



Anglican Diocese of
BENDIGO

18 January 2016

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

Dear Secretary

Submission: Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015

I write to support the general thrust of this amendment Bill. As the Anglican Bishop of a rural diocese covering 30% of central and north western Victoria I am a regular listener to regional ABC radio. In the area covered by the Diocese of Bendigo there are three ABC rural radio stations broadcasting from Horsham, Bendigo and Mildura.

In the part of rural Australia that I have an engagement with ABC radio is depended upon enormously for a variety of community information, fire and flood alerts, news, weather and keeping us in touch with the wider world. Recent announcements made by ABC management of changes to rural and regional programming seem to be in no way in the best interests of the communities they serve. Indeed they appear to be an endorsement of views of Senator McKenzie as expressed in her speech to the Senate on Tuesday 1 December 2015 where she stated;

"We see the reduction of bulletins under the guise of allowing journalists more time to gather local stories. However, with two-thirds fewer bulletins within which to fit all that supposed extra content and the plan to broadcast them on in the early morning, of course regional Australia are suspicious and disappointed. Regional journalists affected by the changes were asking for more resources to cover the news, not more time to find it and dramatically less time to broadcast it."

To mark the introduction across regional radio in Victoria of the new program format which in fact seems to me to amount to a reduction in service and content.

I fully endorse the remarks of Senator McKenzie and believe the ABC is here to serve and that the latest changes show very little indication that the senior management is in touch with the scattered and rural communities of central and north western Victoria.

Yours sincerely

The Rt Rev'd Andrew Curnow AM
Bishop of Bendigo

Cc: Senator Bridget McKenzie

