

# The first regional radio station in Australia was established in Newcastle in 1930.

A record library assistant and announcer-in-training, with Sydney radio stations 2BL and 2FC, **Adrian Jose** was given the job of setting up a radio station in Newcastle in late 1930. He had only been with the Australian Broadcasting Company since September.

At 22 he was probably one of the youngest people to have ever started a radio station. As we know it today—1233 ABC Newcastle—it has turned out to be, one of Australia's most important radio stations.

You would think he would never have imagined that within 80 odd years it would service a population of over 500,000 people in the Hunter catchment and beyond.

Two months later he was appointed the regional officer and steered the station to its first broadcast on 19th December 1930.

This was the start of a long career in broadcasting, firstly with the ABC and then the ABCB (Australian Broadcasting Control Board, 1949-1971).

<http://www.nla.gov.au/ms/findaids/7702.html>

The opening broadcast started with the **Newcastle Symphony Orchestra**, under the baton of conductor J. Stanley Hurn, playing the *William Tell Overture*.

And the first words were spoken by James E. Fenton, Minister for Trade and Customs in the Scullin Labour Government. He was Acting Prime Minister while Scullin was overseas at the Imperial Conference in London from August 1930 to January 1931.

"This new station was the first to be erected outside the capital cities, as portion of the construction program of the National Broadcasting Service," James Fenton said.

It is worth noting that in 1931 Fenton along with Lyons and three other Labour members crossed the floor to vote with the United Australia Party (UAP). They went on to win the December 1931 elections, with Lyons as Prime Minister.

Fenton was appointed Postmaster-General and introduced legislation setting up the Australian Broadcasting Commission—forerunner to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Fenton\\_\(Australian\\_politician\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Fenton_(Australian_politician))

A large audience attended the Newcastle Town Hall to listen to the first broadcast and the Acting Prime Minister, James. Fenton, spoke to the Newcastle audience from a Melbourne studio.



"There is quite a large population within range of 2NC and it is evident that the establishment of the local station will benefit listeners. Listeners may rest assured that everything possible will be done to give satisfactory programmes."

The first broadcast came out of the new studios above a billiard room behind the Old Strand Theatre in Market Square, off Hunter Street Mall.

A transmitter at Beresfield was set up and connected the Hunter Street studio by landline.

The current transmitter is still located at Beresfield.

Despite the significance of Australia's first relay station being in Newcastle, there was no obligation under the national broadcasting scheme for the Australian Broadcasting Company to supply more than one hour a week of local Newcastle content. Local content that was provided consisted of Newcastle news, market reports, church services, and other important Newcastle activities.

2NC at this time was a part of the Australian Broadcasting Company but it was not until June 1st 1932 that the ABC, as we know it now, opened the airwaves.

At first, 2NC remained largely a relay station for the new national broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Commission. The first broadcast for the new ABC reached every state in the federation and was opened by Conrad Charlton and the then Prime Minister Joseph Lyons.

Opening day programs included the first Children's Session with Bobby Bluegum, the first sports program - "Racing Notes" with W.A. Ferry calling the Randwick races, British Wireless News received by cable from London, weather, stock exchange and shipping news.

There was also a talk on goldfish and their care, a slot called "Morning Devotions", music, the ABC Women's Association session, which included topics such as commonsense housekeeping and needlecraft.

In the first few years, 2NC would broadcast intermittently in the morning and would often shut down for intervals during the day.

At the time, there was no concept of continuous broadcasting.

NOTE: Adrian Jose went on to hold senior management positions within the ABC, before taking up a position with the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB) in 1949.

References and Extracts:

- ♦ **History of the ABC in Newcastle**, by Brooke Bannister, 1 March 2011. *Thankyou to the staff at the Local Studies and Family History department of the Newcastle Regional Library for their help and assistance.*  
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2008/03/07/2183117.htm>
- ♦ **Papers of Adrian Jose**, see earlier web link, and
- ♦ **James Fenton, Australian Politician**, see web link
- ♦ <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=EP19301231.2.27.5>

# Strike up the 'band', the ABC is going bush



19th December 1930

The opening broadcast at the launch of radio 2NC, featured the Newcastle Symphony Orchestra, conducted by J. Stanley Hurn, playing the *William Tell Overture*.

<http://collections.ncc.nsw.gov.au/keemu/pages/nrm/Display.php?irn=55295&QueryPage=%2Fkeemu%2Fpages%2Fnrm%2Fnllibrary%2FQuery.php>

## The man on the ground who cranked up the wireless ...

**Adrian Jose: 1908—1991**

<http://www.nla.gov.au/ms/findaids/7702.html>

- 1921-25 Educated Sydney Church of England Grammar School
- 1926 Editorial assistant for *The Australian Encyclopaedia*
- 1926-30 Clerk in Intelligence and Publicity Branch, Australian High Commission, London
- 1930 Joined Australian Broadcasting Company in September as record library assistant and announcer-in-training, 2BL and 2FC, Newcastle
- 1930 Tasked with the job of setting up Australia's first regional radio station in Newcastle. Appointed regional officer at 2NC Newcastle in December**
- 1931-34 Senior announcer, 4QG Brisbane
- 1934-41 Queensland Programming Director, Australian Broadcasting Commission
- 1941 Acting Programme Controller, New South Wales
- 1942 Acting Federal Programme Executive, Sydney
- 1944-46 Acting Queensland Manager, Australian Broadcasting Commission
- 1946-49 Federal Programming Coordinator, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Melbourne
- 1949-71 Director, Programme Services Division, Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Sydney
- 1974-78 Council Member Television Society of Australia.