Beyond Bond: Broadcasting policy and commercial radio in regional Western Australia

Stephen Turner

*Edith Cowan University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons)

Part of the Radio Commons

**Recommended Citation**


This Thesis is posted at Research Online. [https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/623](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/623)
Edith Cowan University

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorize you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.

- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. Where the reproduction of such material is done without attribution of authorship, with false attribution of authorship or the authorship is treated in a derogatory manner, this may be a breach of the author’s moral rights contained in Part IX of the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).

- Courts have the power to impose a wide range of civil and criminal sanctions for infringement of copyright, infringement of moral rights and other offences under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
BEYOND BOND

Broadcasting policy and commercial radio in regional Western Australia

by

Stephen Turner

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of

Bachelor of Arts Degree with Honours

at the Faculty of Arts, Edith Cowan University

Date of Submission: 6th October, 1994
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
ABSTRACT

The introduction and expansion of FM radio broadcasting services in Australia was a long, difficult process, marked by planning and policy blunders. Attesting this fact, two regional cities in Western Australia have experienced a lack of adequate and comprehensive commercial broadcasting services.

The city of Geraldton has an oversupply of commercial radio services, leading to poor quality programming. The similarly sized city of Bunbury is not serviced by commercial FM radio at all, due to an error in planning television services in the early 1960s.

The intention of the study is to examine the policy paradigms which evolved from the process. Underpinned by Cultural Studies methodology, this dissertation analyses the competing policy discourses, and the failure of policy itself that bought about the above situations.

The paper concludes that a lack of clear, and comprehensive policy guidelines when introducing FM radio led to the situation, which was continuing at the time this research was conducted.
I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference in made in the text.

Signature

Date 16 May 95
Acknowledgements

Without the support of many people, this work would not have been possible. Naming all of them would be a lengthy process, but particular support has been given by my parents, the staff of LISWA, particularly Russell Hamilton, Ann Hewer of the ABA, and Bill McGinnis of the WA Department of State Services. I would especially like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Brian Shoesmith for his patience, insight, and ability to focus my thoughts in a productive manner. Finally, many thanks to my wife, for her unending supply of support, critical analysis, coffee, and chocolate biscuits.
Abbreviations

ABA  Australian Broadcasting Authority
ABC  Australian Broadcasting Commission
ABCB Australian Broadcasting Control Board
ABT  Australian Broadcasting Tribunal
AM   Amplitude Modulation
APRA Australian Performing Rights Association
DOC  Department of Communications
EMF  Electro Magnetic Frequency
FARB Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters
FDU  Forward Development Unit
FM   Frequency Modulation
FOCS Federation of Commercial Stations
JPCOB Joint Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting
PSCOB Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting
RFARC Radio Frequency Allocation Review Committee
SSCOESATA Senate Standing Committee on Education Science and the Arts
UHF  Ultra High Frequency
VHF  Very High Frequency
Preface

While the nature of this research caused the author to often come in contact with highly technical documents, and deal with technical concepts of physics and electronics, much effort has been made to express these concepts in terms familiar to people with no background in either of these fields. However, in order to understand some of the reasoning involved in the various policy decisions, an understanding of the differing characteristics of AM and FM radio waves is necessary. AM radio is characterised by its ability to carry long distances and penetrate solid objects, such as mountains and buildings. However, it also is subject to electrical interference, and the quality of the sound it delivers is at the best, only average.

FM radio is characterised by the high quality of sound it delivers, and the suitability of the format to stereophonic transmission. FM, however, carries only relatively short distances, and it may be blocked by solid objects, such as mountains, and buildings.
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Early Days. FM, Television, &amp; Bunbury</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM and Localism</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ABCB, FM and Television</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UHF FM</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The McLean Report</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Green Report</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Policy Path to Geraldton</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents, Supplementary?</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Evolution of Policy Discourses</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The FDU’s Conflict</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ABT. Beyond Bond?</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle for Geraldton</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond Sent Packer - ing</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VII
Chapter 1. Introduction

Since 1937, the small city of Geraldton in the mid-west region of Western Australia, was serviced by a financially stable, and locally-active commercial radio station, operating on the amplitude modulation (AM) radio frequency band. The radio station's audience was spread over a wide geographical area, servicing outlying towns, as well as the city itself with local news, sport, and provided a high level of community participation. In 1992, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, after a series of events to be discussed in this dissertation, granted a licence to an independent radio station, utilising the FM system of transmission, operating on the Very High Frequency (VHF) band of the EMF spectrum. This action resulted in a change of program format, and loss of signal penetration to outlying areas. Almost simultaneously, the incumbent commercial radio service was granted a licence to convert systems, and operate on the same portion of the spectrum, broadcasting a similar program format. As a result of these events, the two companies involved, who had borrowed capital to equip to broadcast on the new frequencies, have been competing for a limited advertising revenue base, have reduced local news services and staff numbers, importing a substantial amount of programming. The Western
Australian Government describes the situation thus:

Financial austerity has led to two "sound alike" music stations. In spite of having an extra commercial radio service, the people of Geraldton now have access to less variety, spoken word programs and coverage of local events, than they did with only one commercial station.

(Western Australia, Department of State Services, State IT, 1993, p.18)

Combined with the physically poor signal propagation inherent to FM, the commercial services in place after these changes do not supply the level of service that would be expected in a market of this nature. Such a market, according to the Department of State Services of Western Australia, (1993, p.1) could expect "programming of high standards, which enhances individual choice, and reflects local perspectives... [and] provide business opportunities and employment...".

In Bunbury, a similarly sized city in Western Australia's south west, expansion of radio services to the frequency modulation (FM) system is at the moment technically impossible, due to an archaic television broadcasting system which occupies the channels on the Electro Magnetic Frequency (EMF) spectrum that, by international convention, are usually used for FM radio broadcasting. Similar sized, and smaller cities in other parts of Australia have been serviced by FM radio for many years. An
applicant for an FM licence in Albany, in the state's Great Southern region suggested that such a service signalled the region's "maturity" to tourists.

(Great Southern Radio, Submission to Australian Broadcasting Authority re: Licence Area Plans, 1993, on microfiche submission no. 175).

An analysis of the above situations reveals the influence policy and regulation has on regional commercial radio services, and, through this, the subsequent effect in configuring and reconfiguring various aspects of popular culture in the regions the services operate in.

Analysis and speculation by the Department of Communications (DOC) and its antecedent bodies foretold the possibility of the situations arising in such areas as Geraldton and Bunbury, but with little apparent effect. A pivotal document published by the DOC's Forward Development Unit (FDU) is ironically incisive in its opening comments:

The history of radio broadcasting in Australia has two key characteristics. First, the existence almost from the beginning of commercial and non-commercial sectors and, secondly, the uneven development of services over time. It is a story of fits and starts.

(DOC, 1986b, P. 1)

Published by the FDU at the request of the Minister for Communications of the time, Michael Duffy, the document aimed to provide a framework for policy makers to interpret the unique structure of radio broadcasting in
Australia. The document recorded the past, and current, state of the radio broadcasting industry in both quantitative and qualitative terms, and speculated about the result of a number of different planning scenarios. Despite the attention paid by the FDU to the planning process and its facilitation, poor industrial and policy administration led to the undesirable consequences outlined above. This study will map the events, and examine the hierarchy (or heterarchy) of discursive influences that surrounded and shaped the actions and policy making decisions that have led to the situations under discussion.

An examination of the radio broadcasting industry within these terms and this time frame is largely without substantial precedent, for, as Miller (in Cunningham and Turner, 1993, p. 44) suggests, "there are large gaps in the institutional histories of other [non-print] media: the television and radio industries, advertising, publishing, and music are still waiting for their general historians." Various works exist on the institutional history of state-owned services (the Australian Broadcasting Commission, and the Special Broadcasting Service), and there is a growing number of journal articles and books examining differing aspects of public, or community radio. Mackay (1957), Geeves (1993) and Walker (1973) detail development during the first fifty years of the industry on a national scale, and Hallahan
(1958) focuses on the pre-war history of West Australian services.

Detailed analyses of radio programming have also been written. Higgins and Moss, (1982) and Continuum, (1992) examine Australian radio, giving insight into the production of meanings and the subsequent relations of power and modes of reception that operate between a radio service and its listeners. A search of current literature reveals however, that little close attention is paid to the dynamic interplay of the greater institutional structures that create the environment which regional commercial radio operates within. In particular, detailed analyses of the effects of policy and regulation dynamics on a commercial radio service's programming and economic structures are rare, and lack established frameworks, parameters, and conventions. It is the intention of this dissertation to address this discrepancy (in part), working from an established set of Cultural Studies parameters.

Utilising an investigative framework of economics or political science may prompt analysis of the relationship between the events and economic determinants, or track relationships of power within the ruling political party and subsequent effects on Government policy. A Cultural Studies approach however, prompts a holistic attitude, regarding the dynamics of the relationships between all determinants, and "meanings".
the effect of the cause. As Hawke suggest:

policy... is neither conceived of, nor practised, outside broader social and political relations. It is constantly being reinforced by philosophical values, political dynamics, and specific organising principles which give rise to competing interpretations in different contexts.
(Hawke, 1993, p. 10)

In underpinning the theoretical framework of this dissertation, positioning one or two people as definitive critical sources, may create a platform for contention. However within the context of this study, Jo Hawke, and Stuart Cunningham provide a useful starting point from which to engage the research. Hawke (1993), in undertaking a rigorous study of the terms of reference the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT) operated from, charts the movement of the Tribunal's policy discourse from "trustee" to "market", and the corresponding rise and fall in participation by the public in the policy process.

Hawke's study is one of the more recent works involving the relationship between Cultural Studies, cultural policy, and cultural practice, a tripartite relationship traditionally not favoured by Media Studies and Cultural Studies academics. In 1986, Bear stated that "relatively few media scholars in this country are interested in policy, possibly because policy
makers over the years have tended not to pay too much attention to their work anyway" (1986), although he does acknowledge the contribution made by academic and editor, Henry Mayer. More recently though, Stuart Cunningham (1992) has attempted to draw policy studies further into the Cultural Studies agenda, drawing attention to, and attempting to reconcile the traditional oppositions found within Cultural Studies with policy practitioners. Amongst other reasons, such oppositions may be due to the perception of policy activities as a dry, bland subject. In acknowledging this perception, but challenging it, Hawke states;

The implementation of policy is conceived, therefore, as a transparent and neutral process which can be simply redirected if objectives are not met. Rational choice theory underlines much contemporary policy-making, but ignores implicit values and power relations. Policy's structuralist critics tend to focus on institutional power at the cost of broader cultural dynamics. (Hawke, 1993, p. 4)

Further, it is difficult to conflate cultural policy and its analysis with Cultural Studies practice, partly attributable to the interdisciplinary nature of Cultural Studies. Descriptive policy analysis (research activity with an aim to assist in formulating policy) must necessarily regard the rhetorical language employed in its (policy's) formulation. Such policy must be "read literally, rather than a symbolic or symptomatic form, its meaning
is given in the form of its words” (O'Regan, 1992) rather than in the content of the rich, evocative, metaphorical style inherent to Cultural Studies. Descriptive policy analysis (analysis and examination of policy) labours in a similar environment.

Additional discord is generated when prescriptive analysis for policy moves external to Cultural Studies academic logic. O'Regan cites policy's:

dependence on factors apparently external to its logic, the particular political environment, shifting public opinion, and the ways in which the public flow of information is influenced by policy agents, politicians journalists, researchers and bureaucracy.

(1992)

Notwithstanding, the prima facie relationship between Cultural Studies, and cultural policy, would be apparent. The Cultural Studies academy provides the basis for the rationale, analysis, and background perspectives to those who actually write and implement the policy, a system that Cunningham refers to as the "Handmaiden" model. However, in practice, the Handmaiden model does not operate. Elizabeth Jacka's reference to the "ever widening gap between cultural critique, and cultural policy" (in Cunningham, 1992, p.3) attests to this.

The source of this impasse may emerge from the different aims
practitioners hold in the respective spheres. Most practitioners in Cultural Studies "view their ...role as critics of the dominant political, economic, and social order, [with] ...command metaphors of resistance, refusal, and opposition... (Cunningham, in Turner, 1993, pp.132, 133).

In suggesting a widening of focus of the background that Cultural Studies works from, Cunningham advocates a "social democratic view of citizenship" (1992, p.10) suggesting that Cultural Studies Marxist or neo-Marxist rhetoric may not be the only capable reformist platform, and that an alternative approach may not suffer the automatic marginalisation that Marxism does "in the public arena".

From the position of the Cultural Studies academy, Cunningham (1992) also addresses the role of academics in the policy process. In attempting to prompt a greater contribution from the academy, Cunningham introduces the concept of "governmentality" from Michel Foucault, to redefine the manner in which academics, and the non-academic public perceive the institutions of "government", and how all strata of "government" in society might be able to partake in the policy process.

Foucault, in describing the shift of the operations and considerations of government from "a singularity, and externality, and thus
of [a] transcendence" to that of "a plurality of forms of government and their immanence to the state" (in Burchell, Gordon and Miller, 1991, pp 89, 90, 91), prompts a policy of dialogue with the governors, whether from within a small institution, such as a family or small business, or a larger institution, such as a federal parliament or administrative department. Foucault notes the government's growing consideration of the "population" in the terms of statistics, "statistics making it possible to quantify specific phenomena of population" hence, "population comes to appear, above all else as the ultimate end of government... government has as its purpose not the act of government itself, but the welfare of the population ." (in Burchell et al. 1991, pp.99, 100).

The role of "statistics", the immanence of "government" and the role of government itself, will be considered in this research.

With regards to contemporary policy research Cunningham further pursues the "social democratic citizenship ", in outlining a "centrist policy position" (in Turner, 1993, p. 127) situated between "right-social-science" and "left humanities", suggesting it occupies a position composed of elements of both postures, "distilled down into the central Enlightenment values of liberty, equality, and solidarity". These "core values" he proffers as "the central motor of reformism... in the public sphere of Western
society" (in Turner, 1993, p. 127). It is employing the coalesced discourse
Cunningham advocates this study will be executed drawing together the
themes of discourse analysis, political economy, political practice, and
pleasure.

In arriving at the terms of reference for this topic a pivotal
question distilled. Does the cultural and social importance of regional
commercial radio warrant such attention? Although this study is mainly
concerned with examining hierarchical discourses of power in relation to the
formation and implementation of policy changes, this point does warrant
attention, as the issue of "importance" of, or the "weight" given to the
commercial regional radio industry is regarded as a policy determinant by
such bodies as the DOC and the Federation of Australian Radio
Broadcasters (FARB), the industry representative body.

Leaving aside economic aspects such as the contribution
commercial services may make to the local economy by employing local
staff, consuming local goods and services, and associated flow-on effects
thereof, the FARB argues the importance of regional commercial radio on
the issue of localism. In stating this, FARB explains, without substantiation,
"the community has come to rely on the local commercial stations as a
source of information and news," (1994, p. 8) suggesting the position such
services occupy is one of "community or local service", a social asset, via their dissemination of local news, advertising, and gratuitous "community announcements".

However, in a FARB submission to the Department of Communications (DOC) 1984 inquiry into localism in Australian broadcasting, headed by James Oswin, (hereafter, the Oswin report), the Federation revealed that its attitude regarding localism was not entirely altruistic, stating "that it is a phenomenon which commercial radio broadcasters for many years have jealously regarded as being fundamental to their operations - particularly, but not exclusively, in non-metropolitan areas" (DOC, 1984, p. 7). This suggests that "localism" is a feature with which such services "sell" themselves to local advertisers.

The manner in which the concept of "localism" is generated however, reveals its ephemeral nature. The need for broadcasting staff to be geographically co-sited with the transmitting equipment in a particular area was negated long ago, networking technology allowing local announcements and advertising to be "split" away from a central source and broadcast only to a particular area, returning to the central source, which may be hundreds or thousands of kilometres away once the "local" insert has finished. The standardisation of pre-recorded advertisements to a
length of 30 seconds or one minute greatly aided in this, allowing a smooth, seamless transition between the "local" insert and the source program.

This practice leaves program content, rather than geography, to provide a sense of localism in the Bunbury and Geraldton services. These services broadcast a program format that FARB described in 1982 as "Adult Contemporary", one of five genres FARB detailed at the time. (FARB, 1982, p. 2). The ABT also referred to this system of classifying formats in its 1986 document "Australian Music On Radio", detailing the program as based on music, represented as a "bright or up-tempo format based on new, current, or past hits, plus news and information" (ABT, 1986, p. 89). All of the radio services in question at some point during the period in question have programmed a syndicated talk-back show for an hour during the morning session, usually between 9 and 10 am, which originated from a separate source, either Perth or Sydney. To a lesser extent, the services were judged by the ABT to include other music program elements such as "gold", "easy listening", or "country". (ABT, 1990, pp. 36, 37). The striking aspect of this information is the predominance of music in constituting program material. While it may be argued that an "Australian Sound" exists within certain genres of music, the 20 per cent minimum level of Australian songs in a
program, set down by an agreement between the Australian Performing Rights Association (APRA), the FARB, and the ABT, raises questions of what exactly is an Australian, let alone "local" sound or content.

Localism, therefore, may be best defined as a discursive construct, a system of signs and conventions operating to construct and conceptualize "difference" between geographic areas. As a result, the discursive operation of localism makes it difficult to explore as a culturally and socially important policy determinant, as it has few denotative qualities. The Department of Communications acknowledged the difficulty in applying the concept to analysis, by stating "localism has never been explicitly prescribed, nor fully explained, in any broadcasting legislation or single government policy statement". (1984, p. 5). The DOC conflates a market discourse with a social / cultural discourse citing the concept of localism in the Oswin report thus:

that commercial (and, as appropriate, public and ABC) radio and television stations should be individually operated units located in as many areas as possible, the size of the service area of a station being such as will reasonably permit the station to be commercially viable. Derived from this notion is the belief that ownership and programming should be controlled at the local level, and that the programming provided should cater for the particular needs and interests of the community within the stations service area. (DOC, 1984, p. 5)
While acknowledging the ambiguity of the concept, the DOC suggested that localism had been a main theme underpinning "the purpose of legislation, policy and planning associated with broadcasting over many decades, and is one of the central components of our present scheme of broadcast regulation." (1984, p. 5). Prior to, and during the introduction of FM radio, the "quality" and "amount" of local content remained a factor in determining and enacting policy. In explaining the basis of government policy regarding localism, the DOC assumes the following concepts:

a) Local owners are more able, and ready to interpret, appreciate and respond to the needs of their own community;
b) local ownership and control means that a station will have a strong local identity;
c) local ownership and control is an effective counter to concentration of media ownership generally;
d) possible financial benefits should accrue to local residents; and
e) local ownership and control is more likely to facilitate the successful establishment of a station, because of the dedication and willingness expected from a community which wishes to receive a broadcasting service.
(DOC, 1984, p. 100)

Apart from point b., the underpinning assumptions of this statement revolve around facilitory matters of procedure, economics and policy. The social and cultural "needs" a local service would fulfil still remain largely
unexplored and unexplained, due perhaps, to the lack of research conducted employing Cultural Studies theory. Lacking such a perspective, policy practitioners tend to default to the easily quantifiable phenomena of economic impact, and facile "community involvement". Sharing common themes with localism, is the discourse of nationalism, which had significant impact in shaping broadcasting policy as it applies to television. However, nationalism is rarely referred to in policy documents in terms familiar to Cultural Studies practitioners, such documents usually interchanging the concepts of localism and nationalism.

To address the application of Cultural Studies practice to such research Cohen (1993) usefully sets up behavioural parameters which result in "localism", drawing on the suggestion of "bias" Innis developed in his general theory of communication. For Innis, Cohen explains, bias refers to the "cultural frames of reference, which result from, and orient patterns of social interaction, related to values inherent in those channels laid down by historical circumstance". (1993, p.106). Communication technology acts as a stimulus to change this interdependent relationship, ergo, "localism", as it applies to regional radio, may be presented as an anachronistic concept as communication technology develops. Localism, perhaps, may be only perpetuated with an exponentially negative level of perception in the
culture or society.

Cohen cites Innis' conclusion that two orientations of media exist in a culture. I would suggest that regional radio, as a communications conduit and filter, exists in a state of tension, vacillating between:

1) An orientation stressing short distance patterns of communication which is largely dependent on interpersonal interaction and local communication; and 2) an orientation stressing long distance patterns of communication which is largely dependent on communications technologies. (Cohen, 1993)

The intrinsic nature of communication technology to bias (localism) proves bias to be subject to communications availability, thus revealing the implementation and consequent regulation of communication technology as a determinant in the level of the perception of bias, or localism existing in a culture. It is my argument that at any time, the position a policy discourse occupies in relationship with the two orientations Cohen cites may reveal some of the dominant determinants surrounding the policy process, providing insight to greater movements of political and social change in the culture. Localism was a key policy determinant prompting the initial investigation of FM radio in Australia.

The continuing development of FM radio operates in a policy
environment which has developed into a tripartite relationship of policy discourses in a constant state of dynamic tension. In detailing the introduction and development of regional FM radio, I will explore the evolution of the policy discourses localism, pleasure, and diversity.

In the second chapter of this dissertation two correlative themes pursuant to the analysis of the Bunbury situation will be detailed. Firstly, the single most significant influence on the development of FM radio; the introduction and subsequent popularity of television. Secondly, the emergence of localism and pleasure as policy discourses in the early phase of FM's development is also detailed.
Chapter 2. The Early Days. FM, Television, And Bunbury

When discussing the technical aspects of radio wave transmission, with regard to the proposed establishment of FM broadcasting in 1973, R.R. Walker expressed doubt that:

 too many people will be all that anxious to come forward with the required folding money given:
 a) the allocation of all FM stations to the Ultra High Frequency band [UHF] - the only place in the world where it is so placed -
 b) the present absence of sets to receive such broadcasts,
 c) the probability of limited sponsorship, 
 d) the relatively high cost of installation of new facilities and new sets, and
 e) poor profit prospects.
(1973, p.101)

In 1994 FM broadcasting operates on the Very High Frequency (VHF) band. "suitable receivers" occur predominantly, and high levels of profit in the 1980s saw a scramble for new licences, and grossly over-inflated the value of existing FM licences. FM broadcasting in Australia shows evidence of great movement in terms of its inception and implementation. This chapter will focus on policy discourses moving from technology, to pleasure, to diversity in forming FM radio policy during the period 1942 to 1986.

The history of FM broadcasting policy and regulation in Australia reveals transitions in policy practitioner's task for the medium. Focusing on the manner in which the introduction of FM is represented in policy
documents reveals a protean hierarchy of discourses, expressing dominant concerns of the cultural policy makers of the time. Two frequently occurring discourses, inter alia, circulate around the ability of the FM system to provide a) many geographically small services, and b), aesthetic pleasure in its form.

The ability of FM to provide geographically small service areas is expressed as an advantage in policy documents, in terms of providing equity of access for audiences in all areas. This ability implicates the medium of FM in enhancing the perception of localism. Localism, as a bias towards short distance forms of communication "emphasises local interest, and can lead to a withdrawal from others further afield." (Cohen, 1993).

Cultural idiosyncrasies in a geographically defined culture are reified and amplified when employing short distance forms of communication. Given that a radio service's operators hold power, by controlling the "voice", and the flow of information, it becomes a "centre" to its audience, who occupy the periphery. Cohen cites Innis' assertion that "access from the centre to the periphery, also meant access from the periphery to the centre". (1993)

Developing into a dynamic tension with localism as a primary policy discourse, was aesthetic pleasure in television's and FM radio's form. Analysis of the early stages of FM's development reveals the movement
between the two discourses, motivated by the Government's primary policy objectives; enhancing localism and pleasure.

It is in this environment of dynamic tension that FM was initially proclaimed by policy practitioners as a valuable asset to society. FM's representation regressed to one of a hindrance to a greater asset (television), and re-emerged in the 1970s again as a social asset, but one largely unavailable.

FM and Localism.

Perhaps the earliest recorded official consideration of Frequency Modulation broadcasting in Australia occurs from the deliberations of the 1942 Joint Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting (hereafter JPCOB) report to Parliament. With terms of reference directed at assessing, and improving the broadcasting industry in its entirety, (both the national and commercial services) the committee delivered a total of 72 recommendations. Of these, arguably the most significant was the recommendation to repeal the existing Australian Broadcasting Commission Act, and draft a Bill which incorporated commercial broadcasters. The commercial broadcasters were progressively becoming a dominant feature of Australian society, a fact not ignored by politicians. Armstrong (1982, p.37)
cites a conversation recalled by Lord Reith from a discussion with the then Attorney General Robert Menzies in 1936. Lord Reith enquired as to whether the government was going to do anything about the increasing domination of the commercial stations (then known as B class stations). Mr. Menzies replied "We haven't got the guts".

Mackay (1957, pp 108 - 129) describes the commercial broadcasting industry prior to 1943 as operating under a (self-) perception of second class broadcasters, of a lower status than the ABC. In defence of the commercial broadcasting industry, Mackay cites the "hold that individual stations have on their communities, and the degree of dependence that communities have on their stations"; localism, as their raison d'etre. Further, McKay claimed the operation of market forces, (successful ratings) as being reasons to hold the commercial stations in higher regard (1957, p.112). The formation of the Federation of Commercial Broadcasters, praised by the 1941 Joint Parliamentary Committee, (1942, p.54) can only have helped the commercials' claim for higher status, and the incorporation of the two industries' regulation into one Act.

Nationalisation of all commercial stations was discussed in the 1942 report, but the Joint Parliamentary Committee decision regarding this action was deferred due to internal divisions, with only Labor members
supporting the motion. (Armstrong, 1982, p.37). Nationalisation of the commercial services would have affected the degree of localism present in Australia, the governmental structure of Australia at the time being dominated by politicians and bureaucracy located in Canberra and Sydney.

The Committee devoted six paragraphs of the report to the issue of Frequency Modulation broadcasting, presenting it as the possible solution to the problem of insufficient frequencies being available to satisfy demand from the 695 applicants for commercial broadcasting licences outstanding in 1941. Noting the existing use of the FM system in America, the committee cited the war as interrupting FM's development, stating "new types of transmitters and receivers will be necessary for those desiring to utilise this new method of transmission," (JPCOB, 1942, p.69), indicating the necessary research and development resources were diverted to the war effort. The committee recommended no Frequency Modulation licences be issued until a Parliamentary Standing Committee had investigated all aspects of frequency modulation broadcasting, television broadcasting, and facsimile transmission. The Parliament accepted the Committee's recommendations of drafting a new Bill, subsequently introducing the Australian Broadcasting Act to become operational in July 1942. The Act included the directive for FM and other new systems of broadcasting to be
investigated.

However, it took a further two years for the Parliamentary Standing Committee On Broadcasting to be formed, investigate FM broadcasting and report, as they produced 16 other reports in the period 1943 to 1948. (Armstrong, 1982, p.37).

The Standing Committee stated that "owing to the effect of the war on world development of the services in question, it was not opportune to deal with these matters until a suitable time after the cessation of hostilities." (Parliamentary Standing Committee On Broadcasting, 1946, p.4).

The resulting report, presented to Parliament in 1946, contained evidence from groups involved in the industry, and the government's administrative body. The Federation of Commercial Stations (later to become the FARB), newspaper owners (expressing interest in gaining initial, or further broadcasting licences), the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), and record and equipment manufactures represented the industry. Evidence regarding administration was provided by the Post Office, responsible for controlling the development of broadcasting until the 1949 establishment of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board. Research engineers from various bodies also participated.
In the preface to the report, the Standing Committee listed the general advantages of FM broadcasting. These included the superior quality of sound reproduction, and sound reception. Further, it emphasised the technical and physical properties inherent to FM which allowed for a greater number of services. (PSCOB, 1946, pp 4,5). This emphasis reflects concerns enunciated in the 1941 report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee which largely focused on matters technical, with only tangential references to sound quality made. The 1946 Standing Committee report further echoed the earlier Joint Committee report, citing the prevailing Australian broadcasting system as being largely defined by technical limitations and deficiencies, and the subsequent impact on equity of access and service quantity. The key discourse shaping policy at that time was the recurrent theme of FM being the means to provide greater access to locally defined radio services for the population. Also prominent, was policy regarding the technical development of the medium.

These discourses were added to in 1946, the Standing Committee introducing the discursive concept of sound quality. The Committee declared "quality" as an advantage of FM: "...a steel guitar solo comes over without any 'mushing' of its peculiar twangy vibrato. An announcer whispers into the microphone, and you start as if someone had whispered..."
Such a description was a significant departure from the predominant transactional language and deliberations of the politicians, engineers and public officials that comprised the membership of such committees. This event was significant in introducing a new perception of electronic media, recognising its capability to provide pleasure in its aesthetic form, as well as in its content.

The evidence presented to the Committee reveals that the witnesses reaction to the suggested introduction of FM broadcasting occupied a wide spectrum of positions. Strongly in favour of the proposition were newspaper proprietors with aspirations to broadcast, existing cross-media owners and the Post Office. Equally as strongly opposed, was the Federation of Commercial Stations. Four key discourses arise from the witnesses’ evidence: equity of access to services, sound quality of services, economic aspects, and technical aspects. Witnesses both in favour of, and those opposed to, the introduction of FM utilised these discourses in their argument, sometimes with sets of evidence being in direct contradiction to each other. The FOCS for instance, testified that high fidelity FM broadcasting could not use existing low fidelity recordings, as the difference in tonal range would produce "horrible distortion". In consequence, they argued, FM broadcasts would only be restricted to
expensive "live" in studio performances. (PSCOB, 1946, p.6). The Columbia-Gramophone company dissented from the FOCS’s evidence, arguing FM broadcasting would actually enhance the fidelity of the existing recordings, with no increase in distortion. (PSCOB, 1946, p.9).

The FM broadcasting component of the report made no reference to television broadcasting and the relationship between the two media. The committee acknowledged the obstructionist stance assumed by the FOCS, but devoted a considerable proportion of their comments to the benefits FM broadcasting would deliver.

Prominent were the Committee’s comments which described FM as the medium which would provide equity of access to services in regional and isolated areas, enhancing localism. By converting existing metropolitan AM services to FM they argued, the newly redundant AM frequencies would be made available to regional services, where the extended propagation of AM would be best utilised.

Also prominent in the Committee’s comments were issues relating to quality of sound, an answer to the FOCS’s suggestion that listeners would not realise or appreciate the better quality. The Committee argued that "it does not seem practicable to test properly the assumption that Australian listeners are satisfied with present standards until they are given
the opportunity to make adequate comparisons with other standards..." (PSCOB, 1946, p.16). Pleasure in high quality sound had emerged as a key policy determinant. Other comments regarded matters of tariffs, administration, and capital expenses.

In handing down its conclusions, the Committee recommended that FM broadcasting tests be carried out by the ABC, re-broadcasting existing AM programmes, in the VHF band. Commercial broadcasters were also invited to test, by their association with the FOCS. The final point made in the conclusions suggested the tests were somewhat of a formality to the introduction of FM, stating:

In order to safeguard the interests of all concerned as reasonably as possible an official announcement should be made as to the approximate length of time during which AM service in the medium frequency band will continue to be provided from capital city stations. (JPCOB, 1946, p.19).

The Standing Committee's report was accepted in part by the Government, who agreed to tests of FM broadcasting, but would not recommend granting any licences, pending further research overseas by officials from the Postmaster - General's Department.

Experimental FM stations broadcasting on the VHF band, as per international conventions, were established in Sydney and Melbourne in
1947, later in Brisbane and Adelaide, broadcasting the ABC programmes. (ABCB, 1972, p.5). The following year however, commercial broadcasters were removed from consideration as FM licensees in any form, the Labor Government prohibiting them from using the FM system. This situation remained despite the change of government, "for almost a decade" (DOC, 1986b, p.3). Regarding the reluctance expressed in the FOCS evidence in relation to FM, it is unlikely that this action had any significant effect on the development of the system.

The ABCB, FM and TV

In 1948 an Amendment Bill to the 1942 Australian Broadcasting Act was passed, which advocated the formation of a statutory body to oversee broadcasting. The duly formed body was introduced as the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB), in 1949.

Intrinsic to the Act was the ratification of the wide ranging power vested in the Minister responsible for the Department. It was hoped by commercial broadcasters that the Board would become an politically transparent body, such as the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) in America. But little changed, "virtually all major powers remained with the Minister." (Armstrong, 1982, p.39). The conservative Opposition of the
time "strongly opposed the 1948 Act, and, in particular, the amount of power it reserved to the Minister." (Armstrong, 1982, p.39). Until the 1992 Broadcasting Services Act, the structure of broadcasting administration was such that the political ideology of the incumbent Government could quite clearly be identified in broadcasting policy.

A series of events in the late 1950s gave reason for further government appraisal of FM broadcasting. The 1956 introduction of television broadcasting to Australia proved enormously popular. This combined with the need to find frequencies for new television and radio stations to service the rapidly expanding population. And in 1957, the Liberal Government repealed the prohibition of commercial broadcasters from FM. These three events prompted the ABCB to conduct another inquiry into FM radio broadcasting. The direction given to the public inquiry by the Postmaster General, was to investigate "all technical and economic factors which would be involved in the introduction of FM broadcasting systems." (ABCB, 1961, p.19). The Inquiry sat in Sydney and Melbourne in late 1957, and was adjourned until April 1958 at the request of the Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations (the former FOCS) to enable the matter to be discussed at the Federation's annual conference in late 1957. Reporting on the 1957 sittings, the Inquiry
declared "there were very real practical objections to the introduction of frequency modulation broadcasting" (ABCB, 1959a, p.14), an opinion which it reiterated after the 1958 sittings. (ABCB, 1959b, p.14). In explaining their position, the Board noted:

> the extraordinary popularity of television in the capital cities and the desire for alternative programming had demonstrated a likely need for a greater number of stations in the various centres than had been previously envisaged. (ABCB, 1961, p.19)

For the inquiry, the need became apparent to re-examine frequency allocations, consequently, they deferred their deliberations indefinitely. The air of inevitability of FM’s introduction that surrounded the conclusion of the Joint Parliamentary Committee’s report more than a decade earlier had disappeared in the face of the growing popularity of television.

Since the first regular broadcast of television, increasingly complex methods of researching the manner in which viewers derive pleasure from television watching have evolved, predominantly concentrating on audiences being examined or interviewed whilst or shortly after watching television. However, the absence of established research parameters and published audience analysis in Australia in the late 1950s makes
determining the level or cause of the popularity of television subject to anecdote and speculation.

In determining the expeditious assimilation of television by early audiences, O'Regan offers that it "was the existence of media, especially radio and cinema that had already "trained" people in the necessary skills for watching and enjoying TV" (1985, p.65). The level of pleasure then derived only from consuming the television text is difficult to establish though, as O'Regan identifies social discourses and orders forming in the suburbs of Australian cities revolving around television ownership, making assumptions of popularity based on the form and content of the media unstable. While the actual source of pleasure may never be defined, the popularity of owning a television set was easily quantified by the numbers sold.

In 1960, the ABCB Inquiry's three year old quandary ended, when the Postmaster General suggested the Government appoint a Radio Frequency Allocation Review Committee (the RFARC, or Huxley Committee). The Huxley Committee operated from the terms of reference to review the outcome of the 1959 Geneva conference of the International Telecommunications Union, to which Australia was a signatory, and to "examine any aspects of the radio frequency position that may arise from

In 1961, the Huxley Committee was directed by the Postmaster General to address the need to find more channels for the rapidly growing television industry, which was hindered by a lack of suitable frequencies. The Huxley Committee's work was prefaced by the 1960 ABCB dispatch to the Postmaster General, the "Report and Recommendations for Commercial Television Licences in Provincial and Country Areas". The ABCB report proposed considering use of the Ultra High Frequency (UHF) portion of the spectrum for TV in metropolitan areas, as was the general practice overseas, with VHF serving regional areas. But in the short time Australian cities had been served by television, over 1 000 000 receivers had been purchased, attesting to its enormous popularity. Nearly all of these receivers were equipped to receive VHF signals exclusively, and would have to be modified either slightly to pick up new VHF signals, or significantly for UHF.

The question for the expansion of television became which band to utilise, VHF or UHF? Either system would entail some inconvenience, being additional costs to the consumer for modifying existing receivers, UHF modifications costing between £15 and £30 more. UHF had significant
advantages in that 45 extra channels were available, whereas VHF was then restricted to a maximum of 10. The UHF system, however, still needed research and developmental work to enable adjustment to Australia's topographical peculiarities, VHF was already operational. The commercial networks also resisted the move to UHF claiming a) the capital expenses were prohibitive, and b), the loss of potential audience if consumers chose not to convert their receivers, opting to pick up only the channels available on VHF, would disadvantage them financially.

Ultimately, using UHF for television broadcasting was not recommended by the Board, justified on account of the cost and inconvenience to the consumer, and in light of the fact that commercial networks “were, to say the least, reluctant to undertake the provision of services in the UHF band” (ABCB, 1960, p.130).

This action positioned the VHF band as the sole frequency to accommodate television channels. Ten channels were available on VHF, but the Postmaster General stated a total of 13 would be needed to accommodate the expected expansion of television in the Sydney - Newcastle - Woolongong area (RFARC, 1961, p. 10).

In an effort to accommodate this expansion, the Huxley Committee reconfigured the Australian assignment of the VHF frequency band to
include a greater total bandwidth of the spectrum, allowing for an extra two channels, and removed experimental FM broadcasters from the middle of the band, freeing up two more. Of the four newly available frequencies, one was reassigned to domestic mobile services use, leaving the desired total of thirteen available for television. The experimental FM broadcasts ceased on the 30th of June, 1961.

However, the Radio Frequency Allocation Review Committee expressed reservations regarding the removal of FM broadcasting from the VHF band. Their report states the "need to remove the restrictions on the use of channels 3 and 5", (the frequencies being reserved for FM broadcasting) was specifically emphasised by the Postmaster General, and:

in the normal course of events the Committee would have examined the whole spectrum in a methodical manner, but in view of the urgency expressed in the Minister's letter to the Chairman the Committee proceeded to consider in detail the VHF band... with particular reference to the provision of thirteen television channels.

(RFARC, 1961, p.69)

The committee further noted that although it was possible to locate 13 television channels in the VHF band "it should be appreciated that this can only be done at some inconvenience and cost to other services" (RFARC, 1961, p.69). Moreover, "an increase in the number of television channels
from ten to thirteen brings the problem of congestion in the VHF fixed and mobile service bands to an acute stage many years earlier." (RFARC, 1961, p.70). Notwithstanding the Committee's efforts to discourage removal of FM broadcasting from the VHF band, the government of the day, taking a decision which defied logic and dogged successive governments for the next 25 years... agreed that 88 -108 megahertz, the frequencies used internationally for FM broadcasting, should be pre-empted for extra television channels in regional areas.

(Department of Communications, 1986, p.3)

The rational choice that would have seen the international conventions for FM broadcasting frequencies used in Australia succumbed, as Hawke suggested, to the broader cultural dynamics. Major expenses and inconveniences involved in developing radio services resulted from the Government not enforcing the comparatively small capital expense involved in altering television broadcasting.

In the policy environment's dynamic tension between the policy discourses of localism and pleasure, pleasure had proved dominant in planning for the use of the finite resource of the EMF spectrum. The pleasure derived from television proved more compelling than enhancing the localism and pleasure in radio services.

In light of the decision taken by the Huxley committee, the
availability of bespoke receivers and transmitting equipment, two television stations were established in Bunbury soon after. ABSW5, an ABC service went to air in May 1965 on VHF channel 5, the commercial service BTW3 two years later on VHF channel 3.

Yet, if the policy had directed television to be transmitted to the Bunbury area on UHF, it would have been a very unpopular decision. Many consumers had already invested substantial sums of money in VHF exclusive television receivers, and sophisticated high-gain aerials, taking advantage of the fortuitous reception available from established Perth VHF stations, 200 kilometres away.

UHF FM

In 1970, FM broadcasting was again the subject of the Government's attention, when the Postmaster General called for the ABCB to conduct yet another inquiry. The report, presented in 1972, makes no specific mention of why the decision to re-open investigations was made. However, the chapter titled "Deficiencies of Present Services" defines the state of existing broadcasting services in terms of four previously noted policy discourses of equity of access, sound quality, technical improvements and economic aspects. New to the FM broadcasting inquiries however, a
discourse evolved resulting from the convergence of the desire for sound quality and technical improvements: programming.

Previous evidence and discussion surrounding programming supplied to regulatory bodies had been mainly content-based, revolving around themes such as the amount of Australian content, or the appropriateness of sports descriptions on a Sunday. The necessity of the particular form of FM to certain types of programming indicates the increasing role aesthetic pleasure was taking in the inquiries.

Demonstrating this, the ABC's submission was given precedence, reiterating evidence submitted to the 1957 inquiry, that:

FM would be important in improving the quality of programme sound especially for the discriminating minority, growing in numbers who are particularly interested in fine music and other similar programmes. (ABCB, 1972, p.36)

The ABC also bore witness that FM is "the only satisfactory method of providing a full transmission schedule for an improved service to the regions, including better local content." (ABCB, 1972, p.36).

Concomitant with the account given of Australian radio broadcasting services again being defined in terms of deficiencies, a further chapter, "Justification for the Introduction of Frequency Modulation
Services" cites the interest that propelled the continuing drive to introduce FM broadcasting. Prominent is the statement suggesting the inquiry was established due to interest expressed by consumers and service providers (ABCB, 1972, p.46: para 201). Public interest was generated from three main sources, people who had heard FM overseas, an appreciation of the sound quality on television broadcasts (which is broadcast in FM format), and "the very significant growth of interest among the general public in high fidelity recordings and their replay in the home...". (ABCB, 1972, p.46). Significant due to the nature of the consumer and service provider demand, this statement indicates the terms of reference in which FM was discussed had shifted to largely emphasise pleasure. Further recognition of pleasure as a significant policy discourse occurred with the Board citing as a deficiency, the inability of the AM system to provide stereophonic or quadrophonic broadcasts. The board's report cited witnesses' claims that "...stereophonic transmissions add much to the enjoyment of the listener..." (ABCB, 1972, p.42).

In light of the considerable support expressed by the majority of witnesses, the Inquiry recommended that FM radio broadcasting be introduced as soon as practicable. However, in determining the manner in which it would be introduced, two factors emerged which obstructed its
smooth implementation. Colour television broadcasting was scheduled to begin broadcasting on the 1st of March, 1975, and doubts were expressed by equipment manufacturers that consumers would be willing to purchase both a new television receiver and a new radio receiver FM capable in a short time frame. This had the consequential effect that commercial service providers would be disadvantaged by the smaller available audience. The decision was made to introduce FM broadcasting a suitable time after the introduction of colour television broadcasts.

Secondly, while acknowledging the significant advantages in economic, technical, and sound quality terms of utilising the VHF band for FM broadcasting, the Inquiry recommended that FM be introduced on the UHF band, with the effect that Australia would be the only country in the world with such a system. The determinants for making this decision were based on an unwillingness to effect a policy that would require television stations to move from channels 3 and 5, the frequencies reserved internationally for FM radio broadcasting, but in Australia, were allocated to television by the 1961 Huxley Committee. The Board stated this decision was based on an economic discourse; the affected television stations would have to re-equip to broadcast on the UHF band, consumers would have to purchase new, or modify existing television receivers and aerials. The
Having regard to the cost and inconvenience which would be caused to the viewing public, the Board would not be prepared to recommend that the band 88 - 108 megahertz should be made available for FM services...

(ABCB, 1972, p.22)

The Inquiry further stated that this would result in the television stations that remained on the VHF band obtaining a considerable commercial advantage in terms of the large audience available who chose not to equip themselves to receive UHF transmissions. The justification for taking this decision echo the reasons given for not reassigning television broadcasting to the UHF band in the previous ABCB document "Report and Recommendations for Commercial Television Licences in Provincial and Country Areas" in 1960.

Justifying the decision further, the Board stated that to efficiently introduce stereophonic or quadrophonic FM broadcasting, the space available on the VHF band may not be sufficient, the extended bandwidth available in the UHF was desirable. (ABCB, 1972, p.45).

Significantly absent in the Board's report is an extended examination of the effects of having a FM radio broadcasting system peculiar to Australia in terms of capital costs to service providers and
consumers. However, the Board did indicate its awareness of the issue, making a recommendation to the effect of generating a market to obtain the greatest economies of scale, stating "it is also important... that the widest possible market for receivers be established in order for manufacturers to produce them in sufficient quantities to warrant the lowest possible price to the consumer." (ABCB, 1972, p.51). It was later estimated that at the time of the ABCB's report, the population of radio receivers capable of receiving VHF FM was around 10% of the total radio population, approximately one million sets. (Senate Standing Committee on Education, Science, and the Arts, 1973, p.21).

In taking this decision, the expected timetable for the introduction of FM radio was moved back further due to engineering and operational problems. The first service would start operating in 1977, the introduction completed by 1981 with ABC services becoming operational. (ABCB, 1972, p.71). The decision to continue with the UHF FM plan effectively excluded many smaller commercial and community services from utilising the medium, the unavailability of bespoke transmitters from overseas, and the high cost of locally manufactured UHF FM equipment combining to price them out of the market. As a result, any local service wishing to broadcast would be subject to the availability of frequencies on the crowded AM
band.

In the hierarchy of policy discourses, pleasure, particularly pleasure involved with television, had moved to dominate policy practitioners deliberation. The change of government however, was to move the focus of policy deliberation again.

The McLean Report

Despite the report of the ABCB inquiry being delivered to the Parliament, contention surrounding the use of the UHF band for FM radio did not cease. On 19th August 1971 the Senate unanimously referred the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Science, and the Arts (SSCOESATA) to investigate "all aspects of broadcasting and television..." (ABCB, 1974, p.13). The duly formed committee comprised "six Senators representing three political parties within the senate." (SSCOESATA, 1972, p.1). The Senate Committee duly called on submissions from the public, industry, and the academy to comment on all facets of the broadcasting industry. (ABCB, 1974, p.13)

In response, wide ranging submissions to the Senate Standing Committee from bodies such as the ABC staff association, (SSCOESATA, 1973, pp.1089-1124) and the ABCB (pp.1125-1181) raised the issue of FM
radio broadcasting again. Particularly comprehensive evidence was submitted by Mr. Trevor Jarvie, delivering a research document compiled by the Music Broadcasting Society of New South Wales (pp.1221-1272), prompting the Senate Standing Committee to particularly address the issue of FM radio broadcasting.

Summarising findings of the FM radio portion of the inquiry, the Senate Standing Committee nominated the ABCB’s 1972 inquiry as being incomplete. The Board’s findings were referred to as facile, the Standing Committee openly expressing doubt in the Board’s research methods and competence. The Senate Standing Committee became of the opinion that:

the disadvantages of developing a UHF service are enormous, and we believe that every possible avenue open to avoid this course should be evaluated, and their costs calculated, in view of those disadvantages.
(Senate Standing Committee on Education, Science, and the Arts, 1973, p.19)

The Senate Standing Committee rejected what it regarded as the ABCB’s "major reason" for placing FM radio in the UHF band, the ability to greater enhance stereophonic or quadraphonic broadcasting. The Committee cited that in their view "the major benefit of FM is that it makes more stations available...", shifting the focus of policy discourse back towards localism.
In making their summary, the Standing Committee recommended to the Government an independent inquiry be established, headed by someone "with no prior commitment, and with no existing positions to defend... we strongly suggest that consideration be given to appointing qualified people from overseas... the investigation should be done as quickly as possible." (SSCOESATA, 1973, p.23) The Senate Committee was effectively separating the policy process from political influence, and the bureaucratic dynamics of the ABCB and its antecedent bodies. The Government appointed former BBC Director of Engineering Sir Francis McLean to conduct the procedure, operating with terms of reference defined as:

To inquire into, and report upon, the technical, social and economic implications of establishing Frequency Modulation broadcasting in Australia and to recommend whether the VHF or UHF broadcasting band, or an intermixture of the two, should be used to introduce new services.
(ABCB, pp. 20,21 1974)

Convened in November 1973, the Independent Inquiry consulted reports and witnesses from previous inquiries, and conducted public hearings. Tendered in March 1974, the report's most significant recommendation reversed the decision taken in 1961 by the Huxley
Committee. The McLean Report recommended that channels 3 and 5 be cleared of the television services in situ, and FM radio should commence on the VHF band.

The ABCB replied to McLean's recommendations in their 1973-74 Annual Report, suggesting there were a number of problems to be addressed before band clearing activity and transmission started.

Later in 1974, despite the ABCB's comments, the Government moved outside the realms of the Broadcasting and Television Act, which the ABCB operated from, and licenced two public subscription stations in Sydney and Melbourne under guidelines laid down in the 1905 Wireless and Telegraphy Act. The Government further invited educational institutions to test FM radio broadcasting in the internationally accepted 88 - 108 megahertz VHF band. For the second time in Australia experimental FM broadcasts were undertaken, in December 1975 4ZZZ Brisbane started transmissions, public subscription stations in Sydney and Melbourne, and the ABC followed with services established in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Canberra in January 1976.

Significantly, participation in the new broadcasting medium tests excluded the commercial sector, even though specific provision was made for them in the McLean report. Harding, (1979, p.10) cites political
pressure applied from rank and file Labor Party members prompted a motion at the 1975 ALP Federal Conference to amend party policy to ensure no FM licences were granted to the commercial sector. FARB responded saying the decision was "ill considered, irresponsible and vindictive... [and] revealed the ALP's deep and violent antagonism to independent media" (Harding, 1979, p.11). Harding further cites an editorial from The New Journalist as indicative of the ALP's mood, the journal criticising the commercial broadcasters, on grounds of lack of diversity in both music and non-music formats.

The Green Report

In 1976 the new Liberal - Country Party Government decided to re-evaluate the structure of Australian broadcasting institutions, and asked the Minister for Post and Telecommunications to direct his Department to:

inquire into the Australian broadcasting system with particular regard to the machinery and procedures for the control, planning, licencing, regulation, funding, and administration of the system...

(Postal and Telecommunications Department, 1976, p.2)

Under the secretariyship of F.J. Green, the inquiry (hereafter, the Green report) recommended that further development of FM radio
broadcasting should take priority amongst tasks facing the proposed Broadcasting Planning Board, stating "because of its superior capabilities, the Inquiry supports the earliest possible introduction of FM services." (Postal and Telecommunications Department, 1976, p.147). Reiterating its potential in terms of providing local broadcasting, and high quality sound, the Green report stated the role of FM radio broadcasting was:

qualitatively different... [and] maximum advantage should be taken of its potential... in the more closely settled areas full development of FM broadcasting will provide great opportunities for separate, improved programming services. These should be used to add to the range and diversity of radio in Australia, adding a new dimension to existing programs and not merely duplicating them. (Postal and Telecommunications Department, 1976, p.148)

For the first time in official policy deliberation, diversity of services had been named as a determinant for expediting the introduction of FM, although the medium had been used expressly for that purpose in licencing 4ZZZ and the public subscription stations in Sydney and Melbourne. Diversity could not be achieved solely by licencing new FM services on a quantity basis though, the Green Report recommending that the criteria for granting new "FM rather than AM licences (or vice versa) should simply be which mode is technically more appropriate to the programming involved."
The desire for FM to be utilised in providing diversity is reflected in the Report's summary of the broadcasting system's program provisions. The Report states programs should be:

- adequately diverse,
- satisfy the requirements of not only the mass audiences, but those of special interests, or different language groups, minority groups, and the underprivileged.
- cater for national, regional, and local needs with emphasis on difference in metropolitan rural requirements...

(Postal and Telecommunications Dept. 1976, p.40)

The requirement for broadcasters to provide programs with regional and local needs, emphasising the difference in metropolitan and rural requirements, suggests a desire to enhance the short distance bias in communication cited by Cohen.

The Green Report also noted the fact that commercial operators were excluded from utilising FM, and addressed the situation, recommending "each of the three sectors of the Australian broadcasting system have access to FM broadcasting." (Postal and Telecommunications Department, 1976, p.168).

The Green report also recommended the abolition of the ABCB, to be replaced by the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal.
Commercial broadcasters were finally given access to the FM system in 1979, the new Liberal-Country Party Government stating that freedom of expression and enterprise were the underpinning concepts of its involvement in Australian broadcasting, that:

this freedom of expression and enterprise is best served by a diversity of structures and outlets...
the overall broadcasting system must be planned to prevent the interests of any one group, or sector, being, indulged at the expense of others, or the system as a whole."
(in DOC, 1986a, p.3).

The Government summarised the benefits of its approach to FM radio as allowing for a diversity in choice, a wider range of program formats, and from that wider range, the chance for services to specialise. Additional benefits it claimed were increased employment opportunities, and a boost to the electronics manufacturing industry. (DOC, 1986a, p.5). Prominent in the new policy, the discourse of diversity had appeared as being a primary motive. Diversity of choice was to become the dominant policy discourse during the next phase of FM's development, and had significant influence in reconfiguring the perception of localism in Australian broadcasting.

In Perth, where the demands for VHF television channels had not been as heavy as the densely populated Sydney - Wollongong - Newcastle
area the design of the Huxley Committee's frequency assignment was based on, several VHF FM frequencies were available. A commercial FM service commenced operation in 1980.

In 1984, the Minister for Communications officially announced that a project known as "Band II Clearance" was to begin, with the aim of clearing in situ television services from VHF channels 3, 4, and 5. (DOC, 1986a, p.207). Projected timetables were drawn up by the Station Planning Branch of the DOC, stating that the Bunbury television services ABSW5 and BTW3 should be cleared by 1993. (DOC, 1986a, p.216).

However, by late 1994, both services were still operating on the VHF channels. In 1986, the transmitter of commercial station BTW3 reached the end of its useful life, and was scheduled for replacement. It was the opportune juncture to transfer the service to UHF, Golden West Network having gained maximum life out of its existing equipment. However, Golden West Network, the proprietors of BTW3 installed another VHF transmitter after being granted a 10 year stay by the DOC. At the time, Golden West Network were commissioning equipment to become the sole satellite television service provider in Western Australia, servicing the entire state apart from the metropolitan area. Claiming it could not afford the transfer to UHF in capital equipment terms, and lose the viewers in
their terrestrial service area surrounding Bunbury who did not have UHF capable receivers Golden West Network advised the DOC that it could either continue with the satellite service, or transfer to UHF, but not both. When the DOC was faced with a choice between enforcing the band II clearance, or introducing a satellite service provider, they chose the latter. (Hugh James, personal communications 18/10/1994). Golden West Network reaffirmed its position in similar terms in a 1992 submission to the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA), the Authority addressing Band II clearance again in drafting a new Frequency Allotment Plan. (Golden West Network, in ABA, 1994). It is pertinent that Golden West Network were also proprietors of Bunbury’s commercial radio service, 6TZ, and therefore in a position to control demand for frequencies from the incumbent radio service.

In the hierarchy of policy discourses, providing television services again proved more compelling.
Chapter 3. The Policy Path to Geraldton

As detailed in the previous chapter, the policy that led to the Bunbury situation was shaped by the discourses of localism, pleasure, technology, and to a lesser extent, diversity. During the next phase of FM's development however, the discourse of diversity was to dominate the shaping of broadcasting policy. This chapter will chart the influence the desire for diversity had on forming policy that led to the Geraldton situation, and, from this, record a number of paradoxes presented by the ABT licence inquiry.

The path for the full development of the FM broadcasting system was cleared in the late 1970s with new legislation, and early in the 1980s with the Band II clearance project. The Government proceeded to obtain maximum use of the newly available radio channels. The DOC cites Labor Party policy as the pivotal reference in the formation of all broadcasting policy until the late 1980s. Officially stated at the Party's 1984 national conference, the Party declared its National Platform policy to:

require the commercial broadcasting sector to be diverse in programming and control, with high levels of Australian content and good programme quality... [and to] encourage the development of additional new commercial broadcasting services to ensure more diversity of ownership and programme choice.
But policy designed to enhance diversity had emerged prior to the Labor Government's term. The previous Liberal - Country Party Government's Minister introduced legislation to the Parliament in 1981, amending the Broadcasting and Television Act designed to initiate a "Supplementary Licence Plan". Armstrong (1982, p.166) cites the plan as grounded in the desire to maximise diversity in television to regional areas using re-broadcast satellite supplied programmes. The supplementary licence scheme is based on the premise that a licensee, already being in control of the necessary broadcasting infrastructure, would only require a minimal increase in costs to provide two services utilising the same infrastructure. There being no reward in competing against itself for the same portion of the market, the licence holder would broadcast a different program format on the second service.

However, both the regional and metropolitan television services rejected the Bill, and in 1982 it was amended to only apply to introducing commercial FM radio in regional areas. (Armstrong, 1982, pp. 167-169).

Surviving the change of government, the Amendment Bill was proclaimed in 1983, stating that the impetus to initiate the supplementary licence process must come from the incumbent licensee, in contrast to all
other types of licences where, applications must be called for by the Minister, the ABT assuming a facilitory role. (Armstrong, 1982, p.168). In delivering the Amendment Bill to the House of Representatives in 1983, the Minister incorporated another policy device aimed at increasing diversity: new, independent licensees.

**Independents, Supplementary?**

Independent licensees were, the Minister said, "the first and preferred option". (in DOC, 1986a, p.4). The amendment included the ruling that the ABT may refuse the grant of the supplementary licence, if it became clear that the market in question could sustain an independent service. The Tribunal also had to take into account the likely effect of a new service on the incumbent operator in making this determination. (Armstrong, 1982, p.168). The incumbent stations were then placed in a situation where applying for a supplementary licence would alert the Minister to the fact that an independent service may be viable in the area. In light of the Minister's comment that independent services were the preferred option, this placed the incumbent licensees in a precarious market position.

Further complicating the supplementary licence scheme was the
provision that any new FM service should cover the same licence area as the AM service it was supplementing. (DOC, 1986b, p.29). In a typical situation, this provision would require the installation and licencing of translator transmitters, as original service areas were determined on the extended propagation characteristics of AM. Installing translators would add to the capital and legal costs of any intended supplementary service.

The operation of the scheme became complex and unwieldy, requiring much effort on behalf of the incumbent broadcasters to convince the Minister to call for an application causing "considerable delay to the hearing process, with consequent expense and frustration to certain interested parties." (DOC, 1986a, p.17).

Attesting to this, Paul Marx cites evidence gathered from conversations with aspiring regional FM broadcasters, suggesting the "main obstacle encountered by such persons is convincing the Minister and/or his department to invite such applications." (in Armstrong 1981, p.97).

After a rush of applicants when the scheme was implemented in 1983, only two were referred to the ABT by the Minister, with one subsequently asking for deferment until the issue of licence areas had been resolved. (DOC, 1986a, p.17). In early 1986, the Minister told Parliament that "although the supplementary licence scheme was the policy of the
previous Government, had been supported by the industry, and was endorsed by his Government, initial enthusiasm for it had now waned, if not disappeared completely." (in DOC, 1986a, p.17).

The Government's initial enthusiasm for the supplementary licence scheme indicated the extent the diversity of choice discourse had leavened broadcasting policy. In 1983 the ABT declared it as one of the five parameters guiding the introduction of satellite delivered television, other parameters listed analogous to discourses established in the earlier phase of FM's development, viz:

2) To maintain the viability of the broadcasting system.
3) To encourage an Australian look for television and radio by maintenance of an appropriate Australian content level...
4) To provide broadcasting services relevant and responsive to local needs; and
5) To discourage concentration of media ownership and control of stations.

(ABT, 1984, pp. 60-61)

The guidelines received Ministerial endorsement in Parliament later that year, in reference to planning all broadcasting policy. (DOC, 1986b, p.7).

With the emphasis on diversity, the Government still faced the need to implement a planning process to facilitate the expansion of television and radio services to regional areas, to replace the failed
supplementary licence scheme. Added to the guidelines enunciated in their own party policy platform, the Government had to consider the approaching launch of the communications satellite "AUSSAT" and its ability to supply television and radio program material directly to all Australians from a single source. The Minister asked the ABT to recommend a form of regulation suitable for satellite radio and television program distribution, but the Tribunal subsequently declined the request. Announcing their declination, the Tribunal described the structure of Australian commercial television as having a serious imbalance due to the dominance of the Sydney and Melbourne stations' power in making programming decisions. (Armstrong, 1987, p.1122). The Tribunal suggested attention would have to be paid to this situation before any further policy regarding satellite television could be enacted.

The issue of satellite service programming and expansion of television and radio services interlocked with other policy determinants, including the Department of Communications inquiry in to Localism in Australian Broadcasting, (hereafter, the Oswin Report). The Oswin report recommendations included particular reference to the (by then) failed supplementary licence scheme as beneficial in enhancing localism in Australian broadcasting, and further recommended that the satellite should
only be regarded as a means of transporting individual programmes between stations, rather than transporting an entire service to be re-transmitted with no local input. (DOC, 1984, pp. 278-279).

In 1985, faced with the need to clarify the satellite situation, act on the Oswin report, and replace the supplementary licence scheme, the Minister directed the newly formed Forward Development Unit of the Department of Communications to undertake a study of "possible impacts of new technologies upon the commercial radio and television broadcasting system..." (in Armstrong, 1987, p.1122).

As the satellite launch date drew closer, the project's terms of reference were altered to exclude radio. The FDU's decision to defer the radio portion of the study, according to Armstrong, was attributable to pressure mounting from AM services wanting to convert to FM to recover the market share lost to the FM stations licenced in 1979. (1987, p.1122). The resolutions and guidelines FARBand adopted at its 1985 annual convention required that "commercial broadcasters compete with each other on equal terms..." and "an existing commercial AM licensee should be entitled to convert to the FM mode of transmission not later than the establishment of an independent commercial FM service in the same area." (in DOC, 1986a, p.173). The issue of AM/FM conversion placed demands on the FDU
outside the original terms of reference, requiring a separate study for radio, and forcing a recalculation of the completion date.

The FDU also confronted changes in the shape of the social and cultural environment which media operated in. The policy guidelines tendered by the ABT and the Minister in 1984 mark a reconfiguration of policy discourses when compared to those underpinning the introduction of FM radio. Some discourses became obsolete, others maintained their status quo, some evolved.

The Evolution of Policy Discourses.

Continuous technological development in both broadcast and domestic sound reproduction equipment rendered both high quality sound and technical proficiency in broadcasting a fait accompli as policy determinants.

The discourse of nationalism, in encouraging an Australian look or sound had also been a policy determinant in previous documents, particularly in relation to television. Nationalism co-exists in a tripartite relationship with localism, and economic factors. Localism shares many terms and discourses with nationalism, but operating in a smaller geographical area. Both discourses in turn share a factor, economic
concerns, indicated by the reference to sustaining economic viability of the broadcasting system, which remained as a policy determinant. The previously dominant discourse of equity in access to services had however, evolved.

During the early phase of FM's development, in the relatively information and media poor Australian society, equity in access to services of any type, was the predominant policy determinant. Policy was compiled with the desired result being to deliver a service to the largest audience possible, defined in terms of geographical area, rather than population. The introduction of television echoed this attitude, the ABCB planning the development of television in stages, to provide most areas with one commercial channel before the first stages got a second service. (for the television services introduction schedule, see ABCB, 1974, p.98).

The policy determinant of equity of access to a single service evolved into the discourse of equity of access to diverse services, due to the ubiquitousness of electronic media. Competition amongst services, according to Wilson, leads stations to "conceive their audiences in demographic rather than geographic terms..." (in DOC, 1986c, p.126). Diversity of services added another dimension to localism as it applied to radio, diversity leading to an audience subject becoming part of an
ideological community, defined not in terms of geophysical position, but their choice of service.

The FDU's Conflict.

The FDU's report "Future Directions for Commercial Radio Interim Report" faced forming a plan for the introduction of alternative radio services in regional areas despite the apparently conflicting policy guidelines laid out by the ABT and the Minister in 1984. Particularly in tension was the desire to maintain the viability of existing broadcasters, but introduce the first and preferred option, new, independent services. The question of viability alone drew much attention; FARB defining it as being able to generate a profit (in DOC, 1986a, p.173), but the DOC drawing its definition from a New South Wales Supreme Court decision stating it in terms of "the ability to survive as a commercial undertaking" (1986a, p.14). FARB argued that existing AM services would be disadvantaged in the market place if independent FM services were to open in competition due to FM's superior sound quality, couching their argument in terms of the audience's pleasure. (in DOC, 1986a, p.120). Experiences in metropolitan markets revealed that the introduction of an FM service into the radio advertising market attracted more revenue to the market in totality, "but
were diverting revenue from the AM stations." (DOC, 1986a, p.72). In order for radio stations in each market to remain viable, FARB argued, "competition between commercial licensees should be on equal terms, and that equality should be achieved by pitting AM against AM, or FM against FM." (in DOC, 1986a, p.120).

However, the DOC also reported evidence supplied by the 7 existing FM licensees, stating the reason for their success was programming, rather than transmission format. The issue of AM/FM conversion needed to be resolved prior to the implementation of FM into regional areas, to enable frequency allocations, and the future structure of the commercial radio industry to be determined.

The FDU ultimately tested three options for dealing with the issue of AM/FM conversion, viz:

Option 1: Allow all commercial stations to convert
Option 2: Allow regional stations in competition with FM stations to convert.
Option 2: Allow no conversion.
(DOC, 1986a, p.137)

Eventually, the interim report could not conclude that any one system for expanding regional commercial radio services bore particular merit in terms of the policy objectives set down by the Government in 1984.
The DOC stated "It is of particular importance to broadcasters that the Government addresses its policy priorities. If its general attitude is to allow a free market, then it should review its 1984 statement of major broadcasting policy objectives..." (1986a, p.140). The competing discourses of diversity of service ownership, and existing service viability, were fundamentally incompatible, the FDU noting the difficulty in applying both discourses under the 1984 policy parameters.

The Final FDU report, published seven months later (Future Directions for Commercial Radio: Report) offered three approaches to plan for the expansion of regional radio, largely a reconfiguration of previous approaches. Firstly, a) (Two - for - one.) allowing existing licensees to provide an extra service, b) (Tribunal Inquiry) offering independent licensees the right to have their claim heard by the ABT, with the incumbent service prohibited from applying, and c) (Market Groups), a combination of the first two approaches. The DOC stated the combined approach making it possible to fulfil the Government's policy determinants; maintaining industry viability, and increasing diversity. Despite the DOC's earlier comments in the Interim Report, the Government did not adjust its policy determinants.

The Market Groups approach required the Minister to make prima
facie judgements as to which markets would, or would not support an independent licensee. The DOC suggested a structure of four groups would be effective, markets where the Minister was certain that an independent service would be viable (Group A), those where the Minister had doubts (Group B), those where it was certain a new independent service was not viable (Group C), and those of a special nature because of their size (Group D) (1986b, p.23). Legislation would be put in place to expedite the licencing process, taking into account the particular considerations of each market group, including a clearer application and hearing process for supplementary licences.

The FDU also addressed a number of adjacent issues, inter alia, the effects of new FM services on diversity of programmes. Particularly relevant to the Government's policy objectives was the research conducted regarding whether supplementary services would provide the most program choice, or the "first and preferred option" of independent licensees would achieve this.

The FDU referred to the ABT's Satellite Program Services (SPS) report, which addresses the question also. The SPS report discussed Steiner's 1952 theory that:

a new station entering a market will provide the same
type of programs as existing stations if its share of the existing market will be greater than the expected share for a different type of program.

(ABT, 1984, p.105)

Steiner also provided an economic model suggesting that in a market, an expected 80% share of the market for one type of programming, and a 20% share for another type, would lead to a market structure where five separate services would have to operate before one of them programmed the format that was to attract the 20% market share. The result of this theory, Steiner proposed is "that a discriminating monopolist controlling all stations would be providing a socially more beneficial program pattern." (in ABT, 1984, p.105)

The FDU cited evidence by FARB and incumbent AM broadcasters who argued for supplementary licences to be issued in preference to independent licences on the same premise. (DOC, 1986, pp. 61-71). FAIR, a body committed to the interests of aspiring independent FM broadcasters commissioned research of the topic, which revealed further evidence supporting the case for supplementary licences, being:

in order to attract a satisfactory share of revenue any commercial radio station in markets under a 100 000 population must achieve a competitive market share of the primary consumer group: 25 - 39s.
It is essential, therefore, that any applicant doesn't commit itself to a programming ghetto - e.g. 10-24
"teen hits". 
(in DOC, 1986b, p.70)

The FDU commented there "would be justifiable criticism if expenditure of effort and resources were in the end to lead to 'me too-ism'." (DOC, 1986b, p.83). Acknowledging the evidence that in smaller markets two independent services would follow a similar program format, the FDU suggested various policy devices, such as categorising licences by program format, to ensure the desired diversity of programming ensured, ultimately stating "it may be necessary to review the means by which program diversity can be maximised." (DOC, 1986b, p.85).

The Minister delivered the results of the study to Parliament in February 1987, stating the Government had formally adopted the Market Group. The Minister emphasised, while discussing the report, that the Tribunal's hearing process was still the ultimate administrative body, and his allocations to market groups will be prima facie only. The Tribunal will still make final decisions on independents, or grant the supplementary licences." (Australia, Parliament, House of Representatives, 1987, p.589).

The Minister's discussion framed the planning policy adopted out of the FDU report as providing "FM services to enhance greatly the diversity of choice available to radio listeners in regional Australia."
(Australia, Parliament, House of Representatives, 1987, p.591). This statement reiterated the desire for diversity as the primary discourse surrounding the expansion of FM radio services.

However, the Minister refused to enact a policy that would categorise licences by program format to "ensure diversity of choice if diversity did not follow the introduction of new services.," stating "I would much prefer to leave programming to station managers and their view of the market, and leave regulation to the ABT and its monitoring of adequate and comprehensive services." (Australia, Parliament, House of Representatives, 1987, p.590).

The ABT: Beyond Bond?

The Minister's statement to Parliament came just over a month after an event that changed the shape of Australian media. On the 20th of January 1987, Alan Bond, through a series of subsidiary companies, reached agreement with Kerry Packer, of Consolidated Press Holdings (CPH), to purchase all CPH's electronic media interests for the price of $1.055 billion. Bond paid for the purchase with $800 million borrowed from a bank, $250 million as part of a share deal with CPH, and $5 million from within Bond's company. A subsequent share float enabled Bond to redeem the bank $400 million. (ABT, 1991, appendix B).
This deal gave Bond the controlling interest in five television stations, and nine radio stations, one of which was Geraldton's 6GE. At the time of the purchase, Bond already owned radio stations 6KA Karratha, and 6NW Port Headland, as well as one other in Darwin. (ABT, 1991, Appendix B)

Later that year, pursuant to the guidelines recommended by the FDU, the Minister for Transport and Communications made a prima facie judgement regarding the expansion plans of FM radio in the Geraldton market area. In judging the Geraldton area to be a Group B market, he expressed doubt as to whether or not the market would sustain a second, independent service. In February 1988, the Minister officially invited applications for the second commercial radio licence in the market. By the due date of the 6th of May that year, three aspiring companies had submitted applications, Stereo 98 Pty. Ltd., Batavia Coast Broadcasters Pty. Ltd., and Geraldton FM Pty. Ltd.. The Minister also called for a supplementary licence application, pursuant to his prima facie judgement regarding the market conditions. (ABT, 1990a, Appendix C).

The Minister then referred both sets of applications to the ABT to conduct public inquiries in May, 1988. (ABT, 1990a, Appendix C). The Tribunal Member conducting the inquiry, Kim Wilson made the decision to
join the supplementary licence inquiry and the independent licence inquiry
together. The hearing would initially determine the viability of an
independent service in the Geraldton market. Subsequent examinations of
the applicants would be determined on that decision.

A preliminary hearing was conducted in September 1988, and a
date for the full hearing, 13th March 1989, settled on. In October, the
Tribunal changed the member conducting the inquiry, Wilson having a
prior, and growing commitment to the Tribunal’s investigations of Bond
Media, owner of 6GE.

Bond’s electronic media interests, and Bond’s fitness and propriety
as a media owner were under investigation by the ABT as a result of a
series of events, dating back to 1986. When Bond bought Brisbane television
station QTQ9 in 1986, he inherited a defamation writ against the station,
lodged by Queensland premier, Sir Joh Bjelke - Petersen. Bond settled out
of court, but in an promotional segment for a current affairs show on his
own Channel 9 network broadcast in January 1988, he made comments
which raised doubts regarding the propriety of his motives for the
settlement. An inquiry into the effects the comments bore on Bond’s
suitability as a media proprietor began in May 1988. In late May, Bond
moved to halt the inquiry, questioning the inquiry powers of the Tribunal
in the Federal Court. In August the Full Federal Court heard an appeal to the earlier decision lodged by the Tribunal which was subsequently upheld. The Tribunal announced the hearing would resume in October of that year.

Also in August 1988, a second set of issues were added to the Inquiry. It had come to the Tribunal's attention that during a licence renewal inquiry for Bond's radio stations 6KA and 6NW in 1987, tapes of local news broadcasts supplied to the renewal inquiry were not actually tapes of the news bulletins broadcast. This raised the issue of the company's candour in dealing with the Tribunal. (ABT, 1990b, p.94).

These events complicated the hearing process for the Geraldton inquiry, as sections 83b (1), 83b (4), and 83b (4)a (i) of the Broadcasting and Television Act combine to state that "The Tribunal shall refuse to grant a supplementary radio licence... if the Tribunal is not satisfied that a person...is a fit and proper person to hold the licence..." (in ABT, 1990b, p.83).

The ongoing inquiry and litigation process surrounding Bond's media companies prompted speculation whether section 83b (4)a (i) would be enacted in regards to 6GE and its owners. The Bond inquiry was not resolved by the start of the Geraldton inquiry in March 1989.

Battle for Geraldton.
During the hearing, the Tribunal in explaining the differing concepts of "the market's commercial viability" and the applicants' "financial capability", announced an establishment fee of $264,442 would be charged, in order to recompense the community for the privilege of having exclusive rights to a public commodity. (ABT, 1990a, pp. 1-7). In making its decision whether an independent or supplementary licence would be issued, the tribunal took into account the previous strong trading figures of the incumbent station, 6GE, which had recorded continuing profits at a time when the industry was experiencing an average loss. (ABT, 1990a, pp. 8-12). Examining Geraldton's economic environment, using economic models based on projection figures supplied by applicants and 6GE, the ABT determined that the city could support an independent service. Great Northern Broadcasters (6GE) were refused their request for a supplementary licence. (ABT, 1990a, p.25)

The ABT did not disclose the specific reasons for refusing the supplementary licence request. However, it did note that in terms of section 83B(4) of the Act, which dealt with the fitness, propriety, and competency of a licensee, nothing in the application lodged by Great Northern Broadcasters "...gave rise to any concern on the Tribunal's part..." (ABT, 1990a, p.25). In view of the ongoing litigation between Bond and
themselves, it is a significant paradox that the Tribunal did not specify that any issue beyond the application had no bearing on the decision. Later in 1990, the Tribunal refused a similar application for a supplementary radio licence in Albany, on the grounds that the applicant was a service owned by Bond, stating he was not a fit and proper person to hold a licence. (ABT, 1991, p.147).

However, in recording the Geraldton inquiry, the Tribunal referred to a section of the report, "The merits of an independent v. a supplementary licence". (ABT, 1990a, pp.19-25). In this section, the Tribunal noted there "is no room for the Tribunal to refuse a supplementary licence on the sole ground that an independent would be viable..." (1990a, ABT, p.19). The Tribunal also noted its power to refuse the licence on "public interest" grounds. (ABT, 1990a, p.21). Having established that an independent licence was viable, the ABT recorded the details acted on in making their decision to refuse the supplementary licence.

The ABT (1990a, p.22) cited the common ownership of 6GE and the West Australian was a situation that came under the Tribunal's "Public Interest Discretion". The Tribunal reserved its right to take into consideration that a supplementary licence would further concentrate media ownership in the city. Following this decision, the Tribunal also noted that
an independent service would provide a further independent source of news to the city. (ABT, 1990a, p.22).

Paragraph 3.14 (ABT, 1990a, p.22) stated that increased competition would prompt "a marked improvement in each service resulting from increased competition." Corroborating this statement, the Tribunal cited evidence tendered from local businesses, stating it was difficult to obtain prime advertising time on the existing service, and the quality of advertising on 6GE was poor.

The ABT, in recognising its administrative obligations to refuse a supplementary licence extended beyond determining the financial viability of an independent service, revealed the "Public Interest" as the other primary policy determinant.

As stated by the Minister in 1983, independent, rather than supplementary licences were the preferred means to expand radio services. The ABT's "Public Interest Discretion" decision in Geraldton follows this theme closely, by choosing a method that would diversify media ownership, and consequently the range of news services available. The ABT's comment that increased competition would improve service is significant in that improving service to advertising clients is a policy determinant without precedent. Competition improving service is a popular
assumption in economic theory, but is seldom referred to in terms of Cultural Policy.

The Tribunal reported that all three applicants were suitable to be considered as a licensee, but eventually awarded the licence to Geraldton FM Pty. Ltd. In concluding the decision statement, the Tribunal made a number of favourable comments regarding Geraldton FM's application, particularly the media experience of the company directors, and their financial capability. Paradoxically in light of the desire for diversity, the Tribunal also was in favour of the applicant's association with one of the city's newspapers, where it had made negative comments regarding the same situation with the Bond-owned 6GE and The West Australian. Also paradoxically, in light of the policy determinant requiring local control over programming, the Tribunal termed Geraldton FM's music program lists, purchased second-hand from a Perth station as "a valuable resource" (ABT, 1990a, p.75). Other points the ABT favoured in the application were Geraldton FM's plans to employ a full time journalist, the emphasis placed in the application on Australian music, and the incorporation of community service announcements into the program format. The service started operating in 1990.
Early in 1990, the $250 million Bond had borrowed from CPH via a share deal became due for repayment. It became apparent to CPH that Bond would not be able to repay the capital. After an unsuccessful takeover attempt, CPH attempted to wind up Bond Media Limited, the parent company of Great Northern Broadcasters. Legal complications prevented the move, but CPH formed an agreement with Bond which resulted in CPH resuming control of the electronic media interests it had sold Bond in 1987. This event resulted in the ABT terminating the Bond Inquiry in October 1990, as Bond was not the person effectively in possession of the licences. In August of 1990 however, Batavia Coast Broadcasters, one of the unsuccessful applicants for the independent licence, entered an agreement of sale with the restructured Bond company, and bought 6GE for $900 000. The ABT held a joined licence renewal and share transaction inquiry in September 1990, and approved the renewal and the sale, noting that the new owners of 6GE planned to convert to FM in the near future. The ABT paid little further attention to the FM transfer however, apart from noting that the licensee planned no significant format changes. The transfer took place in 1991, with no inquiry held. As a result, "thousands of people in the areas surrounding Geraldton lost the commercial radio service they enjoyed".

76
for decades." (Western Australia, State IT, 1993, p.18).
Chapter 4. Conclusions

The events that have led to the poor quality service in Geraldton, and the total lack of a FM service in Bunbury result from the failure of the policy process to meet the broadcasting objectives expressed by the Government.

The influence of the desire for localism, pleasure, diversity, and service viability all contributed to the shape of broadcasting policy, which was in turn shaped by party politics, market forces, and the form of legislation. In examining the discursive representation of FM radio in policy documents, policy maker's dominant cultural concerns were determined.

Of interest particularly, are policy's evolutionary periods, the manner in which new discourses to the policy process are introduced, and the subsequent relationship of the new discourses with the existing policy process. The introduction of each new discourse into the policy process marks an epoch in the development of electronic media culture, and its regulation by the state. The policy determinant, or determinants, which assumed the position of prominence in each phase of the development of FM radio, is a useful indicator of the state's perception of electronic media culture at the time.

The evolution of localism constructs interesting paradigms with the evolution of Australia into a communication rich society. Cohen (1993) cites
Innis’ theory regarding the manner in which communication, such as radio, is "treated" in a society as indicative of greater social interaction. Applying this theory to the introduction of FM radio, it becomes clear the Government's aim was to enhance localism. However, as electronic media expanded in Australia, the desire for diversity marked a reconfiguration of the role commercial FM radio played in enhancing localism. As noted by Wilson (in DOC 1986c, p.126), radio services in the 1980s conceived their audiences in demographic terms. The desire for, and introduction of diversity of services in a service area allows for the audience subject to be defined by the construction of the service s/he chooses to listen to. The audience subject then becomes part of an ideological community rather than a geographically defined one.

The combined emphasis on localism and diversity alerts the analyst to the role the Government plays in determining the role of the audience subject. The Government may determine the role of the subject by regulating in favour of either short or long distance communications, (enhancing the discursive myth of localism), and/or regulating in favour of diversity.

Structural matters, such as bias in Government regulation favouring certain discourses, assumes a post - structuralist reading when
the role of pleasure is investigated. The manner in which the desire for
pleasure, in the form of electronic media, affected the policy process is
particularly interesting. The relationship between the pleasure involved in
listening to radio, versus that of watching television, and the manner in
which that pleasure was regulated by the State reveals the role the
population played in determining the Government's decision to introduce
television on the FM radio band.

During the early phase of FM's development, the desire for
pleasure was regulated by Government bodies such as the Joint
Parliamentary Committee, and the Australian Broadcasting Control Board.
These centralised bodies made decisions on the appropriateness of one
media over another on the grounds of maintaining electoral support,
bearing out to a degree Foucault's proposal of the role statistics play in the
governmental process. To maintain electoral support, the Government
decided to affirm the status quo in regards to television's position on the
EMF band.

However the 1980s saw a significant move of the Government's
role in regulating commercial media. The emphasis placed on the market
determining the introduction of new services, expressed in the early days of
the supplementary licence plan, moved the Government from regulating
commercial media as a trustee of a public commodity to a facilitator of a market mechanism. At a discursive level, these findings echo the result of Hawke's 1993 study. However, it can be determined that the market mechanism form of regulation was not the best method to achieve the Government's policy outcomes. This is demonstrated by the Government's decision to act contrary to the FDU's recommendations regarding regulating for licences classified by program format to ensure diversity. The strict market discourse advocated by the Minister in Parliament has left the Geraldton market in a poor position culturally, and in an equally poor position financially.

However, the Geraldton situation was complicated by the tension between the two competing discourses. In assessing the fitness of Alan Bond as a media owner, the Tribunal was acting very much in the role of trustee. Had the Tribunal found the market in Geraldton to be incapable of supporting an independent service, the situation would have arisen where expansion of the commercial radio service to the area in any form would have been difficult, while the Bond Inquiry played out.

This study highlights the numerous aspects considered in analysing cultural policy. In identifying some of the determinants which affected the policy surrounding the introduction and expansion of FM radio,
a platform for further Cultural Studies based analysis may be constructed. Further analysis arising from this study might include the investigation of possible legislative methods of classifying program format, altering the role of market determinants in broadcasting policy, or suggesting a rationale for removing the political process from cultural policy making.

Above all, the introduction and expansion of the new technology of FM broadcasting reveals a distinct set of paradigms in the relationship between new technology and policy. It is appropriate to consider these paradigms in relation to the introduction of other "new" communication technologies. Intervention in policy events cognate to the Geraldton and Bunbury situations may be expedited by drawing on records of previous similar events.
REFERENCE LIST


Australian Broadcasting Tribunal. (1990a) *Joined inquiry into the grant of a commercial FM radio licence or a supplementary radio licence to serve Geraldton WA.* (ABT report no. IL/88/78 & 93) Sydney: Author.


Australian Broadcasting Tribunal. (1990c). *Broadcasting in Australia 1989, the second annual review of the industry by the Australian Broadcasting


Western Australia, Department of State Services, State IT (1993). *Broadcasting Priorities For Western Australia, A Submission by the Government of Western Australia to the Australian Broadcasting Authority*. Perth: Author.