

Subject: Senate Inquiry into ABC programming

to: The Senate Standing Committees on the Environment and
Communications - Senate Inquiry into ABC programming decisions

from: Lou Baxter

I wish to make the following submission regarding ABC programming decisions.

I am greatly concerned about the lack of diversity in Australian media and regard the ABC as a highly significant element in what diversity is currently available. Furthermore I consider that outsourcing programming is a direct attack upon both the independence and quality of ABC programs. The situation in the UK has shown the dangers of concentrating media yet the Murdoch empire already has an unacceptably high influence in Australian media and commercial pressures are such that outsourcing ABC programs shall increase this influence and that of other commercial players.

If the ABC has to rely on outsourcing, just like the commercial channels, then inevitably commercial pressures shall start to strongly influence what is shown on ABC programs (similarly, textbook production in the USA also displays how commercial influence operates to the detriment of quality production). The ABC should be a producer of innovative quality programming in all areas and this requires a close association with the technicalities of production. Outsourcing removes the sort of informal and formal discussions and liaisons that lead to more innovative programming. I consider the ABC should be less, not more, dependent on outsourced programming. Indeed I urge that the the ABC should have its funding increased so that its production units can be rebuilt. Program quality and range were higher when it had strong specialist units producing many more programs (with higher quality levels). This also meant Australian issues and culture could be explored and valued. Local in-house programming in all program genres on radio, TV and online is necessary if Australian issues and culture are to be given a fair hearing.

The ABC is a public broadcaster that should be focused on diversity and quality, not ratings, even though the latter have often been high. Traditionally the ABC has presented quality programs that display intellectual integrity but that still entertain and inform. Outsourcing shall destroy the ABC's unique position in Australian society.