

From: John Uri [REDACTED]

Sent: Saturday, 30 June 2018 11:02 PM

To: asia pacific media review
<asiapacificmediareview@communications.gov.au>

Subject: **Review of Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific**

[Submission can be made Public]

The Director, National and Community Broadcasting,
Department of Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 2154
Canberra ACT 2601

11 July 2018

Dear Sir

Thank you for accepting my submission in reference to your decision to review coverage and access of existing Australian media services in the Asia Pacific region and the use and value of Australian shortwave technology in the Asia Pacific region.

I also understand that the proposed review will focus on the following areas including:

- all media distribution platforms (i.e. television, radio and online);
- commercial, community and publicly funded services; and
- different types of technologies such as analogue, digital and satellite radio and television services
- and online services.

This is welcoming news for those in the pacific region should the review result in the restoration of short wave (SW) radio transmission that ABC terminated in 2017. I believe the introduction of FM frequency and the cessation of SW transmission will have been devastating for some pacific countries who traditionally rely on this frequency for their day to day information needs including weather alerts etc.

The SW transmission has been in operation for decades (since 1939) and via the ABC, it benefitted Australia and countries in the pacific region because of its reliability to inform and warn major natural disasters and hurricane etc. The service is particularly important for rural communities where, in remote rural communities, they don't have access to radio, even internet services, for their information needs.

The FM technology was introduced fairly recently in Australia, which eventually led to shortwave transmissions being terminated or disconnected. But why ABC decided to discontinue that service is understandable including their recommendation that it is too expensive to operate. The ABC played pivotal role in the pacific region for many, through its radio services, which is easily picked up in the majority of the region.

There's enormous value to be had in both Australia and pacific countries in terms of the role the media will play through radio, television and online services. The restoration of these services will mean greater political influence by Australia in the region and will increase its presence around economic development issues for pacific nations. Australia's attitude towards the region have also changed partly because of the large population of pacific people living & working in Australia and partly because Australia and pacific countries have a shared interest in sports such as rugby, rugby league and netball. You simply cannot argue against that.

The Strategist (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 27/4/17) in 2017 emphasized their point as to why shortwave radio should be restored for the pacific region, and I quote "if FM is the future, (then) the ABC needs to explain why it recently closed FM transmitters in Pohnpei, Palau, Kiribati and the Cook Islands. FM reaches only the capital or a region, not the whole country". The article then continues to argue that Radio Australia's South Pacific service should continue to serve the pacific region on every available platform from shortwave to social media.

Govt may now be aware that China have 'moved' into the region, with reports suggesting that they are already active in utilizing the shortwave radio transmission void, since the services termination in 2017. Last month for example, ABC reported that a Chinese station has taken over some of the shortwave radio frequencies once used by the ABC in the Pacific region, following the broadcaster's decision to end shortwave services (ABC, 22/6/18). This news come as a shock and has worried many people in the pacific, who generally blame Australia and NZ for their neglect of the region.

The government's decision to initiate this review is welcoming. The wide-ranging issues to be covered in this review is also welcoming and should bring many benefits to both peoples in Australia and the region.

I believe the decision by the ABC to shut down its SW radio to the pacific region was a mistake. The cost to maintain the SW radio transmission was considerably miniscule (\$1.9 m), compared to the value of the service being received and used by millions of people in the pacific region.

I sincerely hope that government will do the right thing, that SW and FM radio transmissions will be restored in the immediate future.

Finally, there is rumor concerning plans to shut down ABC and SBS. I urge govt not to close ABC or SBS services, as they are very important services for the public now and in the future. Their service and programming content are entirely relevant to sustain a multicultural nation like ours today and in the future. Therefore, govt should continue funding the ABC and SBS as public broadcasters for the people of Australia.

Yours sincerely

John Uri

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]