



Andrew Wilkie MP

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR DENISON

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate inquiry into the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's commitment to reflecting and representing regional diversity.

I strongly oppose the ABC's plans to close down internal television production in Tasmania. This would result in the direct loss of up to 16 local jobs, have a dire impact on the local independent film industry, reduce local content and, in my opinion, is at odds with the ABC's obligation as a publicly-funded broadcaster.

The ABC charter clearly states the national public broadcaster must serve all regions of Australia. Closing down TV production in Tasmania would be contrary to this charter and the ABC must reverse its apparent decision and guarantee internal television production in Tasmania.

Tasmania has a proud history of punching above its weight and producing high-quality, popular programs including Gardening Australia and Collectors. Sadly these shows are no longer produced in Tasmania and, along with the axing of local football coverage, have reduced the opportunities for camera operators, editors and sound technicians who have relied on casual work at the ABC to supplement their independent work. Locally-made programs have been cut from 18 hours in 2010 to 10.5 hours in 2011 and to just 4 hours last year, according to the ABC's recently released TV strategy.

This is a major blow to dozens of local ABC staff whose jobs are under threat and spells the end to TV made by Tasmanians, for Tasmanians. The cuts to broadcast and production facilities would end the ABC's ability to screen local sport, ANZAC Day services and state election coverage, and will force highly-skilled staff to look for work outside the state.

Further cuts will contribute to Tasmania's brain drain and drive independent film makers interstate or overseas for work. Not irrelevant is that I recently met a local independent television producer who lamented the reduction in Australian-produced children's television on the ABC and reported children turning up to kindergarten with American accents picked up from viewing foreign content on "our ABC".

I am of the strong view that the ABC cannot reflect and represent regional diversity in Australia if it continues to centralise television production in Sydney and Melbourne, and I call on the ABC to maintain Tasmania's television production capabilities so the nation's smallest state continues to have a presence beyond news with the nation's public broadcaster.

Yours sincerely

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