

11th August, 1999

Inquiry Secretary,

House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Communications, Transport & the Arts,

Parliament House,

Canberra ACT 2600

To Whom it May Concern,

With regard to your inquiry into the withdrawal of ABC racing coverage, the following letter is probably more of a plea than a submission. I come from the small town of Augathella in Western Queensland, and I am a hobby trainer, avid race goer and punter, as well as serving on the local Race Club Committee. Even though the local community raised the capital to put the 4 TAB racing coverage in town, it is far from good enough, for the following reasons:

1. A lot of the time the local hotel, which houses the TAB, forgets to turn the signal on.
2. The signal is too weak, even to get a decent reception in town, let alone when you are on your way to a meeting in another town which could be up to 5 hours away. You lose the signal a few kilometres out of town. Therefore, you invariably arrive at the race meeting without scratchings, track conditions, tips and any other important information you feel you need to be able to bet. Another problem recently occurred at the annual Morven rate meeting. Sky channel failed to work, also in a tiny town there was no technical available to do anything about it (the nearest technician being in Roma, 2 hours away). Without a radio coverage to take the Sky channel's place, the whole atmosphere of the meeting was immediately lost and a number of punters left straight away. It was only when one of the local bookmakers used his two way to patch in with a person down town with pay TV, to get results, that any betting on city meetings could take place.

Another problem occurs with out of town race lovers. I have a friend on a property about 9 kilometres out of town who always listened to the races on a Saturday afternoon and if he wanted to have a bet, he just rang his daughter in town to place the bet for him. He

does not receive the 4 TAB signal and now describes his house as "a morgue on a Saturday afternoon".

So, as you can see the current racing coverage has a lot of gaps in the system, mainly being the following:

1. TAB broadcasting coverage. Not everyone has access and is virtually useless when travelling in remote areas.
2. Internet if OK, but has identical faults to the above.
3. Sky channel. Great at the races, but not much good if technical difficulties arise.
4. Newspapers. Good from quides, but they arrive too late in a lot of the more remote parts to be of much use.
5. Pay TV is good, but not accessible to everyone and also expensive.
6. Current TAB forms, scratchings and jockeys has to be downloaded from a one-at-a-time computer screen and a lot of the older punters have no idea how to use it.

So as stated at the beginning of this letter, it is more of a plea to bring back ABC racing coverage simply because it is time proven technology that works. The ABC belongs to all Australians and is available virtually to everyone, anywhere in Australia. I know that racing orientated people only make up a small percentage of the population, but the ABC broadcasts other events that would only attract much the same percentages of followers as well. Australians are proud of the fact that they think everyone should have a fair go, so I can only hope the results of the racing coverage review does the same for the race lovers throughout the country, no matter where they live.

Yours sincerely,

Darcy Clarke