

# QUEENSLAND LEGAL REFORM GROUP

Affiliated with the NSW Legal Reform Group

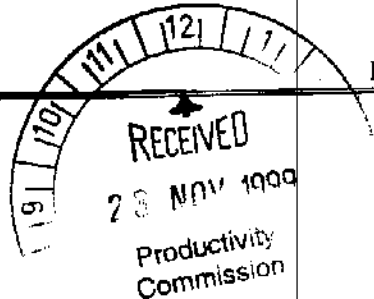
*We are looking and listening*

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23 November, 2009

Broadcasting Inquiry  
Productivity Commission  
Collins Street  
Melbourne 8003



### Submission to Commissioner Richard Snape

- [1] We are a consumer group interested in legal matters and free speech for the community. We have read your draft report and find it very disappointing.
- [2] In fact it is a bit of a sham taken from the public's point of view how you have totally skirted the biggest abuse of free speech which is the print media.
- [3] It is obviously an inquiry to protect and enhance the interests of vested parties and further concentrate the media.
- [4] In Queensland, as in South Australia we are serviced by one monopoly state paper owned by Mr Murdoch. These papers operate as virtually a second tier of government which protects the favored from fair criticisms and frightens the political outcast party into submission on most occasions.
- [5] It makes a mockery of free speech and comment in this state and yet your so-called inquiry ignores this and talks about further relaxing ownership laws. You obviously want us to end up with one TV station, one Radio station and monopolies on the Internet and digital services over time.
- [6] I am enclosing a media released by us recently for your information.

Yours Sincerely

Robert S Bond (director)

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23 November, 2099

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Free speech is becoming a myth in Australia

Australia, the land of the free, where one can think, say, or read uncensored comment is rapidly becoming that illusive dream fading into the twilight of vested interests.

"Cash for comment" proponents, John Laws, Allen Jones, and company have pioneered another method of brainwashing the masses on "struggle street" into holding a benign view of the banks and other sections of big business in return for large loads of loot passed off as sponsorship.

But these little fiddles are chicken feed compared to the potential for calamity on a national scale when the big boys in media decide to act along the same principles.

Of course, dirty money may never change hands but in the rarefied air of mogul business, political favors become the standard currency.

It is entirely appropriate and understandable that the "no" side in the recent referendum in South Australia had to make an approach to the ACCC because their monopoly state paper "The Advertiser" decided it alone was able to judge what the good people of South Australia should read about the referendum as they munched their wheaties over breakfast.

Queensland is another state with a monopoly paper. The uninformed masses are so thankful to be told by this clever paper about the "whisper quiet revolution" the Labor government is magically weaving, which is still totally obscure at the end of the article but it must be right. No one has read anything different, but of course where would they in Queensland.

Only in Queensland can it happen that when a Labor Attorney-General comes under political pressure for espousing anti-consumer policies he can be sure to get a full page testimonial gushing forth about his undoubted virtues from anyone willing to say a good word.

No doubt, comments from the affected public or legal watchdogs like us are still sitting in the in tray of the paper's editor, or more likely have been dispatched to the disinfectant room to have such radical comment cleansed.

Enough of these little domestic spats, as the issue is far broader and all pervading for this nation.

Many people probably just laugh when the radio commentators make a serious comment after the latest fiasco. But many people have the same sentiments when the elite media starts commenting on issues such as politics.

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

A healthy democracy can only operate when political comment is freely available right across the political spectrum. This can only occur when elements of the media have to compete with each other for this comment.

Politicians at present try to con the nation that TV or radio directly competes with the press. Anyone who has used all these media forms will soon learn each one specializes in niche areas.

TV and radio generally want the thirty second grab, national papers rarely cover state issues, and the state provincial papers are always looking for the local angle.

If we are ever to be reassured we possess free and open speech in the broadest sense, none of these media areas should be allowed to come near a monopoly situation.

Over the last thirty years the federal and state governments have failed Australians dismally. The present concentration of the media is dangerous and feeds upon itself.

The Fairfax press is the last bastion of really free comment available to Australians in the written form. The political pressure for it to be swallowed up is a measure of how it is a thorn in the side of the present moguls.

The aim at the end of the day is to smother and control free comment, otherwise why don't these moguls who are so hungry to swallow Fairfax start new papers in Queensland and South Australia and thus allow people in these states a genuine chance of seeing both sides of any political argument.

(630 words)