



**Australian Government**

**Australian Government response to the  
Senate Environment and Communications  
References Committee report:**

**The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's  
commitment to reflecting and representing regional  
diversity**

March 2018

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## Overview

The Australian Government notes the report by the Senate Environment and Communications Reference Committee (the Committee) into The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's commitment to reflecting and representing regional diversity.

On 20 November 2012, the Managing Director of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Mr Mark Scott AO, announced his proposal to close the ABC's Hobart television production unit. On 27 November 2012, following the ABC's announcement, the Senate referred the matter of the ABC's commitment to reflecting and representing regional diversity in Australia to the Committee.

The terms of reference for the Committee's inquiry were to consider the following:

- (a) the commitment by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) to reflecting and representing regional diversity in Australia;
- (b) the impact that the increased centralisation of television production in Sydney and Melbourne has had on the ABC's ability to reflect national identity and diversity; and
- (c) any related matters.

The Committee received 65 submissions from a wide range of interested individuals and organisations. Public hearings were held on 1 February 2013 in Hobart and on 7 March 2013 in Perth. On 20 March 2013, the Committee tabled its report to the President of the Senate. The Committee's report contains a total of five main recommendations.

## Australian Government response

The Australian Government's response to *The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's commitment to reflecting and representing regional diversity* is set out below.

### Recommendation 1:

3.19 The committee recommends that the ABC Charter should be amended in order to ensure that, given the new convergent landscape, the ABC is producing content across all platforms that reflects regional diversity. Such content should be responsive to new and emerging target audiences, including audiences of regional difference.

### Recommendation 2:

3.21 The committee recommends that the ABC:

- conducts an annual program of consultation with regional stakeholders in the film and television industry so that they gain a mutual understanding of ABC production, planning, production priorities and the capacity of regional Australia to produce content; and
- publish the outcomes of this consultation.

### Recommendation 3:

3.40 The committee recommends that the ABC annually publish its regional content production performance for ABC television, including data on the amount invested, number of programs produced, hours of production produced and number of independent companies used.

### Recommendation 4:

3.42 The committee recommends that the ABC establish a regional television production fund for production outside Sydney and Melbourne. This fund should be available to regional production exclusively and may be used as part of co-funded projects within the region with the aim to stimulate regional independent production.

### Recommendation 5:

3.99 The committee recommends that the ABC make and publish at regular intervals its future financial commitment to investing in production outside of Sydney and Melbourne.

The Government **notes** the recommendations.

Since the Committee report has been tabled, key events include the completion of the ABC and Special Broadcasting Corporation (SBS) Efficiency Study undertaken in 2014, and the ABC's formation of its Regional Division.

In addition, in December 2015, two further Senate inquiries were announced which considered, amongst other things, the role of the ABC in rural and regional Australia.

In the 2016–17 Budget, the Government provided an additional \$41.4 million over three years to the ABC for local news and current affairs services, particularly those located outside the capital cities, and to continue to deliver news content across its digital and mobile platforms.

In 2017, the ABC announced a \$50 million per annum content fund, of which a \$15 million per annum fund will be established for regional jobs and content.

In October 2017, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Measures) Bill 2017 was introduced into the Senate. The Bill will ensure regional communities are provided for in the functions of the Corporation and through representation on the ABC Board, as well as requiring specific reporting obligations in relation to regional jobs and hours of local regional news broadcasts.