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The Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications.

Dear Committee Members.

We are writing to you about the recent cancellation of the ABC's shortwave services and to seek at least the reinstatement of the national service.

4WDNT represents the 4WD Clubs of the Northern Territory and is a member of 4WD Australia who represents directly over 10,000 members. We are most disappointed at the recent cancellation of the ABC shortwave services. Many of our members have HF radio receivers and tuned into the HF service when travelling, camping and working in remote areas.

This service was a key communication medium for many people in Northern and Central Australia's remote areas as well as off shore. There is no other equivalent communication service available to most people who have been using the short wave service.

The service not only provided news and entertainment, but also was a vital emergency broadcast service which is a requirement under the ABC Charter.

The following suggestions from the ABC demonstrate a complete lack of understanding of the needs of the community in areas outside major capital cities.

1. The VAST service can be used in lieu of shortwave.

The VAST service is extremely expensive and only suitable for permanent installations. There are large numbers of shortwave listeners who cannot have permanent installations. VAST does not work reliably during cloudy weather, cyclonic and monsoonal conditions.

2. Broadcasts are available via streaming.

Streaming is not available in the vast majority of the Northern and Central remote areas of Australia.

3. Broadcasts are available via AM and FM

AM and FM is only available within very close proximity of towns and not available in the vast majority of the area of Northern and Central Australia.

4. Emergency broadcasts are still available from the Bureau of Meteorology.

The BOM broadcasts are of a very different nature to that required by the community during emergency events and would certainly not provide for the community needs. They are targeted at coastal and off shore areas.

5. It is 100 year old technology.

This is a spurious argument as there is no other technology that provides the same service. Plenty of technologies are 100 years old but that does not mean they should be abandoned.

6. Digital recipes will be provided to Darwin using money saved by the cessation of shortwave.

Digital radio is of very limited benefit to the NT given its very short transmission range.

7. Money saved from the cessation will be used for ZFM transmission in overseas markets.

Why would it be appropriate to cancel a vital Australian service to service some people outside Australia instead?

8. ABC International's Chief Executive Officer Lynley Marshall said the reinvestment from closing international shortwave services would maximize the ABC's broadcast capabilities in the Pacific region.

This is a rather ignorant statement given the enormous foot print for shortwave reception and the very limited footprint of FM transmissions.

In making the decision to stop all HF radio services, the ABC has admitted it had no idea how the national and international services have been used nor how many people are impacted. It also admitted that no consultation occurred before the decision was made.

As Australia's Public broadcaster, it has fundamental responsibilities to all the people of Australia and others worldwide, not just to those in large capital cities - as this policy seems to be targeted at.

The shortwave service is vital to many of our members, the members of the various HF radio clubs, and many travelers, drivers and residents of remote areas of Central and Northern Australia. These people are just as important as those in large cities and HF radio broadcasts provided much of their very important and up to date communication needs.

We urge you to reverse the decision and re-enable this service which is vital to so many Australians.

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