



The Role and Future of Radio Australia and Australia Television

Report of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
References Committee

May 1997

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**Inquiry into the Role and Future of
Radio Australia and Australia Television**

Report Of The Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence And Trade
References Committee

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

That the following matters be referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 14 May 1997:

- (a) the contribution to Australia's foreign policy and trade interests, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, and the roles as independent broadcasters, of:
 - (i) Radio Australia and
 - (ii) Australia Television;
- (b) the activities of similar foreign broadcast services, radio and television, broadcasting to countries in the Asia-Pacific region;
- (c) the consequences of the closure of Radio Australia and/or Australia Television;
- (d) the relationship between Australia's overseas information and cultural activities and Australia's foreign and trade policy interests; and
- (e) the role of Radio Australia, having regard to:
 - (i) the cost effectiveness of the service in meeting the needs of target audiences.
 - (ii) the relevance of programming offered by the service in the context of media choices available to target audiences; and
 - (iii) the extent to which culturally appropriate Australian Broadcasting Corporation programming could be delivered by means of rebroadcasting on local or regional services.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Radio Australia and Australia Television are two great Australian success stories in the very competitive field of international broadcasting.
2. After 58 years of broadcasting and with an audience of tens of millions of people, Radio Australia is highly respected for its integrity, independence and quality of programming. Many regional leaders have given testimonials to the value they place on Radio Australia's services. A large volume of mail (130,000 letters in 1995-96) attests to the loyalty of its audience. The volume of mail significantly outstrips that received by the BBC World Service and Voice of America in the Asia Pacific region.
3. It is incomprehensible to the Committee that the Government would even contemplate the closure of Radio Australia's Asian language services or, for that matter, the closure of Radio Australia itself.
4. In only four years, Australia Television has, through satellite transmission and rebroadcasting arrangements, made its mark in the Asia Pacific region. A December 1995 study showed that its penetration of the Asian market equalled that of CNN and the BBC and was second only to Hong Kong Star Television. What is remarkable is that Australia Television has achieved this for a cost of between six and eight million dollars a year. In fact, after subtracting revenue, Australia Television cost only \$2.38 million in 1995-96.
5. It is also very difficult to understand why the Government would seek to privatise Australia Television, supposedly to improve efficiency, when it costs so little now and is likely to be self-supporting within two or three years.
6. No details are available about the terms of the proposed sale of Australia Television. It is not clear to what extent a buyer would be required to use Australian content material or whether there would be any attempt at imposing restrictions on the owner in relation to programming. The Committee has doubts about the enforceability of any such restrictions, particularly if the service were resold. A privatised service would aim justifiably to maximise profits, even if this were inimical to Australia's national interests. As the service is expected to be self-funding within two or three years, it is nonsensical to sell an entity which furthers our national interests when it will cost the taxpayer nothing.
7. It is obvious to the Committee that the Minister for Communications and the Arts, Senator Richard Alston, has not considered the future of Radio Australia and Australia Television other than in a most superficial way before making his decisions. In his public statements, he has relied largely on Mr Mansfield's comments and recommendations. Since the establishment of this inquiry, Senator Alston has trivialised the issue by making misleading statements, such as suggesting that short-wave radio is outdated and that this Committee's inquiry is too late to influence the Government's Budget process. Contrary to Senator Alston's assertions, the Committee believes this inquiry has provided an opportunity for all the issues to be publicly aired and assessed.
8. Unfortunately, Mr Mansfield, as he has publicly acknowledged since the release of his report, did not consider the foreign affairs aspects of the two international broadcasters, which obviously should be key elements in any consideration of their future. As the foreign affairs

aspects were outside the scope of his inquiry, Mr Mansfield did himself, the ABC and the nation's interests a disservice by mounting a half-baked justification for his recommendations in relation to both Radio Australia and Australia Television.

9. Should Australia Television withdraw from the field when there are many competitors, particularly when it is placed among the leaders? That was Mr Mansfield's bald suggestion. Of course not. Australia is known for its competitiveness. The withdrawal of Australia Television, in view of its market success, would involve much loss of 'face' and respect for Australia.

10. The Committee believes that it is also unfortunate that Mr Mansfield's terms of reference were too narrow to cover rapid developments in communications technology and the globalisation of the media. He would otherwise have been able to consider the future of the ABC in the context of the rapid changes taking place in broadcasting in the Asia Pacific region rather than within the proposed budget for the ABC. The ABC's forward thinking in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the consequential establishment of Australia Television, gave the ABC a place in the fast developing satellite television broadcasting market in the region. Despite early problems, including under-capitalisation, and having been subjected to many inquiries, Australia Television is just beginning to blossom as one of the region's main satellite television broadcasters. And now it will be sold.

11. Initial decisions relating to the future of Radio Australia and Australia Television are the responsibility of the ABC, as they are part of the ABC, an independent statutory authority. The lack of public support for the two international services by the ABC has been noted by commentators and the Committee. The support expressed for them by Managing Director Brian Johns at a hearing of this Committee is one of the few occasions the ABC has taken such a stand. The ABC's belated decision, on 30 April 1997, to support four of the six Asian language services in a very reduced form, for an outlay of about \$1.6 million, is welcomed by the Committee, but it does not go nearly far enough. The only consolation is that at least this decision maintains in some form these crucial foreign language services.

12. The recent decisions of the Government, as reported in the media, in relation to the future of Radio Australia, supporting only English language services and Tok Pisin for Papua New Guinea, carry with them overtones of Australian policies in years gone by. The disregard for the Asian language services, to which the bulk of Radio Australia's audience listen, is inexplicable given the stated policies of the Government to have close relations with Asia and the desire to increase trade with regional countries. The threat of the loss or down grading of Radio Australia services would not have endeared tens of millions of listeners to Australia, particularly as Australia is seen as a developed and relatively wealthy country, which could afford to operate short-wave services to the region in local languages. As all countries in South East Asia and North East Asia (except Burma), including countries to which Australia gives considerable development aid, operate international short-wave services, there does not seem to be any justification or logical reason for the Government's indifference to the closure of the Asian services. Certainly the Government has not given any valid reason for its decisions. The Government's pre-election policy sits very uncomfortably with those decisions. That policy was:

Radio Australia has a proud place in the ABC. It has been providing overseas services for half a century benefiting not only Australian expatriates but also the nationals of many countries, particularly those in our region. The Coalition is strongly supportive of Radio Australia's existing services and will ensure that they are not prejudiced or downgraded in any way.

13. Nevertheless, the future of Radio Australia and Australia Television are ultimately a matter for the Government. It was the Minister for Communications and the Arts, in his media release of 16 July 1996, who suggested to the ABC that it investigate privatisation of Australia Television. Senator Alston has also supported Mr Mansfield's recommendations regarding Radio Australia. The Committee believes that it is disingenuous for the Government to suggest that this is just the ABC's responsibility, when the Government proposes to slash the budget of the ABC by about \$55 million.

14. The Committee believes that Radio Australia and Australia Television complement each other. Radio Australia's short-wave radio services require only relatively cheap receivers for listeners to receive the broadcast. They do not require a television set or a satellite receiver to pick up satellite signals or rebroadcasts through local free to air or cable subscription television services. Some countries do not allow private ownership of satellite receivers and prohibit rebroadcasting of foreign television news services. For a vast number of people in Asia, radio is the only medium to which they have access. Many local services in some countries, such as Indonesia, also use short-wave rather than medium-wave for their broadcasts.

15. In countries, or areas of countries, where television is the dominant form of electronic media, Australia Television is the preferred service. It is also a unique service in the Asia Pacific region in that it broadcasts a wide range of programming, mostly Australian content. Other international television broadcasters tend to specialise in particular program genres.

16. The Committee examined the appropriateness of short-wave radio as the mainstay of Radio Australia's services. Although old technology, as is medium-wave, it is by no means out-dated technology. Other international broadcasters have invested heavily in short-wave transmitters in recent years, particularly to upgrade their services to the Asia Pacific region. NATO has gone back to short-wave transmission for some of their communications systems because of satellite failures. The Australian Defence Force has recently invested one billion dollars in the Jindalee over the horizon radar, which is based on short-wave technology. With the prospect of digital short-wave transmission for both domestic and international services in the near future, short-wave will continue to be an important broadcasting mode for the foreseeable future.

17. Radio Australia already uses other transmission modes to broaden its audience. It uses satellite, rebroadcasting and the Internet. Technology is changing rapidly and, undoubtedly, broadcasters will have to adapt to these changes in the future to maintain their place in the broadcasting market. For the moment, however, short-wave radio remains the most effective means of transmitting programs to a large audience which is dependent largely on radio broadcasts.

18. The broad foreign affairs aspects of international broadcasting cannot be valued in dollars and cents. It is about the subtle messages conveyed to the peoples of the region, about

life in Australia, the beauty and sometimes starkness of our countryside, our hopes and disappointments, our achievements in many fields, our democratic principles and our perceptions of issues and events which affect Australia, the region and the world. It is about creating an awareness of Australia, an understanding of our way of life and the multicultural nature of our society and showing that our future is inextricably linked with Asia and the Pacific, even though we maintain strong ties with countries in other regions from which many Australians have come. It is also about programming which draws attention to things which relate specifically to trade, business, education, tourism or diplomacy from which Australia might benefit directly as a result of those broadcasts.

19. Radio Australia and Australia Television project images of Australia to Asian and Pacific countries. There is no other viable and cost-effective means of projecting and promoting Australia to tens of millions of people in the Asia Pacific region and beyond. Without Radio Australia and Australia Television, there would not be an effective Australian voice or images of Australia to inform the region about our country.

20. As the audiences of the two broadcasters include many of the political and business decision-makers of the region, Australia must benefit from the knowledge and understanding about Australia which the two broadcasters disseminate.

21. Whether it is in international diplomacy, business, education, tourism, the arts, sport or any other human endeavour, the goodwill engendered by Radio Australia and Australia Television provides a basis for Australia's relationships with regional countries. What Australia puts into the region, other than in a mercenary way, Australia will get out of it. The two broadcasters provide services to the region from which Australia benefits.

22. The Committee was told in many submissions from people living in the region that Radio Australia and Australia Television programs telling listeners and viewers about Australia as a successful multicultural society had helped to dispel doubts about Australian racial tolerance following accounts of the race debate broadcast on local media stations in the region. In other words, the two broadcasters provide an Australian voice in the region to counter news items which may hurt Australian interests. Without such a voice, there is no other viable means to tell Australia's side of the story to tens of millions of people.

23. Australia spends more than two billion dollars a year on foreign affairs, overseas aid and trade promotion. A large amount of that is focussed on Asia. In comparison, in 1995-96, Australia Television cost less than \$2.5 million (after deducting sponsorship revenue) and Radio Australia cost between \$20 and \$25 million (including transmission costs). The Committee believes that for such a relatively small amount of money, the two broadcasters are particularly cost effective in projecting and promoting Australia, as well as our many national interests.

24. Comparative studies done in 1995 by Radio Australia and in 1996 by KPMG of Radio Australia and nine other broadcasters showed that Radio Australia was very cost-effective in comparison with other international broadcasters across the range of measures used in the studies. In other words, Australia is getting value for money for Radio Australia.

25. With regard to Australia Television, in 1995-96, it kept costs within the target range but revenue was higher than the target level. With total costs, including transmission, of a

little more than six million dollars, it is hard to conceive a more cost-effective organisation, particular given its performance measured against the BBC and CNN.

26. Having come to the conclusion that Radio Australia is a respected and cost-effective broadcaster attracting a large audience using appropriate modes of transmission and providing programming that obviously meets the needs of the audience, the Committee believes that it would be foolish in the extreme to cut its range of services. **The Committee therefore recommends that the Government provide sufficient funds, at least at current levels, to allow Radio Australia to continue to provide its current range of English and foreign language services through a variety of media, especially the medium of short-wave radio.**

27. **The Committee also recommends that additional funding be provided to Radio Australia to fund a Burmese language service and to expand the Khmer language service.**

28. The Committee also concludes that as a result of Australia Television's success in market performance, in overall programming and in exceeding financial targets, Australia should not be deprived, by privatisation, of its services in furthering national interests in the Asia Pacific region. **The Committee therefore recommends that (a) Australia Television not be privatised and that (b) the Government maintain funding in accordance with the three year funding package entered into by the previous Government and supported in its election policy by the current Government.**

29. The Committee then considered whether the two broadcasting organisations should remain with the ABC, merge with another organisation, such as SBS for Australia Television; move to another portfolio, such as the foreign affairs and trade portfolio; or be restructured in some other way. The Committee concluded that the two bodies should remain with the ABC but each should have a separate board comprising representatives of the ABC, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Communications and the Arts, expert or interested individuals (one of whom should be the chairman) and the head of the respective international broadcaster. This would enable the two organisations to have more attention and direction from more focussed boards for developing strategies to meet the challenges of a dynamic market, emerging technologies and moves towards the globalisation of the media.

30. The Committee strongly believes that it is crucial for Australia's interests that we continue to be part of the developing media arrangements in the Asia Pacific region. Consequently, **the Committee recommends that Australia continue to operate international public broadcasting services to the Asia Pacific region and that such services continue to be associated with the ABC but with separately identified funding.**

31. The Committee is aware that the ABC finally relented and agreed to fund four of the six Asian language services with reduced transmission time and significant staff cuts. If Radio Australia had been forced to stop broadcasting to Asia, the respect, trust and goodwill which it had built up over 58 years would have disappeared overnight. If the Government or the ABC does not relent in relation to the proposed privatisation of Australia Television, so too will the respect earned by Australia Television in the short time it has been broadcasting to the Asia Pacific region. In Asia, loss of 'face' and respect has a very negative effect. The

respect for Australia engendered by respect for Radio Australia and Australia Television will also evaporate. And it will take a long time to replace.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Establishment of Inquiry

1.1 On 13 February 1997, the Senate unanimously referred the matter of the role and future of Radio Australia (RA) and Australia Television (ATV) to the Committee for inquiry and report by 15 May 1997. The Committee agreed that it should present its report by 5 May 1997.

Conduct of the Inquiry

1.2 The Committee advertised the inquiry in the national press on 19 February 1997 calling for written submissions to be lodged with the Committee by 10 March 1997. The Committee's advertisement was also broadcast on RA and ATV so that interested listeners and viewers could provide their views on the two services to the Committee. The Committee is grateful to RA, ATV and the ABC central office for their co-operation in making these broadcasts. The advertisement was also placed on the Committee's Internet web site and that of the ABC.

1.3 The Committee received 2,211 written submissions, which all except three support the retention of RA and ATV in their current forms. A list of submissions is contained in Appendix 1. The Committee is appreciative of RA's assistance in translating a number of submissions written in languages other than English.

1.4 The Committee conducted public hearings in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney at which 62 people, appearing on their own behalf or representing organisations, gave evidence. A list of the people who appeared at the public hearings is contained in Appendix 2. In addition, the Committee visited the offices/studios of Radio Australia in Melbourne on 12 March 1997 and of Australia Television in Sydney on 13 March 1997. Although the Committee was unable to visit the Australia Television office/studio in Darwin, staff representatives from the Darwin office of ATV gave evidence to the Committee in Canberra.

Lack of Departmental Co-operation

1.5 The Committee wishes to draw attention to the lack of co-operation by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in this inquiry. In accordance with usual procedures, the Chairman of the Committee wrote to Mr Downer on 24 February 1997 seeking a written submission from his Department and the appearance of departmental officers at a public hearing. The Committee received neither an acknowledgement nor a substantive reply from Mr Downer.

1.6 The Department did not make a written submission to the Committee. Officers of the Department did, however, appear at a public hearing on 2 April 1997. At the hearing, when asked by the Committee why a submission had not been made, Mr Bill Fisher, First Assistant Secretary, Public Affairs and Consular Division, replied:

The question of whether a minister directs the department, or what the minister directs his department to do, is within the prerogative of the minister, rather than of the department, so I am afraid I do not think I can get down that track very far.¹

1.7 At the hearing, the two officers of the Department refused to answer most questions put to them about RA and ATV. At the beginning of the hearing, Mr Fisher explained:

I should say to you that the question of the future of Radio Australia and of Australia Television is one that is currently being considered by government and therefore I will be unable to go into any details on the questions before the inquiry, as concerns matters of policy.²

1.8 When asked shortly afterwards about RA, Mr Fisher responded:

I suppose the same considerations really have to apply. The question of the usefulness of Radio Australia in those circumstances, of course, is really part and parcel of the current policy considerations before government and so I am afraid I simply have to say the same thing in answer to you, that this is not a matter on which the department can express an opinion at the moment.³

1.9 The fact that a matter is being considered by the Government is not, and never has been, a reason for a departmental officer to refuse to answer questions relating to that matter. Parliamentary committees often inquire into matters which are subject to Government consideration during the course of those inquiries.

1.10 It was obvious that the DFAT officers were acting on instructions, presumably from the Minister, not to assist the Committee.

1.11 The approach taken by the DFAT officers was contrary to both the practice of our parliamentary system of government and to the *Guidelines for Official Witnesses before Parliamentary Committees and Related Matters*. Under the heading of accountability in the introduction to the Guidelines, it is stated:

In the Australian system of parliamentary government, and consistent with the traditional understanding of ministerial responsibility, the public and parliamentary advocacy and defence of government policies and administration has traditionally been, and should remain, the preserve of Ministers, not officials. The duty of the public servant is to assist ministers to fulfil their accountability obligations by providing full and accurate information to the Parliament about the factual and technical background to policies and their administration. The guidelines are therefore aimed at encouraging the freest possible flow of such information between the public service, the Parliament and the public.

1 *Committee Hansard*, p. 55.

2 *Committee Hansard*, p. 52.

3 *Committee Hansard*, p. 53.

1.12 The Committee is well aware of the restrictions in the guidelines on what public servants can discuss when appearing before the Committee. The Chairman issued the normal warning regarding policy matters in his comments at the beginning of the hearing. The witnesses were not asked to comment on policy or on the advice which they might have given in the formulation of policy, or even identify the considerations which the Government has been taking into account in deliberations at that time.

1.13 Neither the Minister nor the Department has made any claim that the information was withheld on public interest immunity grounds. The Committee therefore believes that the Minister's action in gagging the Department was a blatant attempt by him to prevent the free flow of information to the Committee and through it to the Australian public. In so doing, he was showing contempt for the normal processes of parliamentary accountability.

1.14 In a submission dated October 1996 to the Mansfield inquiry into the ABC, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade strongly supported both RA and ATV. In a letter dated February 1997 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Minister for Communications and the Arts, which was leaked to the media, the Minister for Foreign Affairs argued strongly for retention of the two international broadcasting services.

1.15 In the light of Mr Downer's putative support for RA and ATV, it is almost incomprehensible that he would not allow his department to co-operate with the Committee in this inquiry. The Committee is also disappointed that DFAT did not provide any information or views on RA and ATV given that Mr Mansfield had not considered these issues and further believed that the Government did not have enough information to evaluate their performance. When interviewed on ABC Radio National Breakfast on 26 February 1997, Mr Mansfield said that 'If you look at my terms of reference, I only had to look at the ABC. I didn't have the task and wasn't asked to look at Australia's foreign policy'.

1.16 The Committee was also dissatisfied with the level of assistance afforded the Committee by the Department of Communications and the Arts. Its submission was not received until 10 April 1997, a week after officers of the Department appeared before the Committee. Given the bland nature of its submission, there is no reason why it should have been so late. Furthermore, it was apparent to the Committee that the Department's choice of witnesses was not in accord with the Guidelines, which provide that:

It is essential that the official(s) selected should have sufficient responsibility or be sufficiently close to the particular work area to be able to satisfy the committee's requirements.

1.17 The Committee noted that officers with direct responsibility and expertise in the areas covered in the hearing were not nominated by the Department to give evidence to the Committee. The officers giving evidence to the Committee were not able to satisfy the Committee's requirements because of their obvious lack of detail of the matters under discussion.

1.18 The Committee did, however, receive submissions and took evidence from other expert witnesses.

Timing of the Inquiry

1.19 The Minister for Communications and the Arts, Senator Alston, has made it clear that the Government will consider the future of Australia's international broadcasting services in the Budget context without waiting for the release of the Committee's report.

1.20 Mr Mansfield's report was released on 24 January 1997. Parliament did not resume sittings following the summer recess until 4 February 1997. The Committee considered the proposed reference on 6 February and on 13 February the Senate referred the matter of the role and future of RA and ATV to the Committee. In other words, the Senate acted very quickly to establish this inquiry. This refutes any suggestion made by Senator Alston to the contrary.

1.21 When Senator Alston appeared on the Network Ten program *Meet the Press* on 16 March 1997, in reply to a question from Mr Paul Bongiorno about the relevance of the Committee's inquiry, he said:

As you rightly point out, it's going to be far too late in the day to come up with recommendations a week beforehand [the Budget] and expect that they'll be given serious attention. Now, they will still have the opportunity to call evidence and generally have views expressed in the lead-up to those negotiations, but if they're expecting that we're going to suddenly turn around and have a whole new rethink about Radio Australia on the basis of that report, then I think they've left their run too late.

1.22 Senator Alston did not table the Mansfield Report in the Parliament so that it could be given proper parliamentary scrutiny. He did not encourage public debate on Mr Mansfield's far-reaching ramifications. His disregard for the Committee's inquiry and the precipitate way he has been pursuing the demise of RA and ATV, despite the fact that Mr Mansfield did not consider the matter in any detail, demonstrates that he has been treating the whole matter as a *fait accompli* without giving any consideration to the ramifications of what he has been trying to do.

1.23 It should be emphasised here that both Houses of the Parliament have the right to inquire into any matter relevant to the Parliament on behalf of the people of Australia, even if the Government is proceeding with its decision-making processes in relation to the matter. The Budget may be prepared by the Government but it is still subject to parliamentary scrutiny and parliamentary approval. Obviously, the Senate will consider the Committee's findings and recommendations during the process of budgetary scrutiny.

1.24 This inquiry has, at least, given thousands of people in Australia and viewers and listeners around the world an opportunity to comment on the changes to Australia's international broadcasting services as proposed by Mr Mansfield and Senator Alston. Their opinion, expressed through written submissions and oral evidence given to the Committee, virtually unanimously, is that Radio Australia and Australia Television should not be closed or reduced in size or commercialised.

1.25 If the Government makes decisions about the future of RA and ATV contrary to the recommendations of the Committee, it has to wear the opprobrium of millions of listeners and viewers within Australia, the Asia Pacific region and beyond, many of whom depend on RA and ATV for news and current affairs, their English language training and entertainment. Moreover, it will do lasting damage to Australia's reputation and interests.

1.26 The Committee notes that contrary to the Federal Government's position, there is strong support for the retention of RA and ATV from other Coalition Governments and representatives throughout Australia. For instance, all State Premiers and Territory Chief Ministers, seven out of eight of whom represent Coalition Governments, support the retention of the two organisations in their present form. So too do the Victorian State Liberal Council, two branches of Coalition Parties (which made submissions to the Committee) and former Liberal Prime Minister, Mr Malcolm Fraser. Former Liberal Member of Parliament, Mr Bill Yates, strongly supported RA in written and oral evidence.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

Introduction

2.1 This chapter briefly covers the growth of international broadcasting services and the history and development of Radio Australia and Australia Television.

Brief History of Short-Wave Radio Transmission

2.2 Short-wave radio broadcasts today have a different but related function compared to broadcasts during the Second World War and the Cold War, when they operated as a propaganda tool.

2.3 With the acquisition of superior broadcasting capability on the high frequency spectrum, short-wave transmission in the 1980s provided good quality signals that could penetrate to every corner of the globe. This enabled such international broadcasters as the Voice of America, BBC World Service, Radio France Internationale, Deutsche Welle and ORF Austria using high frequency broadcasting to disseminate programs largely aimed at fulfilling contemporary foreign policy objectives.¹

2.4 According to Mr James Wood, a consulting engineer and broadcasting writer:

Today, the bulk of the 100 or so countries engaged in information broadcasting use it as an instrument of foreign policy, projecting the positive side of the country's character to the rest of the world, and thereby extending its influence.²

2.5 The dramatic growth of short-wave broadcasting from the 1980s onwards is revealed in the table below, charting sales of international short-wave transmitters from the 1950s through to 1990.

2.6 By the early 1990s, short-wave technology had eclipsed all other mass media with its ability to traverse broad land masses and oceans, to be received by listeners in palaces and city boardrooms down to village schools using cheap radio handsets. With over a hundred countries engaged in information broadcasting, it was a medium that could reach all people and all markets uncensored. As Mr James Wood concluded, it could thus:

1 James Wood, 'Comment: Growth explosion in international HF information broadcasting', *Telecommunications Policy*, Vol. 15:1, February 1991 *passim*.

2 James Wood, 'Growth explosion in international HF information broadcasting', in *Telecommunications Policy*, v. 15 (1) February 1991, p. 24.

extend [a country's] zone of political, cultural and economical beliefs into the territorial areas of other nations in distant continents - a feat which before the 20th century would have only been possible with an invading army.³

Table 2.1: Growth in international information broadcasting

The growth explosion in international information broadcasting in the high-frequency spectrum (sales statistics for sales of short-wave transmitters since 1950)

Period	ABB		Thomson-CSF		Marconi		AEG	
	Units	kW (total)	Units	kW (total)	Units	kW (total)	Units	kW (total)
1950-54	4	400	1	250	4	400	1	50
1955-59	7	700	2	600	3	300	-	-
1960-64	13	2 350	14	1 530	27	4 350	22	1 950
1965-69	18	4 350	10	1 350	26	6 050	13	1 300
1970-74	29	7 350	25	8 150	11	1 850	7	1 450
1975-79	19	6 450	17	5 350	11	3 050	14	6 750
1980-84	47	14 750	27	8 950	15	5 300	16	6 750
1985-90	100	30 500	32	12 600	21	6 750	26	10 200
Totals	237	66 850	127	38 780	118	28 050	99	28 450

Note: Companies are: Asea Brown Boveri (Switzerland), Thomson-CSF (France), Marconi Communications (UK), AEG Telefunken AG (Germany).

Source: James Wood, 'Growth explosion in international HF information broadcasting', in *Telecommunications Policy*, v. 15 (1) February 1991, p. 24.

2.7 At the same time, the success of an international short-wave radio service in fulfilling foreign policy objectives rests on the credibility of the broadcaster's product as perceived by the listener. A listener does not have to listen to a particular service. There are now many services from which to choose in most regions of the world. The BBC World Service's success has resulted from its distinct repositioning, after the Cold War, as an international broadcaster with a commitment to independent standards of journalism and the communication of information.⁴ Despite its obligations to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with respect to broad objectives, it dedicates itself to 'today's mission to give a global perspective on international events to a global audience ... not in terms of the demands of policy, but in terms of its relevance to its audience'.⁵ Radio Australia as part of the ABC, an independent statutory authority and, as such, a voice informed but not directed by Australia's foreign policy interests, has also achieved success in meeting audience requirements in the Asia Pacific region for similar reasons.

3 James Wood, *Telecommunications Policy*, p. 27.

4 John Tusa, 'BBC World Service as a public sector broadcaster', p. 230.

5 John Tusa, 'BBC World Service as a public sector broadcaster', pp 230, 232.

Radio Australia

2.8 The development of Australia's short-wave broadcaster, Radio Australia, has broadly mirrored that of its overseas counterparts. In December 1939, it commenced its charter as an overseas short-wave service, Australia Calling, run jointly by the ABC and the Department of Information.⁶ Its object was to function as 'an Australian gesture of support to British efforts, through the BBC's External Service, to counteract the propaganda broadcasting of the British Empire's enemies'.⁷

2.9 Later during the War, under complete control of the Department of Information, Australia Calling reflected the war time agenda of ABC internal radio services. As the June 1942 Australian Broadcasting Commission Report said, in response to Australia's position as 'a vital centre of war', Australian radio services had become 'a major implement of national policy'.⁸ Radio services would thus direct the thinking of Australians at home and its servicemen overseas by providing suitable war time news bulletins and through providing programs that would assist in maintaining morale.

2.10 To mark the changed role of the service at the end of the War, Australia Calling was renamed 'Radio Australia' and returned to the control of the ABC in 1950. However, as K.S Inglis observed in his authorised history of the ABC, this administrative decision by the Menzies Government was determined by a new foreign policy agenda. The decision to cut the operations of the short-wave service was overridden when:

The ABC warned them that if Australia stopped transmitting on frequencies allotted by international agreement, somebody else - the Russians for example - might move into them. That encouraged Cabinet to think again and so awakened the interest of the new Minister of External Affairs, P.C. Spender, to the uses of short-wave radio for foreign policy.⁹

2.11 During the 1950s, Radio Australia had a general service and one specifically directed at South and South East Asia.¹⁰ By 1956, it was broadcasting in English, French, Indonesian, Thai and Mandarin with news bulletins given in each language.¹¹ In the early 1960s, Japanese programs and a Vietnamese service were introduced.¹² In this period the ABC began to post staff in Asia, partly to meet the needs of Radio Australia. The service proved extremely

6 *Sixty Years Our ABC: Celebrating Australia's 60th Anniversary 1932-92*, ABC Corporate Relations and ABC Document Archives [1992], p. 8.

7 *The ABC in Review: National Broadcasting in the 1980s. Report by the Committee of Review of the Australian Broadcasting Commission* [Dix Report], Vol. 2, Canberra 1981, pp 421-2.

8 *Sixty Years Our ABC*, p. 8

9 K. S Inglis, *This is the ABC*, Melbourne: 1983, p. 156.

10 *Legislative Research Service, Radio Australia and Australian Foreign Relations: A Brief Survey*, prepared by Dr F. Frost, 27 June 1985, p. 2.

11 K. S. Inglis, *This is the ABC*, p. 157.

12 K. S. Inglis, *This is the ABC*, p. 253.

popular in Indonesia at this time and short-wave enthusiasts in the International Short-Wave Club Popularity Poll in 1971 voted RA first ahead of the BBC and Radio Nederlands.¹³

2.12 In the early 1980s, Radio Australia suffered budget cuts and was unable to upgrade its transmission facilities after its Cox peninsula transmitters were destroyed by Cyclone Tracy in 1974.¹⁴ At the same time, international competitors were upgrading to superior high frequency transmitters. Despite this set-back, after the transmitters were restored in 1984, Radio Australia was able to capitalise on the widespread short-wave transmission and reception infrastructure throughout the Asia and the Pacific by increasingly focussing on the region. It was therefore able to play an important role with special broadcasts during the Fiji coup in 1987, the Tiananmen Square crisis in China in 1989 and even to Australian hostages and expatriates in the Middle East during the Gulf Crisis in 1990.¹⁵

2.13 In late 1989, an ABC Committee of Review, convened by Mr Stuart Revill (the Revill Review) found that Radio Australia's transmitters were under-powered for providing reception to target areas and concluded that unless investment allowed improved transmission capacities RA would not be able 'to compete even in its highest priority areas' and that 'unless action is taken urgently, its position will continue to deteriorate'.¹⁶ With funding forthcoming from the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Transport and Communications, facilities were upgraded in Darwin and Shepparton and two additional transmitters went into operation in May 1994.¹⁷

2.14 Radio Australia currently broadcasts in English and eight other languages to a wide audience throughout Asia, to Papua New Guinea, the Pacific Islands and Micronesia.¹⁸ The *ABC Annual Report 1995-96* stated that, among other Radio Australia initiatives of the period, the organisation retained its urban audiences in China despite its competitors' improved delivery systems, successfully pursued rebroadcasting arrangements with Thailand and, won a special citation for its expanded Khmer service at the annual United Nations Media Peace Awards. RA also made technical advances in having replaced terrestrial studio to transmitter site lines with the ABC Delta satellite distribution system, developing a Radio Australia Internet site and making news bulletins available in Europe and North America on World Radio Network and Internet audio.¹⁹

Brief History of International Satellite Television

2.15 During the 1980s, concurrent developments to those in short-wave transmission were occurring in the mass media applications of satellite technology. In February 1984, the BBC's Managing Director, External Broadcasting, Mr Douglas Mugeridge, canvassed the idea of

13 *Legislative Research Service, Radio Australia and Australian Foreign Relations*, p. 3.

14 Reported in *Legislative Research Service, Radio Australia and Australian Foreign Relations*, pp 2-3.

15 *Sixty Years Our ABC*, p. 21.

16 *Radio Australia Review: report to the ABC Board, September 1989*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, August 1989 (known as the Revill Review) pp 25, 28.

17 Reported in Errol Hodge, *Radio Wars, Truth Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, p. 259.

18 Radio Australia, summary information provided to the Committee Feb 1997, Attachments 3 (a) and (b).

19 *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report 1995-96*, p. 84.

international satellite television in a speech to the Los Angeles Council of World Affairs. The following April, a news release by BBC External Services stated that although short-wave broadcasting would be important at least until the end of the century, it was likely to become less competitive in parts of the world where cable and satellite brought a greatly increased choice of services to audiences. The conclusion of BBC External Services was that, if the BBC were to maintain its reputation in international broadcasting, it was time to give serious consideration to the development of world news services.²⁰

2.16 By the early 1990s, the American CNN news and current affairs channel was broadcasting around the world and the United States Information Service's TV Worldnet was broadcasting to 125 countries. Rupert Murdoch's commercial empire, after his purchase of Hong Kong's Star television in mid 1993 for US \$525 million, stood at 64 per cent of world ownership with a potential reach of two-thirds of the world's population. Star's five channels, until recently broadcasting BBC News, would reach 45 million people in 38 Asia Pacific countries.²¹

2.17 With the communications developments that were occurring in Asia and with the increasing concentration of media ownership in private hands, the important role satellite television would play in cultivating the decision-making, business and educated elites throughout the region was widely recognised.

Australia Television

2.18 In 1989, the perceived need to take into account the foreign policy implications of satellite television broadcasting led the Revill Review to conclude that any potential Australian international television service should draw on the experience of Radio Australia, with its network of correspondents and reputation in the Asia Pacific region, to ensure that regional sensitivities were taken into account. The ABC should logically, therefore, be involved in any potential broadcasting in the area but it clearly could not do so without substantial additional funding.²²

2.19 The latter proved to be the stumbling block for Australia's entry into the international television broadcasting arena. At a press conference at the National Press Club in July 1992, Mr David Hill, then Managing Director of the ABC, noted that while the ABC Charter (1983) obligates the ABC to broadcast internationally, the ABC had not transmitted television programs abroad because 'its been just too costly and we've never had the funding'.²³ Observing, however, that availability of satellite technologies was rapidly increasing throughout the Asian region, he further stated that Australia must soon consider the option. With this in mind, he said, he had recently informed a Senate Estimates Committee that the

20 Errol Hodge, *Radio Wars*, pp 265-6.

21 Robie, David, 'Ownership and Control in the Pacific', *Nius Bilong Pasifik: Mass Media in the Pacific*, ed. David Robie, Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press (in assoc. with the South Pacific Centre for Communication and Information Development) 1994, p. 22.

22 Revill Review, p. 32

23 *The ABC into the 21st Century*, The National Press Club, 29 July 1992 (questions and answers only recorded).

ABC would need at least \$25 million, 'If we are serious about the ABC and Australia's profile in the Asia-Pacific region'.²⁴

2.20 The urgency of the matter was emphasised by the ABC's Assistant Managing Director, Mr Malcolm Long, just prior to this in June 1992, in an interview with Ellen Fanning and Andrew Scholl for Radio National's *PM*. Commenting on the communications explosion in Asia he observed that over nineteen international television services were now broadcasting throughout the region, but primarily conveying US and European material. It was Australia's opportunity to become the regional broadcaster, projecting this new technology just as Radio Australia had creditably done for many years. He concluded that:

one of the important opportunities that Television Australia can offer is for us to project Australia, Australian values, feelings about Australia's role in the region, Australia's activities, our manufacture, our tourism, into a region which is fast becoming a television culture like most of the rest of the world.²⁵

2.21 In September 1992, the ABC asked Cabinet for \$5 million to trial a television service to the region. Deferring the decision, Cabinet countered with a radical suggestion that the ABC consider using advertising and commercial sponsorship to help fund the project.²⁶ ABC staff, represented by Mr Quentin Dempster, immediately rejected the proposal, concerned that it would make commercial control of content unavoidable.²⁷ However, the proposal was ultimately implemented with the establishment of ATV.

2.22 While independence from commercial involvement remained an inviolable feature of the ABC Charter for other services, Australia Television was encouraged to proceed with sponsorship which did not feature in news reports, break into other programs and without 'hard-sell' advertising. As an ABC background paper released in 1993 stated: 'Sponsorship of the Australia Television service has allowed the ABC to initiate the service without diverting funds from domestic television and radio production'.²⁸

2.23 In February 1993, the ABC, in a joint initiative with the Australian Government, moved to distribute its satellite television service via Indonesia's Palapa B2P satellite, beaming to more than fifteen countries throughout North and South East Asia.²⁹ Programs featured news and current items from Australian domestic television but also included material targeted for the region from ABC overseas offices, from the Visnews news service and from Reuters 'Asian Report' and 'American report'.³⁰

24 *The ABC into the 21st Century*.

25 Parliamentary Library, *ABC Director discusses plans to broadcast a range of television programs into Asia*, *PM*, 15 June 1992.

26 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 September 1992.

27 *Australian Financial Review*, 22 September 1992.

28 *External Funding, Advertising and Sponsorship*, ABC background paper, April 1993.

29 Errol Hodge, *Radio Wars*, p. 268.

30 Errol Hodge, *Radio Wars*, p. 270.

2.24 Almost one year later, the ABC's overseas television and radio operations were both put under control of the General Manager of Radio Australia, Mr Derek White, who thus became the General Manager of ABC International Broadcasting.³¹ Under one management umbrella, the two services began vying for funds. Even after advertising breaks began appearing during the news and seven block hours were, controversially, contracted out to American NBC News and Current Affairs in 1994,³² ATV needed additional funding from Radio Australia.³³

2.25 In October 1995, as part of the then Government's funding initiative for the service, the Minister for Communications and the Arts, Mr Michael Lee, acknowledged the success of ATV in building its audience in Asia and announced:

The Government will provide a further \$6.2 million a year for the next three years to the ABC to operate ATV. Of that new funding, \$2 million will be derived through savings from Radio Australia's (RA's) transmission costs. In addition to the Federal Government funding, it is estimated that ATV will also continue to raise more than \$1 million a year through continued sponsorship.

This will provide ATV with a secure future on which to build its growing audience.³⁴

2.26 In 1995-96, ATV exceeded its revenue target while expenditure was held within budget. The programming schedule now features 94 per cent Australian content with news and information programming standing at an increased 32 per cent.³⁵ The station broadcasts 16 hours a day from the Palapa C-2 satellite to as far north as Beijing, as far east as Samoa and as far west as India, covering 33 countries and territories, representing a 20 per cent increase in audience reach. In addition, rebroadcasting agreements with Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Laos, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Vanuatu and Vietnam allow additional tens of millions of non-satellite dish owners to view entire channel or individual programs.³⁶

2.27 Following the Government announcement in July 1996, the ABC in its (December 1996) updated presentation to Mansfield's review of the role and functions of the ABC, reported that it was investigating the feasibility of 're-structuring ownership' of Australia Television, with majority sale being the expected option.³⁷

31 *ABC International Broadcasting*, ABC Media Release, 7 February 1994.

32 Errol Hodge, *Radio Wars*, p. 271.

33 Speculation about the nature of the cuts was ignited by Radio National *PM* and *Australian* news reports. See Gil Appleton, 'Robbing Radio Oz to pay TV', *Communications Update*, June 1995.

34 *Future Assured for Australia Television*, Press release, Michael Lee MP, 25 October 1995.

35 *Australian Broadcasting Commission Annual Report 1995-96*, p. 55.

36 ABC Australia Television, summary information provided to the Committee, February 1997.

37 *One ABC: The Vision-and the Decisions: an update form the ABC to the Review of the Functions and Role of the ABC*, December 1996, pp 31-2.

CHAPTER 3

RESTRUCTURING INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING SERVICES: OVERSEAS AND IN AUSTRALIA

Introduction

3.1 In the first part of this chapter, we describe proposals to restructure the BBC World Service and close Radio Canada International (RCI), which arose out of funding stringencies, and their outcomes. It is interesting to note that these two international broadcasters and Radio Australia were all subject to serious cuts in service or closure at about the same time. With respect to the BBC World Service and RCI, their governments accepted the foreign policy imperatives for maintaining their services.

3.2 We then describe the history of the main inquiries to which RA and ATV have been subjected. This history helps to put the current predicament of RA and ATV into context.

Overseas Restructuring

BBC World Service

3.3 In June 1996, the BBC announced a package of restructuring measures for the World Service. In July 1996, a joint Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Office/World Service Working Group was set up to consider the detail and implications of proposed restructuring and review of funding arrangements for BBC World Service. The report of the Working Group, however, was not final, with criticism of the proposed changes prompting further discussion. Finally, a funding shortfall was averted which could have involved the closure of up to six language services. In fact, funding was increased by 3.1 per cent over the previous year, which also represented an increase in real terms.

3.4 The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, which monitored the restructuring and funding processes, commented:

We welcome the increased provision for World Service grant-in-aid for broadcasting and the firm assurances that no closures of language services will be needed. We also welcome the fact that the settlement will enable the World Service to make investments most critical to maintaining competitiveness. We believe it is right to link additional financial provision in subsequent years to clear evidence of savings and increased efficiency.¹

3.5 The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee argued strongly against any diminution of the World Service:

We also reiterate the crucial importance of ensuring that restructuring does not lead to any diminution in the quality of the World Service or any loss of its

¹ *British House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee Second Report*, p. vi.

unique expertise and ethos. It is essential that the World Service remains at the cutting edge of United Kingdom cultural diplomacy and a key element in creating a favourable climate for the pursuit of United Kingdom economic, political and security interests. We are pleased to note the Foreign Secretary's endorsement of the essential need for the World Service to be able to continue to play its very important role, to maintain the quality of its output, to continue to meet its targets and objectives and provide value for money.²

Radio Canada International (RCI)

3.6 During the same period, Radio Canada International (RCI) was experiencing serious financial shortfalls. In 1995, its parent organisation, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) was to have its operating budget reduced by A\$394 million over three years, a reduction of 33 per cent resulting in a 50 per cent loss of staff.³ At the same time as these substantial cuts were made, an emphasis was placed on improving CBC's domestic broadcasting services. It was decided that RCI's 51 year broadcasting life would come to an end on 31 March 1997. The Government was also considering possible participation of the private sector in delivering international broadcasting services.⁴

3.7 On 14 December 1996, Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy announced a plan in the Canadian House of Commons that would keep Radio Canada International afloat for one year: the Departments of Heritage Canada and of Foreign Affairs and international Trade would contribute \$6 million each and additional money would come from the Department of Defence and the Canadian International Development Agency.⁵

3.8 The RCI submission to this inquiry reports that RCI now has a commitment from the Government for long-term separate funding. No longer part of CBC, RCI stated that the organisation will retain its 'traditional journalistic independence' operating at 'arms length' from Government as before, but now as part of a Crown Corporation. At the same time, it will be taking a prominent role in 'Canada's diplomatic effort through an "International Information Strategy" or "softpower" projection of information in the national interest'.⁶

3.9 On 12 December 1996, the Hon Sheila Copps, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Cultural Heritage, announced that RCI would be funded as a 'long term service which is part and parcel of the Government's foreign policy thrust ... [as] a key cornerstone in foreign policy information'.⁷ Official ties between Government foreign policy and the organisation's operations were therefore explicitly made, moving RCI's operations into line with the British system.

2 *British House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee Second Report, The Organisation and Funding of the BBC World Service (Follow-Up Evidence Sessions) 22 January 1997, p. vi.*

3 Karen Winton, 'CBC struggles to keep it local', *Communications Update*, November 1996, p. 12.

4 'Radio Canada International: Broadcaster wins second reprieve', *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 December 1996.

5 'Radio Canada International: Broadcaster wins second reprieve', *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 December 1996.

6 Radio Canada International submission, p. 4.

7 Radio Canada International submission, p. 4.

Relationship between international broadcasters and their governments

3.10 International broadcasting services operated by Britain and the USA are, to varying degrees, officially tied to the foreign policy objectives of the Governments of those countries. American international information services are under direct control of the US State Department while the BBC World Service, established by Royal Charter, operates with funding received from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The BBC World Service is thus required by that Office to broadcast:

to such audiences overseas and in such languages as are approved by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in accordance with the objectives, priorities and targets which may from time to time be agreed with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, or with such Departments of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom as may from time to time be specified in writing by the Secretary of State.⁸

3.11 It should be emphasised, however, that the BBC World Service maintains complete editorial control over programming.

3.12 By contrast, Radio Canada International, prior to the implementation of the new arrangements had, like Radio Australia, a history as part of an independent statutory broadcasting authority, established as such by an Act of Parliament to provide national broadcasting services.⁹ Funding for international broadcasting services were drawn from within the overall budget of the parent organisation. When that funding was cut, support for international services came under scrutiny with resultant pressure to either privatise or find other means of funding.

3.13 The Canadian example has resonances for the future structure of Australian international broadcasting services.¹⁰ Canada's international radio services now follow the British model, offering on the one hand a 'guaranteed editorial freedom' and, on the other, the requirement that it follows the broad policy directives of its funding agents, the departments responsible for foreign affairs and Canadian heritage.

Responsibility for and Funding of Radio Australia

3.14 Debate over the proper sources of funding and allocation of responsibility for Radio Australia has been a feature of its operational history. The close relationship which international broadcasting services have had with departments responsible for international relations has been a source of considerable tension in the Australian debate and has given rise to a series of reviews and government inquiries.

8 Quoted in Bob Mansfield, *The Challenge of a Better ABC, Volume 1: A Review of the Role and Functions of the ABC*, p. 41.

9 The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was created by an Act of Parliament on 2 November 1936 and now broadcasts under the 1991 Broadcasting Act. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation was established in 1932 under the Australian Broadcasting Act, with Act amended in 1983 to incorporate the new ABC charter.

10 Derek White, submission no. 400.

3.15 During the Second World War, a notable conflict between the objectives of the Department of Information and the Australian Broadcasting Commission occurred over a joint Department/ABC series about the Japanese broadcast in March 1942. While collaborating extensively in its programming at home and overseas, the ABC in its 1942-43 report referred to its 'difference of opinion' with certain Government departments on the manner in which some types of propaganda should be handled. Using that series as example it opined that: '... serious loss to the war-time effectiveness of our national stations would result from any undermining ... [of public confidence in the ABC's] impartiality and integrity.'¹¹

3.16 The degree of interaction between the desire to maintain journalistic 'impartiality and integrity' and the need to respond to foreign policy objectives, was an explicit or implicit component in the debate over the following decades.

3.17 In 1964 and 1965 the possibility of Radio Australia being a separate statutory authority, as a variant on the British model, was considered by the Department of External Affairs. But this proposal was called into question in a draft paper 'Location of Radio Australia', prepared by a senior departmental officer, who 'said it might "take some time to achieve the desirable end of a separate institution"'. He indicated that time would be needed for Radio Australia to accept the Department of External Affairs' uncompromising views on the fundamental difference between the requirements for external and internal broadcasting: 'that the considerations which govern the presentation of programmes of the news on one are not necessarily valid for the other'.¹²

3.18 In 1973, Mr Peter Homfray, then head of Radio Australia and increasingly frustrated by a perceived unwillingness on the part of the ABC to fund the service adequately, proposed to the Minister for the Media, Senator Douglas McClelland, that RA could become a separate statutory authority under his Department.¹³

3.19 Accordingly, in April 1973, Senator Douglas McClelland wrote to Prime Minister Gough Whitlam suggesting that Radio Australia should be put directly under his ministerial responsibility and be attached to the Department of the Media. The Prime Minister rejected the American model option saying that Radio Australia must be able to demonstrate its 'comparative freedom from direct Government control'.¹⁴

3.20 Over time, consideration of the cost factors involved in maintaining international broadcasting services, either as part of the ABC, affiliated with another department, or as a separate entity, increasingly dominated discussion of the role and functions of RA.

3.21 In February 1975, the Public Service Board/ABC Inquiry into Radio Australia again considered the option of placing Radio Australia with the Department of Media (but as an

11 *Sixty Years Our ABC: Celebrating Australia's 60th Anniversary 1932-92*, ABC Corporate Relations and ABC Document Archives [1992], p. 9.

12 Errol Hodge, *Radio Wars, Truth Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, Chap. 12, p. 257.

13 Reported in Hodge, *Radio Wars, Truth Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, Chap. 12, p. 257.

14 Sir Keith Shann to Acting Foreign Affairs Minister, 6 August 1993, DFATA 570/1/6 part 2.

autonomous unit). It was concluded, however, that this would incur the same administrative and cost obstacles involved in establishing complete independence. This latter option was regarded by the inquiry as 'a last resort'.¹⁵ Later, in December 1975, the ABC submission to the Waller Inquiry also rejected the possibility of RA becoming a separate statutory authority. It suggested that although an independent board of directors would be desirable, the establishment costs would be 'exceedingly high'.¹⁶

3.22 During the 1980s, a number of experienced commentators, all former diplomats and former high ranking Defence and/or Foreign Affairs officers, expressed severe criticisms of Radio Australia. Sir Arthur Tange, Mr William Pritchett and Mr Malcolm Booker all considered the idea of an international radio service operating on the premise of journalistic freedom was extremely questionable.¹⁷

3.23 In 1988, all three made explicit statements to that effect, also querying the cost effectiveness of RA's operations. Australian taxpayers, in their view, were being tricked into supporting, as Mr Pritchett put it, 'a small independent bureaucracy of journalists'.¹⁸ For Mr Booker, it was this group who, by their naive insistence on a 'warts and all' approach to overseas reporting, caused regional disharmony and embarrassment to Australia. At interview he later concluded: 'You can't engender good will by exposing the deficiencies of your neighbours and their governments. If you want to engender goodwill, it's a highly expert propaganda exercise.'¹⁹

3.24 Sir Arthur Tange saw that a possible, but qualified, reason for continued Radio Australia services could lie:

... in the circumstances in which Australian official policy or the conduct of Australian diplomacy, the conduct of Australian defence relations, was impeded by ignorance abroad, in societies with whose governments we were dealing, of Australian motivations and Australia's intentions - was impeded by misunderstandings such as we had, to use an historical analogy, of Australia's white Australia policy: that certainly was an obstacle 20 or 30 years ago.

3.25 He, nevertheless, concluded:

I doubt today that we have those obstacles residing in the minds of countries with which we do official business. So the question arises: why do we need Radio Australia?²⁰

15 Management Consultancy Division, Public Service Board, *Review of Radio Australia*, Feb. 1975, p. 4.

16 ABC Submission to the Waller inquiry, 28 July 1975. The conclusions reached by the inquiry were released as *Radio Australia, Independent Inquiry Report* (the Waller report) in December 1975.

17 Tange was former Secretary of both the Defence department and the Department of External Affairs, Pritchett was a Secretary of the Defence department and Booker First Assistant Secretary under Tange and his successor; as reported in Hodge, *Radio Wars*, Chapter 12, *passim*.

18 W. B. Pritchett, letter to the editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1988.

19 Recorded interview with Booker, Canberra, 20 March 1989.

20 Recorded interview with Tange, reported in Hodge, *Radio Wars*, Chap. 12, p. 252.

Major Inquiries of the 1980s and 1990s

3.26 In the 1980s and early 1990s, a number of major inquiries were conducted into Australia's international broadcasting services and their parent organisation, the ABC.

The Dix Report (1981)

3.27 In 1979, the then Government established a committee to conduct a major review of the ABC. The committee, which was chaired by businessmen Mr Alexander Dix, presented its report, *The ABC in Review: National Broadcasting in the 1980s*, to the Minister for Communications, Mr Sinclair in May 1981. The recommendations of the report, known as the Dix Report, were largely implemented and resulted in the organisation which we know today.²¹

3.28 After receiving over 2,200 submissions and conducting hearings in all states, the Dix inquiry noted that the organisation must respond to the changed demography of Australian society. He emphasised the need to move from an English bias in programming towards a model reflecting the diversity of Australian society, including rural and remote, multicultural and Aboriginal content. He rated the importance of news and current affairs programming very highly and noted that restrictions on revenue coincided with increased costs for program production. He thus recommended: broad management restructuring (a corporate structure and outlook); an emphasis on regionalism; greater commitment to Australian content (with an emphasis on complementarity²²); and, funding support from program-related merchandising (resulting in the ABC shops etc) and possibly from limited sponsorship. Dix also suggested that the ABC should be relieved of its responsibility for orchestras and that the states should fund educational programs.²³

3.29 The Dix Report was convinced of the value of Radio Australia as Australia's international presence and recommended that its status be enhanced. One aspect of this was the upgrade which would result from the ABC having control of its radio transmission facilities (still under control of the National Transmission Agency). The clause for provision of international services was to be included in the ABC's charter (within the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983) and the service would be operated by the ABC with separate funding. The report had rejected the possibility that Radio Australia be incorporated within a government department saying:

it has become part of the conventional wisdom in Australia that a service guaranteed independence from direct government control by statute is bound to have more credibility with its audience than one operated by a government department, as is the Voice of America. It is a wisdom we share.²⁴

21 All but nine of the report's 273 recommendations were implemented.

22 Providing, for example, coverage of high profile events that did not attract commercial media interest, such as women's sport.

23 This summary of the report is drawn from 'Dix and the ABC', *Communications Update*, September 1996.

24 Dix Report (1981), p. 31.

Radio Australia Review [The Revill Review], (1989)

3.30 In response to a discussion paper, Policy Discussion Paper No 1 issued in early 1988 by the Minister for Transport and Communications, Senator Gareth Evans, a major review of Radio Australia was announced in November 1988.

3.31 The ABC Committee of Review, convened by Mr Stuart Revill and assisted by Dr Rodney Tiffen as consultant, was appointed to inquire into the role of Radio Australia within the ABC and to evaluate its general performance in serving its target audience. It produced its report, the *Radio Australia Review*, in August 1989.

3.32 The report found that Radio Australia services should continue, and as part of the ABC.²⁵ It noted that Radio Australia had been severely disadvantaged by lack of control of its transmission facilities and, therefore, by its inability to upgrade facilities in line with its competitors and by prohibitions on transmitting off-shore and on contracting sharing of transmission time (as prescribed by the National Transmission Authority Act). The report noted that figures of comparative investment by governments were striking: over the preceding five years, the BBC spent approximately \$A120 million on its Audibility Program, Voice of America spent roughly \$A490 million, while less than \$3 million had been spent on RA's transmission from 1984-85 to 1988-89.²⁶ Relative investment in transmission facilities was, therefore, enormously disparate.²⁷

3.33 The report stated that Federal Government funding was urgently needed to upgrade RA's transmission facilities and that the ABC should have ownership and control of RA's transmitters. At the same time, it noted that these same problems had thwarted RA for years, as a 'parade of official reports' had concluded. The Revill Review recommended 'urgent remedial action' so that Radio Australia could be restored to a competitive position in its target regions.²⁸

3.34 As part of this enhanced profile, RA was also to advance its impact on the Asia Pacific region, with the South West Pacific a priority. This was in part because of growing instability in the region. As advised by the Department of Foreign Affairs submission to the inquiry, there were 'internal tensions (eg. Fiji, New Caledonia and Vanuatu) and an increased external interest that in some circumstances, could potentially destabilise the region in ways inimical to Australian interests'.²⁹ The report also referred to the South Pacific region's reliance on RA for 'consistently reliable information on Pacific and international affairs', the former not being offered by other main international broadcasters.³⁰ For this focus to evolve,

25 *Radio Australia Review*, ABC, August 1989, pp 35-36.

26 Expenditure for both BBC and VOA figured as part of longer term commitments. From 1981, BBC proceeded with a decade long Audibility program (approved by the Callaghan government and implemented by the Thatcher government) costing 100 million pounds in new capital expenditure. Meanwhile the Reagan government announced an US \$1.3 billion modernisation program for Voice of America. *Radio Australia Review*, ABC, August 1989, pp 24-25.

27 See *Radio Australia Review*, ABC, August 1989, p. 25 for details.

28 *Radio Australia Review*, ABC, August 1989, p. 28.

29 *Radio Australia Review*, ABC, August 1989, p. 13.

30 *Radio Australia Review*, ABC, August 1989, p. 14.

however, the report recommended that restructuring, management and transmission commitment to broadcasting in the region was vitally necessary.³¹ It noted that despite the ABC Board's directive of 1988 that the South West Pacific should be given priority ahead of South East Asia, such commitment had not yet been evinced by the organisation.³²

3.35 Despite certain operational weaknesses the overall profile of Radio Australia presented by the report was, however, strongly positive. Audience response had shown that RA had continued to attract large audiences who were satisfied with its services. Although some decline in audiences was noted, short-wave was confirmed as an appropriate broadcasting medium for its majority target areas, particularly the Pacific, while recommendations were made for more advanced technologies for audiences in, for example, Japan.³³ The report thus directed that the organisation must see itself as an 'international communicator, rather than as an international short-wave broadcaster alone' and recommended regular review of programming schedules to keep focus on developments in the targeted regions.

3.36 Finally, Radio Australia's independence from direct control of the Department of Foreign Affairs was seen as crucial. The report noted that insistence on this was echoed broadly by the submissions received.³⁴ The review committee's conclusion, too, was that Radio Australia's independent broadcasting status, as part of an independent Australian Broadcasting Corporation, was a demonstration to its audience that Australia was the democratic nation it projected itself to be: 'a nation which allows an open flow of information, which nurtures debate on policy and holds its government accountable through close critical examination of its actions.'³⁵

Radio Australia Review 1994-95

3.37 In 1995, Radio Australia was revisited by Dr Rod Tiffen in an independent review resulting in the *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*. The review aimed to assess broadly what were the implications of changes in the broadcasting environment for RA's services and to evaluate RA's response to the recommendations made in the 1989 review. For the first time, the desirability of RA providing television services was seriously canvassed.³⁶

3.38 In his review, Dr Tiffen attempted to ascertain whether the audiences for short-wave services, particularly in RA's targeted areas, had been maintained. Acknowledging the unreliability of surveys conducted over the last couple of decades with their wildly divergent assessments,³⁷ he noted that audience reception was down in Indonesia and that RA's relative position had declined, especially as compared with the BBC.³⁸ He remarked, however, that

31 *Radio Australia Review*, ABC, August 1989, p. 2.

32 *Radio Australia Review*, ABC, August 1989, p. 14.

33 *Radio Australia Review*, ABC, August 1989, *passim*.

34 *Radio Australia Review*, ABC, August 1989, p. 9.

35 *Radio Australia Review*, ABC, August 1989, p. 9.

36 *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, p. 1.

37 *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, p. 8.

38 *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, p. 4.

the opposite was true for the Pacific, an area to which RA had applied itself in accordance with recommendations made in the 1989 Reville review.³⁹ In particular, Dr Tiffen reported that audiences in Papua New Guinea had dramatically increased, so much so that RA's regular listenership there was substantially ahead of both the BBC and VOA.⁴⁰

3.39 Dr Tiffen's overall judgement about the future of short-wave radio was positive. Despite evident developments in communication and reception technologies in the Asian region, he speculated that this development was likely to be a metropolitan one only, with correspondingly increased short-wave reception in provincial and rural areas not surveyed.⁴¹ He also observed that new developments did not mean that older technologies disappeared, rather that total media consumption increased.⁴² The direction was thus for an increase rather than winding down of RA's services. Short-wave radio was a cost effective medium for reaching the largest audiences, and its potential during political crises, as illustrated during the coups in Fiji and the protests in China, was an important factor when considering future directions for RA.⁴³

3.40 Dr Tiffen raised the question of whether RA should diversify its operations by moving into television but not, however, in direct competition with ATV. Should such a move be made, Dr Tiffen considered that it should be in indigenous languages, not in English. He also warned that it be conducted in a measured way which did not endanger the value of its current operations.

3.41 A major consideration for RA, as ever, remained the 'institutional absurdity' of RA's transmission arrangements.⁴⁴ Despite the directives made in the 1983 ABC Charter, and the repeated recommendations made in following reviews, Dr Tiffen reported that RA remained locked into a triangular arrangement with Telecom Australia and the National Transmission Authority, and was denied funds and control over its transmission. The review noted, once again, that this had to end, emphasising that 'this is the single most important objective in changing government policy towards RA'.⁴⁵

3.42 Related to this were other budgetary considerations; the organisation had experienced disproportionate cuts to its budget relative to other ABC functions.⁴⁶ At the same time, it had moved to new ABC premises at Southbank incurring large re-establishment costs.

39 *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, p. 41.

40 *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, pp. 6-7.

41 *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, p. 10.

42 *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, p. 25.

43 *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, p. 10-11.

44 See *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, pp 61-66.

45 See *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, p. 1.

46 *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, p. 52.

Our ABC: Report of the Senate Select Committee on ABC Management and Operations (1995)

3.43 During 1994-95, a Senate Select Committee conducted an inquiry into a number of areas of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, including Australia Television. The original terms of the inquiry were agreed to by the Senate on 21 September 1994 but were amended and expanded on 13 October 1994. The Committee was chaired by then Shadow Minister for Communications, Senator Richard Alston. Its report, *Our ABC: Report of the Senate Select Committee on ABC Management and Operations* was released in March 1995.

3.44 The terms of reference for the inquiry encompassed a wide range of issues, including the performance of ATV in gaining an audience in Asia, whether sponsorship undermined ATV's integrity and the financial future of ATV.

3.45 The Select Committee reported that it:

accepts that the ABC's decision to rely on existing data on audiences and the 'Assessment of Opportunity' it commissioned from PA Consulting as its pre-launch research was reasonable. The Committee notes that, after almost two years of transmission, the ABC now has the results of actual audience surveys from Indonesia and Sri Lanka which register ATV's daily audience at 150 000 and 500 000 respectively. There is also an increasing body of anecdotal evidence which indicates that the service is being received with approval by its target audience.

The Committee believes that as the service is more firmly established, and as more data on audience share become available, ATV will have more success in attracting sponsors.⁴⁷

3.46 However, the Select Committee concluded that the ABC was not realistic in its initial revenue projections and that, had it accepted a longer lead time for the establishment of the service, ATV would not have been put in a position where unrealistic forecasts were inevitably unfulfilled and the viability of the service questioned.⁴⁸

3.47 The Select Committee reported that the Government's Hutchinson and Barrett review⁴⁹ had concluded that the extension of the line of credit to ATV had not represented diversion of funds for other services and that as long as they were repaid with interest, it would not do so.⁵⁰ This accorded with the statement of the Chief Executive of ATV,

47 *Our ABC: Report*, March 1995, pp 68-69.

48 *Our ABC: Report*, March 1995, p. 69 and at Evidence note 80.

49 The review of the management and financial arrangements of ATV was requested by the Minister for Communications and the Arts in 1994 and was conducted by the Deputy Secretaries of the Department of Communications and the Arts and the Department of Finance, Mr Michael Hutchinson and Mr Pat Barret. The *Our ABC* report notes that the major impetus for the Government's review of ATV was the 'prior failure of ATV to meet its revenue targets, its recourse to an internal line of credit for funding and the consequent concern at the potential negative impact of ATV on the free-to-air domestic service'. See *Our ABC Report*, March 1995, pp 67-8.

50 *Our ABC Report*, March 1995, p. 71.

Mr Michael Mann, who told the Committee that 'Based on our current conservative 10 per cent increase in sponsorship, we will break even in 1999. Repayment of the line of credit would not occur till some years later.'⁵¹

3.48 In conclusion, the ABC conceded that, if appropriation funds were not to be used after June 1995, 'additional sources of bridging finance may be necessary'.⁵² This, however, was not seen to be inappropriate by the ABC, as the Chairman of the ABC Board, Professor Mark Armstrong, confirmed to the Minister for Communications and Arts, Mr Michael Lee. In a letter responding to the Minister, Professor Armstrong emphasised that ATV was 'an important activity in the context of [the ABC's] Charter' and that the 'ABC Board has never implied it was a marginal activity'. He further stated:

It is the duty of the Board to set policy, allocate resources and to ensure that the Charter functions are completed efficiently. The introduction of the Australia Television service is entirely consistent with these responsibilities⁵³

3.49 The Select Committee considered 'allegations that the editorial independence of the ABC is threatened by the requirements of BNA, ATV and Pay TV to satisfy commercial sponsors, investors or clients'.⁵⁴ No evidence was found that any editorial compromise had occurred as a result of existing arrangements. However, the Select Committee stipulated that, as a preventive measure, funding guarantees should be approved by Parliament so that 'ATV will be eligible to make use of ABC's budget funds [and] will be able to afford to lose a sponsor who makes the provision of sponsorship funds subject to unacceptable conditions'.⁵⁵ The Select Committee supported the principle of adequate funding for ATV:

The Committee recommends that when the ABC Board reviews the ATV service in June 1996 it should make an assessment of the level of government funding required to make up the difference between sponsorship revenue and the amount required to operate the service. The Government should then give serious consideration to including any such shortfall in the ABC budget appropriation.⁵⁶

3.50 With regard to general ABC funding, the Select Committee supported the continued exemption of the two per cent efficiency dividend on the grounds that it helped to 'provide greater planning certainty for the ABC's capital works program'.⁵⁷ The Select Committee also supported the maintenance of ABC funding at least at its current level.⁵⁸

51 *Our ABC Report*, March 1995, p. 71.

52 *Our ABC Report*, March 1995, p. 71.

53 Letter to Minister for Communications & Arts, Mr M Hutchinson, *Our ABC Report*, March 1995, p. 60.

54 *Our ABC Report*, March 1995, p. 75.

55 *Our ABC Report*, March 1995, p. 77.

56 *Our ABC: Report*, March 1995, p. 75.

57 *Our ABC Report*, March 1995, p. 96.

58 *Our ABC Report*, March 1995, p. 99.

Review of the Status and Funding of the ABC's International Broadcasting Services (1995)

3.51 This review was conducted by an interdepartmental group consisting of representatives of the Department of Communications and the Arts, the Department of Finance and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with the ABC. In the course of its inquiry it considered 60 written submissions from interested individuals and organisations and submitted its report in October 1995.⁵⁹

3.52 The impetus for the review was the Government's continuing concern over the funding of the ATV service. Despite the evidence and conclusions of the Barrett and Hutchinson review, commissioned on 10 June 1994, recent revenue forecasts for ATV suggested that the planned 1996-97 review of international broadcasting services should urgently be brought forward.⁶⁰ On 6 June 1995, the Minister for Communications and the Arts informed Parliament of the revised schedule. At the same time, he advised that the Government 'entered the review as a strong supporter of the contribution which ATV has made in raising Australia's profile in the region'.⁶¹

3.53 Timing was also significant for other reasons. On 30 June 1995, the conditions of the Government establishment grant of \$5.4 million to ATV, as accepted by ABC, were to lapse. These included clauses referring to the need for the service to be self-funding in years subsequent to the grant period, to run on sponsorship and promotional programming and to enter into consultative arrangements with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.⁶²

3.54 In supporting ATV, the Government had emphasised the need for the service to operate on a commercial basis as soon as possible and to allow for the show-casing of Australian trade, industry and tourism.⁶³ Now that the conditional period had expired, the ABC could exercise its option to close the service. The ABC decided to continue operation stating that it saw the ATV as 'a valued and valuable part of the ABC, making an important and valued and valuable contribution to the Australia's profile in the important Asian region'. However, it also advised that it would not continue the service at the expense of Radio Australia or other budget-funded activities.⁶⁴

3.55 The Government therefore had to consider overall cost considerations and other operational aspects of the continuation of ATV services relative to ABC's other international broadcasting service, Radio Australia.⁶⁵ These were to be considered in the light of the

59 *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report 1995-96*, p. 67.

60 *Review of the Status and Funding of the ABC's International Broadcasting Services*, October 1995, p. 3.

61 *Review*, October 1995, p.3.

62 *Review*, October 1995, p. 7.

63 *Review*, October 1995, p. 7.

64 *Review*, October 1995, p. 7-8.

65 General issues for ATV were the necessity of upgrading and replacing satellite services, the need to maximise and assess audience reach so as to attract sponsorship and the need to produce regionally-focussed programs with the possible assistance of RA's language services. For RA, the range of considerations were as reviewed in the sequence of previous reports, with the impetus ever stronger to assert that short wave had had its day, particularly in Asia, relative to television broadcasting. Again, and pivotal to RA's effectiveness, was its lack of control of its transmission facilities and transmission

functions of international broadcasting services as contained in s.6(1)(b) of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act which specified assessment of the importance of the foreign relations dimension of the services.⁶⁶

3.56 The review's conclusion was that ATV was not a viable satellite broadcaster without additional resources⁶⁷ and yet could not apparently deliver programming in the region other than as a satellite broadcaster in its own right.⁶⁸ The reviewers reported that, in mediation of this dilemma, both ABC and DFAT saw potential for ATV in equity partnerships with investors (such as other broadcasters, newspapers or newspaper organisations).⁶⁹ However, DFAT was concerned that ATV should retain identity as 'a distinctly Australian service'.⁷⁰ The ABC also expressed reservations in regard to the sale of ATV news services because of: 'risks to the integrity of ATV news should buyers seek to alter news feeds to avoid adverse criticism from governments where buyers have strong commercial interests'.⁷¹ The ABC further cautioned that even if guarantees were secured that ATV news would be broadcast complete, 'such a guarantee would be impossible to monitor'.⁷²

3.57 With regard to Radio Australia, the report noted that while substantial investment in short-wave delivery by other major international broadcasters had occurred over the last decade, the predicted decline in short-wave use suggested that investment on that scale in short-wave infrastructure could not be justified by an Australian Government.⁷³ It thus recommended that RA needed to 'develop further its role as an international communicator and exploit alternative means of delivery to target regions'⁷⁴ and to do so, the ABC was 'open' to pursue funding from Government in the next budget triennium, commencing late 1996-97.⁷⁵ Again, the organisation's need to control its transmission facilities and transmission budget, so that it could use related contemporary broadcasting mediums such as AM/FM rebroadcasting and satellite broadcasting, was pivotal to RA's effectiveness. Accordingly, it was recommended that transmission funding should be made over to the ABC. This time, however, the recommendation was qualified by the Department of Foreign

budget, a situation which ensured that it could not advance into related contemporary broadcasting mediums such as AM/FM rebroadcasting and satellite broadcasting.

66 Specifically introduced by reference 2 (b) which called for assessment of 'the effectiveness of the ABC's international services and the manner in which they complement the Government's foreign and trade policy objectives'. See *Review*, October 1995, p. 70.

67 *Review*, October 1995, p. iv.

68 *Review*, October 1995, p. 43.

69 *Review*, October 1995, pp 41-2.

70 *Review*, October 1995, p. 42.

71 *Review*, October 1995, p. 40.

72 *Review*, October 1995, p. 40.

73 *Review*, October 1995, p. 36.

74 *Review*, October 1995, p. 43.

75 *Review*, October 1995, p. iv.

Affairs' suggestion that the transaction should occur only with the proviso that the ABC should continue its ATV service.⁷⁶

3.58 Specifically, the Department of Foreign Affairs saw television as the major new medium for reaching opinion makers in what it considered the priority regions of Australian interest; East Asia followed by the South Pacific.⁷⁷ It therefore favoured investment in ATV over Radio Australia. The ABC, meanwhile, argued for a balance between television and radio services which it believed should and would change over time.⁷⁸ In defence of Radio Australia, ABC cited audience research which showed that short-wave radio, including local language services, had enormous impact in Asia and the Pacific.⁷⁹

3.59 Another significant factor contributing to the report's assessment of the foreign relations implications was that of the ABC international services' independent status as guaranteed by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act. This enshrined the consultative relationship between the Department of Foreign Affairs and the ABC, whereby the ABC Board has independence from the Government of the day in determining policies relative to the organisation's function. The report concluded that 'A potential tension exists, therefore, between the public diplomacy objectives of government and the ABC's editorial independence'.⁸⁰

3.60 The Department of Finance considered the fact that the 'ABC would continue to retain discretion to depart from the Government's objectives' was a major flaw in the 'structural arrangements' of Australia's delivery of international services.⁸¹ Further, the Department believed that the review had failed to assess the effectiveness of the services in advancing Australia's international objectives relative to the expense already committed in DFAT's diplomatic effort, some \$750 million in 1995-96. The Department of Finance therefore determined that the Government needed advice on the best way of achieving its objectives in the provision of international services and recommended that a Cabinet Memorandum be commissioned for consideration by the Expenditure Review Committee in the 1996-97 Budget.

3.61 In consideration of all the evidence, the report concluded that 'Australia's diplomacy objectives are best served through the provision of independent broadcasting services as provided by the ABC'. It stressed the respective strengths of each service and cited future funding options for the services as follows:

- Option A: maintenance of RA budget and transmission funding at current levels and full Budget supplementation for ATV;

76 *Review*, October 1995, pp vi & 43.

77 *Review*, October 1995, p. iv.

78 *Review*, October 1995, p. 17.

79 *Review*, October 1995, p. vi.

80 *Review*, October 1995, p. 9.

81 *Review*, October 1995, p. vi.

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- Option B: maintenance of RA budget funding; ATV funded through sponsorship, reduction in RA transmission costs and additional Budget funding of the 'gap';
 - Option C: maintenance of RA budget funding; no further Budget funding for ATV.

Conclusion

3.62 The role and future of Australian international broadcasting services have been the subject of continual inquiry, review and debate. The same issues have tended to recur: the effectiveness or value of international services as Australia's voice to the world; the relative merits of an independent service versus one more closely tied to Australia's foreign affairs' objectives; the ethical and pecuniary factors which might direct the range and nature of services offered; the relative effects of modern communications developments, particularly in the targeted regions; and, whether Australia can afford to run, or can afford to lose, these services and, if they are to continue, how and by whom should the services be delivered.

3.63 These same issues are also in the forefront of the Committee's inquiry. However, before addressing these and other issues relevant to the terms of reference, the Committee examines, in Chapter 4, the relevant parts of the report of the most recent review of the ABC, that conducted between July and December 1996 by Mr Bob Mansfield. Whereas international broadcasting services had been key issues in most of the earlier inquiries, this area of the ABC's operations received scant attention by Mr Mansfield. Nevertheless, his conclusions and recommendations in relation to these services, if implemented, have dire consequences. It was these conclusions and recommendations, and Senator Alston's unquestioning support for them, which gave rise to the Committee's inquiry.

CHAPTER 4

THE MANSFIELD REVIEW OF THE ABC

Establishment of the Review

4.1 On 16 July 1996, the Minister for Communications and the Arts, Senator the Hon Richard Alston, issued a media release entitled 'ABC to Enter New Era' which announced Mr Bob Mansfield as the Government's independent reviewer of the ABC. Senator Alston said that Mr Mansfield's review would 're-define and re-position the national broadcaster for the 21st century'. The terms of reference for the review were:

1. The Government seeks a more focussed role for the ABC which strengthens its effectiveness in key areas by defining the scope of current ABC services and activities.

2. Having regard to the Government's broadcasting policy objectives and information and entertainment services currently provided by other broadcasters and providers of electronic media services, and the scope for proposed and reasonably anticipated technological change affecting broadcasting services the review shall examine and make recommendations to the Minister for Communications and the Arts by the end of 1996 on:

- (a) the future role and functions of the ABC; and
- (b) the type of services and activities envisaged by this role and functions.

3. Without limiting the generality of the review, the review shall have particular regard for the need for:

- (a) independent news and current affairs services which are accurate, impartial and comprehensive;
- (b) high quality information and entertainment services which contribute to a sense of national identity; and
- (c) services which fulfil the needs of rural and remote communities, children and other significant groups not well served by other broadcasting services.

4. The Review shall also have regard to the need for consistency between the cost of future ABC operations and the Government's broader fiscal strategy of delivery of Government programs and services as efficiently as possible.

4.2 Referring to the Government's budgetary position, the Minister stated that despite election commitments not to reduce ABC funding, the ABC would be subject to the two per cent reduction in running costs imposition contained in *Meeting Our Commitments* released

on 15 February 1996. The Minister also said that the ABC would also be subject to a \$55 million funding cut in 1997-98.¹

4.3 The Minister said that:

By indicating funding levels at this stage the ABC will have certainty of funding and the time to review its operations and range of activities in line with the new funding levels. The proposed Review will be a major input into determining the range of activities.²

4.4 The Minister also addressed the future of ATV in the media release:

The Government will also ask the ABC to explore the possibility of delivering the services currently being provided by Australia Television more efficiently.

The Government will discuss with the ABC Board the scope for ensuring the maintenance of ABC program content on Australia Television, particularly news and current affairs, while tendering the operation of the service to the commercial sector.³

Conduct of the Review

4.5 As a result of Mr Mansfield's call for written submissions, 10,615 individuals, groups and organisations lodged submissions with his Review. Most of these submissions have not been made public. He consulted, on a private basis, ABC staff in six locations, the Friends of the ABC in all States and Territories, 16 other Australian organisations, three media commentators, Georgia Public Broadcasting in Atlanta, USA, and the BBC in London, UK.

4.6 Mr Mansfield records that 9.1 per cent of respondents commented on international services; 6.7 per cent favourably (many without using the services) and 2.4 per cent criticised the services *per se*, that is their funding or operation.⁴ He remarks that Radio Australia was favoured over ATV in the sample and that some respondents saw international services as a potential area for cuts backs.⁵ Unfortunately, he does not provide any further details of the comments made about international services in the submissions and the nature of the criticisms.

Mansfield Report

4.7 Mr Mansfield presented his report to Senator Alston on 23 December 1996 and it was released to the public on 24 January 1997.

1 'ABC to Enter New Era', in Mansfield Report, pp 46-47.

2 'ABC to Enter New Era', in opcit, p. 47.

3 'ABC to Enter New Era', in op cit, p. 47.

4 B. Mansfield, *The Challenge of a Better ABC, Volume 2*, p. 18.

5 Mansfield. op cit, Vol. 2, p. 18.

4.8 Mr Mansfield recommended that 'the principal function of the ABC should be defined as broadcasting for general reception within Australia'.⁶ He stated that:

During the review I regularly explained my approach by suggesting my task was to determine what the Australian public views as the 'trunk and roots of the ABC tree' with the intention of ensuring that nobody could cut it down.

The point of defining priorities is not to restrict the ABC to certain types of programming or to specific services. Rather it is to give guidance on types of programming and aspects of the ABC's service which are not discretionary and represent the community's basic expectations. This will be particularly important in periods of funding constraint, when the ABC is required to make difficult decisions on internal priorities.⁷

4.9 Mr Mansfield made a number of other recommendations relating to sale of property, outsourcing of programming and the medium-term divestment of the ABC orchestras. With respect to international broadcasting, he recommended:

That the requirement for the ABC to broadcast programs to audiences outside Australia should cease;

that the ABC should retain the ability to transmit programs outside Australia if it chooses;

that the ABC should be permitted to apply net savings from the closure of Radio Australia to the achievement of its savings target - this should include any transmission savings, consistent with the Government's commitment to fund the ABC directly for its transmission costs; and

that if an appropriate commercial arrangement for the operation of Australia Television is not entered into before June 1997, the service should be closed down.⁸

4.10 At a meeting of The Sydney Institute on 25 February 1997, Mr Mansfield explained the basis of his decision regarding Radio Australia. He said:

My terms of reference were to look at the ABC. I wasn't asked to look at Australia's foreign policy. I recognised very clearly when I made the recommendation to close down Radio Australia that there was another spectrum of consideration. The government has set up a Senate sub-committee to look into that. From the ABC's point of view, it must face the fact of living within the budgetary restraints the government has made. Spending more than \$20 million on Radio Australia could eventually mean cutting reporters in Townsville, Cairns, Rockhampton, Alice Springs and Central Australia. The Australian community was unanimous in telling me it wanted no more cuts to

6 Mansfield, op cit, Vol. 1, p. 9.

7 Mansfield, op cit, p. 19.

8 Mansfield, op cit, p. 10.

the local ABC services. There was an absolute commitment to domestic broadcasting. And it's in that vein that I made that recommendation for Radio Australia.

4.11 In his report, Mr Mansfield said that the 'current ABC Charter accords overseas broadcasting equal priority with domestic broadcasting. I do not believe there are compelling reasons for this to continue.'⁹ This statement is disingenuous because the Charter does not specify that equal priority be given to both domestic and international services. In fact, the ABC has always given overwhelming priority to its domestic services. In funding terms alone, international services only account for only a few per cent of the ABC's budget.

4.12 In his report Mr Mansfield said that he did not believe that the ABC could maintain its domestic broadcasting services and its international services, as well as fund technological changes, within the level of funding for the ABC identified by the Government. He acknowledged the foreign affairs considerations, as he did above, but claimed that he was not in a position to evaluate those considerations. He drew attention to the fact that the BBC World Service was required to broadcast to audiences and in languages approved by the Government in accordance with objectives, priorities and targets agreed between the BBC and the Government. On the other hand, the ABC possesses statutory independence in the way it carries out its functions. As there was no agreement between the ABC and the Government on objectives or targets for its international services, Mr Mansfield considered that evaluating performance would be difficult. And, as explained above, he did not see it as part of his review.

4.13 Although there are not the formal consultative mechanisms in place between RA and DFAT as there are in the United Kingdom and Canada, there are regular consultations between the two bodies on programming objectives and priorities.

4.14 The Committee believes that, if Mr Mansfield had considered that the ABC's international broadcasting services were outside his terms of reference, he should have recommended that the Government establish a separate review to examine their future. His half-hearted attempt to justify his position on international broadcasting did nothing to enhance the credibility of his findings and recommendations in this area. The Committee now examines what he did say about RA and ATV.

4.15 Mr Mansfield said that:

RA's *potential* shortwave audience has declined from an estimated 100 million in 1981 to 20 million in 1996 (and a likely *actual* weekly audience of five million).¹⁰

4.16 The ABC pointed out in its submission that it was not valid to compare the Dix Report estimate of 100 million audience reach with the 20 million 1996 audience reach because the estimates were calculated in very different ways which do not allow any meaningful comparison to be drawn. This is considered in more detail in Chapter 5 but, briefly, the 1981 figure was based on the number of letters received multiplied by a factor to

9 Mansfield, op cit, p. 41.

10 Mansfield, op cit, p. 42.

provide an estimated audience. The 1996 figure was calculated on the basis of scientific surveys and only includes areas covered by those surveys. The figure does not include, for example, an estimate for rural China and for much of India, as well as other countries. It also does not cover the audience for rebroadcasts of its programs through AM and FM services, satellite transmissions and the Internet.

4.17 Mr Mansfield was critical of the fact that four of RA's language services are broadcast for less than one and a half hours a day. He went on to say:

It is not clear why these services have continued to operate at such marginal levels. A reordering of priorities could have enabled RA to provide more effective services to its more significant audiences or enabled it to exploit other delivery platforms.¹¹

4.18 If Mr Mansfield was not clear about the reason for such programming decisions, he should have found out before being critical of them. The Committee is sure that RA would have responded with alacrity to any request for such information. In addition, it is obvious that Mr Mansfield had not considered the ramifications of terminating broadcasts in four of the non-English languages used by RA. Mr Mansfield provided no evidence that a 'reordering of priorities could have enabled RA to provide more effective services to its more significant audiences'. He also provided no evidence to support the proposition that such a reordering of priorities could have enabled RA to exploit other delivery systems. In fact, RA already exploits other delivery systems, such as satellite, the Internet and terrestrial rebroadcasting.

4.19 Mr White commented on Mr Mansfield's assertion in his written submission dated 17 March 1997, as follows:

In fact by any international comparison, Radio Australia's smaller language units - Cantonese, Vietnamese, French, Khmer and Thai - are highly efficient, have strong audience loyalty and provide an effective service which Radio Australia would be delighted to expand - had it the resources to do so.

4.20 To assess whether the Government was getting value for its \$20 million investment in Radio Australia, Mr Mansfield suggested three performance measures that would determine whether:

- the service is reaching its target audience
- the type and mix of programming remains valid
- short wave remains the most cost effective delivery.

4.21 He concluded that he had 'insufficient evidence for the Government to draw firm conclusions in any of these areas'.¹² Mr Mansfield concluded that he was 'strongly of the view that, if the Government wishes to maintain an overseas broadcasting service that, as in the

11 Mansfield, op cit, p. 42.

12 Mansfield, op cit, p. 42.

United Kingdom, the funding of these services should be considered in the context of the public diplomacy effort'.¹³

4.22 Mr Mansfield referred in his report to the DFAT submission to his review:

DFAT clearly sees shortcomings in the current services, stating in its submission that 'while it is clear that RA and ATV have a key public affairs dimension in our region, in a changing broadcasting environment, neither service is presently meeting its full potential and restructuring is necessary to address their shortcomings'.¹⁴

4.23 The 'shortcomings' mentioned in the DFAT submission to the Mansfield review are based on wrong information. DFAT stated that the 'listenership of short-wave radio has obviously been facing a steady decline in recent years and fewer people listen to RA'. This is wrong and is considered in more detail in the Chapter 5. Later in its submission, DFAT stated that with 'the decline of short-wave, RA needs to consider radically changing its delivery mechanisms'. It is wrong to say that there is a decline of short-wave in the region, especially in countries targeted by RA. There is, in fact, no viable alternative to short-wave radio available to replace these short-wave services. Other international broadcasters are actually increasing their investment in short-wave services. This too is considered in more detail in Chapter 5. Mr Mansfield should have checked the facts before drawing conclusions and making recommendations on the basis of wrong information.

4.24 When DFAT suggested that RA change its 'delivery mechanisms', it went on to suggest that more extensive rebroadcasting arrangements be entered into with local AM and FM stations with a switch to packaged programs for particular markets. It continued:

There is already an example of a cost effective Australian commercial radio program operating in China. The enterprise operates on a small budget pre-packaging its programs for rebroadcasting on local radio.

4.25 Mr Derek White, General Manager of RA, told the Committee:

That is the service produced by John Singleton's company, which I mentioned last time. It is simply a music bed sent to China which is presented on an English language service, as I understand it, in Beijing and also repeated in some provinces. But the presentation or the content, including any news and information, is put out by China. It is not, by any means, a concept of international broadcasting. I have already detailed the difficulties of securing rebroadcasting in this region. I have to say that that proposal in that submission is very largely - in fact, almost totally - impractical.¹⁵

4.26 Mr Mansfield differentiated RA from the BBC World Service on the basis that the RA, as part of the ABC, a statutory authority, is 'not required to accept its [DFAT's] views or any other policy directions from the Government' while the BBC World Service is required to

13 Mansfield, op cit, p. 42.

14 Mansfield, op cit, p. 42.

15 *Committee Hansard*, pp 147-48.

take account of the Government's foreign policy objectives. He concluded that 'in the absence of such agreement concerning objectives and priorities, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of funding or to revise priorities for overseas broadcasting services, particularly for RA'.¹⁶

4.27 The only difference between RA and the BBC World Service in this respect is that the BBC has a formal link with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office while RA's link with DFAT is informal. The point is that Mr Mansfield has admitted that foreign policy matters were outside the scope of his inquiry and he did not pursue them in any detail. There is no evidence that he even tried to evaluate RA's performance in relation to foreign affairs matters.

4.28 With regard to ATV, Mr Mansfield said:

The previous Government agreed to provide funding of \$6.2 million per year for the operation of the ATV service for three years commencing in 1996-97. These funds were to be supplemented from revenue generated from advertising and sponsorship.

The current Government has not withdrawn the commitment. In the 1996-97 Budget context, however, it requested the ABC to explore the possibility of delivering the ATV service more efficiently by tendering its operation to the commercial sector.

I endorse the Government's decision. With more than 100 satellite television channels operating in Asia, I do not consider that the ABC should be allocated funding to enable it to operate competitively in the Asian market. If no acceptable relationship with the commercial sector is found, I believe that the service should be closed down. This decision should be made by June 1997.¹⁷

4.29 In responding to the Mansfield Report, Mr Michael Mann, Chief Executive of ATV, told the Committee:

Much has been said about Australia Television in connection with the Mansfield review. I would like to make it clear that I made a request to see Mr Mansfield and when I saw him on 8 October last he informed me that he did not believe that his brief included a comprehensive overview of international broadcasting. We spoke only for about 15 minutes about Australia Television. Mr Mansfield has, subsequent to the release of his report, made it quite clear that he did not look at the benefits of international broadcasting and he even welcomed this Senate inquiry.¹⁸

4.30 As Mr Mansfield did not consider international broadcasting in any detail, it is odd that he can pronounce authoritatively that ATV cannot compete with other satellite television channels in the region. The evidence points to the opposite conclusion. In fact, ATV has been

16 Mansfield, *op cit*, p. 41.

17 Mansfield, *op cit*, p. 41.

18 *Committee Hansard*, p. 129.

a success story, notwithstanding its funding difficulties and other constraints, such as the pressures imposed on it from a series of reviews and inquiries.

4.31 All preceding reviews of the ABC's international broadcasting services had concluded that these factors were also descriptive of the important role played by RA and ATV in the Asia Pacific region but their evidence was not taken into account. Instead, Mr Mansfield found the 'significant role the ABC's international services play in advancing Australia's trade and diplomatic objective', identified by the Department of Foreign Affairs in its submission to his inquiry, 'hard to evaluate'. He was thus, it seems, in sympathy with the Department of Finance's view, expressed to the 1995 *Review of the Status and Funding of the ABC's International Broadcasting Services*, that the effectiveness of the services was not proven.

4.32 The Government has not made a definitive statement on the recommendations made by Mr Mansfield. However, the Minister for Communications and the Arts, Senator Alston, has personally publicly aligned himself with those recommendations, including those concerning the international broadcasting services. In the Senate Additional Estimates hearings on 27 February 1997, Senator Alston declared that Mr Mansfield had made a 'pretty powerful case' based on the evidence received; that the Minister himself 'had not seen any in-depth analysis that demonstrates either the effectiveness of the service or a significant demand for it'; and that, in any case, pre-budget deliberations had decided the matter.

4.33 In the same week, Mr Mansfield, at the Sydney Institute, stated that the foreign affairs implications of the closure of international broadcasting were outside his terms of reference and that he welcomed the Committee's present inquiry into the role and future of Radio Australia and Australia Television.

4.34 Senator Alston's public comments in support of Mr Mansfield's recommendations and observations in relation to the ABC's international broadcasting services lack credibility given that Mr Mansfield has publicly acknowledged that he did not address these issues from a foreign affairs point of view in his report. The Committee believes that both the Minister and Mr Mansfield have done a disservice to RA and ATV by commenting on the organisations functions and performance without any proper consideration of the issues.

CHAPTER 5

RADIO AUSTRALIA

Introduction

5.1 In 1981 the Dix Report recommended that provision for international services should to be included in an ABC Charter. They were enacted by the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983*. Sub-sections 6(1) and (2) comprise the ABC Charter. The international broadcasting directives, in sub-sub-section 6(1)(b) state that:

6(1) The functions of the Corporation are -

- (b) to transmit to countries outside Australia broadcasting programs of news, current affairs, entertainment and cultural enrichment that will
 - (i) encourage awareness of Australia and an international understanding of Australian attitudes on World Affairs; and
 - (ii) enable Australian citizens living or travelling outside Australia to obtain information about Australian affairs and Australian attitudes to World Affairs ...

5.2 The provision of Radio Australia and Australian Television services is one of the strategies devised by the ABC to realise its international broadcasting obligations. Fully, these prompt the ABC to:

- (i) Provide ABC programs and services to international audiences and maintain ABC international broadcasting activities, Radio Australia and Australia Television.
- (ii) Pursue international development opportunities for the ABC.
- (iii) Project a clear and consistent image of the ABC as a public broadcaster and a leading provider of audio-visual services and products.
- (iv) Ensure that the ABC keeps up to date with international activities in broadcasting services and related services.¹

5.3 The Committee now examines, in relation to RA, its audiences, programming and the benefits which flow to Australia and the region, as well as to listeners elsewhere in the world.

¹ *ABC Annual Report 1995-96*, p. 84.

RADIO AUSTRALIA'S AUDIENCE

Introduction

5.4 Radio Australia, which has been operating since 1939, now broadcasts in English and eight regional languages to the Asia Pacific region and, through a variety of transmission technologies, to most other parts of the world.

5.5 As the main transmission system used by RA is short-wave radio, the ready availability of receivers and their relative cheapness, enables people in all socio-economic groups to receive RA's broadcasts. By broadcasting in nine languages, many people in the region can listen in their own language, which encourages listeners to access RA broadcasts. Mr Derek White, General Manager of RA, confirmed the diversity of RA's audience:

The research has shown that the proportion of audience who are, if you like, the upwardly mobile, educated male population of the surveys taken tend to be a strong part of the international radio listening audience. But that is not, by any means, excluding a much wider range of audience.²

Audience Surveys

5.6 Estimating accurately the size of RA's audience is impossible to do. Although surveys of short-wave services have been conducted in parts of the Asia Pacific region in conjunction with other international broadcasters, such as the BBC World Service and Voice of America (VOA), surveys cannot be conducted in some regional countries or in regions of others. Even if it were possible to conduct comprehensive surveys of the region in order to achieve a total estimate of audience for a short-wave service, doing so would be prohibitively expensive. However, while it would be useful to have an accurate estimate of total audience, it is by no means a necessity. Other measures can be used to supplement survey results in evaluating performance.

5.7 The results of audience surveys show the size of the regular audience, which is defined as listening to a service at least once a week, and the audience reach, which is the number of people who listen to a service at least once a year. These are internationally accepted standards.

5.8 In areas of the region which have been covered by surveys, RA's estimated regular audience is 5,502,000 of which 1,680,000 listen to the English language service and 3,822,000 listen to services in other languages. The total reach in any language is 18,361,000. The following table shows a breakdown of RA's audience in selected countries:

2 *Committee Hansard*, p 110-111.

Table 5.1: Radio Australia's Audience

Country	Total Reach	Regular Aud. Local language	Regular Aud. English	Any Language
Indonesia	8,600,000	2,062,500	275,000	
China	4,100,000	630,000	60,000	
Indian Sub-cont.	2,883,000		857,500	
PNG	1,230,000	574,000	226,000	
Vietnam	860,000			537,500
Philippines	not available		131,000	
Thailand	171,000	18,000	63,000	
Fiji	58,000		32,000	
Solomon Islands	55,500		33,000	
Malaysia	9,000		2,000	
Other Pacific Nations	263,000	not available	not available	
TOTAL	18,361,000	3,822,000	1,680,000	537,500

Source: Radio Australia submission, Attachment A.

5.9 It must be emphasised that the above audience figures are for the surveyed areas only and are not total estimates. The above totals do not include listeners in the following areas:

- listeners in rural China, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, and most of India where surveys have been conducted in only nine of the 25 states (RA believes that there is too much variation among states to extrapolate from the surveyed areas to obtain a total estimate for India);
- listeners in surveyed areas of the Asia Pacific region who hear Radio Australia via satellite receivers or on rebroadcasts on local AM/FM stations, particularly in the Pacific, China and Thailand;
- listeners in Europe and North America where RA is rebroadcast on local stations and heard on short wave; and
- the short-wave listeners in the rest of the world and the Internet audience, through audio and text.

5.10 It is obvious, when considering the population of the areas not covered by surveys, particularly within the reach of RA's short-wave services, that RA's total audience reach must be far greater than the 18.3 million audience in surveyed areas. There is currently, however, no way of ascertaining how many more people listen to RA.

5.11 The difficulty in accurately estimating the size of the audience was raised not only by RA but also by others, including Dr Errol Hodge, who wrote in his submission that:

A problem for supporters of RA and ATV is that estimates of their audience sizes vary widely. At the televised news conference after Mansfield handed his

report to Alston, the Minister said Radio Australia's audience had dropped from 100 million several years ago to 'only' 20 million. (the estimate of 100 million was never realistic, being based on a total of more than half a million letters and cards to Radio Australia in 1979-80 ... and a rubbery estimate by the International Shortwave Listeners' club that each letter represented 200 listeners.) The actual audience for Radio Australia probably falls somewhere between Mansfield's five million and Alston's 20 million; precision is impossible because for example, no audience research is possible in China, from which after the Cultural Revolution listeners sent 183,00 letters and cards in a single year ... and where shortwave listening is still widespread.³

5.12 Mr White told the Committee that in Eastern Europe and in the republics which made up the former USSR international broadcasters are hiring AM and FM transmitters to transmit their broadcasts instead of using short-wave transmissions. He went on to say:

It is also true that short-wave audiences decline - with one contrast, which I will mention in a moment - where there is a free flow of information in a completely open and developing communication environment, Thailand being a case in point. We deliberately stopped short wave to Thailand because we felt it was not the best use of our resources. As we reduced, that was one of the areas that we cut staff in. We now send a small amount of programming to individual Thai stations for rebroadcast either on tape or by direct phone delivery or, in some cases, by satellite. That is something that is acknowledged and recognised. Japan is the same. But in other countries, because of the simple economics and the availability of receivers, there has been no decline. In some cases I think it would be argued there has been an increase.

The one contrast that I make in the area of sophisticated communication societies is the United States, where short-wave listening has increased dramatically. Short - wave receiver manufacturers see it as their biggest market opportunity. We know, from the response we have had, that those listeners are looking for a service that they do not get from American domestic media. I am sure members of the committee who have been in America know that you can watch an American network television bulletin and not realise there is anything outside of Los Angeles and New York, apart from occasional references to Europe and the Middle East.⁴

Qualitative Surveys

5.13 RA conducts qualitative as well as quantitative audience research. For example, 'RA posts questionnaires to listeners who have written to various language services to investigate their attitudes to RA's programming'.⁵

3 Dr Errol Hodge, submission no. 361, p. 3.

4 *Committee Hansard*, p. 117.

5 RA submission, p. 4.

5.14 In 1995 and 1996, RA posted about a thousand questionnaires to listeners who had written to the Vietnamese, Thai, Indonesian and Chinese services. The completed questionnaires provided detailed feedback on why people listened to RA, how they compared RA to other international broadcasters and what impact their listening had on their attitudes towards Australia.

5.15 RA reported that among each of these samples the appreciation of RA's World and Australian News was paramount and the listeners expressed a demand for more coverage of the Asia Pacific region, particularly of their own countries.

5.16 RA also reported that the questionnaire sent to listeners in China asked them to compare the news services of the major stations broadcasting in Standard Chinese. They placed the BBC and RA on an equal footing but considered the BBC offered greater "depth" of background coverage. The news services of the Voice of America, Radio France Internationale, Radio Japan, Radio Canada, the Korean Broadcasting Service and Deutsche Welle were rated as inferior. Among all these samples a majority of respondents indicated that they had developed a "more favourable" attitude towards Australia as a result of listening to RA. The "more favourable" response was given by 80 per cent of Vietnamese listeners, 63 per cent of Indonesians, 62 per cent of Chinese and 58 per cent of Thais. RA said that the:

reasons given for this 'more favourable' attitude among Indonesian listeners as recently as 1995 are illustrative of the limited understanding of Australia that still exists today.

Indonesian listeners said RA had changed their attitudes to Australia because they had learnt that the White Australia policy had been abolished, Aborigines have the vote and are represented in Parliament, that Islam is freely practised in Australia, that the Indonesian language is taught at schools and universities, the Australian population is eligible for unemployment benefits and pensions and that Australia provides aid to Indonesia and many other Asian countries.

These factors, and many others, have helped to change an image of Western arrogance and superiority that many Asians held towards Australia. These listeners were surprised that Australia is interested in and respectful of Asian countries, a point strongly reinforced in their view by RA's broadcasts in their languages.

5.17 In audience research carried out in Indonesia in 1995 and 1996, Dr Hart Cohen of the University of Western Sydney, Nepean, said he found that RA retained its strong audience numbers in Medan in 1996 which was demonstrated one year earlier in Surabaya. He said:

Radio Australia has a committed audience related to its educational, cultural and information programming. It is in the realm of news and information services, however, that we noticed the strongest audience support. There is no question that the perceived independence of both these services [RA and ATV] drive audiences in Indonesia to seek out information related to both domestic and foreign events. In the Surabaya and the Medan studies, news was selected as the chief benefit of global media and that ATV and RA rated extremely high in the delivery of news and information.

As I wrote in a letter to The Australian (31/1/97) '... One of the attractions of both these services to its users is its perceived 'independence' from government influence in media environments which do not customarily have this independence ... The constant refrain emerging from our research is that Australia Television and Radio Australia *offer alternatives* - they present a 'different' point-of-view - one that contrasts with and can then be compared to both Indonesian local media and other global/regional broadcasters ...'⁶

5.18 Dr Hart Cohen also reported on RA's audience compared with its main competitors:

In international radio the BBC rates the highest in English language programming, though was equal first with Radio Australia in the popularity of Indonesian language programming. Radio Australia is second to the BBC in most categories of listening frequency. Twenty-three percent said they listened to RA most days, sixteen percent at least once a week.

Apart from the BBC and RA, six other international radio services have a regular listening audience in the region though with smaller audiences than either the BBC or Radio Australia. Voice of Malaysia has a strong presence in Indonesia broadcasting in the Malay language.⁷

Listeners' Mail

5.19 Listeners' mail not only provides an indication of size of an audience but also its strength and loyalty. According to RA, 'there are strong indications that the people who write to international broadcasters are often the most enthusiastic and motivated of the listeners and for them radio, and particularly international radio, is over-whelmingly their major source of world news, ahead of television and newspapers etc'.⁸

5.20 In 1995-96, RA received nearly 100,000 letters. These included 31,500 letters in Indonesian, 46,500 in Chinese and 11,000 in English. In addition, RA received 30,500 letters in response to a competition run only for a fortnight. The total number of letters for 1995-96 was nearly 130,000.⁹

5.21 In 1996, RA received 51,658 letters to its Chinese unit compared to 24,492 to the BBC World Service Chinese unit and approximately 36,000 to Chinese section of Voice of America. The RA Indonesian unit received more than 33,000 in 1996 compared to approximately 4,000 to Voice of America's Indonesian section and 25,583 (which included 12,080 competition entries) to the BBC World Service's Indonesian section. These figures show that RA has a more dedicated and loyal audience than either the BBC World Service or VOA. It shows convincingly that RA has more effectively engaged its audience in the region.

6 Dr Hart Cohen, submission no. 386, pp 3-4.

7 Dr Hart Cohen, submission no. 386, p. 4.

8 ABC/Radio Australia submission, p. 4

9 ABC/Radio Australia submission, p 5

5.22 Listeners' letters also give some indication to audience size in unsurveyed areas. For instance, the RA audience in China is based on a survey conducted in ten major cities only and excludes approximately 500 million non-urban dwellers. According to RA, a 'random sample of 414 letters from more than 5000 received from China in January-March 1997 showed that 39 originated in the 10 cities surveyed while 375, or 91%, came from elsewhere in China'. Although one cannot simply extrapolate from these figures to establish a total China estimate for RA's audience, it nevertheless indicates that the potential audience reach and regular audience may be significantly higher than shown in the surveyed area.

5.23 RA passed to the Committee a copy of a letter from China, translated by RA, which reads in part:

I am convinced that whoever listens to your programs enjoys them. As far as I am aware, there are 500 people in our village out of a total population of 800 who are loyal listeners to Radio Australia. This is around seventy-five per cent of the persons in the village.

5.24 Although anecdotal, it again gives an indication of the nature of the audience listening to RA in China.

Mansfield Report

5.25 Mr Mansfield said in his report that RA's audience reach had declined from an estimated 100 million listeners cited in the 1981 Dix Report on the ABC to an estimated 20 million today. However, the results of the crude and very unreliable methodology for estimating audience in 1981 cannot be compared with estimates derived from scientific surveys of audiences in the mid 1990s. The Dix estimate was calculated by multiplying the number of letters received by a number to arrive at the estimated audience whereas the current estimate, as detailed above, was based on survey methodology. Mr Mansfield's use of the current audience reach of 20 million listeners does not take into account the listeners in unsurveyed areas.

Listeners' Responses to the Mansfield Report's Recommendations

5.26 RA received more than 4,000 responses (by letter, e-mail, fax and telephone) between 24 January 1997 and 17 April 1997 to Mr Mansfield's recommendations. The RA China section received 1,453 responses of which 753 have so far been categorised. The responses came from 19 countries but 88 per cent of those processed came from the Peoples' Republic of China. The following is a breakdown of their contents:

- 87% of them say 'just don't shut down'
- 35% that RA provides information not available elsewhere
- 35% that they learn a lot from our programs
- 34% that they value the link with Australia
- 21% that RA is an important part of their lives
- 18% that RA prompts trade, tourism and study connections
- 14% that RA provides enjoyment
- 13% that RA is a valuable ambassador for Australia.

5.27 The Indonesia Section of RA received 1,145 responses of which 635 have been processed. They came from three countries as there were tiny numbers from Malaysia and Saudi Arabia as well as the vast bulk from Indonesia. The following is a breakdown of their contents:

- 97% specifically say 'just don't shut down'
- 66% comment on RA's trustworthy news and information
- 42% say they rely on RA for many things - news, information, entertainment and as a teacher
- 37% say RA provides information not available elsewhere
- 21% say RA is a teacher to them
- 18% value the link to Australia
- 11% say RA promotes trade, tourism, study connections
- 9% mention the ambassadorial role.

5.28 The English language section received 903 responses from 60 countries of which 810 have been processed and 191 were from representatives of 'special interest groups'. Of the mail from overseas, 72 per cent came from non-Australians, 25 per cent from Australian expatriates and the nationality of three per cent could not be identified. Some 82 per cent of writers identified how they listened on short-wave. The remainder listened to rebroadcasts on local AM/FM stations, cable/pay radio services and 'real audio' on the Internet by the World Radio network. A wide variety of reasons for supporting RA were mentioned but some key categories emerged:

- 29% praised the public diplomacy role played by RA
- 27% saw it as an important link with Australia
- 27% said they valued RA as a trustworthy source of news and information
- 25% said they valued RA's concentration on covering the Asia Pacific region
- 20% said that RA provided news and information not available elsewhere
- 10% said RA promoted trade, tourism and educational connections (with many citing personal experiences).

5.29 Of the total of responses which have been processed and categorised, the following is the overall categorisation of contents:

- 74% specifically said 'don't close'
- 31% said RA provides information not available elsewhere
- 30% said they value RA's trustworthy news and information
- 26% said they value the link RA provides to Australia
- 23% said RA is an important part of their lives and they rely on RA for many things
- 21% said they learn a lot from RA's programs
- 15% said RA is an ambassador for Australia
- 13% said RA promotes trade, tourism, study involvements
- 12% commented on RA's concentration on the Asia Pacific region
- 8% said RA provides them with enjoyment and recreation
- 2% said RA helps spread democracy

5.30 The reason that Mr Mansfield received relatively few submissions from overseas was that his inquiry and the possible threat of closure were not broadcast to listeners of the service. Even so, about a thousand submissions commented on the ABC international services and most of which favourably. Where criticisms were levelled at either of the two services, Mr Mansfield did not comment on the nature of the criticisms. Most criticisms of one or the other service in the Committee's submissions related just to programming, not anything more serious. It is clear, given the above response to Mr Mansfield's RA recommendations and the fact that the Committee received 2,200 submissions of which all except three supported the continuation of the two services, that there is a strong feeling among listeners that RA should not be closed or reduced to a rump serving only the Pacific.

5.31 RA drew attention to the Voice of America's audience research expert, Kim Elliott, who has written of what would be lost if RA were closed: Radio Australia has been one of less than a dozen international radio services that really has enough of an audience to have a real impact.

Radio Australia is an important regional voice with large audiences in Indonesia, the Pacific nations and a sizeable audience in China. It remains one of the best ways and one of the few ways to be fully informed about news in Asia, the Pacific and Australia itself. It would be missed.¹⁰

PROGRAMMING

ABC Programming Policies and Guidelines

5.32 *ABC Editorial Policies* (December 1995) identify the programming position of Radio Australia as:

an authoritative, independent and impartial provider of international news and information, and of high quality entertainment programs compatible with the tastes and interests of its target audiences and reflecting the range and diversity of Australian culture.¹¹

5.33 The policy guidelines for international reportage within that document further specify that Radio Australia must exhibit a developed 'sense of location' because:

there is an important link between the image a society like Australia projects to the outside world and the understanding this country has of its international neighbourhood. Fundamental to Radio Australia and Australia Television therefore must be identification with their target audiences in Asia and the Pacific, projecting Australian values honestly but with sensitivity to other values that exist throughout the diverse region.¹²

10 ABC/Radio Australia submission, p. 30

11 ABC submission no. 377, Appendix A, p. 83.

12 ABC Submission no. 377, Appendix A, pp 84-5.

5.34 In this context, in making editorial and programming decisions, ABC broadcasters are to assume that:

- Australia is an integral part of the Asia-Pacific regions; Radio Australia and Australia Television will operate as regional broadcasters rather than as 'foreigners';
- The world view of Australia Television and Radio Australia will be centred on the region, with global and Australian domestic affairs being seen in that context, Australian domestic issues and interests have a natural and important place on the information and entertainment agendas of the region.
- While recognising that news content will vary on a day-to-day basis according to the relative importance of news events, news bulletins will be based on a mix reflecting its regional priorities, i.e. Asia-Pacific region, important world news, then other Australian news.
- Some expressions of Australian culture may be inappropriate for distribution within other cultures.¹³

5.35 The latter point is strongly developed within the *ABC Editorial Policies* which nevertheless insists that, in the delivery of accurate, balanced and independent news reporting, offence to the political cultures of the Asia-Pacific must occasionally be expected. Emphasis is therefore placed on the need for care in expressing material for broadcast, it being noted that: 'Media in many Asia-Pacific societies do publish and broadcast critical material, although their language may be more circumspect than that used in Australia'.¹⁴

5.36 Evidence that the ethics encapsulated in the ABC's editorial policies are broadly acceptable to the nations of the region is indicated by their acceptance as the basis of a code adopted by the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union at its the annual general meeting in 1996. The General Manager of RA, Mr White, chaired the sub-committee which prepared the code of ethics. RA reports that the established code will now guide the Union's membership in their work as part of broadcasting groups across the region.¹⁵

5.37 In its submission, RA's discussion of its programming priorities and delivery shows clear adherence to these approved policy guidelines. In order to maximise audiences and ensure the regional focus of its services, both news and entertainment, Radio Australia broadcasts 41 hours of programming each day in English and in eight regional languages - Indonesian, Tok Pisin, Standard Chinese (Mandarin), Cantonese, Vietnamese, Khmer, Thai and French.¹⁶ In the process of news reporting for the region, the importance of the service's role in producing accurate and timely news and current affairs programming is balanced by its commitment to delivery of cultural appropriate material which meets the needs of the target populations.

13 ABC submission no. 377, Appendix A, p. 85.

14 ABC submission no. 377, Appendix A, p. 85.

15 ABC submission no. 377, p. 70.

16 ABC submission no. 377, p. 24.

Relevance and Effectiveness of Radio Australia Programming

News reporting

5.38 RA has been an independent reporter for 58 years in a region where government control or influence over the media is not uncommon. Distinct from the Voice of America, which broadcasts official US State Department commentaries, RA equates itself with the BBC with its reputation for independence and reliability. However, over the past ten to 15 years, RA has earned the distinction as providing the best regional service in the Asia Pacific region.¹⁷

5.39 According to RA, although the region may appear to be adequately served by a range of local media, including radio, television and newspapers, the reality is that tight government controls and/or poor resourcing severely limit the quality and content of the information available through local media. Consequently, where significant local events go unreported, or are belatedly or inaccurately reported because of these factors, RA meets the needs of indigenous communities by often providing local news ahead of the local media.¹⁸

5.40 As well as being timely and accurate, the relevance and accessibility of RA's news reporting to the region is ensured by the reporting networks it has established during its long history:

What RA draws on for both its English and other language services is a network of ABC reporters based in Asia which far outstrips anything done by European or American networks. Only the Japanese broadcasters put equal resources into covering Asia. The ABC has correspondents based in Tokyo, Jakarta, Beijing, Bangkok, New Delhi, Singapore, Hanoi and Port Moresby. RA makes great use of the output of these Asia correspondents.¹⁹

5.41 In collaboration with this network, RA's news reporting is provided by its News and Current Affairs Department, known as NewsCaff. Its output is directed to all RA target areas - the South West Pacific, South East Asia, North Asia and South Asia. Most listeners receive the services by short-wave radio, although NewsCaff has also initiated a very successful news on Internet service, provided by ABC Newslink.²⁰

5.42 NewsCaff's English language output is broadcast to all target areas at their morning and evening peak listening times. The content of the news bulletins and current affairs programs is tailored to the audience in each country.

5.43 Foreign language services receive programs from NewsCaff for translation. NewsCaff ensures that there is relevant material for each service. In turn, the language services, in

17 ABC submission no. 377, p. 14.

18 ABC submission no. 377, p. 63.

19 ABC submission no. 377, p.14.

19 ABC submission no. 377, p. 8.

20 ABC submission no. 377, Vol. 2, p. 6.

consultation with the news room, select stories and determine the running order of news bulletins. This process is overseen by the News Duty Editor who can direct that certain stories must be run by the language services.²¹

5.44 The current output of news bulletins produced by NewsCaff is ten minutes of news on the hour, 24 hours a day from Monday to Friday. These bulletins include 11x10 minute World Bulletins (including news about Australia), 8x5 minute World plus 5 minute Australian Bulletins, 3x5 minute World plus 5 minute Asian Bulletins and 2x5 minute World plus 5 minute Pacific Bulletins. In addition, the department produces a thrice-daily 8 minute business and finance report, *Business Day*, which includes Australian and regional stock exchange news.

5.45 NewCaff also produces 7 hours 40 minutes of current affairs output each day. This consists of 8x5 minute and 5x12 minute editions of the *Dateline Asia-Pacific* program. This program has a rolling format with each edition updated and tailored to the current target region as fresh reports are filed by Radio Australia's overseas correspondents and local reporters. Also broadcast are ABC current affairs programs *AM*, *The World Today* and *PM*.

5.46 The total weekday format consists of 14 hours of programming per day, including current affairs programming. The weekend total provides 9 hours 20 minutes on Saturday and 7 hours on Sunday. Weekend programming consists of 10 minutes of news reporting on the hour over 24 hours and features a range of pre-recorded current affairs programs such as: *Report from Asia*, a 20-minute Asia round up; *Background Report*, an in depth analysis of a single topic and; *Business Week*, a 20 minute analysis of Australian and Asia-pacific business news. Also broadcast are ABC Radio National's *Indian Pacific* and *Correspondents Report*.²²

5.47 Evidence received by the Committee strongly endorses the reliance of audiences throughout the region on RA for prompt provision of accurate, independent and regionally focussed news reporting.

5.48 Mr Djajamihardja, Indonesian languages services reporter for Radio Australia, stated that in Indonesia reliance on RA's news services is widespread among Indonesian Government Ministers who 'as a whole admit that before they go to work, they always tune to RA to listen to what is happening in Indonesia'.²³

5.49 Further, high-level figures in Indonesian society are frequently interviewed by Radio Australia and, in turn, listen to Radio Australia for accurate reporting of regionally significant events.²⁴ Mr Djajamihardja cites an occasion when he interviewed the 'father of the Indonesian military', General Nasution:

I interviewed him about what happened in the 1940s during the guerilla war - we call it the independence war - and he explained everything and then he tuned to Radio Australia to follow what was happening at the UN because

21 ABC submission no. 377, Vol. 2, p.4.

22 ABC submission no. 377, Vol. 2, p. 6.

23 *Committee Hansard*, p. 383.

24 ABC submission no. 377, p. 76.

Australia at that time was the champion trying to help Indonesia to find a solution to our independence war. In the end, General Nasution asked how you guys in Australia could manage to get news so accurately. 'I'm ashamed,' he said, 'because I tune to Radio Australia just to know what is happening in the city where I live, in Jakarta'.²⁵

5.50 Mr Duncan Buchanan, a volunteer with the Overseas Service Bureau, records his experience of the effects of RA's broadcasts at village level in the mountains of Flores, Eastern Indonesia:

Radio Australia news was extremely well-regarded for giving a side of events which was not available through the government radio station, which is basically a propaganda vehicle. News about the rest of the world, about Australia and particularly about Indonesia itself were listened to avidly. I vividly remember an evening spent in discussion with a group of village leaders after there had been a demonstration against Indonesia's involvement in East Timor, and during which an Indonesian flag was burnt by the demonstrators. The people of Kusu could not understand why the demonstrations were occurring, and particular why the Indonesian flag was being burnt, which was regarded as more than an insult. Without Radio Australia's broadcasts, such discussions would never have taken place.²⁶

5.51 At hearings in Melbourne on 16 April 1997, Professor Frank Morgan, recently returned from Cambodia where he was involved in the implementation of a United Nations media development project, provided an indication of the importance of Radio Australia's newest language service, the Khmer Service, in a war-devastated country undergoing reconstruction.

5.52 While in Cambodia, Professor Morgan witnessed a grenade attack on a political rally in which 20 people, including one journalist, was killed and 130 people, including 20 media people, injured. In this threatening atmosphere, he concludes, one could not expect a confident media coverage of the forthcoming elections, more especially when: 'the local media are just as factionalised and partisan as the rest of the political system, what hope is there for equitable coverage and well-informed elections'.²⁷ Professor Morgan told the Committee about the role of Radio Australia and Australia Television in Cambodia:

Firstly, those two organisations are well and widely respected for their non-partisan fairness and their high levels of professionalism. Secondly, in a country still struggling with the concept of the fourth estate, they provide an exemplary role model for media - government relations ... Thirdly, they represent a country and a way of life where politics stands for more than the brutality of money and power - and I would like a dollar for every time those words were used to be me by Cambodians, in the fortnight I was there, to refer to their distress about the current situation in that country. Fourthly, they speak

25 *Committee Hansard*, p. 383.

26 Submission no. 414, p. 1

27 *Committee Hansard*, p. 421.

to people in their own language, a people who have been culturally wounded and demoralised by recent history. At the same time these two organisations offer them an entree to the English language, the language of opportunity worldwide.²⁸

5.53 The Committee received wide support for this assessment from Cambodia, including from local media representatives in that country. For example, the Director General of Apsara TV and Radio Station at Phnom Penh, Mr Ouk Prathana wrote confirming the importance of Radio Australia and Australia Television services in keeping Cambodians informed of Australian and world news. He also expressed sorrow at the threat of closure saying that he felt 'the Australia Radio Service and Australian TV are really important for the audience for the present as well as the future'.²⁹

5.54 In Papua New Guinea and the Pacific, RA's important role in reporting the Fiji coups in 1987 and in the recent tension in PNG was also widely acknowledged in evidence to the Committee.³⁰ In Papua New Guinea several radio stations in the 19 provinces have not been operating because of lack of funds³¹ and the national broadcaster, NBC, is in particular difficulty. RA's surveys show that its audience has increased from 28 per cent to 39 per cent between 1990 and 1993. Listeners include 50 per cent of those completing high school.³²

5.55 Mr Pius Bonjui, of Radio Australia's Tok Pisin PNG service, cites an example of Radio Australia's responsiveness to Papua New Guinea's news needs:

I will give you an example of where Radio Australia is valuable. In last month's incident where 10 days of uncertainty in Port Moresby almost brought the PNG democracy to its knees, Radio Australia played its part. We believe we had our listeners informed of the event during the 10 days of uncertainties there. As such, we believe we did our best to do that by extending our services in the evening broadcast three hours to another extra hour in the morning from six till seven. We are now getting feedback on the valuable service that we provided during the crisis in Port Moresby last month. That is one of the examples of Radio Australia's role in serving our target areas in the south - west Pacific.³³

5.56 The Australian Council for Overseas Aid, in relation to the events in Bougainville, reported:

From Papua New Guinea we have the point made that many rural communities do not have any other radio option. They cite specifically the situation in Bougainville where the people depend heavily on Radio Australia - PNG

28 *Committee Hansard*, p. 421.

29 Submission no. 360.

30 See for example Mr Derek White, *Committee Hansard*, p. 33.

31 Mr Pius Bonjui, *Committee Hansard*, p. 378.

32 ABC submission no. 377, p. 28.

33 *Committee Hansard*, p. 378.

services to know what is happening in the rest of their own country with Bougainville provincial radio being off air for almost three years.³⁴

5.57 Witnesses also confirmed the role Radio Australia has played in informing the PNG community during natural disasters:

There is a very practical application of Radio Australia in the example from the Milne Bay province in eastern Papua. Some of the islands were recently damaged by Cyclone Justin. It was Radio Australia - PNG service that kept the region informed about the progress of Cyclone Justin.³⁵

5.58 Reports from the Pacific also emphasise the essential role of RA's reporting during natural disasters, particularly as local communications systems can be damaged or destroyed during such events. The geographical formation of the Pacific Islands makes them particularly reliant on short-wave services provided by Radio Australia for provision of information throughout the entire Pacific region, as Mr Dobell told the Committee:

It is hard for Australians sometimes to mentally grab the idea of the South Pacific. When John Howard went to the Marshall Islands last year I think that was very valuable. There he was on a speck of coral 200 metres wide, the shape of a horse shoe. It really brings home the limitations that these are micro states that are not economies as the classic definition of an economy would have it. Australia matters so much.

If there is a petrol strike in Brisbane they need to know in Vanuatu and the Solomons because that means that they had better turn the generators down to half because supplies will not be coming in. They need to know the rugby scores. They need to know what the dollar is doing in terms of their kids' education. We are not comfortable with the idea that we are a superpower in one particular part of the world; we do matter. Our information agenda matters to them.³⁶

5.59 Other submissions to the inquiry generally confirmed RA's distinction in reporting the Asia Pacific region in contrast to other broadcasters. Mr Edwin McKeithen, a retired US Foreign Service Officer living in Thailand and regular listener of VOA, BBC and Monitor Radio International services, reported:

Radio Australia is particularly strong in reporting on events in Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam and the rest of Asia and the Pacific. I can vouch for the quality of your reporting from Thailand, Cambodia and Laos - countries which I know well. I thus have confidence in the calibre of your reporting from areas I am ignorant of. I must confess that I knew absolutely

34 *Committee Hansard*, p. 260.

35 *Committee Hansard*, p. 260, as cited from letter from P Maime, Development Education Officer, Catholic Commission for Justice Peace and Development Secretariat/CARITAS PNG, incorporated pp 277-78.

36 *Committee Hansard*, p. 248.

nothing about the Pacific Islands until I became a regular listener to Radio Australia.³⁷

5.60 Mr McKeithen concluded on Radio Australia's news coverage:

I have gradually acquired the greatest respect for the newspeople of Radio Australia. They impress me for their dispassionate objectivity and their intelligent reporting, unquestionably the best of all the international radio journalists.³⁸

Foreign Language Services

5.61 Witnesses and submissions to this inquiry emphatically asserted that foreign language services were an essential feature of Radio Australia's effectiveness in presenting Australia to the Asia Pacific region. Expert witnesses corroborated the evidence given in inquiries in the recent past that foreign language services were not only the key contemporary instrument of communication for Australia to the region but that foreign language programming was the undoubted growth market of the future for international broadcasters. This evidence from experts in the field was supported by the groundswell of submissions from regional listeners at all levels of society, state ministers to villagers, who substantiated Radio Australia's achievement.

5.62 The inquiry revealed that foreign language services are observed to have the most impact on regional audiences - although some listeners understand English well enough to listen to the news, information, science and education programs broadcast on RA's English language service, many do not have a sufficient command to ensure adequate comprehension. The largest audience of RA's programs listens to the local language services. Further, while current urban-focussed audience surveys generally reveal that RA's listenership is weighted toward the better educated,³⁹ letters received by RA and submissions to this inquiry suggest that foreign language programming meets the needs of a much wider audience.

5.63 Many witnesses have emphasised that Australia's long-term interests are served best by reaching the largest possible audiences, at all levels of society, in the Asia Pacific region. They alert Australians to the naivety of assuming that our neighbours see things in the same way as we do and, particularly, that matters which have revealed how different perceptions can be need to be addressed as promptly, persuasively and effectively as possible. Similarly, witnesses reported that distrust of Australia as a representative of colonialist powers in the region and recollections of the White Australia Policy, are easily aroused by media attention given to racist commentary in Australia.⁴⁰

5.64 Evidence confirms that RA's foreign language programs have succeeded in dispelling misunderstandings between our countries by presenting an alternative view to that presented

37 Submission no. 378, p. 2.

38 Submission No. 378, p. 1.

39 See, for example, survey data at ABC submission no. 377, pp 7-10.

40 See also Parliamentary Information Service, *Backgrounder: Asian Press Reactions to Australia's Race and Immigration Debate*, 5 December 1996.

by regional and other broadcasters. The type of inter-cultural awareness and sensitivity which RA's foreign language service is committed to, and has been seen to deliver, is perceived as essential if Australia is to realise its potential in the region as the neighbour/ trader formal Government policy intends.

5.65 In recognition of the important role Radio Australia has played, many commentators suggest that Radio Australia's foreign language services should be expanded to encompass services to Burma and Korea in Australia's national interest and in the interests of regional peace and peaceful development.

5.66 Radio Australia's submission to this inquiry provides full details of broadcasting hours and programming of its foreign language services. Programs are delivered by short-wave radio and some are rebroadcast. A summary of hours, programming and broadcasting arrangements follows:

French Language	30min x 7 days short-wave/ relays & rebroadcasts 20 min news, as <i>Pacifique Info</i> , plus music Noumea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu
Tok Pisin	3hrs x 7 days short-wave news, sport, specialised information, music and entertainment PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu
Bahasa Indonesia	5hrs x 7 days short-wave news and current affairs 32%, information 19%, English lessons 13% and music features 37% Indonesia (particularly Eastern), South-East Asia
Vietnamese	1.5hrs x 5 days, 2hrs x weekends short-wave news and current affairs 30%, AusAID funded English lessons 33%, Aust-Vietnam programs, science, health education and the arts 26%, music programs - Australian music 11% Vietnam
Thai	5min plus x 5 days re-broadcast & transcripts news current daily & information features Thailand via local radio & university networks
Khmer	1hr x 7days short-wave news & current affairs 33%, information programs 24%, English lessons 43%
Chinese	5hrs x 7 days short-wave, internet, rebroadcast (Standard Chinese x 4.5, Cantonese x 1) S.C: news & current affairs 23%, spoken-word/information 49% music/entertainment 28% C: news & current affairs 22%, spoken-word/information 49%, music/entertainment 28% North Asia incl China, Hong Kong, Macao, Philippines, Taiwan

5.67 These services all offer programs specifically produced for the target audience in local languages. Specialist spoken-word programs focus on issues of concern to the local audience. They also explain Australian life, aspirations and views on international issues, and the relationship between Australia and the target country. Music programs represent a range of musical genres plus local popular music complemented by music by Australian composers and performers. English language teaching programs are conducted in a format which makes them accessible to local people. Delivered in local languages, these programs promote the image of Australia as a friendly, tolerant and open society.⁴¹ These radio programs are then supported by bi-lingual 'English on Radio Australia' booklets.⁴²

5.68 In his report, Mr Mansfield remarked on the fact that four of RA's foreign language services were active for less than one and a half hours a day. He referred to this level of broadcasting as 'marginal' and suggested that a re-ordering of priorities might have allowed a more appropriate delivery of services to 'more significant audiences'.⁴³

5.69 Radio Australia provides clear explanation of its current provision of services to these countries and shows how it has already demonstrated its ability to adapt to reach a capacity audience in the region.

5.70 With respect to the French language service, RA reports that it was restructured owing to an apparent reduction in short-wave reception.⁴⁴ The focus of the service was still, however, the Pacific and so rebroadcasting and relay options were pursued through local French language stations in Vanuatu, Tahiti, Noumea and New Caledonia. While the short-wave service still operates, the alternative arrangements resulted in a substantial increase in audience size.⁴⁵

5.71 Submissions and witnesses to this inquiry expressed support for Australia's role in providing an alternative source of information to that provided by Radio France Internationale which tended to be European in focus.⁴⁶ French speakers in the Pacific wanted to hear about news from their region upon which they could rely. As Mr Oscar Temaru, Mayor of Faa'a and leader of the Pro Independence Party Tavini Huiraatiri wrote from Tahiti:

Rest assured that beyond the professionalism demonstrated by the small team (French service) of Radio Australia, this service of the ABC is unique. It is a link meeting point for all Pacific people. Radio Australia is the only provider of neutral information, independent, covering the whole region [and] strongly participating in island life.

41 ABC submission no. 377, Vol. 2, passim.

42 Submission no. 414, p. 2.

43 Mansfield, op cit, p. 42.

44 ABC submission no. 377, Vol. 2, p. 15.

45 Audiences stand at an estimated 60, 000 each from Radio Vanuatu and Radio Tefana (Tahiti) and 70,000 from Radio Diijido covering Noumea and New Caledonia. see ABC submission no. Vol. 2, pp 15-16.

46 *Committee Hansard*, p. 8. Translated from French.

Its disappearance would also be a loss for your country and its image as a great democracy, showing its respectful interest in the small island nations of the Pacific.

For us Polynesians, who have suffered the impact of the ghetto in which the French nuclear tests have trapped us, Radio Australia has contributed to the emancipation and the opening of our country.⁴⁷

5.72 The importance of the Khmer service, RA's most recent addition to its foreign language service division, has already been discussed. After it became clear that the Government was considering closing or downgrading RA, either RA or the Committee received submissions and messages from King Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia's first Prime Minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, Cambodia's Ambassador to Australia, Mr Chheang Vun and the Under-Secretary of State in Cambodia's Ministry of Information, Mr Sieng Lapresse and other senior officials. These writers as well as numbers of expatriate Australian aid workers and academics working in the region, all confirmed the essential role that RA's Khmer language service plays in restructuring the devastated Cambodian society and providing independent news of benefit to locals and ex-patriates alike.⁴⁸

5.73 Listeners in the region came out with strong support for all of the other language services. A letter received by RA from a doctor in the city of Vinh, Vietnam, confirmed the important foreign relations role played by the Vietnamese language service:

To the 200,000 Vietnamese living in Australia and several million listeners in Vietnam the closure of Vietnamese Service/RA would be seen as the worst development in relation between the two countries. It is a relation which has only blossomed recently after a long period of suspicion and hatred resulting from Australian military support for the Saigon Government. Thanks to Vietnamese Service/RA, misunderstanding and prejudice were largely replaced by friendship. But now this emerging friendship is about to be terminated.⁴⁹

5.74 Mr Dang Xuân Phú's provides evidence of RA's effectiveness here. He writes congratulating RA on its programming:

In the past two years, Vietnamese Service/RA's programs have improved and have become richer compared to those from international broadcasters. VS/RA now have programs that deal with health, world travel, education etc. These are very important information programs that are lacking in other overseas Vietnamese Services. The presentation of programs are very attractive - full of warmth and sweetness. Through this improvement, VS/RA has helped raise our people's awareness.⁵⁰

47 Submission no. 187.

48 Submission nos 500.

49 *Committee Hansard*, pp 394-95. Radio Australia notes the figures quoted here are estimates

50 Submission no. 262.

5.75 The popularity and importance of Indonesian language news programs to all walks of life in Indonesia has already been cited. When the possible closure of RA's Indonesian service became known, the Committee received many messages of what can only be described as despair from listeners who rely on Radio Australia's programming for independent news, information and entertainment.⁵¹ Aid workers writing from Indonesia also confirmed the important role RA has in providing information to isolated islands in the Indonesian archipelago which would otherwise be entirely without world information resources:

The closure of Radio Australia would deprive the people of Manggarai [East Indonesia] of this window on the outside world which they have at present, and would, I feel, be removing a source of good-will towards Australia which should not be looked at in purely monetary terms. There is no other comparable service which I am aware of which provides independent radio programmes in Indonesian. The only other Indonesian language programmes are broadcast by the heavily-controlled government radio station in isolated areas like Ruteng.⁵²

5.76 Mr Oscar Wang, senior broadcaster with Radio Australia standard Chinese section, offered his recent experiences in Shanghai and Beijing as evidence of the loyalty of mainland listeners. He reported enthusiastic support and dumbfounded amazement that Australia should consider closing Radio Australia:

The very first people I met at the Beijing airport and the last people I met at the guest house in Diaoyutai when the Prime Minister was conversing with Beijing university students all wanted me to bring back the message: Australia, don't be an international deserter. What you are doing is deserting your obligation, deserting your friends, deserting your listeners in Asia as a whole.⁵³

5.77 Mrs Luana Man-Ling Kou, colleague of Oscar Wang, also confirmed listeners continued support and dedication to the standard language service's programming. Mrs Kou reported that she produces two programs weekly for the service. One, a program called *The Young Ones*, includes information about the Australian education system, the university, overseas students and young people's activities in Australia. The other is an entertainment program which reports Australian festival events and celebrations as well as albums and request programs. Mrs Kou reports that these programs solicit popular response from both students and parents in Hong Kong, Malaysia and China. Parents and other listeners contact the program or write letters investigating Australia's potential as an education opportunity⁵⁴

5.78 In Papua New Guinea, Radio Australia plays an undisputably important role in being the only international broadcaster to deliver a language service in Toc Pisin. Since introducing the service in 1993 the audience has grown dramatically and its importance to the people of Papua New Guinea increased.⁵⁵ The format consists of such locally focussed

51 See for example Submission nos 218, 221-225..

52 Submission no. 414, p. 2.

53 *Committee Hansard*, p. 389.

54 *Committee Hansard*, p. 392.

55 ABC submission no. 377, Vol. 2, p. 19.

programs as: *Pacifik Kona*, on oral history; *Tumbuna*, on the environment and *Wanaples*, about Aboriginal/indigenous issues.

5.79 While evidence widely confirms Papua New Guinea's reliance on English language programming, it is RA's Toc Pisin service that attracts over twice the rate of reception, delivering twice the service to native Papua New Guineans.⁵⁶ As Dr Errol Hodge reported to the Committee, in times of crisis the reliance of indigenous people on local language services can be gauged as even more significant:

The importance of the audience in Papua New Guinea has never been greater than in the past few weeks. Audience research shows that in normal times more than one-third of radio listeners in that country are listening to Radio Australia because of the grave problems facing the national broadcasting commission. First Market Research conducted a survey in 1993 which showed that more than 50 per cent of Papua New Guineans with high school education who had completed high school were listening to Radio Australia, but anecdotal evidence is that recently people have been tuning to the pidgin service in unprecedented numbers to find out what is going on in their own country.⁵⁷

5.80 In the case of the Thai service, Radio Australia chose to adopt a rebroadcasting policy in response to an apparent diminution in short-wave reception. Ms Santhaporn, of Radio Australia's Thai language service, reported:

The Thai short-wave service closed down almost two years ago. Since then some of my colleagues have retired and some have been retrenched. There are only two left at the moment. But we have successfully struck up cooperation with a lot of important Thai stations. Our cooperation is with the Nine station in Thailand to broadcast the feature program. That includes the Mass Communication Organisation of Thailand, Radio Thailand and a university that has satellite networks all over the country.

We also have news broadcasts every weekday with three Thai stations. One station has the satellite broadcasting all over the country. They do the Takeover news on weekdays. There are two other news stations. One is a university station and Mass Communication Organisation of Thailand gets other news from long distance phone calls.

I just want you to be aware that, although short wave may not be relevant to some countries such as Thailand, provided that we have enough resources to investigate in further cooperation, we have done that with a very limited resource. Our target reach at the moment is all over Thailand - AM and FM stations. We are right there in the market competing with BBC and VOA at the moment.⁵⁸

56 ABC submission no. 377, p. 8.

57 *Committee Hansard*, p. 209.

58 *Committee Hansard*, p. 391.

5.81 Through RA's foreign language programming, the ABC is delivered to the region as the acknowledged best foreign language service, in keeping with its current international broadcasting objectives. The service fills a role in the Asia Pacific which is widely valued; stimulating the lives of regional audiences today and guaranteeing long-term benefits to Australia and the region in the future.

5.82 In considering the multiple and reciprocal benefits of Australia's provision of these services to the region, foreign language programming is undoubtedly the most persuasive mechanism by which Australia can both promote its interests and convince our neighbours of our commitment to the region by contributing something truly valuable: independent information. This view was expressed again and again by witnesses and writers of submissions to this inquiry. Of this fact other international broadcasters are also acutely aware. In a letter to the Committee, VOA commented:

The largest of our language divisions is the one broadcasting to the East Asia and Pacific regions. We recognize the strategic importance of this area, which also is likely to be a powerful engine of the global economy in the coming century.

As for plans to close Radio Australia, a February 12 headline in *The Australian* of Sydney says it all: 'Indonesian's Lament Plan to Axe Voice of Freedom.'⁵⁹

5.83 Foreign language programming, considered as an active aid to foreign diplomacy, has profound effects in its capacity to reach the listener at every level of society, to promote human rights, regional trade and development and universal peace. RA has distanced itself from the overt foreign policy stance which America sustains in the region. Evidence received by the Committee confirms that this is its main attraction to its audiences: they see value in RA's incisive yet empathetic commentary on regional events; rely on its English lessons and business programs; and enjoy its cultural and educational items.

English language programming

5.84 In the case of English language programming, RA is the voice of Australia, widely perceived as a friendly and reliable voice. Many regional submitters to this inquiry confirmed that the presence of RA's English language service was also reassuring as the voice of a friend heard from childhood. These responses ranged from an elderly gentleman in Singapore to a twelve year old girl in Vietnam, both of whom lamented the suggested closure of RA and confirmed that the service had formed their present vision of the world, inspired their imagination and assisted them in learning English.

5.85 Currently, RA's English language service broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Its program content consists of news and current affairs programming (some 48.4 per cent of output), sport, information, music and entertainment focussing on Australia, Asia and the Pacific but including items about other areas of the world.

5.86 Regionally focussed spoken-word programming comprises the weekday magazine features *Pacific Beat* and *Pacific Focus*, dealing with health, women's issues, travel, the environment and religion. Other spoken-word programs deal with science, technology, the arts, literature, the media, listeners comments and social history. These programs complement *Dateline Asia /Pacific* which covers more topical regional affairs. Other features such as *Australia Today* are vehicles for the best and most appropriate material generated by ABC regional and metropolitan stations.

5.87 Sports and music programs have generated their own widespread audiences. RA's sport programming relays *ABC Grandstand* and *Sports Wrap* but also includes extensive coverage in news bulletins, current affairs and stand-alone programs. Specialist regional coverage of sport is now also provided through a 'stringer network' established throughout the region. The full range of music genres are also covered by RA as relayed in the Radio National program *Music Deli*. Two other programs provide further variety twice week.⁶⁰

5.88 Radio Australia's English language programming, particularly news and information programming, has long held a respected place in the Asia Pacific region and is highly valued.

5.89 Professor Clive Kessler, reporting on English language news in Malaysia, where he spends several months a year, stated that even when his academic contacts reported that 'they do not like, or have been told they should not like, Radio Australia' they confessed that the service's coverage of other Asian countries was extremely helpful to their work. Programs his contacts referred to were:

the old format that ended in December last year, of the *Network Asia* format of two hours of in-depth current affairs, rather than the post-January 1997 one-hour *Dateline* format ... [and] coverage that includes both the Radio Australia material generated by Radio Australia itself and also to the inclusion in that Radio Australia *Network Asia* program of materials coming in particular from *AM*, *PM*, *The World Today*, and so on.⁶¹

5.90 The Australia-India Council reported that the weekly English language program *Charting Australia*, which it jointly funds with RA, has been broadcast on short-wave to India since 1994 and is now rebroadcast on local FM channels by All India Radio. The audience for the short-wave broadcast alone is estimated at around one million listeners.⁶² The program encourages understanding of Australia and provides interviews with prominent Indian and Australian figures. Understood to be the first foreign program to be accepted by India for rebroadcast via satellite to any interested All India radio station, *Charting Australia* aims to promote trade and cultural interaction by communicating to the expanding English-speaking middle India with whom, other witnesses confirmed, Australia can expect a dynamic bilateral relationship.⁶³

60 ABC submission no. 377, Vol. 2, p. 10-11.

61 *Committee Hansard*, p. 283.

62 Submission no. 318, passim.

63 See also Professor Robin Jeffrey, Submission no. 367.

5.91 English language programming is also highly valued by Australians, and other English speakers, living, travelling and working abroad. Mr Kevin Zehnder confirmed the important role played by Radio Australia for AESOP's volunteers working in the region:

As stated in the submission, AESOP is a non-government organisation providing volunteers to assist businesses mainly in the Asia Pacific region. I have had the opportunity of taking part in four assignments in various parts of the Pacific in the last four years as a volunteer. While I appreciate that the chief function of Radio Australia is to provide news and information to our Asia Pacific neighbours, it also serves a very important part in keeping volunteers up to date with current events in Australia while on a posting overseas.

Most of the participating countries served by AESOP have local radio stations which naturally broadcast the language of the local people. In many cases, we, as volunteers, have only a limited knowledge of the local languages and are unlikely to become fluent in them due to the shortness of our assignments, which can last from four weeks to six months. Any reduction in this broadcast service would be a great loss and sadly missed by all of us who, in our own small way, are trying to promote Australia to our Asia Pacific neighbours.⁶⁴

5.92 Numerous submissions received by the Committee reflected AESOP's view. More particularly, a number of people reported that on the crucial role of RA's news services in times of crisis in the region when serving professionally or travelling overseas. Mr Charles Bowers reports his dependence on Radio Australia as a volunteer in Cambodia in 1992-93 and 1995-96:

I was a volunteer District Electoral Supervisor located in a remote district in the lead up to the elections held in May 1993, and during this time I became totally reliant on Radio Australia news broadcasts to get any picture at all of the then current situation in Cambodia. As the election date approached, the security situation deteriorated rapidly. The UN communication system was practically non-existent, and the UN authorities had decided to restrict the flow of information so as not to panic the troops. This meant that each volunteer had to make their own decisions regarding their personal safety, and practically the only source of information that we had to base this decision upon was Radio Australia's hourly news bulletins, which always included up-to-date news on the situation in Cambodia.⁶⁵

5.93 Another group of travelling Australians who wrote of the particular value of RA's English services were ships captains and sailors.

5.94 A large number of submissions from Australian aid workers overseas confirmed the importance of English language programming as an English teaching aid in the region. For

64 *Committee Hansard*, p. 334.

65 Submission no. 239.

example, Laura Thomsett, Australian Volunteer Abroad in Tuvalu in the Central Pacific in 1996, taught Science and English students in the country's only school. She wrote:

Radio Australia news and other programs are broadcast over the local radio station in Tuvalu regularly throughout each day. With a total absence of any other mass media in an extremely isolated country, this service is crucial in keeping Tuvaluans and expatriates in touch with new ideas and world events.

For school students with whom I was most involved, listening to Radio Australia is pivotal in the development of their English listening and speaking skills. General knowledge is heavily based on 'I heard it on the radio ... 'I cannot emphasise enough the importance of Radio Australia's educational role.⁶⁶

English language teaching programs

5.95 The Committee also received many submissions from both Australian aid workers and regional language teachers reporting their reliance on Radio Australia's formal English language teaching programs as an essential resource for their work.

5.96 A body of submissions from indigenous writers in the region also supported the widespread popularity and importance of Radio Australia's English language teaching services outside institutions in the Asia-Pacific region. These services provided essential training to listeners at every level and section of society, from the young enthusiasts to national leaders.

5.97 The Australian Council for Overseas Aid reported that a senior Cambodian official uses RA to improve his English:

Our office in Cambodia reported just last week that the Governor of Kampot province, for example, told her only a couple of weeks ago, completely unsolicited, that he listens to Radio Australia frequently - and that is a real province. He uses it to keep up his English. He listens to the English language level as well, so there is formal training. Also, a lot of people use it informally to keep up their English and to keep up as well with the information and educational aspect.⁶⁷

5.98 Important to the Committee's understanding of how English language teaching services fit into the delivery of English and foreign language programming, Ms Stone of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid pointed out that English language teaching programs were not actually part of English language services:

If you are teaching English, you need to be teaching it using the local language. So, if you cut a local language service, you lose your medium for actually teaching English. I think that is a concern, particularly in Papua New Guinea. A lot of people who are geographically isolated are often linguistically

66 Submission no. 411.

67 *Committee Hansard*, p. 264.

isolated as well, and Radio Australia can actually reach them through their local language services and English can be taught that way.⁶⁸

5.99 This and other evidence presented to the Committee suggests that Radio Australia's programming more than meets the needs of expatriates and target audiences in the Asia Pacific region. The key to this success is, without doubt, the dynamically interactive programming format produced by the combined efforts of RA's foreign and English language services.

'Culturally Appropriate' Programming

5.100 RA ensures that programming broadcast into the Asia Pacific region is 'culturally appropriate' in two ways: first, by delivering programs in indigenous languages and; second, through selective presentation of domestically produced material - in English or translation - or programming produced with the target audience in mind.

5.101 RA's foreign language service representatives, appearing before the Committee on 16 April 1997, argued that these two approaches were dynamically interactive. Mr Hanh Trahn, Executive Producer of Radio Australia's Vietnamese service, touched upon a number of significant elements which demonstrate the particular effectiveness of Radio Australia in its delivery of a culturally appropriate foreign language broadcasting service:

It is worth emphasising once more that Radio Australia[s] expertise is not only in regional languages but also in its understanding of the target countries in terms of their culture, their economics, their politics and so on. This helps us tailor and present information in such a way that it is easily understood by our audience. In other words, all Radio Australia language services are not merely translating services but communicating and broadcasting services. In this context, our English service role is very distinct from the ABC domestic service in that it has to communicate with a foreign audience who happen to understand English. As you well know, understanding English is not synonymous with understanding Australia.

Most of our foreign language staff were born and have grown up in the countries of their target audience. Most of us are now Australian citizens. We see our future as well as our children's future inextricably linked to the future of this country. This future depends on how Australia is seen by the world in general and by the Asia Pacific region in particular. We are not, as some uninformed commentators have suggested, a bunch of foreigners using Australian tax money to indulge in chit-chatting with other foreigners.

At the risk of being immodest, I would say that we are one of the finest examples of how multiculturalism can serve Australia's interests. By having a foot in each culture we are the best equipped to explain Australia to the Asia Pacific region and vice versa. Most Australian born Radio Australia staff are

familiar with the Asia Pacific region because they have studied it or they have travelled, lived or worked there.

To be an effective international radio broadcaster, Radio Australia must be capable of putting itself in the shoes of its overseas audience to the extent that our audience readily identify themselves with us and, by extension, with the values we Australians project. This high degree of empathy is indeed very rare among international services; but Radio Australia has been doing this successfully for half a century. As thousands of our listeners' letters received every month would attest, our perceived friendliness, fairness, independence and, dare I say, fearlessness are rated very highly.

Of course, Radio Australia's job is to tell the world about Australia and its views on global and regional issues. But another perception from our listeners is that often we seem to know more about their own countries than they do. Many say they were amazed to hear about things going on in their backyards. How does Radio Australia achieve this? By having not only correspondents in residence in these countries but also language broadcasters who can maintain extensive networks of contacts in the 4 countries of their birth. This is Radio Australia's first-class credibility.⁶⁹

5.102 In its submission, RA describes the process which delivers the standard of service which Mr Trinh describes:

Radio Australia divides its program making departments by geographic region, each of which is responsible, within RA's overall program guidelines, for its own output. Besides the 24-hour English language service, the eight foreign language groups draw heavily on RA's news room for news and current affairs and they adapt ABC domestic programs covering topics such as health, agriculture, education and science. They also initiate their own interviews and feature programs, occasionally travelling to conferences and events within Australia or their home countries if funds are available.⁷⁰

5.103 The cross-fertilisation between RA's English language and indigenous language programming services is further explained by Mr Trahn:

We, the staff of all language services of Radio Australia, work together as a team. We confer and exchange program materials with one another and with ABC domestic services. For example, we regularly use materials from *Asia Focus*, *Pacific Beat* and *Network Asia*, which are programs produced by Radio Australia; *Health Report* and *Science Show*, from ABC Radio National; *Landline*, *Quantum*, *Four Corners* from ABC TV; and *Arts National* and *Indian-Pacific* also from Radio National.⁷¹

69 *Committee Hansard*, p. 376-78.

70 ABC submission no. 377, p. 72.

71 *Committee Hansard*, p. 377.

5.104 In this way, RA represents multicultural Australia - contemporary Australian values, life and perspectives - to the region in terms it can understand, whether in its own language or in English. The combination of programming in English and eight regional languages thus provides a wide coverage of Australian, regional and world affairs as well as providing valuable educational, entertainment and lifestyle programming.

5.105 Further, Radio Australia's sophisticated interpretation of the objectives are seen to turn on a particular sensitivity to, and knowledge of, regional issues which place it above the often perceived patronising tone of the BBC, or the propagandist tendency of Voice of America. Overcoming the suspicions aroused by the White Australia Policy in the recent past, Radio Australia is reported to have succeeded as 'the friendly voice' of the region.⁷²

5.106 Submissions to this inquiry confirm that Radio Australia is overwhelmingly welcomed as a culturally *interactive* presence, one that it is investigative, reflective and responsive to the interests—political, personal and professional—of the listening populations of *our* part of the world.

Intrusiveness of International Broadcasting

5.107 In an article published in the *Australian* of 28 January 1997, Mr Duncan Campbell, a former senior Australian diplomat, wrote:

It needs to be accepted that Radio Australia was part of our equipment from imperial days. In this post-colonial, post-imperial period it is time it was jettisoned. International short-wave broadcasting is intentionally intrusive politically, and not without elements of presumed cultural superiority. And even with the aid of miniaturised digital receivers, the technology has been overtaken.

5.108 Mr Campbell expanded on this theme when he appeared before the Committee on 15 April 1997:

The Radio Australia function vis-a-vis the target countries of the regions it serves was initially, in my view, deliberately intrusive. Yet nowadays the explanation that I hear seems to be a much more gentle and benign one than that. I think one has to ask the question: at what point did it ever cease to be intrusive simply because the hot war, in which it grew up, and the Cold War period, in which it then was so active, passed? At what point after that did the function actually change? At what point did it become, as it were, permissible to indulge in a largely propaganda performance?

I do not think, as I have heard argued, that simply to go on competing with the other countries that provide this sort of service into our close-in regions actually justifies the continuation of the role in itself. By and large, those countries are former imperial and colonial powers and I think the question is invited: is this a function which modern day Australia, with the aims it has for

itself in this part of the world, really wants to maintain? Is it a function which is really redolent of a degree of cultural superiority?

5.109 Originally, during the Second World War, RA was a propaganda tool of the Australian Government but for many years now, it has been an independent international broadcaster as part of the ABC, a statutory authority. There are many reasons why it has a large audience in the Asia Pacific region but perhaps the dominant one is that it is seen to be an independent broadcaster, providing news and information which is neither propaganda nor censored by government. Tens of millions of people throughout the region want to listen to it. If not, they would not switch it on. They would simply turn to another service.

5.110 It is most likely true that some governments or leaders may not always appreciate the truth about an event or an issue being broadcast on an RA news service when they have censored or influenced their own local media. Some people may not agree with the views broadcast by RA because they reflect an Australian perspective even though it is not an Australian Government view. However, RA broadcasts to the people of the region, not just the political elites. International broadcasting services do have some influence, particularly if they are respected broadcasters, such as RA, in the many fields of human endeavour covered by the services. But RA's influence is relatively benign, creating more a sense of warmth and empathy between Australia and countries of the region, encouraging a greater rapport with our neighbours and more interaction with the region in diverse fields. Not all other international broadcasters are so benign.

5.111 In an interview on 29 April 1997, Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said:

One thing is sure of course, Radio Australia is well known throughout the region. Government and people may or may not like some of its contents. But it has been able to establish a track record. It has been able to establish a presence that is quite significant over the years.

5.112 The projection or promotion of Australian interests by RA and ATV is not necessarily being intrusive. We also project our national interests in many other ways. That is why Australia spends two billion dollars on our diplomatic service, development aid programs and trade promotion. Perhaps RA and ATV do it better than the rest for a fraction of the cost. And, of course, all countries in the region do just the same thing.

5.113 All countries in South East Asia and North East Asia, except Burma, operate short-wave services, most in several or many languages. As receiving and broadcasting technology improves, most people in Asia will be able to receive services from most countries of the region if not also from around the world. Will Australia be the only country not to have its voice heard in the global communications marketplace that is very quickly evolving? And what are the ramifications if Australia's voice is not there being heard while everyone else's voice is?

5.114 Mr Campbell's view of Radio Australia's short-wave broadcasts having 'presumed cultural superiority' is arrant nonsense. At one time, perhaps, most international short-wave broadcasters were operated by developed nations. But as already mentioned this is no longer the case. Do Australia's international broadcasters have 'presumed cultural superiority' while those of Indonesia, China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Laos, Japan and all the other international

broadcasters do not? Of course not. While RA is one of the more benign international broadcasters, taking an Australian perspective but not pushing government policies or views, many of the other short-wave services are not so independently minded.

5.115 Although given more detailed consideration elsewhere in the report, the Committee wishes to make the point that short-wave radio technology is not outdated, as asserted by Mr Campbell. If it were outdated, other international broadcasters, would not have invested considerable amounts of money in recent years to upgrade their short-wave transmitting facilities. Neither would the Australian Defence Force have invested one billion dollars in the Jindalee over the horizon radar project, which is based on short-wave technology.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS IMPLICATIONS OF RADIO AUSTRALIA SERVICES

Introduction

5.116 In many parts of this report, there are references to the broad benefits which Australia derives from Radio Australia broadcasts. In this chapter, the Committee draws together some of the key elements for further discussion.

Regional Support for Radio Australia

5.117 Respect is hard won in Asia. It is the quintessence of any solid relationship. It makes things happen. But when respect is lost, it is lost for a long time.

5.118 Radio Australia is a respected international broadcaster in the region. It has, over a long period of time, built up respect for its independence, its integrity, its understanding of its audiences, its sensitivity in handling difficult issues, its help to regional listeners in many areas of life and in languages that many people in the region understand.

5.119 Australia has gained respect in the region through the respect won by Radio Australia. Australia has won it in many other ways too. Our relationship with the region covers a wide spectrum of endeavours. But few can match the breadth of RA's reach. Tens of millions of people listen to RA, from leaders of government to people in remote villages. The relative cheapness of short-wave receivers bring this medium to a vast potential audience. RA has done much to help Australia.

5.120 With respect comes loyalty. There is no doubt that RA has loyal fans. It received 100,000 unsolicited letters last year and another 30,000 for a competition. It receives far more mail than any of its competitors.

5.121 With respect comes empathy and trust. Empathy with RA. Empathy with Australia, because listening to RA has given people knowledge about Australia, the wonders of Australian nature, our history and Aboriginal heritage, our lifestyle, our sport, our art, our education system, our economic and technological achievements, our democratic system and our multicultural society. They also know about views on regional and global issues. They also learn things about their own countries and their neighbours.

5.122 Respect, loyalty, empathy and trust cannot be bought. It has to be earned. You cannot measure it because it is not tangible. There are no statistics kept of the benefits of RA to Australia. You only know about individual cases when someone mentions them. The child who is sent to school in Australia because the parents, by listening to RA, know that Australia is a safe place for students, does not become an RA statistic. Except by anecdotal means, no-one will ever know that RA was the reason the child came to Australia. But by not having statistics, does that make RA less beneficial? Of course it does not, except to bean counters.

5.123 The size of the audience, the volume of mail and the evidence to this Committee shows that Radio Australia's services are warmly welcomed as a culturally interactive presence by its audiences in the region. Listeners see Radio Australia as independent, investigative, reflective and responsive to the personal, political and professional interests of *their* part of the world, as it is Australia's.

5.124 The evidence confirms that Radio Australia presents a personality and profile which is recognisably different to that of other broadcasters. It has succeeded as 'the friendly voice' of the region.⁷³ Speaking in this 'friendly voice', RA has put to good effect the type of 'soft power' foreign diplomacy currently pursued by Canada. For example:

Indonesian listeners said RA had changed their attitudes to Australia because they had learnt that the White Australia policy had been abolished, Aborigines have the vote and are represented in Parliament, that Islam is freely practised in Australia, that the Indonesian language is taught at schools and universities, the Australian population is eligible for unemployment benefits and pensions and that Australia provides aid to Indonesia and many other Asian countries.

These factors, and many others, have helped to change an image of Western arrogance and superiority that many Asians held towards Australia. These listeners were surprised that Australia is interested in and respectful of Asian countries, a point strongly reinforced in their view by RA's broadcasts in their languages.⁷⁴

5.125 A submission from Chin Communications, a company which supports businesses and organisations operating and expanding into Asia, reports the damage and predicts the ongoing consequences if Radio Australia were to close:

So-called racism in Australia has been widely reported in the world's media as a result of Pauline Hanson's outbursts last year. Australia and Australians, in our experience had always been highly regarded as tolerant and truly multicultural, that is until Hanson hit the airwaves and headlines. We became perceived as anti-Asian and a lot of damage has been caused as a result. This news, by our first hand experience, has spread to all corners of China. Left to our competitors, should there be no balanced view without Radio Australia, we would have no international voice reaching out to Asia in particular to remind our neighbours just how important they are and how a small minority of

73 *Committee Hansard*, p. 17.

74 ABC submission no. 377, p. 4.

Pauline Hansons in a country could receive publicity out of proportion with majority views. How much damage has this negative publicity done to our international markets, export earnings, investment and potential overseas students to our futures? Close down Radio Australia and it reinforces the message that we don't care about our near neighbours in Asia and the Pacific, in particular and leaves people believing the racist views being propagated by competitors.⁷⁵

5.126 Witnesses to this inquiry reported the particularly strong contribution Radio Australia's presence in the region made to the maintenance of Australia's national security, to the promotion of democratic freedom, to its role in times of crisis, and to the promotion and preservation of human rights, such as defending human dignity, promoting freedom of speech and universal peace; saving human lives and reducing suffering.

Human rights

5.127 Mr Scott-Murphy of the aid organisation CARITAS remarked on the relationship between free dissemination of credible information and human rights:

I would just like to remark on some aspects of Radio Australia and human rights. With 10 years experience of working with human rights workers both government and non-government in East Asia, South East Asia and the South Pacific, it is clear that in times of crisis people turn to Radio Australia for credible independent information. The essence of human rights is in public opinion. Human rights are not legally enforceable in international jurisdictions; they depend upon public opinion. Radio Australia provides independent information and news.⁷⁶

5.128 Professor Clive Kessler confirmed and underlined the important role RA plays in fostering democratic freedom and human rights in South East Asia:

The press in Malaysia and in South - East Asia in general is largely an instrument of government developmental purposes and there isn't much scope for alternative avenues - there's not much public space. The people who are attempting to create that space, enlarge it, to use it - including, in particular, groups such as the Muslim's women's rights movement in South-East Asia - are, in a sense, largely dependent upon services such as those of Radio Australia. If that Radio Australia coverage were to go and all that would come in would be the other voices from, say, Saudi Arabia and Iran, this not only would not be in the interests of those human rights movements in South-East Asia but would not be in Australia's interests either for the kind of support that they can draw internationally from short-wave radio to be diminished in that way.⁷⁷

75 Submission no. 336, p. 4.

76 *Committee Hansard*, p. 260.

77 *Committee Hansard* p. 288.

5.129 A more dramatic contribution is related in a recent letter received by the Friends of the ABC. In it resident of Papua New Guinea tells how Radio Australia's reporting averted the potential for actual human rights abuse :

The most psychologically damaging feature for the villagers caught up in Bougainville's civil war is the absence of unbiased, accurate, and timely information. Wild rumours circulate with frightening speed, destroying trust, spreading uncertainty, and encouraging some to lash out with violence. Reliable news, reported by trusted non-partisan journalists, and broadcast by a respected organisation such as Radio Australia, is an essential pre-requisite for peace. The fear of public disclosure and condemnation helps reduce the human rights abuses perpetrated by all sides.⁷⁸

5.130 A number of well-known persons, such as Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi and Jose Ramos Horta and Bishop Bello of East Timor have all commented on the importance of Radio Australia in assisting their human rights causes. Australia has long had a commitment to human rights in the region. Any closure of RA's foreign-language services must inevitably be seen as a weakening of Australia's commitment and support for human rights and democratic principles.

Role of Radio Australia in Times of Crisis

5.131 A large number of witnesses and submissions recorded that Radio Australia's audience is at its greatest at times of crisis in communities where news broadcasting is restricted for political or other reasons.⁷⁹ Within this group, evidence confirms Radio Australia's role in saving of lives through timely advice to locals and expatriates during such periods of civil unrest, coups or natural disaster.

5.132 Mr Charles Bowers, whose reliance on Radio Australia's news services as a volunteer in Cambodia in 1992-93 and 1995-96 is cited elsewhere in the report, went on to say that Radio Australia's service is essential for both Australian and other English speaking nationals in dangerous situations throughout Asia. In Cambodia, his experience was that other world services simply did not report the region, neither could Australia's embassy be relied upon to assist :

BBC World Service provided occasional reports on Cambodia, but this was very patchy as they no longer regard SE Asia as part of their sphere of influence. The Australian Embassy in Phnom Penh washed their hands of any responsibility for the Australian volunteers to the UN mission, and refused to brief us on the security situation. They would not even give us access to Australian newspapers during this period.

This dependence on news from Radio Australia was not restricted to Australian volunteers, and many of the English speaking volunteers also relied on Radio Australia for up-to-date news on Cambodia in the lead-up to the

78 Submission no. 391, p. 4.

79 For example, *Committee Hansard* p. 371.

elections. The first news that most of the UN volunteers received of the murder of their Japanese colleague Atsuhito Nakata in Kompong Thom Province was from Radio Australia, and not from the UN.⁸⁰

Defence and Reconstruction

5.133 Mr William Armstrong, Overseas Service Bureau, made the point that the development of friendly relations with our neighbours contributes to our defence effort:

Here we are talking about something in the order of \$15 million or \$20 million. We have just made an announcement of \$700 million being cut in the defence area. I think that is a terrific move; it should have happened years ago. This is an integral part of our forward defence. Our relationship with the Asia Pacific region is an integral part of our forward defence. If we can build relationships with this part of the world at all levels - cultural, political, social, sporting and everything else - we do in the end defend ourselves, protect ourselves and put ourselves into the region as a partner in the region.⁸¹

5.134 Radio Australia's aid role in promoting peace and development was emphasised by Mr Sieng Lapresse, Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Information, Kingdom of Cambodia, who wrote to the Committee protesting about the proposed closure of RA, and asserting the value of RA's Khmer Service to his country:

At the a time when Cambodian people are reaching out to learn more about the rest of the world, Australia is planning to stop a key source of information: Radio Australia and Australia Television.

Having worked with the Voice of America from 1967 to 1987, I know how important and influential international radio can be. Having worked for the reconstruction of my country on the border from 1987 and from Phnom Penh since 1991, I know how important radio is in the process of reconstruction and how much Cambodians value Radio Australia as a source of information and education.

Australia has invested heavily in the peace process, the elections and subsequent rebuildings of our nation. Why pull out the supports. Please reconsider this decision.⁸²

5.135 Mr William Armstrong of the Overseas Service Bureau also emphasised the long-term role of Radio Australia in promoting regional peace. He sees Radio Australia as safeguard to national interests in that it builds 'relationships with this part of the world at all levels cultural, political, social, sporting and everything else'. This cultural interaction thus ensures

80 Mr C. Bowers, submission no. 239.

81 *Committee Hansard*, pp 369-70.

82 Submission no. 368.

that 'we do in the end defend ourselves, protect ourselves and put ourselves into the region as a partner in the region'.⁸³ He describes how this process starts from the village level up:

The young kid that learns English riding around on his bike listening to the radio in the village remembers Australia. He knows the jingles, the latest hits, the bands and all the rest of it that perhaps do not seem important to politicians and to others. But 10, 15, 20 years down the track when that kid grows up, he has got Australia implanted in his mind, and he remembers it. The women in the village learn their English, their recipes and all the other things. Those things are long-term investments for Australia as a nation and as a people.⁸⁴

5.136 There is considerable evidence that many senior political, bureaucratic and business officials in the region listen to RA because of its independence, integrity, accuracy and focus on the regional affairs. They find out what is happening in neighbouring countries and sometimes even in their own. They respect and trust RA's news services. Their listening to RA means that they are hearing Australian perspectives on regional and global issues which are of interest to them. Those perspectives are not the Australian Government's views except when official pronouncements are referred to in news and current affairs programs. But they are, nevertheless, Australian views. This helps understanding at the diplomatic level. Consequently, other governments are less likely to misunderstand Australian positions on regional issues. It also facilitates the conclusion of mutually beneficial arrangements and agreements.

5.137 RA also has an audience in the United States and northern Europe. Mr Paul Rickershauser, an American from New Jersey, submitted that:

Being a short wave listener on the East Coast of the United States I especially value [RA's] news and commentary on issues concerning the Pacific Rim. I use this information to shape my views on my country's foreign policy towards Australia and other countries in the area. I communicate my views to my elected representatives on a regular basis and would suggest that many other short-wave listeners do the same. I would ask you to consider that your short-wave service is a cost effective way to promote your foreign policy agenda. I urge you to reconsider your cut backs to the service.⁸⁵

Trade

5.138 The Australian Government has been and is keen to promote trade and investment with the region. Radio Australia can help by giving Asian business and political managers an understanding of Australia, our way of life, our economic and technological achievements, our natural and human resources and other information about Australia which contributes to decision-making. The role of RA in providing information about Australia and the benefits of this (not just for trade relations) were raised in 426 submissions to the Committee. The development of business and political relationships are facilitated by understanding. Doing

83 *Committee Hansard*, p. 370.

84 *Committee Hansard*, p. 369.

85 Submission no. 854.

business with Asia is about building relationships and trust. Once a relationship is established, business or political agreements follow naturally. The hard part is building the relationship. The concept of building trust and relationships as the key to doing business in Asia was highlighted in the Committee's inquiry into the Development Import Finance Facility (DIFF) in 1996 and in the earlier inquiry into Australia's relations with China.

5.139 Radio Australia helps to keep business people up-to-date with what is happening in Australia and in the region. This helps in developing business relationships. Ms Celia Clarke, Deputy President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs explained these intangible benefits to the Committee:

I would like to speak in support of Radio Australia from a business perspective. I will give you two examples. From 1986 to 1990 I was a senior economist with the Westpac Banking Corporation and travelled to some 22 countries in the Asia Pacific region. From my perspective during those tours, Radio Australia often featured as a starting point during business discussions. I cannot say that I would have brought the bank X dollars of money but it was certainly very helpful, from my perspective, to hear people in many of the countries say they listen to Radio Australia and what did I think of such and such, and I was able to tell them. That was from the business perspective.⁸⁶

5.140 Business people overseas submitted that they listened regularly to RA to obtain the latest business news and market reports. This facilitated their business dealings with Australia, especially in primary industries.

5.141 The extent to which Radio Australia assists Australia's trade effort can not be quantified. RA's assistance with the development of trade and business was, however, referred to in 256 submissions to the Committee. The anecdotal evidence is strong and there is direct evidence from companies and business people who attested that RA has helped them with their business interests in the region..

5.142 Dr Errol Hodge told the Committee that the impression conveyed by Radio Australia of Australia's potential was realistic and likely, therefore, to be most effective:

I said in my opening remarks that I believed international broadcasting was vital to trade and investment as well as education and tourism. I believe there is a tangible benefit to business. In fact, Radio Australia has provided me with details of letters it has received from Australian business executives on benefits that they have received in the way of contracts and so on. Radio Australia and Australia Television give a favourable impression of Australia - it is not a rose-coloured view like the Voice of America - as a country of scientific enterprise, business acumen ...⁸⁷

5.143 Mr William Armstrong, Chief Executive Officer, Overseas Service Bureau, told the Committee that while he saw the Australian Government trying to increase trade with the region, his organisation's representatives abroad had noted that Australia's motives were

86 *Committee Hansard*, p. 358.

87 *Committee Hansard*, p. 213.

regarded with suspicion by many countries in the region: they see Australia as interested only in their markets, and the money to be made in them, and not in the countries themselves. The closure of Radio Australia, he saw, would enforce this perception and damage Australia's long-term interests greatly in the region.⁸⁸

5.144 That the closing of Radio Australia would confirm Australia's lack of interest in or commitment to the region was a view expressed repeatedly by witnesses to the Committee and also in many submissions from RA's listeners.

5.145 The Committee was told that for Radio Australia's loyal followers in China, the notion that RA would be closed just as Australia's trade and diplomatic officials have been trying very hard to build up the trade relationship with China was both illogical and foolish. Mr Wang, of RA's Chinese Standard language service, returned from a recent trip to China with their message for Australia: 'Isn't there something wrong with your mentality and with your head because you want to demolish Radio Australia?'⁸⁹

Tourism

5.146 Tourism is one area which, evidence suggests, could be affected if Radio Australia were to close. Over a hundred submissions to this inquiry stated that Radio Australia had inspired their interest in travelling to Australia, or believed that Radio Australia was influential in promoting tourism to Australia. Chin Communications provides a good case for the latter view:

Tourism is one of Australia's growth sectors which must be of great importance to all Australians' futures and no doubt to the government concerned with rising unemployment. With reducing tariffs and threats to our once strong manufacturing industry, Australia needs to develop new sectors to attract investment and overseas dollars. Australia, as an exotic location with wide open spaces, great natural beauty, unusual floral and fauna, beaches and golf courses, not to mention casinos, to name but a few attractions that appeal to Asians, is well-placed to attract a good share of the rising tourism market from Asia. The Age Newspaper of today reports a rise by 26% in numbers of holiday makers from China, a number that is set to increase as China allows a growing middle class and relaxes travel restrictions. Further, David Lague, writing for The Age predicts that Australia, by 2001, will earn \$1 billion from an estimated 350,000 mainland Chinese visitors, on top of the \$3 billion that Japanese tourists spend at present. Radio Australia (and Australia Television must take some credit for conveying scenic images of Australia and assisting some of these million plus arrivals to choose Australia above all other countries; and that is only considering two countries in our region.⁹⁰

5.147 RA does not have to run holiday programs about Australia's scenic spots to encourage tourists to visit. By providing diverse and interesting information about Australia, RA entices

88 *Committee Hansard*, p. 369.

89 *Committee Hansard*, p. 389.

90 Submission no. 336, p. 3.

listeners to come and see for themselves the country with which they have become quite familiar in many ways through RA programs. Again, the subtle influence exerted by a trusted and respected broadcaster cannot be measured but that does not diminish the beneficial effects it has on tourism and other areas.

5.148 RA is also able to promote tourism in areas of the region where the Australian Tourist Commission does not promote Australia or promotes Australia in a limited way.

Education

5.149 Another area which relies on support from Radio Australia is the provision of education services. The Committee heard from a number of organisations whose representatives stated that their futures were dependent on Australia maintaining its profile in the region. ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses to Overseas Students Associated Limited), for example, relies on Radio Australia and Australia Television to promote Australia as a safe destination for quality language training for students throughout the region:

It is a very good medium for advertising, particularly in the face of other detrimental things that have occurred with our industry. For example, the visa increase has had a very severe impact on our student numbers just from 1 October when the visa fee was increased. In our principal markets like Taiwan and Thailand, visas have gone down by as much as 23 per cent. So we have got to have channels like Radio Australia and Australia TV to ensure that the profile of Australia is still there in the face of our key markets and also to counter the effects of our competitor countries. For example, CNN heavily promotes the US and its interests and also the BBC promotes the UK.

Australia really should have quite a good market share in Asia, being very close in geographical terms. Of course, our market share is nothing compared to the UK and the US. So we have still got to have that presence somehow either in the form of advertising, promotion, awareness raising and so on. That is basically the thrust of our submission. We do not support at all the closure of either of those channels.⁹¹

5.150 The suggested closure of Radio Australia also caused alarm to the parents of Chinese and Malaysian students studying or planning to study in the Australian tertiary sector. Ms Luana Man-Ling Kou, presenter of programs about Australia's education and culture on RA's Chinese standard language service, relates how:

One Malaysian parent said she was planning to send her daughter to Australia to study next year, but now she has heard that Radio Australia is going to be closed down. She is worried about not being able to obtain any news or information about Australia when her daughter comes to Australia. Now she has to think about that one. Another parent from China is very upset. He said the same thing. Through Radio Australia he heard about the universities and

91 *Committee Hansard*, p. 291.

the education system in Australia and that is why he is planning to send his son to Australia to study. If the station is closed he is worried that he will not be able to receive information about Australia when his son is in Australia. There is another listener from Hong Kong who has expressed the same view.⁹²

5.151 Ms Koh goes on to broadly summarise the importance of Radio Australia's presence for its audiences - and for Australia and the Asian region in the immediate future - as gauged by the intensity of their response to its possible closure:

Listeners have been calling us and sending us letters expressing their concerns. Also, they are angry about the recommendation. They say that the Australian government has been expressing interest in participating in and being involved in the Asian region. If Radio Australia is withdrawn from broadcasting, that is a very clear signal that the Australian government is not really interested in sharing their information with other countries. I returned from Hong Kong just last month. I talked to a lot of Hong Kong residents and they expressed to me that short-wave broadcast is very important for economic reasons, in China as well in Hong Kong, because Hong Kong will be returned to China after 1 July. A lot of the media in Hong Kong are self-censoring their programs and their own output because China has already warned them that they have to be careful about what they broadcast. These people are worried that in the future they may not be able to get news from local radio or television stations.

I also talked to the Chairman of the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, Mr Alfred Chown. He says he and his members are very disappointed about the recommendation. He said the \$20 million funding that Radio Australia is getting is very little compared to what it generates in trade, education and tourism.⁹³

5.152 As with other areas, there is no way of calculating the number of students which have come to Australia to study in schools and tertiary institutions because of the influence of RA. The influence is subtle. It gives people an impression of Australia that it is a country where their children will not only get a good education but will be safe. Other programs about Australia's education system provide useful information for parents considering options for their children's education.

Conclusion

5.153 As a respected broadcaster with an audience of tens of millions of people in the region, Radio Australia projects an image of Australia to Asian and Pacific countries. It promotes the Australian way of life, values and achievements. Apart from Australia Television, it is the only Australian voice in the region. There is no other viable and cost-effective means of projecting and promoting Australia to tens of millions of people in the Asia Pacific region and beyond. Without RA and ATV, there would not be an Australian voice and image to let the region know something about Australia.

92 *Committee Hansard*, p. 392.

93 *Committee Hansard*, p. 392.

5.154 Although RA has access to tens of millions of people, money cannot be found to fund its foreign language services to Asia despite the fact that two billion dollars are spent on diplomacy, foreign aid and trade promotion.

5.155 As Radio Australia's audience includes many of the political and business decision-makers of the region, Australia must benefit from the knowledge and understanding about Australia which is disseminated by RA. It must influence their impressions of Australia because RA is reflecting the views and feelings of Australia. It provides a link to Australia which extends into their lives and work. And because Radio Australia is so respected in its own right and as an international broadcaster focussing on regional matters, that respect creates a climate of goodwill towards Australia.

5.156 Whether it is in international diplomacy, business, education, tourism, the arts, sport or any other human endeavour, the goodwill engendered by RA will give Australia a base from which to start. You cannot measure goodwill as you cannot measure respect in dollars and cents. What Australia puts into the region, other than in a mercenary way, Australia will get out of it. Radio Australia provides a respected service to the region and Australia benefits from it.

5.157 If Radio Australia were forced to stop broadcasting to Asia, the respect, trust and goodwill which it had been built up over 58 years will disappear overnight. In Asia, loss of face has a very negative effect. The respect for Australia engendered by respect for RA would also evaporate. And it would take a long time to replace.

CHAPTER 6

RADIO AUSTRALIA: TRANSMISSION, FUNDING AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS MATTERS

Short-Wave Transmission

Funding arrangements

6.1 Without an effective means of transmission no broadcaster, international or domestic, can do its job properly. Radio Australia has faced transmission difficulties throughout its history, its main obstacle being lack of control of its transmission budget, which has been in the hands of National Transmission Agency, or its predecessors, for over 50 years.¹ It is thus an anomaly amongst its international broadcasting competitors who all have control of their transmission budgets.²

6.2 Without control of its budget, Radio Australia cannot elect to upgrade transmission facilities or direct funding to other technologies from short-wave. Nor can it lease or exchange time on off-shore transmitters in Asia, a practice carried out by its competitors to facilitate provision of stronger signals to target audiences.³ Further, National Transmission Agency directives prescribe that the Agency's activities are restricted to operating short-wave transmitters based in Australia, again this in contrast to its competitors who have invested heavily in short wave and, less markedly, in medium wave transmitters through out the world.⁴

6.3 Former Director of Radio Australia Mr Peter Barnett explained some of the difficulties he experienced in his dealings with the NTA. In Mr Barnett's view, problems with the NTA have been exacerbated by the different service orientations the two organisations have. NTA, Mr Barnett observed, understands international broadcasting only in terms of technology. Without an appreciation of Radio Australia's programming objectives it has therefore resisted Radio Australia's urgings to enhance the effectiveness of its transmission into Asia:

The problem with Radio Australia, I used to say, was that we whisper to the world because we just have not had the transmitters that were effective. In my day, we tried very hard, as I mentioned, to have the current system extended into Asia. If we had had transmitters in Thailand, we could have easily reached right into the heart of Beijing, which is a difficult area to reach. But we never got sufficient support for that. They have closed down Carnarvon since I left and that was, again, a great input into the area. It was very frustrating being at

1 *Committee Hansard*, p. 45.

2 See Michael Bird, submission no. 349, p. 1.

3 ABC submission no. 377, Vol. 2. p. 55.

4 See Michael Bird, submission no. 350, p. 1.

RA and feeling that you were not getting the support that you deserved. I suppose every department head may feel that but we did feel that when we made proposals to upgrade the power of the transmitters, we never really were able to go ahead to the degree that we would like.⁵

6.4 Mr Derek White, present General Manager of Radio Australia, told the Committee that he too had had difficulty encouraging the NTA to consider the leasing or of exchanging of time on Radio Australia's short-wave transmitters with overseas broadcasters. At least ten broadcasters, he reported, had approached Radio Australia in the last few years, but neither the 'department nor the NTA' showed any interest in the commercial possibilities.⁶

6.5 That Radio Australia's transmission budget should be controlled by the ABC is a fact long acknowledged: recommendations have been made to this effect by virtually every inquiry and review conducted into Australia's international broadcasting services over decades.⁷ The actual amount of funding necessary to provide for Radio Australia's independence was the subject of discussion at the hearings.

6.6 In evidence to the Committee, Mr White was careful to point out that the estimate made by Mr Mansfield in his report was substantially under that required to maintain full services as they currently stand. Mr Mansfield cited a figure of \$7 million which, Mr White said, covered maintenance and operations of existing transmitters in Darwin, Shepparton and Brandon only.⁸ The ABC annual report for 1995-96 cited a figure of \$9.8 million as NTA costs for Radio Australia.⁹ Finally, in answer to a question on notice placed by the Committee, the Department of Communications and the Arts nominated the figure of \$11.9 million, of which \$6.9 million constituted salaries and \$5 million was associated administrative costs.¹⁰

6.7 It had been assumed by many contributors to this inquiry, and by Radio Australia itself, that the ABC would soon be allocated the necessary funds after the sale of the NTA this year and so Radio Australia's problems, at last, would be solved. As Mr Derek White, wrote in his personal submission to the inquiry:

The Federal Government is planning the privatisation of Radio Australia's transmission provider, the NTA, while funds sufficient to purchase transmission requirements are due to be transferred to the ABC/ RA at July 1 this year. Radio Australia looks forward to securing the ability to use its transmission funds in the most and listener effective way at home and abroad.¹¹

5 *Committee Hansard*, p. 9.

6 *Committee Hansard*, p. 35.

7 See Chapter 3.

8 *Committee Hansard*, p. 45.

9 *Committee Hansard*, p. 45.

10 Question on notice to the Department of Communications and the Arts, 3 April 1997, p. 1.

11 Submission no. 400, p. 7.

6.8 In evidence to the inquiry, however, Mr Vic Jones, General Manager of the NTA, rejected that any such arrangements had been made. Instead he told the Committee:

The Office of Asset Sales is currently conducting a scoping study to advise the government on the practicality, the advisability, of privatising the NTA - selling the facilities. That process is only part-way through. When it is completed, the government will no doubt consider the report and make up its mind about what the future holds. But from my agency's point of view, nothing is going to change in the immediate future. We are continuing with business as usual and will do that until the government makes a decision and requests us to do something else.¹²

6.9 Dr Alan Stretton, First Assistant Secretary of Film, National Broadcasting and Intellectual Property Division, confirmed and extended Mr Jones explanation:

... the government decided in last year's budget that the Office of Asset Sales would undertake a scoping...study of the NTA to see whether it should be sold and, if so, under what conditions. I understand that an interim report of that will be considered in this year's budget context. In a sense, what happens to the RA transmission funding will be decided in that context. It is too early to say that as of 1 July that funding for transmission facilities would be handed over to the ABC. This is an issue before government in this budget context.¹³

6.10 The Committee therefore received no further evidence from the Department on this matter.

Transmission facilities

6.11 Radio Australia currently transmits from 14 short-wave transmitters—three at Brandon, six operational at Shepparton while Darwin has five operational transmitters with four currently being scheduled.¹⁴ Until July 1996, Radio Australia also operated from its station at Carnarvon which has since been dismantled, its transmitters recycled or and sold. To transfer its eight languages from the studio to its short-wave and satellite (see below) transmission points, it employs a combination of the ABC's Internal Delta satellite system and Telstra landlines.¹⁵

6.12 Significant upgrading of Australia's short-wave transmitters amounting to \$23.2 million has taken place between 1991 and 1997.

6.13 The Darwin (Cox Peninsula) station is the largest broadcasting station in Australia, radio or television. It was originally built to serve South East Asia following Sukarno's

12 *Committee Hansard*, p. 188.

13 *Committee Hansard*, p. 188-89.

14 *Committee Hansard*, p. 397.

15 ABC submission no. 377, p. 51.

Confrontation campaign, was damaged by Cyclone Tracy in 1974 and rebuilt in 1981-82 at a cost of \$12 million.¹⁶

6.14 As part of an extensive upgrade in 1994-95, two new state-of-the-art transmitters manufactured by the French company Thomcast were installed following the Tiananmen Square incident. These transmitters are extremely power efficient, can be modified for digital operation and are capable of broadcasting in a single band mode which may be required for international broadcasts after 2007. Upgrading of the transmitters computer systems also took place at a cost of \$12 million. Antenna systems had major maintenance in 1995 at a cost, understood by Radio Australia, to be \$0.3 million, with a further \$1.5 million for relocation of the 300kW transmitter from Carnarvon.

6.15 The Cox Peninsula station is the most sophisticated of Radio Australia's short-wave transmission facilities and has a power output which is only exceeded by the low frequency H.E. Holt North West Cape naval communications station.¹⁷ It has seven multiband, slewable, curtain antenna arranged to deliver signals from Central Indonesia too India in one arc and north to Asia in another. Each antenna can operate on a variety of frequencies and the signal beams can be steered to better focus coverage. The station is operated by 14 highly skilled technical specialists.

6.16 The Shepparton Station is the original Radio Australia station and was established in 1943. Its 100kW transmitters were installed in the 1970s , with one additional standby unit being recycled from Carnarvon. The four newest were commissioned in 1983-84. The original antennas are being replaced with modern designs similar to those at Darwin and placed at optimum positions to serve the Pacific and PNG. They are also ideal for serving Eastern Indonesia and Timor following the closure of Carnarvon. Radio Australia estimates the total capital expenditure spent on the station between 1991 and 1996 at \$9.6 million. Some 10 specialist staff operate and maintain the transmitters.

6.17 Brandon station is situated near Ayr in Queensland. It is low power(10kW) and is unstaffed. It has limited range and uses equipment recycled from the old Lyndhurst site (ceased operation in 1987) to serve PNG and the Coral Sea.

6.18 The Carnarvon site was closed after an agreement was made between the former government and the ABC to assist in the funding of Australian Television. The sale of Carnarvon allowed \$2 million to be transferred to Australia Television and was constituted by the NTA at hearings as a positive outcome; it meant that a desirable reduction in Radio's Australia's operation costs had been achieved.¹⁸

6.19 Carnarvon had provided the most effective reach into the Asian region, a fact recognised by other international broadcasters who, prior to closure, had approached Radio

16 The information in this section is drawn from 'Technical Background to Radio Australia's Transmissions', supplementary information material provided by Radio Australia, pp. 4-5 and from evidence provided by Mr Nigel Holmes, RA's transmission manager, at the hearings on 16 April 1997, *Committee Hansard*, pp 381-97.

17 The role of short wave in Australia's defence system is discussed below.

18 See *Committee Hansard*, p. 187.

Australia with a view to leasing broadcasting time. Mr Nigel Holmes, transmission manager for Radio Australia recorded:

It has been Radio Australia's aim in recent years - probably up to the closure of Carnarvon - to enter into transmitter sharing negotiations. There are other broadcasters, for example, Radio Netherlands [who] were very anxious to broadcast into Indonesia from the Carnarvon site, and they were prepared to offer us access to some of their transmission resources in exchange.¹⁹

6.20 The closure of Carnarvon in July 1996 has meant that Radio Australia has lost a desirable asset from both an Australian and international broadcasting point of view. Radio Australia transmission hours have been reduced overall and, although upgrading of other facilities have allowed maintenance of the service in target areas, the potential to reach them from two directions, in combination with the Shepparton station signals, has been lost.²⁰ Equally important, Australia has lost valuable infrastructure that would cost tens of millions of dollars and several years work to replace,²¹ not to mention marketable assets (contractible transmission time for sale or exchange) in an increasing lucrative and competitive short-wave broadcasting market.

Effectiveness of short wave

6.21 The fact that short-wave is considered a powerful and relevant broadcasting medium is indicated by the heavy investment other international broadcasters have made in short-wave transmission technologies in recent years. Mr Derek White told the Committee that, following the recommendations of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee review, the BBC World Service received a total figure of £152.4 million (A\$316 million), a budgeted increase of 3.1 per cent for 1997-98.²² Mr Michael Bird elaborated on international trends in transmitter installation:

The BBC and the Voice of America, VOA, are both completing new, high powered short-wave relay facilities in Thailand to increase their reach into China. The BBC has also announced it will replace its old relay station in Oman with a new higher powered one to serve the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent, both on short wave and medium wave, at a cost of \$60 million. Radio Japan has recently installed a 300 kilowatts short-wave transmitter in Sri Lanka. VOA is also expanding its facilities in Sri Lanka with three 500-kilowatt short-wave transmitters. Indonesia is also reported to have installed nine 250-kilowatt short-wave transmitters recently.

The United States Information Agency, which is responsible for VOA, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, has recently established the Asia Pacific

19 *Committee Hansard*, p. 385.

20 ABC submission no. 377, Vol. 2, p. 52.

21 For comparison, replacement investment for Cox Peninsula would be \$50 million dollars and three years with Shepparton as \$30 million and two. See 'Technical Background to Radio Australia's Transmissions', p. 5.

22 *Committee Hansard*, p. 106.

Network, often referred to as Radio Free Asia, to broadcast to China and the rest of East Asia in eight languages. Currently it uses VOA transmitter facilities in the Philippines. It will soon install three new transmitters and aerials on the Northern Marianas Islands for this service. To counter this, the Chinese government has announced that it will shortly order from United States manufacturers ten 600-kilowatt medium wave transmitters, fourteen 100-kilowatt and ten 500-kilowatt short-wave transmitters.²³

6.22 On 16 March 1996, Senator Alston told Ten Network's *Meet the Press* program that 'short wave is of dramatically less significance in this day and age'.²⁴ The evidence cited above refutes this assertion. Expert witnesses to this inquiry variously described the supposed decline of short wave as a 'myth', a 'red herring' or just plain 'wrong'.²⁵ Radio Australia's surveys and popular response to this inquiry by listeners throughout the Asia-Pacific region all disprove the view that short-wave transmission is no longer an effective or relevant medium for international broadcasting, and particularly for our target audiences.

6.23 A single witness to the Committee's inquiry, a former foreign affairs diplomat Mr Duncan Campbell, held the view that short-wave broadcasting had passed its use by date in Asia and would soon to be replaced by television.²⁶ This was also a view expressed by the Department of Foreign Affairs in its submission to the *Review of the Status and Funding of the ABC's International Broadcasting Services* in 1995.²⁷ At that time, the ABC had argued that television and radio services were complementary and that an appropriate balance would evolve according to audience preferences.²⁸

6.24 However, at hearings to this inquiry, the ABC was much more cautious about its commitment to Radio Australia and less supportive of its role as an international short-wave broadcaster. Mr Brian Johns, ABC Managing Director, told the Committee:

In past decades, Radio Australia was one of the few means of projecting national perspectives to people overseas. Today it is one of many. Cinema and television exports, music and the performing arts, satellite television, Internet sites, publishing and the growth of commercial relationships are some of the paths. New media technologies are blurring the distinction between domestic and international services. In future years, international audiences will have a greater potential access to Australian media, just as local audiences will have increased access to media around the world.

The ABC must therefore be prepared to review the way in which it participates in international broadcasting. Of course, international development will be uneven. Many Radio Australia listeners are in less developed countries with

23 *Committee Hansard*, p. 18.

24 'Radio Australia in touch with the World', *News Release*, 17 March 1997, *ABC Online*.

25 *Committee Hansard*, p. 379; Submission no. 350, p. 1.

26 *Committee Hansard*, p. 342.

27 *Review*, October 1995, p. iv.

28 *Review*, October 1995, p. 17.

limited access to media. For the foreseeable future, many such people will continue driving along narrow roads rather than super highways. In a general sense, however, the changes affecting the environment of international broadcasting are the same as those we face in Australia: new digital media forms, including satellite, cable and on-line services; many more channels of audio and video programming; and a developing level of foreign content.

6.25 Prompted by this scenario, Mr Johns emphasised that the ABC had undergone major restructuring, under the 'One ABC' policy, to determine what its service delivery might be given current funding expectations:

The challenge for the ABC is how best to use available funding in the new media environment. Audiences value the services of Radio Australia: witness the testimonials provided to this committee in the Radio Australia submission. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the fact that the international broadcasting environment is undergoing rapid change.²⁹

6.26 The pace of 'rapid change' was not seen to be as overwhelming as Mr Johns presents it by expert witnesses to this inquiry. Instead, they confirmed that, while short wave was clearly a grandfather to the new internet and satellite technologies, it was still extremely functional and effective and was likely to remain so on into the 21st century. It was emphasised that short-wave technologies would not be soon superseded by other technologies. Just as the introduction of television had not made domestic radio redundant, nor FM radio ended the popularity of AM medium-wave reception, so the relevancy and facility of short-wave broadcasting would ensure it survived to complement newer technologies.³⁰

6.27 The features that recommended short-wave services in the past - vast audience reach, uncensored content and economical reception - were the same features that presently advocate substantial investment in transmission infrastructure by other international broadcasting nations.

6.28 Again, these are the features that, evidence confirms, deliver target audiences in the Asia Pacific region the type of services that they need and desire. Ms Stone, of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid reports:

I would like to draw the committee's attention to the sense of ownership that a lot of our partners feel in the Pacific and South-East Asia about the service operated by Radio Australia. It actually is directed to a region that suffers greatly from geographic isolation through a large proportion of populations living in highland areas or in outer islands. Populations in these areas can rely only on short-wave radio. There is no other form of communication for them, no other option. At the same time, many of these communities which suffer from geographic isolation are also disadvantaged socially, economically and

29 *Committee Hansard*, pp 93-94.

30 *Committee Hansard*, p. 379.

politically. Radio Australia is seen as a lifeline to overcome a lot of that isolation.³¹

6.29 A submission from a volunteer teacher provides a particularly evocative account of villagers' reliance on Radio Australia's short-wave news reporting in Ruteng, Eastern Indonesia. He writes:

I spent much time as I could riding my motor cycle to far-flung mountain villages, isolated by the lack of good roads, etc, and yet I was constantly amazed to find in these small villages people who were very aware of what was happening in the world outside, and particularly Australia, and who gained that knowledge through listening to Radio Australia's broadcasts. Television sets were very expensive to buy, and cost to run in areas without electricity, needing to run on car batteries which had to be continually re-charged; very few people outside of the town of Ruteng had a television set. Newspapers were unobtainable and most of these people are illiterate anyway, and trips to the town of Ruteng were few, but village people were able to afford a radio and batteries and after a day's toil in the rice fields they would gather around a neighbour's radio in their dark wooden houses to listen to the news, and later discuss it endlessly. Radio Australia news was extremely well regarded for giving a side of events which was not available through the government radio station, which is a basically a propaganda vehicle. News about the rest of the world, about Australia and particularly about Indonesia itself were listened to avidly.³²

6.30 That this reliance on Radio Australia's short-wave service is shared by listeners at all levels of society in countries throughout the region, whether more sophisticated channels of communication are available or not, has been amply substantiated by evidence cited in other areas of this report. Short-wave stands as the only broadcasting medium that can deliver a strong, easily received signal to a mass audience at a great distance. Further the availability of receivers, their low cost and facility for use on the move, proven, for example, during the Gulf War, makes short-wave a superior medium for international broadcasting.³³

6.31 In the past, Radio Australia's only drawback, compared with its international competitors, has been the problem of projecting a sufficiently powerful signal into the region. The inability to enter lease and share arrangements with its competitors has been a major limitation in this respect. Radio Australia assesses its technical effectiveness by field surveys. Currently, its services reach audiences via short wave in Papua New Guinea, the Pacific, Indonesia, South-East Asia, and in North Asia on an axis from Darwin to Beijing. In other

31 *Committee Hansard*, p. 259.

32 Submission no. 414, p. 1.

33 See 'Techs, Skies and Audio tape: Is Short wave Being Replaced?' in *Passport to World Band Radio*, [p.69], where pocket-sized short-wave receivers were preferred by US troops in the Gulf compared to issued 'man portable receivers' for reception of satellite transmissions carrying US Armed Forces Radio. The troops listened to 'Baghdad Betty', BBC World Services on short wave, instead.

areas, such as western and northern China, Radio Australia's transmissions are less effective.³⁴

6.32 Despite these limitations, Radio Australia has made considerable developments in its short-wave delivery. The paper 'Technical Background to Radio Australia's Transmissions' summarises these advances. In particular, it reports that Australia has a history as a world centre of excellence in ionospheric propagation knowledge. The application of research into upper atmospheric physics by the Inonospheric Prediction Service has provided Radio Australia with the computer programs used to determine which frequencies are best at a given time.³⁵

6.33 As Mr Nigel Holmes explained to the Committee, the determination of appropriate frequency bandings at appropriate times is essential to the delivery of an optimal signal to target areas:

Short wave does give variable performance. Looking at it statistically, if I aim to plan a broadcast during a nominated period in the target area - for example, look at a morning period between 0500 and 0700 local time, a reasonable time to put a morning broadcast into a particular target area - I try to engineer the frequency and the bearing of the transmissions to give a reliability of 90 per cent or better.

There will be times when you are listening to a broadcast and it is excellent one day and it is poor the next. That is part and parcel of short-wave broadcasting. The physics of short-wave broadcasting rest entirely on the behaviour of the sun. While some aspects of solar behaviour are well known, predictable and well understood, other aspects are less able to be predicted, and we do have problems from time to time. But, on the whole, we are able to put reliable broadcasts into our target areas about 90 per cent of the time.³⁶

6.34 The upgraded Cox Peninsula station at Darwin has a state-of-the-art computer system which ensures optimal delivery of signal and is also fitted with the latest in effective and flexible aerials that can steer a signal most accurately to target audiences in Asia.³⁷ These are just the type of facilities coveted by our competitors - the BBC, Radio Nederlands, Deutsche Welle and the Voice of America - all of whom are anxious to gain a piece of Radio Australia's place in the sun: its geographical advantages; access to frequencies and hard-won, loyal audiences.³⁸

6.35 That short-wave is not an anachronism in today's broadcasting world is also underlined by the fact that it has a growing audience in North America, which is one of the

34 ABC Submission no. 377, Vol. 2, p. 53.

35 'Technical Background to Radio Australia's Transmissions', p. 3.

36 *Committee Hansard*, p. 384.

37 'Technical Background to Radio Australia's Transmissions', p. 3.

38 All of these organisations have written to Radio Australia asking about the availability of spare short wave capacity. See 'Radio Australia in touch with the World', *News Release*, 17 March 1997, *ABC Online*.

most media developed environments in the world. Moreover, following a number of satellite failures in the late 1970s and 1980s, short-wave technologies are the modes of delivery now being more extensively used by US and NATO military services.³⁹ With new digital signals, short-wave military communications enable secure and robust communication by voice, data or fax.

6.36 In Australia, the largest government military purchase after the Collins submarine project is the Jindalee Over the Horizon Radar Network (JORN), at a cost of \$1 billion. JORN is 100 per cent reliant on the transmission, propagation and reception of short-wave signals. The practical success of the Jindalee system at Alice Springs is well known. The effectiveness and relevance of short-wave technology in this context has not been questioned. In the face of the evidence why should it be?

Other Technologies

6.37 Mr Mansfield questioned in his report whether short-wave technology remains the most cost-effective means of delivery. The Committee asked the Department of Communications and the Arts whether there was any other viable delivery option for broadcasting RA's programs and maintaining audience reach.

6.38 The Department of Communications and the Arts did not fully answer the question, even though it was taken on notice. Instead, the Department simply said, 'In addition to short-wave Radio Australia services and programs can be delivered in a range of ways'. This response by the Department did not answer the key element of the Committee's question, which was whether any of the modes, or even all modes together (without short-wave) would guarantee maintenance of RA's current audience reach. Given the Department's sidestepping of this question, the Committee presumes that the answer is 'no'. The Department's four options are listed below.

Delivery Mode

Audience

Satellite

- re-broadcasting of all or part of a service on domestic AM/FM bands or cable networks where governments permit & local broadcasters choose to do so
- access by individuals with suitable satellite reception facilities

Transmission lease/hire

- broadcast of whole or part of RA services to the audience of other short-wave broadcasters through lease/hire of their transmission facilities

³⁹ These and the following details are from 'Technical Background to Radio Australia's Transmissions', p. 3.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Program/sale/swap/supply | - provision of RA programs to local broadcasters in the region for re-broadcasting on domestic AM/FM stations or cable networks |
| Internet | - news items currently available in text form in English, French, Tok Pisin and Chinese could be provided via audio. ⁴⁰ |

6.39 All of these options are currently used by RA to the degree allowable by present funding arrangements. The lack of flexibility in these arrangements has been described. Nevertheless, evidence to the Committee has convinced it that RA has been both innovative and strategic in its development of alternative modes of delivery. These currently complement its short-wave services which are, at present, its majority audience.

6.40 RA submitted that letters which were received in response to Mr Mansfield's recommendations to close RA were used as the basis to conduct a sample survey of the mode of delivery by which the writer had received RA programming.⁴¹ The submission records that some 82 per cent of overseas writers identified their means of receiving Radio Australia. Of the total, 72 per cent said they listened to RA on short-wave. The remainder listened to re-broadcasts on local AM/FM stations, cable/pay radio services and 'real audio' on the Internet, provided by the World Radio Network. Fewer than one per cent listened directly from the Palapa C2 satellite.⁴² Description of RA's current modes of delivery, and assessment of their further potential for the broadcaster, follow.

Satellite

6.41 RA currently broadcasts via the Palapa C2 satellite which is owned by an Indonesian Government company.⁴³ The satellite's footprint extends to India, across South East Asia and southern China, and across the South Pacific to the International Dateline. RA uses two of the audio sub-carriers attached to the Australia Television signal on the satellite. One carries RA's 24 hour English language service, the other a mix of RA's foreign language programs and weekend sports broadcasts. At present, RA is not charged directly for its use as the lease for the two carriers is included in Australia Television's contract. The continuation of this arrangement is contingent on Australia Television's future.

6.42 RA has also been negotiating with AusAID to fund installation of downlinks by local radio stations in PNG, Tonga, Fiji and Western Samoa so they can receive a high quality signal via the Palapa C2 satellite. This installation of AusAID funded downlinks is currently on hold pending the decision about Radio Australia's future.

40 Answer to question on notice taken by the Department of Communications and the Arts, 3 April 1997, [p. 3].

41 A total of 694 letters were received within a month of the release of the Mansfield report, that is be the end of February 1997. See ABC submission no. 377, p. 5.

42 ABC submission no. 377, p. 5.

43 The following information is from the ABC submission no. 377, Vol. 2, p. 53.

6.43 In evidence to the Committee, Mr Derek White reported that the audience reach of RA would be dramatically reduced if it were to rely on a satellite delivery of its services.⁴⁴ He pointed out that a number of countries in the region - including China, Malaysia, Singapore and, recently reported, Vietnam - have banned private ownership of satellite receivers.⁴⁵ Rebroadcasting from satellite transmission by local AM/FM stations would be subject to possible censorship by local government authorities.

6.44 Further, the cost of installing a satellite receiver is prohibitive for most listeners of RA and many do not have available mains electricity required to run the satellite receivers. Mr Derek White told the Committee:

The Palapa satellite goes from China, west to India, east to Fiji and Tonga and I think it reaches Western Samoa. Very few people would access the signal directly from the satellite for a number of reasons. As you are aware, in a number of countries in this region satellite dishes are banned. They do not exist. In many countries, the cost of a satellite dish, even if it were not banned, is simply beyond the reach of most people and that applies equally in the Pacific as it does in most of Asia. You can contrast a satellite dish with an almost standard available short-wave receiver at about \$10 or \$20.

The delivery of the signal is controlled by the gateway. For example, taking the Palapa signal - and this applies to Australian television in the same way - if for some reason, either a government were upset or the system broke down or something, you have lost the capacity to deliver the signal and you are not in control of the actual distribution of the satellite. There is no developed system of direct listening to a satellite radio signal through a purpose designed radio available anywhere in the world at this stage. The only way you can hear a signal from the satellite is through the television set.

This was actually tried quite a lot in Europe, and European broadcasters are convinced that people just do not want to listen to a radio signal while having their television set turned on; it just does not make sense - or you can get an extra little black box. I cannot describe the actual technology, but there is an extra piece of equipment you can buy and you can split the signal off from your satellite receiver to your hi-fi set. Again, when you consider the nature of much of the audience for Radio Australia, as a practical alternative in this region, it is simply not on.⁴⁶

6.45 These points were all supported by various witnesses to the inquiry.⁴⁷ Dr Errol Hodge pointed out that if Radio Australia broadcast to Indonesia via satellite only, there would be 'a

44 *Committee Hansard*, p. 115.

45 *Committee Hansard*, p. 110.

46 *Committee Hansard*, p. 115.

47 For example, *Committee Hansard*, pp 252, 386 and following citations.

great deal of self-censorship'.⁴⁸ Mr Graeme Dobell stated that the developments, in terms of satellite technology, were as much about politics as technology.⁴⁹

6.46 Mr Michael Bird, having recently assisted the London-based World Radio Network establish its Asia-Pacific satellite service, gave the following expert opinion:

Within the Asia Pacific region, both regional and international broadcasters are expanding their satellite services at an unprecedented rate. PanamSat IV, AsiaSat II and Palapa C series satellites have all recently come on stream, providing Asia with an explosion in satellite capacity. The march of Murdoch into Asia at this stage appears to be unstoppable with his acquisition of the Hong Kong based Star TV using AsiaSat. However, at this stage there are many drawbacks to the use of satellites. The Chinese response to the BBC's use of Star TV transponders demonstrated the vulnerability of this delivery system. At the time, it was rumoured that when Murdoch obtained his controlling interest in Star TV, the Chinese asked for the BBC World TV Service to be removed from AsiaSat.

RA currently uses ATV's sub-carrier to piggy-back its signal via the Palapa C satellite. However, while this is a useful adjunct, little or no response has been forthcoming to this service. Short wave is still very much the primary method of delivery within the Asia Pacific region, ensuring independence, penetration and affordable reception technology.⁵⁰

6.47 Mr Nigel Holmes, Transmission Manager of Radio Australia gave further details on the costs of satellite dish reception. Whereas an average short-wave receiver costs \$US 45:

A two-metre satellite dish, a cheap mesh dish, which might last three to five years in the Pacific region, may cost around \$US500 to \$US800. But you need a bit more than just a perforated parabolic wok. You need a television receiver, a source of mains power, a satellite receiver and a device called a low noise converter. If you add all that together, you are looking at about \$US1,000 to \$US1,500 - presupposing, of course, that you have ready access to mains power. It is not really a proposition for most of our end users of Radio Australia programs; it is something that you would expect a broadcast station in a target area to invest in.⁵¹

6.48 Evidence conveyed to the Committee by Mr Oscar Wang, Senior Broadcaster, Chinese Language service, emphatically confirmed that satellite was not the people's choice or option in China. Mainland Chinese listeners, responding to the Government view that short-wave was in decline, requested Mr Wang to:

48 *Committee Hansard*, p. 212.

49 *Committee Hansard*, p. 252.

50 *Committee Hansard*, p. 19.

51 *Committee Hansard*, p. 386.

Send your senators and officials to China to find that out for themselves. Do we have any satellite dishes in our villages? Do we have other ways of communicating with your country? If not through Radio Australia, how do we know, Mr Howard, that you are the Prime Minister of Australia? Only through Radio Australia do we get these kinds of messages.⁵²

Rebroadcasts

6.49 For Radio Australia the main facility of satellite transmission is for rebroadcasting. As Mr Holmes told the Committee:

At the moment, the greatest percentage to Radio Australia from our palapa broadcasts comes from the ability to use those broadcasts as de facto program interchanges. In other words, we see the worth of Radio Australia's broadcasts on palapa not so much as being a means to get the signal to the final listeners but as a means of getting a high quality reliable signal to rebroadcasters within our target regions.

This is happening at the moment with Radio Australia's tiny Thai service. We carry that program on palapa. We do not expect any listeners in Thailand to look directly at the palapa satellite and listen to the programs for themselves - they are welcome to do so, if they have the wherewithal. But the Thai programs are taken off the satellite by rebroadcasters - by university stations ... They are carried up and down the country on AM and FM stations.⁵³

6.50 Such rebroadcasting arrangements have already been effectively pursued by Radio Australia where:

- it has been ascertained that short-wave services are in decline (as in the case of Thailand) or;
- where countries have been desirous of receiving downlinks on programming as a means of strengthening signal reception or expanding programming content of local stations.

6.51 The RA submitted that in the Asian region, few countries permit rebroadcasting of unedited foreign news or other sensitive material. In China, for example, RA's music programs, English language lessons and special programs about Australian life are increasingly accepted. Not so, however, is Radio Australia's news in Cantonese and Mandarin, which is heard only through short wave. The same restrictions on satellite reception therefore apply for rebroadcasting: the material must be acceptable to the government and to the local AM or FM broadcaster before it is delivered to its audiences.

6.52 In the Pacific, by contrast, RA extensively rebroadcasts material. Most Pacific nations readily rebroadcast news and other information programs offered by the major international broadcasters in the region. RA, BBC, Radio New Zealand and the Voice of America. In an

52 *Committee Hansard*, p. 390.

53 *Committee Hansard*, p. 386.

underdeveloped information environment, Pacific radio and television operators readily accept material from external sources. This has encouraged a degree of domination by foreign information which some commentators see as culturally invasive.⁵⁴ Mr Derek White alluded to this at the hearings in relation to the potential for Australia to establish 24 hour satellite transmission to the Pacific funded by AusAID.⁵⁵

6.53 Because of this factor, rebroadcasting of programs is rather precariously balanced between falling short of the information needs of the region and overstepping that need when programs rebroadcast are not sensitively or perceptively produced nor judiciously chosen for audiences in the region.

6.54 At the same time, the rebroadcasting environment is highly competitive, and because of this, it is increasingly likely that countries will soon be charging broadcasters who want to relay programs through local broadcasting services, rather than the other way round. The measure of acceptance of material is dependent on how positively it is perceived by the receiving countries. The emphasis on 'cultural appropriateness' thus becomes increasingly focussed.⁵⁶

6.55 Evidence to the Committee suggests, that RA's short-wave services to date have been welcomed precisely because they provide audiences with an alternative to local and other international programming in a format which is both 'culturally appropriate' and meets the needs of its audiences.

6.56 To achieve this, RA selects and adapts domestic programming for short-wave broadcast through its foreign language service division.⁵⁷ The programs are re-worked for specific audiences throughout the region. While some sports and media programs are distributed without adaptation for rebroadcasting, these are mainly for expatriate audiences. No other domestic programming is provided direct for rebroadcasting to target audiences. Mr Peter Barnett, former director of RA, thus rejects the option of RA continuing as a rebroadcast service only:

It would be a pretty down-market compromise, and I will tell you why. As I say, I have not been there for a long time but I still take pride when I hear RA news because I do believe that RA news is the most thoughtful news anywhere - certainly for this region. For example, within Australia we talk about the ALP and ACTU, and they would not mean anything, so we have to spell out what they are, which Radio Australia does very, very well. It is a whole different mind set when you are writing for fellow Aussies compared with when you are writing for someone who has English as their second or third language or maybe in their own indigenous language. It still has to be explained and pointed out. You cannot give the same accurate picture of

54 See Robie, David, ed. *Nius Bilong Pasifik: Mass Media in the Pacific*, Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press (in assoc. with the South Pacific Centre for Communication and Information Development) 1994.p. 22-3.

55 *Committee Hansard*, p. 115.

56 See ABC submission no. 377, pp 70-82.

57 The following details are from the ABC submission no. 377, pp 72-3.

Australia and the world to Australians as you would to people overseas. I think it would be very difficult. By the way, some programs could do that quite well. I am sure for some of the science programs and some of the current affairs programs there would be no problem, but you would have to be selective. You could not do it as an overall general rule.⁵⁸

Audio transcription and the Internet

6.57 The ABC submission records that Radio Australia currently sends audio transcription tapes of information and music programs to a number of stations around the Asia Pacific region for rebroadcast.⁵⁹ The English service sends five tapes each week to 17 stations in the Pacific and three to All India Radio. The North Asia (Chinese Service) each week sends information and music programs to 18 stations in China. The Thai service provides 20 tapes to Thai stations each month. The duration of information on the tapes ranges from 15 to 90 minutes.

6.58 In May 1996, RA began placing program schedules and background information on the ABC's Internet site. In August, Internet news in English was launched, closely followed by French, Tok Pisin and, most recently, Chinese. Plans are in place to start Internet news services in Indonesian, Vietnamese, Khmer and Thai.

6.59 The new audiences established through Radio Australia's Internet services, with 'hits' totalling 160,000 in January 1997, are complementary to Radio Australia's estimated 20 million audience for short-wave transmission. Internet services could not at all be perceived as an alternative to serve Radio Australia's current mass audience, but they do demonstrate the organisation's capacity and desire to investigate and develop new modes of delivery, and to do so in a focussed and economical manner.

6.60 As Radio Australia's submission explains, its Internet service is an example of value adding from existing services. The Internet news is produced by Radio Australia's editorial staff who can move stories directly from the NewsCaf computer system to the net with a minimum of processing. RA thus provides an edge to the ABC's Internet system and innovates in the international scene: the Internet English news also doubles as the ABC's international news service while Radio Australia's Chinese language Internet news is one of the first of its type in the world.

Digital short-wave potential

6.61 Radio Australia, as a short-wave service, is aware of the potential of digital short-wave to enhance its signal. Mr Derek White reports:

There is a development going on at the moment which offers great prospects, that is, digital short wave. The existing transmitters, in most cases, can be converted. Digital broadcasting is likely to take over within the next decade or two and that will deliver a short wave signal with the same advantages but

58 *Committee Hansard*, p. 14.

59 The information in this section is drawn from the ABC submission no. 377, Vol. 2, p. 54.

with other gains as well. It will have a clearer, more reliable signal without the variations that are a problem with short wave. It will reduce the channel space so there will be less crowding of the spectrum and you will get a clearer signal. There will be a great number of advantages to come.⁶⁰

6.62 Many witnesses to this inquiry recognised that digital short-wave is the way forward for the medium. In his submission to the Mansfield review in September 1996, Mr Michael Bird wrote that the 'European Broadcasting Union is now testing two types of digital encoded short wave' and that the expected outcome was that short-wave would experience a 'rebirth within five to seven years'.⁶¹ At hearings in April, he confirmed this time frame but also reported a development in that the Germans and the French had just agreed to combine their systems and that extensive testing would now take place.⁶²

6.63 In a supplementary paper to the Committee, Mr Bird outlined the advances in digital AM, with three systems currently under development by Thomcast (France), Voice of America/Jet Propulsion Laboratory (USA) and Deutsche Telekom (Germany). These firms are working on options will facilitate the establishment of a world wide digital standard, including possible modes which combine analogue and digital transmission, as developed by Thomcast. If all proceeds smoothly, the standard for long-wave, medium-wave and short-wave delivery will be established in three years, allowing application of the technologies by international broadcasters.⁶³

6.64 Mr Bird described the technology of digital and current potential of Radio Australia to be converted to the system:

The technology is very simple. It is basically the same technology that is being used in a computer modem or a fax machine. As for its technical term, it is very close to the television encoding system called MPEG-2 which is being used on television satellite broadcasts ... Radio Australia has got two new Thomson transmitters at Darwin, which could be used straight away. All you need is a box of tricks on the transmitter. It turns the audio into zeros and ones. It is transmitted through the aerial system up to the ionosphere and it is received, according to Thomcast in France, on a portable radio as you know it. Cheap sets will be made which will include long, medium, short analog, short digital and FM stereo for a price a little above today's price.⁶⁴

6.65 In regard to the production of economical digital receivers, Dr Errol Hodge told the Committee that he was aware that China had indicated its willingness to build hundreds of millions of receivers which would receive digital short-wave.⁶⁵ Further, Mr Bird confirmed

60 *Committee Hansard*, p. 39.

61 Attachment, submission no. 349, p. 5.

62 *Committee Hansard*, p. 20.

63 Paper received 16 April 1997.

64 *Committee Hansard*, p. 20.

65 *Committee Hansard*, p. 223.

that 'Sony, Panasonic, and Sangean in Taiwan, are very keen [on digital development] because it will revitalise their markets'.⁶⁶

6.66 It is apparent from the evidence that RA is in a position to build on its existing infrastructure to gain a position of real strength in the digital short-wave environment of the future. The alternative is, as Mr Peter Barnett suggested, a matter of 'closing the door when the door is going to open for everybody else'.⁶⁷

Satellite digital broadcasting

6.67 The Committee also received evidence from Mr Richard Butler, Chairman of *WorldSpace/AsiaSpace* who reported on the future potential of satellite-aided digital broadcasting. This mode, nevertheless, had some of the strengths and disadvantages of other satellite broadcasting: a strong, quality signal balanced by a potential for jamming or censorship of that signal and, at present, the prohibitive costs of reception devices.

6.68 In a letter to the Committee following his appearance, Mr Butler clarified some aspects of the potential to block the satellite DAB radio signal saying that, while it was possible to jam the signal, the service would mainly be provided through 'uplinking of the individual countries own uses with extended regional coverages'.⁶⁸ This would appear to mean that the DAB satellite signal would rely on rebroadcasting and so would be subject to similar controls. The availability of a direct signal would therefore be contingent on the costs reception to independent users.

6.69 Mr Butler reported in his submission that *WorldSpace* was currently funding research into this area which will allow for the production of economical receivers, and stated to the Committee that these would be 'hand held or portable car environment'.⁶⁹ Within five years he estimated the cost of these receivers would be \$50, competitive with contemporary short-wave receivers.⁷⁰ Other evidence received, however, questioned these developments.

6.70 In a letter to the Committee, Radio Australia reported that no working prototype had as yet been produced by the manufacturers commissioned by *WorldSpace*. Neither had the technology been successfully demonstrated in several field tests nor had it overcome problems such as reception in buildings.⁷¹ Other evidence suggested that *WorldSpace's* projected cost of \$50 for receivers to be manufactured in future was also questionable given that this is the current wholesale price of the components needed to manufacture satellite receivers.⁷²

66 *Committee Hansard*, p. 21.

67 *Committee Hansard*, p. 10.

68 Letter received 21 April 1997.

69 Submission no. 678 and *Committee Hansard*, p. 409.

70 *Committee Hansard*, p. 410.

71 Letter of 18 April 1997, p. 3.

72 'Technical Background to Radio Australia's Transmissions', p. 6.

6.71 Although this satellite technology is not yet available for use by broadcasters, it clearly has potential for broadcasting services in the future.

Conclusion

6.72 The Department of Communications and the Arts had no information to offer the Committee on the relative merits of current broadcasting technologies as this was 'one of the issues the government was considering'.⁷³ As this was a technical question, the Department should have answered it. As pointed out in Chapter 1, the fact that the Government is considering a matter is not a valid reason for not answering questions about matters which do not impinge on policy advice. The Department has a duty to the Parliament to provide factual and technical information to a parliamentary committee. However, it is clear that no other transmission mode at the moment has the capacity to replace short-wave radio for the bulk of RA's programming.

6.73 Nevertheless, Dr Vic Jones of the NTA did offer cautionary advice about making sudden changes in infrastructure in broadcasting environments. Commenting on the need to run analogue and digital technologies in a change-over period he said :

That is exactly the sort of issue that makes it so important not to rush into a change. In broadcasting the massive investment is by the public, not by us. Many dollars are spent by us and our budget looks enormous, but it is tiny compared with the investment by the public. You cannot just change the transmission system overnight because there is no audience - and the most important thing for a broadcaster is their audience. So when you make the change, firstly you have to get it right because you cannot change your mind; secondly, you have to make arrangements for that transition, and it usually does involve simulcasting of one form or another to build up that audience of receivers.⁷⁴

6.74 Building up an 'audience of receivers' is the crucial issue for consideration of Radio Australia's future as broadcaster. Any decision made about transmission technologies should take into account the empirical evidence: Radio Australia's largest audience is now secured through short-wave technology. At the same time, as Mr Michael Bird argues, Radio Australia, positioned as it is in terms of both geography and infrastructure, has the potential to become a regional 'one stop shop' for international communications: making greater use of the growing number of delivery modes - not only short-wave and satellite transmission but Internet, CD-Rom, and multi-media technology.⁷⁵

6.75 In his review, Mr Mansfield suggested that Australia should withdraw from the media marketplace in the Asia Pacific region *because* that market has become increasing competitive. Mr Graeme Dobell counters eloquently that Australia should take its place in the race:

73 *Committee Hansard*, p. 190.

74 *Committee Hansard*, p. 196.

75 Michael Bird, Submission to the Mansfield review, Attachment to Submission no. 349, p. 2

Obviously, that market is getting richer and more crowded, and that is one of the great benefits of this huge surge that we are seeing in the region. However, it strikes me as surprising that because the market is seen as getting harder and more difficult that is seen as a reason for us to get out of it. To me, that seems to be very surprising logic in the same way that it is harder for us to win an Olympic gold medal than it was a couple of decades ago. That means we train harder, and we try harder because it makes the competition, in some sense, more useful or more valuable perhaps. To me, this idea that we get out because it is getting harder is a strange concept.⁷⁶

6.76 The Committee strongly supports Mr Dobell's views.

Cost Effectiveness of Radio Australia

Radio Australia funding

6.77 Each year, the Government notifies the ABC Board of its total level of base funding. The Board then decides the amount to be allocated to RA and notifies the Government accordingly. This figure then appears as a single line appropriation for RA in the Government's Budget. In 1996-97, RA was allocated \$13,494,000. This figure includes \$1,002,447 for Southbank Support Services, the cost of transmitting programs to the short-wave transmitter sites operated by the NTA and the cost of transmission of programs other than by short-wave radio. These other transmission costs include \$190,000 per annum for delivering audio transcripts for rebroadcast by overseas radio stations, \$80,000 per annum for two one-hour feeds per day to the World Radio Network centre in London for satellite distribution to rebroadcasters in Europe and North America and \$78,000 per annum for Internet operations. The RA's share of the total ABC budget has been between 2.5 and 2.7 per cent.

6.78 The cost of operating the NTA short-wave transmitters is the responsibility of the NTA. According to the Department of Communications and the Arts, the transmission operating costs for the HF transmission facilities used to deliver RA services is \$6,968,000 in 1996-97.⁷⁷

6.79 The RA budget for 1996-97 is broken down into \$9,906,587 for salaries and \$3,662,413 for expenses with additional revenue of \$75,000. The budget can be considered in another way: \$2,026,760 for general management, \$2,851,291 for resources and distribution and \$8,615,949 for program departments. The average staffing level for RA in 1996-97 is 144.

76 *Committee Hansard*, p. 243.

77 Department of Communications and the Arts, letter dated 15 April 1997 to the Committee.

International comparisons

6.80 RA submitted that in 1995, that:

it surveyed a range of international broadcasters as part of its preparation of material for the Federal Government's Inter-Departmental Review of International Broadcasting.

This study, using various criteria for comparison, was effectively replicated by the international management consultants, KPMG, who were commissioned last year by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the Department of Canadian Heritage, to conduct an operational review of Radio Canada International (RCI).

6.81 RCI and RA are comparable in size as shown in the following table.

Table 6.1: Comparison of RA and RCI

	Budget*	Staff	Languages#
Radio Canada	\$A15.4 million	125	7
Radio Australia	\$A20.5 million	144	9

* Including transmission; Mansfield figure for Radio Australia.

RCI's total language output substantially below RA.

6.82 The outcomes of the international comparison are as follows:

In summary, Radio Australia - low ranked on annual expenditure - ranked high in efficiency as shown by cost per language service; cost per hour of program output; hours of program output per staff member; proportion of programs produced in house; cost of service per citizen; and the proportion of staff allocated to programs vs administration.

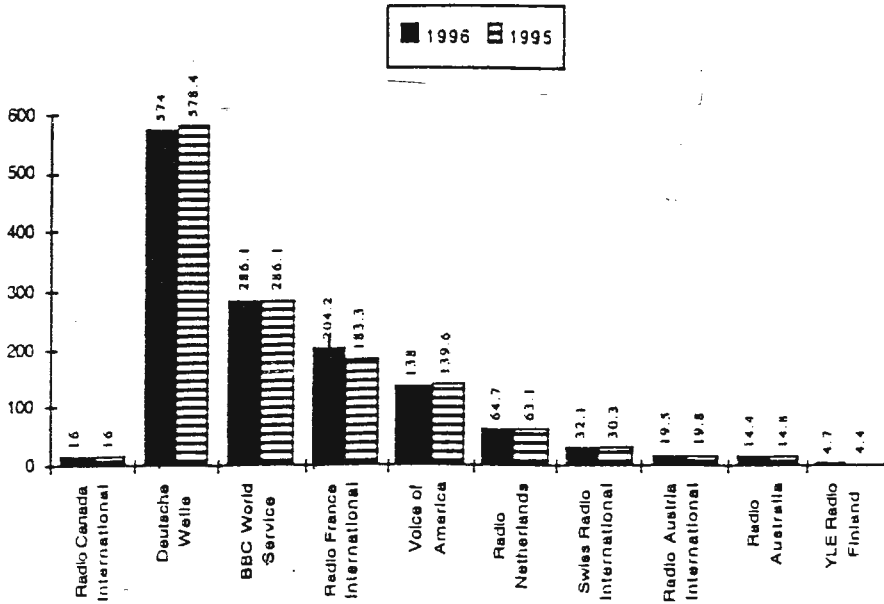
In particular, Radio Australia's success in meeting the needs of, and appealing to, its audience in a cost effective manner was reflected in the listener response as measured by mail. Per million dollars of budget, Radio Australia's mail response was almost three times that of any other broadcaster surveyed. The volume of listener mail per program hour was also almost three times that of its nearest competitors, including BBC - World.

Radio Australia achieved this audience response despite having limited transmission facilities and a primary target area limited to the Asia-Pacific, and despite being one of the very few international broadcasters without off-shore short-wave transmission facilities. For comparison, Voice of America has 100 short-wave transmitters off-shore; Deutsche Welle 31; BBC World Service 30, and RCI nine.⁷⁸

78 ABC/RA submission, pp 52-53.

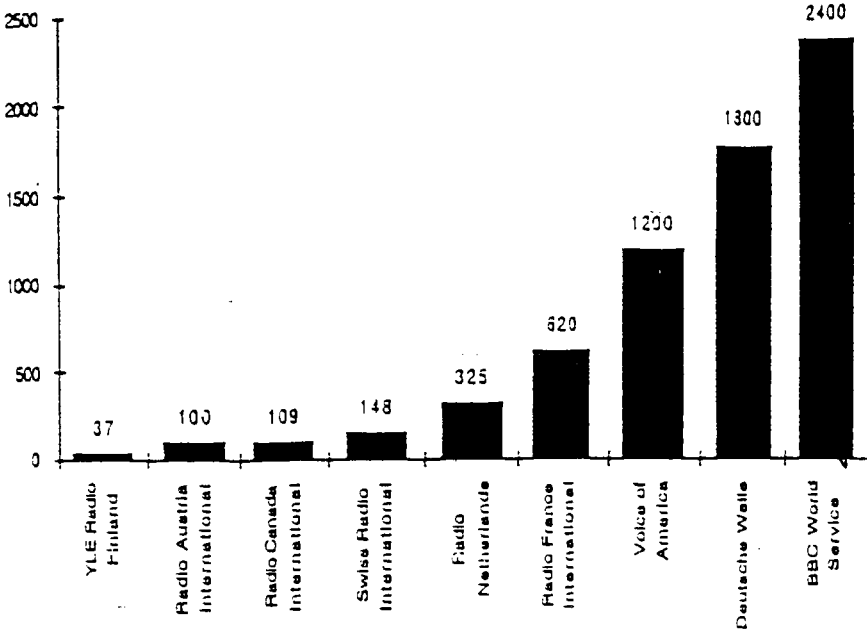
II. Cost/Budget of International Broadcasting Services

(\$millions Cdn)

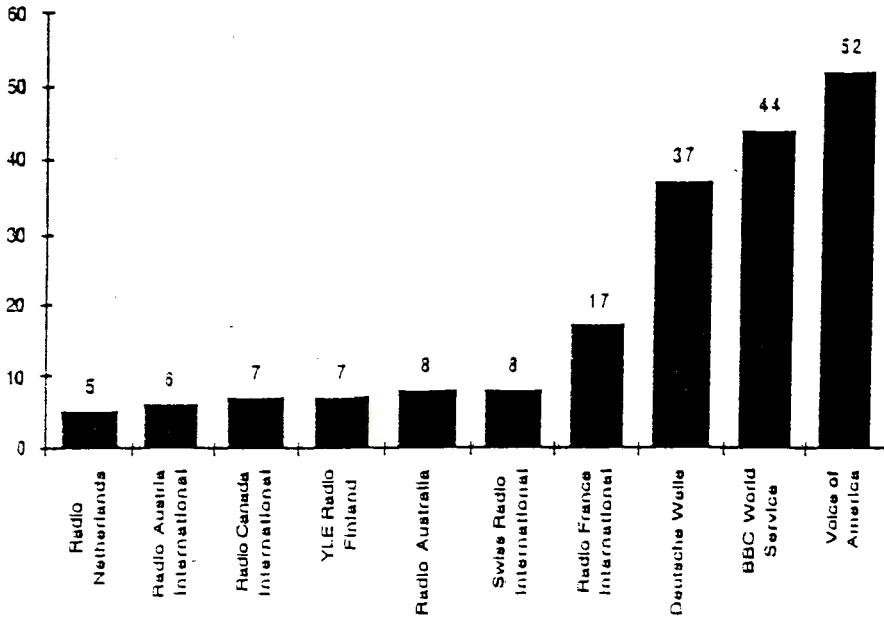


Note: Budgets exclude transmission costs, which are handled by separate organizations, in the cases of BBC World Service, Radio Australia, Radio Netherlands, Swiss Radio International, and Radio France International. Some distribution costs handled by Finnish domestic service and Radio France International.

III. Number of Full-Time Staff Equivalents, Excluding Transmission Staff

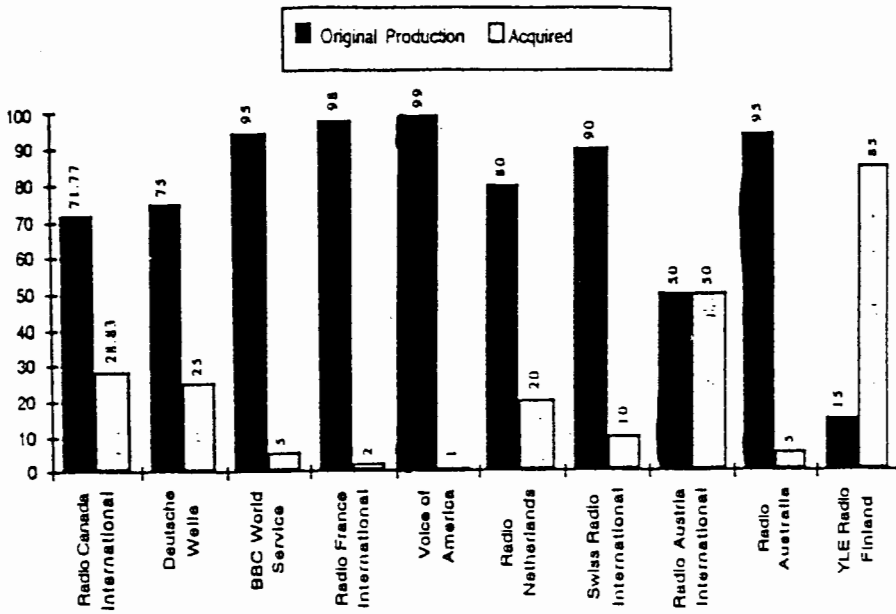


IV. Languages Broadcast - Totals

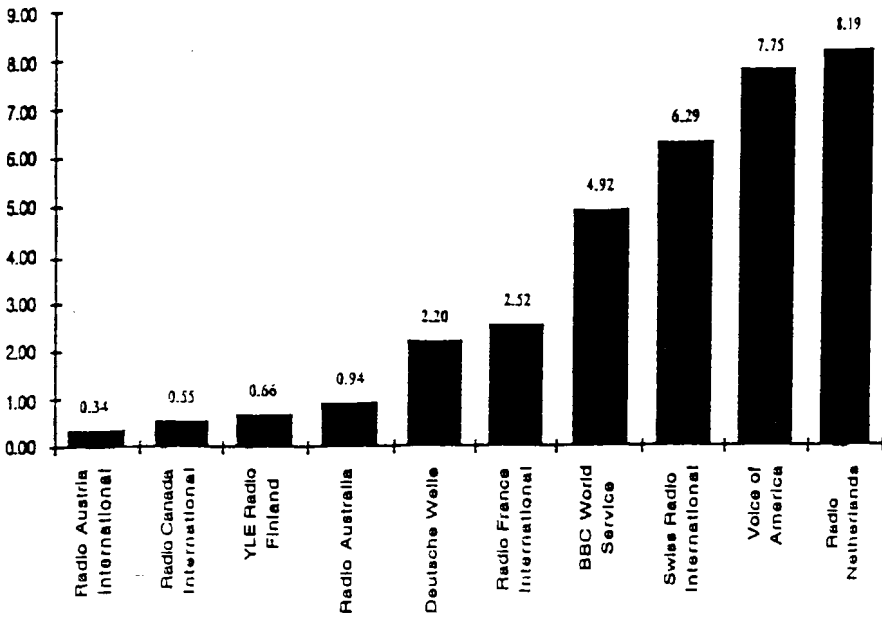


* Radio Australia's figure does not include English Language output.

VI. Source of Programming (%)



VII. Expenditures per Inhabitant in \$ Canadian

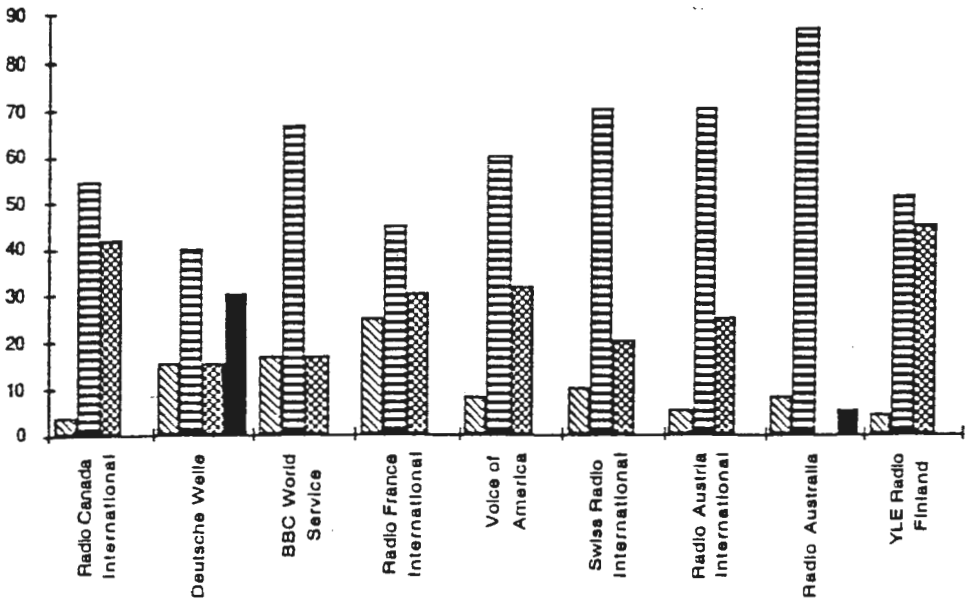
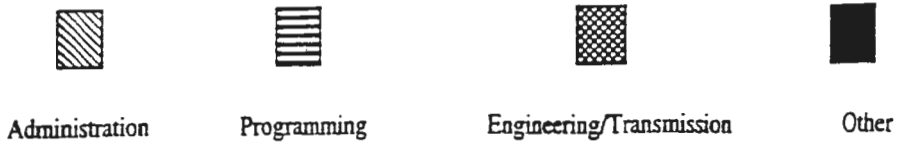


Note: Expenditures are not directly comparable due to exclusion of engineering/transmission costs by some international broadcasters.

VIII. Primary Purpose of Shortwave Service

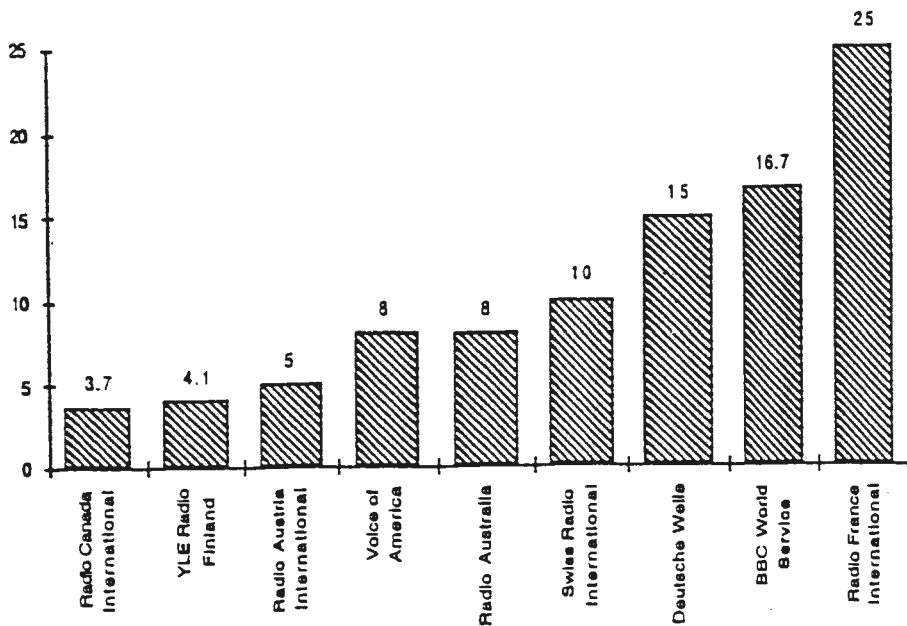
	Radio Canada International	Deutsche Welle	BBC World Service	Radio France International	Voice of America	Radio Netherlands	Swiss Radio International	Radio Australia International	Radio Australia	YLE Radio Finland
Serve Domestic Travelers						☑	☑	☑		☑
Inform General Audience About Your Country in Their Languages	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	
Inform General Foreign Audiences in Your Language				☑	☑		☑	☑	☑	
Promote Trade and Tourism for Your Country					☑					
Other						☑				

IX. Staff Allocation (in % terms)

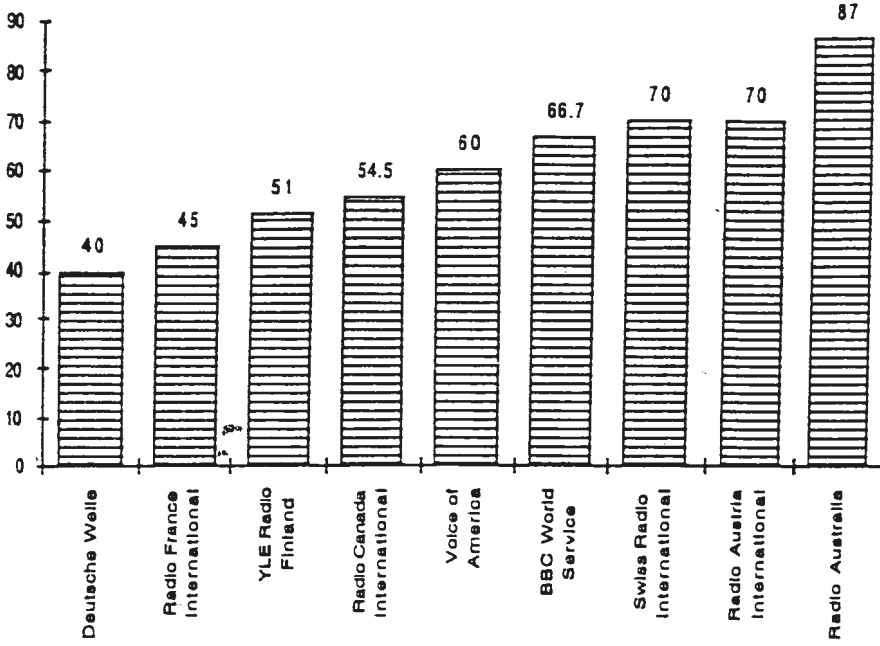


Note: Transmission and/or engineering for certain broadcasters may be handled by other organizations (e.g., domestic services). Into this category fall: BBC World Service, Radio Netherlands, Swiss Radio International and Radio France International; some costs for Radio Finland too.

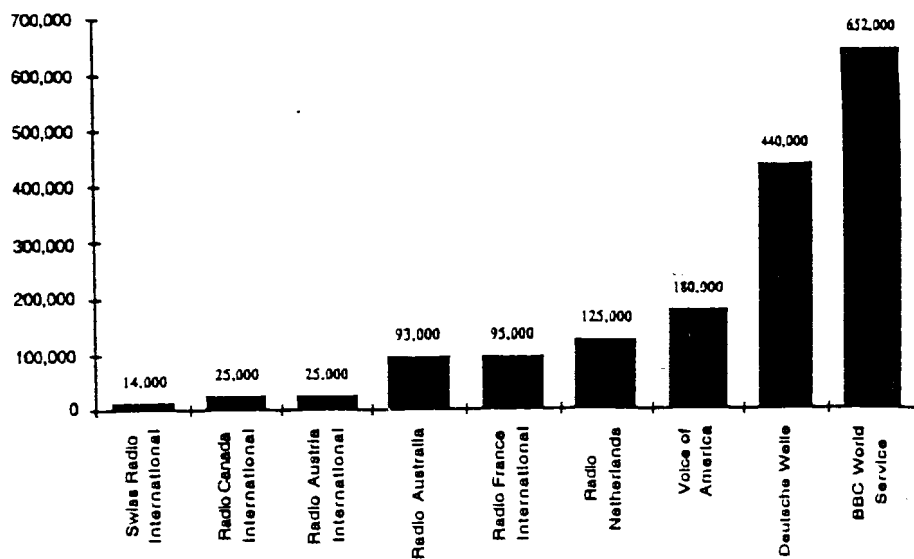
IX A. Staff Allocation (in % terms) - Administration



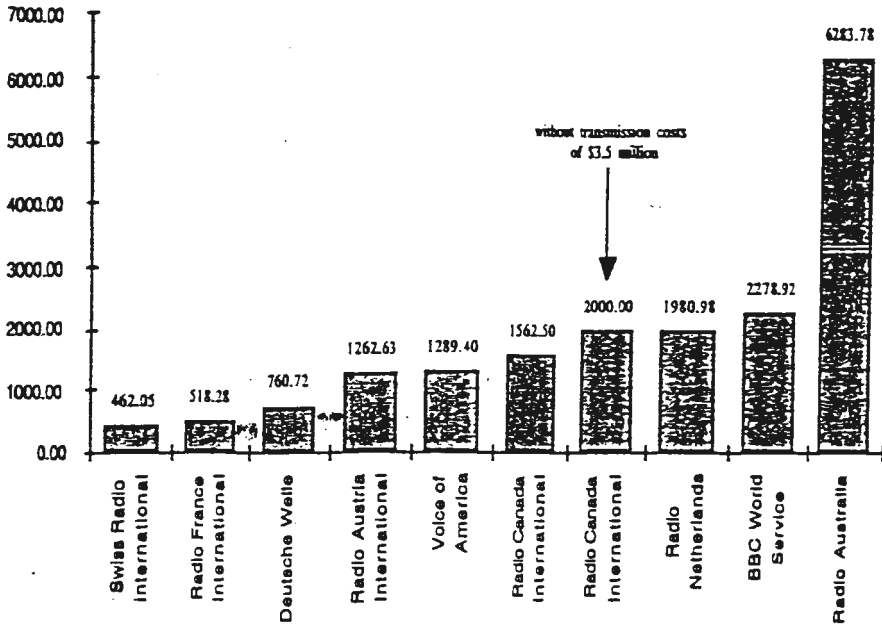
IX B. Staff Allocation (in % terms) - Programming



X. Volume of Annual Listener Mail (excl. contest mail)

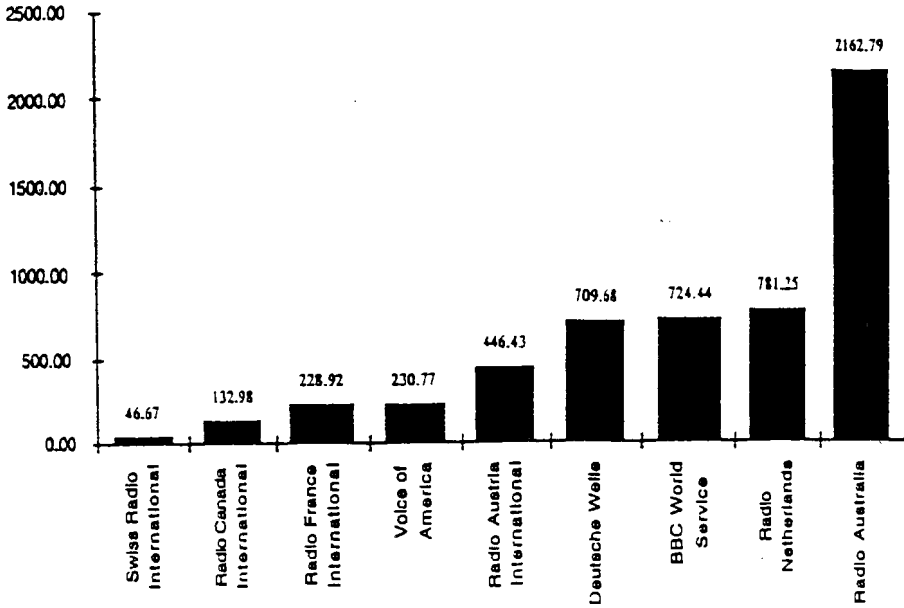


X A. Volume of Annual Listener Mail (excl. contest mail) per Million Dollars of Budget

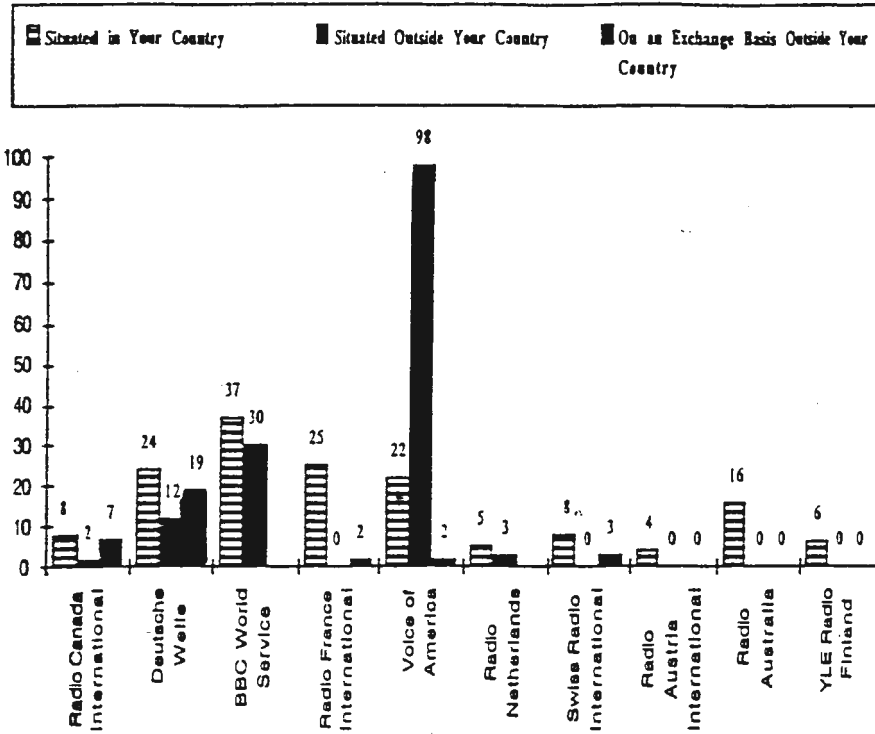


Note: Results based on actual budgets and do not include transmission and/or engineering costs for BBC World Service. Radio Netherlands, Swiss Radio International and Radio France International.

RCI shown with and without transmission costs of \$3.5 million.

X B. Volume of Annual Listener Mail (excl. contest mail) per Program Hours

XI. Number of Shortwave Transmitters



Note: RCI owns two transmitters operated by UK in UK. Operating costs are paid by UK.

6.83 It is very clear from the KPMG charts comparing a number of international broadcasters against a range of efficiency measures that RA was among the most cost-effective across the range. The Committee believes that RA is both efficient and cost-effective and achieves considerable benefits for Australia for a small cost.

6.84 The Committee does not believe that the future funding of RA or, for that matter, ATV, should be considered on the basis of domestic versus international broadcasting. The role and functions of each are quite different and should be treated separately by the Government. The Government should treat RA funding as a single line appropriation separate from the ABC's budget, irrespective of the future structure of RA and its place within the bureaucracy. Mr Mansfield's recommendations and the apparent preparedness of the ABC to sacrifice its international broadcasting services should it not receive funding for them over and above that which is required for its domestic services, makes the argument for completely separate funding more cogent.

6.85 During the inquiry, there was considerable objection to the funding of RA by DFAT or for the placement of RA within the foreign affairs and trade portfolio. It was argued that such an arrangement would be perceived within the Asia Pacific region as the Government assuming greater editorial control over RA's services. In other words, the perceived independence of RA, particularly in news and current affairs, would be treated with a little more cynicism. If taken with other Government decisions and the government's handling of issues affecting the region - the abolition of the DIFF scheme; reduced aid budgets; closer defence ties with the USA; the proposed cuts to RA and the proposed privatisation of ATV; the perceived poor handling of the race debate by the Government - it is perhaps understandable that any transfer of RA funding to DFAT might be misconstrued within the region.

6.86 Although the Committee believes that it would be preferable for RA funding not to be included in the DFAT budget, it would accept such an arrangement should it mean the survival of RA. The Committee notes that the BBC World Service is funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. However, that arrangement is one of long standing and the BBC World Service has had time to prove that it is independent of political interference in its editorial policies. Similarly, should RA find itself in a similar position dependent on DFAT funding, it would eventually demonstrate to its audience that there has been no editorial interference by government. It should not be forgotten that all public broadcasters are funded from the public purse and in the end the particular purse used for funding the broadcaster does not really matter, provided that editorial independence and program integrity are maintained.

6.87 The Committee appreciates that there are particular synergies in the operations of RA and the ABC domestic services. They share foreign correspondents, RA draws heavily on ABC news, information and current affairs although there is some reciprocity, and the RA broadcasts many programs prepared for the ABC domestic services. RA would not be nearly as effective without access to ABC resources. For that reason, the Committee believes that it is important for RA to remain attached to the ABC. However, it is also apparent to the Committee that because RA is a small and discrete unit within the broad range of services provided by the ABC, it has not attracted the level of attention and support it needs to fulfil its important international role. Consequently, it would benefit from having a separate board to oversee its operations and give it direction, particularly at a time when globalisation of

broadcasting services is evolving very quickly, with emphasis in the Asia Pacific region. Such a board should comprise representatives of the ABC, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Communications and the Arts, and a number of people with expertise in broadcasting or the region (one of whom to be the chairman) and the General Manager of RA. Although there would be some additional costs for a part-time board, it should not make any significant difference to overall funding.

6.88 The Committee does not consider the transfer of RA away from the ABC to the foreign affairs and trade portfolio as an effective or desirable move. It would increase perceptions within the region that the Government was becoming more involved in editorial policy although the Committee is sure this would not happen in practice. Nevertheless, perceptions are sometimes difficult to disperse.

6.89 If RA were in the foreign affairs and trade portfolio, it would be more difficult for the Minister for Foreign Affairs or DFAT to repudiate statements made in a RA news or current affairs program should another government object to those statements. At present, the Minister and DFAT can disassociate themselves from news broadcasts which are not consistent with Australian foreign policy on the grounds that RA programming is independent of Government control. Other governments, which perhaps have more control over the media in their countries than the Australian Government does over RA, might regard with greater scepticism any attempt at disassociation if RA were ultimately responsible to the Minister.

6.90 Finally, DFAT's relationship with its public affairs journalists over many years, and the abolition of the International Public Affairs Branch in 1996, would not augur well for RA should it be transferred to the foreign affairs and trade portfolio. The role of the Branch was international public and media promotion of Australia, which RA does in a different way. The Committee believes that there would be no real commitment in DFAT to support RA within the portfolio.

6.91 The only other option canvassed seriously during the inquiry was the establishment of a separate organisation combining RA and ATV. Although it does have some attractions, it would inevitably require additional funds to carry out corporate functions for which the ABC currently takes responsibility. It would also be difficult, although not impossible, to make arrangements with the ABC to ensure the synergies among the three bodies, which add to the current effectiveness of the two international broadcasting services, were not lost. The Committee therefore believes that RA and ATV should continue to remain attached to the ABC with such changes mentioned above and in the chapter on ATV being implemented. However, if such arrangements are not successful, further consideration should be given to the possibility of combining RA and ATV in a separate organisation or for RA to be established as a separate organisation.

6.92 The Committee therefore recommends that the Government provide sufficient funds, at least at current levels, to allow Radio Australia to continue to provide its current range of English and foreign language services through a variety of media, especially the medium of short-wave radio.

6.93 The Committee recommends that Radio Australia continue to operate international public broadcasting services to the Asia Pacific region and that such services continue to be associated with the ABC but with separately identified funding.

6.94 The Committee also recommends that additional funding be provided to Radio Australia to fund a Burmese language service and to expand the Khmer language service.

CHAPTER 7

AUSTRALIA TELEVISION

Background

7.1 Australia Television (ATV) was established in December 1992 as a joint initiative of the Federal Government and the ABC. For the ABC, the establishment of a satellite television service was a means of meeting its Charter obligation to broadcast to countries outside of Australia.¹ The previous Government saw the venture as a vehicle for propagating an Australian regional identity.

7.2 In order to insulate the ABC from any financial risk and to ensure accountability for the venture, the Government decided that ATV should operate as a subsidiary of the ABC (Australian Television International Pty Ltd). Other provisions of the venture included the ABC agreeing to accept commercial sponsorship for the service and to repay the establishment grant when ATV became profitable.

7.3 ATV was launched by the then Prime Minister on 17 February 1993, who declared 'that from now on, the people of our region will know us better. ATV will bring Australia and the South East Asian region significantly closer'.

ATV Delivery to the Region

7.4 Most ATV programs are either transmitted to Darwin via satellite from the ABC's Sydney studio at Gore Hill or recorded "off air" in Darwin for broadcast overseas.

7.5 ATV uses the Palapa C2 satellite which has a footprint extending west to the Indian sub-continent north to Beijing and east to the South West Pacific. It covers 33 Asian and Pacific countries and territories. Budgetary constraints have prevented ATV from extending its footprint to other Asian countries and the Middle East.

7.6 As well as delivering its programs direct to the region via satellite, ATV has established rebroadcast agreements with cable and terrestrial broadcasters thereby increasing ATV's potential audience. As a result, a full or part ATV service is available to audiences (without satellite receiving equipment) in Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Vanuatu and Vietnam through the services of 120 licensed local operators.

7.7 ATV indicated to the Committee that a further 300 operators (most of them in the Philippines) carry ATV programs.

1 A charter function of the ABC under its legislation is "to transmit to countries outside Australia broadcasting programs of news, current affairs, entertainment and cultural enrichment that will: (i) encourage awareness of Australia and the international understanding of Australian attitudes on world affairs; and (ii) enable Australian citizens living or travelling outside Australia to obtain information about Australian affairs and Australian attitudes on world affairs." (s.6 of the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983*)

7.8 The following is a current list of cable operators and domestic broadcasters with whom ATV has established rebroadcast agreements:

Table 7.1: ATV Rebroadcast Agreements

Country	Rebroadcaster	Agreement
Cambodia	TV9	Selected Programs
China	Guangdong Cable	Selected Programs
Hong Kong	Wharf cable	World At Noon, ABC News, Foreign Correspondent
India	Asianet	Five Hours Daily
	Business India Television	Selected Programs
Indonesia	IndoVision Distribution	Entire Service
Laos	Lao National Television	Selected Program
	Lao TV3	English-Have a Go
Nauru	Nauru Television	50-60% of AusTV's Daily Schedule
Papua New Guinea	Hitron	Entire Service
Philippines	92 Cable Operators (Official)	Entire Service
	315 Cable Operators (Unofficial)	
Singapore	Singapore CableVision(Cable)	Entire Service
	Singapore Cable Vision(UHF)	Australia Television News
Sri Lanka	MTV Channel (Pvt) Ltd	9-12 Hours Daily
	Telshan Network (Pvt) Ltd	Selected Programs
Taiwan	Jet Cable	Entire Service
	New Cable	Entire Service
	Twin Country Cable	Entire Service
	Shu Lung Cable	Entire Service
	TWT Comm. Cable	Entire Service
	Powerful Cable	Entire Service
	KTS CATV	Entire Service
	W.S. Wire Trans.	Entire Service
	Yangmingshan Cable	Entire Service
	NCATV	Entire Service
	Pao Fu CATV	Entire Service
Thailand	IBC Symphony Co.	World At Noon, AusTV News
		Foreign Correspondent
	Thai Sky Cable	Selected Programs
	Suchat Telecom	Selected Programs
Vanuatu	VBTC	2-3 Hours Daily
Vietnam	Vietnam Television	Selected Programs
	Hanoi MMDS	Selected Programs
	HCMC MMDS	Selected Programs
	Vung Tau MMDS	Entire Service

Source: ATV Submission

7.9 On 9 April 1997, ATV announced that it had entered into agreement with RPG Netcom in Calcutta to carry the entire ATV service. This will be the second major network in India to take the ATV service. ATV said that RPG Netcom presently 'have 25,000 cable homes connected through 14 nodes and hope to have 24 nodes and 100,000 subscribers by the end of the year'.²

7.10 In addition, ATV has developed a hotel distribution network with more than 400 first class hotels providing ATV to guests.

7.11 This overview of the distribution network shows that despite the increasing range of international news channels broadcasting to the region, ATV has managed within a short period of time to establish a unique service encompassing news, information and entertainment.

7.12 The success that ATV has had in negotiating rebroadcast arrangements demonstrates the region's acceptance of ATV's service and the relevance of its programming.

Viewer Audience

7.13 It is difficult to establish precisely ATV's viewing audience given the nature of satellite broadcasting. However, based on a study by NielsenSRG Research Services (Hong Kong) for the Australian International Education Foundation, published in December 1995, ATV's penetration in the Asia region is equal to CNN and the BBC, and second only to the Hong Kong based Star Television. The study estimates that ATV currently reaches 20.4 million households via satellite, cable or terrestrial rebroadcast. According to ATV, 'This gives the Australian service the same reach as its much wealthier and more established competitors, the United States-based CNN and BBC World from Britain'.³

7.14 Details of the number of households in Asia and the Pacific with access to ATV via cable and terrestrial rebroadcast agreements are set out below.

7.15 Mr Mann told the Committee that it was impossible to determine how many home viewers watch ATV. He went on to say:

We know pockets of the direct to home viewers. In Indonesia, for example, where we have done our most research, we know that there are 110,000 households watching us every day. I must point out here that there is a lot of difference between radio and television. Radio Australia measures its audience per week and we measure ours per day. What percentage of that block of Australians make up a percentage of our audience I cannot tell you, but there are quite a lot of Australians out there watching our programming.⁴

2 ATV Media Release dated 9 April 1997 entitled 'New cable deal for Australia Television in India'.

3 ATV submission, p. 10.

4 *Committee Hansard*, pp 136-37.

Table 7.2: Households with access to ATV

Country	Cable	Terrestrial
Cambodia		200,000
China	400,000	
Hong Kong	306,000	
India	10,725,000	
Indonesia	22,900	
Laos		70,000
Nauru		2,000
Papua New Guinea	9,600	
Philippines	700,000	
Singapore	105,861	
Sri Lanka	1,795,000	
Taiwan	265,000	
Thailand	262,200	
Vanuatu		N/A
Vietnam	700	5,500,000
TOTALS	14,592, 261	5,772,000

Source: ATV submission, p. 11.

7.16 Dr Hart Cohen of the University of Western Sydney, Nepean, has co-ordinated audience research projects in Indonesia in 1995 and 1996.

According to our research results, the strongest broadcasters in the region in terms of audience draw are the large global players: CNN, STAR TV, MTV ASIA. These organisations specialise in particular genres (News, Video chips, Sports) and have substantial reach in terms of access to their signals. There are a total of 32 television channels in the Medan media environment - of these, 15 broadcast predominantly in English.

Australia Television manages to be competitive with these channels though it takes a different tack using a general programming strategy with a regional focus. ATV consistently rates in the top five channels in most categories of watching.

In international radio the BBC rates the highest in English language programming, though was equal first with Radio Australia in the popularity of Indonesian language programming. Radio Australia is second to the BBC in most categories of listening frequency. Twenty-three per cent said they listened to RA most days, sixteen per cent at least once a week.

Apart from the BBC and RA, six other international radio services have a regular listening audience in the region though with smaller audiences than

either the BBC or Radio Australia. Voice of Malaysia has a strong presence in Indonesia broadcasting in the Malay language.⁵

7.17 In 1995, a survey showed that ATV's weekly audience in the Philippines was estimated at about 250,000 people.⁶

7.18 ATV submitted that:

At a time of increasing awareness of Australia within the Asia/Pacific regions, many viewers turn to AusTV for an insight into a country where they do business, send their children to university, holiday or plan to invest. Many others watch because AusTV remains the only free-to-air English language service produced within the region by a regional broadcaster who gives priority to regional issues.⁷

7.19 In DFAT's submission to the Mansfield inquiry, it commented:

The audience reach of ATV has considerable room for improvement and there is a need to keep changing the formula to get it right. ATV was always seen as a long term project and it would be regrettable to abandon it in its relatively early stages.

7.20 Although the first statement is qualified by the second, it is very unclear what is the basis of DFAT's implied criticism of ATV's audience reach. After operating for only four years, there is of course considerable potential for increasing audience reach. DFAT does not indicate what it believes should have been the audience reach of ATV in September 1996, the date of the submission. It also does not say what was the problem with the then 'formula'.

7.21 DFAT went on to say that:

DFAT believes that, recognising economic constraints, it should still be possible for ATV to provide a viable and valuable service through initiatives such as private partnerships in programming, more aggressive marketing strategies or privatisation. The overall resources available to the service, however, should not be further reduced in the process.

7.22 As this was the last paragraph of the part of the submission dealing with ATV, it is not clear whether the suggestions in this paragraph refer to ways of improving audience reach or to improving ATV programming (criticised earlier in the submission), or both. The lack of detail not only makes the meaning obscure but also raises the question as to the extent to which DFAT had thought through its ideas in this area.

7.23 DFAT's lack of co-operation with the Committee in this inquiry by not making a submission and by not allowing reasonable questions to be answered by officers at a public hearing, meant that the Committee was unable to explore further some of these issues with

5 Dr Hart Cohen submission, p. 4.

6 ATV submission, p. 11.

7 ATV submission, p. 11.

the Department. The Committee therefore had to take their statements to Mr Mansfield on face value.

7.24 The Committee believes that ATV has done an exceptional job in securing an audience reach similar to CNN and BBC World in Asia in just four years and at the cost of a little more than \$6 million a year. Although many international broadcasters operate in the Asian market, no other operator in the Asian market has matched ATV's success in its short history.

7.25 There is considerable anecdotal evidence that among ATV's audience there are many Asian and Pacific leaders and other influential people, who not only are made aware of Australian perspectives on regional and global issues and events, but who are also shown graphic images of Australia, our lifestyle, culture and economic and technological achievements.

Programming

7.26 ATV broadcasts 16 hours of Australian produced material each day. The mix of programming encompasses Australian news, information, sport and entertainment. At the same time, programming includes regionally focussed news, current affairs, educational and sport items. The challenge for ATV has been to bring a multi-faceted image of Australian society to the Asia-Pacific region while providing news and information services for the region.

7.27 Programming material is sourced from the ABC, SBS, Network 10, Channel 9, Channel 7, Film Australia, the National Sound and Film Archive and from independent producers. ATV's expenditure on programming is close to \$1 million a year.⁸

7.28 Approximately one-third of ATV's programming is news and current affairs. Programs include, from the ABC, *ABC News*, *Lateline*, *Four Corners*, *Stateline*, *Foreign Correspondent*, *The World at Noon* and the *7.30 Report*, from SBS, *Insight* and *Dateline* and from Network 10, *Meet The Press*. ATV also produces a bulletin of Australia Television News on weekdays specifically for the service's Asia-Pacific audiences.

7.29 With regard to other programming, ATV described it as follows:

Sports programming over the past year has included coverage of Australian Football League matches, Rugby Union, Australian Rugby League, the Melbourne Cup, the National Basketball and Soccer Leagues and a range of other sporting disciplines of interest to AusTV's Asia/Pacific audiences as well as the 80-100,000 expatriate Australians able to access the service.

In 1996, AusTV launched a weekly two hour program of Australian contemporary music, *The Bridge*, and carried an AusAID funded educational series called *English-Have a Go*. It also show-cased such outstanding series as *Janus*, *Australian Story*, *Landline*, *Compass*, *Quantum*, *World of Style*, *The Great Outdoors* and *Healthy, Wealthy & Wise*. Children's programming

included the highly acclaimed ABC children series, *Playschool*, and the international award winning series, *Ship to Shore*.⁹

7.30 Despite the rapid increase in the number of international satellite channels broadcasting to the region, ATV is the only English language comprehensive service produced by a regional broadcaster. While other international broadcasters, such as BBC World, CNN, CNBC and ABN provide general news or business news, ATV produces a range of programs (news, documentaries, children's entertainment and arts and educational series) with an emphasis on news and current affairs affecting the region.

7.31 The uniqueness of ATV's programming mix together with its regional focus was emphasised to the Committee in written submissions. As one expatriate living in Phnom Penh wrote:

What I value most about Australia Television is its beauty, colour and unhurried professionalism which is obvious but understated compared to the arrogant self promotion and bombardment of stressful visuals from CNN. Australia Television shows a wonderful variety of programs about Australia's multicultural, cosmopolitan and rural lifestyles ('Great Outdoors', 'Healthy, Wealthy and Wise') and current affairs on the national and regional international news ... sports coverage variety is excellent ...¹⁰

7.32 Many submitters compared ATV very favourably with other international services available to them. For example:

Comparisons with other international broadcasters is extremely unfair to other broadcasters. These broadcasters are in a nutshell very poor indeed. The CNN and BBC focus is predominantly on Europe and USA and concentrate on news items which may be of passing interest, but which are unfortunately belaboured for hours on end (or it seems so).

The sports channels provided by ESPN are great if you enjoy basketball - you can almost guarantee coverage most hours of the day. Star sports are equally unimpressive with coverage of table tennis, cricket in Singapore, and bike racing which again seems never ending. Their tennis and golf coverage is of interest, but often not timely (eg. we watched the Hopman Cup about 4 weeks after the event concluded).

Local television is equally enthusing with South American soapies dubbed to the Indonesian language, or Japanese and Chinese martial arts experts doing their best to rid the world of their many evil opponents.

9 ATV submission, p. 7.

10 Stephen Callender, submission no. 125.

To be fair to all of the above broadcasters there is interesting information and entertainment from time to time but regrettably the times are few and far between.¹¹

7.33 The essence of the above views was reflected in many submissions. Many Australian expatriates, and others, commented that there is no alternative to ATV for people wanting news about Australia and the region. Although other broadcasters include Asian items in their news broadcasts, none provides the range or depth of Asian news stories covered by ATV. No other broadcaster provides Australian news except for disasters or other major items.

7.34 ATV's strong emphasis on news and current affairs is a recognition of the primary uses of satellite broadcasting for news and information, the rebroadcasting of programs through cable and domestic broadcasters providing an extension of this service. Most people who wrote about programming in their submissions rated ATV news highly, focussing on its independence, integrity, relevance to the region and presentation. Although a few people thought that ATV's accurate portrayal of Australia and regional countries (the less seemly aspects of life as well as the good aspects) did a disservice to Australia and denigrated our neighbours, most found the honesty and integrity displayed by ATV as its strength, not its weakness. They could rely on the news and current affairs broadcast by ATV.

7.35 Mr Ross Petzing, Program Department Manager, English-language News of the International Broadcasting Corporation, submitted that:

We operate Thailand's largest subscription television network and broadcast Australia Television news programs on our multi-channel system. We have several reasons for doing this.

One is Australia TV's consistently excellent coverage of news from and about Australia itself. It gives our audience a comprehensive view of events in Australia that, is simply unobtainable.

Another reason we admire Australia International TV is its top-notch coverage of Asian news. While other networks carry at least some news from Asia, the breadth and depth of Australia International TV's coverage of the region is unmatched.

More than 95 per cent of our audience is Thai, and most of the remainder is from other Asian nations. Therefore, you can imagine how highly we regard Australia Television's news programming, given its comprehensive examination of Asia.¹²

7.36 Programming generally was the one area of ATV operations which attracted some criticism in submissions from viewers. The Committee received seven submissions which had negative comments about programming and another 43 which suggested improvements to programming. Although these statistics covered both ATV and RA, most related to ATV. Another 256 submissions had positive comments to make about programming.

11 Mr Barry Cook, submission no. 106.

12 International Broadcasting Corporation, submission no. 323.

7.37 Many of the criticisms appear to reflect the individual tastes of those viewers although the meagre funds available for programming would make it difficult for ATV to maintain programming standards. The many repeats of some programs also drew criticism in a number of submissions. This, too, is mainly a resource problem. Even where criticisms of programming are made, the submitters generally expressed a positive view of ATV programming in overall terms. ATV will need to refine its programming strategies to take account of the criticisms which arose in the many submissions that addressed this issue.

ATV's Contribution to Foreign Policy and Trade

7.38 This cannot be valued in dollars and cents. It is about the subtle messages conveyed to the peoples of the region, particularly the educated people, about life in Australia, the beauty and sometimes starkness of our countryside, our hopes and disappointments, our achievements in many fields and our disappointments, our democratic principles and our perceptions of issues and events which affect Australia, the region and the world. It is about creating an awareness of Australia, an understanding of our way of life and the multicultural nature of our society and showing that our future is inextricably linked with Asia and the Pacific, even though we maintain strong ties with countries in other regions from which many Australians have come.

7.39 ATV's contribution in furthering Australia's foreign policy interests is by providing images of Australia which influence people in the region to do things which contribute to our interests. It may simply be to imbue viewers with a feeling of warmth towards Australia so that when they have choices to make which include Australia among the variables, that they choose Australia. It may be the destination for schooling or tertiary education for their children, the location of their next holiday, the purchase of an Australian product or service, support for Australian views on regional or global issues, or simply the more ethereal embracing of Australian liberal democratic principles.

7.40 You cannot measure this influence in an empirical way. But there is considerable anecdotal evidence to support it. Submissions from people living in the region refer to visits to Australia by their local friends or acquaintances to see places which they had seen on holiday programs shown by ATV. Other submitters said that local people chose Australia for their children's education because they had been convinced by ATV programs that Australia was a clean, stable and safe place for overseas students.

7.41 A number of submitters told the Committee that ATV programs showing Australia as a successful multicultural society had helped to dispel doubts about Australian racial tolerance following inaccurate accounts of the race debate broadcast on local media stations. In other words, ATV provides an Australian voice in the region to counter mischievous news items which hurt Australian interests. Without such a voice, there is no other means to tell Australia's side of the story.

7.42 In its submission to the Mansfield inquiry, DFAT said that:

The media is the most important tool available to strengthen an awareness of Australia in the region. Through its news and current affairs broadcasts, ATV informs its diverse audience of Australian political, economic and social affairs. It provides a vehicle to project Australia's technological innovation and

cultural sophistication and a source of entertainment programs which could expose viewers to Australian culture, ideas and values.

If a positive image is not there and up-to-date, then Australia loses out.

7.43 Mr Michael Mann, Chief Executive of ATV, told the Committee that:

I know from the feedback we are getting, and particularly from senior government and leaders, that we are making our mark ... I do know that President Ramos watches Australia Television most nights. We also got feedback recently that the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia is a regular viewer of our service. When you are accessing people like that and they know more about Australia, how our process works and what our society and culture is all about, I think that has a tremendous impact on our foreign affairs and trade relationship.¹³

7.44 In terms of trade, there is no way of calculating the influence of ATV in generating trade and investment between Australia and countries of the region. Mr Michael Mann recounted to the Committee one instance where an ATV program influenced an \$18 million investment in Australia. He said that if he had not been told personally about the story he would not have known about it.¹⁴

7.45 Under the ABC Charter, one of the obligations of the ABC, and through it, ATV, is to provide information about Australian affairs and Australian attitudes on world affairs to Australians abroad. There are an estimated 100,000 Australians living in the Asia Pacific region. Many, if not most, of these expatriates view ATV or listen to RA, or both. Not only does ATV provide a link for these Australians back to their homeland, it also, as pointed out in many of the submissions, makes life just that bit more bearable for them and their families. Many Australians live in remote areas in the region because they are employed by mining or other companies, or are aid workers or volunteers abroad.

7.46 Australians living abroad are also ambassadors for Australia. By keeping up-to-date with events and issues in Australia, they pass on that information to many of the local people with whom they work or do business and with whom they mix socially. Without that knowledge, they would not be in a position to argue against inaccurate or unfair criticisms of Australia which might have been carried in the local media or to provide the latest information about political issues or commercial trends or activities. Australians who are abreast of recent developments in Australia will influence their friends, colleagues and acquaintances to think 'Australia' for holidays, education, business and other ways.

7.47 ATV is really about projection of Australia to the region so that we are a relevant consideration when people make decisions that could benefit Australia. Australia spends more than two billion dollars a year on foreign affairs, overseas aid and trade promotion. A large amount of that is focussed on Asia. For less than \$2.5 million in 1995-96 (ie after deducting sponsorship revenue), ATV must be the most cost effective service promoting Australia, our foreign affairs and trade interests. What other Australian organisation, other

13 *Committee Hansard*, p. 134.

14 *Committee Hansard*, p. 134.

than Radio Australia, can reach 20 million people in Asia and influence them toward Australia's interests. And ATV is only four years old!

Funding for ATV

7.48 ATV was established by the ABC with a conditional one-off grant from the Government of \$5.4 million. As it was originally conceived as a self-funding body, the conditions attached to the grant included the ABC repaying the grant when ATV became profitable. However, ATV did not live up to its early expectations in relation to profitability. Its financial viability has been the subject of several reviews.

7.49 According to the August 1994 review by the Department of Communications and the Arts, *Australia Television Review of Financial and Management Arrangements*, the failure was due to the fact that ATV did not proceed with a subscription service but went free to air, the over-estimate of sponsorship revenue by the ABC, and a 275 per cent increase in transmission costs over the initial estimate.¹⁵

7.50 In 1995, following a review of the financial and management arrangements, the previous government agreed to provide additional funding of \$1.9 million (paid on 1 July 1996) and a further \$6.2 million per year for three years commencing in 1996-97.¹⁶ This committed funding has now been withdrawn by the current Government.

7.51 According to ATV's submission, total funding for the operation of the ATV service compares favourably with other international broadcasters in the region:

Satellite broadcasting is an industry still very much in its infancy but AusTV's audience and revenue growth figures have placed the service firmly among those operators likely to succeed. Indeed, AusTV's performance compares favourably with competitors like the US based CNBC business news service, which was launched in 1995 and is expected to lose US\$100 million a year by 2000 and Hong Kong's Star TV, which is losing US\$100 million a year. It is worth noting that Star, which cost News Corporation US\$800 million, is said to reach just over 60 million homes while Australia Television on an annual budget of just Aus\$6 million is accessible by more than 20 million.¹⁷

7.52 ATV has shown that it has been able to provide a cost effective service. Its expenditure on news production and the purchase of news and current affairs programs represents less than half the cost of transmission charges - the Palapa Transponder lease accounts for more than one-third of ATV's total budget.

7.53 The Committee also notes that ATV was the first government-funded broadcaster in the Asia Pacific region to provide an international television service to the region via satellite.

15 For a summary of the review see *Australia Television Review of Financial and Management Arrangements*, Department of Communications and the Arts, August 1994, ATV Review - Key Findings and Conclusions, pp. i-v.

16 See Media Release, Minister for Communications and the Arts, 25 October 1995.

17 ATV submission, p. 19.

Profitability of ATV

7.54 ATV was established on the basis that it would become self-funding but retaining its structural link with the ABC. Net revenues from advertising and sponsorship were projected to meet the marginal costs of the service within three years.

7.55 To date, as the table shows, ATV has not achieved profitability.

Table 7.3: ATV Profitability

	1992-93 (5 months)	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
Revenue				
Sales	0.13	0.95	1.49	2.64
Transponder sub-lease	-	-	1.88	1.76
Government support	2.91	2.49	-	-
Total Income	3.04	3.44	3.37	4.40
Expenses	3.04	6.35	8.00	6.78
Profit (loss)	-	(2.91)	(4.63)	(2.38)
Value of ABC Resources provided	1.91	4.06	2.53	2.82

Source: ATV submission, p. 19.

ATV also provided the following abbreviated balance sheet for the information of the Committee.

Table 7.4: ATV abbreviated balance sheet

	30 June 1993	30 June 1994	30 June 1995	30 June 1996
Total Assets	0.15	0.88	1.25	1.74
Total Liabilities	0.15	3.79	8.79	10.77
Equity	-	(2.91)	(7.54)	(9.03)

Source: ATV submission, p. 19.

7.56 ATV added that for the year ending 30 June 1997, total expenditure is forecast to be \$6.6 million.

7.57 A major source of income for ATV has been the leasing of its satellite transponder during "down time", initially to CNBC and currently to TVSN, the Australian-based Television Shopping Network. Advertising and sponsorship have also contributed to revenue.

7.58 The Committee notes, however, that ATV would already be in profit if the National Transmission Authority (NTA) covered ATV's transmission costs, as the NTA does for RA and the ABC's domestic radio and television services.

7.59 The 1994 review also noted that on current projections, ATV would continue to rely on ABC financial support until at least 1999-2000. In particular, the review noted that the future capacity of ATV to meet its operating costs depended on sponsorship revenue.¹⁸ As the review acknowledged, sponsorship revenue was slow to develop.

7.60 Satellite broadcasting in Asia is a new industry and, inevitably, it takes time for such new ventures to become profitable. Mr Mann told the Committee:

The international television industry is a very young industry, and the advertising industry is only now catching up with it. A company such as Fosters CUB only for the first time this financial year has put in its marketing budgets some money for international television. It took that company three years before actually setting aside, and seeing the value of putting, marketing money into international television.

We have found over the last three years that you go to Australian companies and they will say, 'Yes, we want to advertise with you, but at present we do not have any budget for that. Come back when we re-arrange our marketing budget and we will put money aside for international television.' Slowly those budgets are starting to appear. People now understand that there are more statistics available at present - not only about Australia Television but other networks - as regards audience. So people are willing to put money into international television.

Two years ago in Asia there were about 15 international television networks; now there are about 25. As I understand, only one is making a profit - and that is Home Box Office, the premier movie channel. Of course, the other 24 then are making a loss. They believe now, in my discussions with the other networks, that you will need 10 years to break even in international television. Two years ago it was five years, and it has been extended another five years. People are not withdrawing their money from international television; they are keeping at it. They believe that there will be a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.¹⁹

7.61 Recognising the benefits of satellite television, major Australian companies such as Telstra, AMP, BHP, Ansett, Qantas, the New South Wales and Queensland tourism authorities, the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation and universities and educational institutions throughout Australia have used ATV as a successful advertising medium.

7.62 In a press statement released by The Lincoln Electric Company (Australia) Pty Ltd on 25 January 1995, the company stated:

18 *ibid.*, pp 37-38.

19 *Committee Hansard*, p. 134.

Lincoln Electric have recorded a 25 per cent increase in sales throughout South-East Asia since advertising on Australia Television. In our opinion, the sheer size of the Australia Television audience presents advertisers seeking Asian markets with the most cost effective advertising vehicle available.

7.63 In its submission to the Committee, ATV drew attention to a number of factors impacting on its profitability. It stated:

That link [with the ABC] has involved the service in five separate inquiries over the past three years. AusTV believes that the air of uncertainty created by these inquiries has deterred many potential advertisers and sponsors who would otherwise have committed themselves to long term contracts. It must also be said that the commercial expertise within the ABC needs to develop further before it would provide an environment in which AusTV would be able to operate in an optimal way.

AusTV also believes that its basic funding arrangements have left it seriously under capitalised as is evidenced by its inability to reach audiences in North Asia, Western India, Pakistan and the Middle East or produce or purchase programs likely to enhance its viewing audience.²⁰

Commercial Value of ATV

7.64 The tendering process undertaken by the ABC to secure ATV's future raises a number of issues including the basis for the valuation of ATV and whether it is in the public's interest in the longer term to divest itself of this asset. Although the ABC has not revealed how much it has valued ATV, Ms Rosemary Church, representing the ATV Joint Committee, told the Committee that it had been valued at \$28 million.

7.65 Ms Church said that future digitalisation of ATV's broadcast signal would significantly alter the valuation of ATV. The switch to a digital signal would allow ATV to broadcast through four channels instead of only one. In other words, it could retain one for its own use and lease out the other three. Ms Church went on to say that a trial, with the digital signal alongside the analog signal, had shown that this would be a feasible option for the future. It would, of course, require digital receivers. Digital television is on the horizon for both domestic and international television broadcasting and it is simply a matter of time before its introduction. This has the potential to be one of the ABC's most valuable tangible assets and could help in the future funding not only of Australia's international broadcasting services but also domestic services.

7.66 The Committee is concerned that precipitate action on the part of the Government and the ABC to sell off ATV, without examining longer-term options in order to cover a minuscule short-term cost, could lead to a decision which is contrary to the national interest, not only in terms of maintaining an Australian voice in the Asia but also in financial terms.

20 ATV submission, p. 21.

Privatisation of ATV

7.67 In July 1995, the Board of the ABC decided that it could not allocate further funds to sustain ATV. The Board went to the Government, which decided to provide \$18.6 million to ATV over three years to put ATV on a more secure footing. However, following the change of Government, the Minister for Communications and the Arts, Senator Alston, in a media release dated 16 July 1996, in which he announced the appointment of Mr Mansfield to review the ABC, said:

The Government will also ask the ABC to explore the possibility of delivering the services currently being provided by Australia Television more efficiently.

The Government will discuss with the ABC Board the scope for ensuring the maintenance of ABC program content on Australia Television, particularly news and current affairs, while tendering the operation of the service to the commercial sector.

7.68 In August 1996, Senator Alston advised the ABC *inter alia* that:

Ministers agreed in the context of the 1996/97 budget deliberations that the service provided by Australia Television be contracted out with any net savings to be returned to the budget.²¹

7.69 On 23 December 1996, the ABC sought expressions of interest from other parties in order to develop the service. Further expressions of interest were sought through the *Far East Economic Review* on 2 January 1997. ATV submitted that:

More than 50 responses are now being sorted by the Australia Television Board and consultants, Communication Equity Associates and Turnbull and Partners. It is expected that some Australian entities will be invited to conduct due diligence during April 1997.²²

7.70 In discussing this process, the Managing Director of the ABC, Mr Brian Johns, told the Committee:

We have established broad criteria for any future restructuring and we are very anxious within that to maintain ... an Australian involvement and an ABC involvement, in particular by the provision of programming - again, using current affairs and quality ABC programming - so that there is an Australian presence in the area.²³

7.71 The broad criteria are as follows:

- Have substantial net asset backing and cash flow to enable them to provide equity and loan capital to support Australia TV operations for five years;

21 ATV submission, p. 20.

22 ATV submission, p. 20.

23 *Committee Hansard*, p. 131.

- Be able to demonstrate that they have - access to management with professional broadcasting experience in the Asian Pacific region other than staff currently employed by Australia Television - advertising media sales or subscription TV experience which would enhance that currently residing within Australia Television;
- Be able to demonstrate that they can secure Australia TV content supply lines over and above those from ABC;
- Be able to demonstrate that extension into the broadcasting industry of the Asian Pacific region is consistent with their established business and strategic plans.

7.72 The Committee noted that these criteria did not refer in any way to the broadcasting of ABC programs. This was a matter raised by the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) when the CPSU and ATV Joint Committee representatives appeared before the Committee on 3 April 1997. Ms Rosemary Church told the Committee at the hearing that:

We have been told all along that one of the conditions of sale was that the news and current affairs element would be retained. As well as the domestic Sydney, Perth, Melbourne and Darwin news going out into the region of Australia TV, we also tailor a half-hour news specifically for the region.²⁴

7.73 Ms Lisa Fowkes, ABC Section Secretary, CPSU, subsequently wrote to the Committee to say that:

I understand that the range of 'outcome criteria' that the ABC Board has established by which to assess the various bids does not include any express requirement that the prospective operator/partner agree to carry the existing Australia Television news service or any other ABC news and current affairs. This was confirmed to us verbally by Ian McGarrity, Head, ABC Development, who is the manager responsible for handling the process. I believe the Board has expressed the view that the successful bid must include a proposal to carry a substantial amount of Australian content.²⁵

7.74 In the ATV submission it is stated that:

Foremost among those criteria were that a significant English language predominantly Australian content television service would remain after any restructure and that the remaining English language television service would be controlled by Australians.²⁶

7.75 Apart from the third criterion, which is about the ability of a prospective company having an ability to secure Australian content programs, there is no specific mention in the criteria that the service should be 'predominantly Australian content television' and there is no mention at all that 'the remaining English language television service would be controlled by

24 *Committee Hansard*, p. 228.

25 Letter to the Committee dated 9 April 1997 from ms Lisa Fowkes, CPSU.

26 ATV submission, p. 20.

Australians'. Ms Church also told the Committee that 'it is almost nonsense to presume that you could actually sell something with conditions attached'.

7.76 The benefit of ATV as a public broadcaster is that its main function is to provide the Asia-Pacific region, or to wherever its footprints extends in the future, with a portrayal of Australian life and culture, our technological and economic achievements and our perspectives on national, regional and global issues, as a means of advancing our national interests. Within the resources available to it, ATV, as a public broadcaster, does not have to take account of commercial profits and the pressures of investors to make profits at the expense of advancing national interests. Under current arrangements, it does, of course, have to strive to fund its operations from commercial sponsorship but within very stringent guidelines to protect the integrity of its programming. Commercial success is subordinated to the requirements of national interests and journalistic integrity.

7.77 The most recently published edition of the ABC Editorial Policies provide that:

The ABC through Australia Television, Radio Australia and associated media services is responsible for broadcasting news, current affairs and general programs to international audiences, often in countries whose media are more restricted than in Australia. Occasionally, reports may create difficulties in Australia's foreign relations with other countries. This problem is the price of a genuinely independent overseas service and is recognised and accepted by the ABC and the Australian government.

The Australia Television service aims to be a distinctive Australian service directed to a region of cultural diversity. It will reflect Australian values in information, entertainment, sport and the arts while striving for relevance and accessibility to the regional audience.

Cultural sensitivities vary from society to society across the region, both in nature and intensity, but there are areas of common concern. In program selection and scheduling, Australia Television and Radio Australia will be mindful of these concerns, particularly in the areas of entertainment programs such as drama and comedy.²⁷

7.78 ATV noted that in its four years of operation, it had not received any official complaint from a regional government.²⁸

7.79 A striking example of commercialism overriding all other considerations was drawn to the Committee's attention by Mr Mann:

Star Television, News Ltd's Asian television service, when faced with the reality of either accessing the China market or keeping BBC World on its network, jettisoned BBC World. That is a commercial reality.²⁹

27 ATV submission, p. 13.

28 ATV submission, p. 13.

29 *Committee Hansard*, p. 130.

7.80 In its submission to the Mansfield inquiry, DFAT praised ATV's news service but sounded a cautionary note about possible dangers associated with privatisation of ATV:

DFAT supports the view that quality ABC news programming is important and that sub-standard, sensationalist to tabloid news and current affairs programming would be damaging to Australia's interests. In this regard, ATV has it right with its editorial approach of 'Sensitivity without Censorship'.

The Department also believes that the quality of the surrounding general programming is of importance in terms of giving credibility and attracting the right audience to the news and current affairs services. There might be danger that a commercial broadcaster seeking broadly based advertising revenue may produce news programming of much lower production values designed to appeal to a mass audience. We would need to avoid a situation where such a service might rely on programming that would send negative images of Australia by over reliance on racing, poor quality soaps or programs which would gratuitously offend the moral standards espoused by our neighbours.³⁰

7.81 Mr Mansfield did not consider DFAT's views because he regarded the foreign affairs aspects of the ABC's international broadcasting services as being outside the scope of his inquiry. Despite this, Mr Mansfield still endorsed the Government's privatisation proposal and then arbitrarily concluded that if the arrangements were not in place by 30 June 1997, that ATV be closed down. It is incomprehensible that Mr Mansfield could peremptorily dismiss such a cost-effective, successful and important service without first considering the key aspects of its role and possible alternatives to closure.

7.82 The Committee concurs with DFAT's view, as submitted to Mr Mansfield, and similar views expressed by Ms Church above. Once privatised, the Government's control over programming is significantly reduced. Although the Government may enter into a contract with a buyer of the service to impose certain contractual obligations on the part of the buyer with respect to programming, it is questionable the extent to which the Government could prevent the new owner from broadcasting particular programs or advertisements. If the first commercial owner of ATV were to subsequently re-sell it, then it is even more doubtful whether the Government would be able to impose programming obligations on the new owner.

7.83 If ATV were sold, it is even not clear whether there would be Australian content conditions imposed on the buyer, or whether the buyer would be subject to other conditions relating to programming.

7.84 ATV cost the taxpayer a little more than two million dollars in 1995-96. If allowed by the Government and the ABC to concentrate on broadcasting and given a period of stability so that potential sponsors have confidence in its future, the Committee believes ATV would at least break even financially within a few years so that Australia would have a respected voice in the region to promote Australian views and interests at no cost to the taxpayer. In budgetary terms, the present cost of operating ATV is minuscule. The benefits even now to Australia are significant, and once ATV becomes fully established in the region, the potential

30 DFAT submission to the Mansfield review, p. 3.

benefits are enormous. Yet the Government seems determined to throw all of this away. Such a decision for the sake of saving such a small amount of money is quite illogical, economically irrational and completely contrary to our national interests.

7.85 The Committee believes strongly that ATV should not be sold and that it should remain a public broadcaster.

7.86 The Committee therefore recommends that (a) Australia Television not be privatised and that (b) the Government maintain funding in accordance with the three year funding package entered into by the previous Government and supported in its election policy by the current Government.

Future Structure of Australia Television

7.87 The question was raised during the inquiry whether ATV should remain with the ABC, be restructured as an independent organisation (alone or with RA) or be attached to some other organisation.

7.88 At present, ATV is a subsidiary of the ABC, shares some facilities and resources with the ABC and draws upon ABC programming, as well as obtaining programs from other sources, including the SBS and commercial networks. On the other hand, the success of ATV and RA has made the ABC a respected broadcaster throughout the region and the sharing of facilities and resources in Darwin has revitalised that office.

7.89 There are many synergies which can be exploited through a continuing relationship between ATV and the ABC. In some respects, the arrangement has worked very well, but not in all ways. There have been some tensions between ABC staff, who work for a broadcaster that is prohibited from using sponsorship and advertising and ATV staff, who are required ultimately, to run the service on sponsorship. In other words, ATV is a public commercial broadcaster, which has to adopt some commercial attitudes and practices but still has to adhere to public broadcaster ethics and not allow commercial imperatives to override national objectives. The Committee is also aware of some difficulties arising from the fact that ATV is a very small organisation which is obliged to adhere to staffing arrangements and reporting requirements meant for a big broadcaster and not a small operation. ATV should be allowed to manage its staffing and finance matters by itself, subject to normal oversight by its Board.

7.90 Given the fact that the ABC since 1995 has not funded ATV from its general budget, that Mr Mansfield recommended that the ABC should focus exclusively on domestic broadcasting and that the ABC Board has indicated that it would sacrifice its international services first in meeting expected funding cuts, the Committee believes that oversight of ATV should be the responsibility of a separate Board, comprising representatives of the ABC Board, DFAT, the SBS Board, the Department of Communications and the Arts, a few expert or interested individuals (one of whom should be the Chairman) and the Chief Executive of ATV. This Board would focus solely on developing ATV as an independent Australian international broadcaster, which would be respected in the region for the quality of its programming and the integrity of its news and current affairs broadcasts, and to become self-reliant financially. By having a separate Board, it would not be diverted from its charter by having to address domestic broadcasting issues which obviously takes up most of the time of the ABC Board.

7.91 The Committee considered the option of restructuring ATV as a separate organisation either by itself or in association with RA to form an Australian international broadcasting service. There is some merit in this option but it would be more difficult, but not impossible, to enter into arrangements with the ABC to share resources and facilities. It would almost certainly be more expensive to run as some current overheads might not be available free of charge from the ABC. Nevertheless, if proposed changes suggested above are obstructed by the ABC or do not work, it is an option that should be given further consideration. In this period of financial stringency, the Committee wishes to try workable options which are cost neutral or at worst minimise cost increases.

7.92 A further option that was raised during the inquiry was the merging of ATV with SBS. Both provide television services, both accept sponsorship and both have audiences with a range of ethnic backgrounds. However, SBS provides programming for ethnic communities in Australia, whose needs are very different to those of the same ethnic communities overseas, which ATV aims to satisfy. If the two did merge, ATV would lose the synergies which it currently has with the ABC even though working arrangements between ATV and the ABC could be agreed. Although the Committee does not favour a merger at this time, it would not rule out such an arrangement should it mean the survival of ATV as a public broadcaster.

CHAPTER 8

ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING

Introduction

8.1 In this chapter the Committee examines other radio and television broadcasting services operating in the Asia Pacific region and comments on the increasing globalisation of the media.

International Radio Services in the Asia Pacific Region

Programming

8.2 Term of reference (b) of this inquiry calls for assessment of the 'activities of similar broadcast services, radio and television, broadcasting to countries in the Asia-Pacific region.'

8.3 Currently there are thirty-eight other international broadcasters who target the Asia-Pacific region in English and a range of regional languages. English and Mandarin are offered by a majority of these services.¹

8.4 Well-known broadcasters which are based outside the region include:

- BBC World Service (12 regional languages)
- Voice of America (12 regional languages)
- Deutsche Welle (6 regional languages)
- Voice of Russia (9 regional languages)
- Radio France International (5 regional languages)
- The Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran (7 regional languages)

8.5 There are also several major national broadcasters based in the region, including:

- China Radio International (22 regional languages)
- Radio Japan (11 regional languages)
- All India Radio (15 regional languages)
- Voice of Indonesia (5 regional languages)
- Radio Korea International (5 regional languages)
- Voice of Malaysia (5 regional languages)
- Radio Pakistan (6 regional languages)
- Radio Thailand (9 regional languages)
- Voice of Vietnam (9 regional languages)
- Voice of Free China (Taiwan) (7 regional languages)

¹ Information in this section is largely drawn from the ABC Submission No. 377, pp 23-5.

8.6 In addition, several religious organisations also broadcast to the Asia-Pacific region in regional languages. These organisations range from fundamentalist Christian to Islamic groups.

8.7 The editorial standards of these broadcasters vary greatly depending on the degree of Government or other control or on the broader objectives of the organisation.

8.8 Voice of America, for example, is known for its accurate news but, as an arm of the US State Department, it is also required to pursue government foreign policy objectives. The US is also pursuing its foreign policy objectives with the recent establishment of a new service, known as Radio Free Asia, which targets China, Tibet, North Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Burma. The implementation costs of the new service were US\$30 million (A\$38 million).

8.9 Services such as Radio China International and the Voice of Vietnam are tightly controlled and were established to broadcast the views of their governments as direct instruments of foreign policy. Most religious and some national broadcasters, such as the Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, have strongly ideological messages.

Transmission

8.10 In the section on transmission in this report, evidence was cited that showed short-wave transmission is a major growth area in international broadcasting. International competitors are heavily investing in transmission facilities throughout the region, branching into satellite rebroadcasting and entering into leasing and exchange arrangements with other broadcasters.

8.11 Within this field, Radio Australia stands out as the only broadcaster who is unable to make use of off-shore transmitters to boost its signal to target areas. Despite being advantaged by its strategic location within the region, and therefore being petitioned for lease or exchange of air time, Radio Australia is the only international broadcaster which has not been able to trade in this increasingly competitive market.

8.12 The following broadcasters use off-shore transmitters to target the Asia-Pacific region:

- Radio Canada International uses transmitters in Korea, China and Japan
- Radio France International uses transmitters in Japan and Thailand
- Deutsche Welle uses transmitters in Sri Lanka and the Russian Far East
- Voice of America uses transmitters in the Philippines, the Russian Far East, Singapore, Thailand (two sites), Tinian (Northern Marianas) and Sri Lanka
- Radio Nederland uses transmitters in Madagascar to broadcast to Indonesia
- BBC World Service uses transmitters in Singapore and Thailand.

8.13 In the past 12 months several of the national broadcasters targeting the region have taken steps to improve their short-wave signal strength. A summary listing includes:

- China Radio International imported ten 500kW short-wave transmitters to boost its signals to Asia.

- The BBC opened a new transmitter site in Thailand at a cost of £30 million including four 250kW short-wave transmitters and seven aerials.
- Voice of America contracted to build a new short-wave station in Tinian Island in the Northern Marianas using three 550kW transmitters transferred from Portugal.
- Radio France International started using two short-wave transmitters in the Russian Far East targeted at China and Vietnam.
- Radio Japan resumed the use of short-wave transmissions from Sri Lanka.
- Voice of Vietnam started using a short-wave transmitter in the Russian Far East.

8.14 At a time when Australia is considering closing or reducing its international radio service, other countries are spending significant sums of money to boost their coverage and signal strength in the Asia Pacific region. With the end of the Cold War in Europe, the BBC and Voice of America are redeploying resources from Europe to Asia and the Pacific, while other western and regional broadcasters are making use of former Soviet transmitters in the Russian Far East and other former Soviet Republics.

Radio Australia's Position

8.15 Radio Australia's undoubted strength amongst all other broadcasters is its objective and timely coverage of regional news:

With the exception of Australia Television - which, with Radio Australia, is regionally focused - the major world TV news services, CNN and BBC-World, will inform English-speaking elites in detail about the US, Europe and the Middle East, much less about Indonesia and the Asia-Pacific region, and certainly not about Australia. They deliver their news in English; RA in eight languages of the region, from the same time-zones and from the regional perspective.

8.16 About 75 per cent of regional submitters to this inquiry commented positively on Radio Australia's regional focus. Expert witnesses with substantial expertise in the areas of international journalism, broadcasting, Asian studies and government reported their knowledge and first-hand experience of the value which regional audiences placed on Australia's perceptive analysis of local events, informative and engaging programs about regional cultures. Further, Radio Australia has earned a respected reputation amongst its competitors as a reporter of regional events. This was confirmed by other major international broadcasters in their responses to the inquiry (see below).

Regional focus

8.17 As Mr Mansfield and others have observed, broadcasting is booming in Asia. At a superficial glance, it would appear that there is a considerable choice of media in the region and that it is already adequately served by local radio, television and newspapers. However, as this inquiry has confirmed, the quality and range of information provided in the region is severely limited by the political controls or by limited resources, as in the Pacific and Papua New Guinea. In addition, despite the increasing provision of services by other international broadcasters, few focus on regional events.

8.18 Dr Hart Cohen, co-ordinator of recent audience surveys in Surabaya and Medan in Indonesia, confirmed the value of Radio Australia and Australia Television as alternative news sources in Indonesia:

one of the attractions of both these services to its users is its perceived 'independence' from government influence in media environments which do not customarily have independence...The constant refrain emerging from our research is that Australia Television and Radio Australia *offer alternatives* — *they* present a 'different' point-of- view—one that contrasts with and can then be compared to both Indonesian local media and other global/regional broadcasters.²

8.19 Professor Kessler noted there are advantages for Australia too:

The main Bahasa Indonesia services that I hear regularly going into South East Asia are: first, Radio Australia; secondly, the Voice of America, which is a serious program but reflects their notions of broadcasting and also their geostrategic political interests; thirdly, various evangelical radio stations that seem to emanate from the Philippines; and, fourthly, an increasing number of broadcast services in Malay and/or Indonesian that emanate I believe from Saudi Arabia and Iran. The content of that material, you can imagine, is a rather different perspective from the perspective that emanates from Australia and projects Australia's interests. I think there is a vast amount to be lost by discontinuing, for example, the Bahasa Indonesia service.³

Prompt reporting

8.20 Radio Australia's Mr Djajamihardja of the Indonesian languages service made an important point about the particular facility Radio Australia's NewsCAff has for providing, not only regionally focused news but timely news reporting. Quite simply, Australia is located *in the region* and so can provide a service that cannot be matched by its northern hemisphere counterparts:

...we are supported by the time factor. We are three hours ahead of Indonesia. So anything happening there would be beamed back to Indonesia just in time; whereas the BBC would be 10 hours behind the event. The incident on 27 July 1996 took place about midmorning. I was still at work at 7 p.m. when I read in the wires that an incident had been taking place - the headquarters of the PDI being attacked. We started working and we contacted all the contacts we have. I interviewed General Sumitro, who was the commander of the restoration command. I asked him what was behind this incident and why it took place. So we are ahead because of the time factor. Indonesians listened to Radio

2 Submission No. 386, p. 4.

3 *Committee Hansard*, p. 284.

Australia, starting at 3 p.m. Jakarta time, and then they followed what was happening through Radio Australia.⁴

8.21 As a result, Mr Djajamihardja continued, 'Radio Australia is synonymous with news in Indonesia'⁵, which he explained:

When I was in East Timor in 1988, the head of military information came to my hotel and asked me how you guys in Melbourne got this news first hand and so quickly. He was a major and he asked me, 'Can you tell me why the Australian government put a spy satellite over East Timor?' I said, 'No, I just sent the report to Melbourne today through any normal means. I went to the telephone exchange and I reported from there.'⁶

Programming

8.22 RA's prime focus on the region in its selection and coverage of news and current affairs differentiates its services from those of VOA and the BBC.⁷ The American or British services give more on-air time to Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas.

8.23 A comparison of bulletins (of similar duration) from BBC-World Service and Radio Australia at 11.00 am on March 5, 1997 (as monitored in Australia) are shown below:

BBC - World Service

Albania Crisis Initiative
Albania Curfew
Albanian Officers in Italy
German Nuclear Protest
Israel Close Palestinian Offices
Turkish Government Services
Iran Earthquake Appeal

Radio Australia

PM Howard on Bougainville
Bougainville Mine Bid
Albanian Tensions
Arafat at U.N.
China Head Loyalty Call
Cambodia Shooting
Anthrax - Export Concerns
Algerian Election
Iran Earthquake Appeal
Clinton on Arkansas Emergency
ABC Chairman on RA

8.24 The Committee's independent assessment of Radio Australia's programming also revealed that a large percentage of the items on the Asia Pacific reported by BBC World Services were sourced from Radio Australia's new service.

International Broadcasting Survey

8.25 In the course of the inquiry the Committee invited major international broadcasters to provide information on their services in the region. A number of these broadcasters also commented on their perception of the role of international broadcasting generally, and more

4 *Committee Hansard*, p. 382.

5 *Committee Hansard*, p. 382.

6 *Committee Hansard*, p. 382.

7 ABC Submission No. 377, p. 14.

particularly, their estimate of the contribution made by Radio Australia. In this way, the Committee received an insight into what other international broadcasters see as their priorities, broad objectives and specific goals. Within this context these organisations also provide an international perspective on Radio Australia's proposed withdrawal from the industry.

BBC World Service

8.26 BBC World Service reported that it had recently expanded its services in the Asia Pacific region. Mr Sam Younger, Managing Director, clarified the organisation's priorities in the region to the Committee:

It may be helpful if I outline BBC World Service's thinking for this major region which combines information rich and information poor countries. It is also a top priority for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who indicated to us, at a BBC/FCO review of the region, the importance they place on radio as a means of promoting free information within China and enhancing the profile of the UK there. We plan to strengthen our broadcasts in Mandarin and must rely on short wave as the main means of reaching China and other closed societies in the area, such as Burma. We see Indonesian as another key language to be strengthened.⁸

8.27 On BBC World Service plans for rebroadcasting Mr Younger commented:

We will pursue rebroadcasting opportunities wherever we can, but this is not a viable option for a number of countries in the region. We may well lose our present rebroadcasting in Hong Kong after June 1997: accordingly we are turning to the Internet for Cantonese and are already using this for English teaching. We think it essential that programming be tailored specifically for target audiences. The proportion of domestic BBC radio programming that World Service's English network uses is quite small and all our news and current affairs is specially made in-house, as domestic programming has a different and obviously domestic audience in mind.⁹

8.28 It has been noted by the ABC and many witnesses to this inquiry, that the BBC World Services and other major broadcasters have been eager to buy or lease transmission time, or take up frequencies which a closed Radio Australia would vacate, yet BBC World Service's Director writes:

BBC World Service would regard the closure of Radio Australia with concern. True, we might pick up some additional listeners, but the community of international public service broadcasters, providing unbiased and accurate international and national news, is small by comparison with the vast range of competitors who do not. The loss of an old-established member of that

8 Submission No. 268, p. 1.

9 Submission No.268, p. 1.

community would, we feel, weaken the overall standing of the international public broadcaster.¹⁰

Radio France International

8.29 As observed in the section on RA's foreign language services, Radio Australia's French service is provided by short-wave and rebroadcast to countries in the Pacific. Listeners have said in submissions that they particularly value the service for providing independent and regionally focussed news, in contrast to that broadcast by Radio France Internationale. Even so, RFI responded to the Committee expressing its upmost support for the continuation of Radio Australia's Services in the region. Mr Arnaud Littardi, Director of International Affairs, RFI writes:

As an international broadcaster R.F.I. was deeply concerned by the announcement of the Australian government to cut the budget of Radio Australia.

The public international broadcasters contribute to preserve liberty and pluralism of information, which are still to be defended in many countries.

For instance, at the very moment when all the international radios of the democratic countries increase their outputs towards Asia we need the voice of Australia, one of the most prominent country in the region.¹¹

Voice of America

8.30 Voice of America, too, despite its keen pursuit of air time in the region, affirmed the fraternity of influence of which Radio Australia was part and endorsed its continuation. Mr Alan L. Heil Jr, Deputy Director, quoted a headline from the *Australian*, which referred to Indonesian listeners' responses to the closure of Radio Australia as 'axe[ing] the Voice of Freedom' (and quoted elsewhere in the report). Mr Heil also described how VOA had focussed its language services delivery on the East Asia and Pacific regions, expecting that they would be 'a powerful commercial engine of the global economy in the coming century'.¹²

Deutsche Welle

8.31 Deutsche Welle, Germany's international broadcasting service, reported that it had recently extended its interests in Asia with the launch of the Asia-Pacific Satellite AsiaSat 2 in April 1996. It appended to its submission an extensive list of countries in the region, including Australia, with whom it has entered into rebroadcast arrangements for its television and radio programs, offered as multi lingual package - 'The European Bouquet'.

8.32 Deutsche Welle also identifies that a focal interest is in promoting European unification as part of its broader agenda aimed at fostering inter-cultural understanding:

¹⁰ Submission No.268, p.2

¹¹ Submission No. 566, p. 4.

¹² Submission No. 269.

...has the task of conveying in German and foreign language radio and TV programming an accurate and comprehensive picture of political cultural and economic life in Germany and to inform objectively about world events. The programmes are to foster the peaceful co-existence of nations, to serve as a bridge of understanding among the peoples of the world, and to contribute towards Europe's unification process. With its numerous radio and TV programmes, DW promotes freedom of information, cultural pluralism and a sense of solidarity.¹³

Swiss Radio International

8.33 Radio Swiss International, reporting its role as limited as a 'public service organisation operating in a small country', nevertheless emphasised that it is 'respected for its independence, its democratic and humanitarian traditions and its services of political mediation.'¹⁴ Mr Ulrich Kundig, General Manager therefore made the following two general points about the objectives of international broadcasting:

- Over the long period of its existence, international broadcasting - especially non-governmental, politically independent broadcasting - has proved to be an extremely important part of worldwide communication. It may be true that the way it worked in the past (and is still working) in some countries has not always been impeccable, but it is undoubtedly a valid concept for developing and improving *pluralism* in international communication, as well as *reciprocal understanding* and *tolerance for cultural diversity*.
- In a world where technical innovation makes unlimited communication possible, international broadcasting as a country's tool of external relations has become an essential and indispensable means of dialogue. A country's self-presentation via international broadcasting is not - and should not be - an egoistic promotional act; it must and it can be a useful contribution to a better understanding of different realities and therefore to making international co-existence safer and more constructive.¹⁵

8.34 Information supplied by SRI also describes one of its major functions as keeping its 530,000 Swiss abroad, described as the countries 'ambassadors' well informed about Swiss life, and importantly, so they can participate by voting in Swiss Federal Affairs.

Radio Japan

8.35 Keeping travelling Japanese business people well informed in the Pacific was also an impetus to the expansion of Radio Japan.¹⁶ Japan's international broadcaster wrote to the

13 Submission No. 605, p. 1.

14 Submission No. 186, p. 1.

15 Submission No 186., p. 2.

16 *Committee Hansard*, p. 386.

Committee describing its expanded services in the region.¹⁷ Despite Radio Australia's closing their short-wave services to Japan because of its obvious communications advances, NHK, the parent of Radio Japan, approached Radio Australia for sharing transmitter time. As Mr Holmes of Radio Australia reports:

Radio Japan wanted to broadcast Japanese programs from Shepparton, using Radio Australia's transmitters, to New Zealand and the South Pacific for the express purpose of providing news and current affairs information to travelling Japanese business people. This proposal was not made 10 or 15 years ago; it was made 18 months ago. Independent, reliable, portable, affordable and accessible communications is what short wave represents.¹⁸

8.36 Mr William Yates quoted to the Committee a letter to the Minister for Communications and the Arts, Senator Alston, which confirms that Radio Japan, too, sees Radio Australia as integral member of the fraternity of international broadcasters:

As the Deputy Director General of Radio Japan, NHK's international broadcasting service, I am writing to you concerning the future of Radio Australia. We have heard that RA faces imminent closure as a result of government budget cuts. We are deeply concerned about this situation.

We believe that the role of international broadcasting in the promotion of international understanding and cooperation grows ever larger as world affairs become ever more complex.¹⁹

Radio New Zealand International

8.37 Radio New Zealand International offers a strong languages service to the Pacific, broadcasting in Cook Islands Maori, Samoan, Tongan Niuean for periods each week day. Weekly and monthly broadcasts in Fijian, French, Tokelauan, I-Kiribati, Pitcairnese and Bislama (Vanuatu) are also offered. RNZI's ongoing programming consists of Pacific-focused cultural, news information, sport and religious items. It broadcasts via short-wave, on average, for 19 hours a day. RNZI programs are also rebroadcast by nine Pacific countries and ten Pacific Broadcasters.²⁰

8.38 Radio New Zealand International reported that it is funded by the South Pacific Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and is overseen by a Policy Board composed of MFAT, New Zealand Public Radio and Radio New Zealand representatives and one independent member.²¹

8.39 The Committee also received responses to this inquiry from other broadcasters in the region. These included APSARA TV and Radio Station in Cambodia and the International

17 Submission No 484.

18 *Committee Hansard*, p. 386.

19 *Committee Hansard*, p. 430.

20 Submission No. 470, p. 3, 4.

21 Submission No. 470, p. 5.

Broadcasting Corporation News of Bangkok, Thailand who wrote to the committee expressing their alarm that Radio Australia and ATV services might cease and commending Radio Australia for its 'top-notch' reporting on the Asian region.

Television Services in the Asia Pacific Region

8.40 ATV submitted to the Committee:

While AusTV was one of the pioneers in the Asia/Pacific satellite broadcasting industry it has been joined since 1993 by many competitors who have realised the value of television as a vehicle for the dissemination of news and information or the promotion of everything from a nation's image to a brand of breakfast cereal. The one thing all of these services have in common is their recognition of Asia as the world's fastest growing marketplace for both breakfast cereal and ideas.

It is worth noting at this point that AusTV was the first public broadcaster in the Asia/Pacific regions to transmit its programs internationally via satellite. AusTV's lead has since been followed by the public broadcasters of China, Japan, Singapore, Brunei and India.²²

ATV provided the Committee with the following list of major satellite broadcasters available in the Asia Pacific region. The list is divided into government and privately owned services -

GOVERNMENT OWNED

SERVICE	LANGUAGE	FORMAT	ORIGIN
AusTV	English	Comprehensive	Australia
BBC World	English	News/Documentary	Britain
CCTV	Standard Chinese	Comprehensive	China
Deutsche Welle	German/Engl/Span	Comprehensive	Germany
Doordarshan	Hindi/English	Comprehensive	India
NHK International	Japanese	Comprehensive	Japan
RTP	Portuguese	Comprehensive	Portugal
RAI	Italian	Comprehensive	Italy
TVE	Spanish	Comprehensive	Spain
TCS	Standard Chinese	Comprehensive	Singapore

22 ATV submission, p. 15.

PRIVATELY OWNED SERVICES

SERVICE	LANGUAGE	FORMAT	OWNERSHIP
ABN	Engl./Stand. Chin.	Business News	USA
ABS/CBN	Tagalog/English	Comprehensive	Philippines
Bloomberg	English	Business News	USA
Canal Plus	French	Entertainment	France
CETV	Standard Chinese	Entertainment	China/Indon.
Zhong Tian	Standard Chinese	News	Hong Kong
Dadi Channel	Standard Chinese	Infotainment	Hong Kong
CMT	English	Music	USA
Discovery Channel	Engl./Stand. Chin.	Documentaries	USA
ESPN Asia	English	Sport	USA
Golf Channel	English	Sport	USA
Karaoke TV	Canton./Stand.Chin.	Music	Singapore
MCM	French	Music	France
MGM Gold	English	Movies	USA
MTV	Eng/Hindi/Chin/Jap	Music	USA
CNBC	English	News	USA
NBC Asia	English	News	USA
Playboy	largely English	Soft Porn.	USA
Sky	English	Horse Racing	Australia
Sun TV	Tamil	Entertainment	India
HBO	English	Movies	USA
Cinemax	English	Movies	USA
CNN	English	News	USA
TNT	English	Movies	USA
Cartoon Network	English	Children's	USA
TV5	French	Infotainment	France
TVBS	Standard Chinese	Entertainment	Hong Kong
TVBS Golden	Standard Chinese	Entertainment	Hong Kong
TVBS Newsnet	Standard Chinese	News	Hong Kong
TVIS	Standard Chinese	Sport	Hong Kong
TVSN	Engl./Chin./Jap.	Home Shopping	Australia
Walt Disney TV	English	Entertainment	USA

In addition to the above list of privately owned services, the Hong Kong based satellite broadcaster, Star TV, carries a 'package' of channels on its Asiasat 2 satellite. These are operated by Star and a variety of other firms. The channels are listed below.

STAR TV - ASIASAT 2 CHANNELS

Star Chinese Channel	Standard Chinese	Family Entertainment
Star Plus	English	Family Entertainment
Star Sports	English/Standard Chinese	Sport
Channel V	English/Thai/Chinese/Hindi	Music
Zee TV	Hindi	Family Entertainment
EL TV	Hindi	Family Entertainment
Star Movies	Chinese/Hindi/Arabic	Movies
Zee Movies	Hindi	Movies
Viva Cinema	Tagalog	Movies
Film Indonesia	Bahasa Indonesia	Movies
Phoenix Channel	Standard Chinese	General Entertainment

8.41 The Committee notes that ATV is the only international broadcaster which broadcasts a comprehensive programming format in English. The Indian broadcaster, Doordarshan, a comprehensive broadcaster uses both Hindi and English and the Philippines broadcaster, ABS/CBN, broadcasts in Tagalog and English. The main commercial station in the region, the Hong Kong based Star TV, does not broadcast and news or current affairs programs. Most English language news programs are American in origin other than the BBC. Although there may be many channels in operation, many are in foreign languages and/or broadcast specific types of programming. Direct competition with ATV is therefore much less than one might expect from a simple count of the number of satellite channels in operation. It should also be noted that the 100 plus channels mentioned by Mr Mansfield includes local television broadcasters using multi-channel satellite transmissions to differentiate among programming types.

Globalisation

8.42 In a section entitled 'The Future' in his report, Mr Bob Mansfield wrote:

The environment in which the ABC will operate over the next decade will be characterised by continuing and rapid change, as well as increased competition for audiences and available government funding.

Digital technology developments have the potential to revolutionise both the production and distribution of broadcasting content. The compression of digital broadcasting signals will significantly increase the number of broadcasting channels available, effectively ending spectrum scarcity and increasing the range of services available to consumers. Potentially, listeners and viewers will have access to arrange of niche services offering extremely high quality sound and pictures as well as more services offering general programming...

Broadcasting services will be increasingly be provided by a mix of delivery systems, including terrestrial transmitters, satellites and broadband cable.

Subscription services will increase their share of the listening and viewing audience in Australia.²³

8.43 The Committee received ample evidence confirming these statements. They apply to both Australia's domestic and also the international broadcasting environment. The very technological developments that dictate change, expansion and diversity are those which determine that domestic and international broadcasting interests must merge as communications systems become increasing globalised.²⁴

8.44 Although Mr Mansfield refers to the interactive 'mix of delivery systems' he did not consider, because presumably it was beyond the scope of his inquiry, that such diversification means there is no simple line progression of advancement from one technology to the other: instead media developments complement each other and compete in an expanded communications network. Mr Mansfield was not in a position to comment on the implications for the ABC as a national broadcaster in a world of other national broadcasters and regional commercial broadcasters. As ABC Managing Director, Mr Brian Johns pointed out in evidence to the Committee:

The national public broadcaster of Australia does not operate in isolation. It has served diverse community interests throughout Australia. But, in serving local audiences, the ABC has never limited its vision to parochial interests, even more so in the era of media globalisation. The ABC must have a clearly focused international outlook.²⁵

8.45 Professor Rod Tiffin, communications expert and twice reviewer of Radio Australia (1989; 1994-95) submitted to the inquiry:

In many ways the future of international public service broadcasting will depend on whether different national organisations, which traditionally viewed each others as competitors, can develop productive co-operative arrangements, together producing a presence in the multi-channel international broadcasting environment that none can achieve alone.²⁶

8.46 The response from Radio Australia's international counterparts suggests that the current international broadcasting environment is on the right path. Dynamic and competitive as the field is, the broadcasters themselves show that their operations run on idealism and a commitment to producing services which serve national and international needs; in that there is a fellowship of difference which necessarily unites.

8.47 In a tangible sense, the serving of mutual interest drives the international market for leasing or exchange of time options which are increasingly conducted between broadcasters. Mr Nigel Holmes of RA reports on such a beneficial exchange arrangement RA has with the BBC:

23 Mansfield, *op.cit.* p. 12.

24 See Mr Brian Johns, ABC Managing Director, Committee Hansard, pp. 93-4.

25 *Committee Hansard*, p. 93.

26 Submission No. 422, p. 7.

We are carrying some BBC broadcasts at the moment. The BBC wanted to improve the quality of its short - wave signal into Papua New Guinea and the south-west Pacific and, as I speak, we are carrying two one - hour BBC World Service broadcasts every day. The quid pro quo is that we have access to the BBC master control centre in London, which switches Radio Australia programs - received from Sydney via ISDN line - to the World Radio Net headquarters. World Radio Net is a small operation which operates satellite transmissions around the world, and the BBC help us get our signal into the World Radio Net system, in exchange for the two one-hour broadcasts carried on Radio Australia transmitters.²⁷

8.48 He drew attention to potential areas of international co-operation for RA:

Ideally we would like to mount our short-wave broadcasts within 1,500 to 3,000 kilometres of the intended target area. For example, if Radio Australia were able to take up the proposal from NHK, from Radio Japan, to share transmission resources, we would be delighted to let the Japanese broadcast in Japanese, for example, to New Zealand and the South Pacific, and in exchange mount broadcasts in standard Chinese from a Japanese based transmitter which would direct a very reliable signal into North Asia.²⁸

8.49 Dr Tiffen submitted that:

We are entering an unprecedented era of media globalisation. Transnational broadcasting and communication of all forms have increased in volume and intensity....

Regional relations have never been more central to Australia's national interest, while media globalisation requires that all major media organisations have an international dimension to their strategies. At the very moment when transnational media traffic is becoming important, and when Australia's relations with Asia are universally recognised as crucial to our future, we are about abandon an established reputation and expertise, and give up enterprise entirely . It is hard to envisage a more irrational, historically bizarre policy.²⁹

8.50 It is unfortunate that the Minister for Communications and the Arts gave Mr Mansfield very restricted terms of reference for his inquiry into the ABC. The omission of a proper examination of the ABC's international broadcasting services and of the future role of the ABC in a rapidly globalising broadcasting environment meant that these important issues were not considered. Although this inquiry examined the 'foreign affairs' and other related aspects of Australia 's international broadcasters (RA and ATV), the Committee's inquiry did not extend to the future role of the ABC itself. Nevertheless, the Committee believes that evidence taken during the inquiry has made it clear that there is a need to ensure the future of

27 *Committee Hansard*, p. 385.

28 *Committee Hansard*, p. 384.

29 Dr R. Tiffen, submission no. 422, p. 5.

the ABC in the context of media globalisation and technological advances so that the organisation will indeed be in a position to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

CHAPTER 9

CONSEQUENCES OF THE CLOSURE OF RADIO AUSTRALIA AND/OR AUSTRALIA TELEVISION

9.1 Term of reference (c) requires the Committee to consider the 'consequences of the closure of Radio Australia and/or Australia Television'.

9.2 A number of media reports in recent weeks have indicated various proposals under consideration by the Expenditure Review Committee and Cabinet in relation to the future of RA. In the earlier reports, it appeared that RA would be reduced to a satellite service in English only, but more recent reports have indicated that this would be supplemented by short-wave services to the Pacific in English and Tok Pisin.

9.3 Notwithstanding the Government's decision to restrict funding for RA, which would reduce RA to a minimal service, the ABC Board decided on 30 April 1997 to supplement funding by \$1.6 million to enable the Mandarin, Vietnamese, Khmer and Indonesian language services to continue operating on a reduced basis. No funding was provided for the Thai, Cantonese and French language services. Whilst the Committee welcomes the Board's decision as far as it went, it still believes that the substantial reduction in current services will be a serious loss to Australia's and the ABC's international services and reputation. At least the ABC Board's decision recognises the importance of broadcasting to Asia in Asian languages. This is something that the Government wrongly dismisses as unimportant.

9.4 As it appears from media reports that Radio Australia's Pacific services will be maintained with the support of the Government, the Committee considers below only the consequences of closure of RA's non-Pacific services. Notwithstanding the ABC's recent decision to continue four Asian language services, they are continuing without government support and three foreign language services will be closed. In the circumstances, the Committee believes that it should still put on the record the consequences of closing Asian language services. The Committee also considers the consequences of the closure of ATV or its privatisation, whereby it is driven only by commercial imperatives.

9.5 The Committee believes that the consequences of the closure of RA Asian services, and/or ATV or ATV's privatisation, would seriously damage Australian interests.

Domestic Consequences

9.6 A more immediate consequence of the discontinuation of the service would be the loss of employment and a reduction in local ABC television production. The Community and Public Sector Union advised the Committee that close to 20 television staff would be directly affected. In addition, 'the closure or relocation of Australia Television would decimate local ABC television production and mean the loss of Darwin as anything other than a Regional bureau of ABC Television.'¹

¹ Community and Public Sector Union, submission p.15.

9.7 In addition, probably more than half the staff of RA, including many long-term language specialists, would lose their jobs. It is a resource that is virtually irreplaceable.

9.8 If the Cox Peninsula (near Darwin) short-wave transmitters were to close, it is estimated that the Darwin Power Authority would lose revenue of \$2.1 million a year. In addition, there would be loss of maintenance work on the transmitters which would affect a number of contractors in the Territory.

International Consequences

9.9 The Committee was warned by many submitters living in the region that the closure of ATV or RA would send a strong signal to the region that Australia is not interested in Asia. Such a decision, coming within twelve months of the termination of the Development Import Finance Facility (DIFF), which caused considerable diplomatic problems for the Australian Government, and the more recent race debate, which received much bad media coverage in Asia, would only confirm the doubts already held by many Asians about Australia's commitment to Asia. It would also confirm suspicions that Australia is only concerned about what it can get out of Asia through trade without making an investment in forging ties with the region. As Australia is regarded as a relatively wealthy developed nation, the fact that closures of its highly successful and respected international broadcasting services could occur for small budgetary savings is incomprehensible to Asians who made submissions to the Committee. It must also be said that even consideration of their closure or sale is incomprehensible to the Committee.

9.10 Moreover, how will Australia explain to the region the cessation of its services on cost grounds when nearly all Asian countries operate short-wave services? It seems incredible to the Committee that even countries in the region which are struggling with social and economic problems far greater than Australia's problems see the benefit of operating international short-wave services.

9.11 The tone of many of the submissions coming from abroad is one of shock, anger and sadness. For the tens of millions of devoted listeners to RA, some for dozens of years, particularly from countries where there is not a free media, all the goodwill for Australia built up through years of avid listening will turn to bewilderment and anger. Trust and reliability are the key qualities in any relationship in Asia. If that trust is broken, the relationship disintegrates. This was told to the Committee time and time again during our inquiry into the abolition of the DIFF scheme in 1996 and also during the Committee's earlier inquiry into relations with China. There will be tens of millions of Asians who will feel very hurt and let down by Australia. That will not be good for our image. It will also hurt Australia in many ways.

9.12 Many Asians listen to RA and ATV because the services are friendly and the presenters not only understand Australia but also the cultures and countries to which they are broadcasting. The services, including news and current affairs, are about Australia and the region. No other international broadcaster dedicates itself to regional affairs in the same way as RA and ATV. That is why, in the case of RA, it receives so much mail, far more than any other international broadcaster. This is loyalty which money cannot buy.

9.13 If RA and ATV are closed, who will project Australia's image to the region? The new generations in the region will not know anything about Australia. There will be no feeling of warmth towards Australia that has been built up among listeners of RA and more recently viewers of ATV. When future events occur which unfairly get bad media coverage in the region, who will provide a counter view? Without RA and ATV, no-one. How will the Australian side of the story get told. It won't without RA and ATV.

9.14 It appears from the submissions and other sources that RA, and more particularly ATV, encourage tourism to Australia. Is Australia in the future going to spend millions of dollars more in Asia to promote tourism to Australia? It would be more effectively done by showing tourism programs on ATV at a fraction of the cost and using tourism advertising more sparingly.

9.15 ATV and RA portray Australia as a clean, healthy and safe country for Asians to send their children for their education. This type of portrayal is far more effective than spending considerable sums of money through education centres in Asia and other recruitment strategies. How much will it cost to replace this benefit should RA and ATV be closed?

9.16 Without RA and ATV, who will inform business and industry in the region about the advantages of doing business with Australians and Australian companies? Who will tell the region about our advances and developments in science and technology? Who will tell the region that Australia is really a very clever country? There are other ways but at what cost?

9.17 How much will it cost to replace the promotion of the Olympic Games in Sydney which RA and ATV would have done and would the alternatives be more successful?

9.18 Who will keep the tens of thousands of Australian expatriates living in the region informed about Australian affairs? Without RA and ATV, it will be very difficult for many of them to keep abreast of what is happening in Australia and the region.

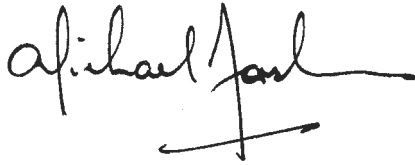
9.19 As Australia has been a strong advocate of universal human rights for a long time, and human rights organisations in the region have depended on RA's accurate reporting of human rights matters, who will replace this invaluable service if RA's Asian language services are closed.

9.20 If you feel some affinity with a country, you will be disposed to buy its products, enter into business arrangements with it, attend visiting cultural or sporting events involving people from that country, or visit the country. Tens of millions of Asians have developed that affinity through listening or viewing our broadcasting services. We don't have to persuade them that we are a friendly neighbour. Without RA and ATV, how will Australia establish that affinity with our Asian neighbours? It won't.

9.21 RA and ATV have been the only independent news services broadcasting to the region which focus on Australian and regional news and current affairs. The BBC may be independent but does not provide the coverage of Asia Pacific news that RA and ATV provide. The region will be poorer for the absence of RA and ATV.

9.22 The Committee has posed a number of questions above. Mr Mansfield did not consider them. There is no evidence that the Minister for Communications and the Arts or the

Government has considered them. If the Government goes ahead with the closure or reduction of RA or the closure or privatisation of ATV, the Government has a duty to the nation and the region to answer them.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Forshaw". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Senator Michael Forshaw
Chairman

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Brown, Mr
Brown, Mr David
Brown, Mr P H
Brown, Mr Richard
Brown, Mr Roswell
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Buenaventura, Mr Luis Carmelo L
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Burdon, Mr G W
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Burrige, Ms Kate
Burton, Mr Andrew
Butler, Mr Michael L
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Caldwell, Ms C
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Cao Thien, Mr Nguyen
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Chaweepak, Mr Surathep
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Cheni, Mr/Ms
Cherrey, Ms J
Chi, Ms Tran Thi Kim
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Cole, Ms Marie
Coleston, Mr R R
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Crawford, Mr/Ms L D
Crawford, Ms Hazel
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Cresswell, Ms Beaverley
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Cunningham, Mr Arthur J
Currey, Mr Ian
Currey, Ms Carol
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Davis, Ms Norma
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DeMaine, Mr Greg
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Ellis, Mr/Ms G
Ellis, Ms Heather
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Knight, Mr Murray
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Lue, Mr/Ms Han
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Marks, Mr/Ms I P
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 McLennan, Mr Colin
 McLeod, Mr/Ms K P
 McLuarric, Mr/Ms J
 McNeil, Mr Andrew
 McNeilly, Mr/Ms W
 McNeilly, Ms Pam
 McPherson, Associate Professor Kenneth
 McQuade, Ms Barbar
 McQuade, Ms Ros
 McQuarrie, Ms Sarah
 McSwann, Mr G
 McWatters, Ms Marguerite
 Meabank, Mr Julann
 Meaney, Fr A F
 Meerendonk, Mr Robert van
 Melhuish, Mr John
 Metherall, Ms Jan
 Metherell, Mr Bridget
 Meyer, Ms Joy
 Micallef, Mr Joe
 Micallef, Ms Lindy
 Michael, Mr Dean
 Michell, Mr Ted
 Millar, Mr David
 Millar, Mr James
 Miller, Mr Brett
 Miller, Mr Keith
 Miller, Mr/Ms Dayle
 Miller, Ms Irene
 Miller, Ms Leah
 Mills, Mr C
 Mills, Mr Russell
 Mills, Ms Patrica
 Milne-Goss, Ms
 Milner, Mr MJ
 Milton, Mr Peter
 Milton, Ms W E
 Ming, Mr AJ
 Minh Phuong, Mr Van
 Mirabueno, Mr Christian R
 Miranda, Mr/Ms R
 Mitaxa, Mr Ronald G
 Mitchal, Ms Marie
 Mitchell, Mr Michael
 Mitchell, Mr Pauline
 Mohan, Mr David
 Mohan, Mr M S
 Molnar, Ms June
 Molnar, Tibor
 Monim, Mr Yosef
 Monroe, Mr John
 Montague, Mr Brenden
 Montague, Ms Judith
 Moore, Mr A and Mrs R
 Moore, Mr David
 Moore, Mr Guy
 Moore, Ms Jacqueline
 Moorhead, Mr D H
 Morabito, Mr Maria
 Moraro, Mr Anthony
 Moraro, Ms Gail
 Morgan, Mr Bruce
 Morgan, Ms Christine
 Morgan, Professor Frank

Morton, Dr R C
 Morton, Mr Barrie
 Moseley, Mr/Ms A
 Moses, Mr/Ms Amis
 Mosley, Ms Marianne
 Moss, Mr John
 Moss, Mr Valerie
 Moss, Mr/Ms C
 Mott, Ms Susannah
 Mouly, Mr/Ms Leng
 Mudaliar, Dr Shyam
 Muderajat, Mr
 Mudjirno, Mr Sujit
 Muir, Mr Alexander
 Muirhead, Mr Graham
 Mulholland, Mr Stephen
 Muller, Mr Anne
 Mulnar, Mr John
 Munir, Mr Rudi
 Munos, Mr/Ms P
 Munro, Erin
 Murchie, Mr Craig
 Murdoch, Mr/Ms P B
 Murphy, Mr Darren R
 Murphy, Mr Scan
 Murphy, Mr/Ms N
 Murphy, Ms Deirdre
 Murphy, Ms Sharin
 Muscat, Mr Andrew
 Musgrave, Dr Ian
 Myaly, Mr Mark
 Naidu, Dr Vijay
 Nakry, Mr/Ms Sar
 Nam, Mr Nguyen
 Nanda, Mr/Ms D
 Nardella, Ms Faye
 Nash, Mr Alan
 Nash, Mr Garry
 Nash, Ms Margaret
 Naumann, Professor Robert A
 Neal, Mr AD
 Neighbour, Mr Brendan
 Neilson MA BTh Dip TEFL, Rev David
 Nekiriiai, Mr Edmond
 Nelson, Mr/Ms M
 Nesbit, Ms Julia
 Nevins, Mr William A
 Newman, Mr Jeffrey
 Newton, Mr/Ms D
 Newton, Ms Jill
 Nga, Ms Nguyen Thi
 Ngoan, Mr To
 Ngoc Chau, Mr Vo
 Ngoc Uan, Mr Hoang
 Nguyen, Mr Le
 Nguyen, Mr Nguyen Cong
 Nguyen, Mr Nguyen Huu
 Nhan, Mr Doan Dai
 Nhon, Mr Nguyen Van
 Nicholas, Mr/Ms A
 Nicholas, Mrs A
 Nicholl, Mr and Mrs T B
 Nicholls, Ms Cassie
 Nichols, Mr James
 Nicol, Ms Maree
 Nicolaas, Mr Hans
 Nightingale, Mr Geoffrey
 Ninkov, Professor Zoran
 Niranrat, Mr Chucheap
 Nixon, Mr James
 Nixon, Ms Nicky
 Noh, Mr Mohamad
 Nolan, Mr/Ms H
 Nolan, Mr/Ms S
 Noonan, Mr B
 Noonan, Mr Paul G
 Noonan, Mr W
 Norman, Captain Barry
 Norris, Mr Andrew
 Northeast, Mr Simon
 Norton, Mr Peter J
 Norwood, Ms Carol
 Nuske, Mr/Ms R
 Nyn, Mr/Ms L
 O'Brien, Mr Morris
 O'Brien, Mr/Ms M
 O'Brien, Ms Carmel
 O'Brien, Ms Deirdre
 O'Brien, Ms G
 O'Callaghan, Mrs P
 O'Connell, Mr Terence
 O'Connor, Mr D and Mrs H

O'Connor, Mr Ian
O'Connor, Mr John
O'Connor, Mr Laurie
O'Connor, Mr Patrick
O'Connor, Mr/Ms N P
O'Connor, Ms P
O'Connor, Ms Pamela
O'Doherty, Fr John
O'Donnell, Mr Scott
O'Donnell, Ms Samantha
O'Donnell, Ms Sheryl
O'Driscoll, Mr Paul
O'Grady, Mr/Ms M
O'Keefe, Mr J
O'Keefe, Mr/Ms B
O'Loughlen, Ms Heather
O'Ncele, Mr/Ms G J
O'Neil, Mr/Ms M A
O'Neill, Mr John J
O'Regan, Mr Mark
O'Rielly, Mr Denisc
O, Mr Mai Van
Oakes, Mr S
Oakes, Mr/Ms M
Ogilvie, Mr Ian
Ogle, Dr Graham
Oldham, Mr David A
Olsen, Mr Roy
Olsen, Ms Kristina
Ormerod, Mr/Ms
Ormesher, Mr Neil
Orr, Mr Stuart
Orr, Ms Susan
Osborn, Mr Jeff
Osborn, Ms Monique
Ovenden, Mr Alex
Ozdien, Mr
Paddick, Mr K G
Pagaciazias, Mr S
Page, Mr Richard
Palmer, Mr David
Pambudi, Mr Aji
Pamphilon, Ms Joan D
Pankhurst, Mr Greg
Pardy, Ms June
Parijs, Mr Manfred
Parker, Mr Gregory
Parker, Mr/Ms J
Parker, Mrs Jean
Parkes, Mr/Ms D
Parkes, Mr/Ms S
Parkinson, Ms Jannelle
Patch, Mr Simon
Paterson, Mr/Ms M
Paul, Mrs Jean
Pawlukowski, Mr Andrew
Pcacock, Ms Linda
Pegiel, Ms Jean
Pell, Mr Ken
Pemberton, Mr George
Perchminelis, Mr/Ms G
Pergomirelli, Mr/Ms L
Perkin, Mr/Ms D
Perkins, Ms Gladys
Pernokis, Mr Dan
Perrin, Mr/Ms J
Perry, Mr Maurice
Persson, Mr/Ms E
Persson, Ms Lorraine
Perton, Mr Victor
Pescod, Mr Neil
Peters, Mr/Ms K
Peters, Ms Diana
Petersen, Mr/Ms F
Petersen, Mr/Ms Mette
Peterson, Ms Susan
Petrov, Mr/Ms C
Petruvic, Mr Geory
Phally, Ms Chhun
Pham, Mr/Ms T
Phat, Mr Do
Phat, Mr Mo Ra
Phillips, Mr and Mrs Paul
Phillips, Mr Ross
Phillips, Mr/Ms S
Phillips, Mrs Marg
Phillips, Ms April
Phonethip, Mr/Ms Chansoda
Phu, Mr Phan Dac
Phu, Mr Vin
Phuong, Mr Nguyen
Pidcock, Mr David

Pilgrim, Mr Noel
 Pinkerton, Mr Don
 Pinkerton, Ms Ruth
 Pinskler, Mr N
 Pinwill, Ms Sophie
 Pizarro, Mr E
 Plaisted, Mr Peter
 Plumb, Mr John
 Plympton, Ms Anne
 Pogn, Mr/Ms Mou
 Pogson, Mr Martin
 Poh Lim, Mr/Ms Chin
 Polasek, Mr O F
 Poliki, Mr John
 Pollock, Mr Robert
 Pollock, Ms M
 Porter, Mr David
 Porter, Mr James O
 Porter, Ms Diana
 Pottage, Mrs Dorothy
 Potter, Mr/Ms DR
 Poulter, Mrs A
 Poulton, Mr John
 Powell, Mr/Ms J
 Power, Mr Edmond
 Power, Mr Frank
 Power, Mr Maree
 Power, Mrs Geraldine
 Power, Ms Fiona
 Power, The Hon Mr Justice
 Prakritpat, Mr Pimpa
 Prakrobban, Mr Vichet
 Prathana, Mr/Ms Ouk
 Preston, Ms Yvonne
 Price, Mr Greg
 Price, Mr Richard
 Price, Mrs Kathleen
 Princhill, Mrs V
 Pritchard, Mr/Ms G
 Pritchard, Mr/Ms J
 Pruss, Mr/Ms D R
 Pullman, Mr Ian
 Puluma, Mr/Ms Joe Aisack Soo
 Punton, Mr Tom
 Purcell, Mr Andrew
 Pye, Mrs J
 Pym, Mr Richard E
 Qing Quian, Mr
 Quang, Mr Nguyen Hong
 Quilter, Ms Janet
 Quilter, Ms Judith
 Quinlan, Captain Sean
 Qun, Nin Z E
 Quoc Huy, Dr Vu
 Quynh Tien, Ms Nguyen
 Racham, Mr R
 Raimundo, Mr/Ms R L
 Raja, Ms Nareal
 Rajagopal, Mr Thiru
 Rakula, Mrs A
 Ralton, Mr/Ms J W
 Ramage, Mr B and Mrs P
 Ramsay, Mr W D
 Ramsay, Ms Anne
 Ramsay, Ms Katherine
 Ramsay, Ms Shirley
 Rand, Mr/Ms D A J
 Rantham, Mr/Ms H G
 Rarung, Mr John Frans
 Rasche, Mr Frank
 Rath, Mr Eugene
 Rath, Mr Eugene
 Ray, Mr D
 Ray, Ms J
 Rea, Mr Damien
 Reason, Mr/Ms M
 Rebeird, Mr Gerard
 Rebeird, Mr/Ms A
 Reddick, Ms R
 Rees, Mr Hugh
 Reeves, Mr Zeik
 Reich, Mr Bruce M
 Reichert, Mr Max
 Reichert, Mr/Ms O
 Remedios, Mr/Ms G
 Remedios, Mr/Ms S
 Renadios, Mr/Ms C
 Renfrey, Mr N and Mrs G
 Requelime, Mr/Ms R
 Rhee, Mr Simon
 Rhodes, Ms Jenny
 Ricci, Mrs Moira

Rice, Mr Brett
Richards, Mr and Mrs J
Richards, Mr Maurice
Richardson, Mr R
Richardson, Mr Shane
Richmond, Mr Stephen
Rickershauser, Mr Paul
Rickey, Mr/Ms S
Ridgewell, Mr/Ms B W
Ridgewell, Ms Barbara
Rieck, Mr Malcolm
Rigby, Ms J
Riley, Mr Kevin
Riley, Ms Dawn
Riley, Ms Judy
Ringer, Mr/Ms WLJ
Ringham, Mr/Ms W
Ripper, Mr Tim
Riseley, Mr Chris
Ritchie, Mr/Ms K M
Rivera, Mr/Ms Alma A
Rivera, Ms Alma A
Rivers, Ms Charlotte
Roberts, Dr Graham
Roberts, Mr Jim
Roberts, Mr Phillip J
Roberts, Ms Michelle
Roberts, Ms Pam
Roberts-Thomson, Mr M H
Robins, Mr Hayden
Robinson, Mr Bernie
Robinson, Mr Hilton
Robinson, Mr/Ms K C
Robinson, Ms Kyra
Robson, Mr Edward A
Robson, Mr Peter
Roche, Mr/Ms Imelda J
Rodan, Ms Beverly
Rodis, Ms Patricia
Rodriguez, Mr/Ms E
Roestam, Mr/Ms Boes
Roller, Mr/Ms D
Roose, Ms Joan
Rose, Mr Gary R
Rosenbloom, Mr John
Roseworth, Mr Tim
Ross, Mr BM
Ross, Mr J F
Ross, Mr/Ms G W
Ross, Ms Julie
Ross-Jones, Ms Claudia
Rossen, Ms Judith
Rosser, Mr/Ms N S
Rothstadt, Mr David
Rothstadt, Ms Kay
Rout, Ms Lyn
Routley, Mr/Ms L M
Routley, Mr/Ms M
Royzade, Mr Akhil
Rush, Mr J and Mrs M
Rush, Ms Susan
Rusnadi, Mr/Ms
Russell, Mr John
Ruston, Mr E W
Ryan, Mr Brendan
Ryan, Mr Tony
Ryan, Mr/Ms B
Ryan, Mr/Ms S
Ryan, Ms Helen
Saffin, Ms Denise
Salindeho, Mr/Ms A
Salter, Ms Lindy
Samad, Mr/Ms H Nahdi
Samosir, Mr Francis
San, Mr/Ms Sok
Sandra, Miss Susan
Sanh, Mr Thach
Sankey, Mr/Ms J
Sapari, Mrs Bambang
Sapmin, MS Wendy
Sarkies, Mr Vic
Sarom, Mr/Ms Kong
Sarriola, Mr I T
Sarwo Rini, Mr Kristien
Sau, Mr/Ms B S Ngan
Saunders, Mr/Ms H
Saunders, Mr Stuart
Saunders, Mr/Ms E
Saunders, Mr/Ms M
Savage, Mr/Ms W
Sawelyn, Miss L
Sawlyn, Mrs D

Saxby, Ms Claire
Scaife, Mr Frank J
Scali, Mr/Ms D
Schindler, Mr James T
Schipp, Mr Mark J
Schlerdt, Mr Mark
Schmelzer, Mr John
Schurmann, Ms Tiffany
Schweinfurth, Mr Sven
Sciduna, Ms Nicole
Scott, Mr AJ
Scott, Mr David
Scott, Mr T C
Scott, Ms Pamela
Scott, Ms Sue
Scott-Murphy, Mr Rick
Searle, Ms Peggy L
Secretary-General (ABU)
Seed, Mr Brian
Seow, Mr Chee-Wee
Sestito, Mr R
Setzepfandt, Ms Yvonne
Seufert, Mr Craig
Sharp, Ms Joyce
Shaw, Mr Bill
Shaw, Mr Glenn
Shaw, Ms Nuala
Shearwater, Ms Gillian R
Sheehan, Mr David
Sheil, Ms Megan
Sheilds, Mr/Ms P
Sherriff, Mr Bill
Shewan, Mr Keith
Shipp, Ms Dianne J
Shook, Professor C A
Shute, Ms Carmel
Sieminski, Mr Robert
Sienwright, Mr John K
Siggers, Mr P F C
Simmons, Mr/Ms P M
Simmons, Ms Kristie
Simon, Ms Fiona
Simpson, Mr Bruce
Sinclair, Ms Jan
Sing, Mr/Ms N
Singh, Mr Amit
Sinh, Mr Ho Tien
Siswadi, Mr
Siswono, Mr Welly
Skey, Mr/Ms J
Skey, Mr/Ms M
Sleeth, Ms Rachel
Slinger, Ms Mildred
Smith, Mr and Mrs H L
Smith, Mr A W
Smith, Mr Alan
Smith, Mr C W H
Smith, Mr EP
Smith, Mr Gary
Smith, Mr L R
Smith, Mr Lewis
Smith, Mr M and Mrs B
Smith, Mr M J
Smith, Mr Ted
Smith, Mr Ted
Smith, Mr/Ms M
Smith, Mrs Francine
Smith, Ms Cherie
Smith, Ms Jan
Smith, Ms Joyce
Smith, Ms Leigh
Smith, Ms Madeleine
Smith, Ms R
Smith, Ms Rosemary
Smith, Ms Suzanne
Smith, Mr Jonathan
Smythe, Ms Rosemary
Soames, Mr/Ms G
Soames, Ms Mary
Sobey, Mr Ian
Soesanto, Mr Ichsan
Soetanto, Mr P
Soh, Ms Helena
Sojka, Ms Karina
Solier, Ms Jan
Son, Mr Doan Nhu
Song, Mr Rebecca
Soorkiz, Mr David
Sorensen, Mr MA
Sornkeaw, Ms Suneewan
Sovann, Venerable Srey
Sowrirajan, Mr Sri R

Spadafora, Mr/Ms P
Sparke, Ms Carolyn
Spear, Mr Peter Alexander
Spear, Ms Elizabeth
Spence, Mr Peter
Spencer, Mr Paul
Spencer, Mr/Ms E J
Spencer, Mr/Ms N
Spencer, Mr/Ms R H
Spinaze, Ms Georgina
Splitter, Dr L J
Spry, Mr R
Stacey, Mr Brandon
Stafey, Ms Sally
Staff of PT Koba Tin
Stagg, Mr Ian
Stamenkovic, Mr Mirjana
Stamenkovic, Mr/Ms H
Standwick, Mr Les
Standwick, Mrs June
Stanlake, Mr John
Stanlake, Mr Stewart J
Stanlake, Mrs Patricia
Stanley, Mr Jeremy
Stanley, Mr Lachlan
Stanley, Mr/Ms G
Stanley, Ms Fiona
Stanley, Ms Julie
Stanley, Ms Katie
Stapleton, Ms Ilona
Stark, Mr Phillip E
Stasey, Mr David
Stavely, Mr Tony
Steadman, Dr Robert G
Steed, Ms Judy
Steeman, Mr Arnoud
Steinle, Mr Peter
Stella-Haldone, Ms Melissa
Stemson, Mr NK
Stensholt, Mr Bob
Stephen, Mr D B
Stephen, Ms Christine
Stephenson, Miss N L
Steuhl, Dr Wolfgang
Stevens, Mr G J
Stevens, Mr Tom
Stevens, Ms Pauline
Stewart, Mr Andrew
Stidwell, Mr/Ms E
Stinson, Mr Steve J
Stoll, Mr/Ms PK
Stone, Mr Dominic
Stott, Mr/Ms S
Stratton, Mr Pat
Stretch, Mr Jonathan H
Strickett, Mr John
Stubbins, Mr John
Stubbs, Mr Carole
Sukartono, Mr
Sullivan, Mr/Ms I
Sultan, Mr W
Sultan, Mr/Ms K
Sunar Hupadi, Mr R S
Suradi, Mr Ngadi
Surferland, Mr Peter
Suseno, Mr Herman J
Sutanto, Mr David N
Sutherland, Mr Michael
Sutterby, Ms Anne
Sutton, Mr George
Suwaryo, Mr O
Sward, Ms Rosalie
Sweeney, Mr/Ms B
Sword, Mr/Ms O B
Synnot, Ms Ilse
Tabernier, Mr
Taft, Mr Michael
Tam Thanh, Mr Truong
Tan, Mr David
Tan, Mr/Ms S S
Tandy, Dr P
Tapp, Mr/Ms T K
Tardent, Mr Dave
Taruc, Mr Roland
Tate, Mr F
Tate, Mr Michael
Tate, Mr/Ms B
Tattam, Mr/Ms F M
Tau, Mr Lee
Tayler, Mr Larry
Taylor, Mr P G
Taylor, Mr/Ms B

Taylor, Mr/Ms D
Taylor, Ms J
Taylor, Ms Sheila
Taylor-Denning, Mr Gillian
Telqenkamp, Ms Michelle
Temaru, Mr Oscar
Tent, Ms Jan
Teoh, Mr Rhonda
Terawsky, Mr Paul
Terawsky, Ms Elizabeth
Terry, Mr/Ms J H
Testa, Mr David
Thank, Mr Hue
Thao, Mr Luu Xuan
The Staff of Bali International School
Theelter, Ms Virginia
Theunissen, Mr/Ms S
Theunissen, Ms W
Thi Bach Tuyet, Ms Luong
Thi Trang, Ms Vu
Thi, Ms Pham Hong
Thinh, Mr Do Duc
Thomas, Dr Gillian
Thomas, Mr John L
Thomas, Mr R
Thomas, Mr Russell
Thomas, Mr W D
Thomas, Mr/Ms M G
Thomas, Mr/Ms V
Thomas, Ms Irene N
Thomas, Ms Julie
Thompson, Mr Chris
Thompson, Mr Gregory
Thompson, Ms Brooke
Thompson, Ms Connie
Thompson, Ms Maritja
Thomsett, Ms Laura
Thomson, Mr Alexander
Thomson, Ms Irene
Thorburn, Mr/Ms A
Thorley, Mr Bruce
Thornton, Mr/Ms B P
Thornton, Mr/Ms J
Thorpe, Ms Judith
Throsby, Mr Peter W
Thwaites, Mr Kate

Tiang, Dr S P
Tien Tran, Mr Van
Tiffen, Mr Rodney
Tilekidis, Mr/Ms L
Tilekidis, Mr/Ms M
Tily, Mr Howard
Timpasut, Mr/Ms Puonggeaw
Tippett, Ms J
Tjoeka, Ms Roza
Tjondro, Mr/Ms R Bambang
Toan, Mr Nguyen Thanh
Tobler, Ms Diane
Todo, Mr Lambertus
Tole, Ms Keryn
Tolhurst, Mr S
Toll, Mr/Ms A
Tolson, Ms Kereen
Tomkinson, Mr John S
Tomson, Mrs Sheela
Ton, Mr Huon Ton
Torma, Mr T
Trali, Mr/Ms N
Tram, Ms Thai Ngoc
Tran, Mr Nguyen Van
Tran, Ms Truong Ngoc
Trevean, Mr/Ms G
Trevean, Ms Margerie Trevean
Trewartha, Mr D and Mrs G
Tri, Mr Hua
Trinh, Dr Nguyen Thi Phuong
Trona, Mr Joe
Trotter, Mr Ed R
Truman, Ms Kaye
Truong, Mr Nguyen Vinh
Tu, Mr Pham Gia
Tu, Mr/Ms Wenz
Tucci, Ms Marion
Tuck, Mr Harvey
Tukan, Mr Aloys Sina
Tumewu, Mr Harry
Tuomainen, Mr Kari
Turner, Mr/Ms C
Turner, Mrs P
Tuyen, Mr Do Tan
Twomey, Mr Peter L
Tyson, Ms Anne

Uch, Mr Nivoth
 Uden, Miss Louise
 Urlimi, Mr W
 Urquhart, Mr Peter K
 Urquhart, Ms Jane
 Valenti, Mr Charles
 Valentine, Mr Wayne
 Van Baug, Mr Tran
 Van Be, Mr Le
 Van Binh, Mr Tran
 van den Boogert, Mr Hans
 Van Liem, Mr To
 Van Nguyen, Mr Tran
 van Spall, Mr Peter
 Van Thong, Mr Tran
 Vander Weerden, Ms Kathleen
 Vanderbelt, Mr Michael
 Vasey, Mr John B
 Vassiliov, MS Sophie
 Vassiliov, Ms Sophie
 Vasulto, Ms Susan
 Vaughan, Mr/Ms V
 Vaughan, Ms Rhonda
 Veesakul, Police General Boonsong
 Vercoe, Mr Brad
 Verity, Mr/Ms H
 Versluis, Mr Damien
 Vial, Mr/Ms P R
 Vial, Mr/Ms R J
 Viecovin, Ms Willemina
 Vigor, Mr Ray
 Vinh Sinh, Dr B S
 Vinh Truong, Mr Nguyen
 Vistarini, Dr W
 Vittona, Mr/Ms R
 Vivian, Mr David
 Vlasiotis, Ms Effie
 Walicka, Mr/Ms E
 Walkenberg, Ms Gaby
 Walker, Mr Robert
 Walker, Mr/Ms N
 Walker, Ms Donna
 Walker, Ms Julie
 Walker, Ms Pam
 Wallace, Mr John
 Waller, Mr John
 Walsh, Mr M
 Walsh, Mr Paul
 Walsh, Mr/Ms P
 Walsh, Ms Sheila
 Waltham, Mr Tony
 Wantrup, Mr/Ms P
 Ward, Mr David
 Wardley, Ms Ann
 Waring, Mr Simon
 Warland, Ms Margaret
 Wastle-Barrett, Ms Thelma
 Waters, Mr R
 Waters, Ms Catherine
 Waters, Ms Joan
 Watkins, Mr Stephen
 Watson, Mr T L and Mrs J E
 Watson, Ms Juliet
 Watson, Ms Margot
 Watson, Ms Maureen
 Watters, Mr Roger
 Watther, Ms Susan
 Watty, Ms Kathryn
 Weaich, Mr A K
 Wearzyn, Mr Stan
 Webb Johnson, Mrs Gloria
 Webb, Ms Adeney
 Webb-Johnson, Mr/Ms N
 Webber, Mr R
 Webster, Mr Robert
 Wee, Mr Randall
 Wells, Mr Charles
 Welsh, Mr Christopher
 Welsh, Ms Barbara
 Wena, Mr I Putu
 Werndly, Mr/Ms B
 Werner, Mr/Ms Chris
 Wesley, Mr Neil
 Westbury, Mr D
 Westbury, Mr/Ms
 Westenhaver, Mr William E
 Westwood, Mrs Elizabeth
 Whalen, Ms V
 Wheeler, Mr R D
 White, Mr Aaron
 White, Mr Alan
 White, Mr Derek

White, Mr Harold D
White, Mr John
White, Mr S H
Whitelaw, Mr AR
Whitelaw, Mr Peter
Whitelaw, Ms Elsie
Whiteman, Mr Robert
Whiteside, Ms Helen
Whitham, Ms Pam
Whitlock, Mrs Barbara
Whitlock, Mrs J
Whitside, Mr Roy
Widagdo, Mr/Mrs
Widdup, Mr Michael
Wielengi, Mrs J
Wiener, Mr Rob
Wierenga, Mr/Ms D L
Wieyhs, Mr/Ms Chris
Wiglesworth, Mr Bill
Wilcox, Mr Jim
Wild, Mr Lex
Wilden, Ms Caroline
Wildin, Professor Maurice W
Wilkes, Ms Lisa
Wilkie, Mr Paul J
Wilkinson, Mr Gary
Wilkinson, Mr/Ms D J
Willatt, Professor Steve
Williams, Mr Andrew
Williams, Mr Michael
Williams, Mr Robert
Williams, Mr Zac
Williams, Mr/Ms D
Williams, Mr/Ms L
Williams, Mrs M
Williams, Ms Keryn
Williams, Ms Michelle
Williamson, Mr D
Williamson, Mr/Ms G L
Williamson, Mr/Ms M
Willman, Mr Tony
Wilson, Mr Allen
Wilson, Mr Garry
Wilson, Mr Ian
Wilson, Mr Keith
Wilson, Mr Lawrie
Wilson, Mr Paul
Wilson, Mr Trevor
Wilson, Mr Trevor L
Wilson, Ms Sue
Winiecki, Mr/Ms T
Wischnowksi, Mr Heinz
Wise, Mr R K
Withana, Mr/Ms T
Withers, Ms Fonia
Wolfe, Mr Eric R
Wolfenden, Mr Peter
Wolkenberg, Mr Tom
Wollenberg, Ms Tanya
Wonnsdorf, Ms Lisa
Wood, Mr/Ms D H
Woodall, Mr J
Woodard, Mr Douglas
Woodford, Mr JMD
Woodgate, Mr Rachel
Woodhouse, Ms Anne
Woodrow, Ms Fay
Woods, Mr Paul
Woolhouse, Mr J
Worland, Mr Bob
Wormald, Mr Paul A
Worrall, Ms Carolyn
Wright, Mr Jerry
Wright, Mr John
Wynd, Mr Geoff
Wynne, Mr/Ms D
Wyse, Ms Linda
Xiaoping, Mr/Ms Song
Xu, Guowei
Xuan Hoa, Mr Pham
Xuan Le, Mr Lutu
Xuan Phu, Mr Dang
Y, Rev Thich Dieu
Yamin, Mr/Ms
Yates, Mr William
Ye, Ms Juj
Young, Mr A
Young, Mr/Ms C J
Young, Mr/Ms D
Young, Mr/Ms J K
Young, Mr/Ms Sigkthai
Young, Mrs Margaret

Young, Ms Anne
Young, Ms J
Young, Ms Jessica
Young, Ms Lyda
Young, Ms Wendy
Yu, Mr/Ms Xiao G
Zakharov, Mr R

Zbiegniewski, Mr Andrew
Zeleznikew, Dr John
Zemdegs, Mr David
Zhang, Mr/Ms D
Zoper, Mr Oscar
Zuideveld, Ms Jan

APPENDIX 2**LIST OF WITNESSES WHO APPEARED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE
AT PUBLIC HEARINGS****Wednesday, 12 March 1997, Melbourne****Mr Peter Leonard Barnett****Mr Michael Bird****Monday, 24 March 1997, Canberra****Radio Australia**

Mr Derek White, General Manager

Wednesday, 2 April 1997, Canberra**Australia Broadcasting Corporation/Radio Australia**

Mr Russell Stephen Balding, Head, Finance and Business Services

Mr Brian Johns, Managing Director

Mr Andy James Lloyd, Head, National Networks

Mr Michael Douglas Mann, Chief Executive

Mr Derek Sargent White, General Manager

Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance

Mr Brett Michael Bayly, Former Chair of DFAT MEAA House Committee

Mr Dave Lane, Industrial Officer

Mr Grant Thompson, Member

Mr John Westland, Chairman, Staff House Committee,

Radio Australia House Committee

Department of Foreign Affairs and TradeMr William Norman Fisher, First Assistant Secretary, Public Affairs and
Consular DivisionMr Paul Francis Molloy, Director, Policy and Projects Unit, Parliamentary and
Media Branch**Dr Rodney Tiffen**

Thursday, 3 April, 1997, Canberra

ABC TV

Ms Rosemary Alexandra Church, Media Liaison Representative

Ms Jill Forner, CPSU Workplace Delegate, Australia Television Joint
Committee

Ms Lisa Lawson Fowkes, ABC Section Secretary, Community and Public
Sector Union

Mr Graeme Robert Dobell

Australian Science and Communicators

Mr Nick Goldie, Member of National Committee

Dr Ronald Errol Hodge

Department of Communications and the Arts

Mr Vic Jones, General Manager, National Transmission Agency

Ms Cathy Santamaria, Deputy Secretary

Dr Alan William Stretton, First Assistant Secretary, Film, National
Broadcasting and Intellectual Property Division

Tuesday, 15 April 1997, Sydney

Caritas Australia

Mr John Scott-Murphy, Public Policy and Advocacy Coordinator

Ms Elizabeth Stone, Regional Coordinator responsible for Africa and Pacific

Credit Union Foundation Australia

Mr John Christopher Newsom, PNG Program Coordinator

Professor Clive Samuel Kessler

ELICOS Association

Ms Margaret-Anne Gabrielle Power, Executive Officer

Ms Alyson Gabrielle Therese Moore, General Delegate

APHEDA

Mr Phillip James Hazelton, Executive Officer

Mr Walter Bass

Alan Davis Media Ltd

Mr Alan Andrew Davis, Managing Director

University of Western Sydney

Dr Hart Kenneth Cohen, Lecturer, Media, Faculty of Humanities, Research
Centre in Intercommunal Studies

Mr Kevin Zehnder, Associate member and volunteer, Australian Expert Service
Overseas Program

Mr Duncan Campbell**Australian Institute of International Affairs**

Ms Cecelia Clarke, Deputy President

Dr Philippe Jean Pierre Cussinett, NSW President

Wednesday, 16 April 1997, Melbourne**Overseas Services Bureau**

Mr Peter Britton, Director, Policy and Public Affairs

Mr William John Armstrong, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Graham Douglas Habgood, Executive Assistant to CEO

Radio Australia

Mr Pious Bonjui, Broadcaster, PNG Service

Mr Hidayat Djajamihardja, Broadcaster/Journalist, Indonesian Service

Mrs Leviseda Douglas, Broadcaster

Mr Nigel Holmes, Transmission Manager (Chief Engineer)

Mr Robert Hoskin, Presenter/Producer, Pacific Service, English Programs

Mrs Luana Man-Ling Kou, Broadcaster

Ms Sunee Sathaporn, Broadcaster, Thai Service

Mr Graeme Thomson, National Industrial Officer, Community and Public
Sector Union

Mr Hanh Tran, Executive Producer, Vietnamese Service

Mr Osar En Hsi Wang, Senior Broadcaster, North Asia Region

National Tertiary Education Industry Union

Dr Carolyn Allport, National President

Mr Paul Cocks, National Research Assistant

AsiaSpace

Mr Richard E Butler, Chairman

Professor Frank Morgan**Mr William Yates**

Friends of the ABC

Mr John Edward Tovey

Dr June Factor, Spokesperson and President, National Committee

Mrs Toni Barbara Feddersen

Conference Australia Pty Ltd

Ms Annie Maureen Hayes, Managing Director

Professor Robin Jeffrey

Northern Territory Department of Asian Relations, Trade and Industry

Mr Neil Clayton Almond, Assistant Secretary Strategic Services

Ms Megan Burges, Communications Development

Monash University

Professor Jeffrey Bruce Jacobs, Head, Department of Asian Languages and
Studies

GOVERNMENT REPORT

BROADCAST OPTIONS FOR THE ABC

Role and responsibility of ABC Management

1. It is well established that the decision regarding the future role of Radio Australia is one which will be taken by ABC Management, and that the Board operates on an autonomous basis consistent with its status as an independent statutory authority. The current ABC Managing Director, Mr Brian Johns, has vigorously defended the independence of the broadcaster stating that the ABC is "independent of government control",¹ and unequivocally confirmed that it is the ABC Management which is responsible for making the funding decisions pertaining to Radio Australia:

Senator TROETH--Could I just clarify that, Mr Johns. In that case, any decision to close Radio Australia would be made by the board.

Mr Johns--Yes. Absolutely.²

2. The former Chairman of the ABC Board, Professor Mark Armstrong, clarified the role of the Board in a letter to the then Minister for Communications and Arts:

It is the duty of the Board to set policy, allocate resources and to ensure that the Charter functions are completed efficiently.³

3. It is therefore the ABC Board which is responsible for its internal budget decisions. With autonomy, of course, comes responsibility for corporate decisions. As a case in point, the Government Senators regard the recently announced decision by the ABC Board to provide funds to extend the RA service beyond English and Tok Pisin, to include Bahasa Indonesian, Mandarin, Khmer and Vietnamese as further evidence of the Board's responsibility to decide the future of RA.⁴

4. Witnesses who appeared on behalf of the ABC demonstrated that the corporation was fully aware of the various options and decisions it had to face with respect to RA and ATV. In responding to questioning about what the possible options the ABC might pursue, Mr Lloyd James, the Head of ABC National Networks, stated:

Mr Lloyd James—Yes, there is a large range of options which essentially cascade down from the \$13.5 million which is the funding for Radio Australia this year and which progressively, as you drop down through them, lose languages and lose geographic spread. Right down at the bottom end the

1 Interview, AM program, ABC Radio, 23/4/97.

2 *Committee Hansard*, p. 107.

3 Letter to the Minister for Communications and Art, Micheal Hutchinson. *Our ABC Report*, March 1995, pp. 60.

4 *Media release*, "Radio Australia", Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 30 April 1997.

potential lies there to move out of short-wave broadcasting altogether and into satellite delivery.⁵

The Government Senators emphasise that what is clearly at issue in this inquiry is not the actual retention or closure of the RA or ATV services, but rather the issue of what form these services should take in the future. This is an important distinction, and one which the majority report fails to clarify.

5. In reviewing its operations, the ABC Board will have to consider its priorities among its broadcasting operations in order to determine where savings might be found. These broadcasting operations can be divided into two broad groups: domestic broadcasting and international broadcasting.

6. Domestic broadcasting includes a range of programming areas: news, current affairs and information services; regional services; rural and remote area services; youth services and children's services.

7. International broadcasting can be divided into regions: the Pacific; Papua New Guinea; Asia; and USA/Europe. At present, Radio Australia broadcasts via short-wave radio in seven languages other than English: Mandarin (Standard Chinese), Cantonese, Vietnamese, Khmer, Indonesian, Tok Pisin and French. It also has a Thai language service which is rebroadcast through local stations. The Thai short-wave service was discontinued some years ago when short-wave radio use in that country declined significantly.

8. In considering its budgetary allocations, the ABC Board can be expected to take a view of how to prioritise these services, in the process of deciding the most appropriate future role for Radio Australia and the ATV service. As with every government department and statutory authority, the ABC is subject to certain funding and budgetary constraints. The Government Senators are of the view that there should be some reordering of priorities aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of RA's services.

9. Acknowledging the ABC's expected budgetary situation and its clearly stated priority (and preference) of directing its funds to its domestic services, it would nonetheless be regrettable if the ABC decided to substantially limit its foreign language international broadcasting via RA. However, it may be necessary to remove some foreign language programming, and perhaps reducing the resources allocated to others, in order to reduce overall programming costs. Certainly, some compromise is likely to be necessary in order to preserve the core function of the RA service - its English language news broadcasting service.

Regional Priorities

10. A number of witnesses presented persuasive arguments supporting a view that, were the delivery and mix of RA's services to be varied, account should be taken of two fundamental and distinct overseas broadcast regions: the South Pacific and East Asia. The point was made that the provision of the RA service to each of these regions requires different rationales.

5 *Committee Hansard*, p. 105

11. Mr Duncan Campbell, gave the Committee the benefit of his extensive experience as a diplomat for nearly 40 years in various parts of the world. He strongly expressed the view that the provision of the RA service should be considered quite separately for different regions:

I think there is a case for looking at the future of Radio Australia vis-a-vis the Pacific very separately from the future of Radio Australia in its other target areas.⁶

12. Dr. Tiffen's independent review of Radio Australia in 1995, resulting in the *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, established that audience reception had significantly increased in the Pacific region, and that audiences in Papua New Guinea in particular had dramatically increased. The opposite was true, however, for target audiences in Asian countries such as Indonesia. This finding adds support to the view that RA's services to the Pacific region are particularly effective compared with its other target regions, and should be strongly supported.

13. In addition, the ABC Committee of Review, convened by Stuart Revill and assisted by Dr. Rodney Tiffen as consultant, referred to the South Pacific region's particular reliance on RA for "consistently reliable information on Pacific and international affairs", given that the former is not offered by other main international broadcasters.⁷ This is a convincing rationale for ensuring that Radio Australia's services to the Pacific region are given particular emphasis in any re-evaluation of its future role and function, and the Government Senators recommend accordingly.

14. It is clear from the evidence presented to the Committee that the role and function of RA is significantly different and distinct in the South Pacific than in the Asia region. There are more competitors in international broadcasting in Asia, meaning increased availability of alternative sources of information should RA not continue to operate fully in this region; Australia has greater ancillary links with Asia than the Pacific, in terms of trade and other services and activities, so Australia will still retain a strong presence in the region; the key decision-makers in the region tend to listen to satellite, and will be able to listen to the ATV service; and technological differences between the regions mean that the role of short wave is declining in Asia much more rapidly than in the South Pacific (eg Thailand). These differences are of fundamental importance in considering the most appropriate future role of the RA service.

Rebroadcasts

15. Programs currently broadcast by RA can also be sent to local AM/FM radio stations for rebroadcasting purposes, including by downlinking from satellite transmissions.

16. RA has pursued rebroadcasting arrangements where short-wave services are in decline (eg Thailand) or where countries want to receive downlinks on programming as a means of strengthening signal reception or expanding programming content of local stations. In China,

6 Hansard, p. 342 (Tues 15 April, 1997, Sydney).

7 *Radio Australia Review*, ABC, August 1989, p. 14.

RA's music programs, English language lessons and special programs about Australian life are increasingly accepted for rebroadcasting on local stations. China does not accept foreign news broadcasts for rebroadcasting on its local stations.

17. In the Pacific, RA extensively rebroadcasts material. Most Pacific nations readily rebroadcast news and other information programs offered by the major international broadcasters in the region, RA, BBC, Radio New Zealand and the Voice of America.

18. Further examination should probably be made of the potential for RA to utilise the opportunities presented by rebroadcasting to enhance its services in a cost effective way.

19. Mr Derek White highlighted to the Committee the important role that RA plays in relation to Papua New Guinea:

This week, it would seem even more so, as Papua New Guinea--a key Radio Australia target area, with its own national radio network in difficulty--demonstrates its volatility ... If the situation in Papua New Guinea gets worse, Radio Australia could be as important as it was during the Fiji coups in 1987 when RA was used by all sides as the only reliable source of information.

Control of local media is a key factor in any takeover of governments. Radio Australia provides the only external service to Papua New Guinea in Tok Pisin, or Pidgin, one of the two national languages. Peter Jonah, of our Tok Pisin staff, is now reporting from PNG for that service which, of course, has access to all other ABC sources, including that most experienced and authoritative Port Moresby correspondent, Sean Dorney.⁸

Comments by DOCA on Radio Australia

20. The Department of Communications and the Arts provided the Committee in writing with four options for delivery of programming to audiences, other than by short-wave radio. The options are listed below.

<i>Delivery Mode</i>	<i>Audience</i>
Satellite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - re-broadcasting of all or part of a service on domestic AM/FM bands or cable networks where governments permit & local broadcasters choose to do so - access by individuals with suitable satellite reception facilities

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Transmission lease/hire | - broadcast of whole or part of RA services to the audience of other short-wave broadcasters through lease/hire of their transmission facilities |
| Program/sale/swap/supply | - provision of RA programs to local broadcasters in the region for re-broadcasting on domestic AM/FM stations or cable networks. |
| Internet | - news items currently available in text form in English, French, Tok Pisin and Chinese could be provided via audio. ⁹ |

21. Ms Cathy Santamaria, Deputy Secretary of the Department, told the Committee in her opening statement that:

Funding to the ABC for RA is separately identified through a single-line appropriation to assist transparency. Responsibility for determining the level of funding priority for RA resides with the ABC, consistent with its responsibility for determining priorities within its global budget. This year RA receives \$13.494 million in ABC budget funding.¹⁰

Comments by DFAT regarding RA and ATV

22. When asked how the views of Australian opinion leaders would be disseminated in the region without RA or ATV, Mr Bill Fisher, First Assistant Secretary, Public Affairs and Consular Division, responded:

Generally this is done through our posts. Matters of significance in Australia would go to all our posts. We have a very extensive system of keeping our posts advised of what is happening in Australia in terms of both the domestic situation and particular messages on particular issues - for example, on the anthrax outbreak a few weeks ago. We would target particular areas with particular information and posts would be specifically tasked to get out and carry a message on something particular as well as having their general obligation to sell the message more specifically.

... We provide posts, to the extent our resources allow, with the wherewithal, the material, to do this. We respond as well. It is a two - way process. Posts will come back and say, 'In such and such a country there is an obvious need

⁹ Answer to question on notice taken by the Department of Communications and the Arts, 3 April 1997, [p.3].

¹⁰ *Committee Hansard*, p. 184.

for more information,' or 'There is a growing problem with regard to some issue or other and we will try to match that requirement.'

23. Mr Fisher was asked how information is disseminated by posts - by brochures or booklets. He replied:

All of the above. It very much depends what the issue is. For example, on the question of the anthrax outbreak, that was handled very much by specific information being sent to posts by cable and then more voluminous material by bag which then the posts use with the target audience. We do have a publication program. That tends to be more general. It is information about Australia generally because, as you know, there is quite an audience of people looking for general material about Australia and we try to meet that to the extent that we can. I suppose our more recent efforts have been to target particular audiences on particular subjects.

24. Mr Fisher was also asked how posts handle matters like the recent race debate, which received considerable exposure in the media in the Asia Pacific. He responded:

When it comes to dealing with a general issue like that our posts are specifically directed to be very active in getting out and pushing our positive message and our positive message is a very strong one. I do not think I disagree with you for a second that some of the media overseas enjoy having a free kick against us—and it is not just us, of course; I think it is good copy for any country.

The posts have been targeted to get out a positive message and every time there is one of these negative articles in the press, in general the post will respond directly to it, both in terms of trying to correct a false impression and to get out the broader message. Often our response is not printed or used and that is something you do not have all that much control over. I think we have been quite successful in getting a good usage rate up on issues like this, but we have been very active in trying to use whatever means are available to us to get that message across.

25. It is evident that, in the event ABC Management decides to scale down the size of the RA service, that Australia will still have a significant profile builders in Asia and the surrounding region in the form of ATV, consulates, trade missions and diplomatic representations. The former Minister for Communications and Art, Mr Michael Lee, advised the Government that ATV made an important contribution to "raising Australia's profile in the region".¹¹

26. Mr Duncan Campbell also put the view that, in his experience as a diplomat over many years, it has been the private sector that was central to furthering Australia's interests in the region, rather than publicly funded bodies such as RA:

¹¹ *Review of the Status and Funding of the ABC's International Broadcasting Services*, October 1995, p. 3.

Mr Campbell—The actual track record, I think, shows that it has been the private sector, by and large, that globally has made the miles for Australia in obtaining recognition for us. I think it points also to the decreasing and disappearing effectiveness of international radio.¹²

27. With respect to the ATV service, the Department of Foreign Affairs wrote in a 1995 submission that it saw television as the major new medium for reaching opinion makers in what it considered the priority regions of Australian interest in this context: East Asia followed by the South Pacific.¹³

Public Funding for Radio Australia

28. While some witnesses claimed that many overseas listeners depend on RA and ATV for news and current affairs, their English language training and entertainment, it was never satisfactorily established in evidence why Australian taxpayers should fund these types of activities or target groups. This is an especially important issue given that there are 100 or so countries engaged in international information broadcasting. The Government Senators consider this lack of substantive analysis puzzling given the extensive anecdotal evidence on this issue.

29. The following is an exchange between Senator Troeth and Mr Derek White, General Manager of Radio Australia, about using public funds to broadcast services overseas.

Senator TROETH—The fact remains that with the groups that you mention in your submission—and I certainly appreciate that you have provided us with a good overview in your submission of all the groups and individuals who subscribe to and listen to Radio Australia—what they have in common is that they receive a comprehensive news service at absolutely no cost to them which is paid for by Australian taxpayers.

Mr White—You are referring here to the Pacific islands in particular?

Senator TROETH—Yes.

Mr White—Yes, because the Pacific islands, as you are aware, Senator, are not well-endowed with financial or other resources. Australia has always seen it as a form of aid. In fact, it is fair to say that for much of our region, not just the Pacific, a free, unrestricted flow of information is a form of aid.

Senator TROETH—You also say, on page 2 of your submission, that the predominant audience of Radio Australia tends to be wealthy, well-educated people.

Mr White—The research has shown that the proportion of people who are, if you like, the upwardly mobile, educated male population of the surveys taken tend to be a strong part of the international radio listening audience. But that is

12 *Committee Hansard*, p. 338.

13 *Review of the Status and Funding of the ABC's International Broadcasting Services*, October 1995, p. iv.

not, by any means, excluding a much wider range of audience. It is simply that, where such studies have been undertaken, the research shows that we do reach a high proportion of people who have education [sic] because they are the people who are most interested in getting that information.

Senator TROETH—I am still asking you: do you think it is appropriate that Australian taxpayers subsidise the audience group which has such a composition?

Mr White—Yes I do, very strongly, because not only are we providing a free flow of information, we are reinforcing an image of Australia as a free nation, a free democracy, one that takes into account all views and broadcasts them. I think we are doing a very great job in building an image of Australia; indeed, some qualitative research on that subject has shown that. I think that is reflected in the submission.

30. While it is clear that there is widespread community support for the continuation of RA, questions still remain about the degree to which it should be funded exclusively by public funds.

Future role of the ATV service

31. With respect to the future role of the ATV service, the Government Senators note that it was the Cabinet of the previous Labor Government which initially rejected the ABC's request in September 1992 to trial broadcasting an international television service in the region. It was also the Labor Government which ultimately made it a condition of the proposal going ahead that the ABC use advertising and commercial sponsorship to help fund the project. In October 1995, Minister Mr Michael Lee was of the view that ATV had a "secure future" based on its commercial arrangement.

32. An ABC background paper released in 1993 stated: 'Sponsorship of the Australia Television service has allowed the ABC to initiate the service without diverting funds from domestic television and radio production'.¹⁴ *External Funding, Advertising and Sponsorship*, ABC background paper, April 1993. We note that this commercialisation of aspects of the ATV service did not provide an insurmountable clash with the ABC's Charter or stance as an independent broadcaster, a point which was reaffirmed by ATV newsreader Ms Rosemary Church,¹⁵ and see no reason why such a policy view has changed.

33. In fact, senior executives of ATV had already approached the ABC with the intention of offering a management buyout of the service. In evidence to the Committee, Mr Michael Mann confirmed this:

Mr Mann--Two other senior staff members of Australia Television and I wrote to the chair of the ABC in early January this year saying that we were interested in putting in an expression of interest. We did that on the basis that

14 *External Funding, Advertising and Sponsorship*, ABC background paper, April 1993.

15 *Committee Hansard*, p. 233.

there was a tremendous degree of uncertainty surrounding Australia Television at that time, particularly in the lead-up to the Mansfield report being handed down. We did that because we wanted to make sure that Australia Television ended up with a good home. We thought that we could give it a good home and we thought that there was a business plan that we could put in place, working with the ABC, to make Australia Television viable. I should not answer for the other side; I should stop there. The ABC later received a letter saying that the management buy-out could not go ahead.

Mr Balding--I can continue. There is a sort of evaluation criteria which I am quite comfortable to table to you. It is the evaluation from the company perspective point of view.

Senator FERRIS--Yes, I would appreciate that.

Mr Balding--I am happy to table that. In looking at the evaluation process, the ABC decided to engage the Australian National Audit Office as a probity auditor to oversight the evaluation process in this regard--not to oversight the decision but the actual process leading to the decision. On receipt of the expressions of interest from AusTV management, ABC management sought advice from the probity auditor as to how this would be seen because the ABC was very keen to make sure that due process was not only seen to be done but was also carried out because this was a very public evaluation and it has also gone international. Advice that the ABC received was that entertaining a bid from AusTV management at this stage may not be seen to be in the best light as far as the evaluation of the tenders would be seen and it could have an adverse financial impact on the outcome of the process.

Senator FERRIS--Does this mean that the people who know best how to run ATV are going to be excluded from the process in the future?

Mr Balding--That could be the situation but also those people who run AusTV would be seen to be in an unfair competitive advantage compared to those other companies who would be seeking to place a value on AusTV and therefore put a bid in.

Senator FERRIS--Does Mr Johns have any comment on that?

Mr Johns--I have nothing further to add on that.¹⁶

34. The ABC Management decision with respect to the future of ATV should be seen as quite separate to the Mansfield Report. By the date of tabling of this report (May 1997), the sale process for ATV is well advanced. As was detailed in evidence to the Committee by Mr Michael Mann, Chief Executive of ATV:

I think the number of expressions of interest and the number of organisations interested in being associated with Australia Television does show that there

is, in the private sector at least, a feeling that you can make a profit on Australia Television.¹⁷

35. It should be added that it is encouraging in this context that Mr Mann saw no need for there to be an "independent" and "public" international broadcaster. His vision of the ATV service, in fact, is clearly on a much more commercial footing:

Mr Mann--That has always been my dream to have Australia Television as the best of Australian television. We have started off housed in the ABC and able to use the fantastic facilities which the ABC has available. If I were setting up Australia Television now, going back five years, I would set it up in the ABC, have great ABC participation and also try to involve all the other big players in Australia. Maybe that is utopian, but I would like to see that happen.¹⁸

36. Mr Mann also expressed his frustration at being unable to take up certain commercial opportunities because of some of the uncertainty surrounding the sale process, including this Committee of Inquiry:

Mr Mann--It is a very difficult time at present to sell any advertising or sponsorship because of what Mr Mansfield said--'close it down or sell it by June'. It is very difficult to get clients on board when they are asking you what your future is. It was not that long ago, probably less than a month, we had a client in the office who wanted to have a million-dollar package of advertising with us over a two-year period. He said, 'Can you guarantee that you will be on air for the next two years?' and I said 'No'. He said, 'Well, when you can, come back to us.'¹⁹

37. It should also be noted that the ABC Management had declared its intention to sell ATV prior to the release of the Mansfield Report,²⁰ and therefore its impending sale should not be attributed to the Mansfield recommendations. This is all the more so given the unequivocal statements of witnesses appearing before the Committee from the ABC stating that the ABC did not consider that the international services were in danger at the time its submission to the Mansfield report was written.

38. Hence, the ABC Management's decision with respect to the future ATV should be seen quite separate by from the Mansfield review.

17 *Committee Hansard*, p. 133.

18 *Committee Hansard*, p. 136.

19 *Committee Hansard*, p. 133.

20 *One ABC: The Vision-and the Decision: an update from the ABC to the Review of the Functions and Role of the ABC*, December 1996, pp 31-32.

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF RADIO AUSTRALIA

39. Evidence presented to the Committee revealed that the appropriate role of Australian international broadcasting services have been the subject of continual inquiry, review and debate for some considerable period of time.

40. In the 1980s RA was criticised by a number of experienced commentators. These included Sir Arthur Tange, (former Secretary of the both the Defence department and Department of Foreign Affairs) Mr William Pritchett (a former secretary of the Defence department) and Mr Malcom Booker (First Assistant Secretary under Tange), who:

- stated that an international radio service operating on the premise of journalistic freedom was extremely questionable;
- queried the cost effectiveness of RA's operations;
- stated that Australian taxpayers, in their view, were being tricked into supporting, as Mr Pritchett put it, 'a small independent bureaucracy of journalists'.²¹

41. In 1988, all three made explicit statements to that effect, also querying the cost effectiveness of RA's operations. Australian taxpayers, in their view, were being tricked into supporting, as Mr Pritchett put it, 'a small independent bureaucracy of journalists'.²² For Mr Booker, it was this group who, by their naive insistence on a 'warts and all' approach to overseas reporting, caused regional disharmony and embarrassment to Australia. In an interview he later concluded: 'You can't engender good will by exposing the deficiencies of your neighbours and their governments. If you want to engender good will, it's a highly expert propaganda exercise.'²³

42. Mr Booker was also of the view that, it was this group who, by their naive insistence on a 'warts and all' approach to overseas reporting, caused regional disharmony and embarrassment to Australia. At interview he later concluded: 'You can't engender goodwill by exposing the deficiencies of your neighbours and their governments. If you want to engender goodwill, it's a highly expert propaganda exercise.'²⁴

43. Sir Arthur Tange saw that a possible, but qualified, reason for continued RA services could lie:

...in the circumstances in which Australian official policy or the conduct of Australian diplomacy, the conduct of Australian defence relations, was impeded by ignorance abroad, in societies with whose governments we were dealing, of Australian motivations and intentions - was impeded by misunderstandings such as we had, to use an historical analogy, of Australia's white Australia policy: that certainly was an obstacle 20 or 30 years ago.

21 W. B. Pritchett, letter to the editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1988.

22 W. B. Pritchett, letter to the editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1988.

23 Recorded interview with Booker, Canberra, 20 March 1989.

24 Recorded interview with Booker, Canberra, 20 March 1989.

He, nevertheless, concluded:

I doubt today that we have those obstacles residing in the minds of countries with which we do official business. So the question arises: why do we need Radio Australia?²⁵

44. Mr Campbell also gave evidence criticising the content of much of the recent public debate that has revolved around the issue of Radio Australia's future:

"[M]uch of the material in the defence of Radio Australia that I have read on the public record seems to me to be more descriptive than anything else. It is rather anecdotal and obviously it involves a degree of special pleading. It is more an account of what Radio Australia has done and what Radio Australia might do in the future. But I would not regard a lot of it as being particularly analytical".²⁶

45. Government Senators concur with these sentiments, both in relation to much of the public debate which has surrounded this issue and to much of the evidence which was presented by witnesses at the Committee hearings, which was often lacking in rigorous analysis.

46. Mr Duncan Campbell, expressed views questioning some of the commonly held notions about RA and ATV. He commented that these views were supported by many of his former diplomatic colleagues.²⁷ He also stated that as a result of the announcement of the changes to RA and ATV:

I do feel that probably the debate itself has been nobbled by the telegraphing of the punch. In other words, I suspect that if the debate had been able to be conducted on an open-ended basis, there might well have been more people weighing in on my side of things. I simply have the feeling that, since the news does look fairly serious for Radio Australia, that in itself has been a restraining influence on people coming forward with further arguments.²⁸

Intrusiveness of service

The Radio Australia function vis-a-vis the target countries of the regions it serves was initially, in my view, deliberately intrusive. Yet nowadays the explanation that I hear seems to be a much more gentle and benign one than that. I think one has to ask the question: at what point did it ever cease to be intrusive simply because the hot war, in which it grew up, and the Cold War period, in which it then was so active, passed? At what point after that did the

25 Recorded interview with Tange, reported in Hodge, *Radio Wars*, Chapter 12, p. 252.

26 Hansard, p. 338 (Tues 15 April, 1997, Sydney).

27 *Committee Hansard*, p. 343.

28 *Committee Hansard*, p. 345.

function actually change? At what point did it become, as it were, permissible to indulge in a largely propaganda performance?²⁹

47. Intrusiveness is not justified by the argument that we have to go on competing with the other countries that provide this sort of service into our close-in regions: 'By and large, those countries are former imperial and colonial powers and I think the question is invited: is this a function which modern day Australia, with the aims it has for itself in this part of the world, really wants to maintain? Is it a function which is really redolent of a degree of cultural superiority?'³⁰

48. Mr Campbell went on to say that Australia could build a modern, equal, contemporary relationship with some of these countries, which is more soundly based if 'we were to subtract this interventionist activity which ... I do believe comes complete with an element of cultural superiority attached to it'.³¹

49. In answering a question about the freedom of the Australian media vis-a-vis that of some other countries in the region, Mr Campbell, while noting that the citizens of those countries have access to another version of events, stated 'Just as important, I make the less than popular argument that it is not necessarily our God-given right, role or responsibility to differ from the sovereign policy of the government concerned'.³²

Information provided by RA

50. In relation to the news and the information provided, Mr Campbell noted:

- UNESCO has been highly critical of 'world news', as it has been seen as a near monopoly of the industrialised world, not an objective body of information, either in its selection or presentation - what makes Australian made news any different?³³
- there is something of a 'non-democratic presumption in a service such as Radio Australia seeking to offer its version of events, its selection of topics and its interpretation';³⁴
- in evaluating what is achieved by the news service, if it is non-contentious and not subject to resistance by regional governments, then it can be assumed that it will be available anyway and 'I think the rating of what we are achieving for an uncontentious projection would be a very generous zero', if it is resisted by regional governments, then the rating 'has obviously got to be a minus', thus:
 What we are doing is constantly trying to enlist the support and the cooperation of those governments. So I think, on that, as I say, simplistic but not altogether misleading rating system,

29 *Committee Hansard*, p. 339.

30 *Committee Hansard*, p. 339.

31 *Committee Hansard*, p. 344, see also p. 347.

32 *Committee Hansard*, p. 349.

33 *Committee Hansard*, p. 339.

34 *Committee Hansard*, p. 339.

if you look at what it is we are trying to achieve in inserting our news, you would have to come to a zero to minus assessment—somewhere in between.³⁵

- that other English language broadcasts are available and that these are not sufficiently different or foreign in nature as to present a problem to present RA listeners.³⁶

Are there really benefits?

51. In evaluating the performance of RA, Mr Campbell presented the following points:

- It can be argued that:

on some news days we would have done better without Radio Australia's contribution. The Radio Australia news, examined day after day, has projected a number of negatives about our economic and social situations and performance—not necessarily in an untruthful way but without guidance as to national benefit or with some misguidance.³⁷

- RA has constantly headlined unemployment levels, industrial disputes, discouraging economic statistics - exactly the same as the domestic media. RA should not distort the news but it should be more selective: 'I believe that by and large Radio Australia did not play it—presumably for reasons of high minded journalism'.³⁸
- 'damage can be done to our national interest when Radio Australia, by presenting a regional issue, has earned us the animosity of regional governments. Basically, that can be justified only vis-a-vis a regime to which we are already hostile, and such targets are in fact too limited to warrant mounting an operation simply on that account'.³⁹
- when the private media earns Australia the dislike and resentment of one or more regional governments, 'Radio Australia tends to be lumped into their sights, anyway, because it is simply seen as part of the Australian media. There is too great a tendency, in my view, for Radio Australia—sometimes through no fault of its own—to be just another brake on our diplomacy and another source of resistance to the sort of progress we might be seeking to achieve'.⁴⁰

What should be projected and how?

35 *Committee Hansard*, p. 340.

36 *Committee Hansard*, p. 347.

37 *Committee Hansard*, p. 340.

38 *Committee Hansard*, pp 340-41.

39 *Committee Hansard*, p. 341.

40 *Committee Hansard*, p. 341.

52. In canvassing what should be promoted, Mr Campbell listed four things: 'our values, our views, our goods and our services'.⁴¹

53. Mr Campbell asserted that the visual media has is the most effective means for this.⁴² He noted:

It is simply that television is increasingly the path of the future, for the great majority of information. I cannot be statistical and hard about this, but it would be surprising to know the number of small towns, villages, and so forth, scattered throughout Asia where there is at least one television set. It is a focal point of attention, interest and receipt of information and influence.⁴³

And:

As for the Asian target area, the challenge is to attach ourselves to and to penetrate the visual channels to which audiences in Asian countries are already tuned. I think the emphasis must shift from trying to be the messenger to the content and the purpose of the message.⁴⁴

54. Mr Campbell pointed in particular to the effectiveness of television in the promotion of trade, and that it appeared that in our diplomacy, 'markets, selling our goods, selling our services, opening ourselves to investment and making way for possible Australian investment overseas' is increasingly 'what we are about'.⁴⁵

Is there a role for RA?

55. Mr Campbell stated:

I think possibly a simple English and French language information service focused particularly on intraregional matters could usefully be supplied by elements of Radio Australia, but under the purview of the clients, perhaps as a service controlled by the South Pacific Forum, and with some modest funding contributed by regional countries as well as Australia. No doubt a small rump activity of Radio Australia, with some of their personnel, could continue as an aid function with some regional audience control and contribution. In other words, I think there is a case for looking at the future of Radio Australia vis-a-vis the Pacific very separately from the future of Radio Australia vis-a-vis its other target areas.⁴⁶

41 *Committee Hansard*, p. 341.

42 *Committee Hansard*, pp 341, 345.

43 *Committee Hansard*, p. 364.

44 *Committee Hansard*, p. 342.

45 *Committee Hansard*, p. 345.

46 *Committee Hansard*, p. 342.

He added:

... I do think that some expert Radio Australia resources could now be transferred to ABC production capacity and dedicated to producing material with sales potential in our region. This might usefully be backed up by some federal bonus payments to Australian TV production facilities—ABC or otherwise—and to those who succeed in placing material judged beneficial to our sales and our standing in the target countries which are of relevance to us from the foreign trade, defence, cultural and Asian policy points of view.⁴⁷

Costs of RA and ATV

56. RA is budget-funded, with the total cost in 1996-97 estimated at \$20.5 million (\$13.5 million from the ABC and \$7 million from the National Transmission Agency).

57. The previous government had agreed to provide funding of \$6.2 million per year for the operation of RA for three years commencing in 1996-97 with ATV seeking extra funding from advertising and sponsorship. The ABC was requested by the current government 'to explore the possibility of delivering the ATV service more efficiently by entering its operation to the commercial sector'.⁴⁸

Comments on the future of RA and ATV

58. With regard to RA, Mr Mansfield stated that he endorsed the governments decision to request the ABC to explore tendering ATV operations to the commercial sector, pointing to the more than 100 satellite TV channels operating in Asia and concluding 'I do not consider that the ABC should be allocated funding to enable it to operate competitively in the Asian market'. He went on to add that if no commercial alternative could be found the service should be closed.⁴⁹

59. Mr Mansfield noted that the ABC Charter accords overseas broadcasting equal priority with domestic broadcasting and concluded that he did not believe 'that there are compelling reasons for this to continue'. He pointed out the ABC's 1997-98 funding allocation may not allow it to maintain the range of both domestic services and overseas broadcasting services and that the ABC was also faced with a requirement to downsize and to invest in new technology. If the overseas broadcasting service was to be maintained it would be at the expense of domestic services.

60. While accepting that the future of overseas broadcasting has a foreign affairs dimension, and that the significant role of overseas services in promoting trade and diplomatic objectives was noted by DFAT in its submission to the review, Mr Mansfield concluded that 'I have some difficulty in identifying the extent to which the ABC plays such a role and, if it does, the extent to which it is effective in doing so'.⁵⁰

47 *Committee Hansard*, p. 342.

48 Mansfield Report, p. 41.

49 Mansfield Report, p. 41.

50 Mansfield Report, p. 41.

61. In coming to this conclusion, Mr Mansfield pointed out two matters: first, that only broad objectives for the ABC's overseas broadcasting activities are identified in the ABC Charter; and secondly, that the ABC possesses statutory independence in relation to the way it carries out its function. Unlike the BBC World Service, the ABC it is not required to accept DFAT's views or any other policy directions of the Government. Thus, Mr Mansfield concluded 'in the absence of such agreement concerning objectives and priorities, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of funding or to revise priorities for overseas broadcasting services, particularly for RA'.

62. Further matters noted by Mr Mansfield were:

- the decline in RA's potential short-wave audience from an estimated 100 million in 1981 to 20 million in 1996;
- that there needs to be a reordering of priorities to enable RA to provide more effective services to its more significant audience or enable it to exploit other delivery platforms;
- four of RA's language services (Khmer, Cantonese, French, Thai) provide less than one and a half hour's programming a day and Mansfield noted 'it is not clear why these services have continued to operate at such marginal levels';
- that there was insufficient evidence for the Government to draw firm conclusions whether RA's programmes were reaching the target audience; whether the type and mix of programming remains valid; and whether short wave remains the most cost-effective means of delivery and that for more than \$20 million per year the Government should be able to be in a position to do this;
- that DFAT saw shortcomings in both RA's and ATV's current services, as it had submitted that 'neither is presently meeting its full potential and restructuring is necessary to address their shortcomings'.

63. Mr Mansfield did consider that if the Government wished to maintain an overseas broadcasting service, its funding be considered in the context of the public diplomacy effort as is the case in the UK. The ABC should not have the provision of services to audiences outside Australia as a priority in its Charter.

64. Recommendation 18 of the Mansfield report stated:

- that the requirement of the ABC to broadcast programs to audience outside Australia should cease;
- that the ABC should retain the ability to transmit programs outside Australia if it chooses;
- that the ABC should be permitted to apply net saving from the closure of Radio Australia to the achievement of its savings target - this should include any transmission savings, consistent with the Government's commitment to fund the ABC directly for its transmission costs; and
- that if an appropriate commercial arrangement for the operation of Australian Television is not entered into before June 1997, the service should be closed down.

65. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, is on the public record as confirming the importance that the Government attaches to the continuation of aspects of Radio Australia from a foreign policy perspective. The following statements were contained in a letter from Mr Downer to Senator Alston relating to Radio Australia:

The significance of RA, especially its news services to the South Pacific and Eastern Indonesia, should not be underestimated. In the South Pacific the strong listenership of RA and the re-broadcasting of RA services on domestic radio has established Australia as the prime regional news hub...

[W]hile I support a rigorous reassessment of Radio Australia from the budget savings perspective, I believe a whole-of-government view needs to be taken of any decision to wind up or revise the service, including to seek a different funding source...[and] to make sure that any alternatives that are considered to the current broadcasting arrangements take into account our Government's overall diplomatic objectives.⁵¹

66. The Minister for Communications and the Arts, Senator Alston, has also made a number of public statements confirming the strong commitment of the Government to maintaining the Radio Australia service wherever possible within the Budget context. Responding to a question in the Senate relating to Radio Australia, Senator Alston stated:

It's clearly a matter of concern, Madam President, that we don't unnecessarily dispense with services and that other options are explored. And I've no doubt the ABC will be having a close look at the effectiveness of this particular service.⁵²

67. A range of submissions to this inquiry and the Mansfield inquiry emphasised the importance of Australia's proximity to Asia. This view can best be paraphrased by the West Australian Government's submission to the Mansfield inquiry, in which it was stated:

Radio Australia provides an important service, principally to the Asia-Pacific region. Its role is related primarily to our foreign affairs interests. Thus Radio Australia should be funded through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which would set up priorities and contract out provisions of the service to the ABC/NTA. Such an arrangement would give clear expression of the reason for existence of the service and avoid muddying the waters of the ABC budget but take advantage of the ABC's skills in this area and the synergy between this and the ABC core services.⁵³

51 Letter from Mr Downer to Senator Alston, 2 February 1997.

52 *Senate Hansard*, 5 February 1997, p.135.

53 West Australian Government submission to Mansfield Report, 1996

ABC MANAGEMENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS RADIO AUSTRALIA

68. There was a significant amount of evidence provided to the Committee which demonstrated that the attitude of ABC Management towards Radio Australia has been one of historical neglect, and even at times perhaps one of disdain. There was also evidence that the ABC's internal cultural problems were very longstanding in relation to Radio Australia, and that it is regarded as the "poor sister"⁵⁴ of the ABC "family".⁵⁵

69. This general lack of "vision" and interest by ABC Management in RA's role and function, was argued to have manifested itself in a number of ways.

70. Evidence was led by Mr P Barnett, the Director of RA from 1980 to 1989, that pointed to the fact that the relationship between the ABC and RA has not generally been a positive one:

Mr Barnett— The relationship between RA and the ABC has not always been positive and it has not always been effective, at least speaking from my years of association. RA was very often out of sight, out of mind; something of a mystery, something of a problem. Senior management in Sydney has not always appreciated the culture, the capacity and the potential of RA. I might say an exception was chairman Ken Myer. He was an internationalist and a visionary. He also came from Melbourne. On the other hand, one ABC managing director was still referring to Radio Australia as 'Radio National' one year after taking office.

The separation of RA from the ABC would not apparently be of any considerable disappointment to the current leadership. It appeared swift in its support of the Mansfield recommendation to close RA. Of course, it would have been a neat and easy solution to what is clearly a very difficult financial crisis that they face, and I do not want to diminish that. In fairness, no management team really wants to preside over the demolition of an empire. But the sense I have got from the RA staff is that they expected more overt support from the ABC. Initially, they thought there was a silence that was followed by proposals for a vastly scaled down service, which was disappointing. Therefore, I think a parting of the ways may well be the best outcome. It could well be something that both sides would now be agreeable to. That was not always the case, but I think it may well be now.⁵⁶

71. This evidence of tensions between RA management and ABC management supported by other witnesses. Dr Errol Hodge, a senior lecturer in journalism at the Queensland University of Technology, endorsed the broad views of Mr Barnett:

Senator FERRIS—It was also suggested to me that there were many levels of interference run by Sydney against Radio Australia in Melbourne. I wonder if,

54 *Committee Hansard*, p. 168.

55 *Committee Hansard*, p. 120.

56 *Committee Hansard*, p. 4.

given your 27 years with the organisation, you could comment on that for me, please.

Dr Hodge—Yes, I believe I can. I think that is an eminently fair description that the people you know in the ABC have given you. I worked for the ABC overseas and in Sydney for 20 years and then became editor of Radio Australia and found just how low in the pecking order Radio Australia was.⁵⁷

72. Mr Westland, Chairman of the Staff House Committee at Radio Australia for the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, also concurred with this view:

Senator FERRIS—I asked the question because I wondered whether it would put an end to the suggestion I have heard that the Radio Australia group is at the bottom of the pecking order—the poor sister, if you like—of the ABC. Have you any comment to make on that?

Mr Westland—It would probably exacerbate that situation rather than improve it unfortunately.

Senator FERRIS—So you are not denying that situation exists?

Mr Westland—We are at the bottom of the barrel. There is no doubt about that. We would be very much at that stage.⁵⁸

73. The following exchange took place in the context of discussing the ABC Management's attitude towards Radio Australia:

Senator FERRIS—I was talking to a member of the current staff of Radio Australia during our visit out there today, and he described the service within the ABC as the cultural Cinderella. He said every time there is a bit of a squeeze on, Radio Australia's priorities go down the ladder. Is that a cultural thing within the ABC management itself that is longstanding rather than being perhaps contemporary?

Mr Barnett—I think so. I think distance is a problem for a start. You are not there at head office and you do not have access to Ultimo and Gore Hill like your colleagues in Sydney. I found that in my capacity quite often things were not going the way I liked so I would be making a point to Sydney and they would say, 'Oh God, he's whingeing again.' I was more of a problem rather than a potential.⁵⁹

74. It became clear through the evidence presented to the Committee that the difficulties between RA and ABC have been longstanding, having arisen ever since 1950, when RA joined ABC.

57 *Committee Hansard*, pp 214-15.

58 *Committee Hansard*, p. 168.

59 *Committee Hansard*, pp 10-11.

Mr Bird—Ever since Radio Australia joined the ABC back in 1950, the relationship between the two has been fraught with many difficulties. The ABC is based in Sydney and is fundamentally preoccupied with domestic broadcasting, whereas Radio Australia is based in Melbourne and broadcasts to the world. While it might appear that the ABC and Radio Australia carry out similar operations, nothing could be further from the truth. Only the BBC operates successfully both domestic and international services. Many countries separate the two. This allows the respective services to concentrate or focus on their mission and audience.⁶⁰

75. In 1973, Mr Peter Homfray, then head of Radio Australia and increasingly frustrated by a perceived unwillingness on the part of the ABC to fund the service adequately, proposed to the Minister for the Media, Senator Douglas McClelland, that RA could become a separate statutory authority under his Department.⁶¹

76. It also became evident that, amongst RA staff, there was a perceived lack of commitment to the future of RA demonstrated by ABC Management and the ABC Board:

CHAIR—Can you indicate to the committee what the morale of the staff is like at the moment in Radio Australia and ATV?

Mr Westland—Absolutely rock bottom; it could not get any lower. ATV was saying that it has gone through five inquiries in the last four years. Radio Australia can date back to 1983 to Dix inquiries which involved restructuring and the creation of a division of Radio Australia. Every one of those inquiries has pointed towards some form of restructuring or some form of downsizing or some form of threat to Radio Australia. At this stage, as a representative of the staff, I would be struggling to keep people at Radio Australia. People are coming to me saying, 'What should I do? Should I leave; should I go?' People have no idea as to what direction to take their careers.⁶²

77. There was also evidence led by various witness in the Committee hearings that suggested ATV and RA were not taking full advantage of many commercial opportunities. This is greatly regrettable as it means potential sources of increased revenue for RA were lost. As Mr Michael Mann emphatically stated in evidence, when asked to describe ABC's commercial prowess and competence:

I would not say that there is an aggressive commercial culture within the ABC.⁶³

60 *Committee Hansard*, p. 17.

61 Reported in Hodge, *Radio Wars, Truth Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, Chap.12, p. 257.

62 *Committee Hansard*, pp 165-66.

63 *Committee Hansard*, p. 137.

78. Government Senators further suggest that the ABC pursue commercial opportunities more vigorously, so as to maximise its potential funds available, for example in the education sector.

79. A further example of this cavalier attitude to RA's potential was revealed by the Managing Director, Mr Brian Johns, when he admitted in evidence: "We have not examined the commercial possibilities of Radio Australia".⁶⁴ The ABC has clearly missed sales potential, and Government Senators are somewhat incredulous that Australia would be about to pay for the right to re-broadcast the service to selected international audiences.⁶⁵

CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE FUNDING MODELS

80. Given this evidence of the ABC Management's attitude towards RA, the Government Senators are of the view that while not taking any concluded view on the issue, it may be worthwhile further examining the possibilities of different funding models for RA.

81. The Committee had the benefit of considerable evidence in relation to alternative funding models, such as those pertaining to the BBC World Service and Radio Canada International. These alternative funding models are described in the majority report. In particular, the Canadian model may be worth further consideration.

82. A number of other witnesses before the Committee expressed views on the relative merits of the various alternative fundings structures that had been suggested. For example:

Mr Westland—An idea that we have floated or suggested is an advisory committee or an advisory board comprising people from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Communications and the Arts, the Department of Defence, independent people and the chairman of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade to act as an advisory or policy making board, an overseeing board, for Radio Australia and ATV. They would set goals for the organisation and set policy directions for the organisation to ensure that we are given a goal, that we are given a direction to take.⁶⁶

CONFLICTING / ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE

83. There was a worrying lack of empirical evidence presented to the Committee regarding such matters as RA's audience size and reach, and its contribution to trade and foreign policy objectives. This increased the difficulty of basing definitive judgements on much of the evidence. The majority report's heavy reliance on anecdotal evidence is unfortunate, as such material is not suitable from which to draw firm, let alone responsible, conclusions. Government Senators consider this unsatisfactory and unfortunate, and believe that given the terms of reference, the onus of proof was on the proponents of RA and ATV to more effectively establish their value.

64 *Committee Hansard*, p. 109.

65 See discussion at *Committee Hansard*, p. 114.

66 *Committee Hansard*, p. 170.

84. The evidence which the Committee received relating to the contribution of Radio Australia to Australia's foreign policy and trade interests was largely anecdotal and often conflicting. Claims by some witnesses who appeared before the Committee suggesting that any change in the structure or scope of the delivery of Radio Australia's services would do lasting damage to Australia's reputation and interests, were unsubstantiated assertions. None of these witnesses supported these claims with solid evidence, and most did not even refer to means by which Australia's interests are promoted overseas other than international broadcasting, which is undoubtedly only a small part of the picture. These assertions also ignored evidence of other witnesses which suggested RA is necessarily effective in all respects.⁶⁷

85. In considering this issue, it is notable that RA received more than 4,000 responses (by letter, e-mail, fax and telephone) between 24 January 1997 and 17 April 1997 to Mr Mansfield's recommendations. The content of these letters were categorised according to the reasons mentioned for supporting RA. Government Senators noted that:

- of the letters received and categorised from the RA China Section, only 18% stated that RA promotes trade, tourism and study connections, and only 13% said that RA is a valuable ambassador for Australia.
- of the letters received and categorised from the Indonesia Section of RA, only 11% said RA promoted trade, tourism and study connections, and only 9% mention the ambassadorial role.
- of the letters received and categorised from the RA English language Section, only 10% said that RA promoted trade, tourism and educational connections.
- of the total of responses which have been processed and categorised, there were only 15% that said RA is an ambassador for Australia, and only 13% said that RA promoted trade, tourism and study involvements.⁶⁸

86. There is also a concern that there is a fundamental contradiction to on the one hand argue that the ABC is an "independent" broadcaster and to laud its editorial integrity and independence, and to on the other hand argue that it is a vital element of Australia's foreign policy strategy.

87. The Government Senators strongly believe that the majority report fails to take sufficient account of the various alternative means by which Australia promotes itself in the region, particularly in the Asia region. Any analysis which examines the value of the role of Radio Australia without taking these other factors into consideration is of questionable value.

88. Loyalty to RA has certainly been demonstrated to some degree by the mail and many written submissions in support of RA received by the Committee. However, no substantive link has been established which shows that this loyalty to RA by listeners translates into a broader loyalty to Australia, increased trade, or furthers certain foreign policy objectives. The only evidence of a link between these factors has been in the form of a range of assertions.

67 *Committee Hansard*, p. 345.

68 RA submission, p. 4.

Additionally, there was some suggestion that many of the letters written received by RA or sent to the Committee were the result of an appeal by RA staff on air to their listeners. In any event, RA's written submission to the Committee itself conceded that the listeners who were most likely to respond to such appeals were those favouring the service.

89. In addition, there is some doubt about the motivation behind some of the statements which were made by figures in other countries, and led in evidence before the Committee. These figures were largely the beneficiaries of a free, comprehensive news service provided by the Australian taxpayer, and it should come as no surprise that they argue in favour of RA's complete continuation. As the Committee Chairman, Senator Forshaw, conceded at one point in the hearings: "They may be genuine; they may not".⁶⁹ This is a significant concession, and Government Senators could not automatically accept these statements as once again such evidence is a less than satisfactory basis upon which to make conclusions. Much of the goodwill apparent towards RA, it seems, is the result of it being a free service to its listeners.

90. Estimates of RA's audience sizes provided to the Committee varied widely. Dr Rodney Tiffen in his independent review acknowledged the unreliability of surveys conducted over the last couple of decades, with their wildly divergent assessments.⁷⁰ This was a difficulty which was raised not only by RA but also by others, including Errol Hodge, who wrote in his submission that:

A problem for supporters of RA and ATV is that estimates of their audience sizes vary widely. At the televised news conference after Mansfield handed his report to Alston, the Minister said Radio Australia's audience had dropped from 100 million several years ago to 'only' 20 million. (The estimate of 100 million was never realistic, being based on a total of more than half a million letters and cards to Radio in 1979-80 ... and a rubbery estimate by the International Shortwave Listeners' club that each letter represented 200 listeners). The actual audience for Radio Australia probably falls somewhere between Mansfield's five million and Alston's 20 million; precision is impossible because for example, no audience research is possible in China, from which after the Cultural listeners sent 183,000 letters and cards in a single year ... and where shortwave listening is still widespread.⁷¹

91. Accurately estimating the size of RA's audience is difficult, if not impossible. Although surveys of short-wave services have been conducted in parts of the Asia Pacific region in conjunction with other international broadcasters, such as the BBC World Service and Voice of America (VOA), surveys cannot be conducted in some regional countries or in regions of others. Even if it were possible to conduct comprehensive surveys of the region in order to achieve a total estimate of audience for a short-wave service, doing so would be prohibitively expensive. However, while it would be useful to have an accurate estimate of total audience, it is by no means a necessity. Other measures can be used to supplement survey results in evaluating performance.

69 *Committee Hansard*, p. 345.

70 *Radio Australia Review 1994/95*, p. 8.

71 Dr Errol Hodge, Senior Lecturer in Journalism - QUT, submission No.361, p. 3.

92. The evidence concerning the relative merits and future viability of short wave as a method of transmission was not such as to allow Government Senators to form a conclusive view of its overall appropriateness or otherwise. However, it is worth noting that RA's Thai shortwave service was discontinued some years ago when short wave radio use in that country declined significantly. It seems reasonable to conclude that short wave is a more suitable method of transmission in the Pacific than Asia region, given the nature and pace of technological developments in the areas.

CONCLUSIONS

93. The Government Senators have raised questions about the timing of this Committee of inquiry, and its report. They expressed these views on a number of occasions in the public hearings. It is questionable whether the Committee's reference was established more with a view to staging a political 'stunt' immediately prior to the May Budget, rather than a serious and substantive consideration of the various options relating to the continuing role and relevance of Radio Australia and ATV.

94. It is expected that the Government will make public a decision regarding the ABC's global funding in the Budget on 13 May, and it may be expected that this decision will reflect the Government's stated desire to maintain important core aspects of the Radio Australia service. However, ultimate responsibility for making a decision on Radio Australia's future funding and structure clearly rests with the ABC Board of Management.

95. In particular, the Government's decision regarding Radio Australia should reflect the strong commitment the Government has demonstrated towards the region, especially in Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific. The Government is urged to give particular consideration to maintaining a comprehensive RA service to these most important strategic areas.

96. It is beyond doubt that PNG is a key strategic area for the Australian Government, as emphasised during the recent civil emergency.

97. Government Senators believe Radio Australia's English and Pidgin services are particularly vital communications services in PNG and the South Pacific countries. Direct listenership and re-broadcast arrangements enable RA to be heard by more than half the population of the region every week. Of particular importance to Australia are the business and community leaders. Government Ministers and other key decision-makers among this audience.

98. The role and availability of other international broadcasters in the region is a decisive consideration. It must be kept firmly in mind that no other international broadcaster offers a South Pacific service to match RA. The evidence presented to the Committee relating to the comparative activities of other international broadcasters showed that the BBC World Service, Radio France International, Voice of America and Deutsche Welle are all available in the region, but do not have specialised services. Radio New Zealand International offers a more limited service based on its domestic New Zealand radio services.

99. However, this is not the case in the Asia region. Unlike the South Pacific region, in which no other international broadcaster offers a service to match RA, Asia is well served by a variety of international broadcasting services.

Senator Troeth - Do you consider that the broadcasts from those other avenues are sufficiently different or foreign in nature from the Australian broadcasts that they would present a problem for those listening to them?

Mr Campbell - I do not believe so.⁷²

100. Also unlike the South Pacific, RA's penetration rate in Asia is relatively low, and falling. There has been a distinct trend that as countries of the region developed and their choice of media became wider and more sophisticated, the use of shortwave has declined. For example, evidence showed that shortwave listenership in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines is low, particularly among decision-makers.

101. In the context of the ABC's budget commitments, the Government has to seriously and critically examine whether continuing to utilise scarce resources to maintaining the comprehensive service to Asia can be justified.

102. Government Senators do not believe it is economically responsible to continue to require the ABC to provide a service to expatriates.

Continued commitment to the region

103. It should be stressed that this recommendation does not amount to, nor signal, a possible 'disengagement from Asia' in any way whatsoever. It is a decision we believe may be necessary within the Budget context. Continued engagement with the Asia-Pacific region must remain our highest foreign and trade policy priority. Claims that focusing Radio Australia's service on the South Pacific region would amount to a disengagement from Asia are simply unfounded and misplaced. The Australian Government's commitment and priority to the Asia-Pacific region as a whole is clearly demonstrated by, among other things, the frequency of high level (Prime Ministerial and Ministerial) visits to countries in the region, particularly by the Prime Minister, Mr Howard, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, and the Minister for Trade, Deputy Prime Minister Mr Fischer.

104. We believe that these recommendations will allow Radio Australia to focus its services on the region where they have the greatest impact, that is, in our immediate region, including among national leaders, and thus be of greatest benefit to Australia.

105. With respect to the ATV service, a detailed consideration of ATV has not been presented here, since Government Senators support the current sale process which is proceeding. It is puzzling to find the generous amount of space devoted to this issue in the majority report.

106. However, Australia will still have a significant and important direct presence in the Asian region in the event that RA's services are changed, since the ATV service will continue to build a profile in the region. When the question is somewhat simplistically asked, "who will speak for Australia", a significant portion of the answer undoubtedly lies in the ATV service. Given modern communications developments in this region, a satellite service such as ATV will prove to be an excellent long term investment. The Department of Foreign Affairs concurred in its view that television is the major new medium for reaching opinion

72 Dr Errol Hodge, Senior Lecturer in Journalism - QUT, submission No.361, p. 3.

makers, particularly in the region of East Asia. In fact, its recommendation at that time favoured investment in ATV over Radio Australia.⁷³

RECOMMENDATIONS

107. The Government Senators recommend:

- That the Radio Australia short wave service to the South Pacific and Papua New Guinea be maintained.
- A high priority be given to broadcasting services in remaining Asian countries, where services should be based on the necessity to reach the decision-makers in those countries. We believe the Government should consider using satellite as the primary means of transmission.
- That, while recognising that the DOCA portfolio is primarily responsible for the RA service, DFAT consider providing some funding for RA, given the recognised contribution of RA to foreign policy objectives in key strategic areas.
- That the Government further consider establishing RA under a funding arrangement separate to the ABC, using possible models now existing in Canada or Britain.
- That within the ABC's already stated budgetary priorities, the Corporation give a high priority to continuing foreign language international broadcasts, particularly within the Pacific region.
- That the ABC continue to encourage re-broadcasting arrangements for
- community radio stations within the Asia Pacific region.

Supplementary comment by Senator Eggleston

Senator Eggleston found himself unable to subscribe to the views expressed by Mr Duncan Campbell.

Judith Troeth

Senator Judith Troeth

Alan Eggleston

Senator Alan Eggleston

Jeannie Ferris

Senator Jeannie Ferris

Sandy Macdonald

Senator Sandy Macdonald

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