

Review of Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific

Submission from:-

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History of Radio Australia

- Australia through Radio Australia provided balanced, relevant, educational, warnings of disastrous weather conditions, and entertainment radio programs from near the end of World War II until around 2010 to people in South East Asia and the South Pacific.
- These programs were in several languages appropriate to the intended audience.
- Radio Australia was well thought of in the region because of its lack of bias.
- After around 2010 the standard of the broadcasts lost their way with withdrawal of almost all foreign language broadcasts, transmitting information and news that largely was Australia-centric and not appropriate to the target audiences.
- About four years ago the transmissions were reduced from six transmitters at Shepparton, Victoria running 24 hours a day (and two lower powered ones at Ayr in Queensland) to three with a reduction in the use of the most appropriate radio frequencies to achieve the radio coverage of the countries of interest.
- The transmissions on short wave radio ceased on 31st January 2017, with the claim that internet and FM radio would cover all of the areas of interest better than could be done by short wave radio (a so called obsolete technology according to the ABC). This claim is biased towards technology that cannot economically provide the services in many of the intended audience areas, including at sea. Most of the countries are maritime by nature.

The need to re-establish Radio Australia

- Currently many of the people in the South Pacific (and to a lesser extent in South East Asia) do not have readily accessible unbiased news, entertainment, educational or information in times of crisis due to storms, coups, or vagaries of terrain.
- Short Wave radio from Australia can provide these services to these countries as it has done in the past.
- We currently have aggressive competition from China Radio International which is flooding the short wave radio bands with at least 60 plus transmissions at some times with transmission powers the same as Radio Australia has used but most are up to five times that power. Only some of these transmissions are in English.
- China certainly believes that short wave radio is not obsolete as it has taken over some of the frequencies Radio Australia was using.
- China has a very active interest in the South Pacific and also into the Indian Ocean area too with all sorts of aid programs, agreements –fishing, etc. These may also lead to military

bases of some sort, radio monitoring, etc much as they are endeavouring to push in the South China Sea.

- The combination of radio transmissions and aid in its many formats are powerful tools to get countries on side.

Re-establishing Radio Australia on Short Wave (High Frequency)

- Determine who should run Radio Australia. The ABC with a particular bucket of money allocated to do this and largely independent of the main ABC, the SBS or by Foreign Affairs.
- Appropriate programming to suit the target audience, keeping in mind the programs that were most appreciated by the recipients over the years from Radio Australia. (The inland service could benefit from using one of the Shepparton transmitters too – it has in the past)
- Re-establish foreign languages as appropriate.
- Obtain radio frequencies to use through the international body who assigns the frequencies and the hours that they can be used.
- Re-commission the transmitters at Shepparton and Ayr. This will take a little time as they have been sitting idle for at least 18 months. The newest transmitter was only commissioned in 2011, others are older.
- By doing the above we can reclaim our position as a fair impartial service which along with our current aid programs would show our interest to help these countries for their and our mutual benefit.
- By having our aid programs without our high frequency radio services we are severely limiting the good will we would like with the countries of the South Pacific.
- China realises the value of high frequency (short wave) radio services along with their aid programs (which may have strings attached). They are quite entitled to have such radio services under international law and we should also be doing the same to balance their ideology by providing easy access to our democratic values.
- Portable short wave radios are quite cheap.

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