

**Submission by the**  
**Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance**  
**to the**  
**Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment**  
**(Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015**



The MEAA is the industrial and professional organisation representing the people who work in Australia's media and entertainment industries. Its membership includes journalists, artists, photographers, performers, symphony orchestra musicians and film, television and performing arts technicians.

## **Who MEAA Represent**

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) is the largest and most established union and industry advocate for Australia's creative professionals. Our membership includes journalists, artists, photographers, performers, producers, ballet dancers, symphony orchestra members and musicians, venue and event workers, sportspersons and officials, together with film, television and performing arts technicians. We have a diverse and vibrant membership across all spheres of creative endeavour in Australia.

At the ABC, our members include journalists and presenters in radio, television and online, plus performers engaged on ABC dramatic productions.<sup>1</sup>

Since the introduction of triennial funding in 1989, ABC funding has ebbed and flowed. The certainty that this three-yearly cycle was to provide has been compromised on several occasions, most recently through the reductions announced in November 2014.

It is now a matter of public record that overall funding for the ABC has been reduced by \$254 million over five years, with \$207 million coming from reduced government appropriations over 2015-16 to 2018-19.<sup>2</sup>

These funding reductions will impede service delivery across the ABC and hamper the innovation necessary to ensure the corporation's ongoing viability in the broadcast media marketplace.

This submission offers qualified support for the contents of the Bill. The fundamental qualification is that the ABC is unable to carry out the functions and duties contained in the Bill without (at least) the restoration of the funding removed from the corporation in 2014 and following.

## **Bill's Objectives**

MEAA notes that the Bill seeks to amend the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* to ensure the ABC responsibilities in regional and rural areas are articulated in its Charter; that the corporation establish a new Regional and Rural Advisory Council; and that relevant regional and rural data as to content and staffing be reported upon.

---

<sup>1</sup> The ABC's technical and administration staff are eligible to be covered by the CPSU.

<sup>2</sup> The cuts are: \$20m in 2015-16; \$61m in 2016-17; \$55m in 2017-18; and \$68m in 2018-19

In particular:

**Charter Amendments**

- a. augment the requirement to broadcast programs that contribute to a sense of national identity or cultural diversity, to include a sense of geographic and cultural diversity.*
- b. requires the Corporation to foster the space within which their journalists operate to the benefit of communities and the viability of regional journalism as a profession, by providing the resources necessary to enable the Corporation to satisfy its functions and duties in regional communities.*
- c. require the Corporation to maintain an effective presence in regional communities and to provide regular transmissions of local content across a variety of platforms.*
- d. mandating that the Corporation approach its obligations to provide services in regional Australia from a social service and community perspective, as opposed to a purely commercial position, when making programming and management decisions.*
- e. require the Corporation to have regard to community expectations in regional areas as to the frequency and nature of broadcasts.*
- f. requires the Board to consult regional employee stakeholders and the Rural and Regional Advisory Council in relation to implementing policy affecting regional areas.*

MEAA believes that the notion underpinning proposed changes to the Charter, while sound, would likely impede the corporation's editorial independence by compromising its efforts in ensuring other aspects of the Charter are carried out. We are also uncertain how mandating the provision of services in regional Australia 'from a social service and community perspective' can be brought to bear.

**Rural and Regional Advisory Council**

- a. require the Board to establish a Rural and Regional Advisory Council that reports to the Board in a similar way as the Advisory Council.*
- b. set out the functions of the Council to advise the Board on rural and regional issues in particular and to conduct a biennial survey of regional audiences regarding their satisfaction with services.*
- c. require the Board to have regard to the advice of the Rural and Regional Advisory Council.*
- d. require the Board have at least two directors (which may include the Chairperson) who reside in regional areas.*

MEAA questions the need for a further ABC advisory body. Presumably the operations of such a body would be funded by the ABC. In any event, the appointment of two Board members whose principal residence is in regional and/or rural Australia does not in itself qualify a person to provide advice to the national broadcaster. MEAA is also wary of the various changes and attempted changes to Board member selection that have occurred in the last 10 to 15 years.

In addition, MEAA does not believe that requiring the ABC to establish and have regard to a Rural and Regional Advisory Body is compatible with section 11 of the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act* 1983 in so far as this may interfere with the Board's independence.

### ***Content and Staffing***

- a. require the Corporation to broadcast at least 5 radio bulletins that consist solely or primarily of regional or local news between 5am and 8pm, at regular intervals.*
- b. require the Corporation to facilitate employment of a proportion of staff in regional areas.*
- c. Amend the corporation's reporting requirements to include significant changes of transmission content in rural and regional areas, particulars of employee locations by base and type, together with comparisons to metropolitan employment figures, ratios of journalists to support staff and the particulars of hours of local rural and regional news broadcasts, aggregated by broadcast area.*

MEAA supports these objectives, subject to their compatibility with the ABC's independence.

### **MEAA's Overall Views**

MEAA brings a wealth of practical experience and analysis to the question of the ABC's operations. The ABC's editorial employees represent a core part of our Media Section, which represents over 5000 members nationally.

MEAA's overall view of the Bill is that its objectives cannot be supported without the guarantee of additional protected funding, including the restoration of the \$254 million in cuts announced in November 2014. Regional and rural broadcasting should not have to take precedence or compete with the rest of the ABC's operations.

Traditional regional and rural media voices – across print, broadcast television and radio have been in decline for some time and this trend shows no sign of abating.

The unfolding crisis in rural and regional media coverage is far greater than the ABC's role and contribution. Diversity and local content are rapidly diminishing across the board as funds dry up in both commercial and public media organisations. Changes to media regulation announced by the Minister for Communications on 23 February 2016, such as the abolition of the two out of three or 75% reach rules, will, absent clear and immutable safeguards, further threaten local content and the diversity of opinion available to regional and rural residents.

So-called new media (i.e. digital/online broadcasters and new entrants like Netflix) will not contribute to improvements in local content and the presence of media resources in regional and rural areas. They are not subject to licence conditions, have few if any local resources and often tailor their products to audiences in more than one country.

Notwithstanding the dynamics of media reform in recent times and the race to retain or build market share, the rationalisations of the past five to ten years in print and broadcasting entities make the ABC's prosperity vital.

To achieve the Bill's overall objectives, the Government and the ABC must acknowledge that the delivery of relevant local news and stories in regional areas requires employees living where the stories happen. Honouring a requirement that the Corporation broadcast at least 5 radio bulletins that consist solely or primarily of regional or local news between 5am and 8pm, at regular intervals, will be doomed if dedicated additional resources are not made available.

If a suitable funding increase to regional editorial (and related) employees, MEAA would support the requirement that the Corporation facilitate employment of a proportion of staff in regional areas. (We cannot presently be drawn on what a percentage or sheer number of regional employees might be as the ABC does not appear to report this discrete information.<sup>3</sup>)

We note however, that the ABC's submission to the 2013 Senate Inquiry examining the corporation's commitment to reflecting and representing regional diversity that ABC Radio had 'around 270 FTEs based in regional and rural Australia'.<sup>4</sup> That submission also referred to 'a total of 88 reporters working in regional newsrooms'.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> The ABC produces overall employee FTE and headcount figures in each financial year. The 2015 ABC annual report put the current number of FTEs at 4313, down from 4664 in 2013.

<sup>4</sup> ABC Submission on Reflecting and Representing Regional Diversity, MEAA, January 2013,

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, page 6.

Notwithstanding the actual numbers of employees in regional areas, MEAA strongly supports amending the corporation's reporting requirements to include significant changes of transmission content in rural and regional areas, particulars of employee locations by base and type, together with comparisons to metropolitan employment figures, ratios of journalists to support staff and the particulars of hours of local rural and regional news broadcasts, aggregated by broadcast area.

### **Views of MEAA's ABC Members**

ABC Alliance members have long identified the drain of resources towards metropolitan centres as one of the key factors having a negative impact on the quality, breadth and depth of the organisation's coverage in regional areas.

In 2013, we reported<sup>6</sup> a widespread perception among staff in regional centres that the creation of News24 without dedicated new funding siphoned funding away from regional production and was a key factor in why more radio programs were being networked across regions.

Our earlier submission also touched on the ABC's 2010 reforms which compromised its efforts to ensure adequate regional coverage. It said:

*In 2010, changes were implemented by the ABC to the way rural reporting was structured. Geographically large and diverse "patches", each with their own dedicated rural reporter to source, produce and broadcast stories, were amalgamated, with reporters paired up with a colleague and relegated to the office one week out of two on a "one-in, one-out" shift arrangement.*

The amalgamation of these regions diminished the breadth of coverage provided and adversely impacted the ability of the ABC to represent regional diversity and contribute stories that inform and underpin a national sense of identity.

There was – and remains - a feeling from the remaining regional ABC content makers that they are letting the communities they serve down by not having the resources, time and personnel to create the kinds of important, revealing and in-depth coverage that properly represents the diversity of regional communities.

---

<sup>6</sup> MEAA-CPSU submission to the 2013 Senate Inquiry on the ABC's regional operations

MEAA's ABC members firmly believe:

- i) there are too few staff to be able to cover for them while they film, compile and produce in-depth audio visual content;
- ii) the escalating demands to feed content into multiple platforms allows little time for creative or investigative work outside the office; and
- iii) the lack of travel budgets increasingly hampers the production of new and regionally relevant content.

### **Coverage in Regional and Rural Areas**

Despite economic challenges, population shifts and service availability constraints – including an increasingly shaky commercial media presence – regional Australia represents roughly one-third of our nation's population.

As the 2011 federal government report, 'Families in regional, rural and remote Australia'<sup>7</sup> noted that in 2009 there were 4.3 million people in inner regional areas, 2.1 million in outer regional areas, 324,000 in remote areas and 174,000 in very remote areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2010).<sup>8</sup>

Because of density, the absence of economies of scale and relatively fewer profitable business opportunities, fewer government and private services are delivered.

Access to broadcasts and the range of broadcast products is less in regional and rural Australia than in cities. As the Department of Communications observed in a 2014 paper:

*'In general terms, a distinction can be drawn between metropolitan and regional markets in terms of the control and ownership of the major media outlets. ... Metropolitan markets tend to support a larger number of media outlets, and as a consequence there is a greater level of diversity of ownership and services in these areas. The inverse is true in most regional markets, which tend to exhibit higher levels of media concentration and more limited diversity. This is in part driven by the relatively dispersed nature of the Australian population across a large geographic landmass, which itself tends to result in few (or single) providers serving smaller communities.'*<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> 'Families in regional, rural and remote Australia', Australian Government, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2011, Baxter, J, Gray, M and Hayes, A.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, page 2

<sup>9</sup> Media Control and Ownership, Policy Background Paper No. 3, June 2014, Department of Communications, page 21.

The Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Media and Media Regulation<sup>10</sup> (the ‘Finkelstein Report’) was more direct:

‘Coverage of local community news is ... modest, particularly in small communities in regional and remote areas’. Of newspapers servicing these areas, the Report observed that ‘most of them have limited resources and consequently low capacity for in-depth coverage of local issues. Much of the content is in the form of generic news with little independent analysis.’<sup>11</sup>

‘With regard to regional television services, ‘only the main urban regional centres have a locally produced television news service’.<sup>12</sup>

The question of how to ensure regional content is delivered is not new. For instance, the Australian Broadcasting Authority’s (ABA) 2002 inquiry into the adequacy of local news and information provided by commercial television providers in regional NSW, Queensland and Victoria found that ‘some regional commercial television broadcasters are not sufficiently responsive to audience needs for local content, particularly programs about matters of local significance’.<sup>13</sup>

The ABA’s report gave rise to regulatory adjustments in 2002 and 2006. These included the imposition of license conditions and obligations mandating minimum local content. The impact of these measures appears to have been moderate and short-lived.

### **ABC’s Regional and Rural Coverage**

The Australia Institute’s recent ‘*Heartland: Why the Bush Needs its ABC*’ report rightly observed that the ABC forms a big part of regional media in Australia. It has 400 broadcasters and reporters in regional and rural areas and provides 3,400 of regional news bulletins each year’.<sup>14</sup>

The ABC’s role and reach in regional areas is set out in its annual reports. In 2015, the corporation reported that the primary ABC channel’s ‘weekly reach in 2014-15 was 3.1 million people, or 43.1% of the regional population’, which was down on the 3.2 million people and 44.8% share in 2013-14.’<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Media and Media Regulation, Hon R Finkelstein, February 2012

<sup>11</sup> Finkelstein report, page 328

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, page 328

<sup>13</sup> ABA Report, 2002, page 329

<sup>14</sup> ‘*Heartland: Why the Bush Needs its ABC*’, Australia Institute, September 2015, page 6. (MEAA is not convinced that there are 400 ABC broadcasters and reporters in regional and rural areas. See our later commentary on this issue.)



Overall, ABC Television had a 31.9% day-time share of the regional free-to-air TV market. The prime-time share was 19.4%.<sup>16</sup>

ABC 2's average weekly regional reach was 2 million in 2014-15, equating to 28.9% of the regional population - slightly down on the year before.<sup>17</sup> 7.4 million people access ABC online each week on average.<sup>18</sup>

Although the ABC's technical broadcast reach throughout Australia is 98% or greater, this is only part of the equation. Apart from access to the ABC's broadcast platforms, what matters is access to news, current affairs and programs that have audience appeal, especially locally relevant information.

Perhaps the distinctive importance of the ABC to regional audiences is displayed by its increased ratings (audience share) in these areas in comparison to its metropolitan ratings. This is no doubt linked to the quality of the ABC's output, but also to the fall in genuinely local news delivered by the corporation's commercial rivals.

In this respect, MEAA notes the comments and findings of the *'Heartland'* report, where it noted that 'Regional media is in decline in Australia, with one third of regional areas not meeting the Broadcasting Act's minimum media diversity requirements.'<sup>19</sup>

According to the *Heartland* Report, 44 per cent of regional areas are at the minimum level of four voices.<sup>20</sup>

**The *Save our Voices* Campaign by regional broadcasters states that:**

Over the past 15 years television newsrooms have been closed in Griffith, the Gold Coast, Newcastle, Wollongong, Canberra, Orange, Wagga Wagga, Mildura and Albury and news services and local coverage scaled back in Bendigo, Ballarat and Gippsland, Mt Gambier, Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton and Broome.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> ABC Annual Report 2015, page 40

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, page 45

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, page 46

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, page 7

<sup>19</sup> *'Heartland: Why the Bush Needs its ABC'*, Australia Institute, September 2015, page 3

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, page 7

<sup>21</sup> *Save Our Voices* campaign website, accessed 10/2/2016

Together with broadcasting, in the last three to four years, MEAA has also witnessed precipitous falls in employee numbers in commercial regional print operations.<sup>22</sup>

While commenting about restraints imposed by the reach rule, WIN Chief Executive Andrew Lancaster said 'reluctance to remove the reach rule is forcing us to review how and *if* we deliver local news going forward'<sup>23</sup> (*our emphasis*)

MEAA is sympathetic to the SOS Campaign's call for strong minimum local content requirements to be built into the conditions of owning a regional broadcasting licence, regardless of who owns it.

### **ABC Funding and Efficiencies**

On occasion, ABC funding decisions seem to correspond with a government's known position about the organisation's 'balance'. The absence of certainty that this generates and the sometimes onerous demands to establish its balance contribute to a lack of forward stability for the organisation.

As recently as February 2013, the ABC had welcomed \$10 million in additional funding to pursue (in large part) an expansion of its regional reporting resources, including investment in cameras and live broadcast technology in regional areas.<sup>24</sup> These funds were earmarked by the ABC to 'enhance our capacity to do more original and local reporting'.<sup>25</sup>

Eighteen months after this announcement, the corporation was faced with the news of significant real funding reductions and again, the cycle of funding uncertainty continued its path. In response to the cuts, the corporation's Managing Director issued a statement, '*Our ABC, Our Future*', in November 2014. The foreshadowed cuts included:

- the loss of 400 people from the ABC workforce (estimated at about 10% of the ABC workforce)
- Ceasing State-based local sports coverage
- Closing the five smallest regional radio posts in Wagin, Morwell, Gladstone, Port Augusta and Nowra<sup>26</sup>
- Consolidation of news operations and program cuts

---

<sup>22</sup> APN has shed at least fifty editorial positions, Fairfax about 300 and News Limited at least 100 in the past 3 years.

<sup>23</sup> SMH, 'Regional news faces cuts as WIN, Prime7, Southern Cross Ten war with Tony Abbott', 6 July 2015, Gordon, J and Thomson, P

<sup>24</sup> ABC News gets \$10m extra funding to boost regional coverage, Knott, M., Sydney Morning Herald, 7 February 2013

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Our ABC, Our Future, Mark Scott, ABC Managing Director, 24 November, 2014

MEAA has borne witness to extensive rationalisations in the Australian media for almost a decade. The typical management response to declines in market-share and revenue is to do two things: i) reduce employment; and ii) centralise and reduce content offerings.

Despite the ABC's protests that it has maintained regional services, both these 'prescriptions' were followed by ABC management in 2014 and 2015. The corollary of this is that the number of ABC employees in regions is fewer and the corporation's capacity to deliver meaningful regional product to its regional audience has been diminished.

The ABC's 2015 annual report noted that the 2015-16 budget of \$867 million 'represents a decrease in real funding of \$299 million or 25.6% since 1985-86'. A reflection of Government funding appropriations and the lack of growth (and maintenance) funding from 2001 to 2015-16 is at **Appendix 1** to this submission. These figures display that the organisation's resources generally oscillate between decline and static in an operating environment where service expectations grow year-on-year.

The ABC has commented that its participation in the digital era has been further complicated by the resource reductions. It has said that the latest cuts 'made it doubly difficult' to remain competitive and relevant in this space and that at the time the ABC 'needs to invest in new audience strategies, the ABC is being forced to divert badly needed funds back to consolidated revenue.'<sup>27</sup>

### **ABC Staff Cuts 2014-15**

The true cost of these cuts – including audience reactions - is not yet fully known. MEAA (and CPSU) members have however faced the first massive wave of job cuts. Our unions invested considerable resources in opposing the departure of about 250 ABC employees over 2014-15, in the so-called '*Hunger Games*' staff reduction process.

The ABC's annual report statistics reveal an alarming trend in staff numbers. The ABC's total employee head count has fallen by 351 between the 2013 and 2015 financial years, with more jobs to go.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps more disturbing is that the ABC had higher employee numbers in 1996 and 1997 compared to today, while becoming an organisation that now has four television channels, four national radio networks, over 50 local radio stations and 11 digital radio services.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> ABC 2015 annual report, page 22

<sup>28</sup> See ABC Annual reports, Appendices in 2013 and 2015

### Creation of ABC Regional Division

In an effort to ameliorate regional community concerns, Mr Scott's November 2014 statement also advised the creation of a 'new Regional Division'.<sup>30</sup>

In a statement by the Regional Division's Director on 1 July 2015 (the Division's start date), it was noted:

*There are more than 400 content makers from 48 locations across the country outside the eight capital cities in the ABC Regional footprint, as well as metro-based Rural team members and the Landline, Australia All Over and Saturday Night Country teams.*<sup>31</sup>

There is some opacity to the true number of ABC employees *in* regional and rural locations and those *providing content* to those locations. To say that a fixed number of staff are outside the eight capital cities hardly equates to employee numbers in regions. The ABC did report regional employee numbers in 1996 (1029 'regional services' employees), 1999 (1082 'local and regional services') and as recently as 2008, when it reported that there were 946.5 in 'radio and regional content'.<sup>32</sup> Owing to changes in structure and divisional titles, it is impossible to discern which of these employees were dedicated to regional work and others who contributed to this (or other) work from major metropolitan centres.

We are nonetheless confident that the level of resources in or available for regional and rural content has been reduced. (See **Appendix 2** to this submission for relevant staffing statistics in ABC annual reports from 1996 to 2015.)

This is why MEAA supports the inclusion of reliable and distinct data concerning the ABC's regional and rural staffing profile and the amount of content those employees generate.

In any event, the apparent promise to preserve and enhance regional services by ABC management was punctured<sup>33</sup> by media reports in late October 2015<sup>33</sup>; these reports stated that the ABC's 2016 programming schedule would result in regional morning programs being axed, and replaced by longer breakfast segments and a one-hour local issues shows called *Local Life*. The changes, Crikey said, 'will also impact news bulletins, with only three bulletins to be produced at a station per day (6.30am, 7.30am and noon), with other bulletins being "news headlines" — statewide round-ups with local stories dropped in at a station level'.

---

<sup>29</sup> ABC 2013 Senate Inquiry submission, page 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Our ABC, Our Future*, Mark Scott, ABC Managing Director, 24 November 2014.

<sup>31</sup> July 1 2015 Statement from ABC Regional Director

<sup>32</sup> In 2007, the ABC's annual report stated that there were 920.7 employees in 'Regional Content Technology and Distribution'.

<sup>33</sup> ABC regional radio staff broadcast their displeasure with new formats, Crikey, Myriam Robin, 30 October 2015

In response, the ABC's regional director conceded that some consolidation of effort was occurring in her remarks that:

*The decision to replace the 0830 and 1730 local bulletins with headlines means reporters can be freed up to leave the office. Local news will still be delivered to audiences via headlines at those times.*<sup>34</sup>

On the ground, there is little if any expectation among ABC employees that regional resources will be maintained, much less improved.

In this context, MEAA queries comments in *The Australian* newspaper on 10 February 2016, in which ABC management asserted that 'not one dollar' has been withdrawn from the regional content budget and that its 'investment in regional and rural audiences is almost \$400m per year.'<sup>35</sup> With respect, it is difficult to believe that no proportional cut has been made to regional ABC funding.

### **Summary**

As MEAA noted in its 2013 submission on the ABC and regional diversity, 'In an era where the fragmenting media landscape means newspapers are downsizing or closing in regional areas, it is more important than ever that the ABC is funded to remain a news-forward, responsive and in-depth provider of quality news for regional Australians.'<sup>36</sup>

The ABC is a quality producer of media and drama; its take-up of digital services has been important and effective in an often hostile market. It nonetheless carries responsibility for an array of community service obligations. This obliges the corporation to provide information and services in areas on terms where the cost per head of population is far higher.

MEAA has always supported this role and shares the broad community sentiment that the ABC is special and that it must have professionalism and relevance in all avenues of its broadcast work.

As the *Heartland* report stated, 'addressing the decline of ABC regional media is likely to require increased funding'.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Statement from Fiona Reynolds, Director ABC Regional, 30 October 2015

<sup>35</sup> 'ABC Jobs on the line' if funds cut', Sid Maher, *The Australian*, February 10, 2016, page 3.

<sup>36</sup> MEAA submission 2013

<sup>37</sup> *Heartland*, page 8

The reorganisation of regional services has occurred on several occasions in the last decade or so. These reorganisations are always attended to by supportive words and some new deeds; they cannot, however, mask the slow deterioration in the ABC's actual presence in regional communities. While it is true that some work can be centralised and perhaps done more efficiently out of metropolitan locations, there is no substitute for having resources that are ready to chase and prepare stories and programs in regional areas.

The ABC's regional service delivery cannot be divorced from the organisation's funding. With respect, it would be disingenuous to expect that an organisation can maintain all broadcast commitments when it is in the throes of extinguishing up to ten per cent of its employees.

MEAA therefore believes that it is not feasible to quarantine one sector of the ABC's operations, its regional output, without compromising other areas of endeavour. MEAA does not support this form of operational favouritism.

As commercial media in regional areas continue to cut costs and or eliminate crucial broadcast resources, the ABC and the part publicly-funded SBS, have to meet higher and higher community expectations as to the news and other programs that are offered. (The take-up of new platforms and content available in the current digital era from other media entities has not displaced the apparent expectation that the ABC 'carry the can' for the media at large.) In the same vein, the ABC should never be seen as a broadcaster of last resort or a 'market failure' minimum service provider. These views are a disservice to the areas served by the ABC and the employees who chase, prepare and deliver content to these areas.

MEAA supports the views expressed in the Finkelstein report, which proposed future remedies. The report noted that:

'Although most attention is at a national level, often the short-comings in journalistic surveillance and in the richness of the media environment are felt most at local levels, outside the major cities. This is one area, however, where a small investment by government could produce significant improvement. Small regional communities are poorly served for local news and the Inquiry is of the view that the situation could be ameliorated with some limited support by the government.'<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Finkelstein report, op cit, page 331

In contemplating the ABC as the recipient of additional funds, the Inquiry noted that ‘the additional funding could be tied to specifically designated functions and conditional upon specific undertakings on its use.’<sup>39</sup>

Although MEAA believes that the ABC overall requires funding repair, we would not oppose the designation of tied funds for the purpose contemplated in the Finkelstein inquiry.

MEAA strongly believes that only greater investment in regional Australia can sustain and improve what is generally viewed as inadequate growth (and decline) in regional and rural Australia. In terms of the ABC, this means that dedicated and ‘tamper-free’ funding commitments must be made to ensure that quality services and a genuine regional and rural presence is sustained.

---

<sup>39</sup> Finkelstein report, op cit, page 332

**APPENDIX 1**

<b>F/Year</b>	<b>Total F/Y Appropriation from Government</b>
2000-01	\$623m \$622,921 m revenue from government
2001-02	\$763.7m <sup>40</sup> received \$710,565 m revenue from government
2002-03	\$628.4m total government allocation over f/year (\$807.7m allocated in 2002 budget) <sup>41</sup> \$733,469 m in revenue from government
2003-04,	\$746.9m total government allocation over f/year (\$742.6 allocated in 2003 budget) \$726,895 m in revenue from government
2004-05	\$757.5m total government allocation over f/year (\$756.1m allocated in 2004 budget) \$757.532 m in revenue from government
2005-06	\$774.25m total government allocation over f/year correct (\$773.49m allocated in 2005 budget) \$774,254 m in revenue from government
2006-07	\$823.8m total government allocation over f/year check (\$822.7m allocated in 2006 budget) \$809,532 m in revenue from government
2007-08	\$846.7m total government appropriation (844.6m allocated in 2007 budget) \$833,963 m in revenue from government
2008-09	\$929.9m total government allocation over f/year (\$869.7m allocated in 2008 budget) \$858,411 m revenue from government)
2009-10	\$972.6m <sup>42</sup> total government appropriation over f/year (\$929.9 allocated in 2009 budget) \$915,508 revenue from government
2010-11	(\$972.6m allocated in 2010 budget) \$955,516 m revenue from government

<sup>40</sup> Includes \$20m in borrowings and Asia Pacific Grant

<sup>41</sup> Includes \$30m in borrowings

<sup>42</sup> Includes \$20m equity injection



2011-12	\$1.0 bn total government allocation over f/year (\$990.7 m allocated in 2011 budget) \$997,403 m revenue from government
2012-13	\$1 042.3bn total government allocation over f/year <sup>43</sup> (\$1.03 bn allocated in 2012 federal budget) \$1,023,700 revenue from government
2013-14	(\$1.077bn allocated in 2013 federal budget) \$1,053,853 revenue from government
2014-15	\$1 113.2 bn total government allocation over f/year (\$1.113.6bn allocated in 2014 federal budget) \$1,063,215 revenue from government
2015-16	total allocation over f/year not known (\$20.4 m cut from ABC budget in 2015-16) \$1.11 bn allocated in 2015 federal budget
2016-17	forecast as \$1,019,714 <sup>44</sup>
2017-18	forecast as \$1,031,732 <sup>45</sup>
2018-19	forecast as \$1,039,389 <sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> \$0.4 m reduction over the f/year

<sup>44</sup> 2015-16 Budget Papers, Table 3.2.1

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

**ABC STAFFING 1996 – 2016**

**APPENDIX 2**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>TOTAL EFT</b>	<b>Number of Regional Employees</b>
1996	4887	<b>1029 employees in Regional Services</b>
1997	<i>figures not available</i>	
1998	4177	<b>1073 employees in Regional Services</b>
1999	4134	<b>1082 employees in Local and Regional Services</b>
2000	4295	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile
2001	4116	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile
2002	4260	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile
2003	4321	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile
2004	4243	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile
2005	4298	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile
2006	4345	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile
2007	4461	<b>920.7 employees in Regional Content Technology and Distribution</b>
2008	4499	<b>946.5 employees in Radio and Regional Content</b>
2009	4535	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile
2010	4535	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile
2011	4599	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile
2012	4603	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile
2013	4664	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile <sup>47</sup>
2014	4679	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile
2015	4313	nil distinct regional employee number in Staff Profile

<sup>47</sup> ABC advised in its January 2013 'Regional Diversity' Submission to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee that 'ABC Radio has around 270 FTEs based in regional and rural Australia', see page 5. This submission also stated that 'the ABC has a total of 88 reporters working in 48 regional newsrooms', see page 6. It is unclear whether any employees at that time were double-counted.