

From: Erica Jolly [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 2 August 2018 2:35 PM
To: asia pacific media review
Subject: Review of the Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific.

Dear Reviewers
Please consider the Submission I am providing in this e-mail.
Yours sincerely
Erica Jolly
Electorate of Hindmarsh.

All submissions have to go to the Review of the Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific

on line

via

asiapacificmediareview@communications.gov.au

Review of the Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific

by the Department of Communications

Submission by Erica Jolly MACE, CUniv [Flinders University] Teacher and writer about education.

First - This Review should be a review into the Australian Broadcasting Services in the Indi/Asia Pacific. USA has now recognised the connections with the Indian Ocean, so should Australia.

My submission.

The 1992 Australian Broadcasting Services Act that set up the separation of media ownership from print and visual media - separation recently removed by the Turnbull government to make possible larger cross-media conglomerates - in the interests of diversity was in line with the government's desire that these broadcasting services should, *in their development, reflect the sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity, be of a high quality with innovative programming that was in its commercial and community role, responsive.* It was concerned with data-casting and the developments of the Internet. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, operating under a different act, was not part of this legislation.

The Labor government's concern, expressed very clearly, was with the quality of the different kinds of licences to be granted by the Australian Communications and Media Authority [ACMA].

In 1999 the Coalition's Amendment to the 1992 Act was almost totally concerned with the expanding role of the Internet. In my reading of it, I saw no reference to the need in the international sphere for the Internet services to, *in their development, reflect the sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity, be of a high quality with innovative programming that was in its commercial and community role, responsive.*

It is possible then for some to see this review of the Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific as increasing the concentration on commercial engagement internationally the expanding capacities of the Internet. In fact it might be that such a narrow focus is the desire of this Coalition government – examining the international potential, commercially, that changing technologies might make possible.

In my view, such a narrow review would be wrong and certainly not in the interest of providing our neighbours with broadcasting services that *in their development, reflect the sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity, be of a high quality with innovative programming that was in its commercial and community role, responsive.*

The role of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation needs to be central in this review. Its educative as well as its entertainment role is now able to be expanded digitally, its podcasts for instance, which so often speak to our international connections. Unlike the commercial broadcasters it is not driven by profit or market-forces. It is not in the control of multinational corporations and *it is committed, in its development internationally to reflect the sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity, be of a high quality with innovative programming that was in its commercial and community role, responsive.*

Commercial broadcasters have no such commitment. That is why the focus of the Coalition governments from 1996 under John Howard, to 2014 under Tony Abbott and, since 2016 under Malcolm Turnbull must be examined for the ways in which they set out to substitute commercial broadcasters for our national investment in a public broadcaster trusted by the vast majority of us, and without the pressure of advertising, to bring to the Asia Pacific region the best of who we are and, by doing so, *reflect the sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity, being of a high quality with innovative programming that is in its commercial and community role, responsive.*

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation in its international arm is not free-to-air. Its treatment under the Coalition's series of Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade is instructive. They have required some funding from advertisers!

Therefore, I submit, that this review of Australian Broadcasting Services now needs to be broad. It needs to examine the adverse impact in terms of quality and the undermining of *the sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity*, through the attitudes in a series of Coalition governments to the international arm of the ABC in radio and television in particular, since 1997.

I submit that, because of the impact of that damaging Coalition approach, Australia has left a vacuum for quality and engagement that is now being filled by the BBC, by China and by New Zealand with their collaborative, culturally aware attitude.

Yours sincerely

Erica Jolly MACE, CUniv [Flinders University]

Electorate of Hindmarsh

August 1st 2018

I present, as evidence of my concern, the following chronology of the actions by Federal governments from 1997 to 2018 for the consideration of the reviewers.

Beginning the chronology from 1997 – 2018 in relation to the ABC's International Broadcasting Services.

1. 2000 – Radio Against the advice of all the experts on the Asian region, in 2000, the Howard government sold the Radio Australia's custom-built Cox Peninsula transmitter. It sold it to a private organization, Vision

Christian, and effectively undermined the separation of Church and State since our investment in the public broadcaster was secular to ensure the tolerance of all faiths across the continent and as we project ourselves out into the region. Radio National would have to buy space and time on this privately-owned transmitter when the Howard government released a bit on money for it to do so. [Read the debate in the Senate June 2000.]

In getting rid of Radio Australia's direct connection with potentially 144 countries, the Howard government had undermined an exceptional organization that put education before entertainment. Among the staff it had linguists who understood the cultures of the countries with which Australia was engaging.

The loss of that expertise would have ramifications in a number of different ways. Radio Australia broadcast in multiple languages: English, Mandarin, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Khmer, French, Burmese (Myanmar), Tok Pisin (Creole for Papua New Guinea), Plus there were outstanding, valuable English language courses. Often the language used was the language of the country to which the signal was sent. And short wave radio had an important part to play and was much valued by the smaller nations.

2. 2002 - With Dr Brendan Nelson as Minister for Education, the Howard government cancelled the funding for the National Asian Languages Studies in Australian Schools [NALSAS]. Set up by the Keating government in 1994, Peter Costello, Howard's Treasurer removed the \$120 million it needed to proceed.

As a direct consequence, that decision decreased the teaching of Asian languages in universities. Those two actions – handing the Cox Peninsula transmitter to Christian Vision and defunding NALSAS – meant the demand for linguists, interpreters, *in* Asian languages and teachers *of* Asian languages dropped.

As Prime Minister in 2007, Rudd put back \$62.4 million but the damage was done. It takes a decade - five years fully to educate the teachers in the languages and sometimes even more to rebuild the cohort of pre-tertiary students interested in a future career that required this or that Asian language. While Howard did put up a policy to increase the number of students doing a 'foreign' language, it could have been French.

[In 1974, in our Mawson High School in South Australia, aware as we were of our nearest northern neighbour, we taught Indonesian. The SA state-based curriculum included Indonesian. Radio Australia before 2000, had had an Indonesian audience of 18.4 million.]

That was the story for Radio Australia that now, it seems, only has English, Tok Pisin (for PNG) and French.

Chronology - Australia's international television program.

1. 1997-1998 – The Howard government, from the beginning had had an adverse effect on the international role of Australia's television program. In that first budget the funding was cut.

2. 1998 – Control was handed to the Seven Network that expected to make a profit through **Australian Television International**. It didn't. So when the tender came up, the Seven Network did not apply.

3. 2002 - Renamed the ABC Asia Pacific, partly funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [DEFAT] and advertising, unlike our public investment in domestic ABC, it was not free-to-air. It was only available by paid cable or satellite service. **And it carried content from Seven network, Nine network, Ten network, the ABC and Murdoch's Sky News.**

4. 2005 - The ABC Asia Pacific was re-awarded to the ABC. It replaced Murdoch's Sky news with ABC bulletins and news content from the ABC studios in Southbank, Melbourne. [Radio Australia was leasing time from Vision Christian and broadcasting to Indonesia.]

5. 2006 – ABC Asia Pacific became the Australia Network. And so it remained although in 2007, with the restructure of the ABC, it became part of the Corporation's International Corporate Strategy and Governance Division.

6. 2014 – With Abbott as Prime Minister, despite his assurance he would not attack the ABC, **the Australian Network was defunded and closed down.** Could this have been because, after 2006, the Australia Network had stopped using material from Murdoch's Sky News?

He did this in spite of the fact that the ABC had just made a great advance. It was one day away from signing a contract to be only the third foreign country to be allowed, through its connection with Shanghai Media Holdings, to broadcast to mainland China. We had to pay the ABC \$10 million in compensation for loss of that contract. It meant 80 ABC staff lost their jobs and once again we lost their expertise.

In 2011, his Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop had been making a case for the increase in the study of Asian languages since this was 'the Asian Century'. It was not the view of Cabinet. Now in 2014, if my memory serves me correctly, she was dismissive of the Australia Network as lacking quality, so it was no loss!

Meantime, Abbott's Minister for Communications was following the Prime Minister's direction in that 'Efficiency Study' to undermine the ABC's domestic free-to-air arm. The ABC's annual budget was to be cut by 5 %. State-based 7.30 editions were axed, Lateline pared back, (now it has gone), bureaus in Tokyo, Bangkok, New Delhi and New Zealand were scaled back, \$6 million was sliced off radio budgets and TV production in South Australia was shut down. Now the SA Sound archives are gone. [I have just heard that Ceduna cannot get SA's 891 Radio Adelaide but is connected to the ABC in Queensland.] All those cuts did not include the cancellation of the Australia Network contract.

7. September 29th 2014 – The Australia Network was replaced by Australia Plus. Given that Abbott had insisted that his government was for 'Trade not Aid', one would have thought that an intelligent government would have recognised, as Australia's Radio Australia demonstrated before Howard set out to destroy it, that cultural awareness and respect for one's neighbours increased the possibilities of trade.

Set up in 2014, in its offerings to 40 countries that can buy its content, **Australia Plus** appears to have been offering neighbours from India to Japan to the South Pacific, the following: 'Home and Away', 'Offspring', 'Packed to the Rafters', 'The Dr Blake Mysteries', 'The Time of Our Lives', 'Bondi Vet', 'One Plus One', 'Big Break', 'Poh's Kitchen', 'Food Safari', 'Rage', 'Gruen Planet', 'Play School', 'Blue Water', and a series of four English language programs – Study English, Living English, English Bites and the Business of English. – Focus on trade. No focus on culture – music, visual arts, even the Oz Asian festivals.

Young people might like 'Home and Away'. With the exception of 'Poh's Kitchen' there is nothing that says, on this digital and on-line approach by **Australia Plus** except for 'Play School', that it is making an effort to speak to the multicultural nature of 21st century Australia. We have reinforced the perception that Australia is basically Anglo-Celtic when so many immigrants have not been Anglo-Celtic since the end of the White Australia Policy in the 1970s.

Facing facts,

In **1997** the stage had been set for this inadequate, ignorant, senseless approach to our international audiences in that Howard/Costello budget of 1997 – 1998 with its insistence on focusing on the commercial in its approach the Australia's Asia/Pacific region.

There were no signs of collaboration with those countries that pay for our digital signals. One thing it told us, with the withdrawal of the Seven Network, was that the profit-driven thoroughly commercial market-driven broadcasting approach by the Australian Coalition government did not work.

In 2005, in her research paper at the Radio in the World Conference in Melbourne, Julie Posetti pointed to the *deliberate suppression of independent analysis* by the Howard government and, we can say, by the Abbott and Turnbull governments since then.

From 1997 the Coalition governments have made every effort, overt and covert, to undermine the effectiveness of the ABC as a member of the 4th Estate that needs to be seen to be editorially independent at home and abroad.

Placing the ABC's international arm under the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade had limited its editorial independence.

In 2017 the ABC's short wave connections were shut down. The Internet is not a substitute.

This year, on July 1st 2018, Australia Plus has become ABC Australia as if another name change and re-badging will make it more recognisable to its digital signal recipients.

Conclusion.

I see no sign that the contents of **ABC Australia** have been expanded to be more inclusive, showing the best of Australia, the successes of its First Nations, its advances in sciences, its variations in music and dance, its recognition of our multi-cultural population, the lives in regional areas as well as urban ones. Ninety nine percent of that content remains Anglo-Celtic.

In 1989 Ross Garnaut was telling Australia that we needed to be teaching Mandarin, Hindi, Japanese and Indonesian. In SA, from the 1970s into the 1980s except for Hindi, we were. We lost a decade in Asian Languages learning after NALSAS was defunded

1. Do we want to go further down this spiralling downward path chosen by the Coalition in its approach to the ABC's international role since 1997? It has undermined the quality in the work of Australia's national public broadcaster.

2. The ABC, digitally and in every way, has not been able to share with the countries of the region the best of who we are.

3. The constant cuts, plus the resentment of independent analysis, have forced retrenchments to staff, making Australia lose the expertise of so many in the last 21 years from the ABC.

4. In 2018, the latest 'efficiency review' which is *following* the current freezing to funding to the ABC is yet a further example of their injurious approach to our public national broadcaster, currently free from the biases imposed by whatever commercial pressure is imposed by the demands of advertisers.

5. Please recognise the harm that has been done to our national reputation. Simon Winchester says "The Pacific is the Ocean of the Future". Add in the connections with the Indian Ocean and, if we do not want to be irrelevant, this review will show the necessity to restore to the ABC the funding and editorial independence to bring to the region a more representative picture of who we are.

6. *That requires us to maintain the integrity of our free-to-air domestic arm of our national ABC. It also requires the reviewers to protect both arms of the ABC from the adherents who want to fulfil the goal of the Institute for Public Affairs to privatise the ABC. And those adherents exist both within and outside of our Federal parliament.*

Erica Jolly

August 1st 2018

