

Australian Racing Radio Association Submission to

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

Inquiry into the Adequacy of Radio Services in Non- Metropolitan Australia

Definitions.

Racing Radio

The broadcasting of racing events by thoroughbred gallopers, Standardbred harness horses, Greyhounds, and various Sports on which wagering is available by the TABs in all Australian States and Territories.

The Australian Racing Radio Association

An Association of the broadcasting stations which broadcast racing events and which join together to discuss matters of common concern in the areas of Technical, Programme, Sales and Administration.

The members of the Association are:-

NSW Radio 2KY

VIC Sport 927

QLD & NT Radio TAB

SA TAB Radio

WA Racing Radio

TAS Radio 7TAB

ACT Radio 1SSS

History

The broadcasting of races in Australia, up until the end of the decade of the 80's was carried jointly by Commercial stations and the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Commercial stations in each Capital City and in most major provincial cities and towns carried the racing programme which consisted principally of Saturday afternoon programming.

Similarly the ABC catered nationally through it's network of transmitters.

During the decade of the 80's the service throughout the provincial areas of the country began to dwindle on the commercial networks, as racing was seen to be delivering a smaller audience than was available with other formats. The demand by the edicts of the then Broadcasting and Television Act 1942 that programmes were to be "adequate and comprehensive" was seen to be met by virtue of the fact that the ABC still provided a nationwide service

In the early 80's the TABs began to contribute financially to commercial stations in order to gain extended coverage and greater detail for their product. Midweek coverage of races began to happen on a regular basis.

The first purchase of a radio station by a TAB happened when the South Australian TAB purchased Festival City Broadcasters, which owned the licence of 5AA.

Today TABs own broadcasting licences, both commercial and narrowcasting in South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory with major TAB funding supporting the broadcasting of races in all other states and Territories.

The growth of racing radio has been such that the ABC used it as part of it's rationale for withdrawing from race broadcasting in mid 1998.

Racing Radio today provides full coverage of racing, seven days a week, based on meetings covered by the TAB in each individual State.

Submission

The growth of Racing Radio is symptomatic of the changing face of broadcasting in Regional Australia over the past decade.

In advertising for submissions to this inquiry it was stated.....

'Changes in the regulatory environment and developments in technology have led to substantial changes in the ownership of radio. One of the main developments has been the growth of commercial radio networks. The heart of this inquiry is on how these developments are affecting program content and quality in non-metropolitan Australia.'

This classically describes how Racing Radio has developed .

There are four types of licence predominantly being utilised by Racing Radio, namely

- 1) Commercial
- 2) Open Narrowcasting
- 3) Low Power Open Narrowcasting (LPON)
- 4) Community

Open Narrowcasting makes up the largest section of Racing Radio Licences Under the provisions of Section 34 the Australian Broadcasting Authority is given the discretion to release sections of the frequency spectrum for a number of uses, one of which is Open Narrowcasting. The ABA has the responsibility to determine the period that will be available for such a release. Section 34 also indicates that such spectrum will only be available where it is not required for other broadcasting purposes.

It is the opinion of this Association that at the time Section 34 was drafted it could not reasonably have been seen how much of the spectrum released for Open Narrowcasting would be taken up by Racing Radio.

As Open Narrowcast spectrum was made available, and as the ABA's planning process proceeded, the ABA took advice from Spiegleman Q.C. who gave the opinion that spectrum for Open Narrowcast should be taken into account in the planning process. The obvious inference being that if Open Narrowcast was taken into account the future use of the spectrum for the area under discussion would be more accurately defined.

So, as the Committee have indicated, it took the change in the regulatory environment, in large part the advent of the Broadcasting Services Act (1992), for the development of an entity such as the Racing Radio network to occur.

We would argue, and would submit that the development of Racing Radio has evolved along classic network lines, in that central programme sources in State Capitals develop programmes of specific interest to the racing public of that state and disseminate those programmes statewide.

That is not to say that all material has its origin in the State Capital. Apart from sourcing interstate and international material of interest, events given coverage also occur on a daily basis in the regional areas of each state.

Coverage of these regional events is the culmination of an enormous amount of time and effort by regional people that goes into providing such a service. Thus coverage by the state and national Racing Radio network encourages funds being expended in regional areas for the benefit of regional people.

We submit that, were it not for the development of the network structure of Racing Radio through the Regional areas of Australia, the availability of radio programmes featuring all the detail on the racing industry would not exist for the listening pleasure of regional listeners, or the support of the regional racing industry.

This committee in the recommendations from a previous inquiry has shown support for the establishment of racing radio services in regional Australia. We believe it should support the view that Racing Radio is one form of networking in broadcasting that can provide positive outcomes for the people of Regional Australia.

Submitted by the Australian Racing Radio Association.