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Mr Robert Kerr
Chair
Competitive Neutrality Inquiry

Dear Mr Kerr

I am writing in full support of the ABC in the context of the current inquiry into ‘Competitive Neutrality’.

I am 73 and since my arrival in Australia 53 years ago I have been an assiduous listener and viewer of ABC programs. Indeed, the only other channel I watch is SBS which also deals with current issues, and I regret the introduction of paid advertising on that channel.

The ABC provides factual, unbiased news coverage. It addresses issues that commercial channels would never touch for fear of losing listener/viewer support. It is able to highlight abuse of power, misuse of public funds, tax avoidance/evasion, dishonesty and hypocrisy, unethical business behaviour and the secret agendas of large companies. This would never be done by privately-owned broadcasters for fear of losing advertising support. How could a broadcaster receiving advertising funds from Telstra ever investigate unethical behaviour or money wasted by that company?

The ABC plays a critical role in emergency situations, as was the case during the Canberra 2003 bushfires. The ABC can be trusted to provide information that’s not only up to date but also correct.

I commend the ABC for having the courage to support experimental comedy series over the decades: I have enjoyed every one of them and feel deprived when they reach the end. I urge the ABC to continue supporting and funding such series, including political satire. Over the years it has also funded amazing dramas, and I’m currently glued to the screen for Mystery Road. This type of program is not funded by commercial channels, depriving Australian viewers of excellent entertainment.

I have bemoaned changes to the ABC over the last year or so. As a devotee of Lateline from its inception to its demise, I really miss it. I also miss the full hour of PM and the World at Noon. As for the Canberra local radio team, I was very disappointed with the changes that have taken place over the last year or so, allegedly to attract younger listeners. The replacement programs are not of the same quality and interest.

I totally deplore the continued decrease in funding to the ABC, which has led to the current situation of endless repeats, most of them BBC programs. The ABC needs and deserves continued high-level funding to enable it to effectively deliver on its charter for all Australians - in regional or urban areas, with different levels of education, different ages and backgrounds. Most importantly, the ABC needs to continue to hold governments/politicians

(of any persuasion) and institutions to account through quality journalism. The effectiveness of Four Corners is a case in point. The in-depth investigations it has undertaken have highlighted scandals, corruption and abuse of power, and led to royal commissions. None of this would have been possible had the ABC needed to rely on private funding or – God forbid – be sold off ! Just look at what happened to the Commonwealth Bank after it was privatised!

How long would Q&A last on a commercial channel? And a quality program like 7.30?

As for allegations of left-wing bias by conservative politicians, why is it that Prime Ministers of both sides have attacked the ABC when it relentlessly probed their Governments' questionable decisions? This impartiality is exactly what Australian voters need in order to become better informed and not be 'brain-washed' or kept in the dark.

Governments cannot and should not undermine the public broadcaster by unreasonable funding cuts or covert privatisation. While it is entirely appropriate that Governments ensure that funds received are well spent, the ABC should not be subjected to arbitrary funding cuts or, even worse, forced to seek private advertising. As a taxpayer and a voter, I do not want to see this happen to 'my ABC'. It is the only broadcaster I trust!

Yours faithfully

Yvette Alberti Devlin