



Speech by

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Hansard 14 May 2002

TELEVISION COVERAGE, RURAL AREAS

Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT (Charters Towers—ALP) (7.29 p.m.): Those of us who do not live in the major cities or on the coast often feel we are being forgotten by major corporations. We are all aware of the contempt shown to rural customers by the major banks, with bank closures and the resultant loss of jobs impacting heavily on many of our communities. Another area where we know we are forgotten lies in television coverage. Hard as it may be to believe, many of the people in my electorate actually receive commercial news broadcasts from Sydney and Alice Springs, which are hardly relevant or pertinent to them. Worse still, in many areas all we get to view is 'snow'. This is supposed to be the information age. I am afraid a lot of the information is not getting through to people in the rural and remote areas of my electorate.

I have been approached by a number of constituents recently about Seven Central's coverage or, rather, its non-coverage of the lottery draws from the Golden Casket Lottery Corporation. It is my understanding that Seven Central has an agreement with the Golden Casket Lottery Corporation to show these telecasts. The non-coverage of the draws has been blamed on programming restraints, but it smacks of little more than bloody-minded commercialism. Many people within my electorate look forward to the live telecast of the lottery draw, and when it is not forthcoming they feel marginalised and disadvantaged in comparison to those who live in the cities or cling to the coastal fringe. I am sure Seven Central does not wish to alienate its rural viewers. With that in mind, I have written to its management, urging a rethink of its programming priorities. I feel sure Seven Central would like to be identified as a good corporate citizen. I am sure it recognises the kudos which would be gained by a return to showing these telecasts as a matter of course.

We who live in rural and remote areas realise that we will never have everything our city cousins take for granted. The sheer vastness of our state and the tyranny of distance will always be a challenge. However, in this new millennium, with the enormous advances in technology in recent times, I do not believe there is any excuse for us not to have a quality television service. The people of my electorate have had enough excuses from the federal government and big business. We demand the respect we deserve and we demand the service we deserve.