

TCIC

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

16 January 2013

Re: ABC Regional Obligations - Closure of ABC's Hobart Production Unit

To Whom it Concerns,

I am writing on behalf of the Tasmanian Creative Industries Council (TCIC) in regards to your request for submissions to the Senate enquiry into the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's commitment to reflecting and representing regional diversity; in particular the closure of the ABC's Hobart Production Unit.

We understand that the ABC's Hobart in-house television production unit will be closed with the exception of news and current affairs. This will result in the loss of 16 direct jobs and further losses to indirectly affected support providers.

It has been reported that the ABC will provide a production fund of \$1.5M to be spent in Tasmania over three years, subject to matched investment by Screen Tasmania. This production methodology is similar to that of the model in Western Australia with Screenwest.

Our concerns are:

- 1) Purportedly the ABC currently allocates ~\$2.7M per annum in Hobart production salaries and administration alone. The proposed three year \$1.5M budget equates to only \$0.5M per annum. This represents a massive reduction in investment compared to the ABC's current budgetary commitments, which going by the above must be well in excess of \$2.7M PA.
- 2) The production fund model relies upon matched investment from Screen Tasmania. Given the restricted budget under which Screen Tasmania is operating it seems unlikely that the agency could match the ABC's funds without completely depleting the availability of funds currently allocated elsewhere.

- 3) The suggested model appears to be market driven at the expense of content value. This reflects a continuing shift in the ABC to a commercial model. It may be that in the future programs of high community value, but little commercial value are discontinued.
- 4) The new Hobart based Academy of Creative Industries and Performing Arts will result in an influx of students and creative activity. With no significant Hobart production facilities the ABC will not be in a good position to engage with this new source of talent. The closure goes against the growing reputation of Hobart (and the State of Tasmania) as a creative hub.
- 5) The ABC's reduction in investment fundamentally contradicts their charter to be a national broadcaster and to fully and accurately represent all Australians. Tasmania is a regional state and the proposed model will put us at a disadvantage compared to wealthier non-regional locations.

We ask that the ABC continues to invest in Tasmanian production at levels that do not rely on Screen Tasmania co-funding for content that is under the ABC's regional obligation to produce.

If the closures are inevitable then the ABC should at least reinvest the entire saving into a local outsourcing model that maintains its current level of investment. An assurance such as this would allow our local production companies to invest in the resources required to truly represent our region on the ABC. There is an abundance of Tasmanian content that could utilise such a budget and this would result in significant business and employment opportunities for our creative industries.

As Chair of the TCIC I thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Kind regards

Andrew Dickinson
Chair - Tasmanian Creative Industries Council

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