

Senate Inquiry into the ABC

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the ABC.

The continued diminution of the creative staff and departments at the ABC in favour of a non-creative managerial class on bloated salaries seems to be continuing a theme.

The diminution of the ABC's news reporting and production capabilities, both at home and overseas, has seen front-line journalists having to do the jobs of three or more people for pretty much the same pay. This may increase measured productivity, and bring nice bonuses to management, but has led to less actual reporting from overseas journalists who no longer have the time or resources to do their job properly. The result being that more of our overseas news comes from cobbled together footage and reportage from non-Australian sources.

In Australia the cuts in staff numbers at the production level has seen a dramatic **decrease** in production quality, but again, no doubt an increase in measured productivity and nice bonuses for management.

The theme would appear to be to privatise, by stealth, the ABC's productive capabilities and become a mere commissioner of commercially viable programmes from the private sector.

This would mean an end to innovative and daring programming and, indeed, an end to a politically and commercially independent ABC, given the vulnerability of profit driven entities to commercial threat.

The Senate must address the ideologically driven pursuit of increased productivity measurements, at the expense of real productivity if the ABC is to have a future. As witness the ABC management's plan to shut down television production units entirely in some states.

The Senate must address the management culture at the ABC which seems so disconnected not only from its creative staff and journalists but from the public generally. As witness the decision making process over lawn bowls, a decision taken without reference to or consultation with anything or anybody outside the ABC's managerial elite. A small thing perhaps but symptomatic of a brand of outdated managerialism more associated with 1980's style asset strippers.

The Senate must address the sidelining, by ABC management, of the ABC's charter, and insist that it be adhered to, not merely in words but in deeds.

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