

ABC Inquiry

Thank you for the chance to make a public submission to this Inquiry. The New Inventors is a program that celebrates innovation and now the ABC is playing a cooking show in its place. Every station has cooking shows. There is no shortage on Australian television of cooking shows. Name one other program that is close to the New Inventors. Commercial stations can't make this show because the judges give independent assessments of the entrants. Why would a commercial company want to make such a program with the ABC? How could they make money out of this in any way that didn't ruin the independence of the series? What funding body would fund a television series like The New Inventors? Screen Australia? The reason the external funding isn't out there for this kind of show is because there has been an understanding before now that the funding for this kind of show is in there. It is given by taxpayers to the ABC to make this kind of show. It is untrue to suggest that co-productions are less expensive because commercial productions companies have access to funding that they can bring to the ABC. What funding is out there for long running entertainment series? Zilch. There are commercial opportunities for shows like cooking shows, celebrity panel shows, and other light weight programs that although entertaining, also might bring in a few bucks. But a family show of integrity that doesn't bother with celebrities and that promotes science and the arts? There is only one producer of this kind of the content, and only one funding source, and that is the ABC. This is the kind of show that is the ABC's bread and butter. It is clever, entertaining, and important. If the audiences are down, then ABC use the skilled staff to make a different show that also celebrates innovation.

No one outside of Mark Scott's speechwriter and maybe not even her thinks that co-productions are less expensive than making programs in-house at the ABC. It is part of the cultural understanding that those who work at the ABC earn less, but get to work on amazing content. If there isn't funding for these kind of shows, and the ABC loses the ability to make them in-house, then the ABC will have to pay commercial producers to make them. They charge more. That's how they make a business out of what they do. Part of their profit comes from copyright. Why would the ABC want to pay other people who charge more to make content, who then get to own the copyright and make money out of that? That is our legacy as Australians, the ABC copyright on our culture.

Technology is getting better and this should be making it less expensive to make content, not more expensive. On smaller budgets with less sophisticated equipment the ABC was able to produce programs made by ABC staff all over the country. So what is the big change? Why is the ABC shutting down on arts and culture, on regional content productions, on local sports, on independence from commercialism?

It is clear why this is happening, and I appreciate very much that this inquiry is taking place. The ABC has overextended itself with opening four channels without the funding to run them all. Don't let mismanagement hijack our ABC.

Thank you.
Sandra White