

Office of the Hon Cassy O'Connor MP

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**Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
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RE: ABC Local Production Tasmania

To Honourable Members of the Standing Committee,

I am writing in my capacity as the Tasmanian Greens' spokesperson on the Arts, but also as the Minister for Community Development in Tasmania, to express my concerns regarding the proposed cuts to the local ABC TV production unit in Tasmania, and its intended replacement with a \$500,000 per year fund contingent on being matched by the Tasmanian Government via Screen Tasmania.

In the Tasmanian Greens' view, and the view of many Tasmanians who feel strongly attached to their local ABC, this move is short-sighted and contrary to the ABC's Charter to serve rural and regional Australia.

It also denies the great talent of our local ABC production teams, and the quality of the work they have delivered to the national ABC audience.

It is my strong belief that the loss of the production unit will have a profoundly detrimental effect on the local Tasmanian film and television industry which has a closely interlinked working relationship with the ABC. The loss of 16 talented and creative professionals employed at the local ABC is a major blow to the local industry, with key people in the creative industries here very concerned about the negative flow-on effect of downsizing ABC local production.

The local production team don't just produce content, but are also the mentors, teachers and advisors to the next generation and to others within the industry. The loss of this capacity will have a major impact on other creative industries like film and documentary

production, as skilled freelance producers and camera operators who rely on the ABC for casual work head interstate.

The local production crew consists of people with local knowledge as well as important connections and networks developed over time which enables them to accurately interpret, report and present local content in a way that cannot be achieved from a nationally centralised location.

Since it was created, the ABC's greatest achievement has been its ability to capture the regional flavour of Australia, and promote diversity and breadth of our culture.

The loss of the ABC Tasmania production unit will create a vacuum in the local industry that will be hard to fill and will diminish the quality and depth of local storytelling.

Centralising ABC production to the large capital cities will not only lead to a greater likelihood of bland and undifferentiated content, it will irreparably damage the development and training of new talent across the industry in regional areas, including Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Greens hold the firm view that ABC Local Production has a critical role to play in the continued development of strong, dynamic creative industries in Tasmania.

There has been some great TV and film content produced locally, and as always, it seems to have been achieved on a 'shoe string' budget and good will. Strategically, and with the ABC's Charter to serve rural and regional Australia, now is the time to be putting more resources into local production, not less.

The proposed \$500,000 funding to Screen Tasmania is most welcome, but it should be additional to maintaining the local production unit and would provide a significant and much needed boost to a traditionally underfunded industry.

I am mindful however that this proposal is a cost shifting exercise and would not commensurately compensate for the loss of local talent if the ABC production crew unit is disbanded.

Tasmania is a small and unique state, with a proud island identity. It has always had an exceptionally inspiring pool of creative talent but it is only now that this strength is beginning to truly surface, gain recognition and be measured for its significant contribution to the vibrancy and economic prosperity of the state. Increasingly, with the rapid decline of the old economy, and the establishment of world-class facilities and events such as MONA, MONA FOMA, the Festival of Voices and Ten Days on the Island, the State has become far more reliant on the creative industries as a significant component of the newly emerging local economy.

The ABC has an obligation under its charter to support regional storytelling, and to promote the diversity and breadth of our national culture.

On behalf of all Tasmanians who love and cherish the ABC, I am urging ABC management to reverse what I believe to be an irresponsible and short sighted decision. I urge you to

reinstate the local production unit and help Tasmania build and maintain its reputation as a vibrant and creative state.

With respect, the ABC Board and Mr Mark Scott are at risk of making a terrible decision and I strongly urge Honourable Members of this Committee to protect local ABC production in Tasmania, and all the extended creative endeavour it supports.

Yours sincerely,

Cassy O'Connor MP
Tasmanian Greens Member for Denison