

Re the ABC

Dear Committee Members,

We can confidently state that the ABC is the envy of other nations across the world. It is a national treasure as are all the staff of this institution who would have to be the most dedicated group of people committed to bringing information, culture and informed discussion to the furthest corner of this country and overseas. When I lived in Alice Springs in the early eighties, the only mainstream television channel available in that town was the ABC. The effect this had on that remote town of 15,000-odd people of all walks of life and ethnicity (it was always very diverse), was truly remarkable indeed in terms of people's level of awareness about world affairs, cultural interests, the latest in science, philosophy, the law, education, etc. Everyone watched programs such as Four Corners and the other excellent quality programs produced by the ABC (and BBC) whether current affairs, drama, etc. The democratisation of knowledge and discussion in this most remote of towns in an island nation isolated from the rest of the world in so many ways was unparalleled and certainly very different from in our capital cities with more channels.

There are many stories one could tell that would demonstrate the essential role the ABC has played and continues to play despite funding cuts, in the health of our democracy and robust economy. Suffice for me to recount an observation I made whilst holidaying in Broome 2 years ago which demonstrates the fact that, contrary to comments made by critics, often politicians, which often characterise the ABC's audiences or supporters, as being left-leaning greyheads or the latte-sipping chattering class. I was getting out of the car at Cable Beach when a local council truck drove up with *Late Night Live* playing loudly enough on its radio that the workers were still able to enjoy Phillip Adams and his guests as they worked their way around the car park on a clean-up exercise. There's plenty of choice of radio stations these days in Broome, so these guys were choosing to listen and educate themselves (which is what it was) on matters far outside their immediate lives, but that would impact on their views and no doubt their quality of life. In addition, one would be comfortable in knowing that if they are regular listeners to RN, they would also be making a contribution to the life of this nation by bringing more informed thinking, more knowledge and reflection to any forum they are involved in – whether that be the family BBQ or table, the PTA, the Pub or the polling booth.

I expect the ABC to be a producer of innovative quality programming in all areas. I want:

1. the ABC to be less dependent on outsourced programming
2. the ABC to be funded and rebuilt so that it has strong specialist units to produce high levels of high quality and genuinely local in-house programming in all program genres on radio, TV and online
3. a public broadcaster that is focused on diversity and quality, not ratings
4. to get rid of those adverts from the so-called ABC shops and for other programs that have slipped into the space between programs. This is against the charter (in the case of ABC merchandise advertising) and absolutely mind-numbing.

Regards

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