



## **Importance of the arts and news in rural and regional Australia recognised in new report**

The [House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts](#) has tabled its report entitled [Arts and the news to rural and regional Australia](#). The report makes 16 recommendations to help ensure that Australians living in rural and regional communities can access high quality arts performances and reliable news services.

Chairman of the Committee, the Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP, said that almost a third of Australians live in rural and regional areas, and that these communities must be able to enjoy the same quality and diversity of arts performances and broadcast content as their counterparts in metropolitan and urban areas.

The Committee's nine recommendations relating to the arts are aimed at helping to ensure that the excellent work already being done by the major performing arts companies continues and, where possible, is further enhanced. The Committee recommended:

- continuing funding Australia's major performing arts companies
- recognising the dynamic and changing nature of the arts in grants programs
- encouraging the educative role of performing arts companies
- maintaining adequate funding for the Australia Council for the Arts' Playing Australia program
- retaining National Touring Status arrangements and extending them to additional performing arts companies
- encouraging and formalising mentoring arrangements between performing arts companies and rural and regional communities
- evaluating and promoting the new Catalyst Australian Arts and Culture Fund
- considering funding and support for digital innovation in the delivery of the arts, and
- opening up the eligibility for the Catalyst fund to include funding for competitions and eisteddfods.

The Committee's seven recommendations relating to broadcasting are aimed at providing the necessary support for regional services in the changing media landscape. The Committee recommended:

- reducing broadcast licence fees for free-to-air and community broadcasters
- carefully considering the implications of any reforms to media ownership on broadcasting and news services to rural and regional Australia
- reviewing the existing broadcast licencing system to consider the adequacy of the concept of 'local' and the provision of incentives for broadcasters who deliver more targeted local content to rural and regional audiences
- ensuring that the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) Board is more representative of the Australian community, including rural and regional communities and ensure two members are from rural and regional Australia
- updating the ABC Code of Practice to require that any correction or clarification must be made on the relevant program in which an error has been made, in addition to being published on the ABC website

- developing a level playing field for public, commercial and community broadcasters in adhering to Australian Communication and Media Authority standards for broadcasting
- developing a framework to enhance the accuracy and accountability of the ABC, and
- retaining the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) and the ABC as separate entities.

The report can be accessed from the Committee's website

at: [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House/Communications/BroadcastingandProduction](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Communications/BroadcastingandProduction)

**For media comment:**

The Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP (Chairman of the [Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts](#))

Phone: (02) 6277 4210

For further background information on the inquiry and Committee, please visit the Committee website [www.aph.gov.au/communications](http://www.aph.gov.au/communications) or contact the secretariat: (02) 6277 4386 or [communications.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:communications.reps@aph.gov.au)

---