

The following is a submission to the Senate **Inquiry into recent ABC programming decisions**

First, I wish to acknowledge that I am currently an ABC employee. However, I have been an ABC viewer for decades longer.

The ABC charter effectively defines the ABC. It delineates the ABC from the commercial networks. Its role is not to create income. It is not to draw the largest possible audience (so as to maximize profit). In part it is to

“(a) to provide within Australia innovative and comprehensive broadcasting services of a high standard as part of the Australian broadcasting system consisting of national, commercial and community sectors and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, to provide:

(i) broadcasting programs that contribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of, the Australian community

And:

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

It seems self evident that cutting production in arts programming is in conflict with the intention of the charter.

In addition the ABC has long been recognized for the skills and innovation of its staff. It has nurtured a culture which encouraged staff to work towards excellence and creativity. And the ABC has provided an environment in which staff could produce great programming, AND pass on these skills to new waves of technicians, operators, writers, producers, etc.

The proposed cuts (and others) will devastate this environment. This important skills base will disappear---and would be very difficult to recreate later, when people realize these mistaken decisions

The loss to the Australian community will be multileveled. The most obvious is the loss of these quality programmes (ratings or not!!!). Less obvious is the diluting of the skills base at the ABC. But the consequences would be felt for years. Also less obvious is the lack of the Australian voice in the area mentioned in the charter:

“encourage awareness of Australia and an international understanding of Australian attitudes on world affairs; and

enable Australian citizens living or travelling outside Australia to obtain information about Australian affairs and Australian attitudes on world affairs;

The charter is essentially saying that the ABC should provide an Australian voice. That it should promote the arts, reflect local culture---of which local sport is also an essential ingredient. Not chase increasing audience size---competing with commercial networks for the same market. These decisions, and others like it, will change the ABC forever in a move away from the heart of the charter, to only become a sad copy of the commercial stations.