Competitive Neutrality Inquiry
Department of Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 2154
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Subject: The ABC is a Public Institution with Unique Roles

The ABC is a public institution with unique demands and requirements placed upon it. As such, it is not in direct competition with commercial media. Below I will discuss some of the roles and characteristics that distinguish it from commercial media and clearly demonstrate that in many areas the two are not in competition. Many of the differentiating characteristics arise from the ABC charter, as detailed in bold in the first part of the document below.
Pt (1ai) the ABC should **broadcast programs that contribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of, the Australian community-**This is a very different mandate from that of commercial broadcasters, whose role is to maximise profit for their shareholders. In many cases this in done by appealing to a narrow demographic at the expense of a sense of national unity and indeed with the aim of limiting expressions of cultural diversity.
Pt (1aii) **broadcasting programs of an educational nature-**this is something that the ABC does extremely well and to the best of my knowledge there are no programs like **All in the Mind, Best Practice, Big Ideas, The Boyer Lectures, Future Tense, Health Report, Late Night Live** or the **Science Show** (just to name a few) on commercial radio. In addition, the ABC carries many outstanding educational programs for children and young adults, among them **Behind the News**, which has been running for over 50 years.
Pt(1bi) **Transmit to countries outside Australia . . .programs that will encourage awareness of Australia and an international understanding of Australian attitudes on world affairs-**while this role has been reduced through closure of ABC shortwave broadcasts, it is still an important one via online broadcasting, DAB+ and podcasts. Once again this is a niche in which there is little or no commercial competition.
Pt (1c) **encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia-**in fulfilling this responsibility the ABC sponsors programs (e.g. the **Music Show, The Hub on Art, The Hub on Screen, The Hub on Stage**) and networks, e.g. **ABC Classic FM**, **TripleJ**, that play a unique cultural role and have no direct commercial competitors.
Pt (2iii) **responsibility. . . to provide a balance between broadcasting programs of wide appeal and specialized broadcasting programs-**no commercial broadcaster has a similar requirement, rather their requirement is to make a profit, so again this is not an area of competition, but rather one where the ABC has unique responsibilities.
There are other important community roles played by the ABC that are not specified in the act, as follows:
• **in an era of "fake news" the ABC is Australia's most trusted news source-**(https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/abc-most-trusted-news-source-poll-shows-after-turnbull-minister-accuses-it-of-fake-news-20161222-gtgmqa.html).
• **the ABC is where Australians turn for reliable information in times of emergency-**this is particularly true when bushfires or floods are imminent.
• **the ABC carries and commissions uniquely Australian stories-**for example the Don Dale inquiry, the live sheep trade investigation, the live-baiting inquiry into greyhound racing

In summary, the ABC is a unique part of Australian culture. It was originally funded by a tax on broadcast receivers; a model that was rejected by the Australian parliament in favor of direct government subsidy. Thus all Australians have already paid for ABC content and should not be asked to pay again, due to the imposition of paywalls or other additional tariffs. Since the ABC does not carry advertisements it can hardly be said to be stealing advertisers from commercial broadcasters. ABC management has to look at the big picture, so cuts or tariffs in one area may result in cuts in unexpected areas elsewhere in the organisation.

Eldon E Ball