

■ submission to Department of Foreign Affairs and Department of Communication and the Arts Review of Australian Broadcasting in the Asia Pacific

As ■ of ■ I thank the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Communication and the Arts for the opportunity to contribute to the Review of Australian Broadcasting in the Asia Pacific and welcome consideration of these invaluable services.

The ■ is ■ responsible for assisting Pacific nations to manage ■ members are Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Australia is a valued member of the ■ making a substantial contribution to all its programs and a total financial contribution of just over AUD 5.8 million in 2017.

■ in Pacific is a vital economic resource for ■ members. It also makes a significant contribution to food security in the region and is a vital protein source for the Pacific and the world. In 2015 Pacific Forum leaders endorsed ■ prioritising economic returns from ■. Revenues from ■ now account for 50% and higher of many island country revenues.

Management of ■ is complex requiring both national and regional policy development and international negotiations with extra-regional ■ powers, including many in Asia. The ■ also seeks to encourage island-based Pacific ■ businesses and foreign investment. It manages the ■ Centre in Honiara which co-ordinates multi-country monitoring, surveillance and control operations (MCS) with the assistance of the defence forces of Australia, New Zealand, France and the United States. In addition, eye-witness sightings by citizens in Pacific nations can contribute to ■ enforcement activities, particularly in the case of the recent illegal ■.

Public awareness and understanding of the wide variety of ■ issues and public debate on initiatives, challenges and opportunities for communities, businesses and governments is essential to successful ■ management. Jobs in ■, environmental management, success at international negotiations and enforcement of national and international ■ governance regimes are vital to the economic future of ■ members and their people.

In the past the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has consistently reported these globally-significant ■ issues to audiences in Australia, the Pacific and Asia (and, through its online news service, to the world). However, in 2014 the ABC cut staff and many services to Asia and parts of the Pacific. In January 2017 the ABC ended shortwave broadcasts. We have seen a commensurate reduction in regional coverage of key ■ issues, to the strategic disadvantage of the region.

Prior to these changes the ABC was the only media outlet reaching audiences in all ■ member states, including in rural areas. The reach and audience of the ABC in the Asia Pacific on Pacific ■ issues and other important regional economic, political and environmental issues was unparalleled. While Radio New Zealand continues to make a significant contribution to regional services these are diminished without its partner organisation across the Tasman to share the load.

The ABC had an enviable mix of shortwave and FM radio, television and online services. The closure of FM transmitters in Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and other Pacific nations was a blow to the region. The end of shortwave broadcasts left audiences on many outer islands without access to important information they need to make decisions about [REDACTED] businesses and to play their role as citizens in [REDACTED] debate. The reduction of the number of ABC journalists with deep knowledge of the Pacific and the ending of specialist television news for the Pacific and Asia has made ABC services less relevant and no doubt reduced their reach.

On a more positive note, the [REDACTED] is pleased that the Australian government and the ABC has continued to support the development of [REDACTED] reporting skills among senior Pacific journalists through the [REDACTED]/Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) at the Western and Central Pacific [REDACTED] Commission (where [REDACTED] and coastal nations come together to set rules for the Western Pacific [REDACTED]). This program, in its fifth year in 2018, has added to the ABC's reach and reputation by contributing to a small but formidable cadre of Pacific journalists capable of high-level reporting of [REDACTED], including as freelancers for the ABC. Maintaining skills and connections of journalists in such a technical area is not easy. However, this cadre of regional reporters does not have the same type of consistent and distant reach, or the widely accepted stature, that Radio Australia provided.

Options for the future of Australian Broadcasting in the Pacific and Asia

Asia Pacific broadcasting has the potential to be retained as a unique asset for Australia in the region. The [REDACTED] urges the current Review to recommend a significant upgrade to ABC services with a radio, television and digital offering for the Pacific and Asia.

The ABC is familiar and trusted institution in the region. As a public broadcaster focussed on the public interest it is well placed to quickly regain its former leading role in providing news and debate on [REDACTED] and many other issues.

In the Pacific radio is still the most important medium for information and public discussion. The [REDACTED] urges the Review to recommend re-instating ABC FM stations with full coverage in all Pacific capitals and to consider extending ABC FM services to other towns and key population centres. Shortwave, including Digital Radio, should be considered for rural audiences. Remote areas within small island members of the [REDACTED] rely heavily on shortwave radio services including or emergency service information during floods, tsunamis and cyclones.

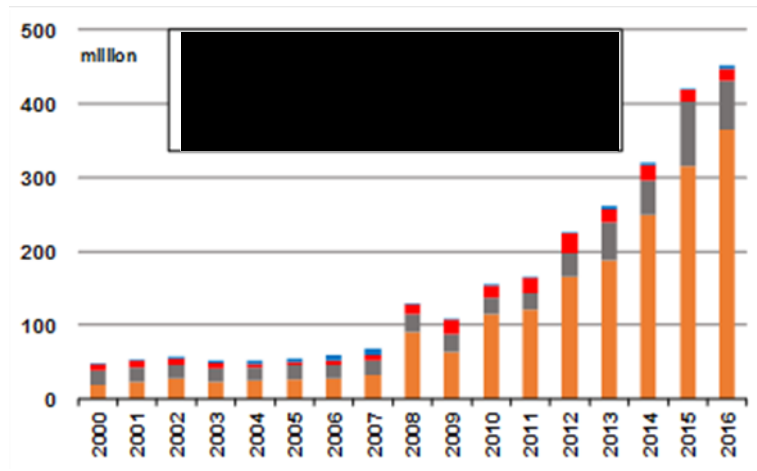
The re-instatement of television news and current affairs made for a Pacific audience would be widely welcomed by all in the Pacific region and help to balance efforts by other extra-regional entities. The ABC could consider partnerships for rebroadcast by media companies in [REDACTED] member states as well as its own stand-alone service.

Live-streaming, catch-up, online and mobile services are of increasing importance in the Pacific and should be a growing part of the mix of ABC services to this region. In Asia's more saturated market online and digital news is likely to be a bigger part of the mix.

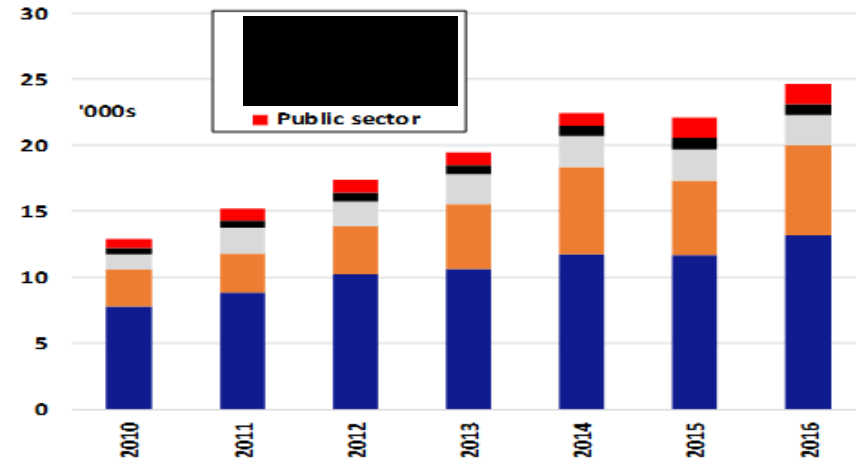
As the lead regional [REDACTED] organisation, [REDACTED] recognises the importance of information to our 17-member countries in a media-poor region. It is hoped the above options will include a greater role for Pacific journalists and media companies skilled in [REDACTED] issues. It is of utmost importance that due consideration is given to the revamping of the ABC presence in both Asia and the Pacific. [REDACTED] believes this would make a valuable contribution for our member states and the [REDACTED] sector.

Economic Indicators

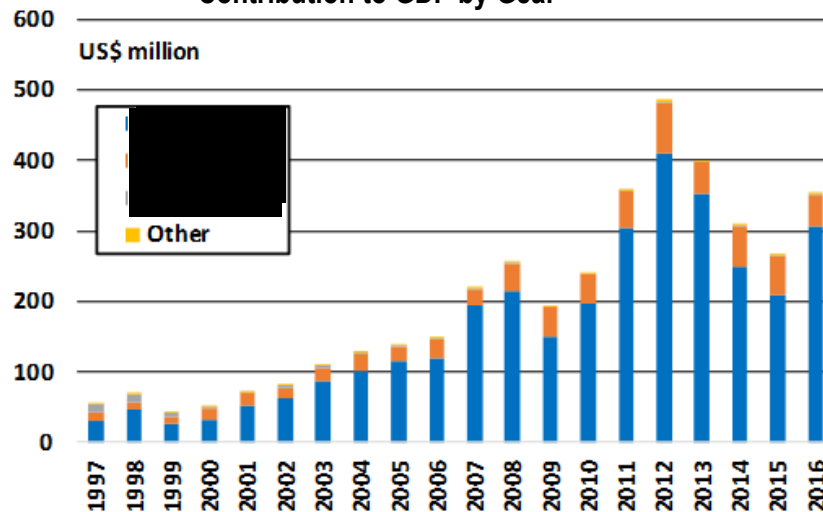
Access Fees



Employment by Sector



Contribution to GDP by Gear



Import by Major Markets

