

The Tasmanian ABC Production Unit is an invaluable part of media in Tasmania.

The following is an excerpt of the ABC Strategic Plan pertinent to the issue:

ABC STRATEGIC PLAN 2010–13 page 9

Providing content and services of the highest quality lies at the heart of the ABC's public purpose. Audiences expect the Corporation to offer experiences that are engaging, entertaining, informative and trustworthy; the ABC will meet these expectations.

In particular, it remains committed to the creation and delivery of Australian content, services to local communities, the highest levels of editorial standards and multi-platform delivery of content.

The Corporation's ability to sustain and transform itself depends fundamentally on its processes and people. As a public service, it must constantly seek to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations, converting savings into its programs and services. **At the same time, it is crucial that the ABC maintain and support a creative and adaptable workforce that is capable of meeting the demands of the future, and actively engage with the wider Australian creative community.**

The Production Unit in Tasmania fulfils all these criteria.

- Creation of local content that tells the unique stories of Tasmania. These stories can be made without the need to seek development funding.
- The ABC Production Unit is a highly qualified and experienced team – able to create quality content in a timely way that matches or betters private production.
- The ABC has long been an employer of emerging media people both in front of camera and in production. Camera/sound/editing. This is invaluable to support of media community in Tasmania.
- Production Unit staff have often lent personal time and expertise pro bono to emerging Tasmanian film makers

How do I know these things? Well my daughter is a film editor. She left home and studied for 3 years in Melbourne at Swinburne University of Technology in order to gain an excellent qualification in Film and Television. She was in fact Editor of the Year in her final year. Instead of staying in Melbourne she returned to Tasmania and is part of the exciting and creative film scene in Hobart often working pro bono in order to gain experience and maintain skills. Through her I am informed about the crucial nature of the work opportunities and mentoring available due to the existence of an ABC Production Unit in Hobart.

Tasmania is producing enterprising and highly skilful people in film and television. The presence of a Production Unit supports this by occupying a stable and crucial segment of the media continuum in Tasmania.

Here is an example of an emerging Tasmanian talent:

“Rebecca Thomson one of our film makers recently won a National competition for her current project pitching in front of over 700 film producers. In September, Thomson competed against 9 of Tasmania’s finest new film directors to win the opportunity to represent Wide Angle Tasmania at the national finals. Presented by Screen Network and held at SPAA Fringe Conference in Sydney in October, 6 state finalists battled it out in a war of words – pitching their ideas for new films to the industry pro’s.” Wide Angle Tasmania

Tasmania is also becoming a place where bigger budget film productions are just taking off and they employ locals with expertise.

Examples: The Hunter starring Willem Dafoe, Sam Neill and Frances O’Connor was filmed entirely on location in Tasmania; Tasmanian docu-drama The First Fagin based on Judith Sackville-O'Donnell's book *The First Fagin -- the story of Ikey Solomon* featured an all-Tasmanian cast and mostly Tasmanian crew.

If Tasmania loses the ABC Production Unit what will we actually lose?

- Expertise
- Local content – those unique stories that underpin community and also promote our State.
- Experienced television production people will leave the state and therefore mentoring will be unavailable
- Employment for younger people with a production qualification will be greatly diminished – and they will abandon either their hard won skills or the State
- Equipment vital for production – what happens when that big story is needed?
Example: Comment from Facebook 7th January 2013 While the Prime Minister was holding a press conference about the Tasmanian Bush Fires, and the NSW Premier and other authorities held another important press conference about the terrible conditions expected in NSW on Tuesday ... All three commercial networks just rolled along with Ellen, Dr Phil etc. This despite each commercial network having three digital channels each to utilise....The ABC should be commended for showing both very important press conferences LIVE on ABC News 24.
- Adequate and appropriate funding to ABC Tasmania

Finally :

An opportunity to diversify production on the back of the NBN roll-out.

Surely this alone is a reason to not close the ABC Production Unit in Tasmania whilst an exciting opportunity such as this has not been explored.

Remember this item in the ABC Strategic Plan : At the same time, it is crucial that the ABC maintain and support a creative and adaptable workforce that is capable of meeting the demands of the future, and actively engage with the wider Australian creative community.

These issues are validated and supported by Lara Giddings, Premier of Tasmania in a letter to Colin Price 18 Dec 2012

18 December 2012

Dear Colin

Thank you for writing to me to express your concerns about the closure of television production at the ABC in Hobart.

I share your concerns and have written to the Chairman of the ABC, Mr James Spigelman and to Mark Scott, Managing Director, to urge them to reconsider their decision. The ABC production unit has played an important role in telling Tasmanian stories, whether through coverage of local sports or the production of noted programs like 'Gardening Australia'.

As you mentioned, the benefits of local production have also flowed on to our local screen industry with trained staff and equipment being available for outside productions. The ABC has effectively provided training, expertise, employment and facilities for film makers and production staff in Tasmania. The loss of production capacity and employment opportunities will have a significant impact on our screen industry and broadcasting capacity that far exceeds the \$1.5 million the ABC has put forward.

The real tragedy of course is that by centralising production in Melbourne and Sydney, there is less scope for Tasmanian stories to be told to the rest of the nation- not just to our own local audiences.

Your comments about the potential for a community television station are insightful. I have also written to the Commonwealth Minister for Communications, Senator Stephen Conroy, to explore other options for the ABC in Tasmania, including developing Tasmania as a centre of excellence for digital screen production to take advantage of the early rollout of the National Broadband Network here. The NBN might be a suitable platform for a form of community broadcasting within Tasmania, interstate and overseas.

Tasmania's Federal Labor members have also been working to try to change the ABC's decision and a Senate Committee inquiry is now underway in to the ABC's commitment to reflecting and representing regional diversity, and the impact of the ABC's policy of centralising production in Sydney and Melbourne.

I hope that our combined efforts will lead to a change of heart by ABC management, or at least an investment in a new direction for the ABC in Tasmania.

Thank you again for your letter and your thoughts on the future of the screen industry in Tasmania.

Yours sincerely
Lara Giddings MP
Premier

Thank you for your consideration of these issues as part of the **Inquiry: The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's commitment to reflecting and representing regional diversity..**

Yours sincerely,
Carol Rea
Margate, Tasmania

