

# ABC Myths and Facts

This information provided by the Friends of the ABC (SA) Inc. P.O. Box 7158 Hutt St SA 5000

**Myth:** Why should taxpayers pay for the ABC, only a minority use it.

**Fact:** A survey conducted by Australian Nationwide Opinion Polls in 1990 found that nearly nine out of ten Australians over 15 (86 per cent), use ABC Radio and/or Television each week. ABC audiences have grown slightly since 1990.

**Myth:** The ABC is wasteful and inefficient.

**Fact:** The ABC is far more efficient than commercial broadcasting in Australia, and significantly more cost effective than the BBC.

It costs less to run all of the ABC's services (one television network, five radio networks, Radio Australia's overseas service, ABC Online, 24 ABC shops and six symphony orchestras) than it does to run the Channel 9 television network. After all these years the ABC still costs Australians less than 10 cents a day.

Compared to its British and Canadian counterparts the ABC is very cost efficient. In 1996 ABC-TV's budget per household was \$53.00 p.a., while the British Broadcasting Corporation spent \$95.00 p.a. for each household and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation spent \$74.00 p.a. For a more detailed analysis of the ABC's efficiency, a report by Professor Glenn Withers is available by contacting us, or through our website.

**Myth:** The ABC is biased.

**Fact:** High profile businessman Mr Bob Mansfield was appointed to review the ABC by the Prime Minister, Mr. Howard. Mr Mansfield reported in his Review of the ABC that allegations of bias in the ABC were largely unfounded.

A survey conducted by Newspoll and released in January 2000 revealed that 87% of respondents rated ABC TV as good or very good, but only 43% rated commercial TV as good or very good. Ninety percent of respondents gave ABC radio the tick of approval, compared to 67% for commercial radio.

An AGBMcNair survey of radio and television coverage of the 1996 elections found that two thirds (67%) of those who saw ABC TV's election coverage was balanced, while only 63% thought that commercial coverage was balanced. In 1995 an Appreciation Survey conducted by ABC Audience Research found that two thirds of listeners (65%) believed ABC radio was even handed in its coverage of politics..

**Myth:** Australians don't need a public broadcaster.

**Fact:** The Australian people see the ABC as the institution which extends the greatest positive influence towards them today.

A survey conducted by Taverner research company for the Sun-Herald (21 Jan 96) on "good and bad influences on Australia today", revealed that "the ABC was the big winner as far as institutions go, with 85% of respondents

saying it had a good effect on Australian society”.

An important national survey on public attitudes towards the ABC was published in the Sydney Morning Herald on 27-28 June 96. The polling showed widespread public support for the ABC and opposition to funding cuts, even from those who do not use the ABC. 85% of the respondents believed that the ABC’s budget should be maintained or increased.

**Myth: The ABC does not cater for mainstream Australia.**

**Fact: Nine out of ten Australians use an ABC service each week.**

The ABC Charter, which is part of the ABC Act, requires the ABC “to provide a balance between broadcasting programs of wide appeal and specialized broadcasting programs”.

Thus the Triple J and Local Radio stations broadcast programs of wide popular appeal, while ABC Classic FM, Radio National and News Radio broadcast more specialised programs.

Popular programs on ABC TV include Sea Change and The Bill, while more specialist programs include Lateline, Media Watch and Compass.

**The ABC provides comprehensive services including;**

- \* A television network
- \* 4 national radio networks - (Radio National, Triple J, Classic FM and NewsRadio )
- \* 9 Metropolitan Radio stations
- \* 48 Regional Radio stations
- \* ABC Online - one of Australia’s top web sites
- \* Radio Australia
- \* 24 ABC shops

***It is this comprehensiveness that guarantees services to mainstream Australia.***

**Myth: Most people think that commercial radio and TV is better than the ABC.**

**Fact: Most Australians rate ABC TV as good, a minority think commercial TV is good.**

A survey conducted by Newspoll in 1988 found that 86 percent of respondents rated ABC TV programming as good, compared to only 44 percent for commercial TV.

Similarly ABC Radio scored 88 percent compared to commercial radio’s 66 percent.

**Myth: Commercial broadcasting is free, but we have to pay for the ABC through our taxes.**

**Fact: The average Australian household pays \$470.00 per year for commercial radio and television.**

This is built into the price of everything we consume to finance the \$3billion spent every year on commercial radio and television advertising.

### **Friends of the ABC**

Our aim is to defend and promote the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in its vital role as an independent, national broadcaster.

We vigorously oppose all efforts to censor the ABC and oppose all forms of sponsorship and advertising for it.

We continually remind all political parties of the importance of the ABC and seek funds from the government to enable it to operate effectively.

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