

Re: Recent ABC Programming Decisions, 2011.

Dear Committee Members

The recent programming decisions and current state of ABC scheduling raises concerns about the current and future quality of ABC television content, as well as the unclear vision of ABC leadership; namely the cloudy vision of Mr Mark Scott and Mr Kim Dalton.

Under Mr Scott's stewardship the ABC has created some impressive and innovative avenues for the public to access ABC content. Unfortunately this appears to have been achieved at a cost to the quality and structure of the content scheduled, as well as a cost to valuable employees, the taxpayers and the integrity of the ABC brand.

A check of ABC scheduling in any TV guide should raise eyebrows. The ABC now has four free to air channels, and it appears that there isn't enough content to go around.

Is the ABC spending too much on expanding the empire at a cost to quality?

ABC2 constantly repeats programs and is full of imported comedies, reality programs (some examples - *The Great Food Truck Race?* A US reality show that has food truck teams competing across the US. *Cook Yourself Thin?*) and US movies. All of these programs would have been purchased, and had the rights repurchased again and again, and the merit of these programs for Australian audiences, and their place in the ABC charter is dubious at best. It would be very interesting to see the percentage of Australian content shown on ABC2 (apart from Spicks and Specks repeats) and the way they fit into the ABC charter.

ABC3 is supposedly aimed at 6-15 year olds, and is only on air between 6am and 9pm. Why? Surely this means that the bulk of content is broadcast when these children are in school. Looking at the TV guide, there is very limited educational content, so what is the use of this channel? Surely this can be used for another purpose, or the beneficial programs (mainly acquired, many from US/Canada) only shown online, as MR Scott tells us that this is where young people view content. Once again, these rights would not be owned by the ABC, and need to be bought time and again for repeats.

The Head of Children's Commissioning and Content Development, Carla de Jong actually lives in Canada, which may explain a massive investment in ABC/Canadian coproduction. Do we fly her business class between the two countries? How much does that cost? Did we pay for her move?

The TV guide, apart from News, appears to show that much of ABC TV programming is merely schedule filling rather than a commitment to quality content. The axed in house productions were of quality and importance.

The New Inventors was a program that showcased Australian innovation, something that Mr Scott claims to champion. Rather than axe the program due to poor ratings, why not a revamp? Why not

market the program as much as the ABC markets bought and coproduced programs? Why lose experienced staff rather than use them in another production?

The gradual whittling down of ABC in house arts programming might give us a clue as to Mr Scott's and Mr Dalton's plans for the ABC. This wasn't a quick chop, this has the appearance of a deliberate plan to wean the public off the large Sunday afternoon commitment to arts programming, so that eventually Mr Scott can refer to Art Nation as a tiny 30 minute magazine that doesn't amount to a hill of beans in the scheme of things.

Once again, experienced staff will be lost, as is the integrity of the ABC. How does this look in the eyes of the Australian public, the Australian taxpayers? What does this say about the ABC brand?

These actions amount to a sell out of faith in the quality of the ABC. The ABC has become a commercial station funded by the public purse. Mr Scott said recently that he doesn't care about the ratings, but he constantly refers to them as an argument against in-house productions and the axing of programs and staff.

How about we start looking at other costs the ABC has, the waste of money, the fast expansion in competition with commercial networks before we axe Australian programs made by the national broadcaster.

Links:

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/guide/>

<http://www.encoremagazine.com.au/abc-executive-to-work-from-canada-7664>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-09-07/scott-arts-not-lost-at-abc/2875074>