

The Environment and Communications References Committee.

Re: Inquiry into the commitment by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) to reflect and represent regional diversity in Australia.

12 January 2013

I'd like to comment on the ABC's recent decision to cut ABC production facilities and staff in Tasmania as it relates to the Inquiry's terms of reference and with a particular emphasis on the capabilities of the ABC as the designated Emergency Broadcaster following the cuts to production.

Firstly I'd like to state the obvious – that as an island state, the culture of Tasmania is very different to that of mainland Australia and it is impossible to properly reflect this without a production unit there. Centralising production to the main centres of Sydney and Melbourne will only serve to further diminish the impact of Tasmanian life and culture on Australia as a whole.

Secondly, the removal of the Tasmanian production unit will severely reduce the availability of specialist TV production skills as those previously employed by the ABC (both permanently and the large numbers of people employed casually) will move interstate and overseas to find employment. The loss of those skills to the state will reduce further the ability of the ABC to produce not only relevant general TV production but also specific content such as emergency broadcasting. The recent bushfire emergencies are a case in point, with specialist personnel being flown in from interstate to cover the crisis. The loss of time and local knowledge in doing this can in no way improve the ABC's ability to cover emergencies and to provide adequate emergency coverage.

I was in Tasmania at the time of the ABC's announcement and it is fair to say that the whole community was shocked by the decision to remove a unit that has provided a half century of service to Australian broadcasting. To remove the ABC's Tasmanian production unit would be akin to removing Tasmania's Senators from parliament... justifiable perhaps from a purely financial perspective but unconscionable from any humanitarian or intellectual viewpoint.

The Committee should call on the ABC to have the decision should be reversed as soon as possible.

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