

Submission: Recent Programming Decisions by the ABC

There are two sides to this submission. The first concerns the decision by the ABC to consistently cross promote its programs on the TV, on the radio, and on the internet. It is not the issue of cross promotion in and of itself that is annoying, it is the number and frequency of them. It has the taste, feel and sight of a normal commercial venture. It suggests to me that the ABC is underfunded, as it uses these promotions as fillers, and it also distorts the time of programming.

The ABC and its wealth of programming was introduced to me when I began university. It seemed to be the only place where one could get a variety of views and a cutting edge for information in politics, in science, in the arts (no matter what form), in ideas, in comedy, in drama and in news. For me too, it gave a voice to minorities and competing views whether it be in type of sports, or social entities, or ideas, or cultures or in science.

All sides of politics seem to criticise the ABC, which to me is an indication that it manages to strike a balance between competing views. It has suffered funding cuts but it had continued to supply good quality programming- until now. Even though the ABC has had an increase in funding last triennium, it has expanded its programming platforms particularly through the internet. It is wonderful that people can now download programs whenever the time suits us and gives access to archives. However, this increase in funding, with the increase in platforms has led to a diminution of money available to each entity with its subsequent diminution in quality.

What I now notice is:

- Radio and TV programs offer the same information- so I may hear the same information through cross programming. It is not as if the programs are presenting alternate views. It is the same information picked up for example- by Catalyst, by the Science Show, by the Health Report, the law report etc.
- The documentaries that appear are insulting to the intellect. These have not been made by the ABC but bought in. They repeat information over and over again, using visual graphics to pad the time to the exclusion of other information.
- Once production is outsourced, expertise is lost and it becomes very difficult, lengthy and expensive to build it up again. Quality always is more expensive and the ABC is the place which should have and maintain that quality. Commercial stations do not do it. They pick up what the ABC has done and butchers it with ads and dumbing down.
- There seems to be an emphasis on entertainment and generalisations. While entertainment has its place, it can't be the only values shown.
- I mourn the loss and the losing of science information, of local sports, of the radio program "star stuff" (last round of cuts), of drama that keeps me riveted, of seeing modern dance programming, of exposure to different ideas, of debate and difference.
- It is too easy in Australia to be Sydney-centric. Living in Adelaide, this is noticeable. It is too easy for the Eastern seaboard to assume that its view is the total view. Perth has always felt that difference. We need regional variety.

To summarise then, I am making the assumption that the latest outsourcing process for internal production is for cutting expenses. Once that art of producing is lost to an organisation it is very hard

to get back and it also deprives the ABC of funding buy denying its capacity to on-sell its excellent programs that it used to make.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my views.

D Hart