



ABC

HUMAN RESOURCES

Response to the Australian Senate
Finance and Public Administration
References Committee

*Inquiry and Report into
ABC Recruitment and Training*

28 June 2002



ABC

Australian
Broadcasting
Corporation

Sue Morton
Secretary
Australian Senate
Finance & Publications Administration
References Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Human Resources

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Dear Ms Morton

**Re: APS Recruitment and Training
Submission by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

I refer to your letter of 7 May 2002 in relation to the inquiry by the Finance and Public Administration References Committee into recruitment and training in the APS.

The ABC has welcomed the opportunity to participate in the inquiry and provide a response on the ABC's experiences in these areas. I have already read a number of the submissions posted on the Committee's website and I am interested in receiving a copy of the Committee's findings. I am particularly interested in opportunities for the ABC to participate in cross APS initiatives in both training and recruitment.

Attached is the ABC Human Resources submissions for the Committee and if you require any further information on any of the matters raised or any other areas of recruitment and training within the ABC, please do not hesitate to contact me on 8333 1500.

As requested, this submission has been made electronically.

Yours sincerely,

(original signed and on file)

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Australian Senate, Finance and Public Administration References Committee

Terms of Reference

On 21 March 2002, the following matter was referred to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee (the Committee) for inquiry and report:

- Recruitment and training in the Australian Public Service (APS).

The Committee has, however sought submissions from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation notwithstanding it is not covered by the *Public Service Act 1999*.

(A full text of the terms of reference is at Schedule A)

Recruitment in the ABC

(i) Trends in Recruitment in the ABC over recent years

Until financial year 2000-2001 the ABC administered and processed recruitment from the seven (7) capital city locations across Australia. This resulted in;

- Duplication of resources with regard to recruitment processing including technology, software, staff and other equipment.
- Variation in the application of recruitment procedures and processes, and their interpretation.
- Evolving state-by-state practices had resulted in at times, inconsistent and segmented recruitment advice to customers and candidates.

To eliminate the relative inefficiencies inherent in such a recruitment model the ABC proactively moved toward a more centralized, national model with the considerable tangible benefits of efficiency and economy of scale.

Nationalization of Recruitment Methodology

The National Recruitment Unit (NRU) was established in the 2000/01 financial year and progressively assumed responsibility for coordinating recruitment activity from State HR Departments. Significant tangible benefits to the recruitment activity were achieved by devoting a specialist functional unit to the process, which include;

- Full utilisation of a national infrastructure with its capacity for increased volumes, improved economies of scale, productivity cost efficiencies and more effective implementation of policy and procedures.
- Consistent standards in advertising style, format, processing times, and procedural advice to customers and other services.

- Centralised collection and reporting of statistics, which allows for tracking of corporate recruitment and selection Key Performance Indicators against best practice benchmarks.
- 50 • Provide consistent access to specialist, ‘value added’ recruitment advice and customer services that can compete with external recruitment agencies within a certain range of services.
- The single co-ordination of the recruitment and selection function aligns strongly with national workforce planning requirements.
- 55 • Reduced duplication of resources and use of shared technology has resulted in improved return on capital investment.
- Reviewed and streamlined current recruitment and advertising practices to increase timeliness and efficiency.
- 60 • Focused on a ‘business partnership’ with internal customers whereby the NRU tailors recruitment services to customer’s needs.

Whilst the efficiencies of a ‘one-stop’ national service have been implemented, local State HR Managers play a critical role in coaching and guiding line managers through the process.

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Advertising Activity

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Internal and external vacancies in the ABC have increased considerably in the last two years. This is primarily due to the organisational restructure of the ABC and the creation of new positions and responsibilities, the re-introduction of the Canberra local 7pm news service, Asia Pacific Television, Radio Regional Expansion and the yearly journalist cadetship intake. Last calendar year the ABC formally advertised 714 vacancies.

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Please note that there is limited empirical data available on ABC recruitment activity due to a lack of an effective, and integrated electronic database although this has been highlighted as a critical concern and is currently being addressed as a key HR budget item.

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New Advertising Styles

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A new advertising style was developed to improve both ABC branding, update the advertising style and introduce the new logo in the job advertisement. The style reflects a more progressive, upmarket presentation and generates cost savings of up to 17% to the ABC that is currently being tracked.

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(ii) *The trends, in particular, in relation to the recruitment to the ABC of young people, both graduates & non-graduates.*

(iii) *The employment opportunities for young people in the ABC.*

95 The key recruitment drives targeted to young people (although not necessarily confined to) are through the IT Graduate Trainee, Journalist Cadetships, Traineeships and most recently as a one-off, major regional radio expansion.

IT Graduate Program

100 The ABC IT Graduate Program offers several placements (generally) per year and is based on ABC operational needs and budgetary consideration. Targeted graduates are Software Developers, Business Analysts, Network and Communications Analyst and Systems Software Programmers.

105 Degree qualifications required may include:

- Software Developers (Information Technology, Computer Engineering, Economics, Commerce or other degree with a major in Information Technology or Information Systems).
- 110 • Business Analysts (Information Technology, Economics, Commerce or other degree with a major in Information Technology or Information Systems).
- Networks and Communications Analysts (Electrical Engineering degree with a major in Information Technology, or Computer Engineering).
- 115 • Systems Software Programmers (Information Technology or Computer Engineering).

120 Career opportunities within the ABC commence with participation in an induction program followed by assignment to a project team. Career development is integral to the ABC and establishes the foundation for IT professionals to provide an effective service to clients.

125 There are opportunities to travel Australia-wide and to work with the many different ABC Business Units. Some of the ABC projects they have been involved with include IT support for coverage of elections, major sporting events, together with systems to support radio networks like Triple J, News and Current Affairs reporters and presenters, the growing network of ABC shops, and the ABC's Internet presence.

130 The IT Graduate Program is advertised in all major metropolitan papers, on the internet and through notifying Universities and other tertiary institutions. All candidates are required to apply on-line and applications are open for a month. The advertising campaign is usually conducted midyear.

ABC Cadet Journalist Program

135 The ABC offers a Cadet Journalist Program annually. The successful applicants are trained in journalism for both radio and television news. 2001 intake = seven cadets, 2002 intake = 11 cadets.

140 Applicants must be tertiary qualified or have substantial practical experience in journalism. Applicants must have well-developed research and writing skills and

good communication skills. A demonstrated interest in current affairs is required and familiarity with all ABC News and Current Affairs output.

145 Positions were advertised nationally in the print media in **The Australian**, in all
major metropolitan newspapers, the **Koori Mail** and internally within the ABC to
provide an opportunity for staff to apply. All advertising directs interested candidates
to ABC jobs on-line to complete the ABC Cadet Journalist Program Application
Form. Successful candidates are informed that they may be required to relocate
150 interstate. Following completion of the 12 month training contract, based on assessed
performance, there are opportunities to join the ABC on an ongoing basis within a
regional news room initially.

155 The application form requires candidates to write a review of a television news
bulletin and develop a local radio story idea. As part of the selection process, the
ABC assesses the individual writing skills and looks for evidence of a commitment to
journalism as a career. Short-listed candidates were requested to attend various ABC
studios around Australia for voice and camera tests. They are also given a practical
exercise to test their news judgement and general knowledge. Based on these results
160 the remaining candidates are chosen for final interviews.

In the 2002 intake a total of 800 applications were received and 11 cadets successfully
placed within each of the capital centres. The take-up rate of cadets who obtain
ongoing employment with the ABC after the initial 12 months training period is
165 extremely high. The majority are initially relocated to the regional areas.

ABC Indigenous Cadet Journalist Program

170 The ABC's News and Current Affairs Division each year offers a position in its
Indigenous Cadet Journalist Training program for a person of Aboriginal or Torres
Strait Islander descent. The Advertising and Selection process mirrors the general
cadet journalist intake. The successful applicant is initially trained in Sydney.

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Science Cadet Journalist, New Media

The ABC has also offered opportunities in 2002 for two science Cadet Journalists
targeted at recent science graduates. Those successful candidates participate in a two
180 year on-the-job training program located in Sydney working in both radio and on-line.
These Science cadetships are advertised nationally in **The Australian**, **Sydney
Morning Herald** and **ABC Online**.

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Local Radio Regional Expansion

Additional funding was made available to the ABC in the 2001/02 Federal Budget to
fund the launch of two new regional stations and the recruitment of 50 new program
makers positions at the ABC's 32 radio stations across Australia. This was
190 specifically aimed at substantially increasing regional program content commitment.
ABC Local Radio would be able to better serve the needs and interests of regional

communities and boost local employment of staff working in the community and reporting on local issues.

195 The 50 new positions are primarily radio producers, presenters and rural reporters. To gain the greater exposure in advertising and to source candidates with a knowledge and understanding of the issues affecting regional and rural Australia, advertising was extensively conducted via **The Weekend Australian**, all major metropolitan and targeted regional newspapers in addition to an ABC on-line recruitment micro-site.

200 This recruitment and selection process was the single largest recruitment exercise conducted in the 70-year history of the ABC. The emphasis was on outreaching to local rural and regional communities. The state-by-state breakdown was as follows (to date):

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SA	5
WA	8
QLD	12
VIC	9
210 NT	3
TAS	2
NSW	10

215 *(iv) The efficiency and effectiveness of the devolved arrangements for recruitment in the ABC*

220 One of the critical changes to improve both the efficiency of the recruitment process and the calibre of candidates available is the introduction of the ABC's specialist National Recruitment Unit (NRU) and the development of new 'value-added' recruitment services available within the ABC.

225 The aim is to devolve the responsibility of the recruitment decision making to the selection panel and local managers by providing the members with specialist advice and tools to support the merit-selection process. The NRU is facilitating this through the development of 'value-added' services, which will be bench marked against external recruitment consultancy practices operating in the marketplace.

230 The objective is to offer specialist recruitment and selection services that can compete with external recruitment providers within a range of services, and which can be costed out to internal customers with overall significant net savings to the ABC.

235 Focusing on a business partnership approach, the NRU will develop collaboratively with the line manager the most effective selection method tailored to their business operations. It will seek to deliver candidates to selection panels in a responsive manner within a streamlined quality controlled infrastructure.

240 Services available would include initial telephone screening, taking advertisement responses short-listing candidates, design of behavioural event interview questions, reference checking, compilation of candidate shortlist reports, and selection committee reports.

245 It has been the ABC's experience that an internal, specialist recruitment provider comprehensively understands the culture of the organisation, the complexities of the ABC's industrial agreements and its Selection and Recruitment Guidelines more effectively than an external provider. This has delivered a more consistent, professional and cost effective recruitment service to the ABC.

250 Conversely, external recruitment agencies provide access to vast databases of potential candidates. This balance between an enhanced internal recruitment service and an external recruitment agency provides the best 'all round' recruitment service to the ABC as well as providing opportunities for the ABC to benchmark its recruitment practices against industry leaders.

255 **Streamlined Recruitment and Selection Guidelines**

260 The ABC has recently reviewed and streamlined guidelines for Recruitment and Selection in the ABC (October 2001). The guidelines are to assist ABC staff who are involved in the recruitment and selecting of staff to fill vacancies covered by the **ABC Employment Agreement 2000-2002**. It clearly delineates both the steps and the responsibilities involved to ensure that employment selection is carried out in line with good management practice.

265 **Training and development, including**

(i) The trends in expenditure on training and development in the ABC over recent years

- 270 • ABC expenditure on training and development has remained substantially unchanged over the last few years. In 1999/2000 the expenditure for training, combining the Human Resources Training budget and the expenditure by Divisions on training activity was \$3.57m. For 2000/20001 the total expenditure was \$3.74m.
- 275 • The ABC Group Audit report on National Training (August 2000) reports that the average training investment per ABC employee for the 1999/2000 financial year was \$912. This represents an investment in training of 1.4% of salary. (The APS figure was \$1,054, the British Broadcasting Corporation figure was \$2,727 and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation figure \$1300.)
- 280 • The training function in the ABC has been restructured to align training activity with the business goals of the divisions and with individual performance management.
- Following this re-organisation the ABC decided to allocate not less than 2% of salary budget to training and development. This decision represents a major commitment to staff development and training.

285 (ii) *The methods used to identify training needs in the ABC*

As an outcome of the re-organised training function, the ABC identifies training needs through Divisional Training Plans. Divisions produce these plans with the support of Training Advisors to set up a process for identifying, planning, managing and reporting on training activity.

A Divisional Training Plan

295 A divisional Training Plan:

- Broadly articulates the competencies and skills needed to achieve the business goals of the Division. It addresses immediate training needs as well as future workforce requirements, including workforce diversity.
- Identifies competencies currently available in the Division and the gaps between those available competencies and the required competencies. It articulates who needs what competencies and where. Specific needs analysis projects are set up for some areas of the workforce.
- Broadly outlines the approaches used in gaining the competencies: recruitment, individual development, staff transfer.

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The ABC Performance Management system is another source which identifies the training needs of individuals to enable them to achieve the objectives in their job plans. These needs are integrated with the overall divisional planning approach to establish the Divisional Training Plan.

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(iii) *The methods used to evaluate training and development provided in the ABC*

- All courses are evaluated and feedback is provided to providers and trainers based on evaluation sheets filled out by participants.
- Training program evaluations are documented through Training Project Reports as an 'evaluation' step at the end of a training activity for both accredited and non-accredited training.
- The ABC is piloting Return on Training Investment models to evaluate individual training programs. Once a number of methodologies have been piloted useful models will be more broadly implemented.

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(iv) *The extent of accredited and articulated training offered in the ABC*

The ABC has recently embraced accredited training and achieved Registered Training Organisation status in December 2000. Since then rapid progress has been made:

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- The ABC has successfully completed two quality audits and is now a Registered Training Organisation under the Australian Recognition Framework.
- ABC is now registered to deliver the following national vocational qualifications:

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- Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Screen

- Certificate III Screen
- Diploma Broadcasting (Radio)
- Certificate III Broadcasting (Television)
- Certificate IV Broadcasting (Radio)
- 335 ○ Advanced Diploma Broadcasting (Assessment only)
- Certificate III Business (Office Administration)
- Certificate IV Assessment and Workplace Training

- ABC is now delivering accredited training in the core business areas of media
340 production and broadcasting.
 - Benefit to ABC – ensures quality and consistency in training programs
 - Benefit to staff – they gain new skills and nationally recognised transferable qualifications
 - 345 ○ Provides efficient return on the dollar investment in training.

- The ABC as a Registered Training Organisation has enrolled 145 staff members since September 2001:
 - 350 ○ 17 Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace training
 - Nine ‘Train Small Groups’ (a single competency from the above Certificate)
 - Nine Certificate III in Screen
 - Two Advanced Diploma in Screen
 - 355 ○ Seven Diploma in Screen
 - 84 Certificate IV in Broadcasting (Radio)
 - Seven Advanced Diploma in Broadcasting Radio
 - 10 Certificate III Business Administration
 - 360 ○ The majority of current enrolments are in the Radio Division, which has embraced the accredited training model in providing core skills to new regional recruits as well as in promoting and acknowledging good practice in broadcasters around the country.
 - Front Line Management Initiative

- 365 ● In response to an identified need, the ABC tendered for delivery of the Frontline Management Initiative (FMI) for front line and middle managers in an effort to enhance the skill set of these staff members.
- One hundred and eighty six (186) frontline and middle managers working across
370 all ABC divisions in each state have enrolled in this customised ABC training program.
- Managers will gain either a Certificate IV or Diploma in Front Line Management.

- The potential alignment of competencies offered in accredited training programs to the ABC's work level standards is being assessed.

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The ABC has articulation arrangements with **Murdoch University** for post-graduate qualifications in Media Management and with **Charles Sturt University**. The latter will need to be reviewed in the light of new ABC accredited training programs.

380 (v) *The processes used in the ABC to evaluate training providers and training courses*

The ABC conducts a tender process when contracting external Training Providers for major delivery of large corporate training initiatives. The Frontline Management Training Program tenders were assessed according to the following criteria:

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- proven facilitation skills and experience
- track record: experience in delivering the accredited frontline management initiative, up to diploma level
- innovative approach to training delivery, including flexible distance delivery
- background of trainers & possession of relevant qualifications
- 390 • referees
- delivery locations
- proposed delivery method
- broadcast and media industry experience
- value added features
- 395 • value for money

In sourcing other providers for external programs, training staff research options and select providers on the basis of best value for money.

400 (vi) *The adequacy of training and career development opportunities available to ABC employees in regional areas*

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The provision of adequate training and career development opportunities to ABC regional staff is an ongoing challenge. Access to more distance delivery and on-line learning. The ABC is addressing this challenge.

ABC Radio is making progress with significant investment in the training of regional broadcasters. A major initiative to ensure equity of access to accredited broadcast radio training began in August 2001, to:

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- Roll out a nationally accredited program of broadcasting craft skills delivery: Certificate IV in Broadcasting (Radio)
- Provide comprehensive training support for new regional broadcasters through a two week broadcast skills course aligned to national qualifications
- Develop distance learning and self-paced materials

- 415
- Ensure four visits by accredited assessor/trainers to each regional station every 16 months
 - Provide regular coaching sessions (minimum of eight sessions per year to all regional broadcasters)
 - Provide an electronic ‘Community of Practice’, fostering a nationwide dialogue between enrolled broadcasters and senior craft specialists from around the country
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So far 90 broadcasters are enrolled and a total of more than 6,000 hours of training has been delivered. In addition, more than 1,200 hours of training has been delivered to regional cross-media staff across Australia.

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Apart from the regional accredited training initiative, ABC Radio has provided regional broadcasters with numerous training and development opportunities. For example:

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- Regional broadcasters are participating in radio succession planning.
 - Annually, a minimum of 80 regional broadcasters attend development conferences held in the major capital cities.
 - 40 Rural Department journalists attend learning and development conferences at least once a year
- 435
- Accredited management training is offered to Regional Program Managers to address management skills gaps
 - It is anticipated that a minimum of a further 50 radio broadcasters from regional Australia will access accredited training over the coming twelve months.

440 Within **Television (TV) and Production Resources**, development opportunities in regional and remote locations are limited. Staffs often relocate to metropolitan centres to progress their careers. In smaller sites the number and type of local productions is too limited to provide wide experience. Productions are limited to news, sport and **Stateline**, as opposed to the full gamut of programs made in metropolitan centres (documentaries, magazine style, dramas, live audience shows, children’s programming etc.). In comparison to metropolitan centres there is also a lack of infrastructure and limited access to the resources available, such as senior craft specialists, specialist equipment and external training partners.

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450 The solutions of on-line and distance learning may not easily apply to skills based training in TV. Solutions that have been used have included arranging interstate placements for such staff periodically in order to update their skill base and expose them to a range of programs and equipment. We are encouraging more senior ABC staff to travel to these areas and share skills. The expense involved in addressing our regional training needs through face-to-face delivery makes this difficult, and it is often problematic to release staff from program making.

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Major craft training for TV is usually delivered in Sydney or Melbourne due to a higher number of participants leads to economies of scale. Logistical issues of delivering face-to-face training in the regions are avoided. Opportunities for regional participants to attend are limited by a lack of available funds.

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News and Current Affairs training is also delivered face to face in Sydney or Melbourne, and faces similar logistical issues for regional staff.

465 **Tools for regional training** are being explored, such as e-learning and
teleconferencing, to provide an alternative to face-to-face training in larger
metropolitan centres. However, e-learning tools are expensive especially to meet the
demands for training for new digital broadcasting technologies, and this remains an
impediment to the up-skilling of regional staff.

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(vii) *The efficiency and effectiveness of the devolved arrangements for training in the ABC*

475 The ABC is not part of the APS and so has not shared training arrangements with the
APS.

480 The ABC business has much in common with many areas of the APS and would
welcome the opportunity both to participate in and to work on the development of
commonly available programs, including the development of competency
frameworks. Areas of common interest include management development covered by
the Public Service Training package, finance, administration, archives and library
services and other areas which support the ABC core business areas.

485 However, in many areas of the ABC, including all the core business areas, radio,
television, new media and broadcast technology, the ABC is best placed in Australia
to develop and deliver appropriate training programs, either on its own or in
partnership with other leading industry providers.

490 (viii) *The value for money represented by the training and development dollars spent in the
ABC*

- The ABC has a project planning system for all training expenditure that sets out
clearly for delegates the outcomes and the costs for each training project, so that
delegates can make a judgement on the value for money before approving
expenditure.
- Each project also has a built in evaluation stage to be completed on completion
of the project.

500 The ABC, however, does not yet have a tool for evaluating the value for money
gained through training expenditure. As noted the ABC is setting up pilots projects to
trial and evaluate Return on Training Investment methodologies. The appropriate
models will then be disseminated.

505 (ix) *The ways training and development offered to ABC employees could be improved in
order to enhance the skills of ABC employees*

The ABC Human Resources Divisional Plan identifies improvements required to
enhance the skill of ABC employees. Current priorities include:

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- A Senior Management Development Program based on senior management competencies
 - Continued roll out of Front Line Management training for frontline and middle managers.
- 515
- ABC wide corporate staff development programs to ensure consistency in approach and economies of scale, eg Induction and Succession Planning
 - Increase in level and scope of accredited training.