

ABC

To the Senate Inquiry into the ABC.

During the past several years, developments in technology have led to ever increasing methods of communication, and the ABC (as well as other broadcasters) has been in the forefront of innovation in these methods. However this has been costly, and despite a reasonable increase in funding for the last triennium, the extra load has resulted in fewer resources available for its traditional role of supporting Australian content in all fields, especially television.

In the likely event of little more Government funding being available, for the ABC to be able to maintain local content and hopefully increase it from its present low point, there must either be extra funding from outside, or a cutback in some areas.

The ABC now has three main outlets: television, radio, and internet-based content. The former is by far the most expensive, and most talked of when considering ABC funding and content. Yet it increasingly appears that the main difference between the ABC and commercial TV channels is the lack of commercial breaks in programmes (for which I am heartily grateful). The ABC attempts to fill four television programmes, which means filling up with predominantly overseas (especially UK) content, and repeats. Yet the one programme that is mainly Australian content, ABC24, is repetitive, (as any news channel has to be) and competes with other services from overseas. Even ABC2 is merging with the childrens' channel part of the time. There can be changes when the analogue channels are stopped, but we must question whether the ABC, in financially straightened times, really needs to run as many as 4 television channels? The proposed axing of several programmes suggests the answer is no.

On the other hand, the radio services are excellent, vital, and must be regarded as Australia's principal cultural achievement. Obviously costing far less than television, the programmes on Radio National are so important to the more academic and educated sections of society, and there is no other competition on the airwaves. In particular the arts programming needs extending, not cutting down as proposed. Equally praiseworthy are the internet services which will no doubt continue to expand as more people become reliant on them.

Prof. Robert Scopes