

## ABC OPENING STATEMENT – ADDITIONAL SENATE ESTIMATES 27 FEBRUARY 2018

Thank you Chair.

Since we met in October last year, the ABC has made three important moves to ensure we remain trusted and relevant to all Australians for future generations.

Just this month we held our inaugural Annual Public Meeting - the first of several planned initiatives to increase transparency and accountability to our shareholders, the Australian public. People from across the country asked questions, with audiences in Rockhampton and Launceston included in the live stream.

The ABC's priorities for 2018 were made clear at that meeting – to produce content that is high quality, distinctive, independent, Australian and trusted.

This commitment will guide every decision on how we reach and engage with new and existing audiences, which leads me to the second initiative.

As part of our *Investing in Audiences* strategy, we've launched *ABC KIDS Listen*, a dedicated digital radio station and app for pre-schoolers and their families. We've expanded our news and current affairs coverage with programs such as *Matter of Fact* with Stan Grant and *National Wrap* with Patricia Karvelas, while creating the largest dedicated daily investigative and specialist journalism team in the country.

Heather Ewart will also introduce national audiences to people in more corners of this beautiful country through a winter series of *Back Roads*.

The ABC already has what is believed to be the world's largest dedicated rural reporting workforce and in the past eight months we have recruited an extra 76 reporters, presenters and producers of regional content. We chose to invest \$15.4 million dollars a year more in regional communities, with another \$3.6 million being spent on tools and equipment.

It's important to acknowledge that serving loyal broadcast viewers and listeners, while keeping pace with audience behaviours and expectations in a rapidly changing global environment, is challenging for all media organisations - the ABC included.

The third move we have made is the re-organisation of content teams around communities of interest rather than platforms, recognising that a great story should be shared on TV, radio and online, and should ultimately be available at any time and on any device.

We have a vital role in providing local coverage, entertaining and specialist content, as well as investigative journalism and analysis. But as our teams were moving into the new structure, we made mistakes. Stories were published which hadn't received the editorial scrutiny they needed, and weren't up to our standards.

This naturally prompted News' leadership to review the internal handling of stories. Today News employees were briefed on changes to some roles, with a greater focus on editorial standards. I am confident the changes will strengthen processes, improve accountability and boost the quality of our digital and broadcasting coverage. We are also creating a new digital unit within our existing Business Reporting Team to enhance quality control and increase oversight of daily news coverage.

I want to close by stating that no media organisation is infallible, but the important thing is that we scrutinise our coverage, investigate when things go wrong, fix our processes, and move forward. However, these instances will not deter us from holding individuals and institutions to account, and we will continue to independently shine a light on stories that need to be told. That is why more than 80% of the Australian public trust and value the ABC.

Thank you.