

17 July 2018

Review of Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific

Submission

My submission is in the capacity as a private individual and Australian citizen. I use shortwave (SW) radio personally, however the number of listening options has reduced in recent times, which is disappointing. There are some, but not many, commercial broadcasters in Australia broadcasting on SW. I also listen to weather forecasts broadcast on VMC by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology. I use this when sailing. It is a vitally important service for shipping generally, but most especially yachts. There are some international broadcasters that I can listen to but since I speak English only, have no benefit from non-English language broadcasts.

I support the idea that Australian broadcasting services recommence on SW radio in the form of Radio Australia or similar.

- 1) SW radio is the most cost effective way of reaching poorer communities, remote communities, and those people in our region who by necessity or by choice cannot access the other means of mass communication: MF and FM radio has limited range; internet access is endemic in rich countries alone, but even then it is not as efficient for mobile and remote listeners; newspapers are cost effective only in large cities. By contrast, SW radio can reach remote areas over huge distances by virtue of the radio wave propagation and ionosphere 'bounce'. The cost of a receiver is much less than the cost of establishing internet access.
- 2) The reach of SW radio is a particular advantage for community service broadcasting, for example in the event of emergencies or matters of public safety.
- 3) Australia is a moderate democratic power in the Pacific region. Our culture, political institutions and lifestyle are different to those in some other countries in our region that are broadcasting. It is important that communities in our region hear a plurality of voices and views. By not broadcasting on SW radio, Australia has foregone that option. (New Zealand has probably taken over as the main democratic broadcaster in the region.) I think it is important that Australia also broadcasts. To not do so means letting other nations broadcast nuances that may not necessarily represent our interests, or those of our allies. We partner with NZ, US, Canada and UK in security matters, the so-called 5 eyes, and SW radio possibly has a useful role to play in information dissemination in the region.
- 4) If Radio Australia, or equivalent, were to recommence broadcasting on SW radio, I would also support the idea that it is broadcasting not just for a Pacific region audience but an Australian audience too. Australia has its share of remote communities that cannot necessarily access the same media that city-residents can. Similarly, for those travelling in Australia, either on land or by sea, SW radio is by far the most convenient and cost effective method of communication. I would support a range of broadcasting categories, including information services such as weather and warnings, news services (both national and international) and cultural programming.

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