
Submission
to the
Inquiry into recent ABC
programming decisions
of
the Senate Environment and
Communications
References Committee



for
Friends of the ABC NSW, Qld, Tas, Vic & WA
September 2011

A. Friends of the ABC

Friends of the ABC (FABC) is the major community organisation representing the public's interest in its national independent broadcaster. It is a politically independent organisation whose aim is the maintenance of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) as a healthy, independent and comprehensive national public broadcaster.

Friends of the ABC has no formal national structure. It comprises autonomous Friends of the ABC organisations in each Australian state and territory working together on national campaigns.

B. Introduction

Friends of the ABC has never been averse to program change and innovation. Hence our comments on program changes are generally limited to instances where the significance of a change has other important ramifications.

In regard to recent ABC television program decisions, FABC is concerned about both the nature of the changes and the context in which they are occurring. The changes are a marker of a fundamental change that is taking place in the essential character of Australia's national broadcaster.

The ABC is moving in some areas to operate in a manner and broadcast content that is more akin to commercial broadcasters. Outside of news and current affairs, the ABC's main television station appears to be favouring light-weight programs whose value is measured by predictions of audience numbers, over programming of cultural value or intellectual integrity.

ABC television is being transformed from an independent producer of television programs into a platform for the private sector. It looks to be abandoning the public broadcaster's responsibility to be a truly national broadcaster which reflects the diversity of voices and interests across the country.

The commercial emphasis now a feature of sections of the public broadcaster is contrary to the spirit, if not the terms, of the ABC Act and Charter. This trend threatens the essential character of the ABC – its independence and integrity. And it is happening without the authority of the national broadcaster's owners, the people of Australia. The community has not been informed of, let alone consulted about the ABC Board's vision for the public broadcaster.

While not the focus of this inquiry, there are other activities and behaviours in which the ABC now also engages – its own business activities and on-air promotions – that are part of the picture of a public broadcaster that is becoming increasingly commercialised.

C. Programming – What ABC Audiences Want & What’s Happening

What ABC audiences want

ABC audiences want the best of overseas programming. However, they also want the best of local programming and expect the national public broadcaster to be a producer of diverse, truly independent and genuinely local programs. The community wants quality entertainment and programs that are informative, innovative and challenging on the ABC – offerings that are a clear alternative to those of commercial broadcasters.

ABC audiences have seen no evidence that the steady shutdown of ABC television’s production capacity in favour of increased outsourcing has resulted in higher quality programming. On the contrary, it is the view of many discerning ABC audience members that the quality of much local ABC television programming has declined and that outsourcing has resulted in many programs that are neither cutting edge nor dissimilar to programs screened on commercial television.

FABC regularly receives feedback that TV programming has become too populist and less innovative - the entertainment less stimulating and lacking a distinctly Australian feel, and factual programming more lightweight.

This is not surprising. Many programs are produced with later sales to commercial and possibly overseas companies in mind at the outset. Outsourced programs are frequently made by the same production companies that make programs for commercial broadcasters.

In a hard copy petition of over 10,000 signatures that was presented to the chairman and managing director of the ABC in 2010, members of the community expressed their alarm at the ABC’s growing trend towards commercialisation, and called for the ABC’s production core to be rebuilt so the broadcaster is no longer as dependent on outsourced programming. (*Appendix A. ‘Keep our ABC Creative & Commercial free’ petition*)

The dismantlement of ABC TV production

Since its inception the ABC was envisaged as a producer - a maker of programs of cultural value and intellectual integrity, not simply a platform for external production.¹ Yet in recent years, Friends of the ABC has viewed with dismay the ABC’s shedding of many talented creative and technical staff who have produced programs that delighted and informed ABC TV audiences. They have been forced to leave, having been informed by the ABC that if they wished to pitch ideas for or make programs, they would need to move to the private production sector.

Pressure to have the public broadcaster outsource all of its television production except news and current affairs initially came from the Howard Government. However, its implementation in earnest began with the appointment of Mark Scott as Managing Director and Kim Dalton as Television head in 2006. Kim Dalton had a long association with the private production sector prior to his appointment at the ABC, and is well known for his support of it.

We have seen specialist ABC production units disbanded, such as the ABC’s acclaimed Natural History Unit in 2007. TV production has been scaled down to the point where no Australian drama and documentaries are any longer produced in-house.

¹ The ABC Act 1983 does not specify that the ABC is to be the producer of local programming it broadcasts, simply because it was taken for granted. In the first Australian Broadcasting Commission Annual Report to Parliament 1933, the Commission distinguishes between the role of commissioners and the staff of the ABC: “The Commission has taken the view that the function of its Members - as distinct from that of its Staff - is to supervise rather than create programs ...”

Resources have increasingly been outsourced to the private production sector at the expense of in-house television production. In Sydney, *The New Inventors* was recently axed. Melbourne's Ripponlea's studios are no longer a hive of activity making programs for the ABC. Only a single studio in the new Melbourne Accommodation Project is scheduled to replace the three studios that will be lost with Ripponlea's planned closure. There is no guarantee that that studio will be used for ABC production and not hired out to commercial producers, as has become common practice with ABC television production facilities.

When the latest round of programming cuts are implemented, outside of news and current affairs, the ABC will be left producing only a handful of regular programs.

Outsourcing has driven down the already low levels of production in states outside NSW and Victoria. FABC is unaware of any non-news and current affairs television production current or planned for Queensland, South Australia or West Australia. It understands that the future of Tasmania's single in-house production, *Collectors*, is uncertain.

ABC TV Arts

The ABC is axing *Art Nation*, which provides audiences with information and insight into a range of current arts events. It is effectively shutting down its television arts unit. FABC believes that only a small number of the unit's 15 staff will be retained, and they will work primarily on online content.

FABC has joined with 63 esteemed Australians, many of whom are known for their outstanding contribution to the arts and other important areas of Australian life, to inform the ABC of our opposition to its decision to axe its only TV arts magazine program and disband the television arts unit. We believe that a team of specialist arts programmers is critical to the ABC's capacity to create and commission quality arts programming, and to record and maintain an archive of Australia's cultural achievements. (*Appendix B. Open letter to the ABC Board 'Request to Stop the Destruction of ABC TV Arts' with 64 signatories.*)

Sport

In total disregard for its importance to the life and culture of many South Australians, the ABC recently announced plans to drop its television coverage of the state's local football. ABC coverage of lawn bowls, which is particularly popular with an older age group in the community that is not well catered for in any area by commercial television, will finish up at the end of the year. There have also been media reports that the axing of West Australian local football broadcasts is also under consideration.

D. Why ABC TV Is Being Transformed Into A Quasi-Commercial Operation

The ABC's increasingly commercial direction, including shutting down its own television production units and entirely outsourcing television production in areas like drama and documentary, is the result of the following factors:

- inadequate funding for the ABC to produce the breadth, number and quality of local programs that a public broadcaster should provide.
- the system of public support for the Australian private production sector.

The system of public support for the private production sector is destroying the ABC's role as a producer because it results in the private production sector being able to sell to the ABC some types of programming considerably more cheaply than the ABC can produce it itself.

Public assistance to the private production sector is delivered through the provision of tax offsets and funding from government (federal and state) film and television funding agencies. The ABC is denied access to these forms of financial assistance because it is intended to assist the private sector, and not the ABC which is meant to be funded directly by the Federal Government.²

This policy has resulted in a strong incentive for the cash-strapped ABC to commission some types of programs which private producers can afford to provide for a lower cost because the private producer has been publicly subsidised, instead of produce them.

- the commercial outlook of ABC managing director Mark Scott and Television head Kim Dalton. They have presided over the ABC moving in an increasingly commercial direction – presumably with either the support of the ABC Board or its failure to take sufficient interest in what is happening.

The comments of Mark Scott and some ABC networks heads over several years indicate that they view ratings as a prominent indicator of the success or otherwise of many parts of the ABC.

In a memo to ABC staff, the reasons that Kim Dalton cited for some of the present program changes were: “falling audiences” and an interest to “focus [the ABC's] limited financial resources on prime-time programming”. In other words, ratings. And he plans to achieve this by cutting in-house programming and directing more resources to outsourcing.

The ABC's move to commercialisation may also be influenced by personal factors beyond the commercial outlook of key people who head it. The extent to which personal ambitions and feelings influence human decision-making is often unknown but should never be under-estimated, especially when a small number of powerful people are making decisions, and in a manner which is far from transparent.

Who is responsible?

Whatever the reasons for the ABC's increasing commercialisation, what has happened is the responsibility of the ABC Board and must be addressed by the Board.

² Although the ABC could not technically access a tax offset because it is an untaxed public body, it was also barred from Federal Government support when the assistance was previously delivered through direct subsidy.

E. Outsourcing, In-House Television Production, and Specialist Program Units

The present and future impact on television programming of the ABC's cutting of in-house production and specialist television program units needs to be considered.

1. **Skilled staff with public broadcasting ethos** There has been a loss from the ABC of talented people from across the range of television production. A secure base from which to nurture and develop future in-house talent is lost when the critical mass required for the ABC to remain a program producer is dismantled. So is an important resource for emerging producers outside the ABC, many of whom have benefited from the guidance and assistance of the ABC's production units.

It will be in the longer term that the damage caused by the loss of specialist units and of skilled staff with an ethos of public service broadcasting will become more evident. Presently, many staff forced out of the ABC as it cut production now work for private production companies from which the ABC is buying programming. But what will happen to the quality of programming when the present generation of experienced program-makers retires from the industry?

Australia's private production industry struggles to survive, and is highly unlikely to devote the levels of resources to training as the public broadcaster has done, let alone provide the secure employment that is needed for development and to prevent talented people being lost from the industry. The public broadcaster, with secure ongoing funding and the synergies that result in a large and broad organisation, has a greater capacity than the private sector to provide a creative base, training and infrastructure to foster and develop production skills.

2. **Centralisation and diversity lost** The loss of program production units (i.e., teams of people who specialise in an area, like the Natural History Unit, for example), does not only lead to the loss of people who produce specialist programs in their field. It also results in the commissioning of programs becoming more centralised in the hands of a small number of managers, which predictably leads to less diversity of programs and program styles.
3. **Advocates for ABC Charter lost** Without strong specialist program units, some program areas are more likely to be neglected. In the absence of a strong team of people with the passion to advocate for resources and pitch exciting ideas for the production of particular types of programming (be they produced internally or externally), important areas of the ABC's Charter risk being neglected when the ABC is divvying up resources.
4. **Localism lost** The more that program production is outsourced and commissioning centralised, the more likely decisions to commission will favour the state in which it is based.³ The neglect of the program interests of Australians in smaller states will be further exacerbated because most private production companies are based in Sydney and Melbourne.
5. **Independence risked** The risk of program independence being compromised is far greater with outsourced programs. While ABC editorial guidelines are intended to apply to externally produced programs, it is considerably more difficult to monitor adherence to, and to enforce the guidelines. Editorial control is to a large extent effectively handed over to the private producer. It is also harder to monitor activities that might flow from the program. (*Active Kidz* and the Australian Egg Corporation is an example of what can and does occur.)⁴

³ People are more inclined to do business with people they know and are in regular contact with.

⁴ The ABC children's program *Active Kidz* expanded into commercial activities outside the ABC as its popularity on ABC television grew. These activities ranged from promoting lollies to trampolines for sale. The Australian Egg Corporation Ltd - which represents egg producers and on their behalf seeks to influence public perceptions about the nutritional value of eggs and the treatment of battery hens - sponsored the Active Kids Let's Party live country tour in 2005.

The ABC's failure to protect even co-produced programming from commercial influence was exposed in the Palmer Inquiry into back-door sponsorship in the mid-1990s.⁵ This inquiry resulted from evidence provided by a brave whistleblower. That is not a reliable foundation for proper ABC editorial control, and it would be far more difficult to discover improper practices if they were occurring in fully outsourced programming.

6. **Innovation lost** The ABC has a Charter responsibility to be innovative. Risk-taking that results in edgy, polemical and provocative work, as opposed to formulaic programming, is less likely to occur in commercial operations, which lack employment security and are constrained by commercial imperatives.

The very nature of the relationship between the ABC and private producers mitigates against innovative programming. It will be counter to the interest of private production companies that want ongoing work with the ABC to take risks. .

The BBC experience of outsourcing

The outcome of outsourcing at the ABC looks to be not dissimilar to what happened at the BBC, even though the BBC outsourced a considerably smaller proportion of its television production than the ABC:

Georgina Bourne, a Cambridge University anthropologist who was given unprecedented access to the inner workings of the BBC for her detailed study of Britain's public broadcaster, reported that outsourcing at the BBC during the 1990s had resulted in "risk-averse" centralised commissioning of programming and "decreasing autonomy for producers and writers", and had led to "lowest common denominator", "formulaic" programming.

Born wrote of Channel Four, which the Thatcher government established as a BBC channel that would buy-in all of its content: Initially many 'independent' production houses that made programs for Channel Four were hives of creativity and more like artists collectives. However, as the sector and profits grew, there were takeovers and mergers. External production houses became more like standard commercial operations and increasingly risk averse. "A number of the most successful independents were bought up by larger, sometimes international cross-media groups" and "no longer enjoyed the autonomy of dedicated creative organisations". The high profile and extraordinary riches accruing to the successful independents sent a signal to the rest of the independent sector to "think international not national". "The sector was increasingly dominated by business logics, the inexorable drive to complete, and the search of higher productivity and profits"⁶

Sir David Attenborough said of the BBC in 2008: "The statutory requirement that a certain percentage of programmes must come from independent producers has reduced in-house production and as the Units shrank so the critical mass of their production expertise has diminished. The continuity of their archives has been broken, their close worldwide contacts lost and they are no longer regarded internationally as the centres of expertise and innovation."⁷

7. **Financial cost of outsourcing** Although the former government and private bodies with vested interests have at times argued for outsourcing of ABC television production, no evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the private production sector is more cost-effective than the ABC in the production of programs of commensurate quality. There is no authoritative Australian study that FABC is aware of that considers outsourcing of the kind in which the ABC is engaging.

⁵ As the result of public revelations of backdoor sponsorship on several ABC television programs, the ABC appointed George Palmer QC in 1994 to conduct an inquiry.

⁶ Dr Georgina Born BSc(Lond), PhD(Lond) is College Lecturer in Social and Political Sciences and Director of Studies; Reader in Sociology, Anthropology and Music; and Official Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge University. She is the author of *Uncertain Vision: Birt, Dyke and the Reinvention of the BBC* (Vintage 2005).

⁷ The first address in the BBC's 2008 lecture series about the role of public service broadcasting, available at www.bbc.co.uk/thefuture/transcript_atten.shtm

On the contrary, when the aforementioned public subsidy of the private sector is removed from the equation, it is reasonable to assume that ABC production of many types of programs would be more cost-effective, given the public broadcaster's existing facilities and infrastructure, long-standing experience, archives and greater pool of resources and staff.⁸ Add to all this, the cost of ABC production does not include a profit component, and the ABC does not pay tax.

Furthermore, while studies have found that outsourcing works in some areas, for example the delivery of simple services like garbage collection, they have also found that outsourcing does not always deliver a comparable level of quality or service and, even when it does, is not always more cost-effective. On the contrary when a product or service to be produced is complex and requires greater oversight, it is not a simple process of awarding work to the cheapest bidder. Developing specifications, tendering, negotiating, monitoring and assessing can increase or duplicate work and add to the cost.

It is difficult to see how outsourcing ABC programming could be more cost-effective, given the level of input and control required of the ABC to achieve program quality and adherence to ABC editorial policies.

In dismantling its own production capacity, the ABC is also weakening its bargaining position with the private sector and abandoning its ability to control production costs in the future.

8. **Australian History & Income Lost** The national broadcaster also plays an important role as a recorder of Australian history which is lost in instances that ownership of outsourced programming does not belong to the ABC.⁹ Not only is the ABC forgoing potential revenue from the on-sale of such content, it will lose ongoing access to it without payment. And so will audiences which are increasingly accessing ABC content online. If high levels of outsourcing of television content continue, the community may lose the access that new technology should allow them to gain to our culture and history.
9. **Risk of Corruption** In the absence of specialist production units, commissioning decisions (i.e., decisions to hand over large amount of public monies to the private sector) are made by fewer people and are less able to be scrutinised. When public bodies engage in commercial activities, 'commercial-in-confidence' is provided as a reason not to divulge important information. Accountability disappears, along with transparency. There follows the potential for nepotism and corruption to occur.
10. **ABC independence undermined** The ABC has a responsibility to determine how it will fairly allocate its limited funds to meet all of its Charter commitments.

There is a real and present danger of this process being subverted if outside commercial interests come to have a vested financial interest in how and where the ABC expends its resources, as is occurring when the ABC outsources its television production.

The undermining of the ABC's responsibility to distribute its resources in the public interest has already begun. Lobbied by the private production sector, in disregard of the ABC's independence, the former Coalition government and the present Labor Government have both target specified amounts of funding for the ABC to drama production. In the case of the Labor Government it also targeted funding to a children's television channel with an expectation of specified amounts of production.

In this instance, FABC is not making a judgement about the merit or otherwise of the areas to which those funds were directed. However, the ABC's independence to make decisions on how it allocates scarce resources is being undermined. And because funding that is targeted to one area comes at the expense of another, some audiences may be unfairly disadvantaged. This is not how services and programming of the country's public broadcaster should be determined.

⁸ That is assuming that fair and reasonable working conditions and health and safety standards apply similarly across the ABC and the private production sector.

⁹ Ownership of programs funded with monies from government film and television funding agencies belongs to the private producer, for example.

F. Securing The ABC's Future

On the quality and independence of the ABC's programming depends the type of broadcaster the ABC will become - whether or not the ABC will remain a truly independent national public broadcaster. So does the ABC's survival. If the ABC comes to be viewed as a platform for content provided by external commercial providers, governments won't consider that it warrants taxpayer support. And the ABC won't continue to attract the strong community support it has always had.

G. Conclusion & Recommendations: The 'public' broadcaster must remain 'public'

The ABC plays a critical role in the operation of our democracy and in the maintenance of our culture. The importance of its viability as a comprehensive and truly independent producer that reflects the interests of all Australians has grown as the depth, quality and localism of much other mainstream Australian media has declined.

The spirit and intent of the ABC Act is clear. The ABC is meant to be commercial free - a role that the community overwhelmingly supports.

The ABC exists to provide a service to the community. Australia's national 'public' broadcaster must remain 'public'. The Government should not allow it to be transformed into a significant platform for private sector production. Nowhere in the ABC Act does it specify that it is a responsibility of the national broadcaster to support the private production sector.

The Board of the ABC must uphold the ABC's independence.

Recommendations to the Senate Communications Committee

Funding

1. A review be undertaken into the adequacy of the ABC's funding. The review should consider the level of funding that is required for the national broadcaster to:
 - properly provide its existing services; and
 - fulfil its Charter and other responsibilities specified and implied in the ABC Act to a high standard, including the production in-house of the overwhelming majority of its local television content in each program genre, and with all local news and current affairs continuing to be produced in-house.

The findings of the review must be made public.

2. A legislated funding process and/or formula be introduced to ensure the ABC is well funded to provide its existing services and fulfil its responsibilities, as specified in the previous recommendation; and to ensure the ABC Board, not governments or external interests, determines how the ABC meets its Charter commitments.

The ABC Board – its members and its operation

3. The National Broadcasting Amendment Bill 2010 (the bill that introduces a new appointment process for the ABC and SBS boards) which is presently before the Senate be strengthened to ensure:
 - the appointment of at least one person with extensive independent public broadcasting experience in addition to the staff-elected director; and
 - the government is unable to influence the Nomination Panel in the Panel's determination of the list of recommended candidates it proposes to the Minister.

4. A public review be undertaken to consider greater transparency in ABC Board decisions on important policy matters; and with maintenance of the ABC's independence being the foremost consideration in the review's recommendations.

Local Private Production Sector

5. The present systems of government assistance for private producers be reviewed, and assistance to the local production industry be provided in a manner that supports private producers without making it cost-ineffective for the ABC to produce in-house the overwhelming majority of its own local programs in all program genres.

Recommendations from Friends of the ABC to the ABC

Note: It is important in all instances that the ABC's independence is upheld, not only from commercial influence, but also from government. Accordingly, these are recommendations that FABC makes to the ABC on the public record. It does not seek government interference in the ABC's day-to-day operations.

1. The ABC Board clarify and articulate to the community its vision for the ABC.
2. Specialist program units for all genres of ABC programming be rebuilt, with those units being responsible for the production of programs internally, the commissioning of programs, and the purchase external programs.
3. The ABC's production capacity be rebuilt so that the public broadcaster produces in-house the majority of its local programs in all program genres, and with all local news and current affairs continuing to be produced in-house.
4. ABC programming be determined on the basis of cultural and intellectual integrity, not a perception that a program will rate well or that a program is saleable after it screens on the ABC; and the ABC's television schedule to include programs that reflect the diversity of interests in the community. "Otherwise, what's the point of having the ABC?", Friends of the ABC is often asked.

<p>Submission to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee Inquiry into recent ABC programming decisions, September 2011 Prepared by Glenys Stradijot, Executive Officer/Campaign Manager, Friends of the ABC (Vic) Inc. for Friends of the ABC NSW, Qld, Tas, Vic and WA.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Inc no. A0034181A</p>
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OPEN LETTER TO THE ABC BOARD

3rd September 2011 [with the addition of 3 signatories @ 14.9.2011]

Maurice Newman AC – Chairman, and members of the ABC Board
ABC
GPO Box 9994
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Mr Newman

Re: **Request to Stop the Destruction of ABC TV Arts**

For the past fifty years, ABC TV has introduced Australians to an array of extraordinary local artists – from Sir Robert Helpmann to Kate Grenville, from the emerging Western Desert artists to Nick Cave.

The ABC TV arts unit has taken us into our galleries, theatres and museums, sharing the country's evolving cultural life. In the last year alone, the unit produced over 500 stories. It has championed new artists, engaged practitioners, and built a vast record of the work of those who strive to articulate our place in the world. Where else do we turn to celebrate our great artists? When we mourned Dame Joan Sutherland, and Margaret Olley, the ABC helped us pay tribute to their lives and work.

We are deeply disturbed by ABC management's plan to axe ABC TV's only arts magazine program, disband the TV arts unit and divert resources to prime time, populist content in pursuit of ratings. It will diminish the ABC's irreplaceable role as the nation's cultural memory. And sadly, it will reflect no glory whatsoever on what was once considered the single greatest achievement of Australia's intellectual and artistic life: the ABC itself.

Without a strong in-house unit to create and to commission arts programming, the national broadcaster will fail its charter responsibilities. And it will fail us, by not reminding us that our national character is informed and shaped by the imagination and creativity of artists.

Yours sincerely

Bruce Armstrong – sculptor, painter

Stephen Armstrong – producer

Ron Barassi AM – Australian Football Legend in the Sport Australia Hall of Fame

Jonathan Biggins – theatre director and writer

Gay Bilson – writer, chef

Nancy Black – theatre director

Polly Borland – artist

Julian Burnside AO QC – barrister

Peter Carey – novelist

Nick Cave – musician, writer

Betty Churcher AO – former Director of the National Gallery of Australia

J M Coetzee – writer

Stefano de Pieri – celebrity chef

Robert Doyle – Lord Mayor of Melbourne

Adam Elliot – animation writer, director, producer

Tony Ellwood – Director, Queensland Art Gallery

Saul Eslake – economist; Director, Australian Business Arts Foundation and former Chair of the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board

Bernie Fraser – former Reserve Bank Governor

Helen Garner – writer

Richard Gill OAM – Music Director, Victorian Opera

Paul Grabowsky – Artistic Director, Adelaide Festival of Arts

John Hillcoat – film director

Janet Holmes à Court AC, HFAIB – businesswoman and arts philanthropist

Chloe Hooper – writer

Lindy Hume – festival Director, Sydney Festival

Hon Dr Barry Jones AO, FAA, FAHA, FSTE, FASSA – former Minister and writer

Michael Kantor – theatre director and actor

Lally Katz – playwright

Tom Keneally - writer

Barrie Kosky – theatre and opera director

Nam Le – writer

Michael Leunig – artist

Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE – Director, Museum of Contemporary Art

Shane Maloney – novelist

David Malouf – writer

Dr Richard Mills AM – composer
Jonathan Mills AO – Composer & Director,
Edinburgh International Festival
Harold Mitchell AC – Executive Director, Aegis
Media
Vera Moeller and Phillip Hunter – visual artists
Clover Moore – Lord Mayor of Sydney
Simon Mordant – Chairman, Museum of
Contemporary Art and arts philanthropist
Graeme Murphy AM – director and choreographer
Ralph Myers – Artistic Director, Belvoir
Robyn Nevin - actress
Sir Gustav Nossal AC, CBE, FRS, FAA – medical
scientist
Stephen Page – Artistic Director, Bangarra Dance
Theatre
Hetti Perkins – Senior Curator, Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Art, Art Gallery of NSW
Hon Mike Rann MP – Premier of South Australia
and Minister for the Arts
David Risstrom – President, Friends of the ABC
(Vic)

Peter Robb – author
Geoffrey Rush – actor
Patricia Sabine – Design Director, Design Forum
Tasmania
Anna Schwartz – gallery owner
Emeritus Prof Margaret Seares AO – Former Chair,
Australia Council for the Arts and former Senior
Deputy Vice Chancellor, The University of Western
Australia
Stephen Sewell – writer
Michael Shrimpton – former head of ABC TV Arts
and Entertainment
Anne Summers – author and journalist
John Wardle – Principal, John Wardle Architects
David Williamson – playwright and screenwriter
Tamara Winikoff – Executive Director, National
Association for the Visual Arts
Tim Winton – writer
Philip Wolfhagen – visual artist
John Wolseley – artist

This letter is sent to the ABC Board on behalf of the above signatories by Glenys Stradijot, Campaign
Manager, Friends of the ABC (Vic). The Board is welcome to direct any queries to, and send a reply care of,
Friends of the ABC (Vic), GPO Box 4065, Melbourne 3001.

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