

Significant concerns re undermining of the ABC and its resources to produce its own independent Australian arts and historical programming

Dear Senate Enquiry into ABC Programming decisions

I am writing as a concerned Australian citizen to register my protest at the undermining of the independence and power of the ABC to produce its own independent programming, particularly in the area of the Arts on television. Sunday Arts programming a decade ago was of the highest standard, produced in-house, with many hours of studio interviews with artists and producers/directors. Now we have barely an hour a week, and I understand even this Artscape programme is about to be axed. The digital expansion in TV has actually reduced our access to in-house art-coverage, and the archive of Art-related interviews which is such a rich resource is now in sharp decline. It is of utmost importance that the ABC is given increased funding in order to achieve the goals of its charter:

"to provide within Australia innovative and comprehensive broadcasting services of a high standard as part of the Australian broadcasting system consisting of national, commercial and community sectors and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, to provide:

(i) broadcasting programs that contribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of, the Australian community; and (ii) broadcasting programs of an educational nature;"

The ABC must maintain its independence and its skill-base in the staffing and special in-house production units, so it can reflect the cultural diversity of the Australian community, and promote the performing and visual arts and social sciences. Its position as a leader in programme production has been undermined, and the expertise it has built up, and the special place in our cultural landscape which it has earned, is being irrevocably eroded. The Government MUST act now to support the ABC to re-build its expertise to produce high quality, genuine in-house programming in all program genres on radio and TV, and especially the Arts. As a public broadcaster, funded by tax-payers, the ABC MUST be focused on diversity and quality, not on ratings. It must not be emasculated by cuts which replace its in-house expertise with outsourcing.

Signed Dr Sophia Constantinides,