

Subject: Senate Inquiry into recent ABC programming decisions
Date: Saturday, 10 September 2011

Hi,

I would like to make this contribution to the Senate Inquiry into recent ABC programming decision.

While working with outside producers to create content is an important part of the overall mix of product on the ABC, I think it is wrong for the ABC to outsource much of the programming in the factual area. This is because an outsourced programme often has very different content to an in-house one. The reason is, production houses need to on-sell their programmes to other broadcasters, to make producing them worth their while. Therefore outside production companies tend to make programmes that appeal to a wider audience than just the ABC. As a result, this often means that the programmes resemble something commercial television would broadcast rather than a public broadcaster. After all, broadcasting popularist programming is what commercial television is all about: maximising ratings and selling advertising space. The role of a public broadcaster, however, is very different. It is to create more "significant" content: to cover important issues in, say, the arts, science, religion and indigenous affairs, which commercial television doesn't do. The ABC has done this very well in the past, but I don't believe it could continue to do so with outsourced programmes.