Draft LAP Variation - Charleville
Australian Broadcasting Authority
PO Box 34
BELCONNEN, ACT, 2616

4 July 2005

Dear Sir,

I wish to thank the Board in calling for public and industry response to the proposal of having the town of Mitchell, Queensland included in the Charleville LAP.

Radio 4VL would certainly like to provide a service to the people of Mitchell on a shared town basis with 4ZR.

We do not believe that the community of interest within the town is aligned solely to the west of Mitchell any more than we believe it is aligned exclusively with the east, and, therefore we feel a shared town basis would best meet the town’s needs.

The town of Tambo is shared between 4VL and 4LG and we recognise that people there have interests stretching both to the north and the south. As a result we work closely with 4LG to ensure the interests of the townspeople are met.

A quick inspection of the present Charleville LAP indicates that we are not asking for inclusion of a community well outside our licence area. The town, in fact, appears to have been clearly and deliberately removed from the Charleville licence area, which all but surrounds it.

The action that resulted in this planning anomaly was either extremely bad luck for the licensees of 4VL at the time the LAP was determined or the result of intense lobbying by more sophisticated forces who had the ear of those drawing the boundaries.

Regardless, the people of Mitchell appear to be the ones who have suffered from the present designation.

If access to Charleville radio services was considered relevant enough for the people living immediately outside the town of Mitchell to be included in the Charleville LAP,
why was it not considered relevant for the people living only metres away inside the town, which is surrounded by the licence area.

Afterall, these people all principally share the same set of daily interests and a common heritage.

It is appreciated, of course, that the licence area boundaries have to be defined at some point, but it is transparently obvious that this particular town was deliberately excluded from the Charleville LAP for some unknown reason.

I believe the time is long overdue to correct this anomaly without penalising 4ZR by reducing the population of its service area.

Recognising the cultural, historical, political, agricultural, industrial, family and sporting ties of many of the people of Mitchell with those living and working in south west Queensland, 4VL has been including regular information from Mitchell in its local news bulletins for over five years. These bulletins are updated and broadcast five times a day. The Mayor and representatives of the Booranga Shire Council regularly take part in live interview programs on the station to get information across to their residents.

In many ways, because of 4VL’s 24 hour a day local origination in south west Queensland, many people in Mitchell tell us they regard 4VL as their local station and certainly as their source of up to date information.

Unfortunately, we often receive comments from the Booranga Shire Council, Mitchell business people and local residents that they have trouble receiving the 4VL service, which is transmitted on AM from Charleville. This is understandable as it is approximately 150km to the west, and, modern day electrical and mechanical noise in Mitchell make reception very difficult.

In the past, attempts to have a 4VL repeater authorised for the town have not been successful.

The inclusion of Mitchell as a shared town in the Charleville LAP would in no way create an unfair advantage for 4VL at the expense of another station.

Our station covers the second largest licence area in Australia, yet, it has the second smallest population base – 9100 people according to the latest census.

Compare this with the two neighbouring service areas, Longreach and Roma, each with approximately 14500 people, and, these are the third and fourth smallest radio markets in the country.

The inclusion of Mitchell as a shared town will take 4VL to slightly over 10-thousand people without reducing the population of the Roma LAP. I understand that viability is
no longer a criterion on which the ABA makes these decisions, and, I appreciate that as long as it applies fairly to all sides of this issue.

I believe that the inclusion of Mitchell in the Charleville LAP will provide Mitchell residents with timely information that is important to many of them on a daily basis and is not currently available from the Roma radio services, nor would you expect it to be, as information on happenings in Mitchell and the south west would not be of any real interest to the general audience within the Roma service area.

By sharing the town between the two LAPs, Mitchell residents and businesspeople, will not be deprived of the current services they receive from Roma but will be able to expand their access to western areas, which are particularly relevant to many of them.

Yours sincerely

BRAD SMART
Managing Director