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**Our ref: 100-05-110**

The Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Communications Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Radio Industry Inquiry**

This submission provides some background on lack of local radio services and the demand for improved radio coverage in regional and rural areas around Melbourne, and recommends the allocation of additional licences for rural and regional radio based in the South East region.

Cardinia Shire is situated on the eastern fringe of urban Melbourne, with its population centre – Pakenham – Situated some 55 km east of the city. There is a population of 45,000 people within an area of 1240 km<sup>2</sup>. Whilst parts of the Shire are at the fore front of one of the fastest growing areas in the State and are included in the Government's urban growth corridor strategy, the municipality is largely (97%) rural.

The region has two major tourist routes running through it. In the North of the Shire is the Puffing Billy Tourist railway, one of the State's premier tourist attractions. The region which is characterised by a relatively young population, is home to a number of successful football, netball and cricket leagues. There are currently 29 government and private schools and 18 kindergartens in Cardinia. The neighbouring City of Casey has 70 schools and 37 kindergartens, serving a population of around 190,000.

Radio reception from the mostly Melbourne based commercial FM stations is unavailable or at best unreliable in most local areas. Currently radio services are provided by the ABC's 774 AM and JJJ FM services. A Warragul based AM service (3GG) provides some local coverage, although sport – the lifeblood of rural communities - is not covered by 3GG.

Lifestyles in Cardinia are typically very mobile, with high participation rates in sport and community activities. With economic pressures and the demands of growing families continuing to erode leisure time, the mostly young and dynamic family households tend to lead busier and busier lives, becoming increasingly reliant on the electronic media as the source for news and information.

It follows then, that radio broadcasting, as a source of news, information, education and employment in rural and regional communities is rapidly growing in stature, because it is the most effective means of providing information to an increasingly mobile population.

The South East Region which includes the municipalities of Greater Dandenong, Frankston, Mornington Peninsula, Casey, Cardinia and Bass Coast, have a 2001 population projection of 626,604 people, or some 18.4 % of the metropolitan total. This is expected to grow to over 800,000 or 22 % by 2021. Yet this region is served by just one commercial FM radio station 3MP at Frankston, which tends towards a city centric format.

As a consequence this significant, and growing, proportion of the metropolitan population have little access to radio services which meet the needs for local news services, tourism, sport, education and community service announcements. Small businesses likewise are denied an effective means of access to sizeable local markets. The regions extensive network of major highways and arterial roads, carry vast numbers of vehicle daily, yet receive scant attention from daily broadcasters on traffic condition reports.

In our view there is a strong case for the establishment of a new radio station serving the South East region, and we would recommend the allocation of sufficient spectrum to make this a reality.

Yours faithfully

Don Welsh  
**Chief Executive Officer**