

**INQUIRY INTO THE ADEQUACY OF RADIO SERVICES IN NON -  
METROPOLITAN AUSTRALIA.**

- \* The social benefits and influence on the general public of radio broadcasting in non-metropolitan Australia in comparison to other media sectors.

My perception in this particular area is that the reduction in numerous commercial broadcasting services by many of the smaller non-metropolitan commercial radio stations owned by the Daily Mail Group (DMG) and Caralis networks could not be providing social benefits and influence on the general public in the respective locations over recent years.

The wide expansion of community radio in Australia would be filling the gap in my opinion because they operate locally with a diverse range of programs and broad music selection of many types which commercial broadcasters performed a number of years ago.

Television in regional Australia, once locally owned and operated, is now mostly networked from capital cities, with only a half-hour local news bulletin in the evening, and perhaps some local sport. Under the changed circumstances, I cannot see that regional television would not have the same influence on non-metropolitan Australia as they once previously did.

The press media continue to print local newspapers in non-metropolitan Australia, some dating back to the 1800's, therefore meeting this particular criteria by disseminating local news to regional and country areas.

- \* Future trends in radio broadcasting, including employment and career opportunities, in non-metropolitan Australia.

Currently, numerous job opportunities which once existed at small country commercial radio stations now owned and operated by the DMG and Caralis networks, has decreased significantly in recent years.

4ZR Roma (DMG) is just one (1) prime example of the loss of employment opportunities, with only one (1) announcer performing a local program i.e. "The Breakfast Session" after which all the programming comes from the Townsville Hub. From the 1950's, over a few decades, 4ZR and the majority of commercial radio stations employed four (4) to five (5) on-air staff, including a lot of trainees mainly from radio schools such as AIR-TV which has been operating since 1952, initially known as the Brisbane School of Broadcasting.

*A Reputation that speaks a Thousand Words*

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- \* **Future trends in radio broadcasting, including employment and career opportunities, in non-metropolitan Australia (ctd.)**

I recall the time during my employment at 4VL Charleville from November 1963 to late January 1971, when five (5) announcers were employed there, plus four (4) to five (5) office-staff, one (1) technician and a technical assistant, also a Sales Manager and a General Manager.

There are a small number of independent commercial radio station operators in Queensland, being 4VL/4CCCCFM Charleville, 4LG/WESTFM Longreach, 4KZ/KOOL FM/4AY 'Country' Innisfail, 10.71AM/89.1 POWERFM Kingaroy, and 4BU/HITZ/ CQFM Bundaberg. These stations are employing more on-air staff than the small commercial stations in the DMG and Caralis networks, however overall staff numbers have been drastically reduced.

Mr Brad Smart, owner of 4VL/4CCCCFM Charleville, has to be commended for his efforts in bringing radio "back to the people" with the addition of a new AM commercial radio station 4DB Dalby, believed to be the first in this country to operate on the expanded 1600-1700 Khz. This created employment for eight (8) on-air and sales staff recruited from within the local service area. As this service is in its early stages and on an unproven frequency for commercial radio, then it will take some time to ascertain if if the station is proven successful or otherwise.

When local companies owned and operated commercial radio stations in Australia, there were far more employment opportunities and career prospects than is the case currently.

I see future trends in this particular area becoming much worse than they are now if the DMG and Caralis networks continue to reduce local services to a point where small stations will eventually lose their now insignificant local content with additional satellite programs produced from cities such as Townsville etc., To back up my belief, I quote the following from Volume 12, No. 5 "Jocks Journal" from Wednesday 1 March 2000 - Friday 17 March 2000 "From January 31, the 15 Bill Caralis owned AM stations and 14 regional FM stations, began taking the 2SM (Sydney) or their FM network service - with the exception of being breakfast which still features a live local program. A lot of jobs obviously became redundant due to such an exercise.

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- \* 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 other forms of local content.

I cannot help but have major doubt that the majority of commercial radio stations in Australia, especially in the DMG/Caralis networks, have the same close affinity with small business and the community at large, compared to the times when local companies owned and operated these institutions. 4VL Charleville, and others, had a very close affinity in all the above areas of this particular criteria, during my employment with the south western Queensland commercial radio station.

Obviously, the independent operators have a closer affinity with the local business firms and the general communities in their respective broadcast signal areas because they produce more local programming than those belonging to the DMG and Caralis networks in particular. 4VL Charleville and 4BU/HITZFM Bundaberg have specialist news staff employed to produce local news bulletins, and therefore providing their listeners with valuable information of happenings in these areas.

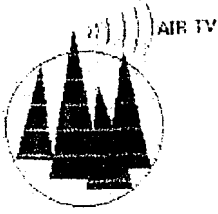
This is supplemented and complemented by community radio services that may be operating in the same areas. It would be safe for me to say that stations not controlled by large operators forcing networked programs upon localities a long distance from broadcast origin, have a definite bondage with their communities at large. I cannot envisage that small stations such as 4ZR Roma etc., networked from Townsville and other large cities would have the same local affiliation as 4VL Charleville to name just one.

Independent commercial radio stations no doubt have more scope and time to provide local news, sport, community announcements etc., and I feel sure they all provide same as an essential service to their listeners as a result of being totally local.

- \* The potential for new technologies such as digital radio to provide enhanced and more localised radio services in metropolitan, regional and rural areas.

Being a non technical person, I cannot make a professional comment in this area, however if this new technology has potential to create more employment and career prospects with almost total localised programming, then it has my full backing and endorsed.

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### **INQUIRY INTO THE ADEQUACY OF RADIO SERVICES IN NON-METROPOLITAN AUSTRALIA.**

#### **ATTACHMENT TO CRITERIA NO.2**

The following is factual and being presented with the permission of two AIR-TV course participants previously affected by loss of their jobs in the DMG network.

1. Ilija (ILL-E-AH) Dugandzic, from the 1998 Course, was employed as an Afternoon Announcer/Copywriter at 4ZR Roma, initially as a Trainee, from March 1999 to December 1999. Although Ilija was made aware of the possibility of his job becoming redundant some time in this period, he joined the station to gain practical experience as a paid performer. After being made redundant in December 1999, through no fault of his own, it took Ilija another three (3) months to achieve paid employment, which was at 10.71AM/POWER FM Kingaroy.

As mentioned in the criteria, 4ZR was programmed from the Townsville DMG Hub following a local breakfast session.

2. Phil McCosker, from the 1997 course, worked for three (3) DMG stations, facing problems of various kinds with each one until he left the network in February 2000. His first commercial radio job was at 2GZ Orange (NSW), where to the credit of the then General Manager, Derek Wells (ex AIR-TV student) gave Phil a night shift by taking off a satellite program from Sydney to make way for a localised production. Phil was also host of the Sunday 6am to 12 noon shift.

After four (4) months, Mr Wells informed Phil that his services could no longer be afforded and recommended him to another DMG station 4GC Charters Towers which he accepted. His positions at 4GC were as Breakfast Announcer/Production Manager/Musical Director. and these duties took up great deal of his working day from early AM to between 6 to 8 at night.

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ATTACHMENT TO CRITERIA NO.2 (Ctd.)

Phil McCosker (Ctd.)

Phil was the only local announcer at 4GC, and after his breakfast session, all programs were broadcast via the Townsville Hub. As a result of the long hours performed, Phil became stressed and was prescribed medical drugs which caused him to sleep in on one (1) or two (2) occasions and therefore late for the Breakfast Program.

The then 4GC General Manager, a new person in this role, dismissed Phil from the job, however it was rather strange that the then DMG Group Program Director, Dan Bradley, obtained another position for him at 5SE Mt.Gambier. Phil was also appointed Music Director during his employment at 5SE and eventually learned that his job was becoming redundant in April 2000.

In view of the approaching redundancy, Phil obtained the positions of Breakfast Announcer and Music Director in his hometown of Kingaroy (Q) at 89.1 Power FM. After a short stay there, Phil was approached to join CFM Toowoomba as Musical Director and Lunch/Drive Time Host - CFM is the sister station of 4GR Toowoomba. Phil is still working for CFM at the time of writing this report.

It has to be pointed out that Phil was replaced at 4GC, however as I understand it, the appointment was short-lived and all programs now emanate from Townsville.

I have presented these factual accounts as examples of employee unsettlement in the radio industry, which are only two (2) of many redundancies made by the DMG and Caralis Broadcasting Networks.

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