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24th September 2006

I wish to make a submission as a private citizen to the Inquiry into the Broadcasting Services Amendment (Media Ownership) Bill 2006 and related bills.

According to the Explanatory Memorandum associated with this Bill:

*The proposed changes will encourage greater competition and allow media companies to achieve economies of scale and scope, while protecting the diversity of Australia's media.*

I have followed this debate closely and find no evidence provided by the Minister (or from any other source) which supports this statement.

I can find very little support for these measures in the media, even in papers owned by News Ltd. Over 50% of the public is against it and 80% of the journalists (according to a poll conducted by the MEAA).

How will the changes *encourage greater competition* when in every market the number of voices will be reduced? It is misleading of the Government, through the Minister, to suggest that this will happen. I have seen no evidence provided to back up this claim. In small populations and large there will be reduced competition.

*Economies of scale and scope* may well be achieved, by reducing staff overall and combining resources. I realise that this is what the big media companies want and it would be another gift given to them by this Government.

There is nothing here to protect the already limited diversity of Australia's media – already one of the lowest in the developed world - and everything to encourage its diminution.

If this bill is passed there is nothing to stop PBL from buying the Fairfax Group and making it as partisan a newspaper group as is the Murdoch press. As the Government has devised policy in the past to favour the companies led respectively by the Murdoch family and the Packer family, doubtless they will show their gratitude to the Government, or the Liberal Party, as they have done in the past. To an involved citizen it seems this is exactly what the Government is trying to achieve.

It makes a mockery of democracy when media and politicians combine to further each others' interests.

It is of great concern that media policy continues to be devised in the interests of the huge media companies and against the public interest. This has resulted in these companies making huge profits with no advantage to the community. The TV companies have given nothing back to the community. Free to air television is atrocious, governed only by greed. Take-up of digital TV is one of the lowest in the developed world, because the networks see there is nothing in it for them. And the public broadcasters are not given the means to develop digital TV as this would be 'unfair competition' for commercial broadcasters.

If these proposals were accompanied by measures to strengthen community and public broadcasting there could be more support from them. But, at the same time, community broadcasters are being forced to take more and more

advertising/sponsorship to survive, the SBS becomes increasingly dependent on advertising – with the compromises that accompanies this – and the ABC is not given the funding that that it needs to fulfil its charter, let alone expand its digital services.

If this Bill passes into law it will be a huge backwards step for Australia.

Joan Laing