitions have been signed. Talkfests have been conducted. Even the mayor James Treloar has announced Tamworth City Council will apply for its own radio licence.

The fact is, Tamworth and regional NSW people don't really give two hoots about how the traffic is flowing in Pitt St, Sydney. We want to hear country music when we turn on the radio in Country Music Capital and we want to know what temperature it is after dark here in town – not in Sydney.

Whatever the outcome, it's going to be one hell of a show in coming weeks right here in Tamworth. Keep reading The Leader



Oh, what a Festival it was! Many are saying it was the biggest ever (they say that every year), but I really think this year they could be right!

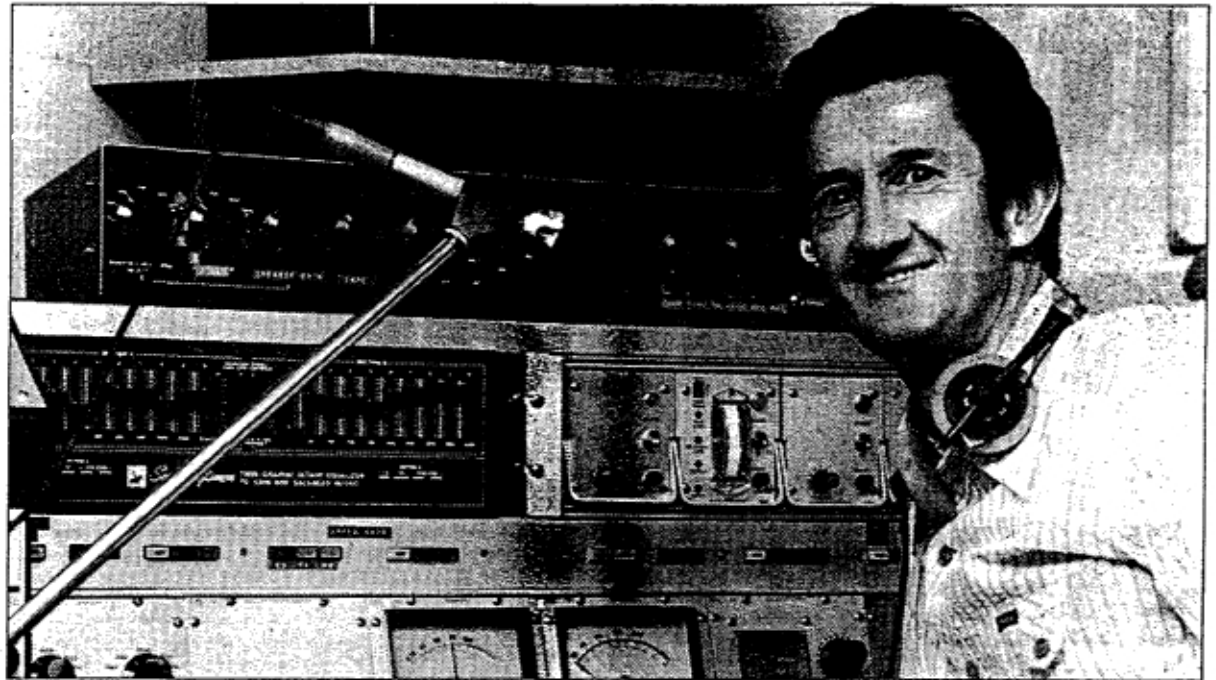
The Carlton Countdown, introduced on Friday, January 14, effectively counted down the days to the start of the 2000 Festival.

Venues right across the city put on shows for the earlybirds and those who just couldn't wait for the music to start happening.

While the home-hosting organisations say the Countdown was a bit of a fizzer, the moteliars in town have claimed occupancy rates rose by 15 to 20 per cent for that week prior to the Festival.

The Festival itself was full of highlights – from super-successful shows such as the sellout Jo Dee Messina concerts through to Jim Haynes' Big Bush Brekky turnouts where 1000 people was the norm each morning, lining up for bacon, eggs and laughter on the side.

New Zealand's Topp Twins made an astonishing debut at the festival in the Lyric Theatre and the Young Stars of Country had capacity audiences each performance. The combined talents of Beccy Cole, Darren Coggan, Felicity and Josh Arnold were very much appreciated by the



The way it was in 1981 – John "Mr Hoedown" Minson was excited at the prospect that the radio program he'd headed since 1965 would be transmitted by direct line to 4WK Toowoomba-Darling Downs, from January 5, 1981. This week, Country Music Radio was axed as it was found to be unprofitable and didn't fit the station's format.

shop near the Longyard Hotel, Kelly and Marian Dixon set up camp just near the big guitar with their camp-oven kitchens, bringing the taste of the outback to townies.

Each night their campfire concerts attracted somewhere around the 400 to 500 mark, with patrons sitting on the grass to hear the balladeers in action.

The Longyard was overflowing with Festivalites enjoying such shows as Bold and Specky with

like Shanley Del and Genni and John Kane – and who could say a Bushwackers show is not a must-see event!

The Pub was an exceptional venue for quality shows and surprises – like Normie Rowe popping up on stage during Leslie Avril's gig there; The Mad Buggers Show with Chad Morgan, Peter Denahy, Greg Hayes and Grant Luhrs was a knockout as well as a sellout; Troy Cassar-Daley jumping up to have a play

dise each night and if you missed a session, it was your loss.

There's only one problem now. We'll have to go through 348 more sleeps until Festival 2001.

Thank goodness for the Tamworth RSL Club's weekly country music jamboree. It will help to tide us over until January next year. Any country artists travelling through Country Music Capital at a loose end on any Thursday night are more than

Home-grown radio has last la

Ella Riggert

THE era of networking national radio shows in Queensland could be coming to an end with listeners demanding entertaining regional content over Sydney-based programmes.

Programme directors claim Brisbane listeners want to laugh and be entertained above all else while Sydney and Melbourne audiences are still heavily drawn to talkback radio.

Queensland replacement programmes on 4BC for Sydney's Stan Zemanek and Brian Bury shows have already gone to air and received a "terrific response".

"Relayed and networked programmes haven't worked as anticipated," 4KQ promotions and marketing director Jennifer Gould said.

"It is cheaper to take programmes from Sydney and Melbourne but people aren't drawn to them.

"The ratings indicate listeners want announcers who know and love their city."

The battle for radio ratings is toughest at breakfast, with Triple M's Sammy and Dean slugging it out with both the B105 Morning Crew and 4KQ's Kim and Laurel.

Their outrageous antics aren't new to Brisbane but programme directors know the mornings are when points are won and lost.

This week a man has been chained to a shopping trolley, another confined to a wheelie bin and a distraught car-lover ordered to strip his Commodore to the ground, then reconstruct it, outside this weekend's motorshow venue - all for the chance to win \$1040.

On the rival station, thousands of

listeners are glued to their radio listening for an obscure "secret sound" with the jackpot running at more than \$10,000.

B105 programme director Grant Tothill said the secret success to the top-rating B105 Morning Crew, now in its 11th year, was their "work ethic, dedication and consistent ability to be great entertainers".

Mr Tothill said the content of a programme was far more important than where the show was produced.

B105's teen cult leader Ugly Phil has mammoth national ratings. Each night the 38-year-old Sydney announcer takes to the airwaves with thousands of pubescent fans clinging to his every word as he counts down the nation's top 30 songs.

Mr Tothill said the programme had worked very well in Brisbane - partly due to the design of the show, which allowed "local windows" to be interjected.

Triple M programme director Dave Wilson said while Triple M and B105 were "creatively competitive", the stations were working hard to create a duopoly in Brisbane by cornering both ends of the market.

"We are the working person's kind of station - down to earth, on the level, easy to relate to, and no bells and whistles," he said.

4BC general manager Noel Roberts said the station had positioned itself as a talkback station but expected it would take up to another five years for it to become a force in Brisbane radio.

He said while the station would continue to take the John Laws and Alan Jones programmes from Sydney, "Brisbane's radio listeners were very parochial".



ROBIN BAILEY

Joined B105's morning crew in 1996 as a producer but swapped to the other side of the microphone two years ago to join Ian Skippen and Jamie Dunn in the city's most popular breakfast show.

QUEENS OF BREAKFAST RADIO

LAUREL EDWARDS

Has been the co-host of 4KQ's breakfast show for the past seven and-a-half years with Kim Mothershaw. Before she entered radio, she worked in television at Channel Seven and Nine.

SAMMY POWER

An eighth-generation Queenslander, he was imported by Triple M as the first host of its fast programme two years ago. He is expected to be a highly successful morning show host.

TOP FIVE OVERALL RADIO RATINGS

STATION	%
B105	22.7
Triple M	16.1
4KQ	11.8
4BC	8.9
4QR	8.3

Source: ACNielsen survey average for 1999



TOP FIVE BREAKFAST RATINGS

STATION	%
B105's Morning Crew	22.7
Triple M's Sammy and Dean	16.1
4KQ's Kim and Laurel	11.8
4QR	8.9
4BC	8.3

CM forgotten most of year

THE current community outrage which has evolved from the decision by 2TM to drop its long-running commitment to country music illustrates how much residents of the city and district value the country music industry and all that flow from it.

At this time, Tamworth is basking in the glory of another Country Music Festival – the best ever held, according to all concerned.

Tamworth residents have grown to appreciate the enormous benefits the Festival provides for the city. Not only does it provide an enormous economic boost but it also generates widespread tourism promotion of the city as Australia's Country Music Capital.

The axing of Country Music Radio from 2TM's local programming has angered many people for two reasons. The first is that the Country Music Capital has lost its Country Music Radio which a growing number of people have enjoyed and appreciated for more than three decades. Radio station 2TM is largely responsible for the Festival we enjoy today and our close links with the country music industry. People see the decision as 2TM abandoning the local community.

Secondly, the loss of Country Music Radio has reduced the local content on the "local" station

Programming from Sydney has replaced local content which, to many people, is unwelcome. Country people adopt "ownership" of local institutions – such as the local radio station, the local newspaper – and when the needs of the local community appear to be abandoned, outrage will always follow.

The events of the past few weeks serve as a reminder to Tamworth that its Festival and its association with the country music industry is hugely valuable.

Why, then, does Australia's Country Music Capital fail to enhance and develop its relationship and title?

For 11 months of the year, it barely rates a mention except among a handful of organisations and individuals. The Tamworth RSL Club, for example, has a monthly commitment to country music through the staging of its popular Country Music Jamboree.

Surely, country music and its growing popularity provides the city with enormous potential to further develop new opportunities that are not confined to one month of the year.

Community support of country music and all that it brings to the city is enormously strong. This deep feeling of community pride should be enhanced to develop our tourism potential and to ensure that Tamworth lives up to its reputation as Australia's Country Music Capital all year round.

Your Key Leader People

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Sports story enquiries

SPORTS EDITOR: Geoff Newling 67681234

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LETTERS to the

ATSIC didn't call protests

I HAVE not called for mass protests and an Olympic boycott, as reported in a number of major Australian newspapers.

The ATSIC board has no official policy on a boycott for the forthcoming Sydney Olympics or on the issue of protests.

I do not support a boycott, and fellow commissioners I have talked to in recent times hold a similar view.

We do, however, respect the right of all Australians, indigenous and non-indigenous, to engage in peaceful protests should they so wish.

I am sure all ATSIC commissioners would join me in wishing all Australian athletes at the forthcoming Olympics the very best in their quest for honours at the games.

I was heartened to read in the press today that Kathy Freeman, ATSIC's Sportsperson of the Year, will be at the Olympics to "run the fastest 400m of my life".

My message to her is a simple one: Run Cathy, run.

Geoff Clark
chairman
Aboriginal and Torres
Strait
Islander Commission
Phillip, ACT

The Northern Daily Leader welcomes Letters to the Editor. Preference is given to letters kept to 250 words, be addressed to the Editor and sent to The Northern Daily, 525, Tamworth NSW 2340, or faxed to (02) 67667631, and include the writer's full name, address and a daytime number for verification purposes. Letters published will only carry the author's first initial, surname and town. Anonymous letters are unacceptable.

cast to Peel St or to those who stand in front to listen to them?

I noted a tremendous amount of control during the wonderful parade but no control of these noise boxes during the week.

I write representing several of our family who did not return to Peel St again because of this over-amplification.

You have a wonderful parade but much is ruined by the lack of control.

We are visiting from north Queensland and trust that we will be able to come again and hear our artists, especially those performing for charitable organisations.

K.R. Milson
Ingham, Qld

Games and GST tie us in knots

WHAT has happened to our letters page? Just in case we are still going to have our page in the future, Ben and I would like to ask if people were listen-

items.

Ann

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Heart torn from country music

MONDAY was a pretty miserable day all round. Apart from coming down from the incredible high created by the best Tamworth Country Music Festival I can remember, I had to come to terms with the axing of 2TM's nightly country music radio program, which had been the centre of my life for 12 years.

It was a pretty harrowing few days, but by mid-week I was well and truly reminded how strong the Australian country music community is, and the potential we have to come through this setback bigger and better than ever. I've been in radio for more than 30 years, and many of those have had a country music connection. For all those years, and many before, country music has had a huge media problem.

While those who listen to Country Music Radio on its 13-station network have now lost their country program there are far more people in Australia who have never had a program like Country Music Radio.

Bill Caralis is by no means the first media proprietor to cancel country music programming rather than come to understand it and develop it to its considerable potential — he's just the owner of what was the flagship media outlet for country music in Australia. It was something he inherited when he bought the Higginbotham's group of radio stations in the mid-90s.

He never understood its history or the role it played in creating and developing the key elements of the Tamworth festival, so he could never understand the amazingly emotional reaction from our listeners and the country music industry.

It doesn't take a lot of exposure to country music to understand it's people music,

with very strong ties between the fans and the people who make the music. There is no stronger loyalty in any art form than the loyalty of a country music fan.

To prove my point I only have to use the example of the gold record presentation to Slim Dusty for his 99th album. He's 72 and still selling 40,000 albums — and he'll probably sell 100,000 units of his 100th album later this year.

Cliff Richard, Elton John and a few other pop icons are almost as strong — but they all get far more media and promotional support

but it won't because it's not getting national exposure.

And everyone of them already has a strong, loyal fan base out in the bush among the people who are exposed to their music and have seen them perform.

Country Music had humble beginnings. The Tamworth festival and the Golden Guitar Awards came from humble beginnings. When television arrived in the area in the mid-60s radio station 2TM decided to play country music at night as the result of a listener poll. It began as hoedown nearly 35 years

ago in the festival promoting the attractions and continuing to broadcast the main events.

On Monday it all stopped. But I must say it wasn't a surprise. Ever since Bill Caralis bought the Carillon Group's stations in 1996 he has held country music back. It was anticipated that we would not be included in the line-up of centralised programming for his stations from 2AM, so we awaited our fate.

One of the reasons given for the closure of Country Music Radio was its lack of sponsor support. Unfortunately we weren't able to develop sponsorship support, but in country music generally there have been some very successful sponsorship relationships in recent years.

Country Music Radio was never allowed to expand to its potential. Each weekend I broadcast on 13 stations across northern NSW and southern Queensland — and beyond to people who listened to the clear channel signals of 2TM Tamworth and 2PK Parkees. In national terms it wasn't a big coverage, but it continually got results and showed country music's potential.

The closure of Country Music Radio has stirred something of a giant — the country music fans who want to be exposed to their music. So I'm off to find a new base from which we can get country music programming to more people.

The expansion of the narrowcast system of radio licences (licences for specific program formats) and the emergence of more radio stations when digital radio is introduced means real opportunities for country music fans to get access to their music and be in contact with the artists they love.

‘It doesn't take a lot of exposure to country music to understand it's people music, with very strong ties between the fans and the people who make the music’

than Slim or any other country artist.

Country music has always struggled with acceptance. This problem is quite unjustified. Those that have broken through, such as Lee Kernaghan and John Williamson, are only the tip of our very rich iceberg. There are probably 50 Australian country music acts that would be major household names if we had the amount of media exposure we deserve.

Kasey Chamber, who won the Tamworth festival's Female Vocalist and Album of the Year awards, deserves to be a household name. Her first solo album, *The Captain*, should sell platinum,

ago and over the years built up a huge following because of 2TM's clear channel signal which allowed the station to be heard from the top of Tasmania to far north Queensland. 2TM initiated the annual record awards and created the Golden Guitar.

As years went on and people started to come to Tamworth for more than the weekend, the station introduced other events, and the Tamworth festival developed. In 1992 2TM's then owners, the Higginbotham family, divested its ownership of those festival events it owned, but the radio program retained its

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Tourism Tamworth

Battle begins for country airwaves

"Shockwaves from the sudden closure of Country Music Radio are spreading Australia-wide," said Chairman of Tourism Tamworth Cr Paul Durant.

However, while expressing grave concern over the demise of 2TM's Country Music Radio which was announced on Monday, Cr. Durant sees some interesting opportunities on the horizon.

Cr Durant said that his Committee has been inundated with offers of alternate strategies and systems for the broadcast of Country Music throughout Australia.

"It takes something like this shut-down to bond a diverse collection of individuals together and to make sure country music remains accessible to the widest possible audience of Australians."

"Given the phonecalls and correspondence that we have received in the last couple of days, there is plenty of evidence of anger not just in the Tamworth community, but as far afield as Melbourne and Northern Queensland as well as many of Australia's rural areas where people have long enjoyed listening to Tamworth's Country Music broadcasts.

"Problems create opportunities and this will prove no exception," according to Cr Durant.

"Even though this shut-down is a commercially driven decision, regional Australia seems to be getting another undeserved flogging and from the feed-back I'm getting from the Country Music industry and the citizens of the bush, I honestly think that the decision taken by Mr Caralis will come back to haunt him in the not too distant future," Cr Durant concluded.

Cr Durant invites further input on this issue from all sympathetic individuals and organisations and especially from those that are willing to form an organised front to stop decision like this being foisted on rural Australia.

"Perhaps this is one for the Prime Minister to look at, if he is genuine about looking after the needs of people in the bush!," Cr Durant said.

Cr Durant concluded: "This is a short term victory for the economic rationalists, but we are fighting for our culture, our community and our commerce for the long term."

"Country Music reflects Australia's unique heritage, and the people of Australia have shown they will not take this decision lying down!"

..... ends

Cr Paul Durant
Chairman, Tourism Tamworth
February 4, 2000

Phone 02 6765 9987

Email: tourism@tamworth.nsw.gov.au

Information Centre
Cnr Peel & Murray Streets
PO Box 553
Tamworth NSW 2340
Telephone: (02) 6755 4302
Facsimile: (02) 6755 4312

Facsimile

Letters to the Editor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

There's a revolt looming in radio listening land

Sir - The whole scenario of our country radio has been devastated by events of the last week or two.

Surely there is some way we can fight back, even if it is in a small way.

As we understand it, broadcasting licence fees are calculated on the basis of an audit of advertising revenue.

Country businesses - keep your money in your local area, advertise in your local press. Don't let it go to Sydney.

Let your community know you are loyal to your area. Make this your local cash for comment.

It seems we won't even be able to put out emergency reports for police, bush fire, flood, accidents and natural disasters as we need? How will another Nyngan or Lismore flood cope? Armidale or coastal hail-storm? Pilliga bushfire? Major road accident on the Pacific Highway? Broadband electricity breakdowns?

We know we won't get the NRL football games have just found out local sport coverage will also go. And no more talk back on local issues to voice our opinions, certainly not to criticise. Even your local Shire president and Member of Parliament has been silenced. We doubt Howard Sattler will have the slightest interest in country problems.

I hope you all rally on February 17 at your local radio station or else phone 2SM that day and also protest to your politicians.

Gordon and Joy Hibberd, Araluen Lane, Wollah.

Sir - calling all radio listeners from 2AD, 2DU, 2GY, 2LM, 2MG, 2MO, 2NZ, 2PK, 2RE, 2VM, Radio 97 and associated Caralis network FM stations.

If it doesn't rate in the city, radio has no use for network listeners. We are regarded as the rubbish dump for city executives to hold their noses and ignore while they continue to gobble up any monetary advertising crumbs.

Now Bill G. and Pamela A. Caralis' Supernetwork Radio gags our rural airwaves with alien city standards, topics and canned music unrelated to our listeners.

Our lives revolve around farming problems, bushfire and road reports, help for the isolated lonely, sick and unemployed, inter-action of regional ideas from Victoria to Central Queensland, community news.

These are part of our daily life - not the cities.

For "in compatible with network needs" - read self-serving, callous city radio. We have no access to alternate stations, all in the same 2SM network. The choice of ABC Radio does not cover many of these communities.

All gone, taken away by a monopoly without a whimper by Government watchdogs of the Australian Broadcasting Authority or the A.C.C.C.

Our music, talk-back, humour, local storm warnings, Police messages is our survival communication.

No-one in the city cares one iota for our disenfranchised and now

silent regional communities.

It is ultimate censorship. It is total discrimination.

Mr Howard is afraid of a country backlash and he is quoted as saying one of Australia's assets is "the heritage it has from its rural background." Where is his rural olive branch now?

The city has taken our banks, phones, hospitals, jobs, services, and now even our voices. We are very angry at the appalling treatment handed to radio personnel, advertisers and listeners. We are people too! Give us our voice back.

How can anyone who listens to Paul Tolley, who expressed compassion, decency and listened to regional Australia and gave us our voice, who exemplified the standards of our culture which we believe and hold dear, while country music expressed our heritage, not protest at the rape of our rural voice?

Stand up and be counted!

The silent muttering majority will not be heard. Mr Barrington told me personally that he did not believe that thousands listened to Paul Tolley, local sport or Country Music. I know you did.

I suggest that every community in which this letter appears organise a protest at their local network station or telephone radio station 2SM on (02) 9922 1269. Make it a common day across our country. Perhaps Thursday, February 17.

Tell all your print media and television networks, because you don't have a voice on radio anymore. Prove Mr Bar-

ington and Mr Caralis wrong!

There must still be community leaders in the country towns, shire councils and local politicians who can speak to you for our democratic right of free speech our way. Not city takeover of our lives.

This could be our last fight as a united country voice.

ACT NOW. BE HEARD.

Radio Magpie at Bingara

(Name supplied but withheld on request).

318i



1998 318i manual, with sunroof, all log books. Two year

JT Fossey

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\$9,995

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1988 diesel diesel tray, work sound PEA-



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1992 Toyota LandCruiser 80 series GXL 8-seater 4WD station wagon with powerful 4.2 litre turbo diesel engine, 5-speed manual, air cond, bullbar, towbar. WGH-319.

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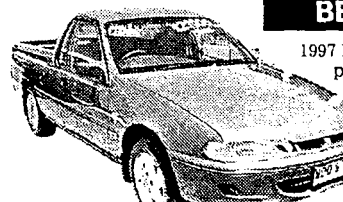
PLEASURE TO DRIVE

Nissan Terrano II 7-seater 4WD wagon. Built 1997, completed and sold new 1998 by JTF, 5-speed manual, air cond, power steer, 2.7 litre intercooled turbo diesel, very low km. Balance new car warranty. VHQ-871.

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1997 Holden Commodore S pac utility with 5-speed manual trans, dual airbags, air cond, power windows. V6 3.8 litre injected engine, tonneau cover, low km.

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LETTERS to the Editor

It's really up to the addicts

I AM writing in response to a letter to the editor from Reverend Harry J. Herbert of the Uniting Church (NDL January 29).

Mr Herbert it seems is an advocate of legal injecting rooms and urges us to disregard anything Warren Woodley has to say on injecting rooms and to leave it to the experts to decide their worth.

Unfortunately the only experts that the Government seems to take any notice of are people such as Dr Alex Wodak, who is staunchly in favour of treatments such as the methadone program and legal injecting rooms.

These treatments have one thing in common and that one common denominator is that they offer no chance whatsoever for heroin addicts to cure their addiction.

Methadone is a replacement treatment that very closely mimics the effects of heroin, is just as addictive as heroin and is even worse to withdraw from than heroin.

Mr Herbert quotes that 600 people in Frankfurt, Germany entered the methadone program due to the establishment of injecting rooms, as if it is something to be proud of, when all they have done is taken a group of people who are addicted to one drug and turned them into poly-addicted people.

It is not the "unsanitary and unsatisfactory locations" used by this very, very small percentage of heroin addicts that the Government is targeting, which Mr Herbert speaks of that is killing addicts, it is overdosing that is killing them.

It will not matter how many injecting rooms are established addicts will continue to shoot up in alleyways etc because it is quick and convenient and a means to an end for them.

The rehabilitation and cure from addiction for heroin addicts lay firmly in the hands

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of the addicts themselves. Until they reach a point where they have had enough and are desperate enough to take the necessary steps themselves and adopt a personal policy (dare I say it) zero tolerance they will continue to be addicted, they will continue to inject in these "unsanitary and unsatisfactory locations" and they will, unfortunately, continue to overdose and die.

It does not really surprise me that Mr Herbert, who comes from a people-pleasing organisation that seems to specialise in soft-line approaches to just about everything, would choose to ridicule Warren Woodley over his views on these issues.

There are curative programs available but the Government in consultation with its "experts/advisers" does not seem to want to embrace them. Why do not know!

Neil Cook

Disgusted with 2TM

I WAS told recently that the management of 2TM was going to get rid of the nightly country music program Country Music Radio but I didn't believe it until last night when I was on my way into Manilla and turned the radio on expecting to hear some country music with the familiar announcers.

Imagine my surprise to hear a stranger, and even worse no country music. The radio was turned off straight away.

I can't believe the management would be no stupid as to get rid of such a long running and well-loved program. I don't believe the audience the sta-

tion will attract will be bigger than the one they already had.

2TM has lost me altogether. I will be finding a station that plays country music.

This is Country Music Capital isn't it, or did something change over the last few weeks?

People all over Australia have been tuning into 2TM at night for as long as I can remember. Even when my husband and I were first married and lived in Kangaroo Valley, we tuned into Hoedown every night. I bet John Minson is flabbergasted.

Organisations are always willing to jump on the bandwagon when there is money to be made (such as during country music month in January), but conscience has flown out the window now with the management of 2TM.

No doubt they will realise I am thoroughly disgusted with the decision. When management comes to their senses, they'll have to put it in the paper or announce it up and down Peel St over a megaphone, as no one will know because they won't be listening to 2TM.

Keep it country!

Kerry Blinman
 Upper Manilla

Discrimination against bush

IN NOVEMBER, 1999 the Federal Liberal National Party government removed the tax deductibility on prepaid expenses (commonly called the 12-month rule) for agricultural, horticultural, viticultural and forestry projects for regional Australia.

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The 2TM decision - your response

No fair go for country people

I HAVE faxed Senator Richard Alston, the Minister for Communications to alert him to the serious state of affairs in Tamworth relating to its local radio station 2TM. I did so as a lover of Tamworth and Australian country music in which I have a deep and abiding interest.

Tamworth is deservedly regarded as the Australian Capital of Country Music. The whole Australian country music industry was nurtured on 2TM, which began transmitting some 28 years ago as Hoedown radio with the legendary John Minson.

Thanks to the programming on 2TM, country music was developed and nourished and it is fair to say the Tamworth Country Music Festival was conceived on that station.

Every day for 12 hours country music radio has been broadcast on 2TM and has become an integral part of Tamworth's unique identity and local culture.

The station's present owner, a Mr Bill Caralis, has decided to aggregate his string of some 16 stations in NSW and broadcast out of Sydney. Tamworth country music radio is already finished and only a token effort of local broadcasting will survive in the new format.

I have been informed Mr Caralis does not see Australian country music as necessary to his programming requirements and he is on record as saying he aims to appeal to the demographic age group of 18 to 45.

Aside from the inherent discrimination in such a policy towards older Australians, it will disenfranchise much of the population of Tamworth, which is older and more conservative than the populations of the mainstream markets of Sydney.

This move is a body blow to maintaining the personality and culture of a great rural city. Tamworth has made country music not only the engine for its prosperity, but also a focus for its civic pride and identity. It surely represents another example of

country people not getting a fair go.

Rural Australians have already learnt to live with the destruction of their local TV industry because of the Federal Government's aggregation policies. Now it seems local radio has also been sacrificed.

I feel sure Tamworth and surrounding communities will not take this matter lying down. The Minister will no doubt hear from concerned citizens lucky enough to live there, who after losing hospitals, banks, doctors and other social services, feel the loss of 2TM is the last straw. The Minister will understand their cynicism when the Prime Minister travels round the country saying our Government cares about the bush.

Australian country musicians and the city of Tamworth need an Australian country music radio station, and I hope the Minister will give urgent and favourable consideration to allowing a replacement if the people of Tamworth ask for it.

Jim Brown
Richmond Vic

Real airplay on community radio

BRAVO to Eric Watson of Selection Records for his comments regarding the axing of Country Music Radio.

We have been aware for some time at the trend of Nick Erby to take credit for his concern for country music while pushing the barrow of US artists.

Last week at FanFest he was furiously pushing his new CD. I'd

already had a look at this album and of about 30 tracks on it only 11 are Australian artists.

With his volubility I wonder if he is still trying to break the record he set on air at Moree of 54 hours continuous air-time when he was announcer at 2VM. We have actually made the decision not to attend the Festival opening concert because he fronts it and won't shut up.

Thank you Mr Watson for your comments about community radio. We are involved with MAX-FM 91.3 at Narrabri - unfortunately off the air this month due to the unwillingness of the ABA to make a decision - and have found from talking to artists that this is where they are aware that they get their music aired.

Lee Kernaghan called into the studio and in conversation with him I found this. Also witness among the list of thank yous in the album of Pat Drummond and Karen Lynne where they thank community radio for their airplay.

I have contacted your mayor's office by phone and spoken to his secretary concerning the statement attributed to him in The Sydney Morning Herald and he has contacted the ABA concerning the issuing of another licence for Tamworth.

You have a community radio station in Tamworth, 2YOU FM. Why not get involved there and help them establish their own commitment to country music, if they don't already have one?

The artists will thank you and their audience and supporter base will widen.

J. Grocott
Bellata

This week The Northern Daily Leader is introducing a brand new page devoted entirely to country music news and views. You'll find it each week on the back page of The Leader's Weekend Magazine. There will be CD reviews, current news and stories of interest from both within Tamworth's country music industry and from all parts of Australia. It's being compiled by The Leader's country music journalist ANNA ROSE.

• Turn to pages 24, 25 and 26 to find out what ANDREW CLERMONT, DALE JUNER and a life-size clay sculpture of SMOKY DAWSON are up to.



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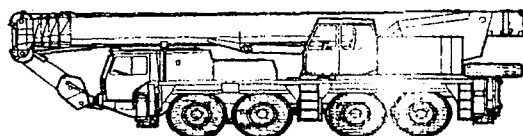
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Whether it's sightseeing

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Now based

disseminated about it and there will continue to be a lot of "disinformation" about it, it is a fairly complex subject when discussed on an item-by-item basis. price of a hot chicken? Not the same as price of a cold chicken, and so on. such isolated examples of how the GST affect us all are basically peripheral to the "inkum" effect and that is that it will, generally speaking: make our accounting systems easier and make our taxation regime simpler. (Most accountants believe this strongly.) When it settles down, it should be proven that it is, basically, a "negative" tax. (You pay more for some items and less for others but the overall effect is that at the end of the year you won't be worse off money-wise). It should also be remembered that it is "par for the course" in some countries, such as the UK. Added Tax in the UK. It has also been operating in New Zealand for many years and new Kiwi PM Helen Clark, after visiting Australia earlier this week, has been firmly in its favour. A Labor PM says the GST is okay, we should be prepared to "give it a go"!

No time to fiddle about

I AM a country music fan who has attended the Festival in Tamworth for the last 20 years. I am disgusted like numerous other people re the axing of Country Music Radio.

I heard on Friday of the protest concert in Bicentennial Park to be held on Sunday. After contacting Kerry Blinman for further information, my wife and I drove up from Gulgong and, from a shady vantage point, were subjected to a very enjoyable afternoon of country music, ably compered by Gary Coxhead.

But there was something obviously wrong. The business owners of Tamworth, where were they? Their absence was deafening!

When country music returns to the airwaves, in all probability it will be from an area other than Tamworth. A lot of people will then associate that place as being the home of country music in Australia.

The only answer is for a country music radio station in Tamworth, with regional coverage similar to that of the former Country Music Radio.

Who was it who fiddled while Rome burned? Nero, I think.

Come on Tamworth business people - put your fiddles away, Tamworth is starting to burn.

Bob Dickie
Gulgong

What hope with do-gooders

IT LOOKS like Mike Munro of 60 Minutes is favouring kids, his facial expressions tell more than his tongue does and in his position he should be impartial, instead of trying to influence people by his body language.

We in NSW are continually complaining that vandals and criminals get away with "blue murder" yet when people from the Northern Territory or WA

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exercise their rights of mandatory sentencing which is in their laws, do-gooders once again start complaining.

In this case, because a 15-year-old Aboriginal boy committed suicide.

Look at this commotion with little common sense. Was mandatory sentencing responsible for the fact that he was killed? No! Was mandatory sentencing the cause of his suicide? No! Was mandatory sentencing the cause of his crimes in the first place? No! It was his decision in which he took upon himself for his actions and his fate.

Why did he eventually take that most drastic step in his life? Was he ashamed, frightened of punishment from his elders or tribe or civil authorities? Who knows, but I am sure it wasn't mandatory sentencing.

The government sees fit to intervene and let children leave home from the age of 14 years, regardless of the fact that the parents are still responsible. These children think they are mature enough to face the world, ignoring most advice except their own.

If they see fit to "do the crime, they must do the time". In other words, they must accept that they have a responsibility to act in a proper manner, or else! No one is to blame except themselves, especially if they are repeat offenders because they will know the punishment to be dealt out.

Possibly more strict supervision is required in some cases but when you have do-gooders howling down possible curfew laws, mandatory sentencing and such, what hope have you got? It is impossible to keep an eye on a person 24 hours a day.

People are entitled to be protected (especially the aged)

from offenders and if these make life more liveable for everyone, then I see no reason for change to suit do-gooders.

Just try and change offenders if possible and laws that let them wander the loose late at night.

L. Edw
Tamw

Heavy-handed treatment

OVER the Country Music period, Tamworth had imported security personnel employed.

On the main Saturday night, about 10.30pm, I was in a hotel and had a plastic Orchy. I started down the steps to go home, with the plastic cup still in my hand but this time there was only one left, which I was going to use on my way home.

One of the imported security was working at the door and told me to go inside with a drink.

I told him that it was a plastic cup. He grabbed my hand and one of his and snatched the cup out of my other hand and threw it to the floor.

He was very rough and abrupt. He hurt my hand and he grabbed it so hard.

There was a couple of people a few steps away who asked what had happened. We told them that I only had one cup, they were so angry the way I was treated.

I think that our young people have enough to contend with by the way they are treated these days without having some smart thinking people come in and rule as were king pin.

I am nearly 50 years old

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