



To: The Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional References
Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

24 February 2004

Members of the Legal and Constitutional References Committee,

I write in response to the Committee's invitation for public comment as part of the inquiry into Australian Expatriates, and to inform the Committee about a new television channel for expatriates called Right Side Up being launched in the UK.

Right Side Up Television

Right Side Up is being launched in response to a need by the Australian community in the UK to 'stay in touch with home'. It is scheduled to go to air on BSkyB in the UK mid-year as a free-view channel. It will initially deliver news and current affairs, but subsequently be expanded to include cultural and tourist elements along with sport and drama.

As part of the assessment process to see if there was a sizable viewership for the channel, we collected statistics about expatriates and others who may have an interest in the channel from many sources including the Australian High Commission (AHC). We found that the AHC estimated there to be:

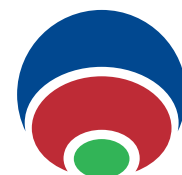
- 150,000 long term Australian-passport holders in the UK, along with
 - 150,000 short-term (less than 2 years) temporary residents
- at any one point in time.

The AHC recognised that it could not estimate the number of Australian citizens who were still in the UK but no longer on an Australian passport. Anecdotal evidence along with personal experience suggests that this is a significant number, perhaps as high as 200,000 given that there is no time limit on staying, and thus there is an accumulation over the years. This would then bring the number of Australian citizens and former Australian citizens to around 500,000 in the UK alone.

This may seem like a high estimate, but many Australians change to a UK passport after the required 5 years residency in the UK in order to open up their employment opportunities in Europe. This means that the 300,000 from above are all 5 years or less in the UK. It is not too difficult to imagine that there may be this same number again who have accumulated in the UK because they have 'stayed on' over the remaining years of their life. Numbers may become more clear over time now that Australia allows dual citizenship with the UK.

Added to the above to create our total market are UK citizens who either:

- have relatives in Australia,
- who wish to travel to Australia,
- who are considering moving to Australia, and
- who have business relations with Australia.



The Need

We informally surveyed many expatriates about what they would look for in a new TV channel dedicated to them, and found that staying in touch with current issues, feeling informed, and not feeling so distant were top of the list.

At present there is very little information flow from Australia to help Australians keep up to date and to help them feel a little 'closer to home'. There are only really 2 publications in the UK to which Australian would look to find information about news and current affairs in Australia: TNT Magazine which has two thirds of an A4 page each week and thus is out of date and necessarily too truncated, and a monthly newspaper called Australian News which is also out of date by the time it is published and more targeted at non-Australians wishing to go to Australia.

There are several business groupings which foster networking, but do not 'bridge the gap' to Australia by bringing information from Australia: Australian Business in Europe (ABIE) which is a social club for Australians living and working in Europe, Australia-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce which is a networking group for business but with a price tag to entry, and various other smaller organisations with very specific focuses.

There is also very little attraction in the websites which distribute information about national issues; they are not a relaxing way to keep up to date. Most expatriates have a quick look at the headlines of their favourite Australian paper over the internet when they get to work, and if they wish to follow it up it is difficult due to the work setting and the time it would take. Hence, they are not up to date.

Thus, the need for a channel of communication which delivered timely and relevant news, entertainment, and information in a relaxing context became compelling.

Communication with Expatriates

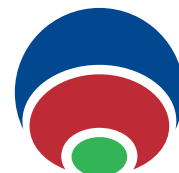
Well before beginning on the work to launch Right Side Up we were aware that the ABC was broadcasting Australian content into Asia to promote Australia in the region, and to provide an alternative English-speaking channel not focussed on the US. This channel also allowed expatriates in Asia to keep up to date and in-touch with Australia.

Why is there no such push into other countries in which Australia wishes to promote itself or where there is a large concentration of expatriates? Television is such a simple method of communication, and extremely effective when compared to other channels of communication. Television has the ability to reduce the distance between Australia and its expatriates.

Whilst it is probably not cost effective for the ABC to set up a whole channel in the UK, we would be willing to work with the ABC, public service departments and Government to distribute:

- Content produced by the ABC for national and/or foreign consumption;
- Information which public service departments such as the Department of Immigration or Foreign Affairs wish to have disseminated;
- Information about national issues which are of topical interest (such as the republic debate);
- New content produced by Government aimed specifically at engaging expatriates.

Television, and specifically Right Side Up, can be used to communicate with the hundreds of



thousands of Australians in the UK, helping to keep them engaged with Australia, feeling 'close to home', and thus more willing to participate in the democratic process.

I urge the Committee to seriously consider and recommend ways in which Australia might better communicate with its huge expatriate community taking into account the fact that television communication is now possible.

I request that I and other members of the Australian community in the UK be allowed to participate in the Inquiry by way of video-link to the Australian High Commission in London. We feel it is important that the Inquiry seeks to involve those who are at the very centre of the Inquiry. I would be pleased to hear from the secretariat that this is possible and the details of times and dates.

I would be pleased to speak to this submission should I be called by the Committee, and indeed would welcome the opportunity to do so, perhaps by video-link.

Yours sincerely,

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