## COMBINED PENSIONERS AND SUPERANNUANTS ASSOCIATION OF NSW

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 BATHURST CPSA
 is a non-sectarian
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Mr. Paul Neville MP 24<sup>th</sup> October 2000 Chair of Committee Inquiry into Radio Industry in Regional & Rural Australia Parliament House CANBERRA 2060

Dear Sir,

Senate Inquiry into Radio Services in Regional & Rural Australia.

- Over recent years there has been a change in ownership of all types of media in regional and rural Australia, with most media sources being aggregated under one-company ownerships.
   (e.g. Rural Press in newspaper ownership, aggregation of Television Channels) and now a similar trend is occurring with commercial radio stations.
- This has seen an overall decline in the provision of news and information on regional and rural interest issues, which are of particular interest to the country population.
- City people have many choices for receiving news, entertainment and educational information and more recently, readily accessible connection to internet services.
- Internet services in the country are not universally available, are slower in delivery and more costly.
- For these reasons, regional and rural radio serves as a vital link to local, as well as worldwide information.
- In this respect, the ABC provides a vital service for Australia-wide regional and rural areas as well as the city. For this reason, the ABC must be retained, well funded and supported by governments of all party political persuasions.

In general, **Regional ABC** programmes are well designed for country listeners and audiences. However, **ABC FM Classic** could be better programmed, with music choices more appropriate to the time of day (e.g. light music in the morning, more serious in the evening) with less talk programmes. Also programmes need to be appropriate for the day, such as special event days. Transmission needs to be improved, especially for night-time listening.

**ABC National** gives the choice between listening to music on Classic FM or listening to talk programmes, however, the Australian content has been diminished in favour of providing talks by American "experts", many of whom are thinly disguised salesmen for a company or cause. There should be a greater use of Australians to present talks and a greater encouragement for them to discuss Australian ideas, concepts and to debate local as well as foreign interest issues.

It is vital for the ABC to provide services into nearby countries to maintain links with our nearest neighbours.

Community radio has been a wonderful innovation and a great asset to regional communities. This has given the opportunity for community groups and individuals to provide music selections and programmes for the age-groups they represent. It has allowed these individuals to develop skills in programming and presentation. Many of them are retired people or are students or unemployed, so that they give their services freely, while at the same time learning a skill and maintaining an interest both for themselves and the community

In this way, the community is given the opportunity of choice to listen to a variety of types of music not available on other local radio stations.

Commercial radio stations are generally of very poor quality, using poorly trained journalists with Americanised accents and poor speech delivery. News services are "gabbled", without a break between news stories, which makes it very difficult for people with English as a second language to understand.

Although they rely on commercials for their viability, the constant bombardment of repetitive advertising makes listening unbearable.

Most stations try to include local news stories and interviews relevant to the area they service and also involve themselves with community fund-raising and activities.

However, their selection of music is commercially driven and does not provide for the range of ages and interests in the community.

Almost universally, commercial radio targets the young by playing modern pop music of doubtful quality, succeeding in brain-washing generations of our youth, who are ignorant of the many varied types of music which have been produced. This is done following the American tradition, in the mistaken belief that the young are the only people with money to spend on buying these "products". They are missing a huge market of all ages, with different tastes in music.

- Music has a very powerful effect on human moods, health and behaviour, so that commercial radio bears a huge responsibility for the type of music selections that they play and the effects these produce within their listening community.
- The isolated, elderly, sick, unemployed, stay-at-homes are not taken into consideration in their programming. All age groups should be exposed to all types of music instead of being brain-washed with one type. Other programmes should provide mental stimulus and be of regional and rural interest.
- Easy Listening radio stations are now providing an alternative, by playing popular music of an earlier era, however, this could be extended to light classical music and excerpts from operettas.
- Community service announcements are generally well catered for with all local Bathurst area radio services.
- Future programmes should be directed towards providing for a wider age group (considering there is an ageing population in Australia) and should also cover a wider selection of both music and subjects of interest.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Mauro

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Herewith are e-mail copies formerly submitted on typed sheets to the Chair of Committee, Inquiry into radio services in regional and rural Australia.