

1948.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

SIXTEENTH REPORT

OF THE

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON BROADCASTING

RELATING TO

THE BROADCASTING OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS TO COUNTRY AND REMOTE AREAS.

CANBERRA, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 1948.

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MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON BROADCASTING.
(EIGHTEENTH PARLIAMENT.)

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M.P.(b)

(a) Appointed 13th November, 1946. (b) Appointed 6th December, 1946. (c) Appointed 17th October, 1947, to succeed Senator the Honorable Herbert Hays, who ceased to be a member of the Committee when his term of office as Senator expired on 30th June, 1947.

TERMS OF REFERENCE.

The following is a copy of a letter addressed to me by the Chairman of the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings :—

“ Following on requests made by Members of the Parliament, the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings has considered on several occasions the question of extending the reception areas of Parliamentary proceedings to country and outback areas of Australia. As it appeared this could be done with existing facilities only by a reduction in the national programmes (regional medium-wave and short-wave), which country, &c., listeners can receive, the Committee considered it was not opportune to recommend any such extension.

The matter was again before the Committee at its meeting on 20th March, 1947, when consideration was given to a request contained in a question in the House by Mr. Edmonds, Member for Herbert, on 6th March, for an extension of the transmission of Parliamentary broadcasts to North Queensland through either a national medium-wave or a national short-wave station. The Committee agreed to a Resolution as follows :—

That a request be made that, subject to the following proviso, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting inquire into the possibility of extending the transmission of the broadcast of Parliamentary proceedings to listeners not encompassed within the service areas of the seven national stations at present used for the Parliamentary broadcast, viz. :—the second national station in each State capital city and in Newcastle :

Provided that, in considering the matter, the Standing Committee shall exclude any proposal which would involve a reduction in services and programmes now being broadcast from national medium-wave and short-wave stations.

It will be appreciated if you will be good enough to refer the subject to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting.”

In accordance with the request of the Joint Committee and in pursuance of the provisions of Section 85 (1.) of the Australian Broadcasting Act, I hereby refer the matter to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting for consideration and report to Parliament.

D. CAMERON,
Postmaster-General.

SIXTEENTH REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON BROADCASTING.

In accordance with Section 85 of the Australian Broadcasting Act, we submit this report to Parliament on the possibility of extending the areas of reception of Parliamentary broadcasts.

2. The terms of reference, recorded on the preceding page, require us to exclude any proposal which would involve a reduction in services and programmes now being broadcast from national medium-wave and short-wave stations.

THE PUBLIC ATTITUDE.

3. Before seeking evidence on the technical and other considerations involved, we deemed it advisable to gauge the strength of public opinion in country and remote areas in favour of Parliamentary broadcasts as a community service and to elicit first-hand information as to the extent to which these broadcasts are not satisfactorily heard, in typical areas, from the stations which at present transmit them, which are—

2BL, Sydney,
3LO, Melbourne,
4QR, Brisbane,
5AN, Adelaide,
6WN, Perth,
7ZR, Hobart, and
2NC, Newcastle.

4. With the co-operation of Country, Labour and Liberal members and civic authorities, public hearings were arranged in Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, and Western Australia (at Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns, Melbourne, Horsham, Sydney, Hobart, Launceston, Deloraine, Devonport, Scottsdale, Adelaide, Kalgoorlie, Perth, and Northam.) The witnesses included spokesmen representing not only large numbers of listeners, but also sectional, as well as general, interests in the local communities, such as the Australian Natives' Association, Chamber of Commerce, Country Party, Labor Party, Liberal Party, Liberal and Country League, Country and Democratic League, Trade Unions, Progress Associations and kindred organizations, in addition to radio retail firms, whose representatives were in a position to give reliable advice as to the type of receivers in use in various districts. Our visits did much to enliven interest in the proceedings of Parliament. The vast majority of the witnesses were anxious to hear them, although there were indications in several quarters that an alternative programme should be available, or that there should be less light entertainment on the alternative Interstate programme in view of the extent to which the commercial stations specialize in that type of broadcasting.

5. As the hearings progressed, it was gratifying to observe an increasing degree of enthusiasm for Parliamentary broadcasts, arising from growing awareness of the danger of belittling the value of Australian Parliamentary institutions and the orderly freedom of election which they confer, in contrast with the disorderly despotism of a minority movement whose avowed aim is to seize governing power by violence and bloodshed under the leadership of designing men, who, misguided by false philosophies of life, are striving to make the masses their dupes by subtle propaganda, camouflaging their intention to rob them of their freedom and make them slaves under a régime of totalitarian tyranny.

6. The following is a summary of additional reasons why the general trend of public opinion is in favour of the provision of facilities, as soon as circumstances permit, to enable as many listeners as possible to hear the broadcasts—

- (1) To facilitate effective functioning of the democratic system of Government, the people should have adequate opportunities to enable them to be fully informed on opposing viewpoints in political affairs.
- (2) True democracy requires an informed public opinion—voters who can use judgment and discretion instead of being swayed by prejudice and emotion.
- (3) In the absence of Parliamentary broadcasts, the press is the principal medium on which the people would have to rely for information as to the views of representative spokesmen of both sides of political controversies.
- (4) The majority of newspapers do not fully report conflicting political opinions, either on account of insufficient news column space or on account of conscious or unconscious partiality in a particular direction.
- (5) Apart from *Hansard*, which comparatively few people have the opportunity to read, the broadcasting of Parliamentary proceedings provides a safeguard against inaccurate, incomplete or misleading press reports, which are said to be biased at times by the selection of size of type for headlines, by the wording of headlines, by conspicuous or obscure positioning in the news columns, and by the phraseology used in the reports themselves.

- (6) As a rule, there is a tendency on the part of the press to give priority or greater prominence to the reporting of unusual happenings in the Parliament than to impartial and adequate reports of debates of educational value which would assist electors to form reasoned, rather than emotional, judgments on the merits of political issues.
- (7) Very little that happens in the House after 10 p.m. is reported in the country editions of the metropolitan morning newspapers. Similarly, very little of the news which "breaks" after 3.30 p.m. finds its way into the evening metropolitan press.
- (8) Australian newspapers include hundreds of country weeklies, bi-weeklies and tri-weeklies, which rarely have any Parliamentary cover.
- (9) The greater the number of people who can be encouraged to listen to Parliamentary broadcasts, the greater will be their interest in the management of their country.
- (10) It is desirable to stimulate interest in Parliamentary proceedings, especially among the younger generation, in order that there may be adequate appreciation of the importance of safeguarding the right enjoyed by the people of this country to participate in free election of their representatives.
- (11) In the interests of individual and national welfare, the fact that the aggregate listeners' fee revenue collected from city listeners is double the aggregate collected from country listeners, should not be regarded as a predominant measuring rod in determining the amount of public funds which might be devoted to the provision of facilities in the country *vis-a-vis* the city—for various reasons, not the least of which is the importance of encouraging the growth of population by establishing liberal amenities in rural areas to make country life more attractive and thereby counteract the drift to the cities. (Standing Committee's note.—In the Committee's Sixth Report, statistics were quoted showing that for every 1,000 potential mothers there must be 365 children under the age of five years, if the population is simply to remain stationary. The rural areas average 520 children under that age. The provincial towns average 420. Sydney, typical of the industrial capitals, averages only 290).

HISTORICAL.

7. As is more or less well known, the national broadcasting system comprises four groups of stations—

- (1) Seven medium-wave stations (one in each capital city and in Newcastle), which broadcast what is called the national programme.
- (2) Seven medium-wave stations (one in each capital city and in Newcastle), which broadcast what is known as the interstate programme.
- (3) Nineteen medium-wave stations in country districts, which broadcast what is called the regional programme, a composite made up from items from both national and interstate programmes, but principally from the interstate.
- (4) Four short-wave stations (two at Lyndhurst, Victoria, one at Brisbane, and one at Perth), which variously broadcast the national, the interstate, or the regional programmes.

8. In addition, there is a third short-wave station at Lyndhurst which has been used since June, 1941, as a unit of the overseas system, in conjunction with three high-power transmitters at Shepparton, except for a period of about two hours in the early morning (when it is used for domestic purposes).

9. When our predecessors (the Standing Committee of the Seventeenth Parliament) inquired into the initiation of broadcasts of Parliamentary proceedings in 1945 they considered several alternative proposals.

10. The first idea was a network of 22 national medium-wave stations capable of serving nearly all the populated portions of Australia. The cost of equipment alone would have been £500,000 and there were insuperable difficulties owing to the shortage of radio channels.

11. A second proposition was to establish local service stations in each capital city but on a common frequency. This idea, known as the "synchronization" system, would have involved £36,000, and would have been unsatisfactory from the coverage standpoint, as the reliable service areas would be limited to a radius of 10 to 15 miles from the transmitters and would be valueless, especially to country listeners. In addition, there would have been difficulties in making the necessary landlines available between the stations.

12. A third proposition was the provision of a service of short-wave transmitters only. At that time approximately 50 per cent. of listeners in capital cities were equipped with short-wave receivers, but the number in country districts was not known. Such a service would

only have catered for a restricted number of listeners, apart from technical difficulties in receiving short-wave transmissions in city areas with a degree of satisfaction comparable with reception from local medium-wave stations.

13. A fourth proposition was the use of selected commercial stations. This would probably have entailed very considerable expense in payment of air time. It would also probably have involved legislation if it were desired to compel the stations to allocate the necessary programme time.

14. A fifth proposal was to use one of the groups of seven national stations in the State capital cities and Newcastle. This, it was pointed out, would have resulted in the service being withheld from country districts which rely on their local regional station for national broadcast reception. On the other hand, if these regional stations were included, listeners in areas which rely on such stations exclusively for broadcast service would not have an alternative national programme when Parliament was on the air.

• 15. A sixth proposition involved a combination of three possibilities—

- (1) The use of one of the groups of seven national stations in the capital cities and Newcastle.
- (2) The use of short-wave stations to augment the service for listeners in the country and remote areas.
- (3) The use of selected country commercial stations willing to sell time.

16. This proposal would have entailed withdrawal of telephone trunk channels between capital cities and would have subjected telephone users to very serious disabilities. Already, under the then existing conditions there were delays to trunk line calls of as much as six hours between Sydney and Melbourne and five hours between Sydney and Brisbane. In addition, the inclusion of commercial stations in country districts would have rendered it necessary to withdraw intra-state trunk lines from telephone users. The majority of these, too, were very heavily overloaded, and calls were subjected to long periods of waiting for service. It would have been most unfair to expect the public, in business and social relations, to tolerate the longer delays which would have resulted from adoption of this proposal.

17. The only remaining proposition under the conditions available in 1945 was the use of the main group of seven stations in the capital cities and Newcastle and the national regional stations in the country districts supplemented by short-wave service to remote areas.

18. In the nine months that elapsed between the date of the Committee's Eighth Report and the date of commencement of Parliamentary broadcasts, the Post Office was able to provide additional channels to overcome the delays, and Parliament decided to use one of the groups of seven national stations in the capital cities and Newcastle, and to provide for such other additional stations to be used as are "prescribed" (Section 4, Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act).

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS.

19. The word "prescribed" means that these other additional stations would have to be specified in a regulation under Section 17 of the Act. The recommendation to the Governor-General as to making any such regulation would come within the province of the Postmaster-General, who administers the Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act, as indicated in Administrative Arrangements Order of 18th April, 1947 (page 1093 of the *Commonwealth Gazette*).

SHORT-WAVE PROPOSALS.

20. The use of regional stations for Parliamentary broadcasts being excluded by the terms of reference, we devoted attention to the possibilities of short-wave. Existing short-wave stations are—

Call sign.	Location.	Power.	At present used by—
VLH	Lyndhurst, Victoria ..	10 kw.	A.B.C. for domestic service
VLR	Lyndhurst, Victoria ..	5 kw.	A.B.C. for domestic service
VLQ	Brisbane ..	10 kw.	A.B.C. for domestic service
VLW	Perth ..	2 kw.	A.B.C. for domestic service
VLA	Shepparton, Victoria ..	100 kw.	Department of Information for overseas service
VLB	Shepparton, Victoria ..	100 kw.	Department of Information for overseas service
VLC	Shepparton, Victoria ..	50 kw.	Department of Information for overseas service
VLG	Lyndhurst, Victoria ..	10 kw.	Department of Information for overseas service except that it is used by the A.B.C. for domestic service from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. on week days and 6.45 a.m. to 8 a.m. on Sundays

21. The Post Office contemplates the establishment of another 10 kw. short-wave station at Brisbane, Perth, Sydney and Adelaide, mainly to cover "blind" areas not adequately serviced at present. The Department's plans may, however, depend to a large extent upon the outcome of international discussions concerning the allocation of frequency channels.

22. VLQ serves listeners in the outback areas of Queensland, and VLW provides the only service available to listeners in remotely situated parts of Western Australia.

23. The coverage of VLR is intended to meet the needs of an area extending roughly from the Victorian border to the Queensland border, while VLH is designed to continue that coverage to the north seaboard. These two stations are therefore complementary, and although there is an area of overlap in which both are audible, each of them is required for an effective coverage of a single general programme to those listeners who are not in the overlap area. The A.B.C. feels that the use of either of them for Parliamentary broadcasts would be inimical to the service, in view of the fact that quite a number of listeners to each station would be deprived of an alternative programme if either were carrying Parliament.

24. The Commission initially suggested the provision of a single high power station of 50 kw., widely diffused, to serve the inland with an alternative programme, including Parliamentary broadcasts. This proposal, the Post Office points out, is practicable (provided interference-free channels are available) but costly. It would take two years to build the station and would involve an expenditure estimated at £115,000. The Post Office prefers a multiplicity of low power stations, estimated at £18,000 each at Brisbane and Perth, and £36,000 each at Sydney and Adelaide, where new sites and buildings are required; especially as they would enable local State programmes to be provided, such as school broadcasts and rural sessions. The Commission agrees that this latter aspect is important, and, although the costs would be much the same, has no objection to the proposals, which, it assumes, are primarily concerned with the provision of an alternative programme and not with complementary geographic coverage. The Post Office evidence, however, shows that the new transmitters at Brisbane and Perth are being erected to provide geographic coverage, complementary to that of stations VLQ and VLW, and not specifically to enable alternative programmes to be made available.

25. The Commission believes that its existing transmitters, both medium-wave and short-wave, which are at present not taking the Parliamentary broadcasts, are required for the provision of a single general programme to those areas which have no other alternative. But if it were determined that notwithstanding this consideration Parliament should go on one of the short-wave transmitters, then, in the Commission's view, VLR would cause the least inconvenience to listeners, in view of the fact that it has a smaller exclusive coverage than VLH. However, although the Commission does not feel that this should be done, it would be agreeable to VLR carrying the Parliamentary broadcasts until such time as the second short-wave transmitters are established in Brisbane and Perth, when the new coverage design which their coming would create might make it advisable for VLH to be used in lieu of VLR. In any case, when the projected short-wave stations are completed, the A.B.C. will be willing to carry Parliamentary broadcasts on one station at each of those places where two short-wave stations are provided—the actual choice of stations to be left undetermined until the effect of the new coverage can be gauged by research and experience.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS.

26. At Horsham the suggestion has been made that Parliamentary broadcasts be alternated over the various national stations week about. The Commission, however, points out that this scheme would be most unsatisfactory from the standpoint of programme building, apart from the more serious objection that the regional programme is the only one heard by many country listeners, who would be deprived of an alternative service if Parliamentary broadcasts were included.

27. Parts of Victoria do not receive satisfactory short-wave service on account of the "skip distance" factor. Regional stations are therefore the only medium through which Parliamentary broadcasts could be provided immediately for country listeners who do not hear 3LO Melbourne. Our terms of reference preclude us from considering that idea, and all we can say is that if the evidence we heard on behalf of listeners in the Horsham district may be regarded as typical of the attitude of listeners in other country districts of Victoria and other States, there is a case for duplication of the regional transmitters as soon as circumstance permit.

28. Somewhat similar suggestions to that at Horsham have been made by witnesses in Western Australia. The broadcasts will probably be heard in additional areas of that State when the new short-wave transmitter at Perth is in operation, but the servicing of other places will need to await duplication of the regional stations.

AN IMPROVED SERVICE FOR TASMANIA.

29. Consideration has been given to the possibility of serving Tasmania from a single station of high power, instead of from two stations at Hobart and one at Kelso, near Launceston. It has been reported that the medium-wave station at Athlone, situated in the geographical centre of Ireland, gives a reasonably good service throughout the whole country. The following is a comparison of the conditions :—

	Ireland.	Tasmania.
Length	230 miles	180 miles
Breadth	160 miles	200 miles
Mountains	Very few over 2,000 feet. In general they are towards the coast	Many over 2,000 feet. They are largely central
General level	Less than 500 feet	Large part over 1,500 feet
General form	Saucer-shaped	Mountain ranges separate inhabited areas

30. From the radio propagation aspect, the difference is wholly one of conductivity, Ireland having high (i.e. good) conductivity, whilst that of Tasmania is low. The service areas to be expected from 100 kw. stations are—

Daylight—

Ireland	260 miles
Tasmania	80 miles

Night-time—

Ireland	120-150 miles
Tasmania	40-50 miles

31. The service areas would not be circular in form, as the variations in the conductivity values due to mountains, &c., would cause the signal strength to decrease more rapidly in some directions than others. Hence, a centrally situated station in Tasmania, apart from not giving the required coverage, would dissipate the greater part of its signal strength in areas of poor soil conductivity where there is little habitation.

32. For these reasons the Post Office is of the opinion that it would be impracticable to provide a service from a single station in Tasmania which would be satisfactory in all populated areas of the State.

33. In Tasmania also it was represented that the northern half of the State comprises approximately two-thirds of the population ; that reception of Parliamentary broadcasts in various parts of the northern half, either from 7ZR or 3LO (both of which transmit these broadcasts), is either non-existent or unsatisfactory on account of fading &c. ; that an additional station should be provided in the north to remedy these complaints ; or that 7ZR should be reconstructed on a site between Hobart and, say, Oatlands.

34. In the opinion of the Post Office, however, the north coasts districts are better served, as regards alternative national programmes, than any other regional area ; observations have shown that fairly good signals are received from the Melbourne stations most of the time, especially if an efficient outdoor aerial is erected. The provision of a second regional station to serve the northern portion of the State is bound up with the question of duplicating all regional stations. The removal of 7ZR to the Midland districts could not provide a solution, since the signal strength in the north coast districts from a 10 kw. station, situated even as far north as Oatlands, would not be satisfactory and would be subject to fading. Furthermore, the service in the city and suburbs of Hobart from such a situation would be below the standard of reception which has been set as the minimum for capital cities. However, the Post Office has planned to select a new site for 7ZR and to increase its power from half a kilowatt to 2 kw. The new site will probably be north of the Derwent River, as a more comprehensive coverage can be obtained from this location, and it is expected that many of the existing difficulties with reception will be overcome.

ANTI-FADING RADIATORS.

35. Since the establishment of stations in the national system, and anti-fading radiating system has been developed. This is a type of radiator (aerial) designed to concentrate transmission along the ground from the station with a minimum of transmission at high angles skywards.

36. The reason for this arrangement is that at night-time sky waves are returned to the earth and interference with the wanted ground wave, causing fading and distortion at some distance from the station. The existence of this fading zone around the station at night-time

thus limits the area in which completely satisfactory service may be given. The distance at which the fading zone occurs is dependent on ground conductivity, frequency and radiator design, but not on transmitter power. In daylight there is in general no such sky wave and therefore no fading zone.

37. Anti-fading radiators are high (730 feet in some cases) and therefore expensive.

38. In thus explaining the effect of introducing these radiators, the Post Office has indicated that they have not yet been established at certain stations which transmit Parliamentary broadcasts and that the question of installing them is under consideration.

A SERVICE FOR NEW GUINEA AND NORFOLK ISLAND.

39. Representations have been made in favour of extension of the Parliamentary broadcasts to New Guinea, where there are between 4,000 and 5,000 white people, also to Norfolk Island, where the population is approximately 1,000. The Minister for Information has indicated that programme time could be set aside each sitting day for a ten to fifteen minutes' summary of the day's proceedings; and that this service, if carried on the 10 kw. transmitter VLG, as well as on one of the 100 kw. transmitters at Shepparton, would be clearly audible in New Guinea and, on certain beams, Norfolk Island. Needless to say, care would have to be taken to ensure that the summaries would be factual and impartial.

STANDING COMMITTEE'S COMMENTS.

40. As noted above, the terms of reference forbid us to consider any proposal which would involve reduction of existing services and programmes. Underlying that limitation is the consideration that no station should be used for Parliamentary broadcasts if listeners would thereby be deprived of an alternative programme while Parliament is on the air.

41. In the opinion of the A.B.C., which is in favour of the extension of Parliamentary broadcasts to all electorates, the most satisfactory idea would be to duplicate the various regional medium-wave transmitters. This, however, is a very long term proposal for several reasons, the most important of which is the absence of suitable medium-wave radio channels. There has been evidence that the introduction of frequency modulation in the capital cities will enable medium-wave channels at present used by capital city stations to be released for additional regional stations, but the indications are that it will be ten to fifteen years before these channels can be released—that being the period estimated by responsible Post Office officials to be involved in effecting a final cutover to frequency modulation in capital cities.

42. Although the Post Office has mentioned that VLR, in conjunction with the new Brisbane and Perth stations, would provide a wide coverage over areas not now receiving Parliamentary broadcasts, it is clear that the use of VLR, VLH, VLQ or VLW for Parliamentary broadcasts would involve a reduction in existing services, and having regard to our terms of reference we are obliged to exclude them from consideration.

43. The only other existing short-wave station which the terms of reference permit us to consider using is VLG, which, except during very early morning hours, has been allocated to the Department of Information for overseas service, and was used prior to December, 1946, for the re-broadcast of "Question Time."

44. The Minister for Information, while anxious to co-operate, points out that release of VLG for Parliamentary broadcasts would disrupt the service to Malaya and Islands in the Pacific adjacent to Australia. He has advocated the use of VLR and VLQ and has suggested an alteration of the frequencies of VLR in order that that station may serve northern and central Queensland with Parliamentary broadcasts. The Post Office advice on that suggestion is as follows :—

VLH and VLR are intended primarily to provide service to listeners resident in different areas, although there is some overlapping. VLH, which has the more northerly coverage, operates in the 9, 11 and 15 megacycle bands during different periods of the day, whilst VLR transmits on frequencies in the 6 and 9 megacycle bands.

Providing interference-free channels could be found, it would be practicable to arrange for VLR to transmit on frequencies higher than is at present the case, so as to serve residents of central and northern Queensland. Such a plan would, however, result in the duplication of the short-wave service at present being rendered in those areas by VLH.

There is little doubt that the adoption of the proposal would deprive many listeners of the programme they have customarily received from VLR. Nevertheless, the districts which VLR is at present designed to serve have some alternative service available from other short-wave transmitters and at night-time from the secondary coverage of medium frequency stations.

45. Should Parliament decide not to use VLR at present, the position could be re-examined after the projected short-wave stations at Brisbane and Perth are completed. As suggested by the A.B.C., it could then be determined whether VLH should be used instead of VLR. In

favour of the adoption of this course, it could be said that it is better to withhold a facility than to grant it and subsequently withdraw it ; that is to say, if VLR were used now it might be difficult later on to substitute VLH, if the new coverage made the substitution desirable.

46. In addition to the decision which may be reached as to the use of VLR for Parliamentary broadcasts, we suggest that, in the event of restoration of the re-broadcast of " Question Time " from VLG, consideration be given to so beaming the transmission that listeners in northern Australia would receive it, as well as those in areas outside Australia. In this connexion reference is invited to the alternative proposed in the following advice from the Acting Chief Engineer of the Post Office :—

The frequency used has a much greater influence on coverage than any other factor. If VLG were used specifically to provide a service to islands in the Pacific, frequencies which would permit the optimum signal to be laid down in the desired area would be chosen. Such signals might also be receivable in northern parts of Australia, but not with the same satisfaction as in the area to which the transmission is specifically directed. Frequencies could perhaps be used which would provide a satisfactory service in Northern Australia, and, at the same time, by virtue of " Second hop " reflection from the ionosphere, render a reasonable service in Pacific areas. Such a matter would, of course, require a careful study, due regard being paid to all the factors and vagaries associated with short-wave propagation.

47. We recommend that the suggested study be undertaken, in the event of restoration of the re-broadcast of " Question Time " from VLG ; also that the question as to which domestic short-wave stations should broadcast Parliament be determined, as suggested by the Commission, after the projected stations at Brisbane and Perth are completed, when the effect of the new coverage can be gauged by research and experience. These new stations are expected to be in operation early in 1949.

48. During the investigations in Queensland there were complaints of unsatisfactory reception of Parliamentary broadcasts in the Southport area. The Post Office indicated, in reply to our inquiries, that it had agreed to increase the operating power of 4QR (which transmits Parliamentary broadcasts) and 4QG to 10 kw. and to erect a new radiating system for them. These measures will not only improve conditions for Southport listeners but will at the same time enable a better service to be provided for listeners in other areas of southern Queensland.

49. For the benefit of those listeners who are within the " skip " distance of short-wave stations and who do not hear Parliamentary broadcasts satisfactorily from the medium-wave station through which they are at present transmitted, we recommend that, pending duplication of the regional stations, a 10 to 15 minutes' summary of the day's proceedings should be broadcast by the Commission during a suitable time in the evening. It would be necessary that great care should be taken to ensure that the summaries are factual and impartial.

50. There is evidence that people would have a better appreciation of Parliamentary broadcasts if they understood Parliamentary procedure. Our predecessors suggested in 1945 (in the Eighth Report) that this requirement would be met by the circulation of a publication similar to the *Listeners' Guide to Parliament on the Air* which has been issued in New Zealand. We endorse that suggestion, which might be carried out as soon as the Parliament is enlarged. We also suggest that consideration might be given by the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings to eliminating the noises which, many witnesses claim, tend to mar the proceedings somewhat ; and to arranging for the announcer to give such explanation of Parliamentary procedure as is possible during the intervals that elapse on the occasion of divisions.

51. We conclude by quoting the words of Sir William Haley, Director-General of the British Broadcasting Corporation, that " broadcasting is the most powerful device yet conceived to serve the end of bringing about an informed democracy ". For that reason, it would be a fundamental mistake, especially in these difficult times, to be niggardly or short-sighted in the provision of adequate facilities to enlighten all sections of the people as to the views of the representatives who govern them, and whom they may periodically confirm in office or change at will, without intimidation, through that great instrument of free democracy—the secret ballot box.

S. K. AMOUR, Chairman.
D. O. WATKINS, Vice-Chairman.
A. FINLAY.
A. J. RANKIN.
T. P. BURKE.
C. W. J. FALKINDER.
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Canberra, 11th September, 1948.