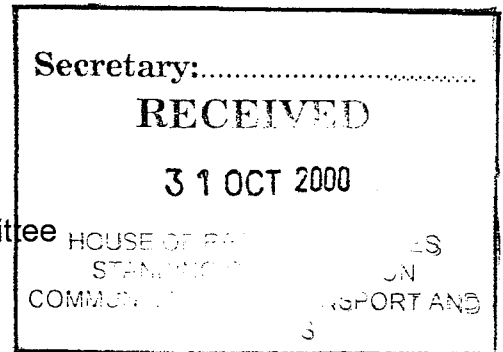


**SETTLEMENT SERVICES COALITION OF NSW**  
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Address for mail c/- Anglicare, 44 Frampton Avenue, MARRICKVILLE,  
NSW

25 October 2000

The Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Communications Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



**Radio Industry Inquiry**

Dear Sir/Madam

This Coalition comprises members from a range of settlement services based in NSW where projects exist that are funded under the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs' settlement services funding program. Among these members are a number who are based in regional and rural NSW.

We are writing to you to raise with the Radio Industry Inquiry the importance to migrant people, especially new arrivals, humanitarian entrants and those with special needs living in rural parts of NSW, of having access to consistent language radio services as provided in metropolitan Australia by SBS radio. We are particularly concerned with the access to information on services available from government and other agencies as delivered through the media as well as helping these people maintain a quality social life through radio's ability to keep them in touch with their own language community.

Thus we address three areas: the social benefits and influence of radio; the effects on individuals, families small business of networking; and the potential for new technologies.

**a) The Social Benefits and Influence of Radio**

The existence of strong migrant communities in rural NSW is the sign of a healthy rural community. This statement underlines the importance of migrant people being able to fully participate and remain in rural communities. Crucial to new arrivals and older settled migrants to their remaining in rural NSW is their ability to have access to a range of social supports. Among these is what is provided through radio and to a lesser extent television.

Why radio is so important in this process is that if you are a new arrival you are able to access a service that provides both information and music, etc in your original language. If you want migrants to move out of the cities today then you have to have services in the rural areas that support them.

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For longer settled migrants the same requirement exists but becomes very important for the social side of life. As you will be aware, the impact of one's children moving to the major cities no less effect migrants "in the bush" than other people. In being left behind, consistent and regular language radio is vital to these people as a social support.

### **b) The Effects of Radio on Individuals, Families Small Business of Networking**

We are very aware that both Federal and NSW State departments and their agencies pay considerable sums to publicise services through radio. This is usually through the services provided by SBS and those government organisations like Centrelink, Aged And Disability and Housing hold the view that by using SBS this will enable all clients having a first language which is not English, including those living in regional and rural NSW, to have a clear understanding of how to access services. Further, this is also often predicated with the belief that the language tapes on these services developed by SBS will filter through to Community Radio stations where local radio will play these as an extension to their services. Much of this is a myth. While migrant people in metropolitan areas are able to access information vital to their using government services migrants, rural areas don't have access to consistent and regular programs. For example, if an ethnic radio broadcaster on a community radio station has access to tapes on services for the half hour or so program they are about to broadcast they have only one opportunity in possibly two weeks to run those tapes. The broadcaster is left with the dilemma to decide what they should broadcast when there may be a list of other items as well as the required music, etc. not discounting the service tapes.

There are other problems with community radio as it applies to migrant people living in rural areas. The local ethnic broadcasters are often the most articulate people and will in many instances not be representative of the local ethnic population. Thus the languages that are regularly seen listed, as being available on rural community radio will include French and Spanish, languages of migrants not found in rural NSW. In addition, for the varied and dispersed migrant communities that exist through regional and rural Australia, community radio provided information, and what is broadcast for non English speaking migrants, is usually delivered on an ad hoc basis.

The value of an extended SBS type radio service is key to a more equitable provision of services to migrants living and working in regional and rural Australia. This is critical both to being able to fully participate in Australian life and to the success of many government programs for the community where information access is the "a priori".

### **c) The potential for new technologies.**

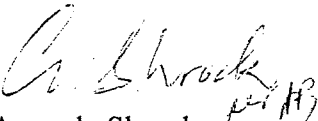
We understand and value the way that new technologies are helping to bring all Australians closer together and this includes our migrant people living in regional and rural NSW.

Recently, we became aware that the government is funding SBS to develop digitalised television services. This investment it would seem, precludes them to provide funding to extend the equally and perhaps in the case of migrants, very important service SBS radio offers. However, we are also aware that in digitalising television the current SBS radio service could be included in this process should SBS wish to offer this option. We believe that the value of the new digital television services should include other services where they are identified as important to the community. We see this with the digitalising of SBS television.

The use of the Internet and government websites now provide the opportunity for those with access to an Internet link, including individuals, services like those provided by Immigration's funded projects to download information on government services, policies and changes be introduced. Language forms and translated information is among this material and is providing a new way of helping migrant people live in rural Australia. But it is all new and many people have still to come to terms with the new Information Technology. The expansion and value of new ways of bringing radio to a highly disadvantaged group is needed more than ever.

Radio in rural areas is the key method of delivering translated information across all Australia. We therefore bring this issue to your attention. We look forward to the outcomes of the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

  
Amanda Shrock  
Chairperson