

14 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.

I have worked in the Hobart branch of the ABC in Tasmania for 26 years. As a Producer/Director within the TV Production Unit for the last 15 years, I have worked locally and interstate filming national programmes such as Auction Room, Collectors and Gardening Australia.

The closure of this Unit will not only directly impact on Production Staff in the Hobart branch but will also impact on many freelancers, work experience students including students from our indigenous community and have less visible flow on effects in our wider community.

- I have regularly worked with freelance camera operators, audio operators, researchers and local talent/ hosts.
- The Tasmanian Production Unit has regularly mentored work experience students from Rosny College and through the Tasmanian Indigenous Working Group the unit has been working towards work experience placements for indigenous student into all facets of TV Production.

In more recent times I have seen ABC TV embrace and invest in new services and delivery options for ABC content to keep up with the fast pace of technological change (ABC1, ABC2, ABC3, ABC4, New24, iview.)

But at what cost? Seemingly at the cost of regional television content and representation.

In 2011 the ABC announced new initiatives with two regional states WA and SA. The ABC now taps into money from Screen West and South Australian Film Corporation to produce content that was once produced by ABC staff. In other words material that the ABC simply brands with their Logo and broadcasts.

Even with the money secured for production for WA and SA why is it that we are seeing on our screens re-run after re-run of British content presented by mostly middle aged men? Australians know more about the coastline and history of Britain than they do of their own country.

The question too has to be asked, with the reliance of external funds to produce content what happens when the investment dollars dry up from Screen West and South Australian Film Corporation? The ABC is left with no internal production staff in regional Australia to produce quality television and no funding.

Another crucial question that should be asked of ABC Management is how can the ABC guarantee that programming made by commercial production companies from money sourced outside the ABC is truly independent? After all, true independence is the foundation of the National Broadcaster and the one thing that differentiates the ABC from all other broadcasters.

In relation to Tasmanian Television Production, the Tasmanian State Government does not have the money to match Mr Scott's sweetener of \$1.5Million dollars over 3 years for independent external production. At this point in time it is still not clear if the ABC money will stay on the table for external production if the State Government does not match the funds.

So what does the closure of the ABC TV Production Unit mean for Tasmania?

- Fundamentally Tasmania could lose all representation both within the ABC and externally.
- Tasmania will lose the enormous skill base which has been developed over decades.
- Tasmanians will lose the capacity to tell local stories the way they want them to be told (apart from in a News format).
- With no local content being produced there will be no historical archive to draw from in the future.
- There will be no opportunities for tomorrow's program makers within the state.
- And over time the history of this Production Unit and its successes will be rewritten and possibly lost forever!

Thank you for providing the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry.

Tracey Smith