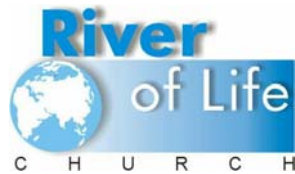


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Tessa Jowell MP
Media Ownership Consultation Responses
Broadcasting Policy Division
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
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SW1Y 5DH

24th January 2002

Dear Ms Jowell

Media Ownership Consultative Response

I'd like to respond to the consultative document re. media ownership rules, and in particular paragraph 6.1.6 which quotes from the White Paper and 6.1.8 which invites views on whether government should remove all restrictions on religious organisations holding national broadcasting licences and national multiplex licences.

It is my view, the view of the Church which I pastor and the view of a great many Christians I have met in the UK, that the present rules preventing Christians from owning national terrestrial broadcasting stations is simply an offensive discrimination against Christians and, for that matter, all faiths prohibited from holding licences at present. Very few countries maintain such inhibiting restrictions and even some of those previously thought of as repressive do not hold such draconian powers over religious broadcasting.

How can it be that this nation, which has been instrumental in promoting Christianity and Judeo-Christian values around the world, should maintain these ill-founded rules which act against responsible people who wish to present wholesome programming to members of the public who wish to tune in? In my experience, Christian organisations who are currently working in the field of broadcasting in the UK are producing quality material which is balanced and wholesome; very desirable and palatable to our society. I see no reason why British citizens should be prevented from the opportunity to receive these broadcasts on car radios and ordinary receiving apparatus. It is good that current rules allow this type of broadcasting on satellite and internet, but we feel the freedom should be extended to include terrestrial technology too.

Please do bear in mind the huge groundswell of public opinion which supports the freedom of Christians to own and operate broadcasting stations in the UK.

Yours faithfully

MARK SMITH (Pastor of the River of Life Church, Dumfries)