

Inquiry into Australian Content on Broadcast, Radio and Streaming Services.

This submission on behalf of ABC Friends National includes

- a summary document of key issues
- the ABCF Survey of Attitudes to ABC programming.

ABCF has long promoted the need for increased Australian content on ABC Television.

We are critical of the ABC closing its state production units and ending State Wide current affairs programming.

As technology has become more sophisticated the ABC has centralised and part privatised its television programming to Melbourne and Sydney. While it is technically easier to produce content from around Australia, the ABC has concentrated television production in two capital cities.

It is true that the ABC has produced some excellent regional programs like “Back Roads” and “Landline”, but these are the exception rather than constituting a realistic share of viewing time for Australian audiences.

While the ABC does screen quality Australian content on free to air and iView we still suffer from an overload of BBC programs bought cheaply in the past and still being foisted on the long suffering Australian public.

ABCF considers that the ABC does not maximise its opportunities to screen Australian content. Archived quality Australian programs remain hidden relics of the past yet British repeats are featured ad nauseum! And the ABC’s December-January summer schedules should be avoided!!!

It is recognised that standard Australian television viewing habits have changed so the ABC is adapting to meet these changes. iView and the new Comedy Channel demonstrate that the ABC is responsive to audience preferences. However, with four television channels there should be more Australian choice for all age groups, especially children and older viewers who do not necessarily access new technology. Furthermore, the ABC needs to consider the implications of a changed commercial media focus which leaves the ABC to cater more for viewers across regional Australia.

The ABC has been resistant to discussion of quotas for measuring its Australian content and in principle ABCF can understand that such a proposal it is at odds with the independence of the national broadcaster. Yet without increased Australian content criticism of the ABC will be on going.

Australian content does not depend solely on creative work and the ABC is lagging behind in its national and local television news and current affairs coverage. Sadly, ABC television news is more likely to offer a spectacular car crash or fire in the United States than a serious regional event in Australia.

ABCF acknowledges that the ABC Budget has been considerably downgraded in recent years and understands that the ABC is being asked to do more with less. Therefore, it is necessary to re consider just how more Australian content can be developed despite limited resources. ABCF recommends

- Prioritising Australian Content in Prime Time.
- Upgrading Regional News and Current Affairs to maximise Australian content
- Developing an Australian Documentary Strategy to showcase this readily available Australian content
- Screening the work of Young Film Makers on a Regular Basis

Margaret Reynolds, National President.

