

Subject: Senate Inquiry into the ABC
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Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the ABC.

The quality of programming on the ABC is being eroded by the constant out-sourcing of the making of programs. The public has lost the world class Natural History Unit and now is threatened with the loss of the Arts Unit. The production of documentaries and dramas by the ABC is compromised by continual commercial partnerships.

The employment of management staff who appear more committed to the commercial sector than to the ideals of public broadcasting is jeopardising the role and the standards of what was once one of the great public broadcasters. To hear Kim Dalton defend the contribution to the Arts of the ABC by constantly citing the forthcoming telecast of the film Mrs Carey's Concert is quite disgraceful.

The axing of Art Nation, a program which alerts viewers to various events and gives an introduction to artists and ideas, is vandalism. By all means have more in depth programs on the arts but do not do away with programs which already fulfil a useful role.

The part played by Radio National must be maintained. The Book Program is a daily highlight with high quality discussion and review of literature and literary events. The popularity and success of the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne must surely indicate how much well produced programs of this type are appreciated. It is rumoured that the specialist programs at 8.30 am are to be tampered with: I still mourn the loss of the Religion program with Stephen Crittendon which provided intelligent discussion of religious issues and events. To lose such specialist areas at prime time slots as the Health Report, the Law Report and Rear Vision would be too much. Such meddling with valuable programs is inexcusable.

I emphasise that I am not opposed to change but I am opposed to constant dumbing down, to chasing rating figures, to destroying the capacity of the ABC to produce its own programs. Change should bring improvement. To see the ABC succumb to puerile celebrity programming is alarming.

To sum up:

The ABC should create and maintain independent production units skilled in the creation of innovative programs in the fields of drama, the arts and science. Co-production and out-sourcing should only ever supplement the ABC's own work. The ABC should have some production

units in all states and not concentrate its operations only in Sydney. It must remember its role as a national broadcaster.

The ABC should implement its charter and fulfil the requirements: to inform, to educate and to entertain. There must be variety and diversity of needs should be catered for.

It should neither chase ratings nor become a niche broadcaster only. All Australians are entitled to quality programs produced by the ABC.

Gael Barrett