

Dear Senators

I was pleased to hear the Prime Minister declare just before the federal election, that, under his government there would be "No cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or the SBS."

I am writing to request that you hold the government accountable to their promises. Australia is, after all, supposed to be a democracy. It should not be necessary to point out that the ABC and the SBS, while much diminished by attacks from the Coalition over many years, remain oases of truth and quality in the otherwise barren desert of television broadcasting.

Advertisements on the SBS have been an unmitigated disaster, dragging down the quality of programming, as sponsors' preferences are pandered to, as well as annoying viewers and providing an unwarrantable distraction from the programme content. It is time to remove advertising altogether, and the government must provide increased funding to allow this to happen. SBS 2 is now unwatchable, with very few exceptions, and SBS 1 is a shadow of its former self. This is the inevitable outcome of commercialisation. Additional advertising would only increase the bland "sameness" that is already infesting SBS content. As a result of the changes proposed in the draft legislation before you, there will be little difference between the SBS and the privately-owned channels, and therefore no reason to keep it in public hands. The sale of the SBS to private interests will follow, which is no doubt the ultimate goal of the present government.

A vibrant and diverse broadcasting service is essential for our diverse and vibrant community. Commercial television, tied to the advertisers' requirement for mass public appeal, cannot deliver this. A service catering for an ethnically diverse community is a necessary component of Australian broadcasting, for the benefit of ethnic minorities and the population at large. At a time when extremists and fanatics of all persuasions are threatening the fabric of our society, by mindless fanaticism on the one hand and gross government over-reaction on the other, the enlightening role that the SBS can play is even more critical.

Citizen voters will not be fooled by Minister Hockey's claims of budget "crisis" and the blaming of the previous government for the so-called "crisis". As all reputable analysts have pointed out, the government inherited an economy that any finance manager in Europe would kill for, thanks to the prudent management of the Global Financial Crisis by their predecessors. The structural budget problems bequeathed by the Howard government and the current drop in the iron ore price can be addressed adequately by ensuring that Australian and International corporations and citizens pay their fair share of taxation, without cutting essential services such as those provided by the SBS.

I strongly urge you to propose amendments to the Bill to provide for:

- **no more advertising in any hour on SBS,**
- **disallowing of 'product placement' of commercial goods in SBS programs,**
- **no further commercialisation of SBS,**
- **no increase in disruptive commercial breaks – rather, removal of advertising entirely, and**
- **restoration of appropriate funding levels to allow SBS to regain its independence**

Thank you for your attention.

Peter Maurice Wilkinson