



MIGRANT INTERAGENCY

C/o Migrant Resource Centre of Newcastle

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25 October 2000

Committee on Communications,
Transport and the Arts

The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Submission No: 144
27/10/00
Secretary: Janet Holmes

Secretary:.....

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27 OCT 2000

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORT AND
THE ARTS

Radio Industry Inquiry

Dear Sir/Madam

At its most recent meeting the Newcastle Migrant Interagency decided to bring to the Radio Industry Inquiry's attention the needs of migrant communities living in regional and rural NSW. Several of the members of the Interagency have active roles in northern NSW and recognise the importance of radio in areas where there is a dearth of services for people of migrant backgrounds.

The Interagency has identified two areas where the improvement in radio services in rural areas would play a major role in benefiting the community. Firstly, the knowledge of the existence of government services for migrants is very restricted for migrant people living in rural areas. The information that exists, especially in languages other than English, is available through some written material and through the occasional visiting consultations but is non-existent through radio. Further, while some SBS television services can be found across this same area the television reception is variable.

Most migrant people are aware that SBS and some other FM radio services operate in Sydney and to a lesser degree in Newcastle and provide a service which keeps them up to date with what is happening. They understand that this radio has regular timetabling most often on a daily basis for their language group. The same does not exist for Community Radio, which is seen by some authorities to fill the gap and cover the needs of people of Non English speaking background.

Since no adequate radio services operate in rural areas to meet the needs of migrant people they virtually have no access to information on services available from government. At the same time government departments and other agencies are often loath to address the needs of migrant people and without regular radio are able to ignore their servicing obligations to the migrant part of their clientele.

The second area that we wish to address is the importance of radio, especially in community language to meet the social needs of migrant people living in rural areas. There is no need to describe Australia's migration to point out that many of those who settled in rural areas after the Second World War have grown old in those areas. Today many of our members have had to

deal with individuals and groups who are quite lonely people. Language loss through developing social isolation and the normal reversion to the original language by some would in many ways not be as great if these people could access regular language programs. Television does not currently fill this need.

Probably the easiest approach to meet all that this Interagency has identified would be to extend the existing SBS services. While we know that there is a scheme currently operating which encourages communities to extend SBS services by contributing half of the funds for small communities in much of regional Australia this is not feasible nor, outside of the migrant population would there be much interest.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Irene', written in black ink.

Irene Lupish
Convenor