

Submission on The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's commitment to reflecting and representing regional diversity.

Date: 19 January 2013

Dear Sir / Madam

I believe it is a huge mistake and a dereliction of duties for the current Managing Director of the ABC, Mark Scott to disinvest our national broadcaster of regional assets. The closure of production facilities in WA, SA, Qld and Tasmania appears to represent a move to deliberately devalue the ABC. The move seems irrational when a number of the best and most popular programs on ABC television and radio platforms have been terminated. My concerns and impetus for this letter to this inquiry is that the moves by the Managing Director of the ABC are politically driven.

Why would the ABC's Managing Director want to closed down regional production to simply channel more resources into politically biased programs such as The Drum, the 7:30 Report or the RN's Breakfast with Fran Kelly. There was value coming out of the production assets in each state. For us the ABC audience (the shareholders), the value of regional production can be measured by the popularity of informative quality productions such as the Gardening Australia. Formerly anchored in Hobart and hosted by Peter Cundall, the Gardening Australia program had a unique quality, not the least because it was produced in Tasmania. It appears irrational to move production of such a quality program to Sydney without Peter Cundall. Then a decision was made to discontinue The Collectors, another quality production from the Tasmanian assets of the ABC.

The termination of these two programs from Tasmania represents a reduction in value not only to the national audience (the shareholders) but also and more worrying, a loss of assets in terms of human resources. The ABC has ceased production of good programs and a lot of people have lost their jobs in Tasmania. It would of course be very difficult to reproduce the quality of programs such as these in Sydney. Sydney is one of the most expensive cities in the world to live and do business now. Then if you analyse the disinvestment process a bit further to consider all the lost opportunities for business community in Tasmania that were involved with production in Tasmania you can start to see that this disinvestment process that Mark Scott has pursued so aggressively, is a downward spiral. What is Mark Scott's end game here? There is no evidence to show that the pursuit of quality programming is in anyway a driver.

What value is left in the ABC when the organisation is centralised in Sydney and involved simply with producing low grade programming, relying on repeats of tired programs or just purchasing overseas produced content. There is little value to ABC audiences or local economies in the production of shows like Dumb Drunk and Racist or the appalling right wing marketing segment that is the Drum. Personally I cannot stomach the blatant and constant right wing bias in the ABC news and current affairs any longer. I go to on-line alternatives now. The likes of Independent Australia, New Matilda and The Conversation provide me and so many of my friends and acquaintances I have discovered, such a valuable source of information and opportunities for discussion it is unlikely that a return to the ABC will come about.

The ABC is effectively now a loss making venture in the terms of the programs it produces for the national audience. It is hard to see how this disgraceful managing director Mark Scott can get away with it. In the corporate world he would not survive. What company board would allow a managing director to oversee a reduction in market share and thereby devalue the very organisation he or she would normally be charged with growing and building. Mark Scott has devalued the ABC for what is a political agenda. He should be replaced immediately.

**Recommendation:**

The ABC provides full accounting details to support the decision to centralise production facilities in Sydney and Melbourne while ceasing regional production.

Yours Sincerely  
H.Marshall