

This short submission relates mainly to Papua New Guinea and the now defunct shortwave radio service.

I have had a long association with Papua New Guinea that began in 1967 and has been maintained to the present.

In that time I have visited and worked in some of the remoter parts of the country, both on the mainland and in the islands.

From this experience I can attest to the extreme reliance that people in those areas had on the shortwave service.

This included things like shipping, weather and disaster reports and news about their own country. In the latter case people often preferred the unbiased views of the shortwave service to their own local stations.

News services in Papua New Guinea have now been captured by commercial media with questionable agendas and by the government as propaganda arms for their spin.

In my time in Papua New Guinea I also observed the appalling rubbish that was broadcast on television going into the country when the contract was held by an Australian commercial television station. This rubbish was not only inappropriate but embarrassing to me as an Australian.

Most remote villages still use shortwave radios. When the Australian service stopped they were mystified and extremely disappointed. The message they received was that Australia didn't care about them anymore.

Most Papua New Guineans have a strong affinity to Australia, even if the sentiment is rarely returned by our politicians and media, so the cutting off of the service was a real blow.

Now the Chinese have picked up the abandoned shortwave bands. That fact must be really puzzling the Papua New Guineans. They are probably asking themselves whether this means shifting their allegiance from Australia to China.

I hope that as an outcome of this enquiry the grossly stupid decision to stop the service will be reversed and it will be reinstated under the control of the ABC.