Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Submission to the

Senate Select Committee Inquiry on the

Future of Public Interest Journalism

July 2017

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Introduction

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) submits this paper for consideration to the Senate Select Committee Inquiry on the Future of Public Interest Journalism. This submission considers the terms of reference of the Inquiry and sets out for the Committee the integral role played by the ABC in Australia's media ecology and in the provision of public interest journalism.

The ABC requests that the Committee, in its consideration of this submission, with particular regard to section (d) of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, pay regard of the ABC's submissions to recent parliamentary inquiries that have inquired into similar issues:

- The Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015[1]
- Broadcasting, online content and live production to rural and regional Australia 2014[2]
- The Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Local Content) Bill 2014[3]
- The ABC's Commitment to Reflecting and Representing Regional Diversity 2013[4]

[1] http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/ABC_Rural_Regional_Bill

[2] http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Communications/BroadcastingandProduction

[3] http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/ABC_Local_Content_Bill

[4] http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications//Completed%20inquiries/2010-13/abcproduction/report/index

- The Broadcasting Services Amendment (Material of Local Significance) Bill 2013[5]
- Recent ABC Programming Decisions (2011)[6].

Public Interest Journalism

The ABC notes that the Terms of Reference do not define "public interest journalism". For the purposes of this inquiry, the ABC considers it important to clarify that which it is sought to protect– public interest journalism. In a broad sense, journalism exercised by an independent media is regarded as a vital public asset. In 1975, Lord Simon of the High Court acknowledged the importance of an independent media to the democratic process:

> "*People cannot adequately influence the decisions which affect their lives unless they can be adequately informed on facts and arguments relevant to the decisions. Much of such fact-finding and argumentation necessarily has to be conducted vicariously, the public press being a principal instrument."*[7]

Underpinning this notion is a belief in diversity– that the "public press" is not a monolithic entity but a vibrant sector comprising a variety of producers and production models. Moreover, that healthy competition between those elements provides the fact-finding and analysis necessary to deliver a well-informed population and a dynamic democracy.

Implicit in the term "public interest journalism" is a belief that not all journalism is designed to provide a community benefit. Certainly, it is commonly understood that what is in the public interest does not always correlate with that in which the public is interested. Defining the public interest can be challenging, much less determining the best means of its delivery. Notwithstanding this, it is generally recognised that good or serious journalism has a strong public ethos, aiming to inform the community, to hold decision-makers and institutions to account and to provide a forum for reasoned debate. Public interest journalism is inextricably linked to trust. It only works if the community it serves has trust in the information that is being delivered and those delivering it.

"Public interest journalism" is regularly used synonymously with the terms "quality journalism", "investigative journalism" and "accountability journalism". In his submission to the 2011 Independent Inquiry into the Media and Media Regulation, online publisher Eric Beecher, described quality journalism as:

> "*…journalism that reports and analyses the institutions of democracy – governments, parliaments, the public service, courts, police and army, academia, business, science, education, media and other key institutions. It is the journalism that fertilises society with ideas, commentary and analysis. And it is journalism that needs to be conducted responsibly because it operates under a tacit public trust."*[8]

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[5] http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Completed_inquiries/2010-13/bsamendment2013/index

[6] http://about.abc.net.au/reports-publications/senate-references-committee-on-environment-and-communications-inquiry-into-recent-abc-programming-decisions-september-2011/

[7] *Attorney-General v Times Newspapers Ltd* (1974) AC 273, 315

[8] Eric Beecher, Submission to the Independent Media Inquiry, 2011, pp 1-2

One of the triggers for this inquiry is the impact of technological change on the media sector and a resultant concern that this may be threatening the ability of the "public press" to meet its public ethos. Technological change has indeed reduced the barriers of entry for producers of news, empowered audiences and erased geographic borders. It has tested long-standing business models and the regulatory frameworks in which they operate. It has also raised concerns about the negative impact on the public interest.

This inquiry reflects this concern: that the democratisation of media is undermining a vibrant democracy. The perceived threat is a dual one. The collapse of long-established media business models has reduced the capacity of the sector to invest in quality journalism, weakening the ability of the "public press" to fulfil its Fourth Estate function. Furthermore, that the proliferation of new online players, many of whom have no interest in a public ethos, can be seen to be over-running those intent upon providing a public good and eroding trust. There is also the counter view that the internet has been a benefit both to the media sector and to democracy. "It has made what is on the public record far more readily available to anyone seeking information." [9]

The ABC's long-established position is that the community benefits from having a diverse and vibrant media sector and that public broadcasting is an important element in delivering that diversity and vibrancy. The Corporation recognises that the delivery of public interest journalism is an integral part of its remit. Furthermore, it recognises that the high level of support and trust it receives from Australians reflects the community's understanding of this remit and their belief that the ABC adheres to it and meets its obligations.

Public broadcasting and the public interest

The Corporation's commitment to the provision of a high-quality news and information service for all Australians is mandated in legislation and supported by the Corporation's editorial policies and guidelines.

The *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act (1983)* (the ABC Act), sets out that the ABC must "develop and maintain an independent service for the broadcasting of news and information by the Corporation"[10] and states that the ABC Board is obliged to "ensure that the gathering and presentation by the Corporation of news and information is accurate and impartial according to the recognised standards of objective journalism".[11]

The preface to the ABC's Editorial Policies, frames public interest journalism as follows:

> *"Quality content and good journalism are integral to Australian civic life. By setting high standards for ourselves and living up to them, we can ensure our work cuts through the contemporary clutter, distinguishes the ABC from the competition and sustains that important public trust."*[12]

[9] Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Media and Media Regulation, Feb 2012, p 306
[10] Section 27(1), *The Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth).
[11] Section 8(1)(c), *The Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth).
[12] *ABC Editorial Policies, 2012*

Independence and accountability have been important facets of the ABC's commitment to public interest journalism from its early origins. In June 1940, Sir Keith Murdoch as the government's then Director-General of Information, briefly took responsibility for the ABC's main evening news bulletin. However, within a few weeks, reporting was returned from government to the ABC, as it had determined that it should maintain an independent report, and as listeners found the government reporting "stale and propagandist".[13]

Throughout the 1960s, the ABC launched key news and current affairs programs that shaped the broadcaster and its relationships with audiences. *Four Corners*, the ground breaking weekly current affairs program that continues to set the national agenda today, commenced broadcasts in August 1961. In the same era, *This Day Tonight* helped to cement the ABC's reputation as the home of news and current affairs in Australia, complemented by the *PM* program on ABC radio. These programs established the benchmark for high quality journalism, and moved news coverage in Australia beyond prosaic reportage to in-depth investigative journalism.

Four Corners is an exemplar of the ABC's contribution to public interest journalism. For over 50 years it has cast light on issues of important public policy and public interest. One early standout program was in September 1961 when *Four Corners* profiled the lives of the Indigenous community living at the Box Ridge Aboriginal Reserve, near Casino, New South Wales. This was the first time that many Australians saw the conditions in which many Indigenous Australians lived, and the program generated significant public interest and debate.[14]

Numerous other *Four Corners* episodes also stand out and can be seen to have spurred debate which lead to changes in state and federal government policy, the initiation of Royal Commissions and, in some instances, lead cultural and political change. These episodes include but are not limited to:

- 'The Agony of Vietnam' (1966) - A report on the history of the war in Vietnam, with an emphasis on Australia's role in the conflict.
- 'The Second Sex' (1969) - A report on gender equality, in particular, the matter of equal pay between men and women.
- 'The Big League' (1983) – A report on management of NSW rugby league that led to the Street Royal Commission, the temporary standing-down of Premier Neville Wran and the imprisonment of chief magistrate Murray Farquhar.
- 'Black Death' (1985) – A report into the deaths of Aboriginal men in custody in Western Australia that helped initiate the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.
- 'The Moonlight State' (1987) – A report of corruption in Queensland that led to the Fitzgerald Inquiry, and eventually the resignation and subsequent criminal trial of Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen.
- 'Bondy's Bounty' (1989) – A report that led to National Companies and Securities Commission inquiry into Bond Corporation.
- 'A Bloody Business (2011) – A report on Australia's live cattle export trade that resulted in an immediate ban on live exports to Indonesia.

[13] Ken Inglis, *This is the ABC* (Black Inc), 1983, pp 82-83
[14] http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2011/08/08/3288584.htm

- ‘Making A Killing’ (2015) – A report on the use of live baiting in greyhound training which initially led to the banning of greyhound racing in NSW and has subsequently led to its banning in the ACT.
- ‘Australia’s Shame’ (2016) – A report into juvenile detention in the Northern Territory that led to the Royal Commission into the protection and detention of children in the Northern Territory.
- ‘Bleed them Dry Until They Die’ (2017)- A report on aged care homes in Australia, undertaken in conjunction with Fairfax.

In addition to *Four Corners* and *PM,* the provision of public interest journalism is evident across a range of current ABC programs, including but not limited to *Background Briefing*, *7.30*, *AM*, *RN Breakfast*, *The World Today*, *Lateline* and *Foreign Correspondent*.

The ABC’s investment in public interest journalism

Quality in-depth journalism requires significant investment in staff, time and robust editorial processes. The public broadcasting model sets up the ABC to work effectively for the public interest.

The ABC invests more in investigative journalism than any other Australian media organisation. The ABC currently employs more than 900 news journalists and presenters, approximately 140 of whom are engaged in delivering investigative journalism as the primary part of their role. The ABC also invests in a paid News Cadetship program, ensuring that the next generation of news journalists are equipped to deliver public interest journalism to Australians.

The depth and breadth of news and current affairs across ABC platforms is well recognised and evidenced by its significant audiences. In 2015-16:

- from 6am to midnight, the primary ABC TV channel broadcast a total of 785 hours of first run Australian news and current affairs content
- 1.1 million people tuned to the 7pm television news bulletin each night
- ABC Radio news and current affairs programs reached, on average, 1.8 million Australians each week
- ABC News and Current Affairs websites reached an average of 4.5 million Australian users each month.

The ABC also delivers the only free-to-air news television channel and a dedicated news radio service.

The ABC also sees value in collaborating with commercial media outlets to enhance investigative journalism in the public interest in Australia and, to this end, has collaborated on a range of investigations. The projects have included:

- In 2015, Fairfax and *Four Corners* partnered on an investigation into 7-Eleven’s work practices, which sparked multiple inquiries
- In 2016, the ABC and Fairfax partnered on an investigation into Comminsure

- Also in 2016, Marian Wilkinson from *Four Corners* worked with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) on a joint investigation of the biggest leak of confidential information in journalism history. This resulted in the *Four Corners* program 'The Panama Papers – Secrets of the Super Rich'
- As noted above, in June 2017, a joint investigation by *Four Corners* and Fairfax into retirement village companies found that residents are being left vulnerable by inadequate legal protections and underfunded consumer affairs bodies.
- A recent collaboration with The New York Times on a Foreign Correspondent story[15]
- A joint investigation with The Guardian to expose Australia's spying on the Indonesian President[16]
- A partnership with John Lyons from The Australian on the Middle East[17].

In March 2017, the ABC also announced it would relaunch a fact checking unit in a joint initiative with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). This service, 'RMIT Fact Check', seeks to determine the accuracy of claims by public figures, advocacy groups and institutions engaged in the public debate. While this endeavour is resource-intensive and time-consuming, the ABC believes that fact checking is essential service in informing the public about complex matters through an independent, non-partisan voice.

The ABC believes that the partnerships outlined above not only allow for the sharing of resources and collaboration on analysis and original research, but help the media better serve the public interest.

Public trust and recognition

The ABC is proud of its commitment to providing quality journalism in Australia and this is borne out in the trust the Australian public holds in the ABC's news and current affairs coverage.

The independent Omnipoll survey found in 2016 that:

- 86 per cent of those surveyed feel that the ABC provides a valuable service to the Australian community
- 49 per cent rate the ABC overall as "Very Valuable"; the highest result since 2009
- 78 per cent of surveyed metropolitan residents and 83 per cent of regional residents believe the ABC does a good job covering news and information in regional areas. This compares with 37 per cent (metropolitan residents) and 54 per cent (regional residents) for commercial TV and Radio.

The 2017 Essential 'Trust in Media' poll also found that ABC TV news and current affairs was the most trusted media source in Australia.[18]

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[15] http://iview.abc.net.au/programs/foreign-correspondent/NC1702H016S00

[16] http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-18/australia-spied-on-indonesian-president,-leaked-documents-reveal/5098860

[17] http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2014/02/10/3939266.htm

[18] http://www.essentialvision.com.au/trust-in-media-12

ABC journalism is also widely recognised across the industry for its high-quality journalism. Over the last year, ABC programs and journalists have been recognised with numerous national industry awards including:

- *Four Corners* and Fairfax won the 2016 Walkley Award for investigative journalism the aforementioned reporting on the Comminsure scandal. This reporting also received the 2016 Walkley Award for Business Journalism
- ABC News journalist Elly Bradfield was named the 2016 Walkley Young Australian Journalist of the Year
- *Foreign Correspondent* received the 2016 Walkley Award for International Journalism for its reporting on the crisis in Yemen
- *7.30* received the 2016 Walkley Award for TV Daily Current Affairs for its reporting on an Anglican Church paedophile ring
- Joanna Woodburn of ABC Regional received the 2016 Kennedy Award for Outstanding Regional Reporting for her stories on lethal asbestos deposits near Orange
- Norman Hermant received the Citi Journalism Awards for Excellence in Broadcast Media for his reporting on the transition to Consumer Directed Care
- ABC Rural Reporter Cassandra Steeth took out the major prize in the 2017 Australian Council of Agricultural Journalists' (ACAJ) Awards for Excellence in Rural Reporting.

In 2017, in recognition of the importance of local news and information to its audiences and the Australian public, the ABC announced that it will commit a further $15 million per annum to the creation and dissemination of regional news and content (see below).

Journalism for diverse audiences

The ABC provides broadcasting and digital media services to the nation.

As identified in the introduction to this submission, over the course of 6 parliamentary inquiries since 2011, the Parliament has been provided with significant evidence of the ABC's commitment to diverse Australian communities, including rural and regional Australia. The ABC commends the contents of its submissions to each these inquiries to the Committee.

The ABC notes that its Charter, enshrined in Section 6 of the ABC Act, requires the ABC to broadcast "programs that contribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of, the Australian community" and in the provision of its broadcasts to the nation, the ABC "must take account of the multicultural character of the Australian community".[19]

Accordingly, in meeting its Charter obligations, the ABC recognises that it must reflect on and report on matters that affect distinct segments of society, whether that be by geography, industry, demographic, culture or ethnicity, and it must invest in journalism that serves Australia's diverse communities.

[19] Section 6(1)(a)(i) and 6(2)(a)(iv), *The Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth)

ABC Commitment to Regional Australia

As set out in the ABC's submission to the inquiry into *The ABC Amendment (Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015*, the ABC is committed to rural and regional Australia and to the one-third of Australians who live outside the capital cities. The Corporation serves these communities through its dedicated Regional Division, with over 400 staff in 48 locations across the nation who are tasked with developing content, services and activities that reflect and contribute to Australia's rural and regional communities. In part, the submission states:

> *The ABC provides more local news and current affairs reporting than any other Australian media outlet. To deliver this level of service, the ABC maintains fully-staffed and equipped local newsrooms in every state and territory capital city…. This allows it to offer unparalleled specialist coverage of local news and information. In an environment in which audiences can access a world of information and develop truly global perspectives, investigating and reporting at a local level becomes more important than ever.*[20]

ABC programs such as *The Country Hour*, *A Big Country*, *Landline, Taste of Landline, Australia All Over* and *Back Roads* are synonymous with Australian rural and regional journalism, and critically, these programs also bring these issues to metropolitan audiences and to national attention.

Each day, the ABC's regional teams deliver important news and information to local audiences on a wide range of issues of interest to regional audiences and those with an interest in regional affairs, including, for example:

- Coverage of dairy industry and milk prices (June 2017)
- Fracking in the Northern Territory (June 2017)
- Coverage of Adani coal mine (May-June 2017)
- Coverage of Cyclone Debbie (March 2017)
- Coverage of the Women on Farms forum in Harrow in Western Victoria (March 2017)
- Coverage of the NSW bushfires (February 2017)
- Coverage of the South Australian floods and power outage (September 2016)
- Coverage of the Tasmanian floods (June 2016)

The ABC also creates local events to support regional communities, such as the annual *Heywire Youth Forum*, that brings together young Australians aged 16- 26 from rural and regional Australia to attend a leadership forum in Canberra and triple j's *One Night Stand*, this year held in Mount Isa, bringing together some 7,000 people for a free, all ages concert and boosting the local economy by up to $3 million[21].

In March 2017, bolstering its already significant commitment to regional Australia, the ABC allocated a further $15 million per annum to recruit up to 80 new content roles in regional Australia, with the focus on creating regional news content and investing heavily in digital

[20] ABC Submission to Senate Inquiry into ABC Amendment (Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015
[21] http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-04-24/one-night-stand-music-festival-in-mount-isa-a-touring-success/8466936

equipment. In May 2017, the ABC also announced that it would live stream an additional seven regional radio stations, bringing the total number to 23. This increased investment in regional services, jobs and programs has all been funded through internal ABC efficiencies.

These examples of regional news and current affairs journalism and the increased investment in regional content underscores the ABC's unwavering commitment to its Charter responsibilities and its belief that public interest journalism is as important to regional Australia as it is to those across the nation.

The ABC considers that its investment in regional Australia is critical given the contraction of commercial media services in regional Australia. Key developments over the past two years include:

- The News Corp purchase of APN News & Media's regional division, adding another 12 daily newspapers and 60 community newspapers to its stable[22] and the resultant announcement in April 2017, that it would reduce its budget by $40 million[23] and a potential loss of 300 jobs through 'back office synergies'[24]
- The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance estimate that more than 500 jobs from Fairfax regional newsrooms have been cut in last 2 years[25]
- The closure of WIN's Mildura and Mackay bureaux in 2015[26]
- Prime Media announced redundancies in Wagga Wagga, Tamworth and Canberra in September 2015[27].

Though the ABC understands the industry pressures and dramatic changes to audience behaviours and advertising trends that have prompted them, the ABC is concerned by these losses. Australia's dual system of public broadcasters and commercial media operating alongside each other has served the community well. A diverse media is important to the health of regional communities.

The contraction of traditional media mastheads and the consequent reduction in investment by traditional media in regional Australia is stark and, over time, will likely have a profound impact on the number, nature and quality of sources from which regional Australians may receive their news and information.

In such a landscape, the importance of a strong, independent public broadcaster is critical to ensure public interest journalism is upheld and that Australians continue to be informed and educated on issue of public importance.

[22] https://mumbrella.com.au/news-corp-apn-arm-finda-newspapers-buy-375307 .
[23] http://www.afr.com/business/media-and-marketing/publishing/more-job-cuts-loom-at-news-corps-australian-papers-20170410-gvht9f .
[24] https://mumbrella.com.au/news-corp-axe-300-jobs-arm-acquisition-suggests-report-394653
[25] Hansard, Public Interest Journalism Inquiry hearings, 17 May 2017
[26] http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/1517_crikey.pdf
[27] https://mumbrella.com.au/prime-media-confirms-editorial-redundancies-319796

ABC Commitment to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities

As noted above, the ABC's Charter obliges the Corporation to reflect Australia's cultural diversity, and to "*take account of the multicultural character of the Australian community"*[28]. To meet this Charter obligation, the ABC recognises that it is incumbent on it to understand the multicultural makeup of the nation and to reflect that back to Australians.

Recent migration figures[29] indicate that:

- between June 1996 and June 2014, Australia's overseas-born population grew by 55.7 per cent, from 4.2 million to 6.6 million, far exceeding the growth of Australian-born residents (20.8 per cent).
- in 2016, over 9.5 million people in Australia were born overseas or have a parent who was born overseas.
- over 2014-15, India and China were Australia's top two migrant source countries.

As noted by ABC Managing Director, Michelle Guthrie, at her address to the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC) Conference in late 2016, *"the goal for the ABC is to both look and sound like modern-day Australia….the simple truth is the ABC must change as the diversity of our nation changes.*[30]*"*

To this end, the ABC:

- is reviewing its hiring practices and aiming to ensure that its staff reflect the cultural makeup of the Australian population. We already have a great number of presenters and actors from CALD backgrounds but we wish to see more
- has instituted four internships in ABC Television, open to students from Indigenous or CALD backgrounds, which include up to $15,000 for up to 15 weeks' work experience per year for two years, and potential opportunities for employment on completion
- ensures it promotes and celebrates events of multicultural significance such as it did for Harmony Day and recognising the many CALD communities across the nation in March 2017.

The ABC also recognises that, as the national broadcaster it is also incumbent upon it to recognise and celebrate Australia's indigenous cultural heritage. To this end, the Corporation has committed resources to recognising the contribution of Australia's Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities and reflecting these back to the nation, including through:

- establishing a dedicated Indigenous news reporting team, led by a dedicated Indigenous Affairs editor and indigenous units in ABC TV and Radio
- the provision of annual cross platform coverage and support of NAIDOC week and the Garma Festival and coverage of 2017's Right Wrongs, a celebration on the 50 years since the 1967 referendum on Aboriginal rights

[28] Section 6(2)(a)(iv), *The Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth).
[29] Department of Immigration and Border Protection, *Australia's Migration Trends 2014- 15* (2015), https://www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/statistics/migration-trends-14-15-full.pdf
[30] Michelle Guthrie, Keynote address to the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC) Conference, November 2016, see: http://about.abc.net.au/speeches/a-diverse-abc-is-a-strong-abc/ .

- undertaking an indigenous language news service in Warlpiri, Yolngu Matha and Kriol in the Northern Territory the commitment to produce radio identification messages in Indigenous languages as part of an ongoing partnership with First Languages Australia - to raise awareness, promote the value and share stories about Australia's First Languages.

The ABC considers that these examples affirm the ABC's commitment to its Charter responsibilities and its responsibilities to service CALD communities as a core part of its operations.

Journalism in the digital age

The digital era has profoundly changed the landscape for journalists and journalism. Consumers are more empowered and demanding, seeking instant access to content and vastly-improved audience experiences. While radio and television platforms remain effective and popular ways of providing information to mass audiences, there is increasing demand for one-to-one rather than one-to-many contacts. Younger audiences, in particular, prefer catch-up services to linear delivery and more often access content via mobile rather than via fixed devices.

Under its Charter, the ABC is required to be innovative. Given the fast-changing media landscape, this remit allows the ABC to make early and good use of changing technologies to better service its audiences.

The ABC was a pioneer in the use of the then nascent online space to supplement its audio and video platforms with additional information and services to expand its audience reach. In June 2007, the first-generation iPhone was released into the market, exponentially growing the ease with which audience members could access digital media and information.

The audience shift to content consumption via mobile devices has accelerated markedly since this time. The 2017 Reuters Institute Digital News Report states that 74 per cent of Australians source their news from mobile platforms (including social media), compared to 63 per cent for television and 36 per cent for print[31].

At the same time, media organisations also face greater competition than ever before. New digital devices and software today allow more people than ever before to create and disseminate information to large, potentially worldwide, audiences (see below table from the Kleiner Perkins 2017 Internet Trends report) [32].

[31] https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital%20News%20Report%202017%20web_0.pdf
[32] Kleiner Perkins 2017 Internet Trends report, http://www.kpcb.com/internet-trends

Audiences today have greater choice in content, from more providers, causing traditional media companies to lose audience share to new entrants. A loss of market share has in turn negatively impacted advertising revenue.

However, there are signs that producers of quality journalism can develop sustainable business models in this new competitive landscape. For example, the Washington Post and New York Times have grown subscribers by more strategically focusing on and investing in quality journalism,

The ABC notes that there has been some criticism of the ABC's operations in the digital space. The criticism ignores the history and the reality. The ABC has never operated solely as a market failure broadcaster and has always been able to use technological advances to improve its service to audiences. This is appreciated by the community and endorsed by Federal Parliament. The right of the ABC to provide digital services is enshrined in the ABC Charter.

Independent surveys suggest that community understanding of and support for the dual model system in Australia remains strong. There is also supporting evidence that the dual system works to the advantage of commercial operators.

The ABC notes a report commissioned by the BBC which found that public broadcasters contribute to the broader sector:

> "Overall, countries with well-funded public broadcasters, investing in high-quality, diverse news content, tend also to have commercial markets which generate strong

revenues and levels of investment in high-quality, diverse new content. This pattern is most pronounced in the Nordic countries, Australia and the UK [33]

Upholding our editorial standards

In its journalism, across every platform, the ABC is committed to a high degree of transparent and rigorous accountability to ensure we remain committed to the high standards we set ourselves.

The ABC commits more funds and more staff to regularly monitoring and reviewing our editorial standards than any other Australian media organisation. We employ a team of editorial advisers and independent complaints investigators to:

- review and update our editorial policies and guidance on a regular basis;
- train reporters and other content staff in those policies;
- provide pre-publication and pre-broadcast advice on editorial standards;
- review content regularly to ensure compliance with standards; and
- investigate and respond to public complaints about our editorial performance.

The results of regular editorial reviews and complaints investigations are released publicly and play an important role in maintaining public trust and confidence in our journalism.

Conclusion

The ABC, its audiences and the wider community, all benefit from a diverse and dynamic media environment. The Corporation is interested in the Committee's work and any proposals that may stem from it that encourage that environment.

The one certainty is that the environment must involve a strong, well-funded public broadcaster. As the 2012 report commissioned by government in the Independent Inquiry into the Media and Media Regulation, stated:

> "*The ABC is a major player in the Australian news market with extensive investment in television and radio news and current affairs production. As a public broadcaster, it is funded from consolidated revenue. It has a long and successful history in investigative and public service journalism. Should a gap emerge from reduced efforts of newspapers and other media, the ABC, with additional government funding, would be well-placed to fill it.*"[34]

[33] https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howwework/reports/pdf/bbc_report_public_and_private_broadcasting_across_the_world.pdf

[34] Report of the Independent Media Inquiry, 2012, p 332