



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Corio Electorate: Community Television,  
St Thomas Aquinas Primary School**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 4 December 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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<b>Speaker</b>	Marles, Richard, MP	<b>Question No.</b>	

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**Mr MARLES** (Corio) (10:28): Community television is an integral part of Geelong's local news and media services. It has a unique place in our region and is an irreplaceable part of a strong television industry that values diversity; but this is something that the Abbott government has clearly failed to understand. Minister Turnbull has moved to force Victoria's Channel 31 off the air, declaring that they will not have their apparatus licences renewed beyond next year.

Since this announcement, the minister has continually defended his decision by citing weak ratings. While ratings may be an important consideration, community television is about so much more than what can be measured with statistics; it is about delivering high-quality local content that supports participation and media diversity and provides invaluable opportunities for students and volunteers aspiring to a future in the industry.

The work of Channel 31 within the Geelong community demonstrates precisely this. Within any given week, the station delivers two news reports through the *News Geelong* program, solely dedicated to local news, and produces Pulse TV in collaboration with Pulse radio, which is devoted to local issues and events, and two sports reports that focus specifically on our local football and netball. Additionally, the channel provides an important avenue for the promotion of local events and festivals. These are the only Geelong dedicated TV news services. The decision of Minister Turnbull to move community television off free-to-air services threatens the future of these invaluable programs.

The importance of community broadcasters has never been determined purely on the basis of raw figures. In fact, the legislated purpose of community television, established under the Broadcasting Services Act, requires community stations to demonstrate strong community engagement, open access and viable financial records. Channel 31 clearly fulfils its responsibilities to maintain strong community engagement; being a free to air TV station is integral to its open access; and it has an annual turnover of around \$2.5 million, generated predominantly from the sale of sponsorship announcements. Despite this the minister is still intent on destroying our Channel 31. The operations manager of Channel 31, Mathew Field, is disappointed that:

... at a time when there are six shopping channels broadcasting on free to air TV, the people of Geelong are about to lose their community television station as a result of this decision.

I sincerely urge Minister Turnbull to acknowledge the true ramifications of turning his back on community television and reconsider this unfair and misinformed decision.

In the time I have left, on another matter I would just like to commend St Thomas Aquinas Primary School in Norlane, which services one of the lowest SES communities in the state of Victoria. I would like to acknowledge Principal Michael Manganelli and Father Ray Zammit, the parish priest, and particularly the fete they held on 14 November, which was an unmitigated success. They do our community an enormous service.