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I am appalled by the range and extent of cuts to ABC programs and at the absence of any explanation by the Managing Director for these cuts. If these changes are allowed the ABC will become populist, second-rate and unworthy of government support.

A primary concern is the dumping of virtually all the ARTS PROGRAMS on both radio and TV.

The ABC Act includes the obligation 'to encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia'.

This obligation has recently been minimal and the remaining arts programs have suffered by the time slots they have been allocated. Arts programs on TV and radio are not advertised or promoted, unlike the endless promotion of the mediocre series Crownies,

The arts have been given short shrift by the ABC despite the fact that the audience for the ABC is also the audience for concerts, plays, exhibitions and so forth.

And now they are to be scrapped almost in their entirety. If the ABC board has supported this they should resign.

The capacity of the ABC to produce its own drama and documentary is to be permanently lost with the dismissal of the production teams in the various states and in some cases Sydney and Melbourne. Moreover, with little capacity in the states to produce programs with local teams, production will be concentrated on Sydney and the needs and interests of the BAPH states will be totally ignored.

In Kim Dalton's announcement of the changes he offers these reasons: 'falling audiences for some programs, increasing financial pressure and a focus on prime-time programming'. It seems this is justification for ignoring the ABC Charter and the ABC Act. This is not what the ABC is and has always been about. These are the aims of commercial broadcasting.

Dalton has expressed the intention of 'focussing its limited financial resources on prime-time programming creating'. And the ABC is to aim for a younger audience: as the head of ABC1 has said 'We super-serve an audience of 55-plus'. This means competition with the commercial channels – which would be another death touch for the ABC, an end to its *raison d'être*

Over 100 people are to lose their jobs in order for the ABC to compete with commercial television and whether they win or lose they will have lost the loyalty of their traditional audiences and probably some of

the financial support of the government.

Why is the ABC Board supporting these changes? Why is Mark Scott allowing the desecration of the ideals of public broadcasting? Why are the staff at the ABC excluded from discussions of the changes?

This is a rejection of the ideals and aspirations of the ABC for 79 years. The ABC will go the way of SBS if Kim Dalton has his way, and Mark Scott will be known as the managing director who allowed the corruption of one of the best public broadcasters in the world.

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