

11 January 2013

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

SENATE INQUIRY:
THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION'S COMMITMENT TO REFLECTING
AND REPRESENTING REGIONAL DIVERSITY

I would like to make the following submission in relation to the current Senate Inquiry.

Specifically, I would like to refer to the closure of ABC Television's Tasmanian Production Unit and the ensuing impact on both television production and employment within this state. I represent a large pool of freelance producers, researchers, and production crew who have gained significant employment through this unit over many years, via its production of *Gardening Australia* and *Collectors* programs, and other individual documentary programs. There are no other production houses in Tasmania through which these freelancers can find alternative employment, and hence, sadly, this closure will personally signal the end of thirteen years of involvement with ABC Television.

Tasmania's experience indicates that Regional Australia is quite capable of making engaging and sustainable television. *Gardening Australia* originated in Tasmania and was produced for 25 years. Then *Collectors*, which ran at prime time, was produced for seven years. Countless individual documentary programs have been produced in Tasmania. Did any talent or anyone else associated with these programs ever query Tasmania's ability to produce these shows? Not once. Never. My point is that professionalism and creative expertise does not cease at the perimeter of the Sydney CBD.

It is very concerning that regional Australia, in a broader context, is being denied both further representation within the Australian community, but perhaps more importantly, being denied the opportunity to participate in the wealth creating media of the 21st century.

It is apparent that building self-reliance and resilience in regional communities is a major and worthy policy aim of the Federal Government. So it is ironic that at a time when global trends emphasise local growth and the celebration of regional culture that ABC management is embarking upon the further centralisation of production, predominantly in Sydney.

In regional areas, television creates social capital within local communities. It provides access for locals to tell their stories – stories which are not necessarily

news-worthy, but which nevertheless make up the rich and varied fabric of community life, and instil a sense of pride that these productions are 'home-grown'.

Tasmania is currently (and successfully) reinventing itself, and the loss of a television production unit fundamentally impacts on career pathways for students and other career opportunities for industry professionals relocating here.

Unravel this part of the artistic and cultural tapestry and the threads quickly start to fray and break. It is the future jobs and creative output forgone by this policy switch that are especially concerning. Experiencing unintended market failure is one thing, but deliberately creating it is another.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry, and I would be happy to discuss any of these points at greater length with you and your colleagues.

Jill Beckingsale