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ID no - 1964

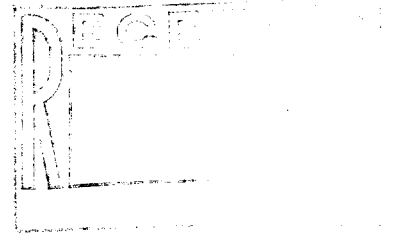
Delwyn Lence

**CHRISTIAN  
CITY CHURCH**  
OXFORD FALLS

8<sup>th</sup> June 1999

◆ PHIL PRINGLE:  
SENIOR MINISTER

Mr H Silver  
First Assistant Commissioner  
Broadcasting Inquiry  
Locked Bag 2  
Collins Street East Post Office  
Melbourne  
VIC 8003



Dear Mr Silver

Thank you for the opportunity of making a submission to this Inquiry. I apologise for the lateness of its arrival. By way of background, Christian City Church (CCC) is located on a 5 hectare site at Oxford Falls on the Northern Beaches of Sydney. It has a congregation in excess of 3000 members, making it one of the biggest single churches in Australia. In addition, there are another 70 churches in the CCC network around the world, including NZ, USA, England, Russia, France, Germany and Scotland.

In addition to normal church facilities, the church at Oxford Falls also contains a primary and high school for about 500 students, a theological college with about 150 full and part-time students, a school of creative arts with about 140 full and part-time students, its own recording label and a recently constructed television studio.

CCC has had an involvement in television since 1985. We are a non-profit organisation that is primarily involved in producing Christian programs for Australian television. We have been on regional and capital city stations almost continually since the late 80's and currently have a half hour weekly program on the TEN network and other regional stations around Australia.

Whilst your Inquiry is far reaching and many of the issues raised in your Issues Paper deserve comment, we are restricting our comments to the issue that we believe has most significance for the future of Australia as we move into the next Millennium – and that is, the role the media has in moulding the values, attitudes and behaviour of our community and particularly of our children. Our submission focuses primarily on the role of television in this regard, as we believe this medium has unfortunately been a major contributor (but not the only contributor) to many of the social problems facing Australia today.

A void currently exists in the moral education of the Australian community. Parents and the education system are increasingly finding it more difficult to fulfil their roles as moral guides for Australian

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families. The media is increasingly filling this role and as a result, various community standards in Australia have fallen significantly in recent times. An opportunity exists for the Australian Government to address this shortcoming by providing a television channel designated for high quality family television – a family television channel. The Australian Government has a responsibility to those members of the Australian community who wish to regain their roles as moral guardians, to provide a high quality family style viewing choice to counter balance that being offered on other channels.

We believe a reinforcement on television of traditional family values will in the long term lead to a better quality community and an improvement in the many social problems facing Australia today.

The key point of our submission is CHOICE! We believe there is a significant proportion of the community who are not happy with the quality of television provided by the current free-to-air stations. They are not able to allow their children to turn on the television and have confidence that they are watching programs consistent with the values and attitudes they and their teachers are trying to communicate to their children. But given the powerful role that television plays in our everyday lives, where else do they turn? At the moment, they have no real choice.

The attached document provides additional comments on this issues. I look forward to reading the Inquiry's draft report which I understand will be available in September/October 1999.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity of making this submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Payne", with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

John Payne  
General Manager - Business

## THE CASE FOR A "FAMILY" TELEVISION CHANNEL

### **(A) THE NEED**

- ❖ The moral status of Australian society is under threat
- ❖ This is reflected:
  - in the increasing divorce rate
    - the number of divorces have quadrupled over the past 20 years to almost 1,000 per week, the highest level since 1976
  - in the increasing youth suicide rate
    - suicide is the second highest cause of death among 15-24 year olds in Australia
  - in the increasing use of hard drugs
    - over 20,000 Australians die every year through drug misuse and between 30-50,000 are considered frequent regular dependant heroin users
  - the falling status of marriage
    - the rate of marriage is the lowest since 1984
    - 27% of all births are outside marriage
    - 56% of couples married in 1992 had lived together versus 16% in 1975
  - in the increase in stress related diseases
    - a typical Australian family consumes over 100 prescription medications in a year
  - in the apparent weakening of community standards on the institution of marriage and the family; gay and lesbian marriages; children in gay/lesbian marriages; euthanasia; abortion; paedophilia etc.
- ❖ The following basic elements of our traditional values, (bearing in mind that 75% of all Australians still declare an affiliation with a Christian church) are increasingly coming under attack in our society:
  - the importance of the family unit;
  - the sanctity of marriage;
  - the sanctity of life;
  - high ethical standards;
  - integrity;
  - honesty;
  - responsibility;
  - fairness; and
  - respect for others;
- ❖ In the context of our fast moving society with multiple sources of information, parents are finding it increasingly more difficult to fulfil their role as moral guardians of their families.
- ❖ Teachers within our education systems are under the same pressure. Generally speaking, teachers themselves are no longer regarded as highly by the community as in the past. In effect, teachers seem to have forfeited their role in the moral education of our children.
- ❖ The media in all its forms, but particularly television, has to a large extent become the major moral educator of the community.

- ❖ As a generalisation, the morals, ethics, and standards of behaviour as portrayed in the media are inappropriate and of a much lower standard than those of previous generations.
- ❖ Having said this, a significant proportion of the community are desperate to regain control over the moral education of their families but are unable to compete with the power of the media. Their ability to choose good quality “family” free-to-air television programs for viewing throughout the day and night is extremely limited.
- ❖ Part of the solution would be for parents to have access to a free-to-air “family” television channel. Pay television operators have recognised this need to a limited extent, and have provided various forms of “family” style viewing for their subscribers. However, the major proportion of the community currently does not have and may never have such a choice.

## **(B) THE SOLUTION – A “FAMILY” TELEVISION CHANNEL**

- ❖ A free-to-air “family” television channel is not the solution, but certainly can be a large part of the solution.
- ❖ A “family television channel” is one which:
  - offers continuous “moral offence-free” viewing to the majority of Australians;
  - is based on traditional family and Christian values;
  - promotes the importance of the family unit, the sanctity of marriage and the sanctity of life;
  - encourages high ethical standards, integrity, honesty, responsibility, fairness and respect for other members of the community;
  - provides programming for all age groups; and
  - is available continuously on a free-to-air basis to the total community.
- ❖ A “family television channel” would not contain programming which:
  - is anti-family or anti-social;
  - does not uphold traditional and Christian family values;
  - promotes services or products or materials for a “restricted” market or audience;
  - contains inappropriate references to sexuality, suggestive material, violence, offensive language, drug use, alcoholism or other similar material.
- ❖ On the above basis, a “family television channel” will provide members of the community with the ability to choose continuous programming which will support their role as moral guardians and educators of their families. The current free-to-air service does not meet this need.
- ❖ We strongly believe that Government has a responsibility to support the community by providing them with a programming choice.

## **(C) HOW COULD IT WORK?**

- ❖ The above information has been presented to support the philosophical case for a “family television channel”.
- ❖ Questions are often asked about how such a channel would be managed and financed.
- ❖ Based on the level of support in the Christian community for the concept of a “family television channel”, we are confident that, if the Government was prepared to endorse the concept, the Christian community would:
  - support the concept on a cross-denominational basis;
  - facilitate the involvement of other appropriate community groups;

- be able to compile high quality family style programming from a wide variety of sources around the world. The concept will also encourage the production of such programs in Australia;
- put in place an appropriate management structure;
- be able to provide the funding required – say \$1.5 m initial capital plus \$0.5 m annual running costs - on an individual denomination or church basis. The church community already has significant funds invested in television in Australia and is committed to supporting a “family television channel”.