



RADIO OUTBACK PTY LTD

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**Committee Secretary
Senate Environment, Communications,
Information Technology & the Arts Committee
Department of the Senate
Email: ecita.sen@aph.gov.au**

Good afternoon,

I am writing to you regarding the proposed new licence conditions on regional radio relating to Local Content, Local Presence and Local Content Plans.

As I understand these new regulations are being proposed only on regional radio. There is no similar proposal on any other regional media or for any city media.

We are a small family business & whilst we have always endeavoured to provide excellent local service to our communities it is always within the capabilities we have at the time.

Imposing these new requirements could put our business in a very vulnerable position. There is a possibility of a competitor who owns both a newspaper & television service. This would be a very powerful competitor who would not have any of the conditions that we as a regional radio operator would be expected to comply with.

Other media would be able to react immediately to changes in the market place. Regional radio could be restricted in making important business decisions until an inquiry took place.

Let me give you an example of how changes could take place in a licensed area. The Broken Hill radio license area had a service area population in the early 1980s of over 35,000. With down grading of mining operations Broken Hill lost almost 10,000 people in a very short time. The radio station operators at the time had to make significant staff reductions and changes to remain viable.

In 2003 Broken Hill's service area was forecast to drop to only 18,000 people by 2010. However currently the population of the service area is believed to have stabilised at around 24,000. Who

knows what will happen? The population may go up , it may go down. Our point is if we are locked into set license conditions we are not able to respond to changes in the market place. The proposals seem to be a return to “the old days” when station management spent a lot of time keeping compliant with the regulations. In this new century with increasing competition, regional managers spent most of their time in sales & program management.

We cannot believe that these new license conditions applying to regional radio are being proposed. Regional radio is the least profitable media & as such would be most affected even if these new content plan where to apply to all media. The fact that it is only to apply to regional radio goes beyond the limits of what is reasonable or equitable.

We ask that the proposed new license conditions on regional radio not be included in the Broadcasting Services Amendment (Media Ownership) Bill 2005

Yours faithfully

**Dave Robertson
Managing Director
RADIO OUTBACK PTY LTD**