

**ABC submission to the  
Australian Government's review  
of Australian broadcasting  
services in the Asia-Pacific  
August 2018**



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## 1. Executive Summary

As Australia's pre-eminent public broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has a proven record in its commitment to international broadcasting. The provision of the ABC's services to the Asia-Pacific and beyond over many decades has demonstrably strengthened Australia's engagement with our international neighbours, and the Corporation is uniquely placed to continue to serve Australia's interests, recognising that:

- The Asia-Pacific region is home to diverse countries and cultures that are experiencing increasing mobility in capital, information and populations, albeit at different paces.
- There are complex and dynamic shifts in geo-politics, technological and demographics that require Australia to take new strategic approaches to engagement in the Region.
- The global media and information environment is also experiencing unprecedented change, with increasing audience transition to mobile and digital technology, and the Asia-Pacific region is outstripping global growth in social media use and mobile connectivity.
- The ABC is one of the most recognised and trusted brands in the Region due to its editorial independence from government, its longstanding presence in Asia and the Pacific and the effective partnerships it has built with local communities, political stakeholders and media organisations across the Region.
- The ABC has also been at the forefront of employing digital and mobile technologies to most effectively reach and engage with its domestic and international audiences.
- Through its international services, the ABC has the content and infrastructure to enable it to connect with a range of international audiences in English and their own languages, presenting Australian perspectives and values to the world through high-quality and distinctive programs.
- Trusted media sources can be a powerful asset in promoting Australia's interests on the international stage. With the appropriate level of commitment and resourcing, the ABC is perfectly positioned to contribute to Australia's investment in the Asia-Pacific region.

## 2. Introduction

The ABC submits this paper for consideration in response to the Australian Government review of broadcasting services in the Asia-Pacific. It should be read in conjunction with the ABC's submission to the Australian Government's *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* consultation process,<sup>1</sup> and also in consideration of the "soft power" review foreshadowed in the White Paper.<sup>2</sup>

The ABC has continuously operated international media services in Asia and the Pacific for almost 80 years and is thus able to provide unique insights borne of extensive and direct experience of producing and delivering programs and services that reflect Australia to audiences in the Region and the world.

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<sup>1</sup> ABC. "Submission on the Australian Government Foreign Policy White Paper", March 2017, <https://www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au/sites/g/files/net3551f/submission/170314-663-australian-broadcasting-corporation.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government. *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, 23 November 2017, p.107.

The review's terms of reference identify its purpose as an assessment of the reach of Australia's media in the Asia-Pacific. Naturally, this requires some focus on the current and emerging distribution platforms that deliver media into the Region. To properly assess what constitutes the effective reach of those services, it is necessary to consider the strategic objectives that they are designed to achieve, as well as the available technologies and trends in audience expectations and media consumption. Together, these factors define the most appropriate platforms for delivering Australian media services to the Asia-Pacific region.

The ABC believes there are considerable opportunities for expanding the effectiveness and influence of Australia's media in the Region. Doing so will help to counter-balance the growing influence of other countries which are investing heavily in expanding their international media capabilities. This submission outlines a number of options for doing so.

### **3. The ABC's experience in international media services**

The ABC has a long-established reputation as an international broadcaster in the Asia-Pacific region. The Corporation introduced shortwave radio transmissions to what is now Papua New Guinea (PNG), and the Pacific in the late 1930s, and formally established Radio Australia in 1945. Over the subsequent decades, the ABC incorporated programming in the major regional languages into the Radio Australia schedule. Through Radio Australia, the ABC has been able to encourage a positive view of Australia and its democratic institutions in neighbouring countries, provide a dependable and independent news service, and encourage English-language learning.

The ABC began delivering international satellite television services in 1993 in the form of Australia Television International (ATI). Following a recommendation of the Mansfield Inquiry, ATI was sold to the Seven Network in 1998. The Seven Network was unable to realise a sufficient commercial return and chose not to bid in a Government tender to maintain the service. The ABC subsequently accepted a Government offer to resume its operation, first as ABC Asia Pacific (2001–05), then as the Australia Network (2006–14), under contracts with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The international television service has been targeted at English-language learners and speakers, particularly educated regional influencers and people wanting to visit Australia for trade or study.

In the early 2000s, the ABC introduced online content to complement its broadcasting outputs. This was subsequently expanded to include mobile and social media services, and, as audience needs and expectations changed, these became service offerings in their own right. They include the ABC's Learn English Facebook community, which is larger than those operated by Voice of America (VOA) and the BBC.

Following the termination of the Australia Network contract and its associated funding in the May 2014 Budget, the Corporation exited over 80 staff and reconfigured and rebranded its international media service to create the unified Australia Plus service with a reduced number of languages.

The ABC's international remit is primarily informed by its legislative obligations as set out in the ABC Charter, and its scope and scale are defined by the availability of funding and resources. These factors are explored in more detail in the following sections. Overall, the ABC's international strategy is to marshal its available resources and utilise the most effective platforms to reach the target audience with distinctive, compelling and informative content.

### 3.1. Legislative foundation

The ABC's enabling legislation, the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth) ("ABC Act"), reflects its long-established international broadcasting role. Specifically, the ABC Charter states that one of the functions of the Corporation is:

to transmit to countries outside Australia broadcasting programs of news, current affairs, entertainment and cultural enrichment that will:

- (i) encourage awareness of Australia and an international understanding of Australian attitudes on world affairs; and
- (ii) enable Australian citizens living or travelling outside Australia to obtain information about Australian affairs and Australian attitudes on world affairs.<sup>3</sup>

A subsequent amendment to the ABC Act established that the only entities with which the Commonwealth may establish a paid contract for international broadcasting services are the ABC and prescribed companies under the ABC Act.<sup>4</sup>

The ABC recognises that, in achieving its twin purpose of reaching international audiences and Australians travelling or living overseas, the mobility of audiences, abundance of choice and proliferation of digital technologies all influence the content it offers and the distribution platforms it uses to reach these audiences.

### 3.2. Resource constraints

The ABC enjoys an excellent reputation in Asia and the Pacific as a credible, reliable and independent source of news and information from a uniquely Australian perspective. The Corporation maintains the largest on-the-ground presence of correspondents of any regional broadcaster, which allows it to provide comprehensive, credible 24-hour news reporting from and for the region.

Nonetheless, the ABC's international operations are directly shaped by available resources, and international services have fluctuated with the availability of funding and facilities.

In particular, the 1996 Mansfield Review of the Role and Functions of the ABC prompted the then Government to sell one of the key shortwave transmitters used by Radio Australia and to sell Australia Television International to the Seven Network. This was accompanied by a significant reduction in the ABC's overall funding announced in the August 1996 Commonwealth Budget. Together, the loss of the Cox Peninsula shortwave transmitter and the reduction of Radio Australia's funding greatly diminished its reach and influence.

Likewise, the 2014 cancellation of the Australia Network contract, which was valued at \$220 million over 10 years, and the ABC-wide budget reduction announced in November of that year significantly reduced the ABC's ability to deliver optimal international services.

In response to these changed funding arrangements, over time the Corporation has reduced its broadcasting footprint and reconfigured its services in order to maximise the effectiveness of its offerings. Currently, the ABC's international media activities operate within a funding envelope of \$11 million per annum. As a result, the Corporation's international strategy is necessarily focused on reaching key audiences in the Region by using the content, platforms and technologies of greatest relevance to them.

In light of this constrained budgetary environment and in alignment with the implementation of the ABC's *Investing in Audiences* strategy announced in March 2017, the previously discrete International division was dissolved and its staff and functions integrated into the wider Corporation. The ABC's international strategy that has been formed under these circumstances is discussed further in section 5.

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<sup>3</sup> *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth), s.6(1)(b).

<sup>4</sup> *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth), s.31AA.

## 4. International media as public diplomacy

While the activity predates the term, government-funded international media services are a core tool for public diplomacy. They sit alongside scholarships, exchange programs, aid projects and cultural and sporting events as an important way of influencing the peoples and institutions of other nations.

In essence, public diplomacy or “soft power” is the set of means by which a nation can bypass traditional diplomatic channels and connect directly with foreign publics and institutions in order to encourage an understanding and appreciation of its policies, attitudes, values and culture. The Australian Government’s *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* characterises soft power as “the ability to influence the behaviour or thinking of others through the power of attraction and ideas” and notes that it is vital to Australia’s foreign policy.<sup>5</sup>

Public diplomacy helps to positively develop a nation’s reputation within other countries, which, in turn, helps facilitate the achievement of foreign policy and trade objectives, including attracting overseas investment, students and tourism. As a 2007 Senate Committee inquiry into Australia’s public diplomacy activities noted, “[t]he importance of public diplomacy is particularly evident where traditional diplomacy is not working or relations with another country have soured.”<sup>6</sup>

By its nature, international broadcasting differs from other public diplomacy methods in several important ways.

First, it employs mass media, enabling it reach large numbers of people on a daily basis, and making it a particularly cost-effective means of influencing foreign publics. For example, a survey of TV audiences in the Pacific conducted in 2014 found that an average of 17% of adults in urban areas reported having watched the ABC’s international TV channel in the previous week.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, international broadcasting allows rapid responses to changing situations in ways that other avenues of public diplomacy, such as scholarships and cultural exchanges, cannot. During the 2009 Indian student crisis, for example, the ABC’s international services were able to quickly provide a counter to sensationalist reporting in the Indian press by transmitting a more balanced version of events into India, both on its own channels and more widely through its relationships with domestic television providers. The coverage, which took the form of news stories and longer-form interviews with key figures, was accurate, open and honest and, as a result, credible.

Finally, international broadcasting carries the supplementary function of providing a centralised source of information about Australia for its citizens living or working abroad.

Alongside its international media services, the Corporation maintains an International Development team, which serves as a very effective vehicle for regional soft power. Primarily funded through competitive DFAT tender processes and grants, the team works on projects that develop the capacity of regional media providers and assist related organisations in areas like governance, gender, health, education, sport for development, disaster response and risk reduction. More details of the work of ABC International Development can be found in the Corporation’s recent submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into the strategic effectiveness and outcomes of Australia’s aid program in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Australia Government. *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, White paper, November 2017 p.109.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Senate, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. “Australia’s public diplomacy: building our image”, Report, August 2007, p.19.

<sup>7</sup> M&C Saatchi World Services Research & Insight and Butuna Smith Research Consultancy. “Citizen Access to Information in Papua New Guinea 2014”, Report, 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/cm/lb/9080250/data/report---citizen-access-to-information-in-png-2014-data.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign\\_Affairs\\_Defence\\_and\\_Trade/Australiasaidprogram](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Australiasaidprogram)

## 4.1. International media competitors

Recent decades have witnessed a greater international focus on the use of public diplomacy, including international media services, as a means by which countries can advance their national interests in a globalised, information-rich world.<sup>9</sup> As can be seen in Table 1, below, the major international media services have operating budgets in excess of one hundred million dollars. With rare exceptions, such as the CNN news service, all are funded by national governments.

**Table 1: Major international broadcasting services**

Broadcaster	Funding A\$m p.a.	Media <sup>a</sup>	Owner	Languages
CCTV (China)	\$3,082.0 <sup>b</sup>	TV/Radio	Govt	English, Chinese, Others (6)
CNN International	\$1,019.0 <sup>c</sup>	TV	Private	English
BBC World Service	\$576.0 <sup>d</sup>	Radio/TV	Public	English, Others (39)
Deutsche Welle	\$532.0 <sup>e</sup>	TV/Radio	Public	English, German, Others (28)
RT (Russia)	\$406.2 <sup>f</sup>	TV	Govt	English, Russian, Others (4)
Radio France Internationale + Monte Carlo Doualiya	\$379.4 <sup>g</sup>	Radio	Govt	English, French, Others (13)
NHK World-Japan	\$378.0 <sup>h</sup>	TV/Radio	Public	English, Japanese, Others (16)
Voice of America	\$319.0 <sup>i</sup>	Radio/TV	Public	English, Others (45)
TV5 Monde	\$173.4 <sup>j</sup>	TV	Mixed	French, Others (14)
France 24	\$158.0 <sup>k</sup>	TV	Govt	English, French, Arabic, Spanish
BBC World News	\$151.0 <sup>l</sup>	TV	Public	English
Al Jazeera	\$136.3 <sup>m</sup>	TV	Mixed	English, Arabic, Others (2)
Arirang TV	\$64.1 <sup>n</sup>	TV	Public	English, Korean, Others (6)
ABC (international services)	\$11.0 <sup>o</sup>	Multimedia	Public	English, Others (3)
BVN	\$7.4 <sup>p</sup>	TV	Public	Dutch

Notes: a. All listed organisations deliver online services; b. In 2016, it was reported that the Chinese government would invest A\$9.3 billion in international media activities, although the period of the expenditure and the allocation to different media groups—CCTV, Xinhua, China Radio International and the China Daily—were not specified in the announcement; c. 2014 estimated budget; d. 2018/19 estimated spend; e. 2016 federal allowances; f. 2017 budget; g. 2014 budget; h. Total operating expenditure for the 2017 Japanese financial year; i. 2018 estimated annual budget; j. 2015 estimated budget; k. In 2015, it was reported the estimated annual budget provided by the French government since 2008 was A\$158 million; l. Estimated costs incurred for 2014–15; m. 2010 estimated annual funding provided by the Qatari government; n. 2018 annual budget; o. Financial Year 2017–18 budget; p. 2017 budget. A list of sources is provided in Appendix 3.

Alongside growth in international broadcast is the rise of global digital services like Google and Facebook, which have themselves evolved into tools and destinations for media consumption. These services function as a mediating layer between media organisations and audiences and are able to present commercial (e.g. pay-walls for publishers) and technical (e.g. algorithmic) barriers that can inhibit content from reaching target audiences. They are also investing in content commissioning and creation. Recent events suggest that these platforms may be vulnerable to manipulation by foreign entities. Likewise, there is evidence they can be used to manipulate populations, sometimes with fatal consequences.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Australian Senate. "Australia's public diplomacy: building our image", pp.15–25; Lowy Institute for International Policy. "Australia's Diplomatic Deficit: Reinvesting in our instruments of international policy", Blue Ribbon Panel Report, March 2009, p.31.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Amanda Taub and Max Fisher, "Where Countries Are Tinderboxes and Facebook Is a Match", *The New York Times*, 21 April 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/21/world/asia/facebook-sri-lanka-riots.html>; Timothy McLaughlin. "How Facebook's Rise Fueled Chaos and Confusion in Myanmar", *Wired*, 6 July 2018, <https://www.wired.com/story/how-facebooks-rise-fueled-chaos-and-confusion-in-myanmar/>.

The elevation of public diplomacy within foreign-policy toolsets has been particularly apparent in the Asia-Pacific region since around the turn of the century, not least due to major investments by the People's Republic of China (PRC). This constitutes the competitive environment in which Australian international media services must operate.

As the 2007 Senate Committee inquiry noted, the PRC has placed public diplomacy at the "forefront of its foreign relations."<sup>11</sup> Beginning in 2001, and particularly since 2009, the country has significantly increased its investments in internationally targeted media services.<sup>12</sup> In January 2009, the PRC government announced that it would boost the country's international media voice, reportedly allocating 45 billion yuan (A\$9.3 billion) for projects to expand the overseas coverage, presence and reach of China Central Television (CCTV), Xinhua and *The People's Daily*.<sup>13</sup> In April 2010, CCTV rebranded its English-language channel CCTV-9 as CCTV News (now China Global Television Network or CGTN), reportedly with the intention of creating an international news brand with a status similar to that of the BBC and CNN within a short period.<sup>14</sup> In July 2010, the Xinhua news agency launched CNC World, a global English-language television news service on satellite, cable and mobile.<sup>15</sup>

By 2018, CCTV was being broadcast in 140 countries in a range of languages and China Radio International (CRI) was being broadcast in 65 languages.<sup>16</sup> In March 2018, Chinese state media reported that the Chinese Government would merge CCTV, China Radio International (CRI) and China National Radio under a single network to be named Voice of China.<sup>17</sup>

A number of regional nations responded to this activity by initiating or expanding public diplomacy programs, including increasing investment in international media services.<sup>18</sup> In particular, in 2009, Japan's national broadcaster, NHK, relaunched its international service, NHK World TV, as a 24-hour English-language news channel, augmented by live internet streaming of the service.<sup>19</sup> The service rebranded as NHK World-Japan in April 2018 and expanded to include additional non-English languages and internet streams.<sup>20</sup>

In a similar fashion, globally focused international media organisations have expanded their services to Asia and the Pacific. For example, in 2009, TV5 Monde split its Asia-Pacific service into two separate channels, TV5 Monde Asie and TV5 Monde Pacifique, to improve relevance for regional audiences. Likewise, in 2009, Deutsche Welle introduced a second television channel for the Region, DW-TV Asia+. <sup>21</sup> France 24 extended the footprint of its English-language television channel into Asia, alongside its existing French-language service.

While the Russian international service RT (formerly Russia Today) primarily focuses on audiences in Europe, North America and the Middle East, it expanded the satellite delivery footprint of its television services to include

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<sup>11</sup> Australian Senate. "Australia's public diplomacy", p.20.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Ying Zhu. *Two Billion Eyes: The Story of China Central Television*, 2012, New York: The New Press, pp.169–195.

<sup>13</sup> "Beijing in 45b yuan global media drive", *South China Morning Post*, 13 January 2009, <http://www.scmp.com/article/666847/beijing-45b-yuan-global-media-drive>.

<sup>14</sup> China Central Television. "The Channel name of 'CCTV-9' changed to 'CCTV News'", *CNTV*, 26 January 2010, (archived) <https://web.archive.org/web/20100512133051/http://english.cntv.cn/20100426/104481.shtml>.

<sup>15</sup> Tania Branigan. "China funds English TV news channel CNC World in push for soft power", *The Guardian*, 2 July 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jul/02/china-english-tv-news-channel-cnc-world>.

<sup>16</sup> Hilton Yip. "China's \$6 Billion Propaganda Blitz is a Snooze", *Foreign Policy*, 23 April 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/23/the-voice-of-china-will-be-a-squeak/>.

<sup>17</sup> Lily Kuo. "China state media merger to create propaganda giant", *The Guardian*, 22 March 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/21/china-state-media-merger-to-create-propaganda-giant>.

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., Ian Hall and Frank Smith. "The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition", *Asian Security*, 9:1, 2013, pp.1-18 at pp.3–6.

<sup>19</sup> Mariko Kato. "NHK to launch global 24-hour news channel", *The Japan Times*, 29 January 2009, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2009/01/29/national/nhk-to-launch-global-24-hour-news-channel/>.

<sup>20</sup> NHK. "NHK WORLD-JAPAN is New Name for International TV Service of NHK, Effective April 2", Media Release, 29 March 2018, <http://globenewswire.com/news-release/2018/03/29/1455491/0/en/NHK-WORLD-JAPAN-is-New-Name-for-International-TV-Service-of-NHK-Effective-April-2.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Deutsche Welle. "Two Dedicated Channels Provide Gateway to Europe", March 2009, <https://www.dw.com/en/two-dedicated-channels-provide-gateway-to-europe/a-3930041>.

coverage of Asia in 2012.<sup>22</sup> In May 2015, RT introduced a Chinese-language YouTube channel, although audiences for the channel have been very small.<sup>23</sup>

In November 2016, following a five-year funding injection of £289 million (\$512 million) from the UK Government, the BBC announced a significant expansion of the BBC World Service that included adding news programming in 11 additional languages like Korean and four Indian regional languages.<sup>24</sup> Broadcasts and online streams of these new language services began in August 2017 with the addition of three African-language news services.<sup>25</sup> The first Asia-focused service, BBC News Korean, went live the following month.<sup>26</sup>

## 4.2. Effective International Broadcasting

Given the number of competing international media services in the Asia-Pacific region and the limited funds available to the ABC's services, it is valuable to understand the factors that contribute to effective international broadcasting.

In 2010, at the ABC's request, the Lowy Institute for International Policy conducted research into the contribution of international broadcasting to public diplomacy.<sup>27</sup> Part One of the study comprised an examination and comparison of the world's major international broadcasting services in order to determine the factors that contribute to their success. It concluded that

for international broadcasting to make an effective and lasting contribution to their country's broader public diplomacy goals, five elements need to be present: credibility built on independence, financial security, legislative protection, strategic direction, and longevity.<sup>28</sup>

It follows that, to maximise the effectiveness of its international broadcasting, Australia should ensure its services possess these characteristics.

Of the five elements, the analysis identified editorial independence as the "lynchpin" of best-practice international broadcasting and the basis on which credibility, reputation and audience loyalty are built.<sup>29</sup> The report noted that credibility and reputation generally take a long time to build but can be lost or severely damaged overnight.

The report further found that the ability to report openly and honestly, including to present views critical of the funding government, were essential to establishing the trust of audiences, as they demonstrate that, while an international broadcaster reflects a national viewpoint, it is not a propaganda instrument. In most successful cases—the study cited the BBC World Service (UK), Deutsche Welle (Germany) and NHK World (Japan)—this editorial independence is reinforced through transparent legislation or a robust code of ethics.

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<sup>22</sup> RRSat Global Communications Network Ltd. "RRsat Signs Contract With Russia Today For Global Distribution of RT HD Channels", Media release, 7 September 2012, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/rrsat-signs-contract-with-russia-today-for-global-distribution-of-rt-hd-channels-168896986.html>.

<sup>23</sup> RT. "RT launches YouTube channel in Chinese, rocks Asian online platforms", *RT News*, 23 May 2015, <https://www.rt.com/news/261497-rt-china-youtube-launches/>; Casey Michel. "No One Watches RT's Chinese-Language YouTube Channel", *The Diplomat*, 26 May 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/05/no-one-watches-rts-chinese-language-youtube-channel/>.

<sup>24</sup> BBC. "BBC World Service announces biggest expansion since 1940s", Media Release, 16 November 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2016/world-service-expansion>.

<sup>25</sup> BBC. "BBC World Service begins language expansion", Media Release, 21 August 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2017/bbc-world-service-pidgin>.

<sup>26</sup> BBC. "BBC News launches Korean language service", Media release, 25 September 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2017/bbc-news-launches-korean-language-service>.

<sup>27</sup> Lowy Institute for International Policy. "International Broadcasting and its Contribution to Public Diplomacy: A report on the role of international broadcasters in supporting their nations' public diplomacy efforts, and the lessons for an effective international broadcasting future for Australia", Report, 29 June 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Lowy Institute. "International Broadcasting and its Contribution to Public Diplomacy", p.45.

<sup>29</sup> Lowy Institute. "International Broadcasting and its Contribution to Public Diplomacy", p.37.



It is worth noting that, while the value of independence identified in the report related particularly to news and current affairs reporting, the majority of services examined in the report are not dedicated news services. Instead, like the ABC's international services, most are mixed-genre services offering a range of content formats, including entertainment, education and cultural programming.

Running through all the five elements that the study identified was a core theme of consistency and continuity: the most successful services were able to develop reputations, brands and strategies—and over time convert them into audiences and advocates.<sup>30</sup> Protective legislation and consistent funding were important inasmuch as they allowed this continuity to develop.

The report also noted that the arrangements that had applied to Australia's international television services—both in terms of the use of short-term contracts and potential outsourcing to the private sector—were unique. No other government-funded international broadcaster operated on such a basis. Instead, the Lowy Institute found that “[i]nternational broadcasting is generally treated as a core component of a government's public diplomacy program, and none of the broadcasters surveyed indicated an intention to outsource this significant component of government business.”<sup>31</sup>

## **5. Reaching audiences in Asia-Pacific media markets**

In evaluating the possible and actual reach of Australian international media services in Asia and the Pacific, it is important to understand that there is no single regional “media market”. Instead, each nation within the Region is a media market in its own right, with its own set of domestic media providers, as well as its own unique audience behaviours that reflect, among other things, the mix of platforms and technologies that local audiences use to meet their particular media needs.

In the ABC's experience, a range of factors directly shape the opportunities for reaching audiences in different countries and determine the most effective platforms for doing so.

### **5.1. Market sophistication**

The ability of international media brands to capture the attention of audiences within a country is directly affected by the size and sophistication of the local media market. In general, greater domestic competition drives up the breadth and quality of the services available to audiences. This, in turn, places international services, particularly those that do not operate in the local language or that do not focus on local issues and concerns, at a distinct disadvantage.

In many countries in the Region, particularly in Asia, the market for media services is already saturated with local providers. For example, following the liberalisation of India's economy in 1991, the number of television channels available to audiences in the country grew over two decades from two in 1990, through 112 in 2000,<sup>32</sup> to around 500 in June 2010;<sup>33</sup> today, there are more than 800.

Saturated markets also present additional challenges for international radio and television services, in the form of fewer available broadcasting frequencies and channel positions.

As a result, the audiences that Australian international services can directly address in such markets are likely to primarily consist of educated influencers with a broad interest in international affairs or a more specific interest in

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<sup>30</sup> The report identified several recent services—Al Jazeera, France 24 and CCTV—that had attracted large audiences in a relatively short period of time, but noted that their approach has been based on significant expenditure (See Lowy Institute. “International Broadcasting and its Contribution to Public Diplomacy”, pp.38–9).

<sup>31</sup> Lowy Institute. “International Broadcasting and its Contribution to Public Diplomacy”, p.56.

<sup>32</sup> Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and PricewaterhouseCoopers. *The Indian Entertainment & Media Industry: Unraveling the Potential*, Report, 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). “Recommendations on Foreign Investment Limits for Broadcasting Sector”, Report, 30 June 2010, [http://www.trai.gov.in/WriteReadData/trai/upload/Recommendations/120/Reco\\_Jun30.pdf](http://www.trai.gov.in/WriteReadData/trai/upload/Recommendations/120/Reco_Jun30.pdf).

Australia. This, in turn, suggests that content being delivered into these markets should be tailored to audiences of this kind. The ABC's programming strategy for international video services in Asia has been directed at educated, affluent and influential individuals with an interest in travelling to Australia, particularly to study or conduct business.

In less-developed markets, such as in the Pacific and the Mekong region, there is greater scope to reach a wider cross-section of the population, as international services are better able to compete for audience attention with local media. The ABC's strategy for its services in the Pacific has long reflected this, including delivering programming of broader appeal to maximise the effectiveness of its services.

## **5.2. Broadcasting platforms**

Radio and television broadcasting have been the traditional cornerstones of international media services. While the use of both is changing, particularly in light of the growth of mobile and social platforms, they are expected to remain key means of reaching regional audiences for at least the next decade.

### **5.2.1. Television**

Access to television continues to grow in all but the most developed economies of Asia and the Pacific. In 2017, 85% of homes in Asia had a television, of which 57% subscribed to a multichannel or pay-TV service—the primary means of distribution for international broadcasting channels.<sup>34</sup> Multichannel television penetration is particularly high in developed markets such as South Korea (100% of television households), Taiwan (84%) and Hong Kong (81%), as well as in the rapidly-developing Indian market (79%).

To reach audiences, international television services must be broadcast in domestic markets. This generally takes the form of carriage of a complete channel on a local pay-TV platform or the syndication of specific programs or blocks of programming by domestic broadcasters. The ABC employs both of these approaches. It actively cultivates relationships with rebroadcasters and seeks to offer channels and/or content that are likely to be appealing to their viewers. It is currently rebroadcast on 210 pay-TV networks in the Asia-Pacific region and through content exchanges with local broadcasters in the Region, which further expand its audience reach.

As regional pay-TV markets have become more competitive, multichannel service operators have been increasingly able to charge carriage fees to ensure placement of channels on their platforms. The ABC does not pay carriage fees, which reduces the number of regional networks on which it is able to secure the rebroadcast of its television service.

Capturing viewer data for international broadcast television is difficult. However, digital engagement for the ABC's video content is strong and growing. In 2018, the average number of views of the ABC's YouTube content by audiences in the Asia-Pacific is close to 2 million per month. In April 2018, the ABC removed the geoblock on the ABC NEWS channel. There are now over 100,000 views of the stream each week from audiences outside of Australia.

### **5.2.2. Radio**

The use of radio in the Asia-Pacific varies significantly from country to country. In PNG and the Pacific islands in particular, radio remains an important medium with 53% of people listening to broadcasts each week in PNG.<sup>35</sup> It is important to note, however, that the available data indicates that audiences in these countries have largely moved away from using shortwave and medium-wave/AM radio services in favour of FM transmissions and, increasingly, radio programming delivered via internet streaming to mobile phones. For example, linked studies conducted in

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<sup>34</sup> CASBAA. "Asia Pacific Multichannel TV 2018", Report, pp.8–9; while the report includes Australia and New Zealand, the small populations of those countries mean they are unlikely to distort the figures.

<sup>35</sup> Services Research & Insight. "Citizen Access to Information in Papua New Guinea 2014", Report, 2014, p.23. <http://www.abc.net.au/cm/lb/9080250/data/report---citizen-access-to-information-in-png-2014-data.pdf>.

PNG in 2012 and 2014 showed that FM radio was the dominant medium, growing from 94% to 95% of all weekly radio listening over the two-year period.<sup>36</sup> During the same period, the proportion of respondents who used shortwave services declined by a third, from 3% to 2% of the surveyed population.

As with international broadcast television, it is difficult to measure regular audience numbers on broadcast radio, especially for the Pacific. However, for the first half of 2018, the ABC's listening audiences in the Asia-Pacific region (excluding New Zealand) averaged 241,000 podcast downloads and 101,000 streams of audio each month.

#### *Shortwave radio*

Shortwave transmissions are robust, travel significant distances and can be "skipped" off the ionosphere, allowing them to be delivered to locations otherwise obscured by the curvature of the Earth. Together, these characteristics mean that shortwave services can broadcast in other countries using transmitters beyond the control of the governments of receiving nations. This technique was central to the more propaganda-focused mode of international broadcasting favoured during the Second World War and the Cold War. It was consequently deployed in earlier eras of international broadcasting to bypass government restrictions. It is, however, dependent on audiences being willing and able to receive shortwave broadcasts. Regional audiences, including in the less-developed markets of the Pacific, now exhibit strong tendencies towards media platforms other than shortwave.

In light of this data and the high cost of shortwave broadcasting as a proportion of a limited budget (\$2.8 million per annum, or 25.5% of a total budget of \$11.0 million), the ABC does not regard shortwave radio as an efficient or effective way of delivering services to audiences in PNG and the Pacific. Accordingly, in January 2017, it ceased shortwave transmissions of Radio Australia to those areas in favour of investing in FM transmissions and internet streams of the service.

The Corporation's decision to direct limited resources away from a relatively expensive and marginal technology was not without controversy, becoming the subject of a Private Senator's Bill and an associated Senate Legislation Committee Inquiry.<sup>37</sup> The ABC has explained its rationale for terminating shortwave transmissions in greater detail in its response to that inquiry.<sup>38</sup> The Corporation also notes that, as the Shepparton transmitter was decommissioned after it ceased shortwave broadcasts, while it would be possible to comply with the Bill's requirement to reintroduce shortwave services, doing so would entail meeting reestablishment costs, in addition to the annual costs of broadcasting. This review should also consider that the Committee recommended that the Bill to restore those international shortwave services not pass the Senate, primarily in light of the ABC's revised international strategy.

The ABC understands there has been some limited criticism of the decision to terminate the Pacific shortwave services, particularly on the basis that Radio Australia plays a key role during natural disasters. Such an assertion misunderstands Radio Australia's purpose and structure. The service's program schedule doesn't naturally accommodate local breaking information or emergency alerts, and so has limited utility during live emergency situations.

The function that the ABC does serve in relation to such events is through its international development programs, which support broadcasters in the Pacific and elsewhere to build their own capacity for emergency broadcasting. For example, ABC International Development has worked with local media teams from Radio Vanuatu to provide

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<sup>36</sup> InterMedia Europe. "Citizen Access to Information in Papua New Guinea", Report, June 2012, p.37, <http://www.abc.net.au/cm/lb/9202648/data/citizen-access-to-information-in-papua-new-guinea-2012-data.pdf>; M&C Saatchi World Services Research & Insight. "Citizen Access to Information in Papua New Guinea 2014", Report, 2014, p.32. <http://www.abc.net.au/cm/lb/9080250/data/report---citizen-access-to-information-in-png-2014-data.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> See Australian Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications. "Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Restoring Shortwave Radio) Bill 2017", Inquiry homepage, [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment\\_and\\_Communications/Shortwaveradio](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Shortwaveradio).

<sup>38</sup> ABC. "Australian Broadcasting Corporation Submission to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee Inquiry into the ABC Amendment (Restoring Shortwave Radio) Bill 2017", Submission, May 2017, <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=fd9ae65b-79e6-48ac-a3cc-b46d91acfe2&subld=511100>.

training, program leadership, strategic planning, and broadcast and engineering assistance, including establishing a broadcasting studio for use during national disasters. This support from ABC International Development empowers local program-makers and ensures they are adequately prepared to serve their audiences.

The decision to terminate the ABC's last remaining international shortwave services was consistent with the prevailing trend among international radio broadcasters. Over the past two decades, the ABC's international peers have increasingly abandoned shortwave radio due to maintenance costs, the availability of alternative technologies and decreased audience demand for shortwave services. The BBC, Radio Canada, Radio Netherlands, Vatican Radio and Deutsche Welle have all closed or substantially reduced their international shortwave services in recent years. For example, the BBC World Service ceased its North American and Australasian shortwave services in 2001, its European and Middle Eastern shortwave services in 2007 and 2008, and its Mandarin shortwave service in 2011. In 2018, the BBC reported that "shortwave radio listening continues its steep decline, with shortwave audiences virtually disappearing in Pakistan, and down substantially in Nigeria."<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, the BBC World Service is instead focusing its resources on satellite and online radio services, in line with audience listening habits shifting to these alternative platforms.

There has been some recent media speculation that Chinese state broadcasters have taken up the shortwave frequencies vacated by the ABC for their own purposes in the Asia-Pacific region. According to independent monitoring of global shortwave frequencies, the Chinese National Radio (CNR) service is using one of the previous ABC Pacific frequencies for a domestic mainland Chinese audience, using DRM technology and broadcasting in Mandarin, and the international service, CRI, is also using vacated ABC shortwave frequencies, but these are targeting India and Mongolia. No current information available to the ABC indicates that the vacated ABC frequencies are currently being used in the Pacific by the PRC.

### **5.3. Digital platforms**

Media markets in Asia and the Pacific have experienced the same rapid changes in technologies and audience behaviours as the rest of the globe. Digital media platforms and devices—including the internet, mobile phones and social media platforms—give audiences access to more programs and services, and greater scope for controlling and personalising their media consumption. They also create opportunities for the public to engage more directly with media organisations—or to largely bypass and ignore them. It is clear that as audiences make greater use of these digital platforms, they tend to reduce their use of traditional television and radio broadcasts.

The relative penetration of media technologies varies considerably across the Asia-Pacific region. At one end of the spectrum lie the advanced media markets of Asia—Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan—whose populations enjoy access to high-speed data networks and make extensive use of digital media. At the other end lie the populous and uneven markets of South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) and a number of the islands of the Pacific.<sup>40</sup> In between lie a range of disparate and emerging Asian and Pacific media markets.

Significantly, mobile phones are one of the key means of accessing information throughout the Region. In 2017, there were an estimated 2.2 billion active mobile-broadband subscriptions (52.2 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants) in Asia and the Pacific, compared with only 509 million fixed broadband subscriptions (12.3 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants).<sup>41</sup>

In the Pacific, access to mobile telephony and internet services continues to grow. Mobile coverage across Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu jumped from less than half of the population in 2005 to 93% in 2014,

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<sup>39</sup> BBC. "BBC global audience rises to 376m", Media Release, 22 June 2018, viewed 12 July 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2018/bbc-global-audience>.

<sup>40</sup> Simon Kemp. "Everything you need to know about the state of digital in Asia-Pacific in 2017", *The Next Web*, 28 September 2017, <https://thenextweb.com/contributors/2017/09/28/everything-need-know-state-digital-asia-pacific-2017/>.

<sup>41</sup> ITU. Time-series ICT data for the world, by geographic regions and by level of development, for selected indicators, 2005–17, Dataset, [https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/statistics/2017/ITU\\_Key\\_2005-2017\\_ICT\\_data.xls](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/statistics/2017/ITU_Key_2005-2017_ICT_data.xls).

while the cost of mobile calls declined by one-third over the same period; international internet bandwidth grew over 1,500% between 2007 and 2014.<sup>42</sup>

These trends underscore the need for successful international media organisations to combine online, particularly mobile-optimised, content with traditional radio and television broadcasts by efficiently reusing their content and tailoring its delivery to the most appropriate devices for their target audiences. In the first half of 2018, the ABC received an average of 1.5 million visits and 2.8 million page views each month to its websites and 376,000 sessions on its mobile apps. In key markets like Indonesia, the ABC has agreements with media organisations like Republika and Detik to syndicate in-language content to more effectively reach audiences where they naturally are.

## 5.4. Social media

A critical change in media ecosystems around the world over the past decade has been the rise of social media platforms. These services disrupt traditional one-to-many international media delivery models by facilitating direct communications between users and by acting as a mediating “layer” between media organisations and the audiences they are seeking to reach.

Overall, Asia and the Pacific exhibit some of the highest levels of social media growth of any region globally. Engaging with social media platforms is thus a necessary part of any successful Asia-Pacific media strategy. In doing so, there are a number of critical factors that need to be taken into account.

The popularity of particular social media platforms varies considerably between countries. Many countries have their own native platforms that may be entirely unfamiliar to Australian audiences. The PRC, for example, has an entire ecosystem of social media services and applications, such as WeChat and Sina Weibo, that are entirely independent of more familiar English-language services like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The same is true of Korea, where the messaging service KakaoTalk had 42 million users—corresponding to 97% of smartphone users—in 2017.<sup>43</sup>

Further, as social media is explicitly built to facilitate casual communication, successful platforms will invariably operate in local languages. International media services seeking to realise the opportunities for direct engagement with audiences that social media platforms create must not only identify the most appropriate platforms to target, but also employ staff capable of communicating fluently in the relevant languages, as these factors together determine the addressable audience of an organisation’s social media activities.

It is also worth noting that, in a number of countries, Facebook is effectively synonymous with the internet for not-considerable portions of the population. As a result of Facebook-only data plans, Facebook is the point of entry to the online services for many mobile users.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, there is evidence that millions of such users across the Region regard themselves as using Facebook, but not the internet.

The other challenge for media organisations arising from widespread use of social media networks is the increasing popularity of private and small-group messaging and content-sharing. Such activity is effectively invisible to anyone other than the platform operator. Many of these, such as WhatsApp, are encrypted services, which makes it difficult to measure their impact, thus preventing media organisations from understanding what is resonating with their audiences and adjusting their content offerings accordingly.

The ABC has 2.75 million fans from outside of Australia for its News account, and a community of over 4 million users for its Learn English service. The Corporation publishes in-language content daily to numerous accounts across broad genre interests, including on bespoke platforms targeted to specific communities, like Weibo and

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<sup>42</sup> Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility. “Economic and Social Impact of ICT in the Pacific”, Report, 2015, <https://www.theprif.org/file/6674/download?token=aFetwB3W>.

<sup>43</sup> Trisha Lee. “The Kakao Empire: The South Korean Example of a Digitalized Lifestyle”, *Masters of Media*, 24 September 2017, <https://mastersofmedia.hum.uva.nl/blog/2017/09/24/the-kakao-empire-the-south-korean-example-of-a-digitalized-lifestyle/>.

<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., Leo Mirani. “Millions of Facebook users have no idea they’re using the internet”, *Quartz*, 9 February 2015, <https://qz.com/333313/millions-of-facebook-users-have-no-idea-theyre-using-the-internet/>.

WeChat for the Chinese-language audience. The ABC continues to innovate with the use of bots for messenger apps to continue to engage with audiences wherever they might be.

## 5.5. Language

In-language services always have an advantage in providing immediate access to—and increasing relevance of—content to the target audiences. The ABC has, at various times over the decades, produced content in Hindi, Bahasa Indonesia, Japanese, Thai, Khmer, Vietnamese, Khmer, Burmese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Fukinese, French, Dutch, German, French and Tok Pisin.

As valuable as they are for effectively reaching audiences, in-language services are relatively expensive to maintain at an appropriate level of editorial quality, and the Corporation currently produces content only in Mandarin, Bahasa Indonesia, Tok Pisin and English. By comparison, the BBC World Service supports teams who publish content in 40 languages.

It is, however, important to note that there is considerable linguistic diversity in the Region. For example, PNG exhibits the highest level of linguistic diversity on the planet, with nearly 850 spoken languages.<sup>45</sup> While it is possible for international media to deliver a range of in-language services, these will represent a small subset of the languages spoken and written in the Region.

The ABC is open to collaborating with other media organisations, such as the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) to expand the delivery of language services to the Region.

Machine-learning technologies have the potential to enable automated translation between different languages. The current quality of machine translation varies considerably—both between providers and from language to language—and is not of a sufficient standard for use with international services. In coming years, however, it may allow a cost-effective expansion of text-based language services.

## 5.6. Restrictions on access to national audiences

Another critical constraint on international media services is regional governments blocking access to or censoring media. The leading example of this is the PRC. Given its status as a global power and its growing influence in the Asia-Pacific region, many nations are seeking to communicate with the population of the PRC through public diplomacy initiatives, including international media services. However, these ambitions are made difficult by the policies of the PRC, which include tightly restricting distribution of international broadcast channels, denying landing rights for international television services, actively jamming radio signals and moderating the population's access to internet services through what is sometimes referred to as the "Great Firewall of China". The ABC has a long-standing relationship with China, having opened its bureau in Beijing 1973, and maintains relationships with a number of media partners in the country to exchange content and publish stories on Chinese-owned media platforms like Weibo and WeChat.

Elsewhere in the Region, governments may impose restrictions on international media from time to time, although international media services attempt to work around such blockages. For example, during the 2009 constitutional crisis in Fiji, the Fijian Government took control of broadcasting services and expelled ABC reporting staff. In 2014, the Burmese Government cut off access to Facebook for a short period to help end religious rioting,<sup>46</sup> while in May 2018, the Government of PNG announced that its intention to shut down access to the social media service for a month in order to identify "fake" user accounts and study its impact on the population.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> A.V. "Papua New Guinea's incredible linguistic diversity", *The Economist*, 20 July 2018, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2017/07/20/papua-new-guineas-incredible-linguistic-diversity>.

<sup>46</sup> Timothy McLaughlin. "How Facebook's Rise Fueled Chaos and Confusion in Myanmar".

<sup>47</sup> Eleanor Ainge Roy. "Papua New Guinea bans Facebook for a month to root out 'fake users'", *The Guardian*, 29 May 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/29/papua-new-guinea-facebook-ban-study-fake-users>.

## 5.7. Expatriates and diasporas

In addition to their public diplomacy functions, international media services have a secondary role as a source of information for citizens living, travelling or working in other countries. In practice, this generally amounts to redistributing domestic content in other countries, rather than creating specific content for these audiences. In the case of the ABC, this function is enshrined in section 6(1)(b)(ii) of the ABC Act.

The Corporation has found that Australian expatriates are particularly interested in receiving news, sport and other domestic programming that they cannot access abroad. The challenge is that securing the necessary rights to distribute this content in regions beyond Australia, let alone globally, can be expensive.

Another aspect of media-based public diplomacy that is not directly related to international media service delivery is providing domestic services specifically for overseas diasporas living in Australia.

This group includes Australian citizens and long-term residents with family and cultural ties to other nations and visitors, such as overseas students. The latter group in particular may have engaged with international media services before coming to the country, suggesting potential advantages in ensuring continuity between international and domestic services.

## 6. Current ABC services and strategy

The ABC's current international strategy seeks to deliver the most effective service possible within available funding of \$11 million per annum. Accordingly, it continues to employ mass-reach platforms in areas where they are appropriate and cost-effective, while using digital technologies to build one-to-one relationships with audiences in changing and new markets.

For clarity and simplicity, the ABC has rebranded its international television and digital services under the "ABC Australia" brand. This change came into effect on 1 July 2018. Radio Australia is now officially known as "ABC Radio Australia".

The strategy is focused on a set of target audience groups, namely:

- Highly educated and mobile "influencers" in the key Asian markets of:
  - PRC (and the Chinese diaspora)
  - Indonesia
  - India;
- PNG and wider audiences in the Pacific;
- Australians living and/or travelling abroad; and
- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities within Australia, particularly those with connections to target markets in the Asia-Pacific region.

In addition to these key groups, the strategy is intended to provide ABC Australia services to audiences throughout the Asia-Pacific region and, through digital platforms, to the rest of the world.

The ABC is using a mix of distribution strategies to reach these distinct audiences. The effective footprint of its services, including radio transmitters and key rebroadcaster relationships, is shown in Appendix 1. The audience of its digital services is shown in Table 2, below.

As radio remains a key medium in PNG and the Pacific, the Corporation has reinvigorated ABC Radio Australia as the basis for a 24/7 audio and digital service distributed via FM broadcasting and streamed to online and mobile

**Table 2: The ABC's Asia-Pacific Audience Footprint, January – June 2018 (excludes Australia/NZ)**

Platform	Metric	Total	Monthly average
Websites	Visits	18,058,634	1,504,886
	Page views	34,506,776	2,875,565
Apps	Sessions	4,514,054	376,171
Podcasts	Downloads	2,649,475	240,861
Radio	Streams	1,218,693	101,558
Facebook	% Fans	NA	36%
	% Engaged users	NA	5%
YouTube	Views	23,918,460	1,993,205

platforms. It has invested in additional FM transmitters in Mount Hagan, Goroka and Arawa in PNG. The FM frequencies through which ABC Radio Australia can be received are listed in Appendix 2.

The Corporation has strengthened the established regional program *Pacific Beat* and introduced the new *Pacific Mornings* program. In addition, ABC Radio Australia stories and programs are syndicated on partner stations in New Zealand, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and PNG and are made available as podcasts. Stories in Tok Pisin are published on the web, the ABC app, and on social media channels.

As multichannel television is expected to remain a viable, if declining, medium for at least the next five years, the Corporation is continuing to deliver satellite television services into Asia and the Pacific, where they are distributed by 210 rebroadcast partners. The service presents a 24-hour mixed-genre schedule of live news, current affairs sport, education, and children's content. In addition, the ABC is syndicating blocks of television programming in places like PNG, and in digital form on local media platforms through partners in China and Indonesia. If, as anticipated, Asian influencer audiences migrate away from broadcast services, the ABC will re-examine the need for a satellite service into Asia.

Acknowledging that its audiences for online and mobile services is fast outstripping those for broadcast, particularly among affluent Asian and expatriate Australian audiences, the ABC has internationalised its mobile app, and plans for an internationalised version of the iView on-demand video service, albeit with a reduced catalogue constrained by the cost of clearing underlying rights.

To sustain the service, the ABC is seeking to expand content partnerships with sibling public broadcasters (SBS, Radio New Zealand International), as well as pursuing content swaps and joint production arrangements with broadcasters in the Region and around the world.

## 7. Options for expanding Australia's international media services

People who are engaged culturally with Australia have a greater likelihood of conducting business with or visiting this country, and of adopting Australia's world view. Australia, with a population of 25 million in a world of over 7 billion people and an Asia-Pacific region of enormous diversity, where China and Russia seek increasing influence, has a lot to lose by not actively connecting internationally by exercising effective soft power.

As a large cultural institution with significant global audiences across numerous touchpoints, the ABC already plays an important role in Australia's public diplomacy. The Corporation believes there are considerable opportunities to expand its international media role. However, its ability to do so is constrained by available resources.

The first priority in any modest expansion would be to an investment in the kinds of content that make the ABC's international media services valuable to regional audiences. This would likely include producing more news,



information, entertainment, education, and children’s programming; the restoration or introduction of additional in-language services; and increasing the content available to international audiences through internationalised versions of the ABC app and iview.

Such content would include programming that covers and more clearly aligns with Australia’s disparate international activities across music, arts, sports and culture. It would include work done by federal and state bodies like Austrade, the Australia Council for the Arts, galleries and DFAT’s *Australia Now*, and expanding coverage of traditional cultural exchanges, such as taking the Australian Ballet in China, or the booming gaming culture which connects young Australians with the world.

More substantial expansions of the services would also include increasing the distribution platforms and touchpoints through which the ABC makes its content available to Asia-Pacific audiences. With greater resources, the Corporation could expand its international footprint around the globe.

In addition, the ABC believes there is the second opportunity that combines digital diplomacy with Australia’s multicultural communities. Moving from a traditional broadcast model of producing and then transmitting stories, the Corporation is increasingly seeking to co-create and engage in dialogue with its audiences on digital platforms. Using the model similar to the one the ABC employs in regional Australia, the ABC’s overseas bureaus can be expanded to operate as local hubs producing for digital, television and radio with all networked across the Asia-Pacific region. In the same way that ABC Open producers work directly with the community to tell their stories through text, video and audio, the ABC’s international hubs would work with people around the world to help produce and share their stories—creating trusting bonds and strong audience reach.

With further investment, the ABC can build the community platforms where Australians whose origins are from outside Australia can have genuine exchanges with connections overseas—effectively becoming Australia’s cultural ambassadors through their engagement. This leverages what no other nation in the Asia-Pacific region has—Australia’s vibrant and successful multicultural community—to amplify the Australian voice. Understanding of the importance of this, the ABC has recently launched a raft of Chinese-language services including news on web and app services and current affairs, lifestyle and children’s content on iview.

Investment in the ABC can broadly be placed into the three following categories with bureaus, production, platforms, and bespoke content (in language and for platforms/ devices) being matched to available budgets:

- Strengthening existing services by deepening the offering, such as offering text updates to basic phone users in PNG and the Pacific;
- Restoring language and platforms recently decommissioned following the cessation of the Australia Network contract;
- Widening the activities to a larger audience footprint geographically in Asia and the Pacific, and potentially beyond the Region into markets in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Latin America, North America and the rest of the world to make the ABC a genuine world service.

## Closing comments

The ABC is the independent source of Australian stories, culture and conversations, and has been established as a trusted international media service for nearly 80 years. It has been effective and innovative in reaching audiences in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond within its limited budgetary environment. This has been achieved by utilising the most effective technology, delivering distinctive, trusted and quintessentially Australian content, and developing strong relationships with international partners.

International media services are recognised by governments across the globe as a potent mechanism of public diplomacy. This has been increasingly apparent with dynamic changes in geo-politics in the Region and across the world since the turn of the century. However, in recent years, Australia has not been able to fully play its potential role as a regional leader by effectively exercising this “soft power” opportunity.

The Lowy Institute’s study of *International Broadcasting and its Contribution to Public Diplomacy* considered Australian international broadcasting activities as they stood in 2010 in light of the elements comprising international best practice and concluded that some, but by no means all, elements were present.<sup>48</sup> It noted that the ABC’s international services enjoy both independence and legislative protection. However, the funding of the services and the longevity benefits that flow from it have not been consistent and have reduced since 2010. The study concluded that “the absence of a clear strategic statement or understanding on the role of Australia’s international broadcasting creates limitations for the broadcaster in fulfilling its role.”<sup>49</sup>

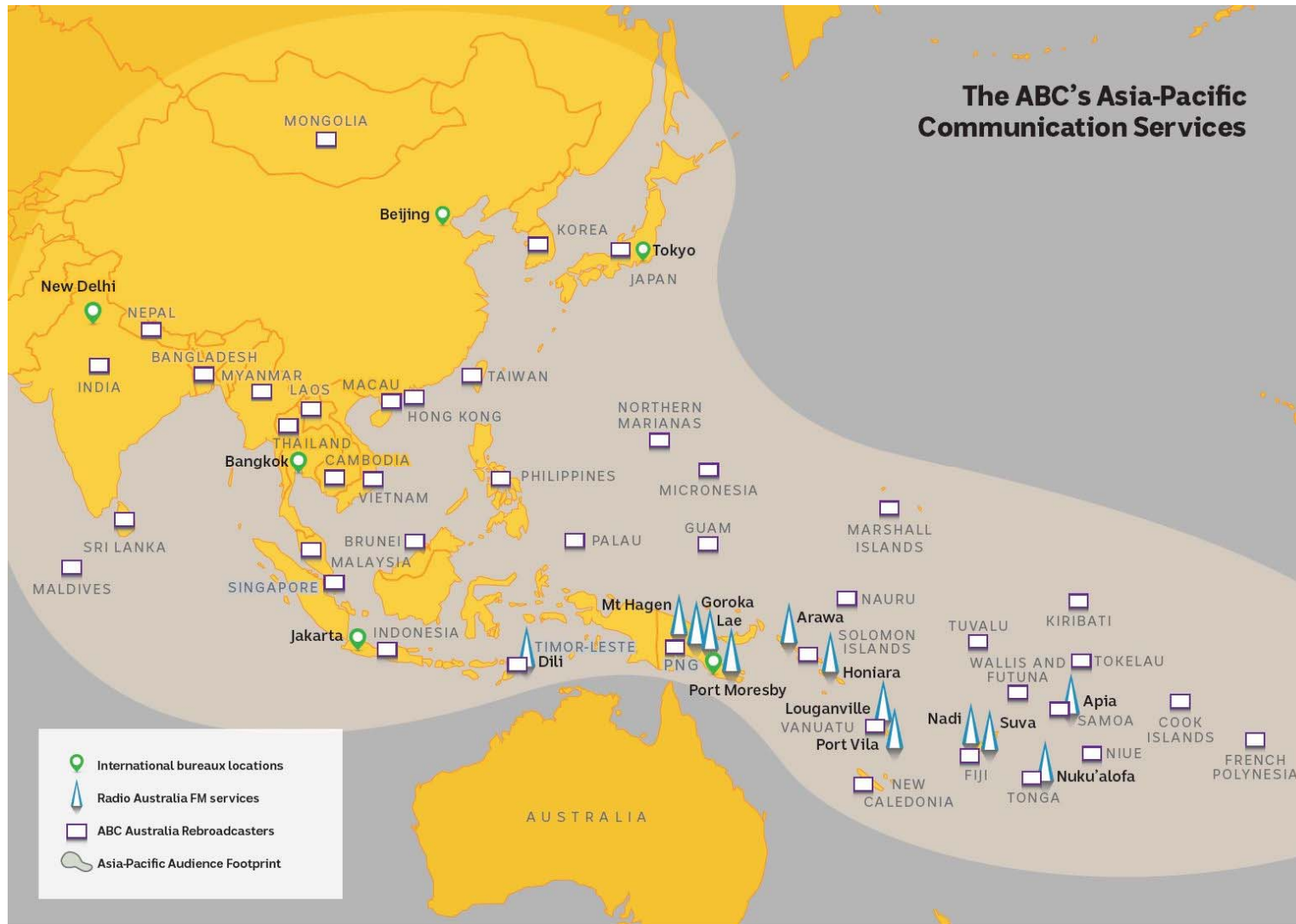
As articulated in the *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, soft power can enhance Australia’s “ability to influence the behaviour or thinking of others through the power of attraction and ideas”. By enabling the ABC to expand what it does best and deliver an independent, robust and committed international broadcasting service, Australia will be able to reach key audiences, enhance its influence and interests, and share its perspectives and values with the world.

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<sup>48</sup> Lowy Institute. “International Broadcasting and its Contribution to Public Diplomacy”, p.56.

<sup>49</sup> Lowy Institute. “International Broadcasting and its Contribution to Public Diplomacy”, p.56.

## Appendix 1: The ABC's Asia-Pacific footprint



## Appendix 2: ABC Radio Australia FM transmission

Country	Location	Frequency	Contractor	Content
Fiji	Suva	106.4	Fiji Broadcasting Corporation	English 24 hours
	Nadi	106.6		
PNG	Port Moresby	101.9	TEPNG	English/Pidgin 24 hours
	Lae			
	Goroka			
	Mt Hagan			
	Arawa			
Samoa	Apia	102	Samoa Quality Broadcasting	English 24 hours
Solomon Islands	Honiara	107	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation	English/Pidgin 24 hours
Tonga	Nuku'alofa	103	Tonga Broadcasting Commission	English 24 hours
Vanuatu	Port Vila	103	Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation	English/Pidgin 24 hours
	Louganville	103		
East Timor	Dili	106.5	RalpVision	English 24 hours

## Appendix 3: Major international broadcasting services

1. **Al Jazeera:** "Al-Jazeera's Revolution", *Jadaliyya*, 20 May 2012, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/25984/Al-Jazeera%60s-REvolution>.
2. **Arirang TV:** "Arirang TV to sack 190 employees, shut 18 programs", *The Korea Times*, 19 July 2018, [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/01/356\\_241929.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/01/356_241929.html).
3. **BBC World News:** "Review of BBC Global News reporting and governance structures", *A report for the News Media Association, Prepared by Oliver & Ohlbaum Associates Ltd*, December 2015, [http://www.newsmediauk.org/write/MediaUploads/PDF%20Docs/OandO\\_Report\\_-\\_BBC\\_Global\\_News\\_and\\_Governance\\_Review\\_3\\_March\\_2016.pdf](http://www.newsmediauk.org/write/MediaUploads/PDF%20Docs/OandO_Report_-_BBC_Global_News_and_Governance_Review_3_March_2016.pdf).
4. **BBC World Service:** "BBC Annual Plan 2018/19", *BBC*, March 2018, [https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howwework/reports/pdf/bbc\\_annual\\_plan\\_2018.pdf](https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howwework/reports/pdf/bbc_annual_plan_2018.pdf).
5. **BVN:** "BVN Budget 2017", *Nederlands Publieke Omroep*, <https://over.npo.nl/download/nl/158>.
6. **China Central Television:** "Beijing's control over Chinese-language media more pressing than Fairfax China Daily inserts", *Lowy Institute*, 1 June 2016, <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/beijings-control-over-chinese-language-media-more-pressing-fairfax-china-daily>.
7. **CNN International:** "Turner Broadcasting to cut staff by 10 percent; CNN to shed 300 jobs", *Politico*, 10 June 2014, <https://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2014/10/turner-broadcasting-to-cut-staff-by-10-percent-cnn-to-shed-300-jobs-196659>.
8. **Deutsche Welle:** "Deutsche Welle Annual Report – Income Statement for the fiscal years 2016 and 2015", *Deutsche Welle*, 17 July 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/deutsche-welle-annual-report/a-3530526>.
9. **France24:** "France24 plans partnership with Mashable and raises questions of unfair competition", *Rude Baguette*, 8 September 2015, <http://www.rudebaguette.com/2015/09/08/france24-plans-partnership-with-mashable-and-raises-questions-of-unfair-competition/>.
10. **NHK World (Japan):** "NHK Corporate Information", *NHK Online*, <http://www.nhk.or.jp/corporateinfo/english/corporate/index.html>.
11. **Radio France Internationale:** "Key figures of RFI", *RFI Les Voix Du Monde*, 16 January 2014, <http://www.rfi.fr/entreprise/chiffres-cles>.
12. **TV5 Monde:** "TV5 Monde", *Wikipedia*, 18 July 2018, [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/TV5\\_Monde](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/TV5_Monde).
13. **Voice of America:** "Voice of America", *Broadcasting Board of Governors*, accessed 19 July 2018, <https://www.bbg.gov/networks/voa/>.
14. **RT (Russia):** "What is RT?", *The New York Times*, 8 March 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/world/europe/what-is-rt.html>.