

## OPENING REMARKS – ABC MANAGING DIRECTOR – SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Chair and Members of the Committee

I appreciate making a brief statement.

It's a great honour to lead the ABC, one of Australia's most important cultural institutions and I welcome the Senate accountability that comes with the importance of the ABC in society.

We will do our best to provide answers to any questions that you may have – not only in this forum but outside it.

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I thought it may be helpful today to provide a brief snapshot of the ABC's performance and its key priorities.

Strengthening Australians' value and trust in the ABC is a key priority that is aligned to our Charter.

Independence and integrity are essential to earn and maintain that trust.

I'm pleased to report that in our latest corporate tracker survey the ABC scored 80 per cent for "*tend to trust/trust a great deal*" – the ABC's highest rating since October 2024.

This result mirrors the finding by Roy Morgan research recently which found that the ABC was the most trusted media organisation in Australia.

In terms of audience performance, the ABC continues to attract large audiences :

- The ABC has been the No 1 Australian digital news brand every month since December 2024 with an audience of 13 million
- ABC NEWS Channel has cemented itself as the number one multi-channel in the country
- ABC 7pm news and 7.30 have grown their audiences by 7% and 13% this year respectively
- ABC iview is the nation's highest-reaching BVOD provider with 3.4 million people watching on average per week.

- The ABC also recorded the highest number of titles in the August podcast ranker, with 47 podcasts in the top 300, including 4 in the top 10 with a total of 3.2 million listeners (+13% YoY).
- In audio the ABC lifted 1.2 share points or 7% in the recent survey as we continue to focus on strengthening the quality of our audio offerings.

And to top it off the ABC had its most successful Logies ever with a record-breaking 11 awards in 23 categories.

But we're far from complacent. There is much room for improvement.

We continue to work hard to ensure that the ABC is as efficient as it can be and ensure that the right choices are made with the budget we have.

At the ABC Showcase here in November we will evidence an increased investment in premium television hours reaffirming the ABC's role as the home of the very best original Australian content.

This is vital at a time the Australian market is being flooded with content from overseas players underlining the importance of the ABC's role in fostering our shared sense of Australian identity.

We are also increasing our investment in original Australian podcasts, ensuring there is more long form audio story telling of our uniquely Australian stories.

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We are focused on strengthening, not lessening, coverage in and of regional and rural Australia, where I believe the ABC can play an important leadership role in ensuring the availability of local services in local communities. Especially at a time when we are witnessing a large withdrawal of media services across Australia – 166 in the past 5 years with 60 per cent in regional and rural areas.

**Last week I was delighted to announce that the ABC will share its crisis and emergency-related digital news content with local news outlets in regional, rural and remote Australia.**

Local news outlets will have access to ABC NEWS digital news content on significant events from major road accidents and community safety incidents to natural disasters and public health emergencies.

This initiative will also help strengthen the sustainability of local journalism.

I'm committed to leading an ABC that supports local news sustainability.

So in addition to the ABC's own activities we are currently working on a project to assist local media improve the breadth and quality of local news coverage to further enhance the quality of civic discourse and information.

This is not about replacement of news by the ABC but the ability to promote new growth in those areas so there is more media diversity. Reimagining the role the ABC can play more broadly in markets that would benefit from assistance.

A project I'd be happy to elaborate on today.

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Thank you.

I'm happy to take questions.....