

# Inquiry into the competitive neutrality of Australia’s national broadcasters

## Submission – Anonymous 8 (3 June 2018)

### Question 8: Considering the commercial activities of the national broadcasters (e.g. where they are selling or purchasing goods and services), is there evidence that they have taken undue advantage of their government ownership, to the detriment of competitive outcomes?

### Not at all to my mind. The closure of ABC store premises seems to have ensured that. If this was ever a concern, and that's a big 'if', the fact that purchases from the ABC are now only conducted when a customer consciously takes their business to an online store seems to guarantee the ABC is not enjoying such an advantage. Such business is more a result of customers actually liking ABC content and wanting to own it for themselves.

### Question 9: What is the differential impact of regulation on commercial and national broadcasters, and is there evidence of consequent adverse impacts on competition and outcomes?

### The primacy of competition is a relic of the worst forms of laissez faire economic policy. Recent commercial broadcaster applications to limit the number of regulation mandated hours for educational/children's programming only proves Amartya Sen's claim that there must be some trade off between efficiency and desirable public outcomes. I, as a citizen of Australia, believe in a diversified public broadcaster. A broadcaster that will create content I might otherwise have never seen nor realized I would have enjoyed. Programs like Gruen, Mad as Hell, and Q&A provide incredibly informative content I enjoy; and which would not exist in an exclusively commercial market.

### Question 10: Is the reporting and accountability by the national broadcasters on their best endeavours to observe competitive neutrality adequate?

Absolutely. Given the cost cutting handed out to the ABC in recent years; which has them performing more functions with less. It is hardly surprising that the occasional error is slipping through the cracks. By my observation the ABC has always swiftly and effectively addressed these concerns. Politicians and media moguls who don't like what's said need to put on their big boy/girl pants and take critical reporting for what it is: an informed perspective.

Question 11: Are you aware of any specific instances where the ABC or SBS may have received any other competitive advantage, due to their public ownership, to the detriment of a private competitor?

### No.

### Question 12: The SBS Charter requires it to take into account the activities of the ABC and community television on radio and television. In the context of the competitive neutrality principles how in your view, is the SBS complying with this requirement? From your perspective does it adequately cover the activities of the SBS?

### While I'm unfamiliar with it's accounting of community television and radio as I understand it the SBS prioritization of foreign programming for immigrant communities in Australia is intended to capture a market which the ABC devotes less specific time and resources to. This seems an effective response to the charter requirement. I recently enjoyed the "Lebanese Beauty Queens" program; something I'd never known was part of modern Australian culture.

### Question 13: From your perspective do the national broadcasters seek a balance between competing in the market and complementing the market? Is that balance the same for traditional broadcasting and for new digital platforms?

### Absolutely. As I understand it the ABC seems to focus more as a complement to commercial media. If it so happens to compete than that's tough biscuits for the commercial broadcaster. All that indicates is that the complementary programming offered over a variety of media by the public broadcaster? It suggests that either the commercial platforms aren't satisfying large areas of the market or they're not trusted as media outlets. Either way that's hardly the public broadcasters' fault. I'd rather a wide range of programming to choose from at the cost of some competition than any other outcome.

### Question 14: Do you have comment on these guiding principles?

Amend the principles to reflect that public broadcasters aren't an enemy of private broadcasters, parliament of the public. To me they hold a similar purpose an Ombudsman, a friend of the populace situated in government. The public broadcasters are there to saturate the public in what the private media excludes. They do a good job of it, and shouldn't be punished because they're not the lapdog of government and happen to disagree with commercially motivated media outlets.