

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2015

Communications Portfolio

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 29

Program No. Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Page 69, 24 February 2015

Topic: ABC Local Radio

Senator Williams asked:

Senator WILLIAMS: I am glad you raised that point about ABC local radio being the emergency broadcaster in Australia. It is not much good if you cannot hear the ABC. I have raised this before with you in 2011-12. I live just outside of Inverell. My office is there. There are 12,000 people in town. We have 2GL at Glen Innes. There is a radio signal from there, 70 kilometres away. On the FM, Radio National and Triple J come from Mount Dow, which is 104 kilometres. The signal in many parts of the town is very weak. I have councillors come to me. I have people come to my office saying, 'Can't you talk to the ACT to see if we can get the ABC signal? They want to listen to your program.' If you go out to Wilcannia or Cobar you will get a clearer signal than you will in the town, a town of 12,000. There are radio towers and television towers there. Would you please revisit and have a look at that signal in Inverell because it will stop people chewing my ears? They have a strong argument. If you are an emergency service you have a vital role, especially in rural and regional Australia, and it is not much good if we cannot hear you. Could you revisit that and see whether you can tap onto one of the towers there and give the town a good signal because they would really appreciate it?

Mr Scott: I appreciate that. We will pursue that with Broadcast Australia, who look after the transmission for us in the contract, and also with the ACMA. They are responsible for the allocation of different signals for different areas. They really work out the policy and then the execution of that policy on behalf of the ABC. Local radio effectively can be heard where 99 per cent of the country operates. So I am surprised that a town the size of Inverell may have difficulty receiving—

Senator WILLIAMS: It is pretty good in some areas. You go up Lewin Street and other areas where there are a lot of people and there is hardly any signal at all. I live west of town now and my signal is stronger—15 kilometres west of town—than when I was actually in town.

Mr Scott: Sometimes that depends a bit on the direction that the transmitters are set up. Mr Pendleton is in charge of transmission internally for us. We will look into that and come back to you on that.

Senator WILLIAMS: That will be wonderful. Thank you very much. Thanks, Chair.

Answer:

Residents of Inverell receive ABC Local Radio services from a number of transmission sites at:

1. Glen Innes on 819kHz AM
2. Mt Dowe on 99.1MHz FM
3. Manilla on 648kHz AM
4. Grafton on 738kHz AM

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Due to terrain and other signal strength issues, the best reception is likely to be from the Glen Innes site. The Glen Innes service is predicted to provide a suburban grade of coverage to the Inverell township. A suburban grade of coverage means that listeners should expect to be able to receive the signal with a good quality car or home stereo system. In cases where the signal drops out, listeners are advised to investigate the use of an external antenna.

There is currently no dedicated ABC Local Radio transmitter for Inverell. Due to limited radio frequency availability, it is unlikely there would be any spare available channels. If there was funding or frequency capacity to establish a dedicated service, availability would need to be confirmed with the Australian Communications and Media Authority.