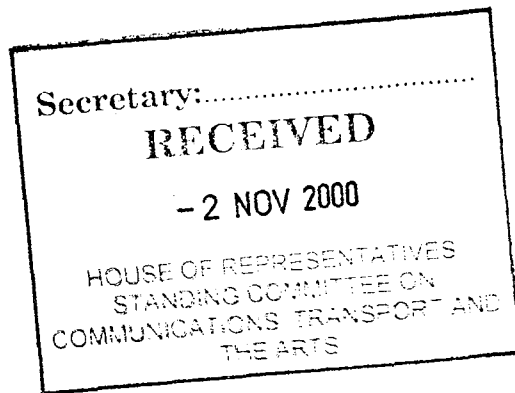



31 October 2000

The Inquiry Secretary
House Communications Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Holmes



Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry Limited
A.C.N. 009 662 060
Industry House
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House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Communications,
Transport and the Arts
Submission No: 268
Date Received: 2/11/00
Secretary: *Janet Holmes*

The Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI), is Queensland's peak employer, business and industry association. The Chamber has a direct membership of over 4500 businesses of which approximately half are situated in regional Queensland. QCCI also represents 120 metropolitan and regional local Chambers of Commerce and also acts on behalf of 20 industry specific associations.

Businesses located in non-metropolitan Queensland have a particular reliance upon local radio broadcasting both for the marketing and advertising of their goods and services but also in accessing local news and community announcements. Small to medium sized enterprises which are located and operate in only one regional area are particularly reliant upon local radio as their primary means of communicating with a customer base which may be spread over a large area. Television advertising is either too expensive or its catchment audience too geographically broad for many regional small and medium businesses. Local newspaper circulation is normally specific to only one town or locality and as such its usefulness, as a marketing tool, to regional small and medium businesses, which operate over large geographic areas, is degraded.

Through its inquiry into radio services in non-metropolitan Australia the House Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts will have the opportunity to make recommendations to the Commonwealth Government as to how best to meet the current and future radio broadcasting needs of Australia's non-metropolitan communities. QCCI would recommend that the committee consider the following points:

- As new broadcasting technologies are made available, provision must be made for the appropriate infrastructure to support them. Government need not necessarily be the provider of this infrastructure but will play a major role in ensuring that the special needs of regional business and communities are met.
- Government regulation in regards to broadcasting licenses and technologies or methods used to provide radio broadcasting must ensure regional communities gain access to competitive radio broadcasting services. The ability of regional broadcasters to provide innovative and tailored services to regional communities should not be compromised by overly restrictive Government regulations.
- With the growth of commercial radio broadcasting networks in non-metropolitan Australia it may be that local communities are not receiving adequate coverage of issues that are of importance in a local sense only. This may include affordable broadcasting time for local businesses to advertise their goods and services.

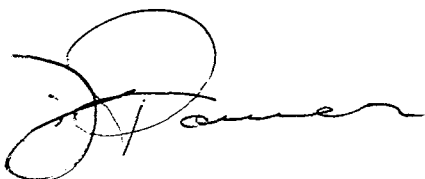
These points are aimed at providing the committee with an understanding of the requirements of non-metropolitan businesses. Too often in the past Queensland's regional businesses have been affected by Government actions aimed at regulating the supply of telecommunications and broadcasting services within capital city markets. QCCI does not particularly argue against the need for Government controls within capital city markets where the demand for bandwidth and frequency is much greater. However, within non-metropolitan Australia, smaller localised populations provide the ability for extra broadcasting licenses, limited to specific geographic areas, to be issued without interference to current services.

With the advent of digital and internet broadcasting, consideration must be given to the inadequacies of the infrastructure required to support these services within regional Australia. Regional businesses suffer from not being able to access the same information sources as metropolitan business due to cost, accessibility and availability issues. Digital and internet broadcasting services could do much to rectify the tyranny of distance for regional businesses but without the necessary infrastructure and reliability regional businesses will not gain the huge advantages from Australia's evolution to the on-line economy.

I have attached a copy of a letter from the Robina Chamber of Commerce located on Queensland's Gold Coast which outlines issues specific to that locality. The views of the Robina Chamber of Commerce are not necessarily those of the QCCI but serve as a good example of local concerns.

If you wish to further discuss the issues QCCI has presented to the committee in this submission please do not hesitate to contact Mr Damian Power, QCCI's Business Liaison Officer on 07-3842 2279 or e-mail dpower@qcci.com.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Craig', with a large, stylized initial 'A'.

pc **Andrew Craig**
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER