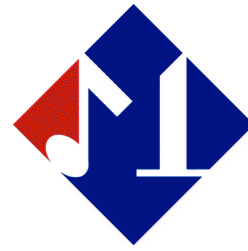


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Australia's representative to the International Music Council



Music Council of Australia

The Secretary
ABC SBS Review

December 12 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

Herewith is a submission to the Review from the Music Council of Australia. The principal author of the submission is Dr Shane Homan.

If there are any questions about the submission, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Homan at the addresses shown on the cover sheet, or me at the addresses shown in the letterhead.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Sincerely

Dr Richard Letts
Executive Director

ABC SBS Review submission cover sheet

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Music Council of Australia

1 ABOUT THE MUSIC COUNCIL

The Music Council of Australia is a fifty-member national peak music organisation for Australia. Its members include nominees of major national music organisations, and distinguished individuals expert in various aspects of music. The membership structure is designed to ensure representation from a broad range of musical genres, the various levels of music education, and the many ways of documenting music and bringing it before its audiences. The Council is the official Australian representative to the UNESCO International Music Council (IMC), Paris, the world peak music organization, and its Executive Director is currently the President. It is also a member of the International Network for Cultural Diversity (INCD), Ottawa.

The Music Council of Australia seeks to bring together all sections of the music community in order to advance a diverse and vibrant musical life throughout Australia. To achieve this, the Council, independently and in partnership, gathers and provides information, conducts research, undertakes advocacy, ensures representation in relevant forums, and initiates and realises projects that advance musical life.

The full scope of the Music Council of Australia's range of activities can be found at the Council's website: <http://www.mca.org.au/>.

2 THE ROLE OF NATIONAL BROADCASTING

2.1 Public Broadcasting

The establishment of the Australian Broadcasting Commission in 1932 introduced the dual model of commercial and public broadcasting for radio and, later, television. Like its earlier counterparts elsewhere (for example, in Canada and Britain), public service broadcasting in Australia derived from a perceived need to provide programming rationales distinct from commercial operatives. The key principles of diversity, independence and innovation for public service broadcasting have been supplemented by explicit objectives of national identity, reach and content within the ABC's charter. The Charter includes specific reference to encouraging and promoting the arts.

It has been convincingly argued that the Australian public broadcasting landscape has broadly adopted the ongoing principles articulated in relation to public broadcasting. These include:

- Universality of availability
- Universality of appeal
- Provision for minorities
- A commitment to the education of the public
- Distance from vested interests
- Freedom for the program-maker

- Fostering a public sphere¹

These fundamental principles should not be diluted in the face of evolutionary change in broadcasting technologies, audience structures and production methods. A contemporary media landscape of multiple broadcasting platforms and services enables public broadcasters to realise their requirements of reaching both national and specialised audiences.

The continuing need for a strong, local public broadcasting sector is in accord with statements made elsewhere:

There is strong community support for an 'Australian' media – that is, a set of industries and media products which speak of and from this country, responsive to and implicated in the interests of local communities and of the national community ... Free market economic rationalism does not automatically accommodate the non-quantifiable social benefits of the national media ... there are still compelling reasons why Australia should try and to remain 'its own place', and why the media must collaborate in that endeavour.²

It is the Music Council's view that as broadcasting content proliferates across increasingly global, multi-media systems, the role of national broadcasters increases in importance as independent, non-commercial spaces that contribute to and shape local and national identities.

2.2 The ABC and the Arts

It is of great concern that the department's discussion paper states that "at present only one domestic programming area – education – is explicitly mandated as a charter requirement for the ABC".³ This ignores the specific requirements in the charter directly related to the provision of arts programming that speaks to the wider role of the ABC in the maintenance of a healthy and vigorous arts environment in Australia.

The Charter sets out only three 'functions for the ABC. One of these three functions is "to encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia".⁴ Yet analysis of arts programming, particularly the role of music and the performing arts, is absent from the discussion paper. Indeed, the word 'music' simply does not appear.

¹ Liz Jacka (2006) 'The future of public broadcasting' in Stuart Cunningham and Graeme Turner (eds.) *The Media and Communications in Australia*, p. 347.

² Graeme Turner and Stuart Cunningham (2006) 'The media and communications today' in Stuart Cunningham and Graeme Turner (eds.) *The Media and Communications in Australia*, pp. 7-8.

³ Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (2008) *ABC and SBS: Towards a digital future*, p. 21.

⁴ ABC (2008) *ABC Charter*, ABC web site: <http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/ABCcharter.htm>.

The absence of music in the discussion paper is part of a broader concern about the continuing role of the arts. Based upon recent ABC programming data, the central place of “musical, dramatic and other performing arts” in the charter is not sustained or observed in practice.

Despite the pattern of successive reductions in budgets endured by the ABC since the 1970s, it has nonetheless maintained a high level of popularity with Australians. The ABC continues to be widely regarded by Australian communities. The most recent survey found that nine in ten Australians believed the ABC provided a ‘valuable’ service, with increasing use of its web site and highly favourable survey ratings of Australian content.⁵ However, there was a decline in respondents’ approval of the ABC’s performance in meeting the charter obligation to encourage and promote the performing arts and represent cultural diversity over the period 1998-2002.⁶

While “some small improvements”⁷ on these issues were recorded in the latest 2007 survey, the longer term trend reveals a consistent view of audiences that the ABC’s support to arts and culture leaves much room for improvement. Older, long term trends of audience views on performing arts broadcasting correspond with and reflect the declining proportion of funding devoted to arts and cultural programs.

The inadequate response to the ABC’s charter requirements in relation to arts and culture has been recognised in one area – television drama, and this subsequently received special dedicated funding in recent federal budgets, designed to increase local television drama production. Similar funding arrangements have not been provided for performing arts, although the Music Council believes that a need exists to correct the historical decline in this area.

As we make clear in section 4, the role of providing content that ensures an informed Australian population is not the sole preserve of news and current affairs content. It appears, however, that news and current affairs content has been largely quarantined from budget reductions, with cultural production forced to shoulder much of the budgetary pressure.

2.3 SBS and the Arts

The Special Broadcasting Service was established in 1975 to provide for the growing minority, multicultural audiences in Australia. SBS “addresses Australians as citizens of a multicultural society [that privileges] tolerance and understandings of difference”.⁸

This is reflected in the SBS Charter: “The principal function of SBS is to provide multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that inform, educate

⁵ Newspoll (2007) *ABC Appreciation Survey – Summary Report*, June, p. 3.

⁶ Newspoll (2007) *ABC Appreciation Survey – Summary Report*, June, p. 55.

⁷ Newspoll (2007) *ABC Appreciation Survey – Summary Report*, June, p. 55.

⁸ Liz Jacka (2006) ‘The future of public broadcasting’, *The Media and Communications in Australia*, p. 347.

and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society.”⁹

SBS surveys about its levels of popularity with audiences, and the extent to which its audiences believe it is fulfilling its charter requirements, do not seem to be available as public documents.

In the current public discussions of both public broadcasters, it is imperative that the *media* objectives of the national broadcaster are not foregrounded at the expense of *cultural* objectives. The Music Council agrees with prior statements made about the ABC's understanding of itself, primarily that:

The ABC is one of the primary cultural institutions of the nation, developing, promoting and disseminating Australian culture in all its diverse forms to both domestic and international audiences. The ABC and national cultural outcomes are inextricably linked. ABC programs on radio, television and online are, in themselves, creative activities.¹⁰

The concept of the ABC as a cultural broadcaster was reinforced at Australia 2020 Summit recommendations, with the ABC and SBS as a “hub of cultural and democratic life”, and the “national town hall” for the interplay of cultural ideas, performances and innovation.¹¹ For this to remain the case, the Music Council concurs with the Summit's call¹² to appropriately fund the arts to guarantee the provision of Australian music content in the public broadcasting sphere.

2.4 The role of public broadcasters within the totality of Australian broadcasting services

The ABC Charter states:

(2) In the provision by the Corporation of its broadcasting services within Australia:

(a) the Corporation shall take account of:

(i) the broadcasting services provided by the commercial and public sectors of the Australian broadcasting system;

The SBS Charter states:

SBS, in performing its principal function, must:

(g) contribute to the overall diversity of Australian television and radio services, particularly taking into account the contribution of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the public broadcasting sector;

⁹ SBS (2008) *SBS Charter*, SBS web site: <http://www20.sbs.com.au/sbscorporate/index.php?id=378>.

¹⁰ ABC (2001) *The Cultural Benefits and Value of Public Broadcasting*, discussion paper, Cultural Ministers' Council, p.5.

¹¹ Commonwealth of Australia (2008) *Australia 2020 Summit*, p. 268.

¹² Commonwealth of Australia (2008) *Australia 2020 Summit*, p. 268.

The summary of objectives in the discussion paper does not refer to this issue of the place of the public broadcaster within the spectrum of broadcast services, although it is one of the keenest issues faced by public broadcasting around the world and is certainly an issue that is constantly alive in the policies and operations of the ABC and SBS. Perhaps it is an issue so ubiquitous that it was not felt necessary to include it specifically in the review. But it is in the Charter, it is of central importance, and if there are to be changes of policy and direction, it must be addressed.

The issue is defined to some extent in clause (2)(a)(iii) of the ABC charter: “the responsibility...to provide a balance between broadcasting programs of wide appeal and specialized broadcasting programs”.

The argument hardly needs to be restated to the members of this review:

- Public broadcasting is paid for by all taxpayers and therefore must serve all taxpayers
- Commercial broadcasters have a much larger audience than do the public broadcasters
- Therefore the public broadcasters should pursue a larger audience by offering programs similar to those of the commercial broadcasters
- But if they do so, why not vacate the field to the commercial broadcasters, who cost the taxpayer nothing?
- Therefore, the public broadcasters must offer programs different from those of the commercial broadcasters, and serving higher public ideals
- But then they will broadcast only to minority audiences and should not be paid for by all taxpayers.

The one inescapable condition in this dilemma is that there is no justification for providing at public expense a service that is already profitably provided commercially.

Nevertheless, in this age where the market is (or perhaps, was!) king, and the success of the commercial stations is measured by audience ratings rather than program quality, there is continuing pressure on the public broadcasters to increase their audiences by emulating the programming style of the commercial sector.

If we are to have public broadcasting, it must provide a different service to that of the commercial sector and the Music Council would assert that that service is best justified by the nature and quality of content and production and the beneficial effects for the nation. The programs are available to all taxpayers and the benefits do serve all taxpayers, even those who do not use the services directly.

The Music Council proposes that the review should present a very forthright statement to that effect, and in turn should seek the government’s forthright support.

It should be noted that obviously, the fact that the public broadcasters do not emulate the commercial broadcasters does not preclude production of “entertaining programs” as a part of the program mix. This issue is taken up in section 4.

Recommendations

- Increase funding across the ABC for the production and broadcasting of music content to levels that are in appropriate proportion to its charter obligation
- SBS to define and quantify its commitment to locally produced music in keeping with its multilingual, multicultural objectives
- State forthrightly that the justification for publicly funded broadcasting lies in its production and presentation of programs that are variously entertaining, informative, artistically profound, culturally diverse, and generally distinct from those available from the commercial broadcasting sector

3 HARNESSING NEW TECHNOLOGIES TO DELIVER SERVICES

The Charter and the principles that are implicit in it must be sustained in any application of new technologies. Broadly speaking, the Charter is “technology-neutral”. Of course, major new production and delivery systems change the nature of the opportunities available to realising the objectives of the Charter. Television added sight where previously radio had only allowed hearing. Interactivity intrinsically changes the relationship to the audience. But an obligation and commitment to local content can be manifested through any media platform. In such matters, there is no justification to bracket new media platforms separately from the traditional media platforms.

3.1 Technological Change

The following has been written in the context of future television strategies, but also applies to all broadcasting forms:

TV is being reshaped, re-imagined and re-invented in unpredictable ways. Broadcasting has become only one of a set of options for the distribution of TV content, alongside cable, DVDs, internet downloads and online video streams. Simultaneously, audiences have embraced new modes of engagement with audio-visual products, with many seamlessly shifting from the role of consumer to that of producer. Broadcasting still reigns, but its place as the normative form is under greater threat than ever.¹³

¹³ Graham Meikle and Sherman Young (2008) ‘Beyond Broadcasting? TV for the Twenty-First Century’, *Media International Australia*, No. 126, p. 67.

The above quote is one of many from industry, academic and other studies that describe how broadcasting, like other media sectors, is undergoing radical shifts in how content is delivered, and when and where audiences choose to engage with its products.

The shift to new technologies has been relatively swift. Recent research indicates that traditional media (free to air television, radio) remain dominant in Australian households. At the same time, the rise of internet, mobile media players and DVD use has been significant:

- 91% of households have internet access
- 97% of households have a mobile phone
- 97% of households have a DVD player
- 76% of households have a portable MP3/MP4 player¹⁴

It is also clear that these technologies are increasingly interacting and overlapping in terms of content and use. In 2008, a song can be simultaneously released on DVD, iPod, mobile phone, radio and music television platforms. Children and young people in particular are 'multi-tasking' across media technologies, often consuming music in relation to other activities (for example, while searching the internet or talking on their mobile phone).¹⁵

This is in keeping with broader technological innovation identified by the Australian Communication and Media Authority, primarily the:

- diversity in the development of physical infrastructure
- continuing spread of distributed connectivity
- enhanced content and network management capabilities
- emerging social web as a platform and database.¹⁶

The fluid nature of digital music in Australians' lives is now being represented in other industry measures. While the Compact Disc remains the dominant format, Australian CD sales have declined since 2002. Digital sales comprised only 8% of all Australian sales in 2007; however, digital sales have consistently increased in the past five years, reflected in the introduction of digital sales charts in 2006.¹⁷

The shift to digital has been reflected in the public broadcasting sector. In 2007, 2.4 million podcast downloads were reported across all ABC radio networks each month, with 4.6 million vodcasts downloaded in the first half of 2007.¹⁸ Recent

¹⁴ Australian Communications and Media Authority (2007) *Media and Communications in Australian Families 2007*.

¹⁵ Australian Communications and Media Authority (2007) *Media and Communications in Australian Families 2007*, p. 68.

¹⁶ Australian Communications and Media Authority (2008) *Top Six Trends in Communications and Media Technologies, Applications and Services – Possible Implications*, p. 1.

¹⁷ International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (2008) 'Australia: recorded music sales 2007', http://www.ifpi.org/content/section_statistics/index.html.

¹⁸ ABC (2007) *Annual Report*, pp. 28, 32.

surveys indicate that young people in particular are granting the ABC increasingly higher approval rates as online services grow and improve.¹⁹

3.2 Music and the Digital Broadcasting Environment

National, public broadcasters have advantages in delivery over commercial rivals. Music content can be a significant means by which public broadcasters maintain and benefit from an internet presence. Innovation can cater to new audiences, particularly as commercial recording companies continue to disagree on universal digital delivery platforms.

Music remains an ideal content form as public service broadcasters move into multi-platform activities. Unlike news and current affairs, it is far less tied to place- and time-specific broadcasting rituals due to various time-shifting media technologies (such as podcasting, vodcasting, mobile phone and media player networks). This reflects an era where an abundance of media content has overtaken older eras of scarcity of distribution and content, from “business models in the analogue world built around aggregating eyeballs”²⁰ to digital models where popular consumption can take many separate and niche forms.

Use of archival programs

There is great scope for the public service broadcasters to digitise its archival and contemporary catalogues. One of the ABC’s stated targets for 2007 included plans to provide greater access to archived material, including converting “60,000 hours of ABC program archives from analog to digital storage by August 2007”.²¹

The Music Council supports the view of the Australia 2020 Summit of the important role of cultural archives in constructing and maintaining audiences for arts content, and as a pathway to creative careers, particularly for young people.²²

The ABC, and to a lesser extent SBS, have substantial music archives of both radio and television content. The digitisation of these archives to allow their online presentation requires budgetary consideration. As part of an arts archive project, music content could incorporate a significant educational and interactive component. It also offers opportunities for public broadcasters to move beyond a ‘soundbites and timelines’ approach to the current online provision of historical material.

Broadband Access

The federal government has committed budget funds to the provision of a national broadband network. Much of the debate about the need for a national broadband network, with capacity at international standards, has emphasised (i)

¹⁹ Newspoll (2007) *ABC Appreciation Survey – Summary Report*, June, pp. 39, 46.

²⁰ Kim Dalton (2008) *CCI International Conference: Creating Value – Broadband Innovations and the Creative Economy*, 26 June, p. 9.

²¹ ABC (2007) *Annual Report*, p. 125

²² Commonwealth of Australia (2008) *Australia 2020 Summit*, p. 260.

the needs of business to remain competitive in a globally networked commercial environment; and (ii) the capacity for a broadband network to remove the current disparities between urban and rural/regional areas in terms of access.

The evident 'digital divide' between the bush and the cities has implications beyond the reliable, prompt access to news and current affairs content as part of the public broadcasters' 'town hall' functions that enable conversations of national importance. It also forms part of a 'cultural digital divide'. This is particularly the case for many music performers who reside in regional locations, and are restrained by access to relatively small live audiences.

Improved broadband access can provide opportunities for regional musical development. Vodcasting, podcasting and live video streaming now form part of both SBS and the ABC's delivery of music content. Much more can be done in the use of these technologies to allow different regional music communities to 'speak to each other'.

There has been some evidence of digital utopianism, evidenced in the implicit belief that simply providing adequate, national broadband standards is enough. Ongoing technological innovation in space- and time-shifting, coupled with a multiplicity of platforms, allows a redefined role for both SBS and the ABC to engage in practical collaboration and access for music forms that exist outside commercial considerations.

Yet without due attention and resources paid to content, improved broadband services will provide a digital 'road to nowhere', and declining pathways to Australian music content.

Recommendations

- Provide specific funding to ABC and SBS to expand digitised archives of music content of historic significance
- SBS and the ABC should expand online programming that increases the viability of music composers and performers located outside the Australian cities

4 INFORMING AND ENTERTAINING AUSTRALIANS

4.1 Information or Entertainment?

Since the establishment of the BBC in the 1920s, public service broadcasters have been charged with requirements to both entertain *and* inform as part of their legislative remit to contribute to national debates and ensure an informed citizenry.

For the ABC, this issue is defined to some extent in clause (2)(a)(iii) of its charter that includes "the responsibility ... to provide a balance between broadcasting programs of wide appeal and specialized broadcasting programs".

For SBS and the ABC, this has required a delicate balancing act in the provision of both mainstream and niche programming. In some cases, where ‘entertaining’ ends, and ‘informing’ begins has been less clear. For example, the ABC’s Triple J has usefully combined political forums for debate with music programming in ways that have proven popular with youth audiences in an era where youth audiences are consuming lesser amounts of traditional news and current affairs services. *Long Way to the Top*, the ABC’s six part history of Australian rock and pop screened in 2001, proved to be a series that entertained while also placing a national history on the public record. The series also trialled interactive components: internet discussions between audiences and major music industry figures featured in the series; internet forums for fans to reminisce and contribute further stories and so on. Produced under various budgetary limitations, *Long Way to the Top* revealed the unique advantages of a national broadcaster in producing national histories that allowed further dialogue between various music communities.

The departmental discussion paper stated that within the commercial sector, the “Seven, Nine and Ten networks have consistently met or exceeded the minimum requirements”.²³ However, with the exception of talent contest shows and a single video hits program, music remains almost absent from commercial television programming – another gap to be filled by the public broadcasters.

In terms of radio, there has been a long and controversial history in relation to Australian music radio broadcasting, encompassing three broad (and consistent) patterns: (i) the historic refusal of commercial radio networks to air a high level of local content, particularly pop, rock and jazz; (ii) the success of local content guidelines in ensuring minimum levels of Australian radio airplay; and (iii) the successful and valued role of the ABC and SBS in airing new and innovative artists that were denied commercial outlets.

Such examples provide some evidence of the public broadcasters’ attempts to produce content that satisfies various, and sometimes conflicting, objectives. Evidence, exists, however, that on television, the rise of alternative programming priorities (‘reality’ documentaries, lifestyle and games shows) have to some extent displaced some forms of arts content. Music obviously forms part of current production decisions to provide ‘entertainment’ as part of the programming mix.

At the same time, there is little justification for the provision at public expense of music content that is already provided within commercial sectors. Further, there is the recurrent danger that as public broadcasters produce increasing amounts of broadcasting of a similar nature to its commercial rivals, increasing calls will be made by their critics for such programs and revenues to be redirected to the commercial sector. A key area here that requires closer scrutiny is the ongoing shift of music content from ‘arts’ to ‘entertainment’ categories, consistent with a

²³ Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital economy (2008) *ABC and SBS: Towards a digital future*, p. 17.

the retreat from distinctive high-end and diverse programming seen more broadly.

Cultural diversity of content is part of public broadcasting's democratic ideals. It not only engenders informed political citizens, but informed *cultural* citizens.

One previous inquiry convincingly argued that "regulation that requires a minimum amount of certain categories of programs to be broadcast is necessary only if it is likely that sufficient quantities of these programs would not otherwise be shown".²⁴ The Music Council strongly believes in the reassertion of this principle in future decisions about the forms of music content, and their relevance to national benefits and outcomes. This includes the notion stated in the departmental discussion paper that a greater emphasis upon "experimental programming could stimulate innovation and risk-taking within Australia's production and creativity sectors".²⁵ This could include both conventional programming of experimental music or experimental productions presenting more conventional music and any mixture of the above.

We add a footnote to this discussion. The spectrum "entertain << >> inform" is not the one usually encountered in discussions of the arts. Rather, "entertainment", pleasant, superficial, even mindless, is at the other end of a spectrum from a selection or combination of characteristics (that perhaps cannot be captured in one word) such as insightfulness, depth, spirituality, challenge, beauty. (Of course, an element of "entertainment" is necessary also at the deep end.) So for the public broadcasters, the issue is not only to balance programs that are entertaining and those that are informative but also, in the arts, those that are simply entertaining with those that are more profound.

The next section of this submission examines specific forms of music content in order to examine how the ongoing debates about 'entertainment' and 'information' are being played out through various programming policies.

4.2 Music Television

Australian television once played an important role in presenting popular music. For example, Channel Seven's *Your Hit Parade* (1950s); *Sounds Unlimited* (1970s); Channel Nine's *Bandstand* (1960s and briefly revived in the 1980s); the ABC's *Countdown* (1970s-80s), *Recovery* and *Rage* all figure prominently in allowing Australian pop communities to gain a distinct sense of national cohesion and identity. These programs, and many others, were also crucial in building touring networks that allowed local artists to construct a national profile.

However, since the mid-1990s, music broadcasting has largely been abandoned by the commercial free to air networks. It is clear that a local popular music program will only be broadcast by commercial television if it is matched to an

²⁴ Productivity Commission (2000) *Broadcasting Inquiry Report*, p. 382.

²⁵ Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital economy (2008) *ABC and SBS: Towards a digital future*, p. 12.

appropriate sponsor, and where the central aim is to present an array of international artists in the contemporary charts. Channel Ten's *Video Hits* represents the sole music program on contemporary commercial television. Foxtel's *Channel V*, a contemporary rock, pop and hip hop program, has no stated local content objectives; Australian artists form part of an international aesthetic of genres, events, documentaries and music videos. And these programs ignore the great range of genres beyond the most obviously popular.

In the classical music area, ABC Television used to broadcast orchestral concerts and opera performances. The issue of opera is addressed at the end of this submission. Television broadcasts of the orchestras have disappeared in recent years. Whether this is related to the divestment of the former ABC orchestras, or has other causes, we do not know. It must be admitted that many of the broadcasts of twenty years ago did not make for arresting television and indeed, may have been mainly for the purpose of filling time for underoccupied orchestras in some of the smaller cities. Nevertheless, Australia has fine orchestras and it is possible to produce televised performances that are highly satisfying. There are at least eight, possibly a dozen orchestras in Australia that could merit television exposure. A weekly program could also include fine performances by the great overseas orchestras.

ABC

Showing late on Friday and Saturday nights since 1987, *Rage* is one of the nation's enduring contemporary popular music programs, and airs a significant amount of Australian music video content. *JTV*, established in July 2006, is the ABC's recent attempt to leverage Triple J's popularity with youth, allowing its better known DJs to present overseas and Australian artists, and the airing of, regional concerts with local artists.

The ABC's new digital channel, ABC2, was launched in March 2005 under two considerable constraints: the lack of additional federal funding provided for new digital services; and legislative obstacles in relation to content forms, designed to limit competition with free to air broadcasters. In 2008, 'Entertainment' represented 11.9% and 'Arts and Culture' represented 4.5% of total ABC2 programming. Music has become a significant component of programming, encompassing jazz, rock and pop concerts and music documentaries. However, the limitations of budget are reflected in the fact that ABC2 often simply replays ABC1 material. Overseas content (such as the 'Live at Montreux' jazz and 'Classic albums' rock series) dominates and programs are subjected to heavy repetition.

Across the ABC, 'Entertainment', incorporating a very diverse range of formats, constituted 15.5% of content in 2006 to 2007.²⁶ For the same period, 'arts and culture' constituted a mere 3.7% of content.²⁷ This latter statistic is accounted for not only by successive federal budget cuts over decades, but also the ABC management's policy of accommodating them by disproportionate cuts to the arts budget as compared to other program areas.

²⁶ ABC (2007) *Annual Report*, p. 184.

²⁷ ABC (2007) *Annual Report*, p. 184.

SBS

Music has a profile on SBS through its popular music contest program *Rockwiz*, the history-documentary series *Great Australian Albums* and its recently commissioned satirical comedy musical *Bogan Pride*. Other programs aired in 2008 have music as their central content; they include *The Secret History of Eurovision*; *No Way, Get F*#ked F*#k Off*, an account of rock band The Angels; *4*, depicting four violinists' performance of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* across the globe; and *Oz Concert*, highlights of the Australia Day concert.

However, the popularity of such programs (particularly *Rockwiz*) masks other long term trends. Firstly, the current SBS music television offerings provide few opportunities for the presentation of new Australian artists or music genres. Secondly, Australian content in the "Entertainment" categories of 'performance/variety' and 'arts', the latter for music content not deemed 'popular music', has collapsed:

SBS Television: Australian Music Content Performance 2004-2008²⁸

	Hours 2004/5	Aust %	Hours 2005/6	Aust %	Hours 2006/7	Aust %	Hours 2007/8	Aust %
Performance / Variety	44	22.7	47	4.3	90	1.1	41	0.6
Arts	117	14.5	127	21.3	155	17.4	101	1.5

The SBS's annual report further reveals that 'Arts' programming accounted for only 2.3% of total programs from 2006 to 2007, and 'Performance/Variety' programming constituted a similarly meagre 1.3% from 2006 to 2007.²⁹ While SBS has considerably smaller annual budgets than the ABC, music and arts similarly constitute insubstantial proportions of overall programming.

4.3 Music Radio

Radio remains a central media forum for Australian music. It plays a critical part in the development and presentation of new artists and music genres, and as a traditional means by which recording companies promote their label repertoire.

ABC

The role of ABC radio has to be firstly understood within the broader mix, and histories, of public and commercial music broadcasting.

Local content measures have been increasingly applied to commercial music radio since the Second World War: 2.5% in 1942; 5% in 1956; 10% in 1973; and 20% in 1976. A 25% standard was adopted for pop/rock, AOR and 'contemporary hits' stations in 1992. Many stations fulfilled their quota requirements by airing old Australian hits. Subsequent amendments from October 1999 have ensured that at least 25 per cent of Australian music played by mainstream rock/contemporary hits stations must be material released in the

²⁸ Compiled from Screen Australia (2007) 'Public broadcasters: SBS: Australian content': <http://www.afc.gov.au/gtp/wftvpbroadsbscontent.html>; and SBS (2008) *Annual Report*, p. 15

²⁹ SBS (2007) *Annual Report*, p. 15.

past year.³⁰ However, in practical terms, when 10 minutes per hour is deducted for advertising, a quarter of the 25% devoted to new releases amounts to a paltry 3.125 minutes of new, Australian content per hour.

The ABC has played a major role in ensuring that Australian artists are heard on Australian radio. This is evident in the amounts of Australian music content currently aired across its radio networks:

ABC: Australian Music Content Performance 2005-2008 ³¹

Program	Target %	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Triple J	40	41.7%	39.6%	41.1%
Classic FM	30	36%	34.8%	34.6%
DIG	40	40.5%	42.2%	40.5%
Radio National	25	35.3%	33.9%	30.2%

Little research has been conducted on the influence of music radio quotas upon local chart and live performance success. However, there is abundant informal evidence, for instance through the payola scandals and their successors in the U.S., where record companies were so convinced of the association that they were prepared to put money and reputation behind bribing broadcasters to air their tracks. There are formal assessments that argue that increased music quotas have historically resulted in increased local CD sales and make a contribution to the viability of local artists.³²

Community stations have demonstrably high commitments to airing local popular music. The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia can provide statistics that show that member stations generally exceed the local content requirements accepted by that sector, as defined in this CBAA document:

3.1 Community broadcasters will ensure a proportion of the total number of musical items broadcast consist of: (a) not less than 25% Australian music items for all community broadcasting licensees except ethnic and classical stations as cited Clause 3.1(b) below; (b) not less than 10% Australian musical items for ethnic and classical stations. (c) (a) and (b) to be determined over one month. ³³

For example, Fbi in Sydney airs 50% Australian music, with half of this amount dedicated to Sydney acts.

³⁰ Australian Broadcasting Authority (2000) *Commercial Radio Codes of Practice*.

³¹ ABC (2007 and 2008) *Annual Reports*.

³² Paul Mason (2003) 'Assessing the impact of Australian music requirements for radio', Music Council of Australia: <http://www.mca.org.au/web/content/view/104/6>.

³³ Australian Communication and Media Authority (2008) 'Community radio', http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_300283.

Within youth radio, the ABC's Triple J has shouldered much of the burden in presenting new acts through the implementation of its 40% local content quota. Within limited air space devoted to music, local ABC stations have provided much needed support for local musicians. Newcastle ABC remains a good example, as a co-sponsor of the local music awards event and providing airplay and other forms of support to award winners.

Dig radio, an automated broadcast available on digital television and the internet, is a further example of the possibilities of future programming. Dig offers jazz, rock, pop, blues, soul, country and folk music for baby boomer audiences "who want an interesting, eclectic and alternative mix of music that they cannot get from existing radio services".³⁴ At the same time, its automated nature utilises a fairly narrow range of possibilities in an emerging media era of two-way relationships between audiences and producers. Multichannelling, using a wider radio spectrum, offers the opportunity for more imaginative programming that can cater to niche audiences and musics.

As the above compiled table reveals, all four sectors of ABC radio in 2008 have met or exceeded their local content objectives. As the number of delivery platforms increases, and the number of music genres and subgenres, it is important that ABC radio maintains this commitment to local artists and audiences.

SBS

A significant element of SBS music radio is *Alchemy*, an interactive radio site that incorporates a range of musics, musician interviews and topics of a global nature. The site emphasises multicultural musics, including the *African Vine* and *Asian Pop Music Show(s)*.

SBS Music has established a distribution partnership with Universal Music. This partnership offers fruitful possibilities for the release of new, multicultural Australian musics in addition to the existing emphasis upon commercial, global artists who are already established.³⁵

SBS radio continues to play an important role in conducting outside broadcasts of community events, many where music is an integral part of local cultural festivals.³⁶ However, the large proportion of these outside broadcasts are situated in Sydney and Melbourne. More could be done in the use of OBs to reflect a truly national reach that achieves greater geographical (and cultural) diversity.

Unlike the ABC, SBS has no voluntary or mandated local content requirements. Indeed, SBS possesses no requirements in its charter to broadcast Australian musics related to its multicultural functions. The establishment of Australian music content quotas for SBS radio is required as part of the public broadcaster's

³⁴ ABC (2005) *Inquiry into the Introduction of Digital Radio*, April, p. 11

³⁵ The 'top selling SBS music releases 2007' included Buddy Holly Gold, Robert Plant and Alison Krauss and the *Skins* television program soundtrack (SBS 2008 *Annual Report*, p. 50).

³⁶ SBS (2008) 'SBS outside broadcasts', *Annual Report*, p. 76.

commitment to airing the full diversity of Australian artists who engage with world musics. We understand that SBS has an aspiration to engage with and support local performers of ethnic musics and the various evolutions and hybrid forms that derive from them. A financial commitment by both the government and the management could support such objectives.

4.4 Live music allocation

Live broadcasts were once an important component for both classical and popular music programs, particularly for the ABC. The live broadcast represents an important distinction from other broadcasting forms, enabling a different form of connection between audiences and performers that has been of enormous benefit to the local music industries. Classic FM management, for instance, avers that its audience is very much drawn to live music programs. It can tell the difference between the live music concert and the carefully perfected recording performances. Live programming can make an occasion for artists to bring before the public musical ideas that would not necessarily be committed to disc for commercial release. It opens up a new area of possibility.

The departmental discussion paper notes that for television, “Australian-produced drama programming typically costs between \$500 000 and \$1 million per hour”.³⁷ A similar budget for music radio could produce perhaps one hundred to two hundred hours of live or contracted special music programming.

Furthermore, ABC facilities do allow the production of master recordings from these live performances, and they can be made available to ABC Records or if declined there, to ABC online facilities, or other specialist small labels or even the artists themselves to reach an additional audience without further cost to the ABC. Were SBS to commit to live performance, similar possibilities would be available there.

Funding for live music performance has been declining for decades. The funding has been further threatened recently from the increasing budget pressures related to digitisation and cross-platform delivery. An increased allocation of funds to and by the ABC and SBS for the purpose of live music production across their radio networks represents an innovative means for the broadcasters to encourage and promote Australian performers and composers.

4.5 Open contracting for public broadcasting content

The departmental discussion paper opens up the question of specific public funding for certain forms of public broadcasting “on a contestable basis”.³⁸ The example cited is that of NZ On Air, a New Zealand government initiative established in the late 1980s to increase the amount of New Zealand content on local radio and television networks.

³⁷ Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital economy (2008) *ABC and SBS: Towards a digital future*, p. 16.

³⁸ Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital economy (2008) *ABC and SBS: Towards a digital future*, p. 40.

The special circumstances of this initiative need to be considered. It should be understood that the NZ On Air initiative operates as a supplement to local music standards, where music radio content levels remain lower than existing Australian radio content. New Zealand music airplay on commercial radio in 2007 was 19.43%, with an overall eventual target of 20%.³⁹ Careful consideration is also needed of the extent to which such funding assists commercial operations in the public interest. A proportion of NZ On Air funding is devoted to the production of music videos, music programs and even reimbursement of recording costs for commercial consumption.

In its campaign prior to election in the 1990s, the New Zealand Labour Party promised to introduce local music content requirements on radio. However, upon election, the government discovered that to introduce such requirements would mean abrogation of free trade commitments made by the previous government under GATS, with financial penalties it could not afford. It negotiated with the radio sector a voluntary local content objective but for its part, had to make a financial commitment to the program now known as NZ On Air. It was a costly way to achieve something that could have been done at no public cost through regulation. However, NZ On Air has proved itself a very effective program in increasing production and marketing of New Zealand music.

The development of a similar statutory agency in Australia could be appropriate in delivering a greater proportion of Australian music content, particularly in new, online contexts. However, it should not be considered as a substitute for ongoing commitments by both public and commercial broadcasting industries to Australian music content requirements.

Beyond this specific possibility, we note that the task of a small staff in streaming radio programs 24 hours, seven days a week does not leave time or energy for special productions – say, for instance, a radio series capturing the history of particular artists or exploring the Australian manifestations of a particular musical genre. Ideas for such programs may be more likely to come from those outside the networks and without the burden of keeping the broadcasters active full time. The allocation of funds to invite and contract for the production of such programs – as has indeed happened in the past – would be very fruitful.

Recommendations

- That SBS establish local content objectives for Australian music for its television and radio networks
- That funding is made available to both public broadcasters for the purpose of live music production across their radio networks
- That two of the ABC's networks, Classic FM and Triple J, increase the output of live music presentations

³⁹ Judith Tizard, New Zealand Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage (2008) Launch of NZ Music Month, 1 May speech.

- That SBS Radio increases its output of live music programs and recordings of Australian performers of ethnic and ethnically-derived music
- That both ABC and SBS television networks increase production of shows featuring local music composition and performance
- That the ABC and/or SBS introduce a weekly television program to showcase Australian and overseas symphony orchestras
- Consideration of contestable funding for specific broadcasting objectives to be considered as a supplement, and not a substitute for Australian music content objectives

5 EDUCATION, SKILLS AND PRODUCTIVITY

5.1 Music, the Public Broadcasters and Education

The Music Council notes the ABC's plans for an education channel ('ABC5') as part of its digital, multi-channel future.⁴⁰ Opportunities exist for this channel to enter into creative partnerships with state and federal education departments for the production and delivery of music programs. ABC5 would be a suitable channel for the dissemination of existing music content with educational objectives.

In this sense, both public broadcasters can play a role in the music aspects of the national education curriculum currently being created by the federal government. There are various roles for music within national educational programs, particularly in the case of interactive distance education. The Music Council recommends that these possibilities, and their wider national benefits, be further explored.

5.2 Music and the Creative Economy

According to a recent study, music and the performing arts constituted 7% of the creative industries workforce, while film and television constituted 8%.⁴¹ In 2001, the annual average rate of growth of the creative workforce was 5%, well above the total workforce growth rate of 1.9%,⁴² corresponding with global evidence of the increasing proportion of employment driven by the creative industries.

Music is one the four "core creative arts" (with the performing arts, literature and the visual arts) within the Australian cultural industries.⁴³

⁴⁰ Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital economy (2008) *ABC and SBS: Towards a digital future*, p. 9.

⁴¹ Peter L. Higgs, Stuart Cunningham, Janet D. Pagan (2007) *Australia's creative economy: Basic evidence on size, growth, income and employment*, QUT.

⁴² Peter L. Higgs, Stuart Cunningham, Janet D. Pagan (2007) *Australia's creative economy: Basic evidence on size, growth, income and employment*, QUT.

⁴³ David Throsby (2008) *Creative Australia: The Arts and Culture in Australian Work and Leisure*, Academy for the Social Sciences, Canberra, p. 12.

It is conservatively estimated that the Australian music industries contributed \$6.8 billion to the economy in 2007.⁴⁴ While music-making and its ancillary industries remain a significant sector of the Australian economy, our financial performance in the international sphere is unsatisfactory. In 2005-06, overseas countries paid \$41m in music royalties to Australia. Australia paid almost five times this amount in royalties to overseas countries, incurring a debit of \$213m.⁴⁵ This statistic reinforces an historical pattern of Australia as a net importer of music trade across all music forms and genres. It should be said that the trade imbalance does not necessarily reflect musical inadequacies so much as inadequacies in broad music education at one end and export marketing at the other.

At the same time, the growth in the Australian music sector mirrors the overall growth of the local creative economy more generally, a phenomenon that has occurred largely in the absence of cultural policy planning:

Australia has experienced somewhat the same patterns of growth in its creative sector as have other countries, when observed in terms of contribution to GDP or to employment. To some extent this has happened without significant policy intervention, at least at the Federal level ... Thus although Australia may not unequivocally be described as a creative economy at the present time, there are certainly elements in the system which are pointing in that direction. But a stronger policy involvement, especially at the Federal level, is likely to be needed in the future if Australia is to maintain or enhance its established and emerging strengths in the development of creative skills across the economy at large.⁴⁶

Public service broadcasting is a crucial element of the local creative economy. As discussed elsewhere in this submission, the ABC and SBS could provide important outlets for new forms of music creativity, ensuring that Australian artists are presented to audiences within a truly global flow of musics and platforms. Indeed, at times the role of public broadcasters can be viewed similarly to that of 'indie' (independent) recording labels, given their track record in identifying new music genres, and taking more risks in airing new talent that has yet to realise a commercial value or audience.

Particularly in the youth sector, ABC's Triple J has become an important training ground for less experienced musicians. Its 'Unearthed' competition regularly provides an entry point for new bands to build successful local and international

⁴⁴ Hans Hoegh-Goldberg (2007) 'Estimating the value of the sector', *Music Knowledge Database*, Music Council of Australia:

http://www.mca.org.au/web/component/option,com_kb/task,article/article,9/.

⁴⁵ Music Council of Australia (2007) *Music in Australia: A Statistical Overview*:

http://www.culturaldata.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/58544/Music_in_Australia_A_Statistical_Overview.pdf

⁴⁶ David Throsby (2008) *Creative Australia: The Arts and Culture in Australian Work and Leisure*, Academy for the Social Sciences, Canberra, p. 27.

careers. Similarly, an outdoor Triple J broadcast may be a band's first experience of a large outdoor concert.

Continuing growth in the Australian creative economy is not only contingent upon the maintenance of existing local strengths. Public service broadcasters can continue to play an important role in the presentation of new musics, exploiting their national reach in binding regional audiences, composers and performers.

5.3 Skills and training

The ABC in particular can play a greater role in the skill building that remains integral to the creative economy. We have previously noted the role that music broadcasting can play in national education programs. The ABC has scope to expand upon its present excellent reputation in music production and training, encompassing the training of staff in recording, studio engineering, outside broadcasting and other skills related to music production.

The ABC and SBS could play a leading role in the skills training required for future digital landscapes and soundscapes. This could take the form of cadetships and mentorships in the new areas of digital archiving, transition of analogue programming to digital platforms and the like. Such positions in the public broadcasting workforce would make a significant contribution to the creation of a national workforce equipped to keep pace with global, digital environments.

Recommendations

- The investigation of creative partnerships between state and federal education departments and the public broadcasters for the provision of music broadcasting on the future digital education channel
- That the public broadcasters bolster their commitment of belief and resources to the support of musical and artistic innovation, even despite the knowledge that there is a smaller audience for the unfamiliar
- That the public broadcasters add their support to finding new ways for Australian musicians and other artists to reach and persuade international audiences through the new digital platforms
- The introduction of new forms of cadetships and mentorships designed to increase the public broadcasters' skills base in digital media production

6 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

6.1 Music programming and diversity

As discussed elsewhere in this submission, the ABC and SBS have an admirable history of programming that has sought to engage audiences and music genres not considered by the commercial sector. Public broadcasting continues to play a role in social inclusion policies as media sectors that engage in much broader programming and regional diversity. It is a most valuable contribution to the quality and diversity of Australian musical life.

Successive waves of immigration have delivered great ethnic and cultural diversity to the Australian population. However, much more can be done in translating multicultural broadcasting to generate the creation of new music.

There is great scope for both public broadcasters to engage more fully with music organisations that currently exist in urban and regional areas, both big and small. Music can play a greater role in the practical implementation of social inclusion objectives as outlined in the *Australia 2020 Summit* themes of community and diversity. These themes remain connected to wider creative and cultural objectives:

So in any consideration of Creative Australia it is important to move beyond the production of creative output in the cultural industries, and look at the ways in which members of the Australian population at large engage with the arts and culture, either through active involvement or as consumers.⁴⁷

Both broadcasters, particularly SBS, can do much more as the central broadcasting forums for the encouragement and promotion of world music composition and performance. As a category of music that encompasses a range of global flows and music genres:

World music activity in Australia taps into the global structures of the northern hemisphere-dominated world music movement and industry and is influenced by trends in the wider market, but it is also highly localised. In particular, the Australian world music scene has been enriched both by Indigenous music and the music of multicultural Australia, that is, the traditional music, or neo-traditional, revived, arranged, folkloricised, adapted or hybridised music performed by migrants from Australia's minority ethnic groups, their descendants or others for mainstream consumption. Therefore, world music in Australia is as much an expression of Australia's multi-ethnic and multicultural society and of local identity as it is a phenomenon of globalisation.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ David Throsby (2008) *Creative Australia: The Arts and Culture in Australian Work and Leisure*, Academy for the Social Sciences, Canberra, p. 23.

⁴⁸ Aline Scott-Maxwell (2008) 'Localising Global Sounds: World Music and Multicultural Influences in Australia' in Shane Homan and Tony Mitchell (eds.) *Sounds of Then, Sounds of Now: Popular Music in Australia*, p. 31.

World music performances and programs can continue to provide practical and valued representations of diverse musics and peoples, allowing engagement within and between local cultures. For example, world music broadcasts are one measure of SBS' commitment as a multicultural broadcaster is its continuing ability to broadcast and reach households in languages other than English.⁴⁹ This has been achieved through various world music programs on SBS radio. Within the language broadcasts designed for particular immigrant groups, much of the music aired is a continuation of the musical traditions derived from former homelands. There is great potential for the airing of new, contemporary world musics in these programs, performed by Australians.

The Music Council proposes funding specifically in support of a program by SBS Radio to encourage, produce and promote world music created by Australians.

On the ABC, Radio National's two long-running shows, *Music Deli* and *The Planet*, have been especially influential. Both programs present artists and music genres that combine and interact with different ethnic and non-ethnic forms. Greater effort could be made in both programs, however, to increase the breadth and diversity of programming to include more genres that are not contemplated by commercial networks.

As digital media platforms continue to be rolled out, radio in its traditional form remains the most accessible media form for all Australians. As such, radio – particularly public radio – is a great facilitator and force in the social lives of Australians. The continuing use of this form of 'old media' is an important factor in ongoing discussions of how media play a role in social inclusion objectives.

6.2 Digitisation and diversity

The opportunities offered by the additional digital channels for even greater musically diverse programming are among the great benefits made possible by the new technologies. The Music Council supports the creation of digital audio channels by the public broadcasters to increase the diversity of musical genres that are broadcast.

6.3 International promotion

A great more can be done to engage the international market for Australian produced world music. For example, an annual SBS presence at the Australian stand at the world music expo, WOMEX, could enrich its offering of Australian recordings and performances.

At the domestic level, SBS could investigate a commercial relationship with ABC Records or other commercial companies for the release of local recordings, or further utilise its digital platforms to release recordings online. Significant cross-promotional opportunities also exist for SBS to engage with local, commercial festivals such as *Womadelaide*.

⁴⁹ SBS (2008) *Annual Report*, p. 84.

Cultural diversity of content remains part of the democratic ideal of public broadcasting. Music stands as the pre-eminent cultural form that transcends language and other barriers, making it a valuable plank in social inclusion and cultural diversity objectives.

Recommendations

- That a world music production program be funded by SBS radio to encourage and promote world music created by Australians
- That multicultural and world musics be part of future digital audio channels created by SBS and the ABC to increase the diversity of musical genres
- The ABC and SBS to investigate new local and international avenues for the promotion of multicultural musics produced by Australians

7 PRESENTING AUSTRALIA TO THE WORLD

We have already stated that in terms of global music trade, Australia remains a net importer of music product. The adoption of new digital technologies provides new opportunities of presenting Australian musicians to the world. These will become increasingly important, given the abolition of former federal government initiatives (such as DFAT international touring programs for Australian musicians) designed to promote Australian cultural forms.

7.1 Radio Australia

Several initiatives have been proposed in the previous section designed to lift the international promotion of Australian music. Beyond these, the ABC's Radio Australia is a central promotional forum for the presentation of music to Australia's neighbours. It broadcasts in "seven languages and focus[es] uniquely on the Pacific and Asia".⁵⁰

The main music broadcasts at present are contained in the *Awaye!*, *Australia Country Style* and *Jazz Notes* programs. There is the possibility of far greater diversity of music programming, presenting Australian music both in its more local and unique forms, notably Indigenous traditional music, as well as the internationally prevalent genres such as rock music and Western classical music.

7.2 Opera Australia

ABC Television has in the past collaborated with the national opera company, Opera Australia, in efforts to construct a national audience through the recording and broadcasting of a portion of its stage productions. Budgetary pressures have led to the discontinuation of this collaboration. Given the existing large government investments in such stage productions, the media exposure afforded through televised

⁵⁰ Radio Australia (2008) website: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/programguide/>

performances provides additional benefits for both the broadcaster and company for little additional investment. The Music Council proposes the reinstatement of televised Opera Australia productions.

In addition, consideration can be given to replicating the media strategies of international opera companies. For example, video recordings of major international companies such as the Metropolitan Opera in New York and the San Francisco Opera have been given brief cinema releases in Australia and around the world, attracting high capacity audiences. While these companies enjoy economies of scale, possibilities exist for Opera Australia productions to achieve international releases through similar cinema strategies.

The Music Council proposes further collaboration between the ABC and Opera Australia to secure domestic and international audiences for televised and cinema productions.

Recommendations

- The ABC provide greater and more diverse music programming on Radio Australia as a means of presenting Australian music to the world
- The funding of further collaboration between the ABC and Opera Australia to secure domestic and international audiences for televised and cinema productions.

8 EFFICIENT DELIVERY OF SERVICES

The Music Council has suggested in previous sections of this submission a number of areas where the public broadcasters can enter into creative and commercial collaborations with educational and music industry sectors as a means of achieving the efficient delivery of music content.