

BROADCASTING POLICY IN AUSTRALIA
Political Influences and the Federal Government's Role in the Establishment and Development of
Public/Community Broadcasting in Australia -
A History 1939 to 1992

P N Thornley

BROADCASTING POLICY IN AUSTRALIA
Political Influences and the Federal Government's Role in the Establishment and Development of
Public/Community Broadcasting in Australia -
A History 1939 to 1992

Phœbe Neva Thornley

BA Dip.Ed. (Sydney)

This thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
University of Newcastle, New South Wales

February 1999

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree for any other University or Institution.

(Signed) _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the four supervisors who guided me through the preparation of this thesis: Associate Professors Lionel Fredman and Eric Andrews for their encouragement as I commenced the task just before they retired; Professor Peter Hempenstall for encouraging me to expand and formulate my ideas as the thesis progressed and for invaluable support, advice and friendship during the greater part of the research; Dr Chris Dixon for undertaking the difficult task of becoming supervisor as the thesis reached the final revision. Special thanks to retired Professor Alan Ward, who read the entire thesis draft at short notice over Christmas, as Professor Hempenstall prepared to leave for a Professorial Chair in Christchurch, and to Dr Hilary Carey, who helped me become acquainted with the Internet, both by joining me to a relevant email discussion group and by facilitating the development within the History Department of my Homepage on the World Wide Web. Lyn Keily not only taught me the basics of using the Internet in formal instruction but was there to rescue me on the many occasions I became overwhelmed by the new technology. This involvement with the Internet was invaluable because it brought me in touch with others doing similar research, not only in other parts of Australia, but in Europe, India and New Zealand. Sharing experiences with other postgraduate students in the Department, including Ann Dunne, Ann Williams, Paula Watts, Troy Duncan and Robert McGregor, was not only supportive, but also often provided some necessary light relief. History Department secretarial staff, Pauline James, Robyn Gay, Jenny McKinnon and Michelle Campbell provided me with a great deal of practical information and were always there with friendship and support during the ups and downs of my study.

Professor Ken Inglis and Associate Professor Graeme Osborne made some useful suggestions early in my research when I visited them in Canberra.

The thesis would not exist without the co-operation of all those involved in public broadcasting, in one way or another, who were prepared to share their ideas and experiences with me, either by interview or correspondence. Four deserve special mention: Grahame Steel, manager of the University of Newcastle's radio station, 2NUR-FM for sharing all his radio experiences with me, especially Aboriginal radio, and for facilitating my participation in many community broadcasting conferences, as a volunteer of 2NUR-FM, where I gathered much valuable information and met and interviewed a number of relevant people, not otherwise available; Dr Geoff Evans for entrusting me with his entire personal archives of his work for the federal government; Trevor Jarvie for many colourful discussions and for a copy of an early draft of his history of 2MBS-FM; Max Keogh, who provided me with some valuable material on Canada and became a good friend and support over the years, whenever things looked bleak.

Wanda Coates, Victoria Quade, Russell Naughton, Bob Hope Hulme and Chris Lawe Davies kindly shared their relevant research with me. Victoria Quade also directed me to useful information on New Zealand. Marj Prior gave permission to quote from a confidential paper. I am particularly grateful to Margaret Jovanovic who made me a copy of the interview of Michael Law she taped in Sydney, in March 1988, just before he returned to the UK.

Family and friends, members of the Edgeworth Ladies and the Toronto Workers Club tennis clubs and the Newcastle PCYC table tennis club, the staff and volunteers at 2NUR-FM, and particularly my little grandson, Johnny, here in Newcastle have all helped to keep me sane and make me smile throughout this endeavour.

To John Luke Newman, with a grandmother's love

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements		ii
Dedication		iii
Table of contents		iv
Abstract		v
Abbreviations and Acronyms	vi	
<u>CHAPTER ONE</u>	Introduction	1
<u>CHAPTER TWO</u>	The relationship between the Government and high technology communication: to 1942	34
<u>CHAPTER THREE</u>	Restricting Broadcasting Development: 1945 - 1967	64
<u>CHAPTER FOUR</u>	Debating the direction of government broadcasting policy: 1968 - 1974	96
<u>CHAPTER FIVE</u>	Divergence in public broadcasting philosophies	131
<u>CHAPTER SIX</u>	The Whitlam years - ideals and realities: 1972 - 1975	156
<u>CHAPTER SEVEN</u>	Principles and pragmatism - the Coalition and Public Broadcasting: 1975 - 1983	186
<u>CHAPTER EIGHT</u>	Influencing government - the Public Broadcasting Association of Australia: 1974 - 1990	216
<u>CHAPTER NINE</u>	Educational Public Broadcasting - A failure?	240
<u>CHAPTER TEN</u>	Ethnic Broadcasting - Government, Public, or Commercial? 1952 - 1992	275
<u>CHAPTER ELEVEN</u>	Funding Public Broadcasting	321
<u>CHAPTER TWELVE</u>	Policy in practice - a comparison between 2NUR-FM Newcastle and 2BBB-FM Bellingen	348
<u>CHAPTER THIRTEEN</u>	Conclusion	379
Bibliography		387

ABSTRACT

Utilizing published and unpublished sources and working with interviews of a number of participants this thesis examines the evolution of the political influences that stimulated the Australian federal government's policy decisions on public broadcasting. The background to the federal government's original involvement in broadcasting in the early years of the twentieth century is investigated to put later developments into a broader perspective. Comparisons are also drawn with progress in other comparable Western countries to highlight the unique nature of the Australian model. Since broadcasting was never an issue, like health and education, which could capture votes from the electorate as a whole, government policy was driven by pressure from particular special interest groups as their influence waxed and waned and calls from individual electorates, when the interest was strong and the seat was marginal. The government decisions that resulted from this situation were *ad hoc* and expedient and no really coherent policy was ever implemented. This thesis examines the forces that led to the restriction in the expansion of broadcasting services after World War 2 and to the change in the influence of pressure groups in the 1960s which led to the establishment of FM and public broadcasting in the 1970s. A detailed exploration of particular interests, such as the Public Broadcasting Association of Australia, educational broadcasters and ethnic broadcasters shows how the influence of different groups changed over time. Once public broadcasting was established the main concern of both broadcasters and government was to keep the sector economically viable. A detailed analysis is provided of how the funding arrangements altered as the sector grew. There were always some idealists who saw public broadcasting as a vehicle for putting forward their own point of view. But, this thesis concludes that, by the early 1990s, apart from its role as regulator, which was the same for commercial broadcasting, government policy on public broadcasting was largely driven by the fact that minimal funding for the sector enabled government to ensure that essential non-commercially viable broadcasting services that would be far more expensive for the government to provide itself, were able to continue.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAP	Australian Assistance Plan
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
ABCB	Australian Broadcasting Control Board
ABT	Australian Broadcasting Tribunal
ACFTA	Australian Council for the Arts 1968-1973
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Services
ACRN	Australian Campus Radio Network
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AFC	Australian Film Commission
AFCBS	Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations 1930-1962
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
AM	Amplitude Modulation
ANU	Australian National University
APCOL	Alternative Publishing Co-operative Ltd
ARA	Alternative Radio Association
AUC	Australian Universities Commission
AVCC	Australian Vice Chancellor's Committee
AWA	Amalgamated Wireless Company of Australasia Limited
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BHP	Broken Hill Propriety Company
BLF	Builders' Labourers' Federation
CAAMA	Central Australia Aboriginal Media Association
CAE	College of Advanced Education
CBA	Christian Broadcasting Association
CBAA	Community Broadcasting Association of Australia 1993 to present
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CEP	Commonwealth Employment Programme
CGPO	Commonwealth Government Printing Office
CPB	Corporation for Public Broadcasting
<i>CPD</i>	<i>Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates</i>
CRAG	Coalition of Resident Action Groups
CRF	Community Radio Federation
CRTC	Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
DOC	Department of Communications
DURD	Department of Urban and Regional Development
ECC	Ethnic Communities Council
EGAC	Ethnic Grants Advisory Committee
EMBSC	Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasting Standing Subcommittee
ERDA	Electrical and Radio Development Association
FACB	Federation of Australian Commercial Broadcasters 1962-1976
FACTS	Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations
FARB	Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters

FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FECCA	Federation of Ethnic Community Councils
FM	Frequency Modulation
FRC	Federal Radio Commission
GE	General Electric
HBJ	Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, Publishers
Hons	Honours
IMBC	Independent and Multicultural Broadcasting Corporation
LOTE	Languages other than English
MA	Master of Arts
MBS	Music Broadcasting Society
MEd	Master of Education
<i>MIA</i>	<i>Media Information Australia/Media International Australia</i>
MUP	Melbourne University Press
NAIBA	National Aboriginal and Islander Broadcasting Association
NEBAC	National Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Council
NEMBC	National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council
NESB	Non-English speaking background
NNSWPBA	Northern New South Wales Public Broadcasting Association
NSW	New South Wales
NSWIT	New South Wales Institute of Technology
NSWPBA	New South Wales Public Broadcasting Association
<i>NSWPD</i>	<i>New South Wales Parliamentary Debates</i>
NSWUP	New South Wales University Press
NZBC	New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation
NZBS	New Zealand Broadcasting Service
OUP	Oxford University Press
PBAA	Public Broadcasting Association of Australia 1975-1993
PBF	Public Broadcasting Foundation
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PMG	Postmaster-General
PRS	Priorities Review Staff
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
RPH	Radio for the Print Handicapped
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SEBAC	State Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Council
SPAR	Sydney Public Affairs Radio Foundation
SPBA	Sydney Public Broadcasting Association
SSCESA	Senate Standing Committee on Education, Science and the Arts
STB	Short Term Broadcasting
TEAS	Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme
TV	Television
UAP	United Australia Party
UHF	Ultra High Frequency
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
ULP	University of Luton Press
UNE	University of New England
UNSW	University of New South Wales

UQP	University of Queensland Press
URSC	University Radio Station Committee
USA	United States of America
U. Tas.	University of Tasmania
UTS	University of Technology, Sydney
VC	Vice Chancellor
WAIT	Western Australian Institute of Technology
WEA	Workers Education Association