

Committee Chair
Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

January 12, 2018

**Submission to the Inquiries into the Australian Broadcasting
Corporation Amendment
(Rural and Regional Measures) Bill 2017**

I have been researching regional media, more specifically, local content since 2008. Inquiries such as this need to occur regularly, particularly in light of the media reform laws that have gone through the parliament - laws that will have an adverse affect on regional communities. I have previously made a submission on this Bill, but I would like to add these comments.

A concern with the Bill is that news is only one part of what makes a radio programme. It could be argued, that more beneficial, and valuable to regional areas, would be an increase in the number of local radio programmes. At best, most Local ABC stations have up to five hours of local programming – which is less than what commercial stations offer in some licence areas. While increasing the number of journalist is an excellent measure, it must be remembered that while news may cover stories that affect local communities, they are not discussed in-depth. ABC networked programmes will be less likely to cover 'local' stories considered important to the community unless they have a statewide impact.

The spreadsheet attached to this submission is a sample of ABC broadcast areas in regional NSW and Queensland which highlights the number of 'local' ABC radio programmes (green) compared to networked (red). While the spreadsheet is dated 2015, not much has changed.

If this Bill is to provide a better service to regional areas, it needs to move beyond just adding more journalists, and provide better funding for local programmes. For example, Newcastle has local breakfast, morning and afternoon programmes, which allows issues pertinent to the Hunter region to be adequately discussed. As you can see from the spreadsheet, the number of networked programmes is quite high in regional areas. A local news service, while necessary and essential, will not adequately compensate for the city centric or generic discussion on many networked ABC programmes.

As for regional members on the regional council, again, this move should be commended. Perhaps there could be consideration that one of those directors who reside in a regional area, be someone who has a media background. This would ensure that the council is made more aware of the issues and community concerns of regional media and broadcasting.

Overall, any move to improving media services to regional Australia is a positive one, especially in remote areas that are not well served by media outlets.

Yours Sincerely

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MONDAY - FRIDAY ONLY AS OF APRIL 2015	ABC Local Radio Network									
Licence Area	Newcastle	Tamworth	Port Macquarie	Dubbo	Broken Hill	Coffs Harbour	Grafton	Toowoomba	Gympie	Murwillumbah
5am										
5:30am										
6am-7:45am										
7:45am-8am										
8am										
830am										
11am										
Midday										
1pm										
2pm										
3pm										
4pm										
6pm										
7pm										
10pm										
Local Programmes	3	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	3

Local
 Networked

Information obtained from ABC local radio station websites.