

Submission to the Inquiry into the Competitive Neutrality of the National Broadcasters

In making this submission I wish the Inquiry to consider the following points:

1. The ABC and SBS are public institutions promoting the long term interest of Australian consumers. They are much more than two media businesses in competition with other media businesses. Their Charters give them a much wider role which is vital to the civil conversation which Australian democracy demands, particularly in a fake news world environment. This is clearly shown in the trust Australians show in ABC and SBS news in the Reuters Report 2018 <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2018/australia-2018/> and in other reports. Their news is trusted and fact checked, and can and is used as a valuable, reliable source of unbiased information.
2. As an independent non-commercially driven institution the ABC is not beholden to commercial interests or agendas and can challenge both corporates and governments. This is the essence of the media's role in a democracy. Examples include news and long form journalism informing Australians all over the country of issues with banks, tax evasion, inequality, live sheep exports and nursing homes in recent months. Without programs like Media Watch, Background Briefing, All in the Mind, the Health Report, the Science Show, Australian Story and Q&A our understanding of what is happening in our country would be incredibly poorer. These programs are not made by commercial media companies who are driving their advertisers' agendas, not working in the public interest. In addition the ABC and SBS provide special programming for sectors of our community which are ignored by commercial media: all age groups, all ethnicities, Indigenous communities, rural/regional and remote people as well as urban dwellers. These programs are available to all and create a deeper understanding of who we are as Australians. This is a vital role for media in every democratic country but has been destroyed in many as they have sold off or starved their public broadcasting institutions; the result is divided antagonistic societies without shared conversations and is on view in the US and other countries.
3. Many reports have considered whether to charge for the ABC and SBS. They have all rejected paywalls/subscriptions etc in favour of access by all taxpayers. Anything else is antidemocratic.
4. As is restricting digital space use. The majority of Australians now use digital media to access news, entertainment and information. The ABC and SBS have led the way on successful, attractive methods of making their content available on line to more Australians and those on holidays or working overseas.
5. Finally, the ABC and SBS are the training grounds of most of our journalists and content providers. All Australian commercial organisations have benefited from the rigour, depth of experience and innovation as well as the breadth and reach of the content required to be

covered by staff at the ABC and SBS. The Charter based services they provide have a profound impact on how they see their jobs and the journalism they provide to Australian society. Programs started and trialled on the ABC/SBS are frequently picked up by commercial media without the commercial risk associated with a 'new' program.

In summary, the ABC/SBS are national treasures and need support not decimation of their budgets each year and yet more Inquiries. They are not competing with other media companies; they have different aims and objectives spelt out in their Charters and appreciated by me and a majority of other Australians.

This submission is from

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