

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts	
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Secretary:	Janet Holmes

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The Secretary
House Communications Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
(and by facsimile transmission 02 6277 2067)

Dear Madam / Sir,

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

I am a resident of Katherine, Northern Territory. I have lived here on a permanent basis from May of 1997. I previously resided in Katherine from mid 1992 until mid 1994.

I wish to provide the following information / make the following comments on what I perceive to be the particularly poor radio services to the town of Katherine and the Katherine region:

1. Using an average radio I can pick up three FM stations and one AM station here in Katherine. On the FM band is the ABC, 8KTR (Katherine - Tindal radio) and the TAB station. On AM is Hot 100 from Darwin.
2. I find this to be a very poor selection. The ABC (Darwin / Top End based) is a good service. The local station makes the best of its limited facilities and funding but is not really able to provide a reliably informative and entertaining service. The TAB station is an acquired taste and obviously has a limited appeal. The AM station is the relayed Hot 100 from Darwin. Hot 100 is one of those low-brow white rock stations that provides predictable, normally dull, music radio, occasionally spiced with crude humour.

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3. It is really quite galling that we here in Katherine can be treated to a description of the fourth race at the Koo-Wee-Rup trots and not be able to hear Parliamentary News Network.
4. I realise that commercial considerations will restrict the availability of commercial radio in places as remote as Katherine that sport such small populations. With this in mind I believe the following stations (as a minimum) should be clearly heard on the local Katherine township airwaves:
 - ABC (as at present from Darwin)
 - JJJ
 - Parliamentary News Network
 - Radio National
 - 8 KIN-FM (the CAAMA radio from Alice Springs)
 - 8KTR
 - ABC Classical (I understand there is a station of this description "down south")
 - BRACS Aboriginal Community Radio
5. I am particularly keen to see Parliamentary News Network radio on our airwaves. During my visits to Darwin I find myself listening to this station most of the time. It is highly informative given its broad use of international news radio services. The fact that it also provides extra AFL match descriptions appeals to a footy fan like myself.
6. Given the large number of Aboriginal people in Katherine the 8 KIN-FM service is a must. I understand you can pick up 8 KIN-FM in Darwin, why not Katherine? I also understand that communities in this region have radio services through the BRACS network. I believe, given the nature of Katherine as a "crossroads" for Aboriginal people, that broadcasts in communities such as Ngukurr, Kalkaringi /Dagaragu, Borroloola and Yuendumu/Lajamanu should be relayed here into Katherine.
7. Katherine is a young community. JJJ is to my mind a very worthwhile station given over to pertinent youth information a lot of the time. Some of the programs on this station also appeal to us "thirtysomething" types particularly "Creatures of the Spotlight" and the world music shows.

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8. Given the imminence of the railway construction period and increased populations in centres such as Tennant Creek and Katherine the time is now to boost radio station availability in these places.
9. I would not be surprised to learn that Internet use in Katherine and the surrounding region is comparatively lower, on a per-capita basis, than most other places in Australia. I also understand literacy rates in this region are low. Given the increasing importance attached these days to speedy information dispersal I suggest increased radio services (particularly Parliamentary News Network radio) could help bridge this information provision gap.
10. I also note the poor standard of local newspapers and the delay in arrival of quality newspapers in Katherine. The local daily is the "NT News" out of Darwin, which is quite infamous for its poor coverage of things other than crocodiles, sensational crime stories and sport. The weeklies in town are the fledgling "Katherine Review" (which isn't too bad) and the more established but very conservative "Katherine Times". Papers such as "The Australian", "The Age" and "The Sydney Morning Herald" do not arrive in Katherine until the day after their publication. In a town where good radio services could make up for this poor newspaper situation we have so few stations.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you wish to discuss anything arising from these comments.

Yours faithfully,



Glen Dooley
Resident Katherine NT