

Chamber of Arts and Culture WA Inc

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
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Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Senators

Inquiry into recent ABC programming decisions

The Western Australian Chamber of Arts and Culture understands that the Charter of the ABC specifically requires it, as the national broadcaster, to broadcast programs that:

- “contribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of, the Australian community”;
- serve “to encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia”;
- “provide a balance between broadcasting programs of wide appeal and specialised broadcasting programs”;
- take account of “the multicultural character of the Australian community”.

With the recent axing of Art Nation and the virtual decimation of the ABC Arts Unit, it is apparent that the ABC is perilously close to multiple breaches of its Charter responsibilities. With the decision to cut ‘in-house’ production in favour of ‘out-sourcing’ and ‘buying in’, the ABC is essentially reneging on its long established (and much valued) role in exploring and celebrating our multi-faceted cultural identity.

The Chamber expresses its deep concern at this state of affairs, and urges the Committee to send a clear message to the ABC Board of Management that recent decisions in relation to the provision of arts and cultural content are unacceptable.

It should be noted that the recent cutbacks are actually part of a sustained erosion of the ABC’s responsibilities that has been evident since the late 1990s.

In addition, the Chamber is also most concerned at the return to Sydney-centric programming and production. Here in Western Australia, we now have a particularly dire situation in which we are providing no significant program content for the national television network. This is in spite of a major financial investment in a state-of-the-art production studio at the ABC’s new East Perth headquarters. Given this, on a national level, we are currently virtually “out of sight, out of mind”. And this is a state that continues to make a massive contribution to the Australian economy, and one that is also punching above its weight in terms of its contribution to Australia’s arts and cultural life.

We urge you to act to stop the erosion of the ABC’s Charter and to ensure that, in terms of programming and production, the ABC returns to being a truly national broadcaster.

Yours sincerely

Sam Walsh
Chairman
Chamber of Arts and Culture – Western Australia