

Friends of the ABC Tasmania

Submission to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee: Inquiry into The ABC Amendment (Local Content) Bill 2014

Friends of the ABC Tasmania present this submission to highlight our key concerns about the failure of ABC Management and Board to meet its obligations to the Australian public as the national broadcaster. Furthermore we wish to record that the Federal Government has a responsibility to ensure that the ABC is financially viable in order to maintain its role as the national broadcaster.

Recent statements by ABC Managing Director Mark Scott announcing specific reduction in ABC services has alarmed FABC Tasmania
We are concerned that management has unilaterally declared these cutbacks that were automatically endorsed by the ABC Board without any public consultation.

It should not be necessary to remind ABC Management and Board that they are ultimately responsible to the taxpayers of Australia and therefore in decision making involving an estimated 8-10 % budget loss there should have been some public process for indicating how to manage this financial situation on an equitable basis across the organization. There should be transparency in revealing how budget savings could be made if an 8-10% cut was made to all areas of the organization.

Instead it appears that ABC Management has decided to waste money on a consultancy firm that will decide how staff will be chosen for redundancy. Yet ABC Management has already selected the programs and services to be arbitrarily suspended without any back up information to justify decisions.

For example there was no financial rationale given when announcing the end of statewide regional current affairs. No alternatives were offered so viewers now have an imposed Sydney centric national current affairs program. Neither Management nor Board is able to explain how ABC television will be able to maintain its responsibility to keep regional Australia informed about local current affairs. Similarly the axing of Bush Telegraph makes no sense and is unlikely to save the ABC money!

Therefore FABC Tasmania recommends

1.THE SENATE REQUIRES ABC MANAGEMENT TO PROVIDE:

-ALL FINANCIAL COSTINGS OF THOSE PROGRAMMES DESIGNATED FOR REMOVAL

-THE IMPACT OF AN 8-10% FINANCIAL CUTBACK IF APPLIED TO ALL AREAS OF THE ORGANISATION.

FABC Tasmania is most concerned about the ABC's further loss of professional expertise and skills base as a result of the announced financial cutbacks. In recent years the ABC has downgraded in-house television production so that many talented program makers have already left the public broadcaster for the private sector. This short-term approach leaves the ABC vulnerable as a number of overseas broadcasters are increasing the stock of local content. The ABC as the national broadcaster should be a leader in television production that reflects Australian culture yet outsourcing means we have to rely solely on independent filmmakers. There needs to be a balance between in house and outsourced television production so that the ABC maintains a leadership role.

Therefore FABC TAS recommends

2. THE SENATE REQUIRES ABC MANAGEMENT TO PRESENT A REPORT DETAILING ITS STAFFING TRENDS 2004-2014 TO IDENTIFY HOW MANAGEMENT IS MAINTAINING PRODUCTIVE WORKFORCE PLANNING.

FABC Tasmania wishes to record its recognition of the very high standard of ABC Radio services and compliments Management and Staff on providing diverse and wide-ranging services to all Australians. In radio services the ABC is exemplary in reflecting local content and in this regard has a consistently strong record for meeting its obligations under its charter.

Sadly this commitment is not maintained in television services where the ABC relies on imported content and aims to provide service across four channels when it cannot meet even a limited Australian content on ABC 1.

The dominance of BBC content may have been acceptable in the 1960s but to have the Australian national broadcaster still reflecting its British inheritance is a sad comment on the ABC's regard for local content. It is time Australians demanded more from its national broadcaster before some one asks "Why are we subsidizing the BBC?"

Therefore FABC TAS recommends that

3. THE SENATE REQUIRES ABC MANAGEMENT TO DOCUMENT ITS EXPENDITURE ON IMPORTED TELEVISION PROGRAMMING 2004-2014 AND INCLUDING SALES REVENUE OF BBC PRODUCT SOLD IN ABC SHOPS AND SUBSIDIARIES OVER THE SAME PERIOD.

In conclusion FABC TAS submits additional material provided by members as appendices to this submission. We would welcome the opportunity to elaborate on our concerns at a public hearing. We hope Senators will consider our recommendations as practical ideas for ensuring the ABC recognize and adopt these priorities when facing budgetary constraints.

Margaret Reynolds, (President, FABC Tasmania)

ABC Friends Launceston Survey in Launceston Mall, Thursday 4 December 2014, 10.30am - 3.30pm				
Do you watch ABC TV or listen to ABC radio?	If yes what programs do you most enjoy?	Which radio and TV news and current affairs do you most trust?	Do you have concerns about what the current Federal Government is doing with regard to the ABC? If so what are they?	Any other concerns
Yes	Australian Story	ABC - 7.30 ABC 24 when not listening to local radio	Cuts. These not required	Save the ABC - Good reporting. Independence required
Yes	Doctor Who		These cuts are not required for such a good channel	SAVE ABC !!!
Yes	Doctor Who		Why cut it when there are other things that are pointless to cut	SAVE ABC !!! It's important!
Both	Four Corners Dramas Afternoon programs Lindy Byrne (should be Hume? Or maybe Jennifer Byrne?) on radio	ABC	Leave the ABC alone!!	Should have a movie preview show

Do you watch ABC TV or listen to ABC radio?	If yes what programs do you most enjoy?	Which radio and TV news and current affairs do you most trust?	Do you have concerns about what the current Federal Government is doing with regard to the ABC? If so what are they?	Any other concerns
Both	Richard Fidler Current Affairs program – Lunchtime (World Today) Afternoon program (radio) Penny Terry Q&A on TV, News, 7.30 Report, Media Watch, Australian Story	Southern Cross + ABC Summer bushfire info important	Federal Govt actions disgraceful. They are acting because they see a bias against the coalition, which is not there. Narrow minded outlook. Not enabling the audience to have a broad range of information	Commercial programs don't give you intelligent discussion on political issues.
Both, constant radio	Spicks + Specks Everything. Grew up with the ABC.	ABC	ABC is something needed by the community – community involvement in Talkback shows etc.	Don't see why these cuts have to be made. Local community gains so much from the ABC so should be prepared to give something back through their taxes etc.
Both	Triple J News Four Corners Mad as Hell	Four Corners 7.30 Triple J Black (?)	Budget cuts which affect local programming – job cuts	

Do you watch ABC TV or listen to ABC radio?	If yes what programs do you most enjoy?	Which radio and TV news and current affairs do you most trust?	Do you have concerns about what the current Federal Government is doing with regard to the ABC? If so what are they?	Any other concerns
TV	Q & A, Insiders The Drum Foreign Correspondent Lateline	Four Corners 7.30 Report	Loss of regional programs	Loss of the rational who is truly rational (?)
Both	Gardening Documentaries Biography	A Current Affair Or WIN WIN News	Not such drastic cuts	
TV	News	TV news	Yes!	Keep services in Tasmania
TV, Classical Radio	News	7.30 Report	Yes!	Keep ABC as is!
Mainly TV	Crime All BBC drama, News, Documentaries	ABC 24 hour Morning Show	Yes, it's criminal	
Yes when cricket & cartoons are on	Cricket and Cartoons	N/A	Yes you have concerns because you see it as the government trying to control the ABC	
Yes	News, The Drum	ABC	Building a bureaucracy concentration in Sydney & Melbourne	Local news
Radio	Whatever's on	ABC news	I didn't know about it	

Do you watch ABC TV or listen to ABC radio?	If yes what programs do you most enjoy?	Which radio and TV news and current affairs do you most trust?	Do you have concerns about what the current Federal Government is doing with regard to the ABC? If so what are they?	Any other concerns
TV, Radio	News Spicks and Specks	ABC	Yes! Keep the ABC!	
Radio	Radio National Radio Tasmania(??) nights	SBS	Caters(?) absolutely concerned(?)	Too much coverage of PM Abbott. Gov squad mixed(missed?)
Yes	Ones that are made in England – a whole range	None	No	In regards to Forestry the ABC is consistently biased and non-factual. It is not meeting charter obligations. It is centred on Sydney and Melbourne & failing regional and rural communities across the board.
Yes, both	ABC 24 Australian drama Four Corners & other documentaries Gardening	ABC	Yes most definitely. I object to any cuts. ABC produces high standard programs	

Do you watch ABC TV or listen to ABC radio?	If yes what programs do you most enjoy?	Which radio and TV news and current affairs do you most trust?	Do you have concerns about what the current Federal Government is doing with regard to the ABC? If so what are they?	Any other concerns
Both	ABC News 24 Children's programs ABC3 (nieces)	ABC 24	Shutting down a reliable source of news & entertainment especially Australian	
Yes	News & current affairs Drama	ABC	I am distressed and horrified by the Government's action. We have to have an independent public broadcaster properly funded or it is not independent.	
Yes	Rural	Four Corners, ABC 2	Cuts in the wrong place	
Yes	Mixture	ABC always	Don't agree	
TV	'Time of Our Lives' Good Australian drama	None	Very concerned	Don't break my heart
Yes	Dramas	ABC	Yes	
Yes	Radio News Classic FM	ABC news	Not happy with cutbacks	ABC should be supported for country people
Yes	Radio National + local Good comedies	ABC, SBS	T A (Tony Abbott?) blatant lie for election	SBS privatised

Do you watch ABC TV or listen to ABC radio?	If yes what programs do you most enjoy?	Which radio and TV news and current affairs do you most trust?	Do you have concerns about what the current Federal Government is doing with regard to the ABC? If so what are they?	Any other concerns
Yes most of the time	Radio National The Drum	National News	5% cuts. Regional areas affected	
Yes	Children's?? + Documentaries	ABC News	Keep funding	
Not often	Southern Cross Night time radio Old Movies Friday night	Southern Cross	Keep their bloody hands off them (ABC)	
Yes		ABC		I only watch the ABC
Both	Tripe J Radio	24 News 'My husband'	Cuts to everything	Perceived lies not so
Yes	Radio Classic FM TV News	ABC 24	NOT HAPPY Finance limits Not Good	No Announcer on ABC FM midnight to dawn
Yes	R N, Comedy, News Breakfast, drama, documentaries	ABC	Yes ABC cuts to funding affecting local programs	ABC is regarded as independent - more of it.
Yes	News, docos, 24 hour News	ABC or SBS	Yes. As above. Only one of two reliable sources of current affairs	It is our only source OUR ABC
Yes	Comedy, News, Drama	ABC, SBS	Yes as above	ABC is independent
Yes	News, Q & A	ABC, SBS	Upset at cuts	Remain independent and unbiased

Do you watch ABC TV or listen to ABC radio?	If yes what programs do you most enjoy?	Which radio and TV news and current affairs do you most trust?	Do you have concerns about what the current Federal Government is doing with regard to the ABC? If so what are they?	Any other concerns
Yes	Good games (my sons aged 6 + 10), 7.30 Report, Cooking Show, Fish (M Evans)	ABC 24 (on all night)	It's totally ridiculous. I want my kids to (have) good safe children's programs	We are losing good educational shows (getting Americanised - not good.)
Yes both	ABC 22 + 23 Lots of TV programs	ABC	Cutting local 7.30 Report Cutting kids programs + otherwise our voices and rights to hear all sides and views of politics and events	Emergency broadcasts. <u>NO</u> commercialising the ABC
Yes	ABC Kids Good Games Documentaries, Iview	ABC	Dishonesty as to cuts for ABC	
Yes	News, Good drama, documentaries	ABC especially morning radio	Using it as political tool	Too many British repeats - eg. QI
Yes	Parliament (TV) News, Today, enjoyed the PM's speech	ABC including Al Jazeera early morning	I don't like 'The Nowhere Boys' It should not be just PG Don't like sport	Sometimes poor reception in lower part of Abbott St + also same in Sunshine Coast
Yes	News, Q & A SBS - Insight Radio News	ABC	I don't trust them - I fear they will just keep on with the cuts (don't believe them)	Concerned about ABC job losses. I like the ABC's programming + documentaries

Do you watch ABC TV or listen to ABC radio?	If yes what programs do you most enjoy?	Which radio and TV news and current affairs do you most trust?	Do you have concerns about what the current Federal Government is doing with regard to the ABC? If so what are they?	Any other concerns
Yes	News, Q & A Australian Story The Drum	ABC	Concerned cut to women's sport Concerned about funding cuts and about the Board's composition (biased)	Concerned about SBS losing funding. I don't want any more ads
Yes both	Local drama News and radio Q & A British programs	ABC	Concern at funding cuts affecting program content	Concern also for SBS
Both	Spicks and Specks Like a Version (Triple J)	ABC	Yes ABC will become like commercial radio + TV	Doing well where it is. Leave it alone
Both	News and Current affairs	ABC	Yes, cutting back jobs	Keep ABC the way it is – even is having to rally against cuts.
Both	News, The Drum, ABC dramas	ABC	Concerned about funding	Independent journalism necessary
Both	7.30, Richard Fidler, Grandstand	ABC 7pm TV ABC morning news ABC Local radio (Leon)	Cutbacks to programs. Will increase commercial radio + TV	Keep our independent ABC

Do you watch ABC TV or listen to ABC radio?	If yes what programs do you most enjoy?	Which radio and TV news and current affairs do you most trust?	Do you have concerns about what the current Federal Government is doing with regard to the ABC? If so what are they?	Any other concerns
All the time – both. Hate adverts	News, Friday night crime, BBC drama	ABC	Lack of exposure in the international and regional sphere	Loss of jobs and experience
Constantly	Triple J, ABC Northern Tasmania, Insiders, 7.30 Report	ABC	Making it harder for the ABC to deliver to regional Australia. Efficiencies require central consolidation so it's unreasonable to argue to the contrary	ABC is trusted over all other media outlets in terms of news. No advertising on ABC – it would compete with commercial stations.
Listen to radio. Some TV – always ABC	Drama series such as 'Jack Irish' Q&A, Lateline, News	ABC	Don't agree at all with what the Government is doing.	
Both	ABC FM basics (or classics?) Sport Talkback - local	Southern Cross	Concern about multiplicity of ABC & SBS programs. Bad quality i.e. 'House Bogans', 'Please Like Me'. Teenage programs bad example to many	Too much duplication of news services. Statewide 7.30 regional (?)

Do you watch ABC TV or listen to ABC radio?	If yes what programs do you most enjoy?	Which radio and TV news and current affairs do you most trust?	Do you have concerns about what the current Federal Government is doing with regard to the ABC? If so what are they?	Any other concerns
Both Radio on all day	Richard Fidler interviews, QI comedy, drama programs	ABC	I don't see any bias with the ABC so I don't accept the Government's views. Bias against the ABC against Liberal Party is rubbish.	Taking programs away from local communities which are not small communities and people want to know what is happening within.
Watch TV	Q & A, Rage, Countrywide	ABC	ABC has done well so the Government should be encouraging them	Where would Australian Music be today without the ABC, - Countdown, Triple J
Watch TV	Drama series, News Programs	ABC	Concerned about the cuts – ABC is best disseminator of news – unbiased. Local news also important.	
Radio is on all day Watch TV	British comedy Australian drama Don't Like Micallef or The Drum – degrading to people	ABC	Taking away Tasmanian content – This is very important to me.	Some happy friendly programs, - eg. Australian Story are important. Farming programs are valuable, eg Landline.