

Submission to Review of ABC and SBS

Towards a Digital Future:

Submission by the ABC Section of the
Community and Public Sector Union



December 2008



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Foreword

The CPSU ABC Section welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this discussion on the future of public broadcasting. Through this process we hope to celebrate the ABC's achievements, acknowledge where the ABC can improve and explore ways to better serve the Australian community. We recognise the need for the ABC to wisely allocate taxpayer funds and maintain its underlying value, built up through years of public investment.

The need for the ABC to provide quality Australian content lies at the core of our submission. We imagine a better ABC, one where the ABC can simultaneously reach their multiple audiences through programs with mass appeal and highly targeted specialist programming. As digital take up accelerates the ABC no longer needs to choose between size of audience and depth of content, it can deliver both outcomes simultaneously. We want the ABC to utilise its comparative advantage in reach and cross platform content creation. We want the ABC to unleash its capacity to repack content for multiple purposes. We want the ABC to open its archive to the independent sector and the public.

We imagine a better ABC, where its traditional roles are complemented with specialist services to drive productivity and skills enhancement, and play a central role in the education revolution. New technologies make this future possible and the ABC is well placed to contribute to what we see as an integral part of 21st century nation building.

Managing the ABC for this exciting future requires vision, a vision that is too often clouded by funding shortfalls and subsequent organisational pressures. The cost cutting of recent years along with the expansion of ABC services, particularly online, have had a direct impact on the quality of ABC services. Whilst the CPSU agrees with much of ABC management's future agenda, we are wary of the continued thinning of resources.

We imagine a better ABC, one that is funded adequately to deliver on the immense opportunities available to us as the digital era unfolds.

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) is an active and progressive union committed to the promotion of a modern, efficient and responsive public sector that delivers quality services and quality jobs. We represent around 60,000 members in the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), the Australian Public Service (APS), ACT Public Service, NT Public Service, ABC and the CSIRO. We also have members in Telstra, commercial television and the telecommunications industry. Within the ABC, the CPSU is

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the largest single union and represents Radio Broadcasters and Presenters; TV Producers, Technical and IT staff, Administrative and Professional staff, Operational staff such as camera operators, editors, audio engineers and some senior executive staff.

This submission has been prepared by the ABC Section of the CPSU. Whilst the digital future poses similar challenges (and opportunities) for both the ABC and SBS, the differences between the organisations are significant and for the sake of clarity it was determined that separate ABC and SBS submissions would be made by the union.

References to the CPSU in this submission should therefore be taken as a reference to the CPSU ABC Section.

Graeme Thomson
ABC Section Secretary
CPSU
December 2008

1. The Role of the ABC

In 1996, the CPSU's submission to the Mansfield Review opened with the words:

The ABC is at a watershed. Over more than sixty years, it has provided an expanding range of radio and television services to Australians throughout the nation, and made a significant contribution to the growth and flourishing of our national identity in an increasingly plural and diverse society.

At that time a number of ABC employees from Radio National and the TV Science Program *Quantum*, had patched together ABC Online with a seed grant of \$2 million. Ten years later, ABC Online has turned into one of the world's most impressive (and visited) websites. The story of how ABC Online came to be, and how it not only survived, but blossomed provides insights for how the ABC needs to reinvent itself as it moves into the truly digital age. The simple lesson was that audiences visited the site because of the outstanding quality of the content.

It's still about the content

From the outset, the CPSU submission makes the simple, but important point: Australian audiences will continue to want to watch and listen to programs. These programs have traditionally been called TV and Radio.

The development and convergence of delivery platforms may change the way audiences receive the programs, but the essence of what attracts them remains the same. As audiences become more familiar with the new technologies they still want 'programs'.

In the excitement to consider the digital future, there is a real danger that attention is being focussed on the means of delivery i.e. the 'pipes' rather than what goes down them. Therefore the CPSU urges that any examination of the future of the ABC (and SBS) be conducted primarily through the prism of programs and content, rather than focussed on the way it is delivered.

The digital future provides opportunities for interactivity, greater diversity and choice. More channels however cannot be equated with greater choice. The now famous Bruce Springsteen line '57 channels but nothing on' is a salutary reminder that the digital future poses both opportunities and risks.

Unless the ABC is provided with additional funding to create programs for the new platforms, program quality will continue to be thinned, Australian content will be further

diminished and with it, the justification for public funds to be expended on the national broadcaster. An ABC is only worth supporting, and fighting for, as long as it provides quality programs.

Objectives are more relevant than ever

The discussion paper describes the current (statutory) objectives that apply to the ABC. These are listed as universality, localism, Australian content, comprehensive and diverse programming, diversity of news and information, education, innovation and quality.

In the multiplatform and multichannel media environment, it is not the functions or objectives of the ABC that need to be reviewed: it is the ABC's approach to meeting these functions. The CPSU believes that the current federal statutes generally provide a suitable framework to ensure that the ABC as the national broadcaster delivers quality content. Each of the statutory objectives included in the discussion paper remain relevant. However the ABC has increasingly failed to live up to these standards.

Comprehensive and diverse programming

The ABC should maintain its role as a comprehensive broadcaster, presenting the full and diverse range of program types rather than being a complementary broadcaster which only provides content that is not broadcast by the commercial sector.

For over 75 years, the ABC has grown and diversified as Australia's population has itself grown and become more diverse. Since 1983, its Charter has obliged it to provide a comprehensive broadcasting service; one which responds to the concerns and needs for information of rural, regional and urban communities, and which binds those communities together and gives them a sense of belonging to a larger national community. The Charter sees the ABC as having a key role in fostering and maintaining a distinctive yet diverse Australian national identity.

Comprehensive broadcasting affords audiences the opportunity to discover a variety of content across all delivery platforms. Audiences are complex; their viewing or listening habits are not limited to one form or genre. Audiences attracted to one form of programming often find out about other programs that may interest them by listening and watching unrelated programs. This interaction builds audiences for more specialised programs and vice versa.

Audience needs and interests are as diverse as the Australian population itself. For example, the services a farmer in south-west Queensland needs from the local ABC radio station at the start of the day - information on the weather, stock and commodity prices, the results of yesterday's sales - are very different from what a small business owner in Hobart or a teacher in Perth will need from their metropolitan ABC station. Yet that same farmer may well also want to know what legislation was debated in Canberra the day before, how the international markets are moving, what's happening to Australia's relationship with China and who won the cricket in Sri Lanka

It is vital that the Charter continue to facilitate the need to balance localism with a national perspective. In a country whose population is geographically so widely dispersed, and so culturally diverse, the ABC provides one of the very few forums in which Australians can carry on both local and national conversations with each other.

Sir David Attenborough has eloquently argued the case for comprehensive public service broadcasting:

THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING (PSB)



PSB, to me, is not about selecting individual programme strands here or there, financing them from some outside source and then foisting them upon commercial networks. Public Service Broadcasting, watched by a healthy number of viewers, with programmes financed in proportion to their intrinsic needs and not the size of the audience, can only effectively operate as a network – a network whose aim is to cater for the broadest possible range of interests, popular as well as less popular, a network that measures its success not only by its audience size but by the range of its schedule

...broadcasting is something else. It is that miraculous advance, still not a century old, that allows a whole society, a whole nation, to see itself and to talk to itself. It enables people, no matter who they are and where they are, to share insights and illuminations, to become aware of problems and collectively consider solutions. It is one of the wonders of our age.

It should not be editorially controlled by governments. Nor should it be used exclusively for commercial purposes. It should be a place where all kinds of people, with all kinds of interests and insights, can share them with society as a whole. That, I maintain, cannot be achieved with a few individual programmes, dotted here and there on networks whose aims and basic functions have some other ambition. It can only be done by a coherent network, one that measures its success not only by the size of the audience it manages to gain for an individual programme but – very

importantly – by the width of the spectrum of interests it manages to represent. A network, in short, that is dedicated primarily to the service of the public.

Sir David Attenborough London, 30 April 2008¹

Comprehensive Broadcasting in a Multichannel environment

Multichannelling provides a solution to the singularly most difficult problem facing comprehensive broadcasters such as the ABC: how to address the competing needs of audiences through a single platform. When the ABC was limited to a single channel for TV, all genres and programs had to compete for time slots, particularly around the peak viewing times between 7.00pm and 10.30pm.

Multichannelling provides an opportunity for the ABC to better meet its Charter obligations by allowing it to simultaneously inform, educate and entertain. Hence multichannelling increases the ability of the ABC to be a comprehensive broadcaster.

If multichannelling is to bring about an improvement in the media landscape it is because it provides greater opportunities for *quality* programs - not just more programs.

Innovation and Quality

Quality requires money. This is not to say that quality programming always costs more, but it tends to. The difference between a good documentary and a poor documentary for example generally rests on the capacity of the documentary maker to tell an entertaining story that provides insight, balance and integrity. In rare cases this can be done with limited shooting and editing. However in most cases, quality documentaries require extensive research, editing and polishing. This process costs money which explains why the ABC has shifted towards commissioning programs that involve less research and do not require specialist program makers.

In order to nurture innovation, it is necessary for the ABC to take risks; new program ideas and formats don't always work. Reductions in the ABC program budget have left little capacity for the ABC to be innovative.

The ABC, as the national public broadcaster, is uniquely positioned to provide quality and innovative content because unlike the commercial sector its content strategy is not shaped by the need to secure audience share for advertising revenue. This is increasingly important

¹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/thefuture/transcript_atten6.shtml

in the digital future as multiple delivery platforms further fragment audiences and advertising revenue. The ABC, less affected by these factors than the commercial sector, is best placed to be the leader in innovative and quality programming in the digital future.

6 million decline in US TV audiences attributed to loss of quality

Another report came out while I was in LA pointing out the incredible fact that the networks in the States have lost six million viewers over the last year. Six million viewers had disappeared.

In fact, I believe the BBC's continued and growing success lies in the range, depth and diversity at its creative heart, its ability to build loyalty in its audience and its mandate for creative risk – and, as a result, its consistent delivery of hits in drama, in comedy, in factual and in entertainment formats.



Jana Bennett, Director, BBC Vision, Speech given at the Banff World Television Festival 2008²

The decline of quality at the ABC

Quality and innovation have declined at the ABC over the past decade. This decline can be attributed to a combination of factors including inadequate budgets and ineffective management. It can be seen across many areas of the ABC: one area that has suffered gravely has been Australian content.

Australian content

The ABC as the national story teller is failing to deliver a suitable range and level of Australian content. Over the past 12 years, the funding available to the ABC for purchasing and producing programs has declined significantly. This reduction in funding together with the ABC's decision to divert funding to online, has been at the expense of Australian content.

Currently less than 40% of ABC programming is local content. Of this, excluding news and current affairs, the majority of local content is comprised of light entertainment programs that are relatively cheap to produce. Only minimal hours of drama and documentaries are represented in ABC local content. The ABC has also cut local content over time including drama, closed down its Natural History Unit and long form documentaries have been outsourced.

The discussion paper notes that the low levels of local content reflect the relative costs of local production versus acquiring UK or US programs. This however is a false comparison

² http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/speeches/stories/bennett_banff2008.shtml

in that it compares the cost of production with the costs of purchasing a licence to transmit a program. It also underestimates the true economic value of ABC production: most in-house production can be rebroadcast an unlimited number of times at no additional cost, on a range of platforms. Moreover the costs of some programs can be partially recovered through the sale of overseas rights. The growth of new delivery platforms creates a demand for content to fill the 'transmission pipes' and with it a revaluation of content and the back catalogue.

The ABC however cannot lay claim to being a champion of local production. The discussion paper provides clear evidence that the ABC has failed to support local production, although it is worth noting that, in the absence of meaningful regulation for local documentary content on commercial TV channels, the Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) have been the major broadcasters of local documentaries.

The CPSU recommends that the ABC be recognised and funded to provide quality local content and that the funding is earmarked for in-house production and commissioning of local content for television: especially of drama and long form (i.e. 50 minutes plus) documentaries.

Australian Content and the Commercial Sector

The business models that sustain the commercial sector are being challenged by new delivery platforms, audience fragmentation and shifts in advertising revenue. To date media proprietors have responded to these challenges by cutting back on costs. That has been achieved by staff cuts and moving out of high end/quality production, most notably in Current Affairs. It is likely that the commercial sector will continue to steer away from producing quality Australian content especially drama, children's and documentaries.

Nine Axe Quality Current Affairs Program

'Go and watch the ABC or Sky' says Ray Martin during Channel Nine's final episode of *Sunday*,

'It's a dopey idea to drop a program like this because this almost says to an audience 'well we don't do current affairs anymore. Why don't you go and watch the ABC, or go and look at Sky Television, we don't do it anymore.'



Ray Martin, 3 August 2008

The ABC's 'business model' is different because it is funded to produce and broadcast quality comprehensive programming by the Australian Government, not from advertising revenue.

To the extent that TV production models are currently being challenged by convergence, attention and thought needs to be given to how the ABC should position itself. In contrast to TV, radio has already worked out its place in the future media landscape. It was forced to adapt itself to the challenge of TV in the 50's. It reinvented itself and its current model is likely to remain largely unchanged into the digital future.

Accordingly, this submission primarily focuses on the challenges facing TV and there is a TV centric view expressed within this submission. However, the CPSU acknowledges that there will be some changes that will affect radio. New methods of program making and delivery mean that greater use can be made of the specialist content that emanates from radio.

Specialist Content a must for the ABC

Now more than ever, there is a need for the ABC to invest in specialist content. That means content that is created by program makers with a strong knowledge of the material they are building.

Australian public culture is in a critical condition. It's shrinking. I'm referring to critical, edited public culture, both specialised and general.

The vast expanses of chat, gossip, headlines and sport are thriving, as is the narcissistic internet. Some of the reasons are obvious: media fragmentation; the financial woes of print and television; the sheer variety of personal pursuits; managerial strangulation; chronic under funding of the ABC.

...

Intelligent public culture depends on specialism, which depends on proper research, editing and expertise. We're suffocated with babble, sport and lifestyle as it is.

Frank Campbell, The Forum, Weekend Australian, 29-30 November 2008

Scheduling decisions for the new channels must focus on specialist programming. In Chapter 7 of the submission the CPSU argues that specialist programming makes effective use of the new channels, fulfils a public purpose and is economically viable.

Organisational Change Required

The key to the transition lies in breaking down the ABC culture of working in 'silos' (TV, Radio and News Divisions) and overhauling the commissioning process so that it is genuinely multiplatform in nature. The 'silos' are a major source of inefficiency. They lock

up resources and limit the capacity of the organisation to derive benefit from multiplatform production.

ABC management are failing to utilise existing staff effectively and their skills and knowledge are being wasted. Employment practices at the ABC prevent the internal exchange of staff within the organisation. Short sighted rules established by ABC management lock employees into particular divisions (TV, Radio etc). Management refuse to take on staff from other divisions because they do not want to accept responsibility for accrued benefits and entitlements. In short, talk about multiskilling and skill development within the ABC is management rhetoric. The majority of staff believe that the ABC is handicapped by a poorly managed regime that is parochial and risk averse.

The CPSU proposes a significant restructuring of the ABC to release the efficiencies and economies of the digital age. That change involves shifting responsibility for the commissioning of programs (i.e. decisions about what programs/content are to be made) away from the existing output managers i.e. TV, Radio and News to a genuine cross platform commissioning body. The CPSU proposes that this commissioning body provide space for the various genres (including specialist areas) to argue and pitch for places on the schedule and for funding. The CPSU also assumes that this model will be resisted by the current ABC 'silo' managers.

The digital platforms need to be populated with a mixture of factual content, education, children's programming sport and the arts. The CPSU argues that light entertainment will be provided by a mixture of in-house and external production and this content will continue to be broadcast on its primary TV networks and through its local radio network. The task of building quality factual programming requires a longer term investment in people. It requires hiring people who have a detailed understanding of particular areas of knowledge and who over time are also trained as storytellers in the art or craft of making programs and maintaining their employment through changing fads and fashions in scheduling and program types.

ABC Performance and Key Performance Indicators

The CPSU argues throughout the submission for the ABC to be given responsibility for, amongst other things, the management of a national educational portal. It is a significant initiative that the CPSU believes gives new and added meaning to the term 'education revolution'. The submission has also pointed to the systematic failure by ABC

management to address many of the organisation's (statutory) objectives. It may be that the excuse lies in the inadequate funding of the ABC or the repeated and politically motivated attacks that have been made on the organisation, or it may simply reflect the poor direction it has received from a politically stacked board.

The CPSU is aware therefore of the potential disconnect between these statements and the call we also make for a substantial increase in ABC funding. The CPSU has strenuously argued for the independence of the ABC. We have at every turn opposed any attempts by government to interfere in the operation of the ABC. Independence from political interference and commercial imperative have been two critical pillars of the ABC.

The CPSU strongly believes in the extension of the ABC's role into areas such as education. It also supports the imposition of quotas on levels of local content, internal production and on the general forms of programming such as specialist content. The question that is then posed is whether it is reasonable for the federal government or parliament to provide funding for these initiatives without having the capacity to hold the ABC to account? The CPSU maintains its position that the principle of independence from the government of the day is inviolable. The CPSU however accepts that parliament should have improved mechanisms to measure and test the ABC's performance in the provision of these additional and enhanced services.

The CPSU suggests therefore that the ABC maintain complete and absolute independence over its editorial content: the stories it wants to tell, and the editorial line within those stories. The CPSU accepts however that the ABC needs to give 'some slack' back to parliament about broader issues: issues such as the split between general and specialist programming; its demonstrated commitment to the arts, music and the performing arts and documentaries.

The CPSU notes that the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will require a level of sophistication. It would not be sufficient for example to simply stipulate the number of hours of local content. Measuring the ABC performance in terms of quantity of Australian content is a useful but limited indicator. The ABC's output also needs to be measured by how well the ABC serves the many audiences that make up the Australian community. It is through the range of ABC content that the ABC meets it, somewhat contradictory, charter obligations as a comprehensive and complementary broadcaster.

The CPSU points to the following statement by the Director of TV, Kim Dalton to the Communications Policy and Research Forum. In that speech he states that diversity and local content are creatures of regulation. The CPSU argues that these sentiments have equal application to the ABC as to the commercial sector.

Let us not forget then that the history of Australian content on Australian television is in fact the history of regulation. Where government intervention through regulation has been absent, so too has there been a lack of a diverse offering of Australian content. This applies as much to the ABC where we have seen volume and diversity of its Australian content subjected to revenue pressures. It certainly applies to subscription television and it will apply to any free-to-air multi channel offering, and other future developments. Kim Dalton³

A new Charter for the ABC

The roles and functions of the ABC are as relevant today as when they were drafted 25 years ago. Both the Dix⁴ and Mansfield⁵ Reviews noted the strong public support for the national broadcaster, and the more recent Mansfield Report found no evidence for a diminished role for the ABC as a domestic broadcaster⁶.

In the context of new digital technology, the wording of the Charter needs to be changed. The Broadcasting Services Act's⁷ narrow definition of 'broadcasting' is problematic as it excludes content that is text including text with associated graphics and open narrowcasting. Clearly the definition should reflect the full range of programs, including TV, Radio, text based content, content provided for download and streaming and content delivered to handheld devices.

The Charter should be varied to:

³ Kim Dalton, Director ABC TV, Communications Policy and Research Forum (25 September 2007)

⁴ The ABC in Review, Report by the Committee of Review of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (The Dix Report), May 1981, AGPS, Canberra

⁵ The Challenge of a Better ABC, A Review of the Role and Functions of the ABC, (The Mansfield Report), January 1997, AGPS

⁶ Mansfield, p14

⁷ Section.6 of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992, defines 'broadcasting services' as:

broadcasting service means a service that delivers television programs or radio programs to persons having equipment appropriate for receiving that service, whether the delivery uses the radiofrequency spectrum, cable, optical fibre, satellite or any other means or a combination of those means, but does not include:

- (a) a service (including a teletext service) that provides no more than data, or no more than text (with or without associated still images); or
- (b) a service that makes programs available on demand on a point-to-point basis, including a dial-up service; or
- (c) a service, or a class of services, that the Minister determines, by notice in the *Gazette*, not to fall within this definition.

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1. encompass all delivery platforms. It should be drafted, where possible, in a manner that does not make reference to specific technologies that may become outdated or superseded.
2. define programs to include the presentation of all audio, visual and text based content
3. remove references to broadcasting where it has the effect of limiting the scope of the ABC's activities.

2. Harnessing new technologies to deliver services

The digital environment provides exciting opportunities. There will be more ways in which audiences can seek out and receive content. However the ABC's role remains the same, to provide programming that informs entertains and educates. The ABC will be valued for its content and programs. Programs will be chopped up, delivered in different sized chunks, and delivered to handheld devices or to home entertainment systems. It is also likely that programs will be commissioned and built as multiplatform content. Despite the changes in the way programs may be made, the essential elements remain unchanged. The content still needs to be researched, created, crafted and edited. It will then be valued or judged according to its quality and relevance.

ABC leading the way

The change that is immediately impacting on the ABC is multichannelling and online. In relation to digital television conversion, the ABC is already multichannelling with ABC2 and is eager to further this service. The CPSU understands that ABC management's approach to digital radio, and how it can be effectively utilised, is still at an embryonic stage.

The ABC is uniquely positioned to build audiences for new technologies and delivery platforms. The ABC also has the staff to create content for new program formats. The take up of these new technologies is dependent on the content being interesting and innovative. The ABC has an objective of universality which compels it, at the very least, to follow audience trends. In other words, if the Australian public is accessing content via new delivery platforms, then the ABC has a duty to provide it.

The ABC has an objective to be innovative and has a proven track record of leading the way. It must be remembered that the ABC, (or more accurately a small group of employees who dragged ABC management kicking and screaming), established the ABC website back in the mid 90's. There was no established audience or demand for the service at the time. It grew at an exponential rate to become the third ABC platform sitting beside Radio and TV. It is now hard to conceive of an ABC without a strong web presence. Web activities however have come at a cost. Web based services have not been funded from new or increased parliamentary appropriations: funding has been drawn from Radio and TV.

The CPSU points to two experiments undertaken by the ABC: podcasting and *Second Life*. Podcasting has been a complete success. It has provided a ready means for audiences to listen to their programs at a time that suits them and, given the high number of international downloads, has assisted the ABC in meeting its 'international' Charter obligations. The ABC's decision to engage in *Second Life* by contrast was a failed experiment. It failed to connect with an audience. What the ABC's online and the podcasting initiatives established is that the ABC is more likely to succeed with the new technologies and new platforms when the ABC relies on what it does well and that is making quality content.

Funding success and innovation

The ABC should have the capacity and funding to experiment with new technologies and new formats. Funding for its Innovation Department should be quarantined from general production budgets to protect these R&D activities.

The commitment of funds for any projects needs to be tempered by the size of the anticipated audience and the acknowledgement that it is the content rather than the 'gadgets' that should drive the initiatives.

Furthermore, once an innovation has proved successful and is included in the essential services of the ABC, then it is critical that the ABC funds this new work in its own right. Unfortunately this has not been the case with ABC Online. Resource allocation for this work has come from existing budgets. Consequently the quality of content has been compromised - the very content that attracts audiences to ABC Online in the first instance.

Organising and reshaping content

New delivery platforms will allow the ABC to better fulfil the objectives of universality and localism more comprehensively.

The ABC has re-branded local and regional radio as 'ABC Local'. The change in title denotes a broader role for Regional Radio. Increasingly, local radio stations are becoming regional centres for radio and web based content. The 50 local websites have become community portals that provide community notice boards for events and news in the regional communities. ABC Local provides an interactive site for communities and their broadcasters to share material, thoughts and news.

The initiative however has come at a cost. Radio broadcasters are expected to split their time between broadcasting and collecting local stories to be produced for the web.

Broadcasters have less time to spend on their traditional broadcasting role, collecting stories for broadcast, and there has been an increase in syndication of programs in regions to cover leave and staff absences.

The CPSU supports the widening of the role of Local Radio, but asserts that the initiative must be funded. The ABC has a responsibility to train staff in how to use the new platforms and compensate them for additional duties and levels of responsibility associated with web based roles.

Opening up the vaults: use and access to archives

The ABC has a vast amount of content in its archives that can, and should be made available to the public. Much of the content will need to be transferred to digital format and indexed (metadata) so it can be browsed and retrieved by end users.

Access to the back catalogue should be free because the content has already been paid for by taxpayers. Seeking to impose charges to access content would not be equitable as it creates a barrier to the economically disadvantaged.

The BBC has recently announced its intention to index its entire back catalogue⁸. The ABC should follow suit with priority given to News and Current Affairs content. The BBC initiative is being undertaken consistent with what is described as a ‘Creative Commons’ approach. That approach -only some rights reserved- provides free access for individual use, while protecting the intellectual property in the case of commercial reuse.

The CPSU is also aware of significant interest in access to the ABC’s back catalogue of drama. However the current funding model for producing drama requires the ABC to forfeit valuable rights which will prohibit it from being able to make this content available in the future.

⁸ ‘There are already over 160,000 individual pages. Eventually, we will add our program back catalogue to produce pages for programming stretching back over nearly 80 years – featuring all the information we have on the richest TV and radio archive in the world.

The BBC is committed to releasing the public value in that archive and these pages are going to play a central role in allowing us to do that.’

Jana Bennett (Director, BBC Vision) - Big is beautiful, Speech given at the Banff World Television Festival 2008, Monday 9 June 2008

http://www.bbc.co.uk/foi/docs/speeches/2008/Jana_Bennett_Director_Vision_Big_is_beautiful_09_Jun_08.htm

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In harnessing new technologies, the ABC needs to be mindful of its existing roles. Successful innovations will be the ones that use our existing content in new ways. There is a need for the ABC to reconsider its process of commissioning and the skills of its staff to take full advantage of the new platforms.

3. Informing and entertaining Australians

Introduction

‘Informing and entertaining’ are the two key functions the ABC is required to perform under its enabling legislation. Public support and respect for the ABC, and recognition that it is Australia’s most important cultural institution is based on its reliability, balance and absence of commercial imperative in its programming.

This support in large part has been built on the dedication and skills of the ABC’s skilled staff (who have created engaging content) and through its unparalleled reach (that allows all Australians to access its services). The ABC supports both national and local communities. It also creates a space for communities of interest such as arts, science, music and sporting communities; they all have a place on the ABC. The ABC has acted as a social glue of Australia. It fosters conversations within communities (both communities of geography and interest) and across social divides.

Australia’s diverse and evolving culture is presented across platforms in a variety of formats. The expansion of ABC services increases its potential to meet the demands of its multiple and overlapping audiences.

As well as ‘contributing to national identity’ and ‘reflecting our cultural diversity’ the charter also specifies the ABC’s role:

to encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia.



The ABC provides the opportunity for audiences to access the best in Australian and overseas culture. It gives our artists another avenue for promotion and performance. It encourages the general



community to explore our culture through a mix of general interest and specialist programming. Whether it’s Unearthing Missy Higgins or bringing opera to a primetime audience with Operatunity OZ, the ABC helps Australians discover the very best of Australian culture.

Role and Objectives

These functions are to be read within the context of a range of statutory obligations that are summarised within the discussion paper as

- Universality,
- Localism,
- Australian content,
- Comprehensive and diverse programming
- Diversity of news and information
- Education
- Innovation and quality

The CPSU argues that both the functions and the manner in which these functions are to be delivered are appropriately set within the current legislation. The CPSU argues however that the ABC is not adequately meeting these objectives.

The CPSU notes that there is a tension between these functions: the tension between a desire to build larger audiences through programming light entertainment and the provision of news, current affairs and specialist programming. The introduction of multichannelling will provide greater opportunities for both functions to be met.

The following discussion focuses primarily on the provision of TV programming for the simple reason that Radio has already to a large degree sorted out these issues. It has been multichannelling for a long time through its provision of Local Radio, Classic FM, Radio National, triple j and NewsRadio. The TV multichannelling model is in many respects an extension of the model that has been working successfully in Radio for decades.

The CPSU broadly supports the ABC proposal for the introduction of a range of new channels. There are some areas where the CPSU would argue the ABC has misplaced its emphasis. The most important case is in the area of education where the CPSU argues the channel should be conceived of as a specialist/factual channel rather than as an education channel.

Five critical areas

The CPSU submission focuses on what it believes are five critical areas. These are

- Children's

- News
- Arts/Culture
- Specialist/Factual
- Drama

The first four of these represent areas of strength by the ABC in both its capacity and proven record as both producers and broadcasters of quality content. The fifth, drama, is an area where the ABC has previously been a strong producer and broadcaster- but in recent years has stopped producing its own content and has also cut back on the number of hours it broadcasts.

Children's

The CPSU strongly supports the move to a dedicated children's channel. The ABC has built up a strong brand in children's content that provides commercial free entertainment and education available to all Australians. The ABC should be building on past success by nurturing the production of quality children's content; unfortunately our commitment to home grown content is declining:

In 2007/08, only 27% of children's television screened on the ABC was Australian. The remaining 73% came from overseas⁹.

Any consideration of a dedicated Children's channel will have to take into account the lack of new Australian content available. Improving the level of local content will require an increased investment in its production. Overseas content has its place, but by relying on overseas content so significantly, the ABC is foregoing many opportunities. Children's content has a number of unique characteristics the ABC could be taking greater advantage of:

- repeatability is desirable especially for younger age groups
- the audience is constantly refreshing, giving content a longer shelf life
- many programming styles, such as animation, are more easily re-versioned for international markets

A production model that exploits these factors has proven successful. *Playschool* episodes have a seven year shelf life and can be repeated many times a year. *Bananas in Pyjamas* is still finding new audiences even though it went out of production in 2000. Reusing children's content in this manner is very cost effective but requires a large initial investment, an investment that ABC management has been reluctant to make recently.

⁹ ABC Annual Report 2007/08

The ABC's internally produced children's content meets the highest editorial standards because it is primarily conceived with educational and developmental outcomes in mind. The integrity this brings is valued by local and international audiences. The ABC has a proven track record of maximising its return from these productions through reuse, overseas sales and merchandising. The ability to reuse and repack content freely will become increasingly important as digital technology takes hold.

The ABC's role in producing quality children's content becomes more crucial as the commercial players attempt to alter the regulatory framework to cushion the impact of declining revenues:

In this environment it is time to question the ongoing relevance of the current quota obligations. There is certainly no justification for an increase in the current quota levels and any change should more appropriately result in a reduction¹⁰.

The ABC may need to play a greater role in supporting the independent production sector if levels of new Australian content decline on commercial networks.

The CPSU also believes that it is critical that an ABC children's channel observes the highest editorial and ethical standards in its broadcasting. This must include an absolute assurance that programs and program material is not driven by advertising or by a commercial imperative. This means that there must be a complete separation of Children's programming and the Commercial Division of the ABC so that programming is driven by early childhood development philosophies rather than franchising and merchandising opportunities.

In summary the CPSU supports:

- the introduction of a dedicated Children's Channel (proposed ABC3).
- minimum quotas of Australian content in accordance with the recommendations arising from the 2020 conference
- the ABC having a central and leading role in the production of this content and in commissioning suitable content from reputable providers.

¹⁰ Free TV submission - Children's Television Review 2007

News

Diversity

Public service broadcasting was founded on the principle that it was independent of political and commercial influence. Many of its supporters argue this makes it a foundation of democracy, providing information and commentary that cannot, and will not be made available by a commercial media. The growing concentration of control of the media makes the role of the ABC as an independent provider of news and information even more critical.

Blogging, for instance. There was a time a few years ago when blogging was seen by some as the magic potion to sustain journalism. It was said to be the ultimate in publishing democracy: a means by which everybody could have their say, everybody could contribute to the great community debates, and we would all become citizen journalists. Well, it hasn't happened, and it's not likely to.

I was taken by an expression used in an editorial in *The Australian* a month or so ago that observed that blogging had all the intellectual value of graffiti on a toilet door.

Some proponents of blogging, principally in the US, have declared that credible stories can be written only with input from bloggers, people with intimate knowledge of the situations in question. That presupposes people in the know will openly come forward with confidential information, a proposition that, in my experience, is far from the truth.

Mark Day Blog, September 2008¹¹

The quantity of information that is now available online is no substitute for well researched programs and quality journalism.

Over the past few years the ABC has cuts costs by systematically reducing the classification of journalist positions at the ABC. This has reduced the capacity of ABC news rooms to critically analyse stories. In the same period the ABC has thinned the news rooms by extending the hours of news and current affairs programming without a corresponding increase in the number of journalistic positions. The ABC has also cut the number of specialist rounds, reducing the capacity of its journalists to develop a detailed understanding of the areas upon which they are reporting. The reduction in journalistic resources keeps ABC journalist in the news room engaged in the production of new programs rather than in the process of researching, analysing and testing material. This encourages lazy journalism...journalism that relies on the reformatting of press releases and from rehashing stories already published/broadcast by other news providers. The

¹¹ Mark Day, *Blogs can't match probing reports*, *The Australian*, 11 September 11, 2008

thinning of resources that has taken place in ABC news rooms diminishes the ABC's claim to be a source of diversity. Diversity, if it is to be respected must be funded.

ABC management are also seeking to introduce a new system of editing in Newsrooms. The new technologies allow journalists to cut stories themselves. This technology gives journalists greater creative control over their programs. As editing resources are being withdrawn from newsrooms, journalists are being required to complete complex edits, i.e. the work previously performed by skilled professional editors. This change reduces the quality of the output in the case of more complex news packages and takes journalists away from their primary task of collecting of news. The drive for efficiency is at the cost of quality and will reduce the capacity of journalists to get out in the field.

Support Investigative Journalism

Investigative journalism is in danger of disappearing. Just this year Channel Nine has axed Sunday, Fairfax has shed staff and *The Bulletin* has closed. The important civic role, of holding powerful interests to account through well researched journalism, has been subsidised in the past by highly profitable and protected media companies. Who is going to finance investigative journalism in the future? New commercial business models will evolve but right now they're failing. Over the next triennium the ABC should prioritise the funding of investigative journalism to cushion the impact of reduced quality output from the commercial players.

In summary the CPSU supports:

- The rebuilding of newsrooms so they provide time and space for journalists to undertake their craft of collecting and analysing information
- Providing sufficient budgets for newsrooms to maintain the balance of skilled and experienced journalists and cadets
- Ensuring funding is provided to support the culture and practice of investigative journalism

Arts/Culture

The ABC's role in Art and Culture

The ABC has a dual role:

- as a creative force that contributes new and entertaining content that helps to build Australia's cultural heritage; and

- to work with the wider cultural community to ensure the rich cultural life of Australia reaches the greatest number of Australians and is not lost to future generations.

These roles ‘encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia’ and thereby help in the achievement of the Charter goals of ‘contributing to national identity’ and ‘reflecting our cultural diversity’

The 2020 summit also concluded that:

the ABC and other public broadcasters should be resourced as a cultural platform for the delivery of culture and the arts to society

Much of a nation’s cultural identity is formed through creative endeavours that are ephemeral. It is vital that the work of Australia’s world renowned composers, artists, playwrights, performers, singers, dancers, choreographers, etc is preserved. It is largely through these and many other creative outlets that Australia defines itself. The ABC is the organisation best placed in Australia to preserve and promote these windows into our society.

Promoting and delivering our culture

Because the ABC has a wider reach than any other media outlet, it can support both national and local communities. The ABC is the social glue of Australia. It fosters conversations within communities and across social divides. It also has the ability to present our evolving culture across numerous platforms in a variety of formats. The expansion of ABC services increases our potential to meet the demands of multiple and overlapping audiences. It is precisely this multiplatform approach that uniquely positions the ABC to become a cultural hub. It should be the meeting ground for a wide diversity of cultural communities, who can contribute to the discussion as well as benefiting from access to the ABC’s own content.

So is the ABC doing enough?

In its role as a creative force the ABC has the skilled staff to produce engaging content and an unparalleled reach that allows all Australians to access its services. It has areas of specialisation whose brief is to consider issues such as science, religion, sport, children’s content, arts and music from an Australian perspective.

But in cutting back or ceasing to make drama, documentaries and children’s content the ABC is failing to meet its responsibility to create a unique Australian voice and present Australian perspectives. The ABC as a creative cultural institution should be nurturing the

best talent, who are able to best deliver these perspectives to a wide audience. As with any great artist or artistic company, excellence can only be achieved by building on what has gone before. Starting from scratch each time is a bit like putting your hand into a lucky dip and hoping to pull out a Van Gogh.

The ABC's ties to the wider cultural community were once much stronger. In the last decade these relationships have been allowed to dwindle through lack of support for arts programming and lack of funding. This is not to say that this is the case across all platforms.

This view is supported by a study commissioned by the CPSU in 2004 on Arts Programming on ABC Radio, Television and Online¹². In that report Prof Liz Jacka found:

- Arts coverage on TV and Radio had declined between 1992 and 2002 had declined
- The ABC has not wholeheartedly embraced newer art forms
- There has been a diminution in the quality and depth of arts programming
- There has been less original performance on both Radio and TV

Arts on TV

Multichannelling enables ABC Radio to provide an identifiable home for a range of music genres through its separate networks: Classic FM, triple j and Radio National.

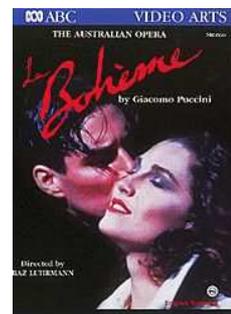
The CPSU believes that multichannelling could open up similar opportunities on TV for broadcast of the arts, music dance and theatre.

Building the archive

The ABC recorded Baz Luhrman's 1993 production of La Boheme for Opera Australia.

The ABC DVD is now promoted as 'La Boheme is the world's first Opera DVD, and is an essential for all discerning Arts lovers.'

The ABC recording provides a clear example of how the ABC can provide an archive of Arts in Australia and promote Australian art and artists to Australia and the world.



Taking the arts to a wider audience

The ABC recorded Keating the Musical.

The ABC's broadcast of the production made the work accessible to many more Australians.

¹² Prof Liz Jacka, *Arts Programming on ABC Radio, Television and Online*, 2004

Collaborations with Theatre companies: Imagining a Better ABC

The ABC could collaborate with arts organisations record and broadcast productions to bring their productions to a wider Australian and the world stage.

ABC TV used to have a flourishing Arts unit which made regular recordings of Australian performances. Over the last decade this has been allowed to dwindle to almost nothing.

It is recognised that broadcasting the arts do not always draw large audiences.

Multichannelling will give space on the schedule for the broadcast of this material.

Budget cuts have resulted in TV Arts and Entertainment moving to cheaper format chat shows which tell us about art forms rather than bringing the actual arts products themselves to the audience.

The digital future provides opportunities for the ABC to improve its compliance with its requirement to foster the arts. These opportunities will only be realised with additional funding and support by management for the specialist staff required to build good arts programming

Specialist/Factual

The CPSU argues that the multichannelling provides an opportunity for the ABC to do what it does best: to produce and broadcast quality specialist and factual material.

The major public benefit that arises from multichannelling lies in the capacity of the ABC to provide additional specialist and factual programs as well as programs of wide appeal.

The CPSU argues in Chapter 7 of this submission that new channels should primarily be used to provide space on a schedule for the broadcast of specialist programming because it represents an area of market failure; it permits the ABC to make most effective use of its staff and it is cost effective.

The CPSU is concerned that ABC TV management however is demonstrating a lack of commitment to specialist and long form documentaries. It is overly reliant on reality style, lifestyle and other lighter material and supplements its documentary content stats with material such as *Grumpy Old Women* and *Grand Designs*.

Documentaries: An endangered species



Australia: Land of Parrots was viewers' favourite documentary for 2008.

Source: Access ABC, *Most Successful Ratings Year Ever for ABC TV* (ABC Corporate Communications eNewsletter, 1 December 2008)¹³

ABC management has closed down the internal documentary department of the ABC claiming that it costs too much to make internal documentaries. The two documentary makers responsible for researching, filming and producing Parrots were declared redundant.

The ABC has now closed down its own dedicated documentary production unit. In the last round of redundancies, ABC management sacked all remaining long form documentary makers. They have said that it costs too much to make their own documentaries so they prefer to fully outsource this genre so program makers can source additional funding (i.e. from other government sources). The CPSU acknowledges that a healthy documentary sector cannot be entirely in-house. There are many documentary makers outside the ABC who want to tell their stories. The CPSU argues that the current system of funding however has resulted in the closure of an important part of the film industry: the internal ABC documentary making unit.

The CPSU has made an extended submission on the issue of specialist programming in Chapter 7, arguing that this form of production lies at the heart of arguments in support of a strong internal production capacity at the ABC.

Recommendations:

- that funding for new channels be directed at the expansion of the ABCs capacity to build strong factually based and specialist programming
- that the ABC make more effective use of its existing specialist staff, and to the rebuilding of specialist staff
- that the ABC build partnerships with independent program makers to complement ABC production of specialist and factual material. These partnerships should provide scope for documentary makers to work inside the ABC
- that the ABC be held accountable for the production and broadcast of specialist and factual material through the development and application of a range of key performance indicators that measure its performance against these benchmarks.

¹³ <http://www.abc.net.au/corp/communications/access/stories/s2432787.htm>

Drama

The ABC closed down its internal drama unit in the late 1990s. The ABC had been a major production house producing ABC funded and co-produced dramas,

The ABC has now lost the capacity and the skill base to produce drama and is now forced to rely on external production houses. The costs of producing drama are briefly discussed in the department's discussion paper. The CPSU notes the significant differential in the costs of program production and licensing. As discussed elsewhere in this submission the comparison is false because it fails to take into account the ABC's capacity to generate overseas program sales, on-sell to pay TV and re-transmission of programs over which it owns the rights. The CPSU also notes that the current system of federal government funding support creates an un-level playing field in that the producer offsets can provide no relief to non taxable entities such as the ABC.

The CPSU is concerned that the commercial sector business model will be challenged by multichannelling and this in turn will threaten its capacity to deliver local content, and particularly expensive local content like quality drama.

The CPSU therefore considers that it is probable that the publicly funded broadcasters will need to take a leading role in the broadcast of drama if local drama is to survive. That of course will require significant additional funding.

Radio

The foreword to this submission noted that Radio is less challenged by the digital future than TV. It redefined itself after the introduction of TV. There are opportunities and new ways of engaging with their audiences, but the changes are not as significant as the challenges facing TV: convergence; spiralling production and licensing costs and the need to find/purchase/build content to fill the multi channel 'pipes'.

I haven't said much about radio. This is because of all of the conventional mass-media, it is the one least challenged by the online revolution. The advent of television long ago forced radio to work out what it does best. It is already a low-cost and highly competitive medium which works very well for relatively small and local audiences. The new technologies may bring some changes in operational practices but it won't change the essence of radio or its business model...Free-to-air television will survive, but only by learning to concentrate on the things it does better than any other distribution medium, just as radio and the cinema have done. The golden years of television should be thought of as what they were - a product of the best available technology at a particular time in history¹⁴

Ian Allen, creator of the ABC's first website

¹⁴ <http://www.abc.net.au/science/slab/emedial2/default.htm>

The major threat Radio has suffered over the past few decades has come from declining budgets. ABC senior management has tended to focus its attention on TV, and has frozen Radio funding.

In this environment radio networks have struggled to maintain adequate services. It has also limited their capacity to take advantage of some of the new digital possibilities.

ABC Radio management has sought to press staff to both deliver their programs and prepare them for online re-use. Tasks such as preparing transcripts, re-editing material and preparing programs for podcasting are all being undertaken within existing budgets.

The CPSU submission provides a brief overview of some of the critical issues facing the radio networks.

Local and Regional Radio



Local Radio is being recast as the local port of entry for ABC audiences to their ABC. Management has sought to extend the role of local and regional broadcasters so they are not just radio broadcasters, but are also collectors of vision for the regional online site, managers of the text on the website and moderators of the local community noticeboards. Many the ABC's employees support this shift, but believe that the lack of support and funding makes the vision unviable. The end result is that it weakens their capacity to do what they believe to be their core job: radio broadcasting.

This shift has been taking place against a backdrop of very tight financial control. Local radio regional salaries are capped at the level of a junior broadcaster. Management state that there is no place or requirement within the regional radio networks for staff to produce original, creative or sophisticated broadcasting. Training is limited and employees who want to develop their careers by working in other regional stations are invited to 'doss down' on the couches of their friends because there are no travel or accommodation budgets available.

Radio National



Radio National is the home of specialist radio programming presenting a range of built and flow programming by a staff

who are experts in their fields. The network produces a range of content rich material that lends itself to re-use. The network has also suffered from tight budgeting that has limited its ability to make more effective use of on-line opportunities.

The recent decision by ABC management to axe a number of programs has prompted significant reaction from the audience and has attracted adverse media attention.

Management sought to justify its decision by stating that the changes were designed to free up resources to liven up its presence on the web. The CPSU argues that a network that has prided itself on the production of some of the highest quality radio programming in Australia should not be forced to sacrifice its programming to support new broadcast and transmission platforms. In doing so ABC management has attacked the capacity of the network to perform its primary task of making quality and innovative audio material.

triple j



triple j has long been seen as a champion of new Australian music. It is a valued member of Australia's music scene, encouraging new artists and giving airspace to the more alternative end of the spectrum.

JTV has provided an opportunity for performers to be seen and heard. This cross platform model is welcomed by the CPSU.

Classic FM



Classic FM recorded 511 live concerts and studio recordings in 2008. This material showcases Australian musicians and composers to a much wider audience. CPSU members in Classic FM have produced a submission to this review which deals specifically with their role and its place in a digital future. Their submission forms attachment 3 to this submission.

NewsRadio



NewsRadio is a cost effective network that provides regular news updates, repeats of other ABC material and rebroadcasts of international programming. The network was established and runs on the proverbial smell of an oily rag.

Recommendations:

Provide the networks with adequate funding. Almost all the problems the CPSU has identified within the Radio Division could be addressed if the networks were provided with additional funds. Within the radio networks are many of the ABC's key specialist program

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makers who could, with adequate support, play a pivotal role in building multiplatform specialist programming in collaboration with their colleagues in TV and online.

4. Education, skills and productivity

The CPSU endorses the view expressed in the discussion paper that education contributes to productivity and economic development, and that a dedicated education (knowledge) channel could be justified in terms of the economic return on investment. The CPSU argues that in addition to the economic and human capital arguments, the promotion of education, learning and knowledge should be viewed as goals in their own right.

The ABC's role in education and training in a 2020 media and communications environment

The CPSU believes that the role of the ABC should be extended so it becomes a significant partner in the education revolution. This change, if implemented, has the capacity to:

Enhance[ing] the intellectual and creative capacity of Australian society and support [ing] the development of Australia's human capital¹⁵.

By harnessing the new technologies and making more effective use of the wealth of material produced by the ABC, including its back catalogue, the very nature of public broadcasting might be transformed.

The CPSU submission examines four different aspects that define the ABC role in education:

- the ABC as a broadcaster of educational material
- the ABC and a dedicated education channel
- the ABC as an education portal
- the ABC as a provider of vocational training within the media and entertainment industry

The ABC as an Educational Broadcaster

The ABC's Children's and Education Department (ChEd) was formed out of the Education Departments that had been established in each state to support the production of education programming. This department had responsibility for meeting the ABC's Charter obligation to broadcast material of an educational nature¹⁶ within TV. 'Education' was primarily viewed as an early childhood activity and little if any attention was then given to concepts such as lifelong learning. The restrictions of the schedule also meant that there was there was little scope in for the ABC to be a provider of vocational education.

¹⁵ Department Discussion paper restatement of ABC's education objective

¹⁶ Section 6(1)(a)(ii) of the ABC Act 1983

The low water mark in the ABC's commitment to educational broadcasting was reached in 2004 when it decided to scrap the *Behind The News* (BTN) program, a widely used national program produced specifically for schools. Public outrage at the axing led to management restoring the program a year later.

The CPSU strongly supports retention of the current Charter obligation concerning broadcasting educational material. It notes however that greater attention needs to be given to ensuring that the ABC meets, and is funded to meet that obligation.

The CPSU argues that the primary means by which the ABC should fulfil the obligation to broadcast educational material is through the provision of specialist factual material.

- In TV this means continuing to produce existing programs such as *Catalyst*, *Compass* and Arts programs such as *Sunday Afternoon*. These programs are made in-house by producers with both specialist content knowledge and craft (i.e. program making) knowledge. The CPSU is critical of the ABC management approach that has resulted in reductions in resources and personnel available to these programs and of an across the board reduction in the quality of its factual output.
- In Radio it means continuing to broadcast content and factually based material that form the backbone of Radio National's output.

The material is not designed to be 'educational' in the sense that it provides information designed to address particular learning needs or established curricula. The material is educational in the broadest sense: it imparts knowledge and an understanding of the world we live in - including its arts and sciences. However it coincidentally provides a significant amount of material that is used by teachers to support curricula.

A Dedicated Educational/Knowledge Channel

The introduction of multichannelling provides an opportunity for the ABC to provide a dedicated channel to broadcast educational/knowledge material. The CPSU notes that the ABC has argued for the establishment of a dedicated educational channel (ABC5). The CPSU broadly supports the introduction of new channels that would allow the ABC to broadcast a wider range of factual and informative material affording the ABC the opportunity to simultaneously 'entertain, educate and inform'. It does not however support the introduction of a dedicated education channel. A channel needs to be created, but it needs to be conceived as a knowledge or public affairs channel, rather than as an education

channel. While a specialist and factual channel may be educative and informative, it must also, to quote Sir David Attenborough, build an audience comprising ‘a healthy number of viewers’¹⁷. An educational channel as distinct from an information channel will be driven by the needs of the curricula it is designed to serve. It has no audience but rather a group of disconnected students directed to the channel by the course material and timetable. The question must be asked whether this is the most effective means of content delivery. The longer term answer to that question is a clear ‘no’. Resource material including lectures, supporting text and interactive material can be provided at a time that suits the students needs more effectively via broadband delivery that enables selective content downloads rather than a broadcast platform. The ABC already has the ability to deliver content via its website, an ability that could be developed and expanded in the future.

The discussion paper floats the idea of a dedicated education channel being used for the provision of foreign language teaching resources and LOTE, digital. No clearer example could be provided as to why the education channel should be scrapped and recast as a broadband platform.

The CPSU has noted the suggestion floated in Chapter seven of the discussion paper that public interest programming be provided by way of contract or other agreement on a contestable basis¹⁸. While the discussion paper does not make a clear link between contestability, public interest programs and a dedicated education channel the CPSU opposes that model. That channel is likely to end up transmitting disconnected and disparate programming.

An Interim Educational Channel

Having dismissed the ABC proposal for a long term dedicated education Channel (ABC5), the CPSU suggests that the model could be used as an interim measure to assist in the distribution of educational material. It is viewed as a second best alternative, but would meet a need that will not be met by the broadband rollout in the immediate future.

The Federal Government has committed \$1.1 billion over five years for the National Secondary School Computer Fund. This fund will provide grants of up to \$1 million to eligible schools to help with the provision of new or upgraded ICT for secondary students in Years 9–12. A further \$100 million is committed to support the deployment of fibre

¹⁷ Sir David Attenborough, http://www.bbc.co.uk/thefuture/transcript_atten6.shtml

¹⁸ Discussion paper, p. 40

connections to Australian schools, delivering broadband speeds of up to 100 megabits per second.

However, it is widely recognised by educators and policy makers that as the rollout of this distribution infrastructure will take time, many educational institutions in remote areas will still need to rely for several years on old technologies such as dial-up internet services, visual learning resource content delivered on VHS cassettes and printed text based materials.

The CPSU believes that the ABC could provide an immediate alternative distribution network via a dedicated factual broadcast channel, ABC5 to assist the Federal Government in its Digital Education Revolution. This would enable teaching resources to be accessed via radio and television (terrestrial or satellite) . Where Broadband is accessible, teaching resources and learning materials could be accessed via an interactive ABC Learning Portal. Where Internet access was not available, materials could be duplicated by the ABC's existing inhouse Dub Shop and Printing facilities for distribution on VHS/DVD/CD and printed materials.

The ABC already possesses the capability via its public web portal to provide video for download (vodcasts) and radio materials (pod casts) as well as text based transcripts of program content which are available to global audiences. This service could be extended for delivery via a specialist Education portal with very little infrastructure cost. The technology, expertise and infrastructure also currently exist within the ABC to design webpages and interactive sites as well as to compress digital content for web based delivery of all types of content. In addition to this, the ABC possesses IT Servers in each state from which content could be downloaded locally, saving considerable costs on the bandwidth required for a national download service.

The ABC as an education portal

The CPSU believes that the development of the ABC as an, or rather *the*, educational portal represents one of the most exciting visions that could be used to redefine the role of the ABC in the digital environment.

If the ABC can be conceived as the provider of the infrastructure for a national education infrastructure, its role could be further extended to include the ABC as a supplier of content and material for the educational portal.

With its world class Archive containing a digitised collection of audio visual content, state of the art key word searching, and production house facilities that cater to the information, entertainment and educational needs of a local Australian audience, the ABC could make that content available as a key education resource for:

- Early Childhood Education
- Primary and Secondary Schools
- Higher Education & VET
- Lifelong Learning

With imagination (and funding) the ABC could become a cornerstone of the education revolution. It has a wealth of education resources for both the classroom and in distance education. The material needs to be made accessible. The ABC would be recognised and funded for what it is: the major producer and broadcaster of material mined by the education sector.

Many teachers of primary, secondary and vocational education rely on the ABC as a significant source of educational material. Extracts of programs provide important source material for the study of geography, history, art and literature. Teachers' access to the material is largely hit and miss. In many cases the material is sources by teachers who heard/saw the program or a friend or colleague has mentioned the program. Access to the vast amount (and wealth) of ABC produced material is not assisted by the ABC.

As a major content provider, the ABC produces significant amounts of material that address educational curricula. The problem is one of retrieval and efficient access by the education sector.

The CPSU proposes that the federal Government invests significant resources in opening up this treasure trove to students and teachers. This requires:

- the digitisation of all content including the entire back catalogue of the ABC
- the indexing of all material (i.e. attachment of metadata) produced and broadcast by the ABC
- creation of a significant education portal that is arranged around the curricula (and hopefully by 2020, the national curricula) being taught in primary, secondary schools and vocational colleges.

How it could work



A teacher or student could navigate through the portal to material on English literature. The portal would open up to a '2020' curriculum on 'current trends in literary criticism'. The search spiders would identify interviews conducted by Ramona Koval on the *The Book Show*. Or it could be to a review of the an art exhibition covered by Fenella Kernebone on the Sunday Arts program. The material would be current relevant and sorted by

relevance.



Or imagine the teacher searching for material to build a lesson plan on health and society. The portal would direct the teacher to relevant material prepared by Dr Norman Swan on *The Health Report*. With effective indexing of material, the portal may provide the same material to a maths teacher trying to find teaching resources on the interpretation and meaning of statistics such as Norman Swan's program on the assessment of risk associated with the use of HRT¹⁹.

The educational resource that could feed the education revolution is already there. It just needs to be made accessible.

The ABC is a rich library of teaching resources. It just needs a better indexing system.

What would it take to achieve?

The CPSU proposal for an ABC Education Portal rests on the fact that the material is (largely) already there. Additional funding would make this rich library of material and teaching resources accessible. The CPSU proposal is that the ABC should be provided with sufficient funds to:

- Index (via the attachment of metadata) within all new content
- Progressively index all material in the ABC archive with priority being given to its news and current affairs program material.
- Digitise all ABC program material
- Build a portal that provides material links to ABC material (audio, video and text based material) sorted against the full range of primary, secondary and vocational (primarily TAFE and equivalent) curricula.
- Link the material to existing Training Frameworks²⁰ and Toolboxes²¹

¹⁹ <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/healthreport/stories/2002/641312.htm>

²⁰ <http://www.aqf.edu.au/aboutaqf.htm>

²¹ *Toolboxes* are high quality resources featuring scenarios, images and interactive activities that simulate real life. They are designed for use by training providers, industry and business and support online delivery of recognised training packages for the vocational education and training sector.
<http://toolboxes.flexiblelearning.net.au/>

Adding to the store of content

As a digital content production market leader, the ABC also has the potential to combine access to its own collection with those of other smaller cultural agencies who do not have the breadth of modes of distribution available to the ABC, thus strengthening the ability of the overall industry cluster to distribute materials. Examples of this type of ‘strategic partnership in educational content’ would be the ABC combining with the following Agencies to licence and distribute content for educational purposes:

- The National Film and Sound Archive
- Screen Australia
- National Archive of Australia
- Australian War Memorial
- SBS

Strategic partnerships of this type would increase and diversify the educational materials available to the national curriculum via the ABC’s web portal and the future ABC5 channel, for instance providing access to Australian movie titles that are currently embedded in the English Curriculum in several states.

The CPSU also believes that Strategic Partnerships with the Higher Education and VET sectors could be formed along similar lines with students accessing information available via this portal as a hotlink through from their own University websites. This would lead to the ABC becoming a Distribution Hub (Cluster leader) of Learning Resource Objects in the future, in addition to maintaining its production activities.

Adding purpose designed Learning Objects

The prime emphasis of the CPSU submission is to promote the use of existing resources for re-purposing as educational resources.

The CPSU notes that the ABC could also be utilised to provide purpose built material and Learning Objects to complement the re-purposed material.

The ABC has significant levels of in-house expertise in its cross-platform program making group that could be utilised for Learning Hub projects. The ABC employs Journalists, Producers, Researchers, Program Assistants, Directors Assistants, Web Designers, Post Production Staff and IT Experts across its Radio, Television and News Divisions. The vast majority of staff are involved in Factual program production, the content of which has long

been reused by the educational sector after its first viewing by the general public. The CPSU believes that the utilisation of ABC employees for future reversioning of Learning Hub content would enable greater synergies of production output to be achieved and would lead to an increase in the skill base and related productivity of ABC staff.

In addition to this, the ABC could work cooperatively with members of the independent production sector and educational institutions such as Universities and TAFEs to produce relevant cross-platform product for the education sector, providing editorial and technical leadership and ensuring that production standards were met.

Why the ABC should take on this new role

The example provided above about how the ABC could enhance its ability to be a provider of educational resources points to how the ABC could enlarge its role and purpose. The following part of the submission discusses how the ABC could provide the necessary infrastructure to assist in the roll out of existing joint federal/state education policies.

The Joint Ministerial Statement on Information and Communications Technologies in Australian Education and Training: 2008-2011²² committed federal and state governments to:

- provide technology enriched learning environments
- ensure education and training environments effectively respond to society's changing expectations
- promote lifelong learning that establish pathways for productive and new careers

The statement recognised that information and communications technologies (ICT) enable the transformation of the curriculum and change the way learners and educators operate, learn and interact and that technologies provide the potential to enable access to: nationally consistent curriculum

The statement then discussed the need to promote the sharing of resources and expertise.

The CPSU argues that the ABC is well positioned to provide the infrastructure for this project.

The ABC's ties with the Education & Training sector have been extensive over a number of years in terms of the provision of factual and early childhood content to augment

²² http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/AICTEC_JMS_on_ICT_in_Aust_Ed_and_Training.pdf

educational curricula. However, CPSU believes that the ABC's mode of distribution for educational content, if correctly resourced by the Federal Government, could be improved to serve the needs of the Digital Education Revolution, building on existing infrastructure, assets and staff expertise.

As recognised by AICTEC²³ there are numerous impediments to achieving the Federal Government's Digital Education Revolution goals in a country as vast and geographically challenging as Australia. The ABC however has the necessary reach, infrastructure and skilled staff and, most important of all, commitment to provide these services without commercial or political influence.

The CPSU argues that there is a close fit between the operational need of a national training and education system and the capacity of the ABC to deliver the services. This is demonstrated by:

- The availability of an existing national digital distribution infrastructure (Radio, Television and Internet platforms) that transcend geographic boundaries
- The provision of Digital Content and back up materials (eg Transcripts) to sustain lifelong training, education and information needs
- Staff expertise in areas such as information gathering, production, distribution, collection management, technical/operational, innovation, and business/project management.

The ABC's role as trainer in the media industry

The CPSU also promotes an expansion of the role of the ABC so that it (again) becomes a leading training R&D agency, a unique incubator for the creation and delivery of local content.

The CPSU notes the number of speakers at the 2020 summit that spoke of the need for the ABC to pre-assert its role as a trainer for the industry. The CPSU notes that despite the emergence of training schools and university courses in media studies, the industry still looks to the ABC as a provider, incubator and developer of program makers at all career levels.

²³ The Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee (AICTEC) is a national, cross-sectoral committee responsible for providing advice to all Australian Ministers of Education and Training on the economic and effective utilisation of online technologies in Australian education and training.

The CPSU vision is of an ABC whose audiences, its employees and independent program makers benefit from the ABC being a producer of quality, innovative programs. That benefit is derived from the ABC having a significant role and place as a production house. This model described is at odds with the direction currently being pursued within ABC TV management - that of outsourcing production and closing down internal production capacity.

The CPSU also notes that the current management approach of outsourcing TV production, whilst maintaining internal production within the Radio Division denies the ABC the opportunity of training and developing both its own staff or outside program makers as cross platform producers.

Importance of the Industry

The ABC is a leader in both the Cultural and Digital Content industries in Australia, a producer of high quality content, a distributor with a wide geographic reach and an employer and a trainer of digital workers in the media industry. It is naturally placed to be the leader in the industry cluster and drive sustained growth in these sectors.

The industries are significant employers. They employed 453 000 people as at 2006 and contributed about \$31.8 billion of industry gross product (IGP) in 2004-05²⁴.

The potential for future cross industry collaborations place the ABC in a prime position to develop itself as a key player in the Digital Education Revolution and would enhance productivity across several cultural sectors.

Skill Development in the Digital Content Industries

Although the ABC used to be a leading industry trainer, it has seen its role as a training organisation eclipsed by the VET and Higher Education Sectors, with Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma of Screen Courses offered in the VET sector and Bachelor of Arts majoring in Communications and Journalism offered by the Higher Education Sector.

Despite the growth in these courses:

Industry leaders comment that students leaving universities or institutes of technology are frequently not 'industry-ready', lack business and project management skills, and require further specialised training.²⁵

²⁴ Cultural and Creative Industries: Key Economic Metrics 2006 Census data update January 2008, http://www.ibsa.org.au/downloads/cultural_pathfinders.pdf

The CPSU argues that the skill gap needs to be met through a range of structured and unstructured activities. The answer lies in providing real opportunities for existing staff to develop their content and craft skills and to share these with other employees within the ABC and with the independent sector program makers they collaborate with. The CPSU does however note that the culture of sharing ideas, and in particular of prospective program ideas is foreign to the culture of the independent sector...and for good reason: ideas are currency for future employment/engagement. Notwithstanding this, the CPSU considers that it is vitally important that the ABC expands its training activities and reasserts its role as industry trainer and incubator of new and emerging talent. This is, of course, dependent upon the ABC remaining or at least recovering its position as a vibrant in-house producer.

²⁵ Centre for International Economics (2005): Australian Digital Content Industry Futures, Prepared for the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, p20

5. Social inclusion and cultural diversity

The ABC has legislated charter objectives which are intrinsically linked to social inclusion and cultural diversity. Objectives, such as universality, localism and Australian content, seek to ensure that the ABC provides programs which are relevant and accessible to all Australians.

As the media environment evolves, access to new platforms and to the benefits of the digital environment are still not equitably distributed in our society. In fact, some communities will experience further social exclusion if the ABC does not maintain its existing programming via traditional delivery platforms.

Universality

In the context of social inclusion and digital technology, it is critical that the Australian Government and ABC management recognise that not all Australian communities are seeking new digital platforms for the delivery of their content. For example, according to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2006-07, only 28% of people aged between 65-74 years of age were using the internet at home.

It is equally important to recognise that not all communities will have access to new digital platforms due to their economic circumstances, geographic location or both, eg remote Indigenous communities. Of the 36% of Australian households that do not have the internet connected at home, 58% are located in remote areas.

In the excitement about a digital future, there is an underlying assumption that all technology is good and beneficial. Certainly there are many new opportunities but not all technology is useful to all people. For example the provision of more digital quality visual content does not present any advantages to people who are vision impaired unless provisions are made that allow them to access that content via this delivery platform.

Localism

The brief description of localism provided in the discussion paper is overly narrow. Localism is more than allowing people with similar interests to communicate and participate in local communities. It can also refer to the production of local stories which are broadcast to wider audiences and assist in nation building by creating a greater understanding of local and regional issues. As technology changes, it is critical that the ABC maintain its commitment to localism.

Reports detailing localism in action have been prepared by CPSU members in Western Australia and South Australia can be found in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.

The expense of analogue transmission technology was a significant barrier to the production of local content in smaller centres. Digital technology breaks down these barriers and presents the ABC with the opportunity to renew its commitment to localism. This involves the ABC investing in the acquisition and ongoing maintenance of equipment and training of staff. It also means seeing new delivery platforms as complementary rather than replacements for existing services.

Social Inclusion and the ABC's Indigenous Programming Unit

In recent speeches, Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP²⁶ identified that in order for people to be socially included, they need to be provided with opportunities to:

- Connect with others through family, friends, work, interests and local community
- Secure a job
- Have a voice and be heard
- Access services

As part of the national broadcaster, the ABC's Indigenous Programming Unit has a public responsibility to contribute more to social inclusion. The digital environment presents an array of opportunities for ABC management.

There has been an on-going existing tension within the ABC about the role of the Indigenous Programming Unit (IPU). Should it be telling stories for local communities, or bridging the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by bringing these stories to the general community?

Before the establishment of National Indigenous Television (NITV), the Indigenous Programming Unit was restricted to telling local stories for local Indigenous communities. However the establishment of NITV last year and the emergence of new digital delivery platforms provide a valuable opportunity for the IPU to reposition itself.

26 The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Social Innovation, Social Impact :A new Australian Agenda, 28 February, 2008

As the CPSU has already identified in this paper, localism embodies more than just local stories for local communities. The ABC has a responsibility to tell local stories to wider audiences and assist in nation building by creating a greater understanding of local and regional issues. The ABC is uniquely positioned to do this because unlike NITV, the ABC has the audience reach and the capacity to talk to more people nationally. The ABC also has the existing infrastructure of specialist program makers. Indigenous communities trust the ABC to tell their stories because they know that the ABC has the resources and the skills to provide quality programming.

New digital technologies will allow more stories to be produced and told. If, however, the quality of ABC programming continues to decline, the trust relationship between the ABC and Indigenous communities will suffer. As a result, sourcing Indigenous content for the new delivery platforms would be difficult.

Job opportunities for Indigenous communities in the digital environment

The ABC does not have a good track record when it comes to the retention of Indigenous staff. Reasons for this include the limited opportunity to develop skills outside of Indigenous program areas. The current ABC management regime does not support training and development of staff and workplaces are located far away from family and community.

The rollout of digital technologies in remote communities, if done alongside Indigenous employment initiatives, could provide the ABC with a better model to retain Indigenous staff. For example, the installation of a digital radio station in a remote community could provide local employment. It would also provide the ABC (and possibly NITV) with more locally produced content for the new delivery platforms. At the same time, there would more opportunity for skilled Indigenous staff to transfer in and out of metropolitan workplaces and participate in program making projects when they arise. Benefits from such a model would be advantageous to the social inclusion for remote communities in general, not just Indigenous communities.

NITV and the ABC – Custodians of their stories

NITV was created in 2007 in recognition of the critical role specialist Indigenous units have in the social inclusion agenda. This recognition has come about as a result of decades of struggle. While there is scope for NITV and the ABC to work more closely together, attempts to combine the roles or functions of the two would be detrimental.

NITV must be given the space to develop. It exists because people have fought for the right to see their unique languages and culture reflected in the Australian media landscape. Given ABC's current track record on Indigenous employment, there is a genuine risk that NITV would be swallowed up whole if their functions were to be merged into the ABC. This would result in the current autonomy of NITV being destroyed.

Any possible benefits in the ABC and NITV working more closely together can only come as a result of rigorous consultation between all parties which follow strict protocols and agreement making frameworks. Further to this, any attempts to change the functions of either group should only be done by consensus and in an agreed time frame.

The CPSU believes that the emergence of NITV will allow greater opportunities for the ABC to focus its attention on a nation building agenda, and that this should be a focus of the ABC in a digital environment.

Religious

The ABC has demonstrated its capacity to build bridges between religious communities in Australia. The specialist religious unit that operates at the ABC provides a platform through programs such as Compass for religious communities to gain a better understanding of each others views and aspirations.

The CPSU notes that the ABC Religious Department is fundamentally different to external religious media outlets and producers. These media producers were created to speak to their own communities and in so doing create rather than remove barriers to multi-faith understanding. The CPSU notes that the capacity for the ABC to achieve its important nation building role rests in part on its capacity to create a dialogue between various communities in our society. This in turn rests on the ABC maintaining a strong in-house production capacity staffed by content specialist program makers.

The CPSU also notes that multi-faith broadcasting has an important role not just internally, but in terms of explaining and presenting Australia to the world. These issues are discussed in the following Chapter of our submission.

6. Presenting Australia to the world

The relationship between Australia's foreign policy objectives and the overseas broadcasting activities of the national broadcasters

The history of the ABC's international broadcasting is the story of on-going conflict over whether Radio Australia (RA) should be an independent broadcaster or a conduit of Federal Government's foreign policy objectives. Errol Hodge's *Radio Wars*²⁷ outlines the major fault lines of this on-going debate. The major questions in this debate are:

- Should Radio Australia act as a mere conduit of our foreign affairs policy, and in so doing, hand over editorial control to the Department of Foreign Affairs?
- Are our foreign affairs objectives best demonstrated to the region by showing how a pluralist society operates and how it allows and values dissent and disagreement? Or is that approach based on a Eurocentric approach that is based on a smug, paternalistic and possibly missionary view about its role.

The CPSU acknowledges the weight of both sides of this debate but comes out on the side of open discussion and debate. The role of the ABC should not be to proselytise. The ABC's role however is to explain our system and culture, and its appetite for argument about ideas, sometimes to cultures that place higher regard on face and consensus. The tolerance shown by the Australian government to a government funded broadcaster carrying news reports and analysis critical its (i.e. the Government) performance is an effective means of demonstrating how our culture and society operate.

Distributing the Signal

This discussion is complicated by the changes in the way the ABC is transmitting information to Asia and the Pacific. Throughout the (South) Pacific, FM re-transmission is the primary distribution method of the RA signal. Short wave transmissions remains the primary transmission method for audiences that lie outside the reach of the FM transmitters. FM repeaters are also used in south east Asia (including Cambodia and Laos). FM transmission is no longer available to either China or Indonesia.

Reliance on terrestrial re-transmission means that foreign governments (and commercial interests) influence broadcasting decisions and have ultimate control as to whether the RA

²⁷ Errol Hodge's *Radio Wars: Truth Propaganda and the struggle for Radio Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 1995

signal goes to air. Re-transmission means that host governments have the power to control the signal and thereby impose editorial control over the RA output.

Further consideration therefore needs to be given to how the independence/foreign affairs discourse is managed in an environment where the ABC's capacity to manage the integrity of its signal/material is influenced by the mode of delivery.

Expanding and enhancing services

The major gap in the ability of the ABC to place its signal in the region lies in China and Indonesia. The CPSU supports initiatives that will improve its ability to get the ABC's signal into these regions.

To achieve this, the CPSU recommends that:

- Additional funding be provided to enable the ABC to finance additional RA re-transmission facilities and arrangements;
- Providing opportunities for the ABC to negotiate reciprocal arrangements with foreign broadcasters. As responsibility for the broadcast of foreign language to Australia's domestic audience rests with SBS, the CPSU considers that greater co-operation between the ABC and SBS should be encouraged or mandated that would allow these kinds of arrangements to be made.
- Enhancing program content. The ABC has shifted resources out of Radio Australia to support its Australia Network and Australia Pacific activities. This has resulted in reduction in resources available to RA foreign language services. The CPSU (ABC Section) believes that the ABC and SBS should collaborate in the production of foreign language programs for transmission to the region.

7. Efficient delivery of services

Internal v External Production

The question about whether the ABC should or should not outsource production has often been posed. The CPSU argues that the question is not correctly framed. ABC staff do not lay claim to a monopoly of talent and innovative programming.

The optimal model must provide a place for the best program ideas that emerge from within and outside to be produced. The model must also be capable of sustaining and developing skills (both content and craft), i.e. specialist staff that are needed in the long term should not be sacrificed to make space for short term program making/schedule demands.

The optimal mix of in-house and outsourced production is that which best fulfils the ABC charter and objectives and serves the ABC's multiple audiences. The optimal mix should provide those audiences with innovative programs and comprehensive services of a 'high standard.' It should enable the ABC to:

contribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of, the Australian community.

Unfortunately ABC management has made it clear that it intends to cut back on internal production in favour of external production.

Last year ABC management closed down the ABC's internal Natural History Unit (NHU). It initially denied that the Unit had been closed down. A month ago management declared the two remaining NHU producers redundant as part of its broader attack on internal production when it cut approximately 20% of the remaining TV producers. In the latest round of staff cuts, the ABC has removed over 400 years of program making experience; experience that has created award winning documentaries such as *Crude*²⁸.

²⁸ <http://www.abc.net.au/science/crude/resources/>

Crude



The ABC's own website describes Crude as:

'a superbly crafted, 90 minute documentary spanning 160 million years of the Earth's history to reveal the story of oil.'

Its maker is promoted by the ABC as a program maker who 'makes films about the bewildering, beguiling and beautiful world we live in - as revealed by Science.'

David Suzuki : 'A thoughtful, surprising and really important film'

The ABC recently retrenched its producer stating that there is no place in the ABC for fine documentary making skills.

Senior ABC TV management have made it clear they are determined to outsource production. ABC management has claimed that outsourced production may be more efficient, but have refused to produce any evidence or documentation to back up their claim. Indeed ABC management recently spent \$1.6 million on an external review of internal production costs and a comparison of these costs with the private sector. The report prepared by the Boston Consultancy Group was never released. The CPSU challenges the claim and believes that any consideration by the Government for additional funding should be conditional upon release of the Boston Consultancy Group report or at least those parts that do not reveal commercial-in-confidence material.

ABC management's claim that it produces the best from inside and outside is not backed up by the facts. Internal documentary makers were told before they were made redundant that the ABC was no longer interested in their work. This may be because management actually prefers 'light ent' and reality style documentaries or it may be because outside documentary makers have access to funding sources not available to internal program makers. Either way, the closure of the ABC documentaries unit warrants external review.

Reasons why internal production needs to be maintained

The CPSU prefaces its comments here by again repeating that it supports a mixed production model of both internal and external production. The CPSU argues that the model should not be cherry picked, whereby external producers are favoured with higher budgets and the ABC is limited to studio based productions and programs with lower production values.

The case for the retention of internal production in Radio is easily made. The business model works, it's cheap, efficient and effective. The discussion about internal/external production is really about TV, and this submission will therefore focus on that area.

There are many reasons why internal TV production should be maintained:

- The ABC is the national storyteller. It must therefore maintain the capacity to give voice to communities and to tell their stories. Especially given that programs with essentially Australian concerns often have limited international appeal and are therefore an area of market failure.
- It's a model that is better suited to meeting Charter obligations in relation to specialist programming.
- It provides greater opportunities for vertical and horizontal integration of multiplatform program content.
- It supports a strong industry hub that is essential for the developmental needs of the wider media industry.
- It makes economic sense.

Economic Efficiency

Current management practice and culture is reducing the efficiency of the organisation.

The ABC must maintain a minimum level of internal production. As the national storyteller it must have studio and production capacity (and that capacity must exist in each state and territory) to tell stories that the commercial sector is not willing/prepared/capable of making. Once established, this studio capacity should be utilised to a level that gives an effective economic return on the capital resources and the base workforce required for the studios.

In this environment outsourcing is economically irrational in that it:

- reduces labour utilisation levels for ABC Resources staff.
- reduces economies of scale.

The CPSU notes that further outsourcing would also have the following adverse economic effects.

- Outsourcing reduces the diversity of production because it forces program makers to work exclusively with profit driven production houses. Program diversity requires that program makers have opportunities to work with the ABC and with private production houses.
- Outsourcing limits the capacity of the ABC to test external bids because it loses the ability to make its own (informed) assessments of the costs of production.
- Outsourcing limits the ABC's capacity to produce multiplatform content because the external sector has not yet developed significant capacity to produce content in this form, given the absence of financial models to support it.
- Outsourcing reduces the utilisation rate of fixed capital, intellectual property and intellectual capital.

False comparison

In comparing the costs of Australian production with licensed production, the discussion paper has pointed to a cost of between \$500 000 and \$1million for an hour of drama compared with a licence cost of between \$30 000 and \$100 000 per hour.

The discussion paper does not suggest that the comparison applies to internal versus external production however there is a common thread to these arguments. The costs of production are high regardless of whether the production is internal or external. Producing an hour of a TV series may cost up to \$1million but that cost is then offset by the licensing of that program to other TV networks. A real comparison of the costs of production versus licensing must take into account the revenue generated by program sales. Management correctly claim that the costs of production of a program like *Crude* exceed the costs of a licensed program however they fail to include the significant revenues that are earned by the ABC through program sales. Whilst these revenues may not have covered the full costs of production, it must be noted that at the ABC through its ownership of rights, it has unfettered and unlimited use of the IP, as opposed to licensing arrangements which usually restrict runs, term, platforms and reversioning.

Management's claim that their dollar goes further when spent on external production is based on a false premise. When the private sector invests in production, it recoups costs by licensing programs overseas and for domestic reuse. The ABC can do the same. The CPSU acknowledges that there is one area however where the private sector has an advantage over the ABC: it can claim tax offsets. In passing, the CPSU notes that the system of tax rebates distorts the economics of production and that this should be addressed.

Internal Production and Specialist Programming

The CPSU argues that not only should internal production be retained, it must also be increased to meet the content demands for the new platforms. Priority should be given to specialist and content rich programming on the new channels, and internal production is the most efficient and effective means of producing that content.

The Charter requires the ABC to provide comprehensive broadcasting services that are general and specialist. The CPSU believes that the legislative intent was that the ABC needed to promote specialist programming because this form of programming was likely to be neglected by the rest of the media. The commercial sector business model requires mass audiences, mass audiences in turn are built through – general or common denominator programs. This market failure requires the ABC to broadcast specialist programs.

Specialist programming tends to be made by specialist program makers with knowledge of their content or subject areas. There is also another breed of specialist program maker: those program makers, often involved in the creation of arts rather than exploration of subject areas who have developed a specialisation of ‘form’. What both groups have in common is that their specialisation is nurtured over time by the development of their storytelling and operational skills. Excellence in program making requires both skill sets to be developed. These specialist program making skills will only be sustained if there is a long term commitment by ABC management to the specialist genre. Programming should not be driven by fashion or fad in program style or genre.

In the same way that the commercial sector does not support or sustain the broadcast of specialist programming, private sector production houses do not tend to support specialist program makers. The private sector production houses are geared up to provide programs for multiple end users. They must retain the flexibility to change production styles and subjects rapidly and to provide material that is demanded by the commercial sector.

In addition to the argument that focusing on specialist programming on the additional channels gives genuine effect to the fulfilment of the ABC’s Charter responsibilities, the CPSU argues that specialist programming is also cost effective:

- i. Specialist programs have a longer shelf life

Specialist programs tend to have a longer shelf life than generalist programs. Generalist programs produced by program makers without a developed knowledge of the subject area

are more likely to be topical and time bound. In the new digital environment it is important to make programs that form a library of content that can be used and repeated.

ii. Specialist programs can be reused

Programs that are content rich have a greater capacity to be cut, reformatted and packaged for delivery on multiple platforms, than general content. Podcast statistics demonstrate that rich content is more likely to be downloaded. Chat shows and talkback, whilst cheaper to produce, have little or no potential to be reused and have never been considered for podcasting.

iii. Specialist content and market failure

The commercial sector business model does not support specialist programming. Advertising revenue depends on mass audiences and mass audiences are generated by the general or common denominator programming, and that by definition excludes specialist programs (with the exception of sport). The Charter requires the ABC to provide a balance between specialist and generalist programs. Implicit within the Charter is the understanding that the ABC is required to provide programs that would not be supported by the commercial media..

Most media newsrooms are aware of many more interesting stories than they could possibly publish or broadcast. Some stories are killed on the basis of inadequate quality, but a large number are filtered out simply by the demands of the particular output medium. This is where the online medium becomes very interesting. Time and space need no longer be restrictions. A bulletin no longer needs to be all things to all people. It becomes possible to cater to specialist audiences. For example, an online news service can safely create a section purely about science without fear of alienating the part of the audience not interested in science.

Ian Allen²⁹

As a cautionary note, the CPSU recognises that the ABC cannot or should not ignore audience share. The tension that exists within the organisation between general and specialist programming is susceptible to the same forces that dictate that the commercial networks must focus on mass audiences. The CPSU notes that without effective management of multichannelling, quality factual and specialist programming can be lost and left unwatched. Multiplatform should not be used to create ghettos of audiences. All networks must carefully and regularly make audiences aware of the offerings on other networks. Audiences and the channels must ‘cross pollinate’.

iv. The ‘left over bits’

²⁹ <http://www.abc.net.au/science/slab/emedial2/default.htm>

Content produced for a particular format often generates additional material that cannot fit into a three minute or a half-hour story. Such materials could be effectively exploited to produce content for supplementary channels or on-line delivery. Specialist content has a greater capacity to be used, reused and repackaged than content that is produced by generalist producers aiming at mass audiences.

[ABC Online News](#) operates a [Sci-Tech](#) section in exactly this way. All of its stories come out of the central ABC newsroom and are generated by the normal news gathering process. Normally only a few of these stories would make it into a TV or radio bulletin and without the online medium they would have been discarded for want of an outlet. Now they appear online. This is one example of how media organisations are beginning to adapt existing resources to generate online content at very little cost.

Ian Allen³⁰, eMedia, Can the Empire Fight Back?

v. Effective use of the skills of ABC staff

The ABC employs staff in a range of subject specialisation areas. They include Science, Health & Medicine, the Arts, Religion, History, Law and the list goes on. The ABC has the capacity to build programs/content that make more effective use of these content specialists.

The specialist model is based on the premise that the ABC engages with program makers either inside or outside the ABC and employs people with a deep knowledge of a subject area. It then nurtures these staff by developing their skills, i.e. their ability to tell stories and present complex material in a straightforward way.

Recasting the ABC as the home of quality programming will create an environment that supports content rich internal production. This is because quality has its foundation in specialist knowledge and the development of broadcasting skills. This is intellectual capital built with public money over decades. It is neither used productively nor renewed when production teams are assembled, and then dispensed with. Effective use of the ABC's intellectual capital requires a longer term organisational commitment.

It is not an argument about excluding the private sector. ABC staff do not lay claim to holding a monopoly of talent and innovative programming. The broadcasting model that the CPSU advocates must be a mixed economy, and that model improves the health of both the public service and private sector production communities.

³⁰ <http://www.abc.net.au/science/slab/emedi2/default.htm>

The ABC has a comparative advantage in the delivery of quality factually based content. In economic terms, the ABC is 'factor endowed' with specialist program makers, i.e. people who know about the content and know how to turn that knowledge into programs.

- vi. Specialist programming provides real opportunities for independent private sector media workers.

Specialist programming tends to favour strands of one-off programs, rather than series. Independent producers (i.e. those not employed by the large private production houses) are given opportunities to work with the ABC on this form of programming more readily than on light entertainment series. The CPSU supports a production model that provides genuine opportunities for independents to work with the ABC, using its resources and working cooperatively to build better programs.

- vii. It's efficient

In a digital environment, the costs predominantly lie in the creation of content. The costs of delivery are virtually zero. The costs of reformatting and repackaging, whilst low are not as low as ABC management have assumed in their business plans. With limited additional funding the ABC can repackaging quality content.

In addition to the arguments above that support the claim that specialist programming is efficient, economic and sustainable, it also argues that the alternatives won't work. Other forms and genres are either uneconomic or fail to meet any public purpose.

- a. Drama is prohibitively expensive if it is to be purpose built for the new networks. Whilst the ABC should promote local drama, even with a massive expansion of funding, it could never seriously expect to fill the schedule of a channel with new drama.
- b. The public interest is not served by creating large amounts of disposable and single use low quality programs.
- c. There is no real public interest served by the ABC seeking to provide a free service that mimics the pay TV model.

Greater opportunities for multiplatform production

To make effective use of the new technologies, programming must be capable of being delivered in multiple formats: audio for radio, audio on demand, video for TV and vods, news programming for radio TV and web. The ABC as a national media organisation has the capacity to integrate these services and effectively repackaging. The real advantage for

the ABC lies in its capacity not just to reformat the content but to genuinely conceive of it as multiplatform at the time it is commissioned. Outsourcing impedes this possibility. The broadcasting rights the ABC currently buys are limited because external producers gain their value from licensing and re-licensing content to multiple users. Reliance on outsourcing prohibits or limits the ABC's multiplatform distribution of licensed material.

Internal Production: an industry hub

The ABC is uniquely placed to offer opportunities for the development of multiskilled program makers to meet Australian audience needs now and in future. It is a vertically integrated broadcast, production and distribution entity which is multiplatform in conception and commissioning. It has a public service remit. Skills development is not sustained by a production team being assembled, used and then disbanded as is the convention in the private, project-based production sector. These skills must be nurtured and require a long term organisational commitment.

The ABC is an 'incubator' or a centre for the research and development of Australian content for TV, radio and digital production sectors. This is an historically important ABC function; one more relevant than ever as platforms proliferate and audiences fragment.

Good programs are made by people

Changes in the media and entertainment sector labour market in recent years have seen career and development opportunities in the industry for people with creative talent and specialised craft skills wither away. The casualisation of the workforce, whilst intended to make the industry more dynamic, only serves to reduce production costs and increase flexibility in the short term. For the ABC, the prospect, offered by casualisation, of an increased flexibility to constantly replenish its workforce with creatively fresh and innovative people is appealing, however, it is a 'false light'. The supposedly fresh and innovative workforce available to draw on are thinning in experience and skills. The supply of specialist, highly skilled program makers is eroding away under the wash of less experienced, low skilled competition.

A number of factors have contributed to the deskilling of the creative production workforce. The availability of quality production technology has encouraged a new generation of program makers to explore a career in the sector, flooding the labour market. Media and production courses are churning out a high volume of graduates, who, though encouraged at first by the seemingly vast opportunities of project based roles, soon realise

that they are forced to compete against each other for limited work, and to accept lower wages as a result. At the same time, those program makers who elect to take the independent path, have diminishing opportunities to have their projects funded and are also forced to undercut each other and compromise their creative vision to keep within shoe-string budgets. Where is the opportunity for a program maker to become highly skilled, when these skills are not valued in a production industry infiltrated by the dogma of economic rationalism?

Clearly, the ABC cannot sit back and rely on the Australian media and entertainment industry to develop the future program makers, it needs to actively invest in this resource itself and it needs to do so now. The ABC has the opportunity not only to sustain its own creative labour force into the future, but to help foster creative talent in the Australian digital production industry as a whole. Unless Australia has long term career and development opportunities for creative people in the digital production industry, the prospect of Australians watching, reading, listening and interacting with distinctly Australian content into the future, seems doubtful. If not the ABC, then where is the centre of on the job learning and development in Australia for journalists and program makers? Program makers in the independent production sector would clearly benefit from the opportunity to learn and share skills in a large and vibrant environment like the ABC.

The ABC is uniquely placed to be a centre for the knowledge sharing of highly skilled production practices and techniques, where talented people are challenged and grow, the highest standards of production are set and a culture of innovation prospers.

The provision of development opportunities and fostering of an innovative culture requires an up front investment which reaps benefits in the long term. The benefits would be substantial and sustained over a long period of time. This review of the ABC provides an opportunity to consider the long term future of the Corporation and for the Government to work with the ABC to ensure that the ABC is equipped for the future. The best way to equip the ABC is to lay the foundation block for a return to quality; a commitment to implement a comprehensive strategy to institute a culture of innovation and creative development at the national broadcaster.

The CPSU supports measures that improve the efficient delivery of services. The CPSU and its members have cooperated with the implementation of more efficient work practices and technologies that have driven program funds further.

Efficiency has however frequently been confused with cost-cutting by ABC management. There are also areas where ABC management has tolerated inefficient systems and waste.

ABC Staff Vision

Staff envision an ABC that delivers more high quality programs that contribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain. The ABC can better reflect the cultural diversity of Australia's community. The ABC has resources it could use more effectively to deliver local content for a multiplatform environment. To do so will create more opportunities for both ABC and private sector program makers.

In order to ensure effective use of the full range of delivery platforms and to foster the development of quality, innovative content, the ABC needs to commission and produce a mix of in-house and outsourced programs.

Managing the mix of production and commissioning activities to fulfill ABC objectives may mean structural change. Structural change is required to break down the old ABC silos called TV, Radio and News to give staff the opportunity to build programs together. Programs should be commissioned to make greatest use of the content and specialist skills of ABC program makers and to build programs together. In relation to the independent production sector, the ABC may need to develop a wider variety of ways for independent program makers to engage with the ABC – offering more than commissioning and/or licensing arrangements which rely on private sector producers to raise deficit finance elsewhere.

ABC staff have expertise, knowledge and content specialisation to produce quality, innovative programs, to work across platforms, genres and subject areas, and to collaborate with ABC and independent program makers to meet diverse audience needs. In the effort to create rich content for the digital age they are the ABC's greatest resource.

Open Contracting for public broadcasting content

The discussion paper raises the question of contracting out particular types of public interest programming on a contestable basis, perhaps similar to the model in place for the provision of overseas television broadcasting (the Australia Network) or to that in place in NZ via NZ ON Air. The CPSU makes the following points:

In Australia the ABC and the SBS, Screen Australia, the NFSA and the AFTRS, State Government screen agencies and limited content regulation are existing mechanisms

supporting public service objectives in relation to film and broadcasting. Contestable funding approaches already exist, courtesy of some of the agencies, for individual productions the public broadcasters elect to outsource.

In terms of contracting out on a larger scale, it is doubtful that there can be a genuine contest in some areas (news and current affairs and some factual and children's genres in particular) given that the ABC is factor endowed with specialist program makers, archive resources and copyrights of immeasurable value. In addition, the ABC is already the country's major producer and broadcaster of local content for the education sector. It also provides interactive access online and through the network of local and regional stations. These assets and advantages – accumulated through years of public investment - should be used in pursuit of Charter objectives. Australian-owned production companies, on the other hand, are not vertically integrated enterprises and are characteristically small and comparatively under-resourced.

External program makers should also be encouraged to contribute to the improvement and expansion of quality local content available to Australian audiences via the ABC. To pit the independents against the in-house producer in a contest for scarce public resources is to waste opportunities to realise the investments taxpayers have made in both the public broadcaster and the independent production sector for many years. Instead, relatively small increases in funding for the commissioning of local production - both in-house and independent – would yield disproportionately large benefits for the broadcaster and its in-house producers, for the independent sector and, most of all, for the audience. The emphasis should be on increasing the quality and amount of local content in all genres and on all platforms.

Larger scale open funding models for specialised forms of content – on air or on line – involve tendering costs and complexities. Furthermore, the open funding model applied to overseas television broadcasting services has not been without its problems; though the record shows that the service has most often and most successfully been operated by the ABC. As discussed above, the ABC has significant advantages in any contest for contracts to produce content on a large scale to meet public service objectives.

NZ ON Air, another example raised in the discussion paper, was created as a means to fulfill public service objectives in an otherwise completely commercial operating environment. It provides limited support for regional broadcasting services, and for

archiving, but its main method for achieving public service broadcast objectives is production investment. Similar arrangements for program investment already exist in Australia through Screen Australia and state agencies in co-operation with the nation's broadcasters; and most significantly with the public broadcasters.

In summary then, the optimal mix of in-house and outsourced production is that which will best serve the Australian audience. Meeting its needs now and into the future requires that we imagine a better ABC; one which is not only better resourced but also better uses the creative resources of its staff and of the independent production sector to 'contribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of, the Australian community'.

Changing the capital requirements

The CPSU acknowledges that the ABC has sufficient funds to meet its capital requirements. The CPSU is concerned however about the lack of strategic planning in the roll out of capital. Capital decisions are driven by five separate areas: ABC Technology and Distribution (T&D); IT (which is technically part of T&D but to a large degree operates independently); Technical Services (again part of the T&D Division, but driven by its own interests), the Innovation Division and the Capital Works that now reports to the Chief Operating Officer rather than T&D. The decisions and approaches are not necessarily coordinated between the departments and there is no single authority that integrates capital works decisions with effective end-user assessments and technical maintenance decisions. The lack of effective coordination distorts decisions about capital replacement versus maintenance decisions – is it cheaper and more effective to replace or maintain?

There should be capacity to transfer expenditure between the ABC's capital and recurrent/operating budgets to allow for the more effective management of these technical resources. One clear example of this is in the area of software. As software updates are drawn from recurrent/operating expenditure, output areas frequently delay and postpone software update decisions. It would appear that new technologies are frequently heralded at the ABC as 'cutting edge' approaches that will introduce efficiencies and economies at the time they are being implemented. Two years down the track however, production departments are scrimping and cutting corners and refuse to purchase necessary and critical software updates.

Changes to the ABC's management of property and facilities

The agenda of the previous government was to drive the ABC away from internal production and to adopt a purchaser/provider split. That agenda was supported by the previous federal government encouraging the ABC to move off its campus style production sites such as Gore Hill and move to reduced facilities in the city.

The CPSU believes that the premise that underpins the suggestion that the ABC move out of its studio facilities is false and is ideologically driven. The CPSU supports the retention of ABC owned and controlled facilities and property.

The CPSU notes that the ABC seeks to make effective use of its facilities by hiring out its studios and facilities. The CPSU reluctantly supports these initiatives. The CPSU considers it is a second best alternative at best. Work is needed to increase labour utilisation rates and to recover costs. The studios and facilities would be more effectively used if they were directly applied to the building of programs that meet the ABC's Charter obligations. In a multiplatform and multichannel environment there is greater opportunity to utilise this infrastructure.

Combining ABC and SBS Operations

There has been some discussion in the media about opportunities for combining operations of the ABC and SBS. The ABC has been technologically driven since its inception. The change is not likely to be in the interests of ABC staff. Notwithstanding that, the CPSU acknowledges that the ABC and SBS will combine back of house broadcasting and transmission activities if the new technologies work, save money (and jobs), and do not create unnecessary risk.

There would not appear to be any purpose served by an external party forcing this change on the organisation. The internal processes that are likely to be used to assess the costs and benefits of the proposal should be allowed to continue.

The CPSU makes the following observation about the combination of the back of house broadcast operations roles:

- New technologies re being developed that will automate many of the broadcast operational functions. Employees engaged in current operation roles are likely to be transferred to the other end, i.e. the 'prepping' role, ensuring that program content

and interstitials are correctly coded. Savings in operational monitoring are likely to be partially offset by the increase in staff required to 'prep' and check the input.

- Capital savings are not likely to be significant. There may be a slight cost saving in the purchase of equipment that is scaled up to meet the needs of SBS as well as the ABC. It is likely however that separate distribution systems would need to be maintained by both broadcasters.
- It is anticipated that there may be savings in some of the ancillary gear eg. equipment used for digital encoding.

The CPSU does of course have a number of reservations about the combination of broadcast and transmission activities:

- There is a risk management role within broadcast operations and transmission: equipment breaks down; signals need to be re-directed and faults restored. In times of breakdown priorities need to be established about which services are to be restored first. The efficiencies and economies that arise from the merging of functions in essence mean that there are fewer staff left available to manage these risks. The setting of priorities within the ABC is a difficult task: the determination of these priorities between two separate broadcasters would be difficult.
- The broadcast operations role is likely to become more complex in a multichannel environment. Any slack created by the use of automated technologies is likely to be absorbed by the expansion of the role cause by multichanneling.
- Different broadcast operation cultures emerge within networks that have advertising compared with those that do not. In the commercial Broadcast Operations environment, the 'ad' is all important. There is a danger therefore that the broadcast operation needs of both broadcasters may not closely align.

Appendices: Submissions from the ground

Appendix 1 Western Australia

This part of the CPSU submission was compiled from contributions from members who work 'on the ground' at the ABC in WA.



The ABC's new premises in East Perth

The ABC's Western Australian branch comprises the state centre in East Perth and nine regional centres – Albany, Bunbury, Esperance, Wagin, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Karratha, Broome and Kununurra.

The ABC moved to new premises in East Perth in 2004 (pictured) in 2004. The move has been popular amongst staff as the old building had become decrepit and far too large for the very much decreased numbers of staff employed in Perth, and since the divestment of the WA Symphony Orchestra from the ABC in both in a corporate sense and physically. The new building has brought different groups of staff closer together and provided much brighter working spaces. The location in the new East Perth redevelopment area around an inlet of the Swan River adds to a pleasant working environment.

Localism

For the purposes of this part of the Submission, 'Localism' is taken to include the contribution of ABC state centres and Regional stations to their local cultural and social environment. It is also taken to include the role of the ABC in employing and/or training members of the community who have or wish to gain skills in the media environment, particularly those with a commitment to independent public broadcasting.

The ABC's Annual Report to Parliament no longer includes profiles of the ABC's capital city centres, rather setting its contents out according to the current Divisional structure. Outside Sydney and Melbourne, the state centres are commonly known as 'BAPH' (Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth & Hobart; sometimes including Darwin – 'BAPHD' – and

Canberra – ‘BAPHDC’). This arrangement of the Annual Report misses the unique and varied contributions of the centres beyond Sydney and Melbourne. It is well known outside of Sydney and Melbourne that ‘the states’ operate quite differently from the larger centres. The basic fact that there are significantly less staff in the smaller centres, yet these staff work across almost the whole range of ABC output as do Sydney and Melbourne, means that staff work very differently. For example, in Sydney and Melbourne camera operators work for either TV News, or for TV Production, or for Resources Hire. In Perth, the same operators may work in all these very different areas at different times, sometimes from shift to shift.

The Govt. Review states on p.5 under the heading ‘Objectives of national broadcasting’:

Localism – allowing people with similar interests to communicate and participate in local communities.

The people who work for the ABC are people ‘bringing communities together’. In Radio in WA, this is through broadcasts on Local Radio (ABC 720 Perth) and ABC Regional Radio – the 9 aforementioned Regional stations. This also happens through the national networks, Radio National and Classic FM, employing staff outside Sydney and Melbourne to tell the stories, and record the music, of their local communities. In WA Television, it is the coverage of important local events, such as the Perth *ANZAC Day March* and the *West Australian Football League* (both telecast live in WA), and the *Hopman Cup* (telecast nationally). It is also through the production of programs for the national television networks (ABC1 & ABC2) such as *Can We Help?* and the children’s program *Rollercoaster* (which also has an impressive interactive online site).

This programming in both Radio and Television brings Western Australia to itself and to the nation and to the world. These programs are only possible due to the work of many and diverse ABC employees – not only in Radio, Television and Online, but those behind the scenes who technically and administratively support the program-makers.

With sufficient resources expended on staffing, equipment and training, branch and regional offices could become hubs for the production of content for broadcast locally or nationally on either radio or TV, or that could be narrowcast, or streamed via appropriate delivery mechanisms, to interested audiences. This would include but not be limited to News gathering and reporting. It’s possible that these hubs could provide media production training in remote geographic areas or in conjunction with local education facilities so that

it becomes possible for some of our more remote citizens actually to have their stories made available to the wider population.

The digital environment could also see the demise of the current divisional structure such as Radio, TV, etc., replaced by divisions such as Content Production, Content Delivery, etc. that promote the efficient use of the ABC's production resources whatever the delivery platform, and wherever that content is produced.

The East coast-centric ABC we currently have will become less and less relevant to the rest of Australia as audience choices continue to expand, especially via the Internet where they are seeing more programs available from around the world. This is already the case with many radio programs (including some of our own) that are accessed from anywhere in the world with no thought to geography, only relevance and listener interest.

Comments from WA Regional Broadcasters

- ABC regional Radio stations have a bright future in the digital age. They are well placed to build on the existing analogue commitment to their local audiences. The regional stations are primarily staffed by broadcasters and journalists who, these days, are also expected to have the skills to be able to contribute to the station's website in co-ordination with a dedicated on-line producer. They meet their charter commitment to connect with the audience primarily through their analogue radio presence, with their on-line contribution being primarily the reversioning of and value adding to the radio stories.

The future could be so much brighter. With appropriate resourcing and management foresight, regional stations could reach their audiences in much more meaningful ways. Regional audiences do not like to have programs piped in from elsewhere while being told that it's local. In the digital age, and with sufficient funding, more meaningful contact with the community is possible. For example, given the funding and the digital channels, it would be possible for regional journalists to present local television news to their immediate community (this would be in addition to state and national bulletins). The result would be that local communities would once again feel 'ownership' of "their ABC".

The regional stations are already under-staffed. If there is to be any hope of increased community connection in the digital era, more staff are required.

Consideration should be given to improving the quality of opportunities for staff and placing many more senior staff in regions to lift quality and meet the challenges of the digital age.

- We are asked to be innovative and creative – something the ABC does well and should always strive for - but it's difficult to be creative when I am unsure if I will be able to feed my family in two months time (as I do not have an on-going position with the ABC).
- When we are being asked about our thoughts on core values like trust and honesty, it seems ironic that as an ABC employee I am unable to trust that my employment will be continued beyond the terms of my current contract.
- The requirement for more content output has increased the workload enormously. We are encouraged to take our cameras with us at the weekend (not an ABC-supplied camera) in case we can snap anything and add it to the website when we get to work on Monday. We are urged to be ever vigilant for stories and photo opportunities.
- Support staff for program makers in the regional centres has been drawn down to nothing. We are now in the position of trying to make innovative programming while having arguments with other departments about the latest bureaucratic whim. It is very damaging to content (and content providers) to have management demanding that you be creative and “take time to dream”, while at the same time demanding that you worry about the nuts and bolts of the office.
- We are desperately short of staff in the regions and can't even get worthwhile people to apply. We won't have 'A Better ABC' until we have a management that embraces the concepts of loyalty and honesty and can manage individuals as opposed to trying create a homogenised, one size fits all, workforce.
- Obtaining and retaining staff in a mining town stuck in the middle of the outback is problematic. There is not enough financial incentive for people to work here as the

cost of living is unbelievable. Medical and other services are just about non-existent.

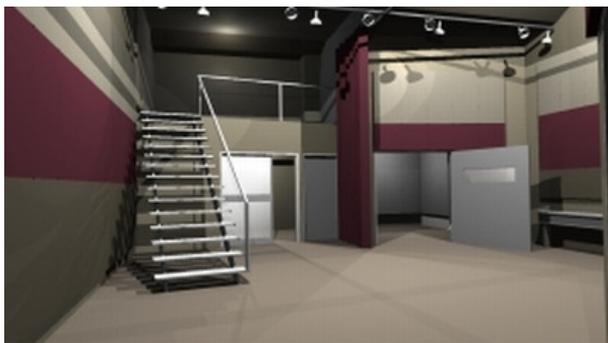
- The ABC is absolutely vital - in many ways a nation is judged by the quality of its national broadcaster.
- From what I can see the same amount of money is having to be split amongst ever more ABC obligations - TV, Radio and Internet. With on-line content so vital, it's essential that the funding be increased. It's impossible for quality to be maintained in all quarters if more is expected of people but no more money is provided.
- To encourage the best people to work for it, the money needs to reflect the importance of the role and position. Too often you flick on the ABC and the standards are not as high as they should be. Programs are made with the right intention but not always the best talent. Why? Look at what can be earned in the "Corporate or commercial sector".

National (Radio) Networks

Radio National and Classic FM both have staff based at the Perth centre, co-located in the 'National Networks Unit'. These networks broadcast nationally. Their brief is to record the stories and music of communities, Australia-wide.

However, staff numbers have decreased in recent years.

In 2007 a vacant Producer position in Classic FM was not re-advertised. That position has now been abolished. Two staff positions remain: a producer (who also produces and presents a nationally-broadcast program) and a recording engineer. These two remaining staff record all of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra's major performances, as well as other music recordings, both studio-based and outside broadcasts. In addition to Classic FM, they on occasion record for triple j when the youth network visits Western Australia. If there were sufficient funds and staffing, many more musical events across a wide variety of genres could be recorded, for present enjoyment and for posterity too: the ABC's Archives are a rich source of content.



Floor of Radio Drama studio ABC Perth

Radio National's impressive new Radio Drama studio in the Perth centre is sadly under-utilised. Four years ago, Radio National employed two radio drama producers (one full-time, one 'nearly full-time') in Perth. Productions were recorded for programs such as *Airplay*, *The Book Reading*, *PoeticA*, *The Short Story* and *First Person*. WA-based actors and other talent were contracted for these productions. In 2004, just prior to the move into the new building, one drama producer took a redundancy. A redundancy results in the position ceasing to exist; thus WA 'lost' this position.

The other radio drama producer (internationally-recognised, she one year chaired a Prix Italia selection committee) retired at the end of 2007. Her position has not been filled and we understand that it too has now been abolished. This leaves the Perth theatre community mourning a lost community asset, and a talented ABC sound engineer with limited opportunity to use his radio drama production skills. The loss to the community is not simply 'fewer hours of WA-produced content on national radio.' Each year the now-retired producer together with the now under-utilised engineer brought in students from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. They developed the students' radio skills and taught them the art of radio drama production. In her final year, the producer brought in a group of intellectually-impaired adults to act in a radio play which was broadcast on *Airplay*.

Radio National at one time employed one full-time and one part-time Social History producer in Perth. Nationally-broadcast programs such as *Hindsight*, *Verbatim* and *Street Stories* (and the religious program *Encounter* which has on occasion been produced in Perth) are very much based on communities and their stories. There are now just two part-time Social History producers in Perth.

Radio National's music programs *The Daily Planet* and *The Weekend Planet*, and its documentary/feature program *Into The Music* are all Perth-based. *Into The Music* has provided some opportunity for more complex program-making within the Perth unit.

Producers and other staff contribute to the network's online presence. Radio National is recognised as the world leader in podcast content and its programs' websites set the standard in Australia. With sufficient funding, the Western Australian unit would deliver many more of this vast state's stories and music to Australia and the world.

TV Production (non-News)

Can We Help? is a nationally televised program that was conceived by Perth-based Circling Shark Productions. Circling Shark entered into a co-production agreement with the ABC and received funding from ScreenWest. The funding agreement with ScreenWest was to kick-start local production and was only for the duration of series one of the program. This provided a significant boost for TV production in WA, creating jobs both internal and external to the ABC. At the conclusion of series one, the ABC bought the rights to the show from Circling Shark. This is a rare example of an originally outsourced program being brought in-house.

Can We Help? has proved a winning formula and has led to the re-establishment of a fully functional TV production unit. Production, camera and audio crews have more regular work on the program and are also available for other requirements in the branch. Apart from the significant boost in morale within this area of the ABC in Perth, it means our state-of-the-art building is much better utilised and local production has a brighter future. *Can We Help?* has gone from strength to strength and has just been commissioned for a fourth series.

Can We Help? is a very research reliant program focussing on locating and reuniting lost family and friends. This requires intense investigative and interpersonal skills. Many of the stories involve restoring very broken relationships and issues of abuse, heartache and abandonment and therefore need to be handled extremely delicately.

The program utilises 9 full-time staff and 4 part-timers as EP, producers and researchers, plus a crew (camera and audio) one day a week (down from 3 days a week for the previous season). Recording in the studio occurs on 8 days a year and involves about 21 people including talent. This compares very favourably with similar in the larger state centres.

The casualisation of the workforce is an obstacle the program has to deal with, with the vast majority of staff being employed on 'run-of-show' or other short-term contracts (of 8-10 months duration). The lack of job security has a negative impact on staff as they have uncertainty about their future. Staff have been lost to the unit as they always have to have

their eye out for other opportunities. It is extremely difficult to find appropriate replacement staff and there is little time for training as the program requires immense lead in work to each series. Staff are reluctant to take leave during production as they are uncertain if they will have a period of enforced leave at the end of their contract. With recent redundancies in television across the country, it has been difficult to access crews and producers in the places we need to film. This has upped the workload on our Perth team with us having to send producers interstate to film several stories at one time. The lack of available crews also hampers our ability to film stories when and where they happen.

Education

In the 1980s, the ABC in Perth had an Educational TV department that made quality educational programs, but due to centralisation, the unit was disbanded and the ABC lost a skilled and enthusiastic production team. A few years later a new team was formed under an exceptionally talented producer, but approximately 8 years ago this team was also disbanded. The programs made by this later team are still being replayed during school hours – for example *Waterworks* which has just finished being repeated on ABC1.

Educational programming could be an opportunity to work with educational institutions to both create programs and educate program-makers. Also, links to online sites provide an enrichment of broadcast content – even if that content was not specifically produced as ‘educational content’ – that can be remarkable research tools for students.

Perth Television Studio

Perth has a large studio/sound stage for Television. It is used to record episodes of *Can We Help?* and, from next year, the popular children’s program *Rollercoaster*. It is also used as an occasional rehearsal space by the WASO, but is largely under-utilised. Though space in the building has been left for a studio control room, this facility currently does not exist. Instead, an Outside Broadcast van is hooked up to the studio and operates as the control room.

Outside Broadcasts

OB6

Sometime around the year 2000, as part of the digital conversion process, the ABC acquired new Standard Definition Outside Broadcast trucks, one for each state. The most successful of these has been OB6, Perth’s Truck. OB6, as you would expect, is utilized for all of the ABC’s Outside Broadcast functions. These productions include the *W AFL*, the

CPSU (ABC Section) Submission into review of ABC and SBS

ANZAC Day March, The Hopman Cup, Regional sport and women's football. It's even used as the control room to produce the studio segments of the locally-produced program *Can We Help?* (6:30pm on Fridays on ABC1).

However, OB6 really proved its worth because of the market failure it prevented. When the commercial networks faced the capital investment required for digital conversion they balked at the expense. Rather than upgrading each state's facilities they began relying on contractors to drive OB trucks up and down the Eastern seaboard to meet demand. Unfortunately, transporting an OB facility across the Nullabor to isolated Western Australia proved prohibitively expensive, meaning only the most important events like international cricket were covered.

OB6, the only digital truck in the West, fills the gap. It now serves all the commercial networks as well as the ABC. The productions it facilitates would not be commercially viable except for the ABC's initial and ongoing investment. OB6 is used by Channels 7 and 10 for AFL, and by Foxtel for A-League soccer, Super 14 Rugby and Basketball. In the process OB6 has more than paid for itself.

It is an example of how the ABC provides the critical mass, especially in the smaller states, that support local industry and lets the private sector thrive. It's a vital piece of Western Australia's media infrastructure. It has helped keep the Western Australian media sector technically relevant at a time when the private sector would not invest in new equipment. It has helped bridge the digital divide in a way the private sector was unable to do. It has meant people working in the industry were able to keep working and keep developing their careers.



WA Outside Broadcast van

TVOBs

TV Outside Broadcasts (TVOBs) WA occupies an interesting niche in the national TV OBs landscape. In WA we are physically isolated from our national counterparts by the sheer size of the Australian continent. The WA people themselves are also a very widely distributed population. They are settled throughout a diverse environment and cultural regional platform.

The media service that TVOBs provides is equipped to celebrate the sporting, arts, youth, adult, metro and regional expressions here. We are proudly the only main, locally based media station with a dedicated TVOBs group, since the shift of the commercial stations towards downsizing and relocating to their central Eastern States bases. Many of the staff in our TVOB team who work on an event are now comprised of many commercial station employees in a freelance capacity, or have in fact joined the ABC as employees in various capacities. Their only other options have been finding employment in another line of work or relocating east without this unplanned but fortunate opportunity to work with the ABC.

The reality is that until recently there were essentially 4 main players in the TVOB sector and there is only 1 main player left now: The ABC. The other point of note is that the programming opportunities haven't decreased. As the only major player WA TVOBs has represented not only the wide variety of local WA ABC programming but also accommodated the requests of the commercial and Pay TV stations, using our excess capacity. This has provided revenue opportunities to the benefit of the Corporation. There have subsequently been occasions, which are recovered at the client's cost, to involve Eastern States staff in our coverages. These opportunities create avenues for sharpening skill sets in a broad range of areas for a wide variety of staff, both locally and nationally. Broadcast quality development would also be enhanced by 'common goal' targets across the branches via communication and liaison paths.

TVOBs staff have also, during this same timeframe, had to adapt very quickly to technological advances, analogue to digital conversion, followed by the High Definition trend just beginning.

To truly represent the people of WA from a media perspective in all its variety we need to be able to reach the wider regional community in the coming years. Much of the backbone of this country's wealth is built from these areas. The historical significance, the safety of

its people, the sense of community are all important messages that the TVOB area is designed to cover due to its mobile nature.

The staff themselves are the core reason behind the success of the WA TVOB group. There are some interesting observations to make about the staff: From April 2009, no core team member will be aged below 30. There are no trainees in this team. The future is now, in terms of the knowledge base, management, skill development and retention of staff in this industry. There is an adage here that says; 'it takes 5 years to become 'useful' as a Tech in this industry and 10 years to become an 'expert' in a given area.' TVOBs suffer from an aging workforce. Compounding this situation is the trend across most industries towards declining staff retention. There really is only a narrow window of opportunity here to pass on the necessary expertise, with staff retirement, retention and time factors all compounding. There is no question that this alarms the staff here. Collectively the TVOBs staff support a system of training for Australia's youth and believe as a group that it should be central to key Corporation values. Fostering greater liaison and, through clearly defined personnel contacts at training institutions such as TAFE and University, would go a long way towards bridging this gap. As an example of this problem: 2008 saw no entrants in the WA section of the ABC Women in Engineering Scholarship, which provides \$1500 and work experience to the lucky winner. So no scholarship was awarded in this state this year as a result. One of the employees in WA TVOBs is a previous winner of this award. It should be emphasised that without consideration of these statements the future sustainability of this sector is questionable.

WA TVOBs is a proud team that envisages expanding into further coverage of regional programs, into greater use of Studio 61, with Full HD capability in our trucks, more junior staff training now to become 'great staff' in 10 years time, and enough staff to accommodate the days when there are more than the one event on the day. The quality of the WA TVOB coverage nationally stands in high regard in media circles. The importance of maintaining this reputation cannot be understated, in terms of ABC ethics and viability in the industry. This reputation does not come lightly. Indeed there have been many hours of dedicated work towards a common goal in making this a nationally recognised unit. Our thoughts above reflect our investment in its future.

WA News & Current Affairs

In Television, WA produces its own 7pm News and a local (WA) edition of *Stateline* screened on Fridays at 7:30pm in the *7:30 Report* slot. There is one reporter based in Perth to contribute WA stories to the *7.30 Report*.

In Radio, there are hourly Perth and regional bulletins, with one Perth-based reporter contributing to Radio Current Affairs (*AM & PM*), the *Country Hour* and contributions to triple j news. Specialist News journalists contribute reportage and comment to Local Radio programs as appropriate (these are usually crime, courts or political stories).

Online, locally-based producers (1 per shift) contribute WA stories to the ABC Online News site.

As new journalists join the Corporation, they are rarely confined to one platform, working as required across Radio, Television and Online.

Changing technology is driving a revolution in ABC newsrooms – the ultimate aim is to be ‘tapeless’, ie shoot, browse, store and archive ABC vision in online server systems, in line with broadcast news organisations worldwide.

The single biggest workflow effect of this changeover seems to be that journalists will (generally) be expected to edit their own *News* and *Stateline* stories. Melbourne are already trialling this. At a recent information session held in the Perth newsroom we were told that there would eventually (in the next year or so) be only 2 x 4-hour News Edit shifts per day, a reduction from approximately 3 x 8-hour News Edit shifts plus *Stateline* and *7.30 Report* shifts. There is general concern that this change will lead to a significant reduction in both the amount and the quality of *News* output.

Journalists based in the Regional centres contribute to *Stateline* and *TV News*, but do so under generally difficult conditions – eg no dedicated broadcast cameras or operators and little training, so journalists use either stringers or domestic video cameras with resulting huge variance in the quality of the vision they can supply. They must also juggle this with their other duties.

ABC News also uses ‘viewer generated’ amateur vision (ie from phones, personal video cameras, YouTube, etc.) – this can create problems around rights and quality.

Perth *TV News* tends to run 3 to 4 more local stories in the 7pm bulletin than any other BAPHDC state.

Having a broad overview of News/Caff stories since ABW opened in 1960, it is obvious that the ABC covered all sorts of regional and remote areas and events as a matter of course, but since the introduction of satellite technology in the 1980s and the resulting capacity to centralise broadcasting, there has been a reduction in resourcing that has severely affected the capacity of the ABC in Western Australia to cover this large state.

The proliferation of media delivery methods and the promise of extra Free to Air (FTA) digital channels is a wonderful opportunity for the Corporation to utilise its existing regional and state offices to create content that can be used in a variety of ways.

The digital environment should also see the demise of divisions such as Radio, TV, etc. to be replaced by divisions such as Content Production, Content Delivery, etc. that promote the efficient use of the ABC's production resources whatever the delivery platform, and wherever that content is produced.

The ABC will be a part of this only if it is dedicated to the production of content, or, if externally produced, that content has been commissioned in such a way that the ABC retains rights that allows for the material to be retained, re-used and re-packaged by the ABC.

ABC-owned material can be re-used, re-packaged, and licensed to external producers and broadcasters either as footage or audio, or as complete programs, thereby creating a revenue stream. Internal production becomes more expensive when footage and/or audio elements need to be purchased from elsewhere because the ABC's current lack of production means we no longer have a deep and rich ABC-owned archive available.

The regional network the ABC already has in place could be utilised to encourage more Indigenous program making to feed into the national network, or for narrowcasting to interested communities.

Currently transmission from Sydney accounts for a very large percentage of TV and national radio programming. This creates barriers to the provision of much local content to either local or national markets – new service delivery models, eg more TV channels,

internet delivery, etc., could overcome some of this centralization and in effect provide a more relevant ABC.

To close, the people who staff the ABC in Perth work hard and with dedication, a dedication they would appreciate seeing returned by management in the form of permanent positions at the ABC. As a staff representative I am approached again and again by people, usually young people, who can't quite feel that they 'belong' at this great organisation. They know that at the end of their contracts or casual arrangements, their ability to commit to this organisation will be at an end. I have had people in tears, at leaving, and at the uncertainty of their future, especially their future in the very limited media market in Western Australia and beyond. These are often talented young people whom their immediate managers would like to keep for their skills and for their acquired knowledge of their programming areas and the ABC. The 'culture' of the ABC, unfairly maligned by some, is built by staff working in an environment where attention to detail and quality and the intentions of the ABC Charter are part of their day-to-day working lives, where people put their hearts into bringing the best programs to the audience. This has always been the 'culture' at the ABC, but it can easily disappear with the retirement of long-serving, hard-to-replace and highly skilled staff that is about to hit hard. Where are the younger people to come up through the ranks to fill these gaps? By increasingly using short-term contracts, which are often not advertised, and casual employment, which never is, the ABC is not providing employment opportunities to the general community or job security to those it hires. At the same time it is talking to staff about "trust" and "respect".

Staff in all areas - from Local Radio where everyone is always under the pump getting out their high rating programs to the community, to TV Resources where staff have a huge job rostering production staff and organising activities that generate income for the organisation; from the technologists who keep two national television networks, four national radio networks, Local Radio and the nine Regional stations operational and on air, to the staff who make sure the building works for everyone's benefit – all these people and more make up the ABC in Western Australia. All these people are already working in one way or another in a digital environment and have already shown great resilience at coping with a constantly changing set of 'tools' with which to do their work.

A significant number of television staff are about to lose their jobs through the introduction of "new ways of doing things"; these people will be a great loss to the ABC and in a small centre like Perth will impact hard on the ability of the branch to take part in the community

CPSU (ABC Section) Submission into review of ABC and SBS

and cover events. Some believe this loss will need to be reversed as the unforeseen or ignored outcomes become apparent in loss of quality and flexibility.

Appendix 2 South Australia

This part of the CPSU submission was compiled from contributions from members who work ‘on the ground’ at the ABC in South Australia.

Regional Radio

ABC Regional Radio in South Australia operates 5 regional stations at Pt Lincoln, Pt Pirie, Renmark, Mt Gambier and Broken Hill (technically in NSW but attached to SA branch because of proximity, sharing the same time zone etc) and one outpost at Pt Augusta. In total 41 full time staff produce almost 170 hours of live radio a week, plus contribute dozens of stories, photos and videos Online. These stations provide specific news, current affairs and specialist programs to local audiences. However due to constant staff turnover, erosion of wage parity against city counterparts, salary capping and ongoing budget issues which often sees positions left vacant for months on end, many local news and rural services are networked across regions hundreds of kilometres apart with very little in common, thereby negating the very essence of that strong localism and connection with the local community.

The staff turnover issue is a major concern with some regional stations experiencing a 200-300% annual staff turnover rate which impacts on the strength of local programming, staff morale and the ABC’s image within a rural or regional context. With no immediate pool of local casuals to fill vacancies, regional stations rely on mostly young broadcasters from either the city (Adelaide) or elsewhere in Australia. There’s either very little or no financial assistance for them to relocate, no assistance with accommodation which is a major issue and cause of workplace tension because of the tight local regional rental markets. Often replacement staff either sleep on couches with friends or work colleagues while they make their own accommodation arrangements. Without exception they are always out of pocket, sometimes to the tune of several hundreds of dollars (in extreme cases staff have been out of pocket in the thousands of dollars) and all of this contributes to a sense of abandonment and lack of corporate caring by the ABC, increasing the chances they will leave within a short time frame and seek better pay and conditions with an alternative employer. This simply perpetuates the rapid turnover cycle. For many young broadcasters this is their first experience with the ABC and unfortunately it is mostly a regrettable and at times a bitter one.

Training of new staff is virtually non-existent or left to local staff to provide as best they can. Most ABC regional radio recruits are young broadcasters with very limited

experience. Some staff have been in a regional station for two years before accessing any formal training.

Regional Managers are expected to be on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year with no reimbursement for this. There's an expectation regional staff will also be available in cases of a local emergency. The ABC expects regional staff will represent the organisation within local communities and these duties are often carried out after hours or on weekends which seems to contradict the ABC corporate policy of creating a work/life balance. Regional salaries are capped, career paths are extremely narrow and there's no recognition of the breadth of skills required by regional broadcasters. This all fuels disenchantment and sours many ambitions of regional staff.

Greater and greater emphasis is being placed on regional staff to contribute to online, with either stories, photos, videos, daily blogs and regular web updates which impact on the core business of producing quality local radio content. There also seems to be a push to generate breaking news online almost regardless of the quality for which the ABC has spent 75 years building its reputation and strength of brand around. There are very specific journalistic skills required to generate material for radio as opposed to online and while there is some common ground between the two, on the whole they require very distinct skills. There's no doubt Online will be the big growth area in the future and it's a very exciting medium, but without adequate training and resources this will just place added and undue pressures on regional staff.

Stress amongst ABC regional staff is a real issue for all the above reasons. In SA alone, two staff have recently been placed on suicide watch because of work related stress. Both have since left the organisation.

Digital broadcasting is a wonderful advance and will provide another platform for regional staff to showcase their talents. With its vast regional network spanning the country, the ABC has a unique opportunity to provide new job opportunities for regional youth through digital broadcasting – allowing them to enter at the development stages and be at the forefront. Perhaps offer traineeships to entice regional youth to consider a career with the ABC. This will require some planning on behalf of the ABC to ensure regional stations can cater for increased staff and there's also adequate resources and training to take advantage of this. Without such solid foundations, digital regional radio for the ABC will be another

burden on staff already under severe pressure and stress and the fear is our core business and quality will be the ultimate casualties.

TV

At present only Sydney can insert HD content into the network. Up until recently, because a decision was made not to allow viewers outside of Sydney to see Sydney's news on HD, a program guide was run from 7pm to 7.30pm. Big problem. Viewers get their new HD plasma home and sit down to watch ABC news only to get a program guide. Lots of phone calls from the public ensue and are met with explanations from us in the technical department.

So, the decision is then made to allow Sydney's news to go to air on HD. More phone calls. "Why can't I see our local news reader on the ABC and all I get is Sydney's weather?" More explanations from we in the technical department. However, during the Stateline program the unsuspecting HD viewing public is back to watching the program guide! And of course they can't watch the local football telecast or the local Anzac day march or in fact anything that requires local insertion into HD. All because the ABC is too stingy (or stupid) to buy an upconverter/HD encoder for each state.

But!!! Maybe some and perhaps increasingly more HD viewers would PREFER to watch Sydney news. After all, they can see an hour of news on channel 10 at 5pm with a lot of local content, then at 6pm they can chose between 7 or 9 and get local news and weather so why not watch Sydney's output? In any case there are nearly always a number of local stories with identical footage to the commercials since we spend much time swapping the material between stations. Hence the piece on channel seven's current affairs program about "Channel 29" or is it 92? In fact all the stations are guilty of pooling footage.

The point is, pretty soon here in the "BAPH" state of SA, we may as well pack our bags and go home. We are being left behind rapidly. Our standard definition technology is now almost obsolete and due for replacement. Only HD equipment will be available to replace it at a cost that I doubt will be affordable especially in the current climate. Our only local programming, News, Stateline, Football and Anzac march cannot be seen in high definition. Still, not to worry, in the very near digital future we will all be able to sit in front of our iphones and watch our beloved ABC in stunning LOW definition.

SA must retain full studio and outside broadcast facilities and the staff to operate them – current reduced staffing levels and decisions about the implementation of new technology (studio control room) may compromise the future capacity of TV in SA to make programs other than those that are acquired in the field. Being restricted to field acquired programs will marginalise local production. There is already an argument to say that by only producing 6.30 timeslot programs in SA and WA (field acquired), that ABC management are paying lip service to the notion of regional TV production (as total TV capacity is taken up by staff allocation to these long running 6.30 series, therefore removing the possibility of ANY other local or national generated program ideas being accepted for production in SA).

SA TV should retain an experienced local Arts producer on staff to feed program material into the network. In fact, SA Arts production for ABC2 should be increased in line with previous contributions.

The ABC TV should take advantage of the expertise of internal staff, including SA, to feed material into any expanded Education/ Childrens network (ABC3) rather than that program material being outsourced

SA Editing capacity should not be compromised by management holding back on the filling of full time positions which have been vacant for years. Programs will potentially be compromised by the loss of highly skilled contractors who are currently backfilling vacant full time staff positions.

Internal craft training needs to be addressed urgently - before we lose those skilled operators as potential trainers, who are the last of their generation to have been fully trained !

ABC management, if it is to have any credibility, must not remove support for existing content creation in TV, in order to pursue further means of content delivery – this is a recipe for disaster. ABC 2 is a classic example of under resourcing.

South Australian Music and Arts coverage

The Music Council of Australia noted with alarm that in the discussion paper on the Review into the ABC and SBS, Music and the Arts don't rate a mention.

Classical Music performances are well covered in Adelaide by Classic FM with over 50 Concert performances broadcast live or recorded each year, by a very small production team. This enables listeners across Australia who cannot attend concerts to hear music by local orchestras and ensembles. As well as classical music, Classic FM music production staff record performances of other genres of music for broadcast on Radio National and TRIPLE J as opportunities arise. For example *Womadelaide* performances are recorded each year, as well as The Adelaide Festival of Arts. A truly wonderful service to music loving ABC listeners and bringing new and well established performers to the listener, thereby also encouraging and promoting the local music community. Due to budget problems, Adelaide production staff have been reduced which has increased the workload, increased stress amongst staff and reduced the capacity to cover local performances.

Local Arts Programming

A TV Program Maker was advised that there would be no place in the TV schedule for Arts input from Adelaide. If a local Arts event was required, maybe a team would be flown to Adelaide. Arranging to record a local event requires local knowledge and a fair amount of forward local planning. So, if any Arts event in South Australia is to be covered at all, it will not be by staff who have in-depth knowledge of the local scene. Reflecting Australia to itself doesn't mean reflecting only Sydney and Melbourne to the rest of the country. Loss of valuable TV Arts program makers ensures that there will be less local coverage of the Arts.

The ABC is embracing more delivery platforms for content. This will logically require more content. If content is King, quality content is the crown. Quality is the hallmark of the ABC. Diminish the quality programming and the reputation of the ABC will be damaged seriously.

The ABC Charter Clause 1 (c) the that ABC has the responsibility "to encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia"

Appendix 3: Classic FM CPSU members

Submission by ABC Classic FM CPSU members to the review ABC and SBS in the Digital Future

Supporting Australian classical music

Classic FM is the only national network in Australia that broadcasts principally classical music. Classic FM broadcasts both new classical compositions and older, traditional classical music works, as well as news and educational segments dealing with classical music and broader culture. Across its variety of programs, the station broadcasts recorded classical music and also spends a significant amount of time recording live concerts and commissioned studio recordings for broadcast. In 2007 we recorded 517 individual programs of Australian music making; in 2008 the figure was 511.

Classic FM places a large emphasis on playing, supporting and disseminating the work of new Australian classical music composers making it the only national network to do so. The network is able to ‘amplify’ the benefit of a concert given to a few hundred by offering it to hundreds of thousands of listeners across the country, thereby capitalising on the investment in commissioning new works and supporting the work of ensembles which perform them.

What Classic FM provides to local groups and Australia wide

The primary role of Classic FM is to provide classical music of a high quality from Australian and overseas composers and performers; to broadcast new and old classical music compositions and to support, inform and inspire listeners of classical music.

Classic FM prides itself on providing an extremely high level of information regarding the recordings and performances it broadcasts. The station also consistently delivers high levels of research and information about the conductors, musicians, performers and composers of the music played on the station. Listeners expect this level of thoroughness and attention to detail from Classic FM broadcasts.

Audiences expect high quality musical broadcasts, thorough information about what they are hearing, correct pronunciations of composers and performers names and details and that’s what Classic FM delivers. It is consistently what listeners comment that they appreciate and enjoy about listening to Classic FM. The station can only continue to deliver such a high quality of content with proper resourcing, both financial and appropriate numbers of experienced staff.

Classic FM's role in radio broadcasting

Classic FM could be described as the one of the country's cultural custodians. Classical music may be considered 'high art' by some sections of the Australian community or it may be seen as simply being another category of music that people enjoy. What is important is the way in which that music is delivered. Classic FM have made it their responsibility within the ABC and amongst all radio stations Australia wide to provide the highest quality broadcasts and information about the programs they broadcast.

Classic FM and the digital future

Classic FM, like many other stations at the ABC, has a significant backlog of programs it has made over the years. The introduction of digital radio means there may be more room to make archived programs available on line for members of the public to listen to.

Classic FM has continued to expand the content it delivers online. Web pages such as 'Australian Music on Classic FM' offer new Australian music to audiences. All the music available on this page of the Classic FM website is created by Australian composers, musicians and sound artists, and commissioned or produced for broadcast by ABC Classic FM. Members of the public can listen to the streaming audio collection of Australian music from the archives, with new music added to the collection each month. There are also links to Australian music web features, and details of forthcoming broadcasts of Australian Music on ABC Classic FM. The Australian Music Unit podcast features mp3s of diverse new music recordings and artist interviews from the contemporary scene.

With the beginning of digital radio and the possibility of more platforms from which to broadcast new programs, staff at Classic FM have discussed a number of innovative ideas about new programs that would provide educational content and entertainment to listeners both in Australia and overseas. One idea is to create a music education station – a music education show updated for the digital age, like Peter Combe's program for a new generation. In this way Classic FM could harness new technology to deliver services and educate a new generation of children about music of all kinds.

As the opportunities for the provision of services through new technology grow so too must the skill base of the staff who work in the station and on particular programs. There is enthusiasm from Classic FM employees about the possibilities of digital radio and how Classic FM can expand what it does best into new programs or new ways of reaching audiences. However as with many other stations, Classic FM would hate to see the

opportunities arise without the requisite skills or training to capitalise on such opportunities. Classic FM is already a station that stretches its finite resources to the fullest extent. We hope that as opportunities to create more of a presence online and in digital formats arise there would be corresponding growth in resources allocated to Classic FM. We hope there would also be more specific staff training to enable current employees to meet the demands of digital radio or that additional staff might be hired who have more tailored digital content delivery skills.

Classic FM and the Music Education it provides

Currently, Classic FM provides production resources and expertise to Musica Viva for its Music in Schools recordings, in branches across the country. The synergies of this relationship could be exploited to enhance the educational output of both organisations.

The potential of such collaborations with educational institutions across the country are waiting to be exploited, provided the appropriate resourcing.

Our weekly program 'Keys to Music' has come to be regarded by schools and tertiary institutions as an invaluable resource. Some work has also been done to add a video component, but more resources are needed to achieve this.

Classic FM entertains, informs and educates its listeners in classical music of all kinds.