

SBS SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS INQUIRY INTO CIVICS EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRALIA (SEPTEMBER 2024)

Executive Summary

- SBS appreciates the opportunity to respond to the inquiry into civics education, engagement, and participation in Australia (**Inquiry**) by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (the **Committee**). For almost 50 years, SBS has played a fundamental role in supporting civics education, engagement, and participation for all Australians through the depth and breadth of our services and activities.
- SBS's particular remit to inform, educate and entertain people in their preferred language, coupled with our reach and trust with the communities we serve in more than 60 languages, means that SBS is often the primary local source of accurate, reliable and culturally informed news and information to facilitate civic and democratic participation for those who speak a language other than English. Key activities during the last Federal election included live translation of the debates in four languages, and multilingual explainers on how to vote.
- SBS is a public policy asset whose value in the context of this Inquiry cannot be understated, noting in particular the recent deterioration of social cohesion, the proliferation of mis- and disinformation on social media platforms, and the threats to sustainable and accessible trusted news.
- SBS already works closely with key agencies such as the Australian Electoral Commission in the lead up to elections, and would welcome any additional opportunities to partner with governments and government agencies at all levels to promote civic engagement, while maintaining editorial independence. In particular, SBS can be further leveraged to expand its existing work for multicultural, multilingual and First Nations peoples – a number of whom may be facing '*social or socio-economic*¹ or *other barriers that may be preventing electoral participation*³ – a focus of the Inquiry. SBS reaches 1 in 2 of speakers of a language other than English every week,⁴ and our network is also home to the dedicated National Indigenous Television (NITV) service by, for, and about First Nations peoples.
- In addition to specific multilingual or First Nations audiences, there is also an opportunity for SBS to deliver civic education to school aged children in an engaging way via SBS Learn, which already delivers culturally informed resources to educators around the country, linked to SBS content and key cultural celebrations such as Lunar New Year and Diwali.
- While the SBS network is already delivering positive outcomes, additional funding would facilitate the delivery of additional screen, audio and online content that increases access by more Australians to '*relevant, appropriate, and culturally suitable information about Australian democracy, electoral events, enrolment and voting to promote full electoral participation*⁵ – as identified by the Inquiry, through avenues such as:

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics published on 26 June 2024 that '[...] in the 2019–20 financial year, migrants were less likely to earn personal income (70%), compared with the total population of Australia (76%) [...]', see <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities>

² According to Australian Government, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, and National Indigenous Australian Agency, see <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-08-income>

³ Inquiry's terms of reference

⁴ SBS In-language Research Program for financial year 2022–23, n = 1200

⁵ Inquiry's terms of reference



- Australia's most trusted news brand⁶ **SBS News**;
 - **SBS Audio** services in more than 60 languages, including **Election Exchanges** community events;
 - Ongoing support for **SBS Examines**⁷ content in more than 40 languages including English, promoting social cohesion and countering mis- and disinformation (this initiative is currently due to conclude in June 2025);
 - Enhancement of **Australia Explained**⁸ content in more than 50 languages, assisting new arrivals including with information on the Australian civic life (including explicit content on voting enrolment and process);
 - Additional content on the **SBS Learn** online national education platform; and
 - Commercial paid partnerships, such as **SBS In Language** translation and production service, **SBS Cultural Connect** campaign-consulting service, and **SBS Media** advertising service which includes **Beyond 3%** initiative that promotes advertising investment in First Nations media and audiences.
- SBS is the most efficient and effective broadcaster in Australia across both television and radio,⁹ with a well-established program involving vigilant annual planning processes, workflow improvements, the renegotiation of supplier agreements, an evolved operating model utilising best-in-class technology, and investment in a working environment that fosters agile practices and a highly engaged workforce. These factors mean that SBS is well placed as the partner of choice for all governments in any new initiatives that may result from the Committee's work.

Recommendations

- *Government should include SBS more formally and purposefully in new civic information and education activities, recognising its culturally informed approach, deep connections, and reach with communities, including multilingual and First Nations communities.*
- *Government should take steps to wholistically address the immediate threats to social cohesion, including potentially novel interventions such as a requirement for social media platforms in Australia to carry trusted and recognised news content.*
- *SBS should be considered as a strong investment and avenue for any new funded initiatives arising from the Inquiry, including potentially:*
 - *funding to grow and continue SBS Examines beyond July 2025;*
 - *a bespoke civics series as part of Australia Explained;*
 - *support for the creation of educator or student resources on civics and/or media literacy in English or other languages, by SBS Learn; and*
 - *any activities that could be undertaken in partnership with other Departments or agencies, such as the Australian Electoral Commission.*
- *Livestreams of debates during elections and similar processes should be made freely available for the purposes of live interpreting, to improve accessibility for multilingual communities.*

⁶ The 2024 *Digital News Report: Australia* by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and the University of Canberra News and Media Research Centre found *SBS News* to be Australia's most trusted news brand (and least distrusted, along with local or regional newspapers), see https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2024-06/apo-nid326816_4.pdf

⁷ <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/sbs-examines>

⁸ <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/australia-explained-language-list>

⁹ Deloitte SBS Effectiveness and Efficiency Review; SBS financial data & analysis, including SBS Financial Statements for FY20 and FY21



1. Criticality of trusted information to support civic society

This Inquiry is timely. Australian society is at a critical juncture, with fracturing social cohesion – the Scanlon Institute’s latest Index of Social Cohesion published in November 2023 measured social cohesion at its lowest level since the survey began 16 years ago in 2007.¹⁰

It is a well-established principle that a stable and cohesive democratic society needs credible, trusted sources of news and information that can be readily and freely accessed by community members, including in their preferred language. A range of factors are coalescing to create a dangerously febrile social environment – including the increased difficulty in accessing trusted news online and on third party platforms, risks to the sustainability of public interest journalism, the rise of generative AI, potential for foreign interference, proliferation of mis- and disinformation, and the use of algorithms to funnel users into echo chambers that do not provide a diversity of views or perspectives.

Adding further relevance to the role of SBS is the fact that Australia is seeing the highest level of overseas arrivals since the pre-COVID era¹¹, with more than 5.6 million people who speak a language other than English at home according to the 2021 Australian Census.

Australian consumers increasingly utilise social media platforms for news. The recently released *Digital News Report: Australia 2024*¹² published in June 2024 found that almost half of Australians (49%) use social media to access news, an increase of 4 percentage points from last year. One in four Australians say social media is their main source of news, while for Gen Z the proportion is almost two-thirds (60%), a significant increase of 17% since 2023. It is also relevant to note that First Nations peoples and a number of multilingual communities have higher engagement with SBS platforms on social media than the general population.¹³

There is an urgent need for Government to address these matters as a single package to prevent further social disruption and take purposeful action to rebuild cohesion in the community. Measures could include mandating the carriage of SBS services on platforms such as Meta, or funding additional initiatives for more SBS content to displace misinformation with culturally informed, impartial and balanced news and information, such as the work done by our team at *SBS Examines*.

Our network’s accurate, impartial, high-quality news and coverage is governed by the robust SBS Code of Practice and rigorous editorial measures, supported by industry-leading¹⁴ complaint-handling process that includes recourse to the independent SBS Ombudsman, and in some cases, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

While SBS services are already delivering positive outcomes, they could be further leveraged to help more ‘*Australians seek and receive information about Australia’s democracy, electoral events, and voting*’¹⁵ – another key focus of the Inquiry. For example, SBS would welcome further collaboration with the Australian Electoral Commission, expanding on successful past initiatives (see pages 6 and 7). Other potential initiatives could include content and services that further promote civic or media literacy (e.g. through SBS Learn – see page 10), or additional content tailored to communities with high proportions of new arrivals, younger multilingual audiences, and communities facing higher barriers for civic engagement.

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/nov/15/social-cohesion-lowest-on-record-as-australia-reels-from-cost-of-living-inequality-concerns-and-voice-debate>

¹¹ According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, see <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/tourism-and-transport/overseas-arrivals-and-departures-australia/latest-release>

¹² Park, S., Fisher, C., McGuinness, K., Lee, J., McCallum, K., Cai, X., Chatskin, M., Mardjianto, L. & Yao, P. (2024) *Digital News Report: Australia 2024* (Canberra: News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra), pp 79-81

¹³ SBS data analyses

¹⁴ SBS customer service satisfaction is 87% – more than the media industry’s benchmark of 77%. source: Zendesk Q3 FY2023–24 (01 January – 31 March 2024), customer satisfaction is based on customer service tickets

¹⁵ Inquiry’s terms of reference



[SBS Learn English](#)¹⁶, and [SBS News in Easy English](#)¹⁷ content including regular podcasts not only assist English language learners, children (and those with health conditions, in the case of *SBS News in Easy English*) – but also provide information about life in Australia in an accessible way. This includes the [Australian Citizenship series](#)¹⁸ videos created in 2023 by the *SBS Learn English* service, to assist those who are taking their Australian Citizenship test – a step required to participate in Australia’s civic activities such as elections and referenda.

There are also calls for further support that enables and encourages *‘First Nations Peoples, particularly young people, to engage genuinely in democratic and electoral processes’*¹⁹ as outlined by, among others, the submission to this Inquiry by ANTAR (formerly Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation). NITV, a key part of the SBS network, is well placed to be a partner of choice for governments and government agencies at all levels, in amplifying civics education, engagement, and participation for First Nations peoples. In addition to traditional broadcast channels, NITV is well placed to deliver multi-platform trusted content to First Nations peoples across the country. NITV has high levels of engagement with its content on social media platforms such as TikTok, with more than 470k followers on Facebook.²⁰

The SBS network not only provides trusted and reliable news that can displace other nefarious content, but it can also play a role in educating and enabling audiences to better identify mis or dis-information, understand its impact, and critically assess information sources.

2. Case study: Referendum on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament

During the recent Referendum on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice (the **Referendum**), NITV provided a national platform for a diversity of First Nations voices, while the broader SBS network provided news, explainers, and information including on how to enrol to vote and take part in the process in more than 60 languages, including:

- The [SBS Voice Referendum portal](#)²¹ – bringing together news and information from across the SBS network including NITV – with articles, videos, and podcasts in more than 60 languages, including explainers such as: [How do you vote in the referendum? The rules explained](#)²²
- The [SBS On Demand Voice Referendum hub](#)²³ – a dedicated destination to stream all things Referendum from SBS and NITV, including trusted news and analysis, and First Nations storytelling

¹⁶ <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/podcast/sbs-learn-english>

¹⁷ <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/podcast/sbs-news-in-easy-english>

¹⁸ <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/australian-citizenship>

¹⁹ ANTAR’s submission, p. 4, available at <https://antar.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/ANTAR-Submission-civics-education.pdf>

²⁰ SBS/NITV data analyses

²¹ <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/voice-referendum>

²² <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/how-do-you-vote-in-the-referendum-the-rules-explained/mxv8gb7hy>

²³ <https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/2023-voice-referendum>



Source: SBS On Demand

- NITV current affairs show *The Point: Referendum Road Trip* – sharing the journey around the continent hearing from communities on Country
- Ongoing, comprehensive coverage in English and more than 60 other languages across NITV News, SBS News and SBS Audio multi-platform offerings. The coverage was provided through broadcast content, dedicated websites including for each of SBS language services, SBS News, and SBS Audio apps, more than 100 social media accounts, and third-party apps and online platforms such as Google's (including YouTube), Apple's, iHeartRadio etc.
- Special programming on NITV and SBS in the lead up to the vote including NITV premieres *Insight* and *Dateline* specials, and live broadcasts on the day of the referendum, as well as analyses in the days following as Australia reacted to the result.

3. Case Study: 2022 Federal election

During the 2022 Federal election, SBS network provided more election coverage in more languages than any other elections prior, with new initiatives that included live translation of debates and election night speeches.

- SBS was the only network to have every election debate on its platform, providing live interpreting of the debates (see further below, on page 6) into key languages other than English (Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Vietnamese), in conjunction with principal media outlets Nine, Seven Network and Sky News. This was an Australian first, enabling access to those critical elements of the democratic process for Australia's largest multilingual communities.
- SBS's news, information and current affairs content (including the flagship SBS News) provided Australian audiences with trusted and impartial coverage across platforms in more than 60 languages, to support civic engagement and participation.
- NITV provided coverage through the perspectives of First Nations peoples, including coverage of candidates, policies and communities.
- Community-focused *Election Exchanges* delivered 400 interviews and more than 200 pieces of content in 20 languages. The *Election Exchanges* saw SBS bilingual journalists on the ground in three Australian states, interviewing candidates, community leaders and members of the public. These events took place in the Sydney suburbs of Bankstown and Eastwood

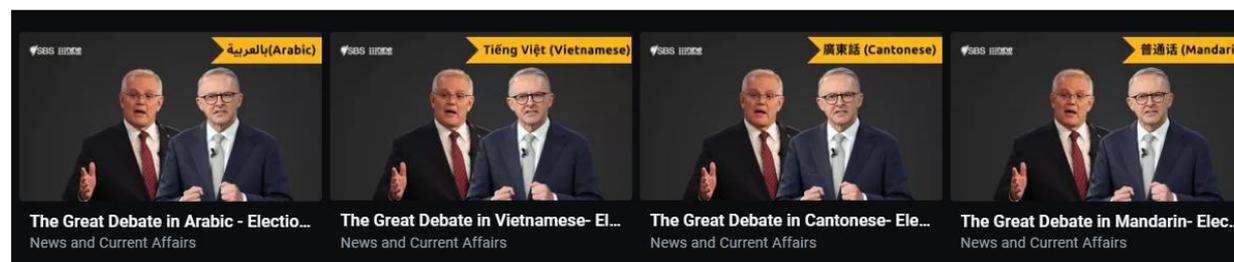


and the NSW regional centre of Wagga Wagga; Dandenong, Broadmeadows and Ballarat in Victoria; and Hobart and Launceston in Tasmania.

- In-language explainer videos and specialised information for newly arrived migrants (see *Election explainers* below).

Example – live interpreting of leaders' debates

To ensure as many Australians as possible could access information in their preferred language to support informed civic participation, SBS provided live interpreting of three Leaders' Debates in up to four languages in the lead up to the 2022 federal election. In an Australian media first, the live interpreting was provided in Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese and Vietnamese, in conjunction with media outlets Nine, Seven Network and Sky News. The interpreting sessions were available online via SBS On Demand and social media.



Source: SBS On Demand

This service was also provided for key portfolio debates, such as the Treasury debate and the Defence debate. Arabic- and Mandarin-speaking audiences also heard concession and victory speeches on election night (streamed live on the SBS Arabic and SBS Mandarin Facebook pages).

It is relevant to note that through its October 2022 [submission](#)²⁴ to the Joint Standing Committee on the Electoral Matter's *Inquiry into the 2022 federal election*, SBS put forward its support for a formal requirement that a live feed of any televised election debates be provided to SBS for the purposes of live interpreting into languages other than English. A similar recommendation should be considered as an outcome of this Inquiry.

Example – election coverage, and explainers

SBS's wide-ranging 2022 federal election content comprised explainer videos, including those produced with subtitles in 40 languages in collaboration with the Australian Electoral Commission:

- *Think before you share*²⁵, and
- *Voting options*²⁶ videos

These 40 languages represented a selection of the largest SBS languages by audience size, social media presence and engagement at the time. Other considerations taken into the selection criteria were English proficiency and emerging communities with high needs for support.

They are Amharic, Arabic, Assyrian, Bangla, Burmese, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Dari, Dinka, Filipino, Gujarati, Hmong, Indonesian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Kurdish, Lao, Macedonian, Maltese, Malayalam, Mongolian, Nepali, Persian, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Somali, Sinhala, Swahili, Tamil, Thai, Tigrinya, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

²⁴ Available at https://drupal.prod.sbs.com.au/sites/sbs.com.au/aboutus/files/sbs_submission_to_2022_election_inquiry_october_2022.pdf
²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00Q1UQU8aiU>
²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsDpwTxNYel&t=28s>



Video Home Live Reels Shows Explore Saved videos Following Search videos

SBS Arabic 29 April 2022 · Follow

Overview Comments

قبل مشاركة المنشورات المتعلقة بالانتخابات، اسأل نفسك، هل يمكن أن تكون هذه معلومات مضللة؟

Be the first to leave a comment.

من قديمنا؟ هل هي منشور؟

Think Before You Share

Arabic: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1248623549306475>

Video Home Live Reels Shows Explore Saved videos Following Search videos

SBS中文 6 May 2022 · Following

Overview Comments

你有没有想过，为什么澳大利亚的选票上有那么多方框需要填写？这就是在选举时偏好投票制很重要的原因。

#federalection

Be the first to leave a comment.

在澳大利亚，我们很幸运地有一个可供选择的投票制度。

Federal Election: Your preference is your choice

Simplified Chinese: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1112296072947126>

Video Home Live Reels Shows Explore Saved videos Following Search videos

SBS Vietnamese 6 May 2022 · Follow

Overview Comments

Đã bao giờ bạn tự hỏi tại sao tờ phiếu bầu của Úc có quá nhiều ô phải điền thế không? Đây là lý do tại sao vào đợt bầu cử, việc bầu chọn phiếu theo thứ tự ưu chuộng lại quan trọng.

#federalection

Be the first to leave a comment.

mà còn xếp loại các ứng cử viên khác theo thứ tự ưa chuộng của bạn.

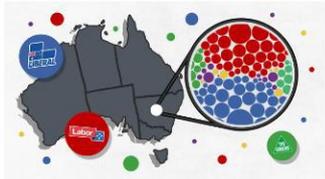
Federal Election: Your preference is your choice

Vietnamese: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=316163633987711>



SBS News Just In Top Stories Census Explorer Australia World COVID-19 Politics Immigration Indigenous Environment Life

Election Explainers



How politically diverse is your community?
POLITICS



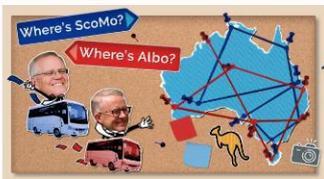
Climate change is an issue for many voters. Here's how the Coalition and Labor compare
POLITICS



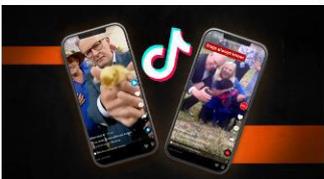
These Australian communities have picked the winner at every federal election
POLITICS



Just tested positive for COVID-19 and need to vote? Here's how
POLITICS



Every seat Scott Morrison and Anthony Albanese have visited during the election campaign
POLITICS



Vying for your vote: how TikTok is changing the election campaign
POLITICS

Among the many other topics, above examples of SBS's federal election 2022 explainers also covered:

- [*How politically diverse is your community?*](#)²⁷
- [*Climate change is an issue for many voters. Here's how the Coalition and Labor compare*](#)²⁸
- [*These Australian communities have picked the winner at every federal election*](#)²⁹
- [*Just tested positive for COVID-19 and need to vote? Here's how*](#)³⁰
- [*Every seat Scott Morrison and Anthony Albanese have visited during the election campaign*](#)³¹, and
- [*Vying for your vote: how TikTok is changing the election campaign*](#)³²

4. SBS Examines

Launched in July 2024, [*SBS Examines*](#)³³ provides additional, culturally appropriate explainers and in-depth reporting in more than 40 languages including English, Arabic, Dari, Hindi, Mandarin, Pashto, Persian, Hindi, Punjabi, Russian, Ukrainian. They focus on issues affecting social cohesion in Australia and addressing misinformation circulating in one or more communities,

²⁷ <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/how-politically-diverse-is-your-community/gcfdeqddo>

²⁸ <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/climate-change-is-an-issue-for-many-voters-heres-how-the-coalition-and-labor-compare/oy3erbq7n>

²⁹ <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/these-australian-communities-have-picked-the-winner-at-every-federal-election/pjq93nyrw>

³⁰ <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/just-tested-positive-for-covid-19-and-need-to-vote-heres-how/17zrecxhg>

³¹ <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/every-seat-scott-morrison-and-anthony-albanese-have-visited-during-the-election-campaign/s1fit9wl9>

³² <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/the-feed/article/vying-for-your-vote-how-tiktok-is-changing-the-election-campaign/ghvyalnjq>

³³ <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/sbs-examines>



through articles, podcasts and videos available across SBS platforms and third parties' including YouTube and social media (Instagram, X, Weibo, WeChat, and TikTok).

This initiative not only supports social cohesion in Australia, but also counterbalances the proliferation of mis- and disinformation, including proliferation accelerated by artificial intelligence (AI) or through foreign interference – matters directly relevant to civic engagement and participation, as identified by the Inquiry.³⁴ In the first three weeks after launch, *SBS Examines* podcasts have already been downloaded more than 15,000 times.

SBS Examines is currently supported by a two-year limited grant by the Department of Home Affairs that will conclude on 30 June 2025. Noting the current societal challenges, additional ongoing funding to support the continuation and growth of this service beyond the current pilot would deliver significant community benefits, including in relation to civic participation.

Recent examples of *SBS Examines* topics have included, but are not limited to:

- [What is discrimination](#)³⁵ video
- [Is immigration really worsening Australia's housing crisis](#)³⁶ video
- [Is the cost of living affecting social cohesion](#)³⁷ podcast
- [Why is sex and sexuality education taught in Australian schools](#)³⁸ podcast, and
- [Anti-immigration riots are escalating in the UK. Here's how misinformation spurred violence](#)³⁹ article

5. *Australia Explained*

Australia Explained is SBS's award-winning and long-standing multiplatform settlement guide, supporting new arrivals navigating life in Australia. Weekly articles, podcasts and videos in more than 50 languages offer practical information and resources – for example, explainers on the recent Referendum, employment, housing, health, education, emergency essentials and more.

Given that elections for Australia's three levels of government occur on a regular basis, and noting the growing levels in immigration, with additional funding there is scope for SBS to deliver a bespoke series on civic engagement as part of *Australia Explained*, to quickly provide reliable information to new arrivals on how to effectively participate in the democratic process in an informed manner.

Examples of previous *Australia Explained* topics include:

- [How to vote in Australia](#)⁴⁰ podcast
- [Want to help shape Australia's future? Here's how to enrol to vote](#)⁴¹ article
- [What is the role of the British Monarchy in Australia](#)⁴² podcast, and
- [How do you prepare for the Australian citizenship test](#)⁴³ podcast, which is further supplemented by the abovementioned [SBS Learn English's four-part video series on Australian Citizenship](#)⁴⁴

³⁴ Inquiry terms of reference

³⁵ https://www.youtube.com/shorts/6wk_VL4rsCQ

³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/FmgUiwWuZUo>

³⁷ <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/podcast/sbs-examines>

³⁸ Same as immediately above

³⁹ <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/article/anti-immigration-riots-are-escalating-in-the-uk-heres-how-misinformation-spurred-violence/klg25tml4>

⁴⁰ <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/podcast-episode/how-to-vote-in-australia/owg7fcoq8>

⁴¹ <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/article/want-to-help-shape-australias-future-heres-how-to-enrol-to-vote/eivfgim3x>

⁴² <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/podcast-episode/what-is-the-role-of-the-british-monarchy-in-australia/ienkniek5>

⁴³ <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/podcast-episode/how-do-you-prepare-for-the-australian-citizenship-test/syvh6ixtx>

⁴⁴ <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/australian-citizenship>



6. SBS Learn

[SBS Learn](#)⁴⁵ is a website providing resources for teachers and educators linked to SBS documentaries, drama series, children's programs, news and current affairs and other SBS network projects. These resources are professionally developed in alignment with the Australian Curriculum. SBS Learn resources are written by professional educators who have particular subject matter expertise and/or lived experience relevant to the topic. From a total potential audience of just over 300,000 teachers in Australia, SBS Learn has approximately 230,000 website page views per annum and approximately 125,000 unique browsers.⁴⁵

There is a potential for SBS Learn to further support formal and informal education on Australia's civic system – especially in relation to the *Learning area: Civics and Citizenship, Year 7–10*, or in the creation of engaging materials (including multilingual materials) to support visits to the Australian Parliament House and the Government House by school students. SBS Learn resources could also be embedded in state or territory syllabuses.

SBS Learn materials have been made available in multiple languages including Wiradjuri, Arabic, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Korean, Hindi, and Gujarati. Further opportunities include but are not limited to providing, in the communities' preferred languages, critical teacher resources and student worksheets as well as other educational resources specifically created about Australia's civic, government, and electoral systems.

Regarding media literacy, SBS Learn continues to work with the eSafety Commissioner to develop resources and participates in knowledge-sharing forums with a range of educational organisations. SBS Learn is also a member of the Australian Media Literacy Alliance (AMLA)⁴⁶, whose members collate and cross-promote projects to enhance media literacy for all ages.

SBS Learn and its reach and capability should be considered in the context of any formal expansion of civics or media literacy education arising from this Inquiry.

Examples of SBS Learn's recent partnerships

- To coincide with the cultural celebration Eid al'Fitr, SBS Learn partnered with the Islamic Museum of Australia (IMA) to deliver engaging resources explaining the celebration to all Australian children.
- SBS Learn recently published its sixth resource celebrating National NAIDOC Week 2024, including resources supporting this year's theme *Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud*, and [2024 Celebrate NAIDOC: Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud](#) resource by Shelley Ware which has garnered more than 93,000 NAIDOC Week related page views.⁴⁶

7. SBS Media – messaging and advertising to diverse communities

SBS Media can help government agencies or entities reach further into multilingual/multicultural communities with their messages or campaigns, including through multi-platform SBS advertising packages. (For more information, see sbsmedia.com.au.)

SBS Media is also raising awareness of the benefits of greater investment by agencies and brands in Australia's Indigenous media platforms with [Beyond 3%](#), an initiative designed to inspire, engage and encourage a long-term shift in the advertising sector.

SBS In Language services help governments and organisations reach communities in their preferred languages. As a federal government approved service provider, SBS In Language provides high quality NAATI-certified translation services for online, print, radio, and video—with in-house capabilities for typesetting, subtitling, voice overs, re-narration, and full-scale audio-visual production that can meet short notices and tight timelines.

⁴⁵ Source: Adobe Analytics 1 Jan– 31 Dec 2023, accessed 29 Aug 2024

⁴⁶ Source: Adobe Analytics 21 May – 31 July 2024, accessed 1 Aug 2024



SBS In Language team has worked on many in-language production projects that supported the Australian Electoral Commission, and we would welcome opportunities for this to be enhanced.

SBS Cultural Connect service also provides advice and expertise in crafting culturally appropriate content as part of SBS's comprehensive service offerings. (For more information, please visit sbs.com.au/inlanguage and sbsmedia.com.au/cultural-connect.)

8. SBS is highly effective and efficient

SBS is highly effective and efficient, with unparalleled and deep multilingual and multicultural expertise, and extensive cross-platform infrastructure. This includes its capability to seamlessly deliver digital media and information services in multiple languages, and provide login and navigation for SBS On Demand in seven languages including English⁴⁷, with SBS On Demand consistently the highest rated media/streaming app on the Apple and Android app stores.

SBS is more essential than ever, demonstrating the effectiveness of SBS's content and services:

- 95% of audiences surveyed claimed that overall, it is good that SBS exists.⁴⁸
- 87% of audiences surveyed said that SBS helps Australia to be a more inclusive nation.⁴⁹
- 91% of audiences surveyed said SBS helps them find content they wouldn't find anywhere else.⁵⁰

SBS reaches 50% of the multilingual population in Australia each week. Awareness of the SBS network is 96% among Italian language users in Australia⁵¹ and 92% among Arabic language users⁵², demonstrating high level effectiveness in SBS service delivery. The SBS network reaches 53% Mandarin speakers, 55% of Arabic speakers, and 64% of Cantonese speakers in Australia each week⁵³, with more than 50 million SBS Audio plays in financial year 2023-24 across more than 300 podcasts in more than 60 languages.⁵⁴

In terms of efficiency, SBS has maintained the lowest cost per audience hour consumed across the free-to-air media sector (for both television and radio).⁵⁵ Audio delivery is also highly cost-efficient and effective, and has the additional benefit of reaching those who may lack literacy skills.

Conclusion

The Inquiry represents an important opportunity to consider the most effective vehicles and levers for civics education, engagement, and education in Australia. As Australia is rapidly becoming more diverse, SBS's role, particularly for multicultural, multilingual and First Nations audiences, is more vital than ever. Noting the context of this inquiry and the decline of social cohesion, there are a range of avenues available to Government to better utilise SBS to deliver constructive societal outcomes, whether through additional funding or collaboration opportunities.

SBS's world-class efficiency and effectiveness, together with its well-established infrastructure and digital service delivery capability, means that any additional work effected through SBS would deliver superior marginal utility and impactful outcomes with strong public benefits.

⁴⁷ Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), English, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese

⁴⁸ SBS Charter Tracker – August 2023 Base: SBS Engaged Audiences

⁴⁹ SBS Charter Tracker – August 2023 Base: SBS Engaged Audiences

⁵⁰ SBS Charter Tracker – August 2023 Base: SBS Engaged Audiences

⁵¹ According to SBS's annual commission of McNair audience research.

⁵² SBS McNair Arabic Study 2021.

⁵³ Financial year 2022-23 SBS In-language Research Program (McNair Research) of Mandarin- (n = 445), Arabic- (n = 425), and Cantonese-speaking (n = 407) participants

⁵⁴ Streamguys; 01/07/2023 – 30/06/2024

⁵⁵ *The Australian*, 30 May 2022, <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/media/eyeballs-on-the-march-as-freetoair-television-slumps/news-story/0c1b75f006d73dbcb2624f53cb35d004>