



SBS SUBMISSION

House of Representatives Infrastructure and Communications Committee

National Broadband Network

Introduction

SBS welcomes this opportunity to provide information to the Committee on the role and potential benefits of the NBN.

SBS is Australia's multilingual and multicultural national broadcasting service. Our principal function, as set out in the SBS Charter, is to provide multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians, and, in doing so, reflect and promote Australia's multicultural society. SBS broadcasts to a national television and radio audience and delivers content online on its website www.sbs.com.au.

Effect on community and social benefits

The NBN will facilitate many community and social benefits for consumers. For SBS, it will provide a means to better meet the diverse communication needs of Australia's multicultural community.

However the proliferation of new content offerings and services available to consumers over the NBN raises a critical issue for the future of Australian media and culture: the ability of Australian voices to be heard in an increasingly competitive and globalised media environment. New IPTV services are not subject to Australian content obligations, and the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement limits the regulation of new media services. The outcome of the Government's Convergence Review will be critical to this issue.

One thing that is clear, public broadcasters will have a vital role to play in maintaining a place for Australian content in our homes, however it is delivered.

The ubiquitous nature of broadband also increases the possible formation of "digital ghettos" among Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CAL) communities. Digital and broadband technologies allow people to source information, in-language, from overseas sources. While SBS's endurance as a media organisation demonstrates the



willingness of the Australian community to embrace diversity and suggests a positive outlook for social cohesion, recent SBS research suggests there is a natural tendency for CALD communities to retreat inward (particularly when vulnerable or threatened) and the prolific nature of global communications will have profound implications for Australia's multicultural communities.

Facilitating community and social benefits

Faster broadband speeds will create more opportunities for communities to engage with content created by SBS through online video and audio services, on-demand access, and other new services including third party content distributors.

One challenge for SBS is the provision of multilingual services. To address this, SBS is developing new online services for language communities. SBS recently launched its Chinese language Virtual Community Centre (VCC) – <http://www.sbs.com.au/chinese>. The VCC provides a new online destination for Chinese Australians. It is targeted to the needs of Australia's Chinese language community and provides content in Mandarin and Cantonese (with some English). The VCC aggregates all SBS content in Mandarin and Cantonese, with additional selected and commissioned online content. For example audiences can watch video catch-up versions of SBS's pilot Mandarin News Australia, (SBS's ½ hour weekly locally produced Mandarin news service).

The VCC enables a deeper and richer engagement with SBS's Mandarin and Cantonese speaking audiences and enables those audiences to create their own communities of interest and share their Australian stories.

Conclusion

The NBN will enable SBS to better meet the diverse communication needs of Australia's multicultural community. Faster broadband speeds will create more opportunities for communities to engage with multicultural and multilingual content created by SBS.

However there is a danger that the proliferation of new services available over the NBN will affect the availability of Australian content, and increase the possibility of digital ghettos for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

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