



## **The Australian media landscape in 2020 - who can we trust?**

The ABC is held in a position of trust which has been the envy of corporations, politicians and even churches. The credibility of the ABC, Australia's only non-commercial public broadcaster, is one important reason that the ABC must retain its place in the changing media landscape.

### **Why *Public Broadcasting*?**

Only a public broadcaster can put the pursuit of truth ahead of the commercial imperative to sell a product. Only a public broadcaster can provide for community needs or values which are not designed to make a profit. It is public broadcasting which serves the public's right to know and its capacity to participate in democratic debate.

'Neither commercial nor State-controlled, public broadcasting's only *raison d'être* is public service. It is the public's broadcasting organization; it speaks to everyone as a citizen. Public broadcasters encourage access to and participation in public life. They develop knowledge, broaden horizons and enable people to better understand themselves by better understanding the world and others.' (UNESCO and World Radio and Television Council)

### **Public broadcasting in a digital age**

In a digital world with a bewildering range of choice, available on many platforms, variety no longer justifies public broadcasting. Distinctiveness, however, does.

Distinctiveness - in particular, local Australian content - will ensure a place for the ABC in the world of ever-expanding technological change. It will ensure sufficient market share to justify public expenditure and to influence other non-public broadcasters.

### **What are the essential qualities for an effective public broadcaster?**

- **Distinctiveness** in creating high quality, culturally diverse, programming
- **Market share** - to justify public expenditure and to exert pressure on other broadcasters
- **Independence**, from political and commercial influences
- **Accountability** to the public ultimately, via parliament, but also through accessible complaints procedures,

## **Friends of the ABC urge:**

- **An ABC with editorial independence from government** that can be protected by a transparent, merit-based system of Board appointments, and by funding which is not "one-off" but recurrent, and on a triennial basis

- **An ABC uncompromised by commercial influence**

The ABC Act should be amended to make it clear that advertising is prohibited on ABC material transmitted via the Internet, as well as on radio and television.

The ABC's current commercial activities must not influence the integrity of the ABC's programming.

- **An ABC which is fearless, innovative and comprehensive**

The ABC should continue to be a pace-setter in community discussion. It should be innovative in programming and in embracing technological change.

- **An adequately and consistently funded ABC**

The ABC cannot possibly maintain its reputation for integrity and innovation unless it is adequately and consistently funded by government.

We propose four benchmarks of adequate and consistent funding:

- a. Comparison with public service broadcasters in other developed countries
- b. Freedom for the ABC to determine its own spending priorities
- c. Public opinion.
- d. Comparison with commercial broadcasters in Australia.

## **Friends of the ABC (ACT & Region)**

[www.fabcact.org](http://www.fabcact.org)

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