

## Submission to the Review of Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific

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I welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the Review of Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific jointly conducted by the Department of Communications and the Arts and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. My submission and judgements are provided in a personal capacity.

### Executive Summary

The Australian government was reminded in the 1975 *Radio Australia, Independent Inquiry Report* that “long-distance broadcasting cannot be confiscated at a frontier or refused a visa or be burnt in a public square.”<sup>1</sup> Shortwave radio technology provides “a relatively cheap means by which one nation can project its outlook on others, even when other efforts may be blocked.”<sup>2</sup> These two judgements continue to be of enduring relevance in the contemporary era of internet, satellite, and mobile communications technology broadcasting Australian content to the Asia Pacific. The use of shortwave technology would address the vulnerabilities identified with FM transmission, satellite, and online broadcasting to the Asia Pacific. This submission strongly recommends that the Australian government resume broadcasting Australian media services on shortwave frequencies concurrently with other broadcast technologies in the Asia Pacific. This is because shortwave technology is a vital sovereign strategic capability for the Australian government in times of crisis and conflict in the Asia Pacific.

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<sup>1</sup> Radio Australia, *Independent Inquiry Report* (Waller report), December 1975, Parliamentary Paper No. 97 1977, p. 2 quoted in Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## Key Recommendations

1. The Australian government should reacquire the Shepparton transmission station and resume shortwave broadcasting.
2. The Australian government should develop a long-term shortwave radio modernisation plan.
3. The Australian government should improve regional specific content and the capacity of listeners to receive Australian media services including shortwave radio now and into the future.
4. The content aspect of the Australia's international broadcasting should remain under the responsibility of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). This will protect the reputation of impartially of news and current affairs programs covering the Asia Pacific.
5. In the short-term, the ABC should source foreign language content and expertise from the SBS to enhance Radio Australia's competitiveness and relevance in the Asia Pacific.
6. An international shortwave radio strategy should also be part of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's media strategy and digital diplomacy efforts.
7. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should also evaluate the feasibility of distributing DRM shortwave receivers capable of receiving Australian shortwave frequencies as part of Australia's foreign aid to the Pacific.
8. Increased funding to improve content should be separate from the ABC budget allocation and closely audited. This will ensure the ABC invests any additional funding provided to improving Asia Pacific content.
9. The Australian government should also establish a separate authority that would be responsible for developing and maintaining Australia's shortwave transmission sites. This would ensure that Australia sustains an independent shortwave broadcasting capability independent of the ABC.
10. The Australian government should also consult with the Department of Defence and other relevant agencies about the role shortwave radio may play in future contingences in Australia's immediate region.
11. Maintaining shortwave radio engineering skills should be a priority of the Australian government as these skills may become important inputs to future defence capability development and operations in the Asia Pacific region.
12. The Australian government should require Radio Australia and the ABC to *consult* with the government on news and current affairs concerning sensitive matters that may adversely impact Australia's interests or national security. However, this should only be done in times of serious regional crisis or conflict and broadcaster independence should always be priority of the Australian government on these matters.

## **Submission to the Review of Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific**

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### **Introduction**

The Review of Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific is more than just an opportunity to assess the coverage and access of existing Australian media services, and the use and value of shortwave broadcasting technology in the Asia Pacific region. The Review is also an opportunity to examine how Australian media services broadcasted using a range of methods including shortwave technology have, and will continue play, an increasingly important role to secure, facilitate, and enhance Australia's national interests in an era of substantial strategic adjustment in the Asia Pacific.

This submission strongly recommends that the Australian government resume broadcasting Australian media services on shortwave frequencies concurrently with other broadcast technologies in the Asia Pacific. This is because shortwave technology is a vital sovereign strategic capability for the Australian government in times of crisis and conflict in the Asia Pacific. First, this submission will cover the historical significance of Australian shortwave broadcasting in the Asia Pacific. It demonstrates that Australian media broadcasted on shortwave frequencies has played an important role in times of war and crisis of direct interest to Australia. Second, this submission assesses the current access options to receive Australian media in the Asia Pacific. It argues that shortwave broadcasting mitigates the risk of existing vulnerabilities to other broadcast methods as shortwave technology is a sovereign controlled strategic soft power capability. Third, the submission then examines the current and future issues facing Australia's shortwave broadcasting capability, as well as recommendations for consideration about the future of broadcasting Australian media services on shortwave technology in the Asia Pacific.

### **Historical Significance of Australian Shortwave Broadcasting**

#### ***Second World War***

The historical significance of shortwave radio technology should not be overlooked in the contemporary era of internet, satellite, and mobile communication technology. Australia's shortwave broadcasting has played an important role in furthering Australia's interests in times of war, crisis, and peace. Australia's shortwave broadcasting service was born during wartime on 20 December 1939. The opening address by Prime Minister Menzies was translated into German, French, Dutch, Spanish and regular broadcasts in these languages began the following year. In 1942, Japanese language broadcasts began shortly after Japan's entry to the war.<sup>3</sup> Australia also created a shortwave listening post to monitor broadcasts from Europe and Japan. These broadcasts served as an important source of information about the world and complemented other intelligence collection efforts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Errol Hodge, "Radio Australia in the Second World War," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 46, no. 1 (1992): 93.

<sup>4</sup> Helen Ferber, "Listening the Enemy: Australia's Shortwave Listening Post in the Second World War," *Victorian Historical Journal* 70, no. 1 (1999).

Australia's shortwave radio services became an important strategic capability assisting the allied war effort against Japan. The service was used to counter Japanese exaggeration about the bombing of Darwin and reduced Japan's knowledge about its success.<sup>5</sup> The service also countered Japan's exaggerated accounts of the midget submarine attack in Sydney Harbour and the claim that its torpedos had sunk a warship.<sup>6</sup> As Japan advanced through Southeast Asia, the shortwave service reported Japanese atrocities across the region in an effort to portray the Japanese occupation as a form of repression compared to pre-war colonial regimes in Southeast Asia.<sup>7</sup> The most controversial Japanese propaganda, however, was the broadcast of personal messages from Australian prisoners of war captured in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Hundreds of Australian families tuned in to Japanese shortwave broadcasts in the hope they received news about their loved ones. Australia's shortwave listening post became an important source of information regarding the number of estimated prisoners of war and the conditions these soldiers were experiencing behind enemy lines.<sup>8</sup> Noting these sensitivities, Australia 'tailored' its shortwave reporting about Japanese prisoners of war to avoid any mistreatment of Australian prisoners of war.<sup>9</sup> In addition to propaganda, Australia's shortwave radio service also served as a source of information and entertainment for Australian and allied troops fighting abroad. Australian shortwave broadcasts were relayed by allied radio stations set up across the Middle East and the Asia Pacific.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Post-Second World War***

The growing utility of Australia's shortwave broadcasting technology would not cease with the end of the Second World War. During Indonesia's war for independence, announcers on Radio Australia called out Britain's and America's hypocrisy as well as America's inaction on policy toward a peaceful settlement.<sup>11</sup> This earned Radio Australia a reputation for impartiality as its news broadcasts were reporting from 'both sides' of the struggle in Indonesia. However, it also put Australia's international shortwave service under closer scrutiny of the Australian government.<sup>12</sup> Radio Australia also played an important role in peace negotiations including broadcasting American and Australian offers to mediate the dispute. Shortwave radio was the primary way messages were passed from the Australian government to the Republic government which was restricted to the stronghold of Jogjakarta.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hodge, "Radio Australia in the Second World War," 94.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>8</sup> Ferber, "Listening the Enemy: Australia's Shortwave Listening Post in the Second World War," 90.

<sup>9</sup> Hodge, "Radio Australia in the Second World War," 96-98.

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of the role of shortwave radio in military broadcasting during the Second World War see Martin Hadlow, "'No Propaganda Will Be Broadcast': The Rise and Demise of Australian Military Broadcasting," *Media International Australia* 150, no. 1 (2014).

<sup>11</sup> Errol Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 166; For media coverage of the issue at the time see "Broadcast on Indonesia Transmission Criticised," *The Age*, 16 November 1945.

<sup>12</sup> "Indonesia Broadcast 'Damaging,' Says Mountbatten," *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 20 November 1945.

<sup>13</sup> "Mediation Offer Accepted Indonesian Broadcast to Australia," *The Advertiser*, 11 August 1947.

## **Cold War**

During the Cold War, the shortwave Radio Australia service played an important role as an instrument of Australian foreign policy in the Asia Pacific. Radio Australia became the “link in the propaganda chain of the democracies” against the communist threat in the Asia Pacific.<sup>14</sup> From a political warfare point of view, Radio Australia had a large audience in the Asia Pacific, particularly in Indonesia.<sup>15</sup> The Department of External Affairs closely coordinated with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) advising on political content that was broadcast overseas on a daily basis in Russian, Mandarin, Cantonese, Indonesian, French, and Thai. In 1955 the Menzies cabinet, which was heavily influenced by the capacity shortwave radio possessed to influence citizens in Southeast Asia at risk to the spread of communism, approved expanding Australia’s shortwave transmitters from three to six.<sup>16</sup> Australia also distributed shortwave radios to selected individuals such as teachers and village leaders in the Asia Pacific as part of the Colombo Plan.<sup>17</sup> This was a policy that not only improved the broadcast range but also provided the means for regional communities to listen to Australian broadcasts.

In the early years of the Cold War in Southeast Asia, Radio Australia became a useful instrument of foreign policy toward Indonesia. Domestic instability in the late 1950s and the rise of communism as a political force resulted in the PRRI/Permesta regional rebellions on Indonesia’s outer-islands. Australia, along with its allies, covertly supported the rebels in their struggle against the central government in Jakarta. Radio Australia was used by the Australian government to give full publicity to rebel political statements across Indonesia. Australia’s shortwave service soon became the principle source of information in Indonesia about the rebellion in Sumatra, circumventing Sukarno’s strict control of print and broadcast media.<sup>18</sup>

During the West Irian dispute, Radio Australia was viewed by Indonesian officials as “probably having more impact on public opinion in Indonesia than any other communication in the country.”<sup>19</sup> Indonesia’s Foreign Minister, Dr Subandrio, was monitoring the morning and evening transcripts of Radio Australia and even President Sukarno would read them closely.<sup>20</sup> The main criticism of Radio Australia by Indonesian officials was that the service reported both the Dutch and Indonesian sides of the dispute.<sup>21</sup> However, those supporting the Netherland’s claim to West New Guinea viewed Australian broadcasts as pro-Indonesian.<sup>22</sup>

During Indonesia’s confrontation with Malaysia there was concern that Radio Australia’s shortwave broadcasts would be jammed by Indonesia. Indeed, Indonesia did boost its

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<sup>14</sup> NAA: A1838, 570/1/2 PART 5A, Spender to P.A.M McBride September 1950 quoted in *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 51.

<sup>15</sup> NAA: A4906, Top secret submission by Casey to cabinet, 5 January 1955 quoted in *ibid.*, 62.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> NAA: A11604, 605/6/1 PART 1, Cablegram for Beale from Casey, 1 April 1958.

<sup>19</sup> NAA: A1838, 570/3/1 PART 2, Hall report on tour of Asia, 11 July 1962 quoted in Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 172.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>22</sup> "What's Eating the Abc?," *Dutch Australian Weekly*, 20 July 1962.

shortwave capabilities with the plan to jam provocative Malaysian shortwave broadcasts.<sup>23</sup> However, Radio Australia's broadcasts played an important role by broadcasting accurate and impartial news of what was occurring on the ground. This reduced Indonesia's tension toward Australia despite Australia's support for Malaysia.<sup>24</sup> It also allowed the Indonesian people access to unbiased information about what their government was doing.<sup>25</sup> However, Radio Australia's broadcasts were not always impartial and at times relayed British propaganda efforts as part of Britain's confrontation strategy to remove Sukarno.<sup>26</sup> Australia had a direct interest in the outcome of the conflict with the deployment of a rotating battalion of Australian troops which were directly engaging in cross-border operations against Indonesian regular forces.<sup>27</sup> While the Australian government continued in their endeavours to have full control over the content broadcasted overseas, impartiality in reporting generally worked in Australia's favour.

The darkest years of Radio Australia's shortwave history was the role it played in supporting Indonesia's anti-communist propaganda effort following the failed 1965 communist-backed coup. Radio Australia played a key role in the aftermath of the coup and the 1965-1966 mass killings that followed. Shortly after the failed coup attempt, it became clear to the Department of External Affairs that Radio Australia was "virtually the only authoritative source from which the Indonesians would be obtaining information about developments in their own country."<sup>28</sup> Radio Australia was so influential that even Major General Suharto and Indonesian Minister of Defence and Security and ABRI Chief of Staff, General Abdul Harris Nasution, instructed senior officers to listen to Radio Australia's daily news broadcasts.<sup>29</sup>

Under close daily guidance from the Department of External Affairs and Australia's Ambassador to Indonesia Keith Shann, Radio Australia broadcasted anti-communist propaganda in support of the Indonesian Army's efforts against the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).<sup>30</sup> Australia's Public Information Officer, Richard Woolcott, also operated as a

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<sup>23</sup> AEG-Telefunken was contracted by Radio Republik Indonesia to build a 100kw shortwave radio transmitter in Cimanggis, Bogor, which became operational in 1967. For an account by one of the contractors see Horst H. Geerken, *A Gecko for Luck: 18 Years in Indonesia* (Germany: Books on Demand GmbH, 2010), 160. Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman's taunting of Indonesian President Sukarno included shortwave broadcasts of love songs by a famous Malaysian singer that Sukarno had failed to court. For an account of this episode see Earl G. Drake, *A Stubble-Jumper in Striped Pants: Memoirs of a Prairie Diplomat* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 87.

<sup>24</sup> "Australian Force Smashes into Raiders ", *The Canberra Times*, 17 June 1965.

<sup>25</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 175-76.

<sup>26</sup> Reddaway, letter, 28 August 1996, quoted in Adam Hughes Henry, "Polluting the Waters," *Genocide Studies International* 8, no. 2 (2014): 163-64. fn 65 pg. 163,164

<sup>27</sup> For an brief overview of Australia's contribution to confrontation between Malaysia and Indonesia see Australian War Memorial, "Indonesian Confrontation, 1963-66," <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/event/indonesian-confrontation>.

<sup>28</sup> Letter to Shann from J.A. Jockel, Acting Secretary for the Department of Foreign Affairs, Canberra. Dated 15 October 1965. NAA: A1838, 3024/2/1/8 PART 2, quoted in Marlene Millot, "Accomplice in Atrocity: Australia's Role in the 1965-66 Communist Massacres in Indonesia" (Masters Thesis Monash University, 2015), 14.

<sup>29</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 89.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 176; also see Millot, "Accomplice in Atrocity: Australia's Role in the 1965-66 Communist Massacres in Indonesia."; "Accomplice to Atrocity?," *Inside Indonesia*, 3 April 2016, <http://www.insideindonesia.org/accomplice-to-atrocity>; "Australia's Role in the 1965-66 Communist Massacres in Indonesia," *Australian Outlook*, 30 September 2015,

middle-man between Department of External Affairs and Radio Australia ensuring program broadcasting followed instructions from Australia's embassy in Jakarta.<sup>31</sup> Australia's propaganda efforts included diverting attention away from the Indonesian Army's pushback against the communists by mentioning the role of civil organisations; reporting news items that were critical of Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio to weaken the current government; and avoiding reports about Britain's naval base in Singapore was anything other than for defensive purposes.<sup>32</sup> Radio Australia was also instructed to undermine Sukarno's credibility to contribute to the idea he was being edged from power.<sup>33</sup> Australia's propaganda effort supported Britain's interest to end Indonesia's confrontation with Malaysia, an interest also shared by Australia.<sup>34</sup> The end result of Australia's propaganda effort was summed up by Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt: "with 500,000 to a million communists sympathisers knocked off... I think it is safe to assume a reorientation has taken place."<sup>35</sup>

Australia's shortwave broadcasting to Indonesia was not the only area of interest to the Department of External Affairs for propaganda purposes. Departmental officers in Canberra were unhappy about some of Radio Australia's broadcasts concerning the Vietnam War.<sup>36</sup> Radio Australia was eventually enlisted to become part of the West's psychological warfare strategy to counter the strong propaganda effort by North Vietnam. In 1962, Radio Australia began Vietnamese language broadcasts. Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Arthur Tange, noted that "Vietnamese programmes from Radio Australia, by providing reliable news, would help raise morale in the south, and provide an alternative to Communist programmes received in both halves of the country."<sup>37</sup> Australia's ambassador to Saigon, noted two years later that "Radio Australia news broadcast are frequently quoted as sources by Vietnamese-language newspapers... Radio Australia, together with the BBC, seems to be regarded as the most unbiased source of news and comment (rather than the Voice of America which is considered to broadcast somewhat 'slanted' news)."<sup>38</sup>

However, the Department's Public Information Office still remained unsatisfied about Radio Australia's coverage. This included reports that Australia should support a Geneva-type conference which was not the view of the Australian government at the time. Furthermore, reports of North Vietnamese protests over the provision of more Australian military advisers, South Vietnamese desertion rates, and a report that a joint-American-South Vietnamese operation in Phouc Tuy province was a complete failure were viewed unfavourably by the Australian government.<sup>39</sup>

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<https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/australias-role-in-the-1965-66-communist-massacres-in-indonesia/>.

<sup>31</sup> Record of conversation between Richard Woolcott and ABC journalist John Hall, file no. 558/3/11, Canberra. Dated October 21, 1965. NAA: A1838, 3024/2/1/8 PART 3. 'Indonesian Situation – Radio Australia', quoted in "Accomplice in Atrocity: Australia's Role in the 1965-66 Communist Massacres in Indonesia," 15.

<sup>32</sup> "Quadripartite Discussions on Indonesia" quoted in Henry, "Polluting the Waters," 166.

<sup>33</sup> Cablegram no. 1193 from Ambassador Shann to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra. Dated and received October 10, 1965. NAA: A1838, 3024/2/1/8 PART 1, quoted in Millot, "Accomplice in Atrocity: Australia's Role in the 1965-66 Communist Massacres in Indonesia," 15.

<sup>34</sup> See note 23.

<sup>35</sup> Henry Raymond, "Holt Says Us Actions Protect All Non-Red Asia," *New York Times*, 6 July 1966.

<sup>36</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 116.

<sup>37</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 117.

<sup>38</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 118.

<sup>39</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 118-19.

The appointment of Paul Hasluck as Minister for External Affairs in April 1964, an avid listener of Radio Australia particularly during his overseas trips, brought with it a struggle between the ABC and the Australian government for greater control of Australia's international shortwave radio service.<sup>40</sup> By 1965, Hasluck had advised cabinet that he was bringing forward a submission on measures that would place Radio Australia's international news and commentary under his department. This included moving Radio Australia to Canberra to improve daily contact with the Department of External Affairs.<sup>41</sup> According to Hasluck, "the shortwave service should be regarded as an important instrument of national policy rather than an independent broadcasting service."<sup>42</sup>

However, Richard Woolcott noted that the Department was not equipped to take full control or even provide full guidance on a 24-hour basis to Radio Australia's news services. The consensus was in the short-term, Radio Australia would be obliged to consult with the Department on sensitive external affairs issues and be obliged to accept departmental guidelines on these matters.<sup>43</sup> A correspondent from Radio Australia would also be stationed full-time in Canberra and a scrambled direct telephone line between Radio Australia's news editor and the Department was installed.<sup>44</sup> Hasluck's grand proposal to take-over control of Radio Australia as part of his portfolio eventually became inertia policy.<sup>45</sup>

The struggle for control over Radio Australia in the mid-1960s, which was driven by Radio Australia's undesirable coverage of the Vietnam War, had changed by the late 1960s. By 1968, it was becoming apparent that Radio Australia's message was getting through to North Vietnam. Officials in the United States (US) noted that intelligence collected from captured North Vietnamese prisoners revealed that Radio Australia's Vietnamese-language programmes were widely listened to in the North, and out of all the Vietnamese-language programmes Radio Australia probably had the largest audience.<sup>46</sup> Once again Radio Australia's impartial reporting, albeit rightfully questioned about biases at times, worked generally in Australia's favour to positively shape the perception of its adversaries.

By the 1970s, the Department of External Affairs had adopted a more liberal stance towards shortwave Radio broadcasting as an instrument of foreign policy.<sup>47</sup> It viewed "the use of Radio Australia for pointed advocacy should be kept strictly in reserve for emergency situations: broadcasts of direct propaganda could only impair radio Australia's reputation and thus its current political usefulness."<sup>48</sup> Indeed, Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam noted "my own Government—has never used and shall never use Radio Australia as a propaganda machine... Radio Australia will continue to be completely independent, completely free to report the news as it truly is. Radio Australia is not the voice of the

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<sup>40</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 80.

<sup>41</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 81.

<sup>42</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 81.

<sup>43</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 85.

<sup>44</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 86.

<sup>45</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 90.

<sup>46</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 121.

<sup>47</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 182.

<sup>48</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 129.



Australian Government.”<sup>49</sup> However, this did not stop the Australian government from conducting three inquiries from 1974-1976. One of the issues that was included in the review was whether the Australian government should have greater control over international broadcasting.<sup>50</sup>

During this period, Cyclone Tracey damaged newly installed shortwave transmitters in Darwin impacting on Australia’s broadcasting capacity to Southeast Asia.<sup>51</sup> The civil war in East Timor and the invasion by Indonesia demonstrated the implications of poor transmission to Asia. Australian officials in Indonesia could not hear Radio Australia reports clearly about the situation in East Timor, and Whitlam’s call to the parties to cease fire was not heard by many listeners in Indonesia and East Timor.<sup>52</sup> The war in East Timor also created problems for Australian broadcasters as no journalists were allowed in the territory and communication to the outside world was cut.<sup>53</sup> However, the Revolutionary Front for Independent East Timor Party (Fretilin) used shortwave radio to communicate to its supporters in Darwin.<sup>54</sup> These cables were passed onto Radio Australia and provided an outlet for Fretilin’s position on negotiations with Portuguese authorities and appeals for Australia’s support. The Indonesian government soon perceived Radio Australia as pro-Fretilin and Radio Australia was dubbed the “the voice of Fretilin.”<sup>55</sup> The director of Radio Australia, Philip Koch, went to Indonesia to explain Radio Australia’s coverage of East Timor with the aim of opening communication with the Indonesia government to balance reporting.<sup>56</sup> However, Radio Australia continued to report on sensitive domestic matters regardless. This included reports by rebels in East Timor and Irian Jaya, a petition charging President Suharto with corruption, and the New Order’s tightening control of domestic media. Radio Australia was increasingly perceived as interfering with Indonesia’s domestic affairs.<sup>57</sup>

By 1980, ABC correspondents in Indonesia were expelled and the ABC was banned from sending correspondents to Indonesia for 11 years.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, Radio Australia continued to report on sensitive matters in Indonesia including the anti-Chinese riots in Central Java which had been censored in Indonesia's domestic media.<sup>59</sup> The damage Radio Australia was causing to the bilateral relationship created another opportunity for the Australian government to push for greater control over Radio Australia’s international broadcasts.<sup>60</sup> However, Australia’s Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden noted: “Radio Australia should not become

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<sup>49</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 131.

<sup>50</sup> This included the Public Service Board ABC Review-ABC Review and the Waller Inquiry, and the Green Committee’s examination of Australian Broadcasting see Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 134.

<sup>51</sup> Jerome Berg, *Broadcasting on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today*. (North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, 2008), 217.

<sup>52</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 138.

<sup>53</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 182

<sup>54</sup> Radio Maubere was broadcasted on 3805khz and later 5270khz Jerome Berg, *Broadcasting on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today*, 223.

<sup>55</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 182, 185.

<sup>56</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 185.

<sup>57</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australai*, 186-88. Also see “Ban on Radio Australia,” *The Canberra Times*, 26 June 1980, 2.

<sup>58</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 181.

<sup>59</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 199.

<sup>60</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 197.

a mouthpiece for any government of the day... it was pointless having Radio Australia broadcasting to countries in the region but not broadcasting domestic matters of interest arising from within those countries to listeners within those countries..."<sup>61</sup> In 1991, the ABC would eventually be allowed to send a foreign correspondent to Indonesia and Radio Australia would again play an important role in covering the 1991 Dili massacre.<sup>62</sup>

Radio Australia would also prove to be an important source of information for domestic audiences in the Pacific. During the 1987 Fiji Coup, Radio Australia's shortwave broadcasts became an important source of information for Fijians. Australia's shortwave news bulletins were also rebroadcasted by local shortwave stations to circumvent strict censorship by the government.<sup>63</sup> By the end of the Cold War, Australia's shortwave service had demonstrated that impartiality was a weapon and the Australian perspective was a soft power capability that informed and influenced citizens and governments across the Asia Pacific.

### ***Post-Cold War***

By 1990, Radio Australia would play an important role for Australians during the Gulf War. In August 1991, Iraq invaded Kuwait and used hundreds of foreigners as human shields in strategic locations to deter counterattacks.<sup>64</sup> This included a large group of Australian citizens held in Baghdad and Kuwait. The Australian government found it difficult to communicate with the hostages in Kuwait as it had no direct diplomatic representation in the country.<sup>65</sup> Radio Australia learned from Australian diplomats that the Australian hostages were experiencing mounting stress and lacked access to reliable information. Radio Australia responded by redirecting transmitters to deliver English-language news to the Gulf and established a daily program enabling families to send messages to detainees to increase their moral. This was an example of the different form of emergency broadcasting Radio Australia could perform to assist Australian citizens abroad involved in crises.<sup>66</sup>

The late 1990s was a time of crisis for Australia's shortwave broadcasting. The Howard government closed the Darwin and Cox peninsula transmitters reducing Australia's capacity to broadcast to Southeast Asia.<sup>67</sup> This decision could not come at a worse time for Australia's strategic outlook. The downfall of the Suharto regime and the crisis in East Timor demonstrated the implications of declining shortwave capability. In an address to parliament in September 1999, former diplomat and Member of Parliament, Kevin Rudd, noted:

In summary, what the Howard government has done over these four years is as follows. It has closed the Darwin/Cox Peninsula transmitters, thereby denying Australia a capacity to broadcast either in English or in Indonesian to central and

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<sup>61</sup> Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 204.

<sup>62</sup> For details of a quantitative review of Radio Australia's coverage of this incident see Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 209-10.

<sup>63</sup> Graeme Dobell, "The Strange Saga of Speight's Siege in Suva", in Brij V. Lal and Michael Pretes ed. *Coup: Reflections on the Political Crisis in Fiji*, (Canberra: ANU Press, 2008).

<sup>64</sup> Geoff Heriot, "The ABC of Patriotism", *Inside Story*, 8 May 2014, <http://insidestory.org.au/the-abc-of-patriotism/>.

<sup>65</sup> Jeremy Thompson, "Private Plans to Bring Aust Hostages Home", *The Canberra Times*, 27 October 1990, 1.

<sup>66</sup> See note 62.

<sup>67</sup> The Darwin transmitter was closed on 30 June 1997 see Berg, *Broadcasting on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today*, 349.

western Indonesia, as well as to broader South-East Asia. It has halved the operating budget of Radio Australia. It has more than halved the number of foreign language staff working for Radio Australia from 144 down to 68. It has halved the number of Indonesian language staff working for Radio Australia from 16 down to eight. Most critically, it has effectively halved the length of daily programming in the Indonesian language being broadcast; that is, broadcast to those parts of Indonesia which are still capable of actually hearing the transmission... Whereas there is still a signal capable of being heard in Timor and in eastern Indonesia, the reality is that, after 60 years of operation, nearly 90 per cent of Indonesia's population cannot hear our signal. We cannot be heard in Jakarta. We cannot be heard across Java. We cannot be heard in Sumatra. So at a time when there is paramount importance attached to our ability to project our national views on recent developments in East Timor to the rest of the Indonesian nation we have woken up to discover that we have cut our own throat.

We cannot rely upon the bulk of the local Indonesian media to carry a textured or even detailed message about recent developments in East Timor. Certainly the Indonesian media, while being much more liberal than under the New Order regime, cannot be expected to explain to their audience what precisely occurred in East Timor after the 30 August ballot, the precise degree of TNI complicity in militia activities in East Timor, the unfolding humanitarian disaster in West Timor and why Australia, in conjunction with the international community, has found it absolutely essential to participate in a multinational force to stabilise East Timor. The bottom line is that, while some of the quality journals in Jakarta may give some exposure to the Australian perspective on these issues, the bulk of the Indonesian media will not. Nationalism in any country has as its first casualty objectivity—particularly objectivity as it relates to the activities of another nation state. Moreover, we have a continued requirement to communicate with the Indonesian elite, many of whom have traditionally been staunch Radio Australia listeners.<sup>68</sup>

To address the poor capacity to broadcast to East Timor and Indonesia the ABC leased two transmitters in Taiwan and Singapore on a 6-month contract. This significantly increased Australia's broadcasting capacity enabling Radio Australia to be broadcasted directly to Indonesia and East Timor for the first time since 1997.<sup>69</sup> However, Radio Australia was broadcasting to Indonesia and East Timor in Bahasa Indonesia and English but not East Timor's widely used language Tetun. Special programming was mainly aimed at broadcasting to Australian troops in East Timor including live coverage of the AFL and rugby league grand finals.<sup>70</sup>

The United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) later requested assistance to use Radio Australia's transmitters in either Darwin or Shepparton to broadcast messages about food, shelters, and reuniting families.<sup>71</sup> The Darwin option was not suitable to broadcast to East

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<sup>68</sup> Kevin Rudd, East Timor: Radio Australia, Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 20 September 1999, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansard%2F1999-09-20%2F0077%22>.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Garran, Richard McGregor and Don Greenlees, "Tears for the Slaughtered – East Timor Betrayed." *The Australian*, 11 September 1999, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Michelle Gilchrist, "UN Radio Seeks Darwin Station," *The Australian*, 24 September 1999, 8.

<sup>71</sup> See note 68.

Timor because of the 1000-kilometer dead zone around the broadcast site of that strength. The station was designed to broadcast across Indonesia's islands of Java and Sumatra. After six weeks of negotiations Radio Australia was unable to secure three hours a day on its shortwave service for UNAMET even on its Shepparton transmitter. Radio Australia faced challenges in transferring its shortwave broadcasts to Singapore to free up space because this required permission from the Singapore government. UNAMET was also not permitted to use Australia's leased transmitter in Taiwan as the organisation did not recognise Taiwan. In the end UNAMET had to turn to the Portuguese national broadcaster RTP1 for access to their facilities to broadcast into East Timor.<sup>72</sup>

In August 2000, the Australian government announced Radio Australia would receive up to \$9 million over three years to extend its shortwave service. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer noted "recent events have highlighted the value of Australia's international broadcasting activities in conveying accurate news and information to the region, as well as providing an Australian perspective."<sup>73</sup>

This statement remains an accurate assessment of the current and future utility of delivering Australian media services on shortwave radio. Australia's shortwave service played an important role in nearly every major crisis of interest to Australia. Radio Australia as an instrument of foreign policy was most influential when the Australian government had an *active* interest in the capability. However, when the capability was not a priority for the Australian government, Australia's ability to influence events was limited. The Australian government would then *relearn* the amplifying capability shortwave radio provides to Australia's foreign policy.

## **Australia's Current Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific**

### ***Current Receiving Options***

Radio Australia currently broadcasts to the Pacific via satellite and 12 local FM relay frequencies. This includes single and multiple FM transmitter locations in Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and East Timor.<sup>74</sup> Smaller islands in the Pacific and Southeast Asia with no FM relay transmission can access Radio Australia and ABC TV broadcasts via the Intelsat-18 satellite.<sup>75</sup> Those in wider Asia can receive broadcasts via the Intelsat-20 satellite.<sup>76</sup> Alternatively, Radio Australia broadcast can also be accessed online and a range of recorded video and audio content is also available for download. This combination

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<sup>72</sup> Michelle Gilchrist, "Deaf to Timor Radio Plea," *The Australian*, 4 November 1999.

<sup>73</sup> Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Final Report on the Inquiry into East Timor, 7 December 2000, see Chapter 3, [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign\\_Affairs\\_Defence\\_and\\_Trade/Completed\\_inquiries/1999-02/east\\_timor/report/index](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Completed_inquiries/1999-02/east_timor/report/index).

<sup>74</sup> These FM broadcasts only cover a limited area including: Tonga (Nuku'alofa), Fiji (Nadi/Suva), Vanuatu (Port Villa/Luganville), Solomon Islands (Honiara), Papua New Guinea (Port Moresby/Lae/Goroka/Mt Hagan/[Bougainville coming soon]), Samoa (Apia), East Timor (Dili) see: <http://www.abc.net.au/radio-australia/frequencies/>.

<sup>75</sup> For technical details on Intelsat 18 see: <http://www.sky-brokers.com/uploads/e1/3f/e13f2d303dd192b19bf57981aab3e843/Intelsat-18-Satellite-Footprints.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> Intelsat-20 was launched on 2 August 2012 and has been fully operational since September 2012. The C-Band covers the Asia-Pacific.

of broadcasting Australian media services to the Asia Pacific demonstrates a key focus on Pacific with local FM relays located in key countries of direct interest to Australia.<sup>77</sup> Satellite relays then fill the lack of FM relays in other areas of the Asia Pacific, and online streaming options complement these services by providing access anywhere internet access is available. This is a sensible and layered method to deliver Australian content across the Asia Pacific to listeners: that have FM transmission frequency reception; or have a satellite receiver; or have access to internet. However, shortfalls in broadcast coverage still exist and could be addressed by the addition of shortwave radio broadcasting concurrently with these other methods.

### ***Issues with Current Broadcasting Options***

#### **FM Broadcasting**

Frequency Modulation (FM) radio transmission provides a high-quality broadcast receivable by radios commonly found in households, mobile phones with FM capabilities, and standard car sound systems. However, this technology has a limited range rated at a maximum of 50-60km with a clear line of sight.<sup>78</sup> Thus, FM signals can be blocked by changes in terrain such as hills and mountains, both of which are common features in the Asia Pacific region. For example, one radio expert has rated the distance of Radio Australia's FM relay transmission in Lae and Port Moresby to a maximum 20km on a good day.<sup>79</sup> To overcome this issue, the Papua New Guinea (PNG) government has long used shortwave radio to broadcast to the rural communities unable to receive FM transmissions. Furthermore, the Papua New Guinea government has recently indicated that it plans to install shortwave radios transmitters in all provincial radio stations across the country. According to PNG Minister for Communication, Sam Basil, "shortwave transmission is still the most effective means of radio communication for PNG, given our rugged terrain and vast maritime environment."<sup>80</sup> Thus, shortwave radio technology remains an important broadcasting technology in the Pacific to overcome the challenges of terrain and vast maritime space.

FM relay transmission frequencies are also licenced and controlled by the state where the broadcast transmitter is located. This means that any government can shut-off FM transmissions relaying Australian content in times of political crisis. The prime example of this was during the 2009 Fijian Constitutional Crisis when two of Radio Australia's FM relay stations in Suva and Nadi were shut down by the military-led government. However, Radio Australia was still able to broadcast to Fiji on its shortwave frequencies throughout the crisis as the shortwave transmitter was located in Australia.<sup>81</sup>

FM transmitters are also vulnerable to natural disasters including damage and power blackouts. In 2015, Cyclone Pam significantly damaged Vanuatu's radio, television, and

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<sup>77</sup> For example, multiple Radio Australia FM transmission relay locations include PNG, Fiji, and Vanuatu.

<sup>78</sup> For technical details on FM technology see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FM\\_broadcasting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FM_broadcasting).

<sup>79</sup> See Nigel Holmes submission to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Restoring Shortwave Radio) bill 2017, <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=05460a3d-58ca-416c-971a-8fcdc2546c92&subId=511076>.

<sup>80</sup> Meredith Kuusa, "Basil: Shortwave transmission still the most effective radio communication," *Loop*, <http://www.looppng.com/tech/basil-shortwave-transmission-still-most-effective-radio-communication-69978>.

<sup>81</sup> "Fiji Shuts Down ABC Transmitters," *ABC News*, 15 April 2009, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-04-15/fiji-shuts-down-abc-transmitters/1651166>.

mobile communication networks. This included FM relay transmitters in Port Vila which were relaying Radio Australia.<sup>82</sup> The importance of Australian shortwave broadcasting to Vanuatu during this natural disaster was described by Vanuatu Prime Minister, Charlot Salwai:

The Vanuatu National Disaster Management Office notes that our citizens, who mostly live in remote island rural areas, still have limited access to modern communications technology. In times of crisis when other forms of media like FM and digital services are damaged or unavailable such communities rely on broadcasts safely transmitted from outside the disaster zone. This is exactly the role Radio Australia shortwave broadcasts played during Cyclone Pam... people around our nation relied on Radio Australia's shortwave broadcasts to stay up-to-date about the cyclone's progress and they took the thorough and expert advice on the shortwave service very seriously indeed. It is undoubtedly the case that Radio Australia's shortwave service helped save Ni-Vanuatu lives.<sup>83</sup>

Shortwave radio technology thus provides the advantages over FM transmission including sovereign control as well as the capability to broadcast long distances over changing terrain features. A shortwave service will provide Australia with a strategic soft power capability that has the potential to reach anyone in the Pacific with a shortwave receiver capable of receiving Australia's day and night shortwave frequencies.<sup>84</sup>

### **Satellite Broadcasting**

Currently those in the Pacific without FM relay services, such as those in rural areas and the hundreds of smaller islands, are limited to satellite or online broadcast options. The satellite option has a higher entry cost putting it out of reach for low-income households as it requires a satellite dish, receiver, paired with a television and or sound system. Furthermore, satellite users also have an array of radio and television content provided in addition to Australian radio and television broadcasts.<sup>85</sup> This means Australian content broadcast via satellite must compete with other entertainment channels and news networks. Without a significant input of funding or focus on delivering high quality regional specific content that can compete with these other viewing and listening options, the added value of delivering Australian radio and television broadcasts via satellite across the Asia Pacific will continue to be limited.

Like FM transmitters, satellite dishes are also exposed to vulnerabilities. Satellite dishes are easily blown off roofs during cyclones or severe weather events. These occur frequently in the Asia Pacific, and these are likely to increase in foreseeable future due to the impact of climate change. Satellites broadcasts are also capable of being blocked by governments. For example, Iran has demonstrated that it has the capability to block Europe's largest and most

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<sup>82</sup> Glenda Willie, "Radio Vanuatu Services Back on Air." 26 March 2015, [http://dailypost.vu/news/radio-vanuatu-services-back-on-air/article\\_62c7277d-1615-5f8f-8841-c39a7f32b4de.html](http://dailypost.vu/news/radio-vanuatu-services-back-on-air/article_62c7277d-1615-5f8f-8841-c39a7f32b4de.html).

<sup>83</sup> Charlot Salwai, submission to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Restoring Shortwave Radio) bill 2017, <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=a0d577b6-e81e-4911-9ca6-ca5b4d6ab004&subId=510011>.

<sup>84</sup> For technical details on night/day frequencies see Nigel Holmes submission listed in note 53.

<sup>85</sup> For a list of available broadcasts on Intelsat-18 see: <https://www.lyngsat.com/Intelsat-18.html>; for a list of available broadcast on Intelsat-20 see: <https://www.lyngsat.com/Intelsat-20.html>.

powerful broadcast satellite, Hot Bird 8.<sup>86</sup> In 2009, Tehran jammed broadcasts from the BBC, Voice of America, and Deutsche preventing critical coverage of the regime from reaching domestic audiences.<sup>87</sup> There are two methods of satellite jamming available to governments. Orbital jamming involves transmitting a strong signal in the direction of the satellite using the same frequency transmitted from the original ground station. This method of jamming is also effective across the entire coverage area making it a suitable option for region-wide censorship. The other method is Terrestrial jamming. This method involves transmitting rogue frequencies in the direction of local consumer satellite receivers. This approach is localised such as an urban neighbourhood and only interferes with the frequency emanating from the targeted location. Terrestrial jammers are portable and have a range of 3-5km in urban areas and up to 20km in rural areas. This method of jamming can also interfere with radio broadcasts and is therefore often used at night during primetime viewing and listening of foreign broadcasts.<sup>88</sup> Orbital jamming is easily traceable by satellite operators, while terrestrial jamming is much more difficult to trace because of its portability and localised jamming range. However, consumers cannot tell which method is being used by their government.<sup>89</sup>

This vulnerability exists to all satellites relaying Australian content in the Asia Pacific. Orbital and terrestrial jamming methods are relatively cheap to acquire and could be used by regimes in the Asia Pacific to prevent Australia's critical news coverage reaching domestic audiences during political and military crises.<sup>90</sup> Alternatively, it could be done by a hostile power in the Asia Pacific in times conflict to prevent Australian broadcasts from reaching audiences across the entire coverage areas of Intelsat-18 or Intelsat-20.<sup>91</sup>

Space is becoming a contested strategic domain and Asia Pacific powers including China are increasingly demonstrating anti-satellite (ASAT) capabilities. In 2006, China conducted a direct energy operation using ground-based lasers to blind US surveillance satellites.<sup>92</sup> In 2007, China also demonstrated it had a direct fire capability and successfully targeted and destroyed a defunct weather satellite.<sup>93</sup> This incident also created more the 3000 trackable space objects and an estimated 150,000 debris particles.<sup>94</sup> In 2009, two satellites collided at

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<sup>86</sup> For technical specs of Hot Bird 8 see: <http://www.dailywireless.org/2006/10/03/eutelsat-hotbird-8/>.

<sup>87</sup> Christoph Seidler, "Iran James Satellite Signals Carrying Foreign Media." Spiegel Online, 31 March 2010, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/silencing-unwanted-coverage-iran-jams-satellite-signals-carrying-foreign-media-a-686670.html>.

<sup>88</sup> For an overview of satellite jamming see Small Media, "Satellite Jamming in Iran: A War over Airwaves," (London: Small Media, 2012), 28-33. <https://smallmedia.org.uk/media/projects/files/satjam.pdf>.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Orbital jamming requires 'send and receive' satellite broadcasting capability which is commercially available for \$20,000 - \$50,000 USD and is commonly used by banks and other industries in the Asia Pacific. Terrestrial jamming capabilities are also commercially available for as low as \$6500 USD for a weatherproof broadcast antenna with a jamming range of 5km. For an overview on how easy it is to acquire this capability see *ibid.*, 32.

<sup>91</sup> For coverage details of Intelsat-18 and Intelsat 20 see <http://www.intelsat.com/fleetmaps/>.

<sup>92</sup> Richard Fisher, "China's Progress with Directed Energy Weapons." Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission hearing on China's Advanced Weapons, 23 February 2017, [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Fisher\\_Combined.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Fisher_Combined.pdf).

<sup>93</sup> William Broad and David Sanger, "China Tests Anti-Satellite Weapon, Unnerving U.S." *New York Times*, 18 January 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/18/world/asia/18cnd-china.html>.

<sup>94</sup> "ISS crew take to escape capsules in space junk threat." *BBC News*, 24 March 2012, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-17497766>.

hypervelocity for the first time creating a significant amount of debris.<sup>95</sup> Satellites are also vulnerable to cyber interruption. In 2011, it was revealed that Landsat-7 operated by US Geological Survey Agency and Terra AM-1 operated by NASA were hacked for several minutes.<sup>96</sup> Together these events demonstrate the increasingly contested space domain and highlight the vulnerability of relay broadcasts via satellite-to-user and satellite-to-radio relay in the Asia Pacific. However, this risk would be mitigated by broadcasting concurrently via shortwave radio in the Asia Pacific.

### **Online Broadcasting**

Online streaming requires internet access via satellite, mobile network, and or a fixed line service. Live streaming and downloading of content is a relatively cheap means of media distribution provided the hosting servers can meet the demand. However, while online options are a relatively cheap means to deliver radio and television broadcasts internationally, it remains an expensive option for audiences in the Asia Pacific due to the cost of metered data. Online streaming options are therefore only available to those citizens that can afford data, and in a limited form, those that can watch through social media such as Facebook as part of unmetered social media provider packages.<sup>97</sup> A significant amount of the population in the Asia Pacific region are also using mobile phones across older network types such as GPRS and EDGE (2G) which makes streaming slow and or unavailable.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, there is still part of the population of the Asia Pacific that live in the remote regions which do not have internet access due to lack of mobile and fixed line services.

Online radio and video streaming is also reliant on constant power supply for transmission of wireless mobile internet from mobile phone towers and computers that run on the power grid. Fixed line modems also require constant power supply in addition to a constant internet connection. The Asia Pacific region is prone to power blackouts and telecommunication disruption caused by natural disasters and a lack of baseload electricity.

Online streaming is also vulnerable to local government restriction. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and government firewalls have been able block online streaming of foreign broadcasting. Since 2002, Vietnam has intermittently blocked foreign news websites including English and Vietnamese language news.<sup>99</sup> Vietnam now requires all foreign news, education, and television content to be translated into Vietnamese and subject to censor by the Ministry of Information and Communication before airing.<sup>100</sup> In 2012, India blocked access

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<sup>95</sup> Bobbie Johnson, "Nasa Alert as Russian and US Satellites crash in space." *The Guardian*, 11 February 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/feb/12/nasa-alert-as-satellites-collide>.

<sup>96</sup> Jim Wolf, "China Key Suspect in U.S. Satellite Hacks: Commission." *Reuters*, 29 October 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa-satellite-idUSTRE79R4O320111028>.

<sup>97</sup> Jemima Garrett, "The Time Is Right for a 'Step-up' in Abc Broadcasting to the Pacific," *Devpolicy Blog*, 9 July 2018, <http://www.devpolicy.org/the-time-is-right-for-a-step-up-in-abc-broadcasting-to-the-pacific-20180709/>.

<sup>98</sup> For a list of services providers and the network types available in the Asia Pacific see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_mobile\\_network\\_operators\\_of\\_the\\_Asia\\_Pacific\\_region](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mobile_network_operators_of_the_Asia_Pacific_region).

<sup>99</sup> Owen Gibson, "Vietnam Blocks BBC Website." *The Guardian*, 12 November 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2002/nov/12/newmedia.bbc>; also see Freedom House, Freedom of the Press Report 2015, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/vietnam>.

<sup>100</sup> Freedom House, Freedom of the Press Report 2015, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/vietnam>.



to pages on the ABC website in the name of national security.<sup>101</sup> In 2018, the PNG government announced that it planned to block Facebook for a month.<sup>102</sup> This demonstrates the potential capability of Asia Pacific countries to restrict access to Australian content online as well as relying on unmetered social media data to deliver Australian content in the Asia Pacific. However, broadcasting concurrently on shortwave frequencies will ensure that this risk is mitigated.

## Resuming a Shortwave Broadcasting Capability

### Key Judgements

The Australian government was reminded in the 1975 *Radio Australia, Independent Inquiry Report* that “long-distance broadcasting cannot be confiscated at a frontier or refused a visa or be burnt in a public square.”<sup>103</sup> Shortwave radio technology provides “a relatively cheap means by which one nation can project its outlook on others, even when other efforts may be blocked.”<sup>104</sup> These two judgements continue to be of enduring relevance in the contemporary era of internet, satellite, and mobile communications technology broadcasting Australian content to the Asia Pacific. The use of shortwave technology would address the vulnerabilities identified with FM transmission, satellite, and online broadcasting to the Asia Pacific.

### Current Issues

Australia no longer has an active shortwave broadcasting capability to the Asia Pacific after years of declining funding and the termination of shortwave transmissions in January 2017.<sup>105</sup> Since then, China has taken over at least two of Radio Australia’s shortwave frequencies that broadcast to Bougainville, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, and Samoa.<sup>106</sup> However, unlike Radio Australia which delivers relevant and impartial news about the Asia Pacific as well as English language lessons to listeners. Radio China International focuses on delivering world news, Chinese news, and Chinese language lessons.<sup>107</sup> According to Director General of China Radio International, Wang Gengnian, China is using shortwave radio to further China’s interests and shape public opinion by broadcasting “China’s narrative.” This

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<sup>101</sup> Michael Edward, “India Blocks ABC Web Pages.” *ABC News*, 25 August 2012,

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-08-24/abc-news-online-blocked-in-india/4221578>.

<sup>102</sup> Benny Geteng, “Shutting Down Facebook in PNG is a Reality.” *Post-Courier*, 29 May 2018,

<https://postcourier.com.pg/shutting-facebook-png-reality/>.

<sup>103</sup> Radio Australia, *Independent Inquiry Report* (Waller report), December 1975, Parliamentary Paper No. 97 1977, p. 2 quoted in Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda and the Struggle for Radio Australia*, 1.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Alexandra Wake, “Pacific Nations Lose Shortwave Radio Services That Evade Dictators and Warn of Natural Disasters,” *The Conversation*, 9 December 2016, <http://theconversation.com/pacific-nations-lose-shortwave-radio-services-that-evade-dictators-and-warn-of-natural-disasters-70058>.

<sup>106</sup> China Radio International is now broadcasting on old Radio Australia frequencies including 12085kHz

(Bougainville, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Vanuatu) see

<http://www.shortwaveschedule.com/index.php?freq=12085>; and 9580kHz (New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji,

Samoa) see <http://www.shortwaveschedule.com/index.php?freq=9580>; and 7240kHz see

<http://www.shortwaveschedule.com/index.php?freq=7240khz>.

<sup>107</sup> Radio New Zealand, “China Radio International Seeks to Address ‘Misunderstandings’,” *Dateline Pacific*, 13 July 2018, <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/programmes/datelinepacific/audio/2018653383/china-radio-international-seeks-to-address-misunderstandings>.

has been dubbed the 'borrowed boat strategy' of harnessing existing media outlets to deliver the Chinese government's message.<sup>108</sup> Thus, Australia's decision to switch off shortwave broadcasting to the Asia Pacific has damaged Australia's national interest by conceding soft power to a potential strategic rival in the Asia Pacific.

However, Australia has only temporarily conceded its strategic broadcasting space in the Asia Pacific. Shortwave radio broadcasting like other broadcasting methods is also vulnerable to jamming. Shortwave radio jamming is simply done by broadcasting on the same frequency using a more powerful transmitter which overrides the frequency.<sup>109</sup> For example, China has long jammed shortwave radio broadcasts in China including the BBC World Service.<sup>110</sup> North Korea has also recently jammed Korean language broadcasts by the BBC.<sup>111</sup> Australia's shortwave transmission station in Shepperton, Victoria, has the capacity to potentially jam frequencies taken-over by China. Radio Australia could utilise the sites full broadcasting capacity which includes 6 x 100kw transmitters. This could potentially dominate the frequencies due to the proximity of Australia and the variable propagation options compared to broadcasts emanating from within China. However, China Radio International is also relayed from Cuba's Quivican 250kw transmitter on the 9580khz frequency.<sup>112</sup> This has already proved capable of overriding Radio Australia broadcasts in North America.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, an upgrade of transmitter strength may be required to ensure Australian content is not jammed by China's shortwave broadcasts.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is upgrading shortwave transmitters from analogue to Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM) technology.<sup>114</sup> Radio New Zealand has already upgraded its shortwave service including a single 100kw DRM capable transmitter broadcasting analogue and DRM transmissions to listeners in the Pacific. The analogue transmitter has been maintained as a backup in the event of a fault with the main transmitter.<sup>115</sup> Australia could replicate a similar upgrade approach.

However, the Australian government should first reacquire the Shepperton transmission station which is reported to be on searching for expressions of interest. The cost of building

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<sup>108</sup> Koh Gui Qing and John Shiffman, "Beijing's Covert Radio Network Airs China-Friendly News across Washington, and the World," *Reuters News*, 2 November 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-radio/>.

<sup>109</sup> For an audio sample of China's shortwave radio jamming see: [https://www.sigidwiki.com/wiki/Chinese\\_Firedrake\\_Jammer](https://www.sigidwiki.com/wiki/Chinese_Firedrake_Jammer).

<sup>110</sup> "Bbc World Service Shortwave Radio Blocked in China," *BBC News*, 23 February 2013, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-21575913>.

<sup>111</sup> Julian Ryall, "North Korea 'Aggressively' Jamming Bbc's New Korean-Language Service," *The Telegraph*, 27 September 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/27/north-korea-aggressively-jamming-new-bbc-broadcasts/>.

<sup>112</sup> This includes broadcasts in English and Chinese see: <http://www.shortwaveschedule.com/index.php?freq=9580>.

<sup>113</sup> For an account of the strength and bandwidth of China Radio International relay on the adjacent frequency 9570khz overriding Radio Australia on the 9580khz frequency as recently as 2016 see: <https://swling.com/blog/2016/02/china-radio-internationals-overwhelming-am-bandwidth-via-havana/>.

<sup>114</sup> DRM provides FM radio comparable quality audio on shortwave frequencies. For technical details of DRM see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital\\_Radio\\_Mondiale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_Radio_Mondiale).

<sup>115</sup> For technical specifications of Radio New Zealand see: <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/technical>. For a list of frequencies available see: <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/listen>.

a new station including transmitters and antenna infrastructure will likely be significantly more than the reported 5-million-dollar reserve.<sup>116</sup> Acquisition of this site by another company may result in the facility being used to support foreign shortwave broadcast relays. After securing the Shepparton station, Radio Australia shortwave broadcasts would be able to resume on analogue frequencies at short notice buying Australia time to reassess its options.

The Australian government should then develop a longer-term modernisation plan. There are several options that Australia could do to boost shortwave capacity. In addition to the broadcasts from Shepparton, Australia could resume shortwave radio transmission from the transmitter site in Brandon, Queensland.<sup>117</sup> This would improve shortwave reception across PNG. This will become important for the upcoming Bougainville independence referendum scheduled for 2019. Another option to improve broadcasting across Southeast Asia is rebuild a transmission site of a similar strength and location to the previous Cox peninsula transmitter.<sup>118</sup> This would provide a shortwave capacity to the wider Indo-Pacific region a growing area of direct interest for Australia.

The other issue that needs to be addressed by the Australian government to make shortwave viable is improving audience numbers in the Asia Pacific. This will require a two-step approach of improving regional specific content and the capacity of listeners to receive Australian media services.

The ABC already creates a limited number of high-end political commentary and news shows providing some excellent coverage of the Pacific such as *Pacific Beat* and *Pacific Mornings*. However, most of the content is broadcasted in English with only a few timeslots allocated to news coverage in Tok Pisin, Solomon Islands Pijin, and Vanuatu's Bislama pidgin languages.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, there is no equivalent content that focuses on Southeast Asia with Southeast Asian languages. This could be addressed in the short term by sourcing and relaying foreign language content from Australia's other state-funded broadcaster SBS Radio, which currently broadcasts domestically in 68 different languages.<sup>120</sup> Radio Australia could also work with the SBS foreign language presenters to create more regionally focused content that can be broadcasted and delivered to targeted areas of interests to Australia including the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

This submission recommends that an international shortwave radio strategy should be part of DFAT's media strategy and would enhance Australia's use of digital media in its international digital diplomacy efforts in the Asia Pacific.<sup>121</sup> DFAT should make an international broadcasting capability part of the New Colombo program. This could involve

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<sup>116</sup> For details of the proposed sale see: <http://swaus.blogspot.com/2018/06/shepparton-former-radio-australia.html>

<sup>117</sup> In 2016, the Brandon transmission station was reported to still have its shortwave transmitters and antenna infrastructure on standby see: <http://medxr.blogspot.com/2016/09/the-brandon-antennas.html>.

<sup>118</sup> For a history of the shortwave station on the Cox peninsula (Darwin) see: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UNdnN\\_ZzhPK-W3uozpRjcy5fvL0JNjR2UUVygcTz0E/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UNdnN_ZzhPK-W3uozpRjcy5fvL0JNjR2UUVygcTz0E/edit).

<sup>119</sup> See Radio Australia's schedule: <http://www.abc.net.au/radio-australia/station-epg/>.

<sup>120</sup> For a list of languages available see: <https://www.sbs.com.au/radio/yourlanguage>.

<sup>121</sup> For details on DFAT's current media strategy see: <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/corporate/Documents/digital-media-strategy-2016-18.pdf>.

recruiting undergraduate and postgraduate students to undertake correspondent assignments in the Asia Pacific.

DFAT should also evaluate the feasibility of distributing DRM shortwave receivers capable of receiving Australian shortwave frequencies to communities as part of Australia's foreign aid to the Pacific. Portable shortwave radio receivers have proved to be lifesaving equipment during emergencies in the Asia Pacific.<sup>122</sup> A subsidised scheme with the assistance of local governments and businesses could be a cost-offsetting strategy. This would improve the number of listeners of shortwave radio and ensure that audiences have DRM-ready receivers in the event Australia makes the switch to DRM shortwave broadcasting.

All these solutions will require increased funding from the Australian government. This review is an opportunity to study the options available in terms of sustaining a shortwave broadcasting capability including funding allocation.

This submission recommends that the content aspect of the Australia's should remain under the responsibility of the ABC. This will protect the reputation of impartially of news and current affairs programs covering the Asia Pacific. However, the funding for this content should be separate from the ABC's budget allocation and closely audited. This will ensure the ABC invests any additional funding provided to improving Asia Pacific content and not divert funding to improve domestic content production.

This submission recommends that the Australian government should also establish a separate authority that would be responsible for developing and maintaining Australia's shortwave transmission sites. This would ensure that Australia sustains an independent shortwave broadcasting capability that could be expanded when needed. It will also ensure that transmission quality and broadcast times are not impacted by funding cuts to the ABC in the future.

### **Future Issues**

The 2016 Defence White Paper states that Australia's second Strategic Defence Interest "is a secure nearer region, encompassing maritime Southeast Asia and the South Pacific."<sup>123</sup> This includes PNG, Timor Leste and the Pacific Island countries. Moreover, the 2017 Foreign Policy White paper notes "some states have increased their use of measures short of war to pursue political and security objectives. Such measures include... misinformation and media manipulation."<sup>124</sup> While digital technologies such as social media are proliferating in the Asia Pacific particularly countries such as Indonesia, history has shown the important role shortwave radio can have as part of Australia's foreign policy in times of crisis and conflict when communication is often disrupted. Restarting Australia's shortwave broadcasts to the Asia Pacific will ensure that this strategic space is not used by potential strategic rivals in the Asia Pacific to influence or shape the opinion that may run contrary to Australia's interests.

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<sup>122</sup> See note 63.

<sup>123</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *2016 Defence White Paper*, Department of Defence (2016), 17.

<sup>124</sup> Australian Government, *Foreign Policy White Paper*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Canberra 2017), 24.

The Australian government should also consider the implications in the event China constructs a shortwave radio transmitting station on one of its occupied features in the South China Sea.<sup>125</sup> This would potentially place stronger radio transmitters near South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. More powerful Chinese controlled and operated transmitters in Australia's northern approaches could jam a range of Australian frequencies broadcasting in the Asia Pacific. China could use these facilities to disrupt Australia's ability to reach listeners in the Asia Pacific or use these services to shape public opinion in times of regional instability and crisis. This would significantly reduce Australia's soft power projection capability. China would then have the capabilities to jam Australia's satellite, internet, and shortwave broadcasting services essentially cutting Australia's soft power projection capability to the Asia Pacific. While this is an unlikely scenario, it highlights why Australia needs to have a whole range of broadcasting options available. This submission recommends that the Australian government should also consult with the Department of Defence and other relevant agencies about the role shortwave radio may play in future contingences in Australia's immediate region.

Over the longer term, if the Australian government decides to not resume shortwave technology, this could result in the loss of important technical skills in long-distance radio technology. It will become increasingly difficult for Australia to build an indigenous shortwave radio transmission capability in the event Australia requires one on short-notice. This has implications not only for Australia's international broadcasting and soft power in the Asia Pacific, it could also impact on the development in defence capabilities and operations that use long-range radio communication technology. For example, Australia is a world leader in high-frequency skywave over-the-horizon radar (OTHR) technology. The Jindalee Operational Radar Network (JORN) uses shortwave radio technology to provide wide area air and maritime surveillance at ranges of 1000-3000km and across 37,000km<sup>2</sup>. JORN is a vital defence capability supporting the defence of Australia's northern approaches and assists the Australian Defence Force in maritime operations, border protection, disaster relief, and search and rescue operations.<sup>126</sup>

This submission recommends that maintaining shortwave radio engineering skills should be a priority of the Australian government as these skills may become important inputs to future capability development and operations in the Asia Pacific region. For example, broadcast engineering specialists from New Zealand and Australia were vital to restoring Vanuatu's radios services following Cyclone Pam in 2015.<sup>127</sup>

The final recommendation of this submission is that the Australian government should require Radio Australia and the ABC to *consult* with the government on news and current affairs concerning sensitive matters that may adversely impact Australia's interests or

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<sup>125</sup> There have been reports that China has already place military communication jamming equipment on Mischief Reef see: Michael Gordon and Jeremy Page, "China Installed Military Jamming Equipment on Spratly Islands, U.S. Says," *Wall Street Journal*, 9 April 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-installed-military-jamming-equipment-on-spratly-islands-u-s-says-1523266320>.

<sup>126</sup> For an overview of Australia's JORN capability see: <https://www.baesystems.com/en-us/feature/seeing-over-the-horizon>

<sup>127</sup> For details see: [https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/AsiaPacific/Documents/Events/2015/August-PMPC2015/PMPC\\_Korol\\_Hawkins.pdf](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/AsiaPacific/Documents/Events/2015/August-PMPC2015/PMPC_Korol_Hawkins.pdf).

national security. However, this should only be done in times of serious regional crisis or conflict and broadcaster independence should always be priority of the government on these matters. This would ensure that Australia has a reputable instrument of foreign policy in future emergencies requiring state influenced information dissemination.