

Cunningham, Adam (REPS)

From: Barbara Benson [carben@mail.southcom.com.au]
Sent: Friday, 27 October 2000 12:06 PM
To: cta.reps@aph.gov.au
Subject: Inquiry into the Adequacy of Radio Services in non-metro. Australia
The Secretary
House Communications Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/madam

I would like to make brief comments on two different elements of your inquiry as I understand it from the information provided in your newspaper notice seeking comments.

1) From a personal point of view; i.e., how radio services impact on me as an individual living in the northwest of Tasmania.

I listen to 2 radio stations, and they are both provided by the ABC - radio national (coming from Melbourne - the northern Tasmanian station does not have many of the programs I listen to such as the morning program with Peter George, up until today) and classic FM; the former mainly to keep me informed on national and international matters and to amuse and entertain; the latter to provide me with the joy of classical music. It is the only station in this area to provide classical music as opposed to cities such as Sydney and Melbourne which have a classical music public broadcasting station.

All the other radio stations in this area provide popular 20th century music which to me has the ephemeral quality of a butterfly and most with none of its beauty and suffers further by comparison with a butterfly by being incredibly noisy.

There are however times when the reception from each of these stations is so poor I have no option but to turn the radio off. The spoken word is so distorted it cannot be understood and the music is no longer a joy to listen to. I do not understand why this should be so considering the enormous technical advances which have been made in the 20th century.

You asked for comments on quantity and quality of radio services. I am happy to have two stations which meet my needs and the quality of their content (as opposed to the technical delivery) is very good. I would only be concerned were there a move to downgrade either of them to meet what may be thought of as popularism.

2) Social and community services

I have owned my small property here for 18 years and have visited regularly over that period, but have only lived here permanently for about 6 months having retired here. I tell you that only as background to my comments and to point out my obvious inexperience and ignorance of the NW of Tasmania.

I do not doubt that over time I shall listen more to the local ABC

station as I understand more the culture of the area and become involved with its life. I can imagine an important role for local and localised radio stations and believe that it is not what we know today, but rather is some future amalgam of radio and other means of communication such as the internet or other forms of communication that have yet to emerge. It is important that we take action as a society to counter the dangers inherent in relatively impersonal communication media such as the internet; the radio at least provides the human voice and thus a more personal means of communication.

Finally, I could not tell from your brief notice in the newspapers (and no I have not accessed your internet site) what you are aiming to do with this inquiry.

One could be cynical and say it is an attempt by the government to counter the swing to the Labour party as evidenced in the Victorian State election. This perhaps is emphasised by the brief notice giving no clue as to what vision you have for non-metropolitan communities. Is there a recognition that the increasing urbanisation of Australia is not necessarily good for the residents of Australia? Is there a move to enhance the well-being of rural and regional community life so that people do not continue to move away from the country to the city? and indeed that city people move to the country? If that is the case, how is this being linked to other important elements of life so that the total infrastructure is considered not just radio services?

Is there any coherent policy behind this? The notice in the newspaper was mostly about the processes of radio services. It is a nonsense to talk about processes if there is not an understood and agreed policy which helps to build and influence those processes. I look forward to seeing the report of the inquiry and then I may understand its purpose and the next steps in the process of building a coherent Australian society rather than one which seems to be increasingly dividing along the lines of metropolitan and non-metropolitan communities.

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