

SUBMISSION TO COMMUNICATIONS MIN'S ENQUIRY INTO FUNDING FOR THE ABC.

Conscious of this enquiry's boundaries, can I suggest one feature that should be present in future budgets/allocations: a secured, *growth* line of expenditure, without any compromise of the Corporation's precious independence.

In my judgement, the lack of such a capability contributes to a tendency to demoralisation among both ABC creatives and managers, amidst a sense of being structurally hemmed-in money-wise. Limited innovation also results.

I think it limits (if not altogether stops) the necessary bigger-thinking that is so vital for creative organisations to retain their vigour. Ideally, there should always be the sense among staff that the Corporation *could*, if necessary, fund something out-of-the-box. But for the last decade really, that feeling has vanished. Yes, small parcels of money are available for, say, clever podcasts or smaller television ventures. But by and large, we're talking small dreams not big ones that go beyond the usual commissioning. And there is plenty of clever, creative thinking on display from staff up and down the ranks, whenever some (rare) commissioning invitation emerges due to a small bucket of development money. I have seen this many times. I've also seen the disappointment when it becomes clear that the amounts are small, invariably pre-determined and not really worth the effort.

This is a real pity. In my experience, all organisations, commercial and otherwise but especially ones prioritising creativity, need some development 'hollow-logs' that everyone knows exist, like an R&D budget. It just frees everyone up a little. I don't believe huge amounts need to be set aside either necessarily, good though that would be.

It doesn't encourage complacency, anything but. In fact, what I'm trying to emphasise is confidence in growing our base beyond government allocation, in thinking outside the established patterns.

As I understand it---while not privy to granular budgetary rules----any money earned via ABC entrepreneurial ventures is now all returned to consolidated revenue. Yet in earlier times, I understand the ABC was allowed to retain around 10% of money earned through e.g. ABC Merchandise. Whereas that route of new investment was removed about ten years ago, I gather.

I hope you can see the value in re-instituting some capacity to retain portions of Corporation earnings that are effectively hypothecated for Creative Development. Better morale and more interesting content could be the yield for staff and Australian consumers: a small change in search of disproportionately big results.