

House of Representatives Standing  
Committee on Communications,  
Transport and the Arts

Box 873  
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Submission No: ..... 243 .....

Date Received: ..... 3/11/00 .....

Secretary: ..... Janet Holmes .....

Cr Paul Covington

Secretary:.....

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
COMMUNICATIONS TRANSPORT AND  
THE ARTS

October 30, 2000

The Committee Secretary  
House Communications Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir or Madam

I have been employed in the commercial radio industry since joining 7AD Devonport as a junior in 1981 – the fulfilment of a life long dream.

During 16 years in regional radio and three in the capital city markets I have seen many changes in the industry many due to technological improvements.

The most disappointing change has been the continuing down grading of local content because of networking. I started at 7AD working night time and weekend shifts. This was how most newcomers learnt the business but, sadly, now most regional stations take these programs via satellite. This means local communities have lost access to traditional announcements by their LOCAL station

- storm warnings
- flood information
- information (eg if the school bus returning from an excursion is running late)
- road closures
- power blackouts
- up-to-date weather forecasts
- regional news services (in some circumstances)

While I accept that in this day and age of “duopoly” running two stations live and local 24 hours a day is not an option I believe there must be a requirement for operators to provide local programming and have strategies in place to cope with emergency/disaster situations. When the power goes out which medium is the most accessible – the battery operated radio.

As I write this I have just been handed an urgent traffic report from the RTA advising the Pacific Highway is closed near Coffs Harbour for one hour. This is put to air almost immediately and is of great benefit to travellers. He may as well pull over and spend an hour or so in Grafton until the road is cleared. If we were on relay this information would not get to air.

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I have included four announcements received today and broadcast locally because my program was live to air from Grafton.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Covington", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Paul Covington  
Journalist  
Radio 2GF