



SBS submission to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review August 2018

Key Points

- The Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (**SBS**) is Australia's multilingual and multicultural public broadcaster.
- SBS has been a continuous leader in adapting to the evolving media consumption preferences of Australian audiences in the delivery of content, and utilising the latest technology advancements to create a deeper audience experience.
- SBS strongly supports the further development of broadband and high speed internet technologies in regional areas in order to be able to provide a full suite of services to these audiences, including content currently only available online.
- The SBS Charter requires that SBS' contribute to meeting the communications needs of Australia's multicultural society, including ethnic, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and increase awareness of the contribution of a diversity of cultures to the continuing development of Australian society'.
- The issues raised in SBS's submission reflects SBS's position as outlined in further detail in previous submissions including:
 - the Review of Viewer Access Satellite Television (**VAST**) – emphasising that SBS is committed, as per our Charter, to providing services to all Australians, and VAST is key to achieving this. Audiences in rural and regional areas should have equivalent access to public service broadcasting.¹,

¹ Available at <https://www.communications.gov.au/sites/g/files/net301/f/submissions/sbs.pdf>

- the Inquiry into the rollout of the NBN – noting that it is imperative that any policy settings maximise the community’s ability to access SBS services easily, and at no charge,² and
 - the Closing the Gap Refresh – underlining that digital accessibility and inclusion, including media representation, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a key factor for health, education and employment outcomes³.
- It is also well recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led media informs and educates non-Indigenous Australians about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- Screen content for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people contributes to early childhood development and a positive sense of identity.
- There is disparity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians in terms of access to information and communications technology for the purposes of education and connection to society.
- SBS supports the principle that media and streaming services be equally available to all Australians, particularly services provided by public broadcasters.

² Available at <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=3269cf8f-db1f-4199-803a-f4a8114b5690&subId=510121>

³ Available at <https://closingthegaprefresh.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/submissions/sbsnitv.pdf>

Introduction

SBS appreciates the opportunity to submit to the Regional Telecommunications Review 2018 (the **Review**), in response to the Regional Telecommunications Review 2018 – Issues Paper (the **Issues Paper**).

As Australia’s multilingual and multicultural public broadcaster, SBS is more critical than ever in building understanding and cohesion in our society.

In a world where audience choice continues to expand, SBS continues to make a vital difference to the Australian cultural and media landscape. The network’s unique position allows it to develop and present compelling, distinctive and thought-provoking content that no other Australian media organisation provides.

Some of SBS’s content is targeted to the needs of particular groups or communities, whether by language or subject matter. Other content has broader appeal, promoting SBS’s stories of our multicultural society to as many Australians as possible. All SBS activities are undertaken in pursuit of our Charter.

SBS reaches almost 100 per cent of the population through its six free-to-air TV channels (SBS, SBS HD, SBS VICELAND, SBS VICELAND HD, Food Network and National Indigenous Television (**NITV**)) and eight radio stations (SBS Radio 1, 2 3, SBS Arabic24, SBS PopDesi, SBS Chill and SBS PopAsia). Engagement is being significantly extended through SBS’s digital services, including SBS On Demand and portals which make online audio programming and information available in nearly 70 languages other than English.

SBS has made continued investments in exclusive and distinctive content, both from Australia and overseas. This content is distributed across both television and digital platforms. The On Demand platform provides more than 6,000 hours of programming across more than 10 distribution platforms with 76% of the international dramas in languages other than English.

SBS radio services provide informative and valued news and information in almost 70 languages, and are delivered on both traditional linear broadcast and via online streaming and podcasting.

Media consumption in regional Australia

Consultation questions

- *What data-intensive activities are occurring in regional, rural and remote Australia?*
- *What digital technologies are needed for these?*

The Australian film and television industry is experiencing a period of significant change. Local and international subscription video on demand and other free-to-air (**FTA**) television catch-up services are disrupting traditional television viewer behaviour and gaining a foothold with audiences.

SBS monitors viewing figures from regional areas through RegTAM. SBS television reaches just under four million people per month in regional areas and holds over 5% of the FTA audience share in regional areas.⁴⁵

Technologies in regional Australia

The *ACMA Communications report 2016–17* highlighted changes in delivery of audio and video content, including viewing behaviours for television, subscription and online content. Although terrestrially-transmitted television remains a dominant form of viewing, the report observed a steady decline in FTA viewing over the last six years, accompanied by an increase in availability and consumer enthusiasm for subscription video on demand services, as well as a significant increase in streaming television.⁶

SBS has been a continuous leader in adapting to the evolving media consumption preferences of Australian audiences in the delivery of content, and utilising the latest technology advancements to create a deeper audience experience. SBS On Demand, as well as SBS's digital audio streaming services and podcasts, continue to experience strong growth year-on-year, engaging more audiences than ever before.

Regarding the uptake of digital media services in regional areas, SBS recently submitted to the Review of the Viewer Access Satellite Television service. In that submission, SBS noted:

... while broadband technologies are increasingly reaching greater population numbers, they are not yet achieving the reach and capacity which terrestrial and VAST services already have – near-universal access.

Whilst internet-enabled delivery technologies and platforms are developing, there are capacity issues which are likely to lead to a significant time lag before they reach the same proportion of the population at requisite speeds, particularly in remote areas. However, despite the growth in online content delivery mechanisms, broadcast (both terrestrial and satellite) remains the most robust and reliable one-to-many content delivery mechanism, particularly when audience volumes are very high (eg. significant news or sporting events).

SBS strongly supports the further development of broadband and high speed internet technologies in regional areas in order to be able to provide a full suite of services to these audiences, including content currently only available online such as interactive documentaries, some live sports coverage, and some SBS On Demand content (across drama, documentary and entertainment genres).

SBS provides a broad range of programs and services to support migrant settlement in Australia, including through its many in-language radio programs, and its practical in-language Settlement Guides. In late 2017, SBS introduced seven new language programs following the Radio Services Review. These services were for high-needs languages groups, with significant recent migration to Australia. Our

⁴ RegionalTAM, Combined Agg, Mkts (includes WA), 01/01/2017 – 31/12/2017, all day (2am- 2am), total individuals, SBS network, based on Consolidated 28 day data up to and including the 12/12/2017, and Consolidated 7 data from 13/12/2017 – 31/12/2017. Based on 5mins consecutive cumulative monthly reach and 5 station FTA Share.

⁵ Note that ratings are not available for the Northern Territory through OzTAM or RegTAM.

⁶ *ACMA Communications report 2016–17*, p4, <https://www.acma.gov.au/-/media/Research-and-Analysis/Report/pdf/Communications-report-2016-17-pdf.pdf?la=en>

audiences increasingly expect to consume our content via digital platforms, and these new language programs were introduced as digital, podcast-only services.⁷

It is critical that migrants in regional Australia are also able to access SBS's digital radio services. For example, in Mackay, Queensland, over 20% of the population was born overseas.⁸ Most of these people were born in the Philippines, and there has been a 10.4% increase in migration from the Philippines to Mackay since 2011.⁹ The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland provided a submission to the Inquiry into the rollout of the NBN in rural and regional areas (the **NBN Inquiry**), and noted that a survey of rating of current internet service found that in Mackay, over 30% of respondents rated their internet service as 'poor' or 'extremely poor'.¹⁰ Analogue radio broadcasts to regional areas also have limitations - the National Radio Network does not offer the full suite of SBS analogue radio services.

SBS's 2017 submission to the NBN inquiry outlined the benefits of ensuring access to SBS content, including that SBS is a digitally-led organisation, with a commitment to new platforms and technologies, and that audiences will continue to realise the social benefits of deeper engagement with content via digital services. As such, SBS's recommended that '...it is appropriate that tax payers, who have funded SBS's content and services, as well as the rollout of the NBN, are supported to gain the social benefits delivered by both into the future...SBS linear broadcast and online services such as SBS On demand should be carried at no charge by NBN service providers on an unmetered basis'.¹¹

SBS continues to support free access for audiences to its digital services.

News and current affairs in regional Australia

One of the core services that SBS provides is national and international news and current affairs. SBS journalists regularly travel to regional areas in Australia to report from these communities. SBS also has strong links with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community broadcasting in remote areas through NITV.

For example, in 2017 NITV News and Current Affairs produced over 106 stories from remote and regional locations where a journalist was physically in the regional location to produce the story. News and current affairs program, *The Point*, produced the majority (57%) of its feature stories in regional areas demonstrating NITV's ongoing commitment to covering stories from remote and regional communities, not covered by other broadcasters. NITV also provides live broadcasts from regional locations and in 2017 broadcast from Arnhem Land (NT), Uluru (NT), Mer Island (QLD), Cairns (QLD), Brewarrina (NSW).

SBS also addresses issues from regional and remote communities through its portfolio of current affairs programming. This includes:

⁷ The new language services are: Telegu, Karen, Hakha Chin, Tibetan, Rohingya, Mongolian and Kirundi.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016

http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SED30048

⁹ SBS Census Explorer <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/census-explorer>

¹⁰ Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland, Submission to the Inquiry into the rollout of the NBN in rural and regional areas, March 2018, page 2 file:///D:/Data/natashae/Downloads/sub_03.pdf

¹¹ SBS submission, page 8-9, available at <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=3269cf8f-db1f-4199-803a-f4a8114b5690&subId=510121>

- *Small Business Secrets* – a magazine style program which shines a light on the small business owners and innovators, many from migrant and refugee backgrounds, playing a vital role in Australia's economic growth.
- *Insight* – Australia's leading forum for debate and powerful first person stories. Each week, host Jenny Brockie guides a lively debate on a single topic.
- *The Point* – investigating cultural, political and social issues with a distinctive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander approach.
- *Where Are You Really From?* – exploring the stories of migrants in regional communities.

SBS services in Indigenous communities

Consultation question

- *Are there practical examples of how communications services can improve the well-being of people in remote Indigenous communities?*

NITV is a national FTA channel on SBS made by, for and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NITV aims to inform, educate and entertain its Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences. Stories, culture, languages, aspirations and development are key components of its content. NITV is the home of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander¹² storytelling, and has been proudly part of SBS since 2012.¹³

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led media informs and educates non-Indigenous Australians about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Screen content for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people contributes to early childhood development and a positive sense of identity.

Through SBS Learn¹⁴, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content is extended to classrooms, providing free educational tools for teachers and students, many of which are available online, including interactive resources. For example, *My Grandmother's Lingo* was an interactive animation highlighting the plight of Indigenous languages. It was Australia's most awarded online documentary to date, and was supported by educational resources, including teacher notes and a *Meet the Animator* interview.

Children's viewing

The Australian Communications and Media Authority's (ACMA) 2017 *Children's television viewing and multi-screen behaviour* report found that children under the

¹² Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is used as the preferred term in this report other than where a title or quote is retained, and when referencing Indigenous peoples in a global context.

¹³ NITV first operated in 2007 as a private company; then, in 2012 merged with SBS.

¹⁴ <https://www.sbs.com.au/learn>

age of 14 are using multiple platforms to watch children's programs, and nearly all children are using multiple devices.¹⁵

A report in 2018 by Carlson and Frazer, *Social Media Mob: Being Indigenous Online*, provides evidence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as early adopters of social media, and insight into identity, kinship ties, social connection and the experience of racism in modern media.¹⁶

The continued accessibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to quality Australian content is of great importance, and should be considered with support for the creation of this content, together with environments that promote culturally safe consumption, such as NITV. In 2017, for example, NITV broadcast, and made available online, *Little J & Big Cuz*, aimed at school transition for pre-schoolers. Further details of this series and the tangible benefits to Indigenous children are available in **Appendix A**.

Digital access in Indigenous communities

The Issues Paper notes that '[t]here are a number of barriers to internet access in remote [Indigenous] communities including language barriers, affordability and awareness of what is available.'¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data has been used longitudinally by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) to outline the digital divide that exists between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.¹⁸ The analysis identified issues with retention of internet access, along with barriers to access in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ICT. Remoteness, income, employment, education and demography are key factors impacting digital accessibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Research by Radoll and Hunter provides insight into the demography and links to social determinants of health. The *Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2017* also supports that the gap between low and high income households relating to digital inclusion is widening.¹⁹ South Australia's *Health in All Policies, Digital Technologies Health Lens project*²⁰, whilst prepared some years ago, also provides evidence-based recommendations for applying a health lens when looking at digital access and inclusion in low socioeconomic groups.

Conclusion

¹⁵ Australian Communications and Media Authority (2017), *Children's television viewing and multi-screen behaviour* <https://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/kids-tv-viewing-and-multi-screen-behaviour>

¹⁶ Carlson, B. & Frazer, R. (2018). *Social Media Mob: Being Indigenous Online*, Macquarie University, Sydney <https://researchers.mq.edu.au/en/publications/social-media-mob-being-indigenous-online>

¹⁷ Issues Paper, p6

¹⁸ Radoll, P & Hunter, B, *Dynamics of the Digital Divide*, CAEPR Working Paper 120/2017, ANU: <http://caepr.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/dynamics-digital-divide>

¹⁹ Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Report: Measuring Australia's digital divide: the Australian digital inclusion index 2017*, <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/2017/08/10/report-measuring-australias-digital-divide-australian-digital-inclusion-index-2017>

²⁰ South Australian Government, *Health in All Policies, Digital Technology, Health Analysis Lens Project, 2008*, South Australian Government, *Health in All Policies, Digital Technology, Health Analysis Lens Project, 2008*, <http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/health+reform/health+in+all+policies/health+lens+analysis+projects/digital+technology+health+analysis+lens+project>

Digital accessibility and inclusion should be recognised as a key factor for health, education and employment outcomes. , The accessibility of key government funded public content services, such as the public broadcasters, is vital to ensuring that key services are provided to audiences in regional and rural Australia, including Indigenous communities.

Appendix A – Case Study – *Little J & Big Cuz*

Case Study

In 2017, NITV presented *Little J & Big Cuz*, a 13 part contemporary children's animation series aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the K–2 school range (aged 4–6 years). The series was translated into Djambarrpuyngu, Pitjantjatjara, Arrernte, Walmajarri, Yawuru and Palawa kani. The series focuses on the lives of five year old Little J, and nine year old Big Cuz, who are a couple of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian kids living with their Nanna and Old Dog. The series synopsis notes that:

Little J and Big Cuz are busy with the ups and downs of playground and classroom. There's always something surprising going on whether it's at school, in the backyard...or beyond. The gaps in Nanna's ramshackle fence lead to Saltwater, Desert and Freshwater Country. With the help of Nanna and their teacher Ms Chen, Little J and Big Cuz are finding out all about culture, community and country.

The series offers a proud and positive view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia, and the opportunities for learning within it, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as they prepare for school.

Little J & Big Cuz was developed in partnership with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), the Secretariat for Aboriginal and Islander Childcare (SNAICC) and Ned Lander Media. Its focus is on school transition with a program of outreach, games, asset development and learning resources for educators made freely available nationally on the series website. Accompanying each episode of *Little J and Big Cuz* is a range of teaching and learning resources founded in the Early Years Learning Frameworks and the National Curriculum. These learning documents have been created as a spring-board for engaging with and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and pedagogies in Early Years education environments (K–2). The intention is to provide a starting point for educators as they:

- Engage with local and broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to learn from and with their communities, build authentic relationships and grow a language that shares and respects the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges and cultures.
- Consider the transitions that take place in children's lives every day and the role of educators to work with children and families to support these transitional moments. These moments of transition can be really big moments, such as the transition from early childhood into primary school, or other moments such as moving from one space into another, or one learning experience to another.
- Consider the spaces in their indoor and outdoor environments and the possibilities of the key ideas of Indigenous Knowledges and culture and how these can build on current understandings and create new learning opportunities for all children