

ABC: Decision to maintain Tasmania's Television Production Unit

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16th January 2013

Senate Committee: The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's commitment to reflecting regional diversity

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue.

We believe the Tasmanian ABC Television Production Unit is invaluable. As well as it being obviously well placed to have the best understanding and appreciation of the importance of uniquely Tasmanian stories, and the ability to tell them well, it provides an excellent training ground for the state's young people interested in pursuing careers in the media profession.

We also believe that to close the unit would contravene the ABC's own charter, which states a commitment to servicing regional communities.

The ABC's Strategic Plan 2010-2013:

The Plan states that providing content and services of the highest quality lies at the heart of the ABC's public purpose. Audiences expect the ABC to offer experiences that are engaging, entertaining, informative and trustworthy, and the ABC commits to meeting these expectations.

In particular, the ABC remains committed to the creation and delivery of Australian content, ***services to local communities***, the highest levels of editorial standards, and multi-platform delivery of content.

The ABC's ability to sustain and transform itself depends fundamentally on its processes and people. As a public service, it must constantly seek to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations, converting savings into its programs and services. ***At the same time, it is crucial that the ABC maintain and support a creative and adaptable workforce that is capable of meeting the demands of the future, and actively engage with the wider Australian creative community.***

We believe Tasmania's Television Production Unit fulfils all these criteria.

The ABC Production Unit is a highly qualified and experienced team that is able to create quality local content since it is on the ground, has qualified local expertise, and is in a position to respond when the need arises. eg. During the recent bushfire situation Tasmania's local ABC team was ideally placed to provide up-to-date, critical and specific information as the situation unfolded.

The ABC has long been an employer of emerging media people both in front of camera and in production, ie camera, sound, and editing. These skills are clearly invaluable in order to support Tasmania's media community.

TV production unit staff have provided mentoring skills and expertise to emerging Tasmanian film makers, and others interested in media careers. Due to their generosity Tasmania has been able to encourage a new generation of enterprising people highly skilled in film and television work.

The Tasmanian ABC Production Unit is well placed to provide quality local content that can be appealing across the National network. An example is MONA (Museum of Old and New Art) that has quickly established both a national and international profile and reputation, and programme content highlighting this innovation could have wide appeal.

Tasmania is also ideally placed as a location for a *History Detectives* style programme, which was an ABC initiative. The recent successes of *Who do you think you are?* And *Who's been sleeping in my house?* Suggests that Tasmania could well develop a **Where do you think you are?** series to involve audience participation in identifying key historic locations.

Tasmania's Television Production Unit has proved its worth, and creative/technical skill, in the national success of programmes such as *Gardening Australia* and *The Collectors* – both of which enjoyed a significant following of regular devoted viewers. Given the vibrant and diverse arts culture in the state, there are opportunities to develop a series that showcases the Tasmania's talented artists, writers, and musicians.

Tasmania enjoys a rich heritage in the areas of natural history and science, so opportunities for the ABC to develop programmes that focus on these aspects of the state, and its unique flora and fauna; its history and its rich colonial heritage; could also be explored.

Tasmania has already proved to be a popular film location for bigger budget feature film productions. The on the ground expertise provides additional invaluable employment opportunities for locals skilled in all aspects of film and television production.

Recent examples include: **The Hunter** starring Willem Dafoe, Sam Neill and Frances O'Connor, which was filmed entirely on location in Tasmania;

Tasmanian docu-drama **The First Fagin** based on Judith Sackville-O'Donnell's book *The First Fagin - the story of Ikey Solomon*, featured an all-Tasmanian cast, and a predominantly Tasmanian crew.

We therefore urge you to consider if Tasmania's ABC Television Production Unit closes it will lose:

- Expertise
- Local content – those unique stories that underpin community and that also promote our State.
- Experienced television production people, who will be forced to leave the state and who will therefore be unavailable for mentoring the new generation.
- Employment for younger people with a production qualification will be greatly diminished – and they will abandon either their hard won skills or the State
- Equipment vital for production when the next big story has to be covered.
- Adequate and appropriate funding to ABC Tasmania
- An opportunity to diversify production on the back of the NBN roll-out. Given the apparent failure of the ABC to explore the opportunities this offers surely it is short-sighted policy to close Tasmania's ABC Television Production Unit.

Considering the points raised therefore we believe the decision to close the ABC's Television Production Unit in Tasmania is short-sighted, and ill-considered. The ABC plays a vital role in Tasmania, and its team should be supported and expanded, not closed down.

We trust you will take our comments into consideration when reviewing this issue, and once again we thank you for the opportunity to have a say in this important matter.

Yours sincerely

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