



Submission to Review of the ABC and SBS

The Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) is a membership-based association that serves as a coordinating forum for organisations and people in research, education, the arts and the broader Australia economy and society. CHASS promotes the contribution of the humanities arts and social sciences to a prosperous, innovative, creative and inclusive Australia. A list of the 103 member organisations is attached to this letter.

CHASS is grateful for the opportunity to contribute its ideas to this important review. We would like to address four issues:

1. The urgent need to reform the ABC Charter and to provide resources to implement it: The Charter should reflect the diffuse and rapidly changing media landscape of new distribution and communication platforms while – and The Government should provide sufficient resources to enable broadcasters to change in response.
2. Creating a risk and innovation fund to stimulate innovative development of Australian programming; communication of information and knowledge; and adoption of new technology.
3. Recognition of the role for the ABC and SBS in knowledge transfer. The public broadcasters should act as a connecting bridge between research and education organisations and the broader community so as to stimulate productivity growth through innovation.
4. Renewal of the public broadcasting commitment to the creative arts so that they play a leadership role in giving audiences access to Australian cultural work of a high standard.

A number of CHASS member organisations will also contribute to the ABC and SBS Review across a range of issues. This reflects the strong relationship of organisations working in the humanities arts and social sciences with the public broadcasters and their audiences and consumers.

*Helen O'Neil,
Executive Director
12 December 2008*

1. Need to reform the ABC Charter to reflect the diffuse and rapidly changing media landscape of new distribution and communication platforms.

The current ABC Charter was established in 1983 when mass media dominated information and entertainment access in Australia. The ABC was probably the most ubiquitous news, cultural and entertainment media with its multiple radio networks and commitment to regional and small state access to national programming. The national public broadcasters created complementary and additional programming in a media landscape in which the ABC was one of four national television networks and the SBS was a largely an urban based second national broadcaster. Concepts of comprehensive broadcasting and complementary programming were crucial in defining the role of the broadcasters.

In 2008 and for next several decades the public broadcasting organisations are operating in a rapidly changing multi platform and multi channel environment. Particularly as the commercial sector experiments with new business models, the ABC and SBS must be focused on providing a wide range of services to Australian audiences and consumers of information and entertainment. They should play a strengthened role as continuing forums for public debate and enrichment while other media and entertainment sources are going through upheaval.

The ABC's Charter also needs to reflect the ABC's historic role of acting as a leader in creating new art forms and news formats based on new technology and distribution methods. It did this with radio in the 1930s, television in the 1950s and 1970s and by leading adaptation of content for Internet based access in the 1990s and 2000s as resources allowed. Australia needs its leadership in the next phase of developing its public platforms for communication, debate and cultural access. SBS with its focus on diversity and multicultural communication also has uniquely useful expertise in reaching more diffuse and diverse audiences in an Australian society where mass media are under challenge.

The next move - to digital broadcasting and more interactive services on-line - will also need innovative and efficient management of new ways in informing and entertaining the Australian community, and in developing the creative work to reflect and stimulate our cultural and artistic life. Funding for change is necessary.

CHASS recommends:

- Updating the first section of the charter to reflect the new digital environment and replacing the references to national, commercial and public broadcasters, but retaining the key roles of the ABC in informing and entertaining, in encouraging and promoting the performing arts, and in providing educational programs.
- That the Review works with the broadcasters to identify clear budgets for the ABC and SBS to move into the digital future so that they are sufficiently resourced in the next triennial funding agreements for implementation of strategic plans based on new Charters.

2. Creating a risk and innovation fund to stimulate development of Australian programming; communication of information and knowledge; and adoption of new technology

As both the public broadcasters move into the digital future they will need to partner and interact with a variety of creative organisations and individuals.

The broadcasters are moving into highly risky commissioning and co-production venture as they explore new programming genres, and adapt creative production and writing and directing skills for new platforms, Some ventures will be learning exercises for producers, some will connect successfully with audiences and the Australian community; some will not.

Development cannot be sustained without a source of funding which recognizes the exploratory and innovative nature of these collaborations. By way of example, ABC2 has been working with Screen Australia and several of the major performing arts organisations to develop live broadcasts of music theatre, opera and ballet using digital production equipment and distribution. Funding has also come from the Australia Council and the arts organisations' internal working funds. There has been specific commitment to developing directing and staging skills using digital equipment. However the non-profit sector simply does not have the funds and there are insufficient links with higher education and training institutions that are preparing the digitally skilled workforce of future years.

CHASS believes a fund for risky and innovative Australian content can help broker partnerships between the ABC and producers and distributors in both commercial and non-profit sectors.

The aim would be to develop producing strength and innovation across Australian industry, not just within the ABC and SBS.

The fund (which should have strong links with other programs linking research and innovation within the Department of Innovation Industry science and Research) should be independent of the broadcasters, but work closely with them.

CHASS recommends:

- That the Australian Government provides specific production investment for innovative programming and skills development. This will enable partnership between the broadcasters and education and research institutions and also allow collaboration with arts and information organisations from the private and non-profit sector.

3. Role for the ABC and SBS in knowledge transfer in stimulating productivity growth and public debate on building a 21st century economy

The recent review of the National Innovation System (Venturous Australia) has identified the enormous potential for productivity growth through better connection between the expertise and knowledge in Australian research and training institutions with commercial and non-profit industry and service providers. CHASS sees the public broadcasters as connecting bridges between experts and ideas developers and the broader community.

This knowledge transfer role is now greatly assisted as costs of multi channelling decrease, and on-line access to programming material and interactive debate becomes common. Development of this across broadcasting, subscription and on-line platforms will be a major contributor by the broadcasters to building an innovative and creative Australia for the 21st Century economy.

The ABC has historically worked closely with researchers and universities to give access to Australian knowledge to the Australian community. The development of the rural programs is an outstanding historic example, and the award winning science programs are another example. It is time for a new commitment as Australia seeks to boost productivity growth.

CHASS notes that the ABC's education role has not been developed fully in recent years of funding strain. At times, the ABC played an active part in creating and disseminating educational programs and providing classroom resources for schools across the country, as envisaged in the Charter. With the development of on-line access, the ABC should consider working with educators in developing materials based on the incoming national curriculum for dissemination.

CHASS recommends:

- That the Review notes the ABC's continuing role in knowledge transfer in Australia and confirms its role in connecting researchers and universities with Australian audiences and knowledge users.
- The Review confirm the need for the ABC to provide programs of an educational nature and work to identify specific funding for new schools-based materials based on digital platforms and channels.

4. Renewal of the public broadcasting commitment to the creative arts

In a country as large and diverse as Australia producing great work and performance is only the start of the task for arts producers and artists. Subsidy allows Australian audiences access to the extraordinary talent and brilliance of Australian artists across the art forms. From Unearthed on Triple J to the television drama departments, children's programming and the transmission of live performance across multiple platforms, the public broadcasters play a significant role in connecting audiences with the best of Australian work.

Although the next few years will see development of a multiplicity of niche audiences for some works and continuing regulation of commercial broadcasters and subscription broadcasting will ensure some Australian creative content, it is only the public broadcasters who will have both a continuing commitment to free access to Australian creativity and the management skills to commission and develop of new Australian programming.

Now that the State symphony orchestras have been divested from the ABC, it is crucial for the future health of music in Australia that the Corporation make a commitment to continuing and enhancing its role in bringing live Australian music to Australian audiences of all ages and demographics, both through broadcasts of the orchestras and through other means."

CHASS recommends:

- That the ABC Charter retains its commitment to encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia.
- That the ABC encourages and promotes the creative arts through emerging communication tools.

Appendix 1: Members of the Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

Level 1 Members

- * Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia
- * Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities
- * Australian Academy of the Humanities
- * Australian National University
- * Chancellery, RMIT University
- * Deakin University
- * Macquarie University
- * University of Melbourne

Level 2 Members

- * Faculty of Education and the Arts, University of Newcastle
- * Griffith University
- * Murdoch University
- * National Library of Australia
- * National Tertiary Education Union
- * Queensland University of Technology
- * University of Western Australia

Level 3 Members

- * Australian Catholic University
- * Australian Council of Deans of Education
- * Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools
- * Design and Social Context, RMIT University
- * Faculty of Arts, Monash University
- * Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology Sydney
- * Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales
- * Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Education, Central Queensland University
- * Faculty of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong
- * Faculty of Design, Swinburne University of Technology
- * Faculty of Humanities & social Sciences, La Trobe University
- * Institute of Advanced Study for Humanity (IASH), University of Newcastle
- * James Cook University
- * School of Social Sciences, University of Western Sydney
- * University of Canberra
- * Victoria University
- * Victorian College of Arts

Level 4 Members

- * Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies
- * Australasian Society for Classical Studies
- * Australian and New Zealand Communication Association
- * Australian Association for Research in Education
- * Australian Business Deans Council
- * Australian Library and Information Association
- * Australian Major Performing Arts Group
- * Australian Society of Archivists
- * Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney
- * Centre for Public Culture and Ideas, Griffith University
- * Collections Council of Australia Ltd
- * Cooperative Research Centres Association Inc.
- * Council of Australasian Museum Directors
- * Division of Humanities, Curtin University of Technology
- * Faculty of Art and Design, Monash University

- * Faculty of Arts, Charles Sturt University
- * Faculty of Arts, University of Southern Queensland
- * Faculty of Education and Arts, Research and Higher Degrees, Edith Cowan University
- * Helpmann Academy
- * Icarus Industrial Design, Design Institute of Australia
- * Institute of Australian Geographers
- * Museums Australia
- * National Council of Tertiary Music Schools
- * National Gallery of Australia
- * National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries, University of Auckland
- * National Museum of Australia
- * Research School of Humanities, Australian National University
- * School of Communications and Contemporary Arts, Edith Cowan University
- * Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney
- * The Australian Sociological Association, Institute for Social Research
- * Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Edith Cowan University

Level 5 Members

- * Art Education Australia
- * Australasian Association of Philosophy
- * Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association
- * Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies
- * Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools
- * Australian and New Zealand Society for Theological Studies
- * Australian Association for Consulting Archaeologists Inc
- * Australian Dance Council - Ausdance
- * Australian Federation of Modern Language Teacher Association
- * Australian Network for Art and Technology
- * Australian Screen Production Education and Research Association
- * Australian Society for Music Education Inc.
- * Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT University
- * Centre of Peace and Social Justice, Southern Cross University
- * Ceres Solutions
- * Council of Australian Law Deans
- * Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations
- * Craft Australia
- * Cultural Studies Association of Australasia
- * Currency House Inc.
- * Design Centre Tasmania
- * Design Research Institute, RMIT
- * Drama Australia
- * FORM Contemporary Craft and Design
- * Hecate Journal and Centre for Research on Women, Gender, Culture and Social Change
- * History Trust of South Australia
- * Independent Media Foundation Inc. in Victoria
- * Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology
- * Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators' Association
- * Manning Clark House
- * Melbourne College of Divinity
- * Music Council of Australia
- * National Institute of Dramatic Arts
- * Regional Arts Australia
- * South Australian Youth Arts Board
- * Taylor & Francis Australia
- * Tertiary Dance Council of Australia, Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts
- * UNSW Press
- * Visual Arts Department, North Melbourne Institute of TAFE
- * Wiley-Blackwell Asia-Pacific

