

## Quentin Dempster's response to the Report of Senate Inquiry into 'Recent ABC Program Changes'

I've read the report and it finds that the concerns of ABC staff and the Friends about dismantling the skills base within ABC television production are justified.

The distressing aspect of all this is that the ABC has ignored the inquiry's findings. As at today's date (November 24<sup>th</sup>) we still haven't seen the three year TV production schedule promised by ABC management.

In the meantime redundancies of skilled broadcasters in arts programming and other areas are being sought. We are about to lose our specialist expertise in arts coverage.

Leaked documents indicate that outsourced programming can be very expensive, particularly where outside production companies have negotiating leverage, which consequently leaves the ABC with no IP – intellectual property – or archive.

The ABC has made itself entirely dependent on the commercial television production sector for almost all its non-news programming.

This is a strategic mistake which over time will add to our costs. Neither the MD nor the Director of Television produced any rebuttal evidence to submissions that it is demonstrably cheaper to make television in-house, given the taxpayer investment in the ABC's studios, sound stages, rehearsal spaces and post-production technology around the country. These assets are currently under utilised. The ABC does not pay state payroll tax or company tax and has a clear operating cost advantage over the commercials because of this. The ABC does not pay an efficiency dividend.

The strategy of the current ABC board and management is destructive of the ABC's creative independence. The only hope we have to restore that creative independence is through the current convergence review where the adequacy of funding for the broadcaster can be confronted.

Quentin Dempster  
Presenter, 7.30 NSW