



30 March 2017

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Restoring Shortwave Radio) Bill 2017
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Members,

NT Farmers is the peak industry body representing the interest of all plant industries in the Northern Territory (NT). NT Farmers represents the interests of grower members in horticulture, nursery & gardens, improved pastures, forestry and other supply chain partners. Plant industries within the NT is the second largest primary industries sector in the NT accounting for approximately \$270 million in production value annually, excluding forestry. The sector employs approximate 3,000 people during its peak seasons and is a valuable and expanding contributor to the NT and national economies.

Shortwave radio plays a vital role in providing remote and regional communities throughout the NT with a communications channel, sometimes the only communications channel with the outside world. Whilst many parts of Australia can claim to have access to reliable and consistent communications, this is not the case in remote and regional NT. In fact given that the entire NT is classified as remote and regional, it has been completely unacceptable to axe the shortwave radio service without any consultation or consideration of the consequences to large parts of Australia. Many of NT Farmers members are located in remote localities and many farmers and their families live in isolated circumstances, with shortwave radio providing connectivity to not just the news of the day but also to updates about market conditions and industry developments.

If the Commonwealth is serious about its Northern Australia development agenda, a good part of this requires reliable and consistent communications. The alternate options of satellite and other services are still in their infancy in Australia and as has been demonstrated and reported by NBN Co, in need of more time to 'find its feet'. These new technologies will play a role but not at present and not for the next few years.

In conclusion, the restoration of shortwave radio services throughout the Northern Territory is a high priority and NT Farmers and its members supports the reinstatement of this service. Services provided by Government such as the shortwave radio service is an enabler of industry development.

Kind Regards,

Shenal Basnayake
CEO