



Australian Government

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**

Review of options to support the independence of the national broadcasters

Frequently asked questions

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1. Scope of the review

1.1 General

1.1.1 What will the review consider?

The review will consider options for strengthening the independence of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), to safeguard against funding cuts and political interference.

Terms of reference for the review have been developed in consultation with the national broadcasters which outline the topics that will be considered as part of the review. They can be viewed at: www.infrastructure.gov.au/natbroadcastersreview.

1.1.2 Will the review consider operational matters of the ABC and SBS, including programming and editorial decisions?

No, the review will not consider operational matters of the ABC and SBS, such as:

- programming and editorial decisions, and the handling of complaints
- staffing decisions, including remuneration and salaries
- charging for content
- models of production
- delivery of broadcast and digital services
- transmission services and infrastructure
- property management and decentralisation.

The ABC and SBS have operational independence under the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* and the *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991*. The above matters are the responsibility of the national broadcasters' respective boards and executives.

1.1.3 Will the review consider a merger of the ABC and SBS?

No.

1.1.4 Will the review consider issues relating to the SBS Relocation Feasibility Study?

No, the SBS Relocation Feasibility Study will be delivered by a steering committee appointed by the Minister for Communications on 27 April 2023. Any decision to relocate the SBS will lie with the SBS Board.

Further information on the study can be found at: www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-communications-arts/national-broadcasters/sbs-relocation-feasibility-study.

1.1.5 Will the review consider broader government reviews?

Yes, where relevant, broader government reviews will be considered.

For example, the department will engage with Ms Lynelle Briggs AO's Review of Public Sector Board Appointments Processes (Briggs Review), given the overlap in issues relating to government board appointments. It is expected that the final report for the Briggs Review will be provided to the government in 2023.

Further information on the Briggs Review can be found at:

www.apsreform.gov.au/resources/communication/review-public-sector-board-appointments-processes.

1.2. Funding

1.2.1 What will the review consider in relation to funding for the national broadcasters?

The department is seeking views on options to protect agreed and announced 5-year funding levels for the ABC and SBS. The review's terms of reference have been provided in the consultation paper.

1.2.2 Will the review consider the amount of funding provided to the national broadcasters, including proposals for additional funding?

No, the review will only consider potential mechanisms for implementing and maintaining announced 5-year funding terms at the funding levels announced by the government. Funding for the ABC and SBS over the next 5 years was announced in the 2023-24 Budget.

1.2.3 Will the review consider funding decisions of previous governments?

No, the review will only consider potential mechanisms for implementing and maintaining announced 5-year funding terms at the funding levels announced by the government.

1.2.4 Will the review consider the ABC generating revenue from advertising?

No, the review will not consider any changes to advertising for both the ABC and SBS.

1.3. Board appointments

1.3.1 What will the review consider in relation to board appointments for the national broadcasters?

The department is seeking views on options to promote the independence of the national broadcasters' boards. The review's terms of reference have been provided in the consultation paper.

1.3.2 Will the review consider the suitability of current or former appointees to the ABC and SBS boards?

No, the review will only consider matters relating to the process for making appointments to the ABC and SBS Boards.

2. Conducting the review

2.1 Who is undertaking the review?

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts is undertaking the review.

2.2 How can I make a submission?

The department has prepared a consultation paper to assist the public's consideration of issues in the review's terms of reference. Submissions addressing the issues raised in the consultation paper can be lodged at:

www.infrastructure.gov.au/natbroadcastersreview.

Alternatively, submissions can be mailed to:

Director, National Broadcasters

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

GPO Box 594

Canberra ACT 2601

2.3 How will submissions help inform recommendations?

Public consultation will ensure that the government obtains a comprehensive understanding of the public's views and expectations on issues relevant to the review.

2.4 Will the national broadcasters be able to contribute to the review?

Yes, the national broadcasters have been invited to make submissions.

2.5 Will late submissions be accepted?

The department will only accept late submissions where it has been agreed to do so prior to the closing date for public consultation.

Noting the variable timeframes for postage delivery, written submissions mailed prior to the conclusion of the public consultation period will be accepted should they arrive outside of this period.

2.6 Will submissions and comments be published or shared with other parties?

All submissions will be made publicly available by the department unless a respondent specifically requests that their submission, or a part of their submission, be kept confidential, and acceptable reasons are provided. Comments will help inform the review in the same manner as submissions, but will not be published on the website.

The department is subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, which may require the department to disclose submissions and comments in response to requests made under that Act.

The department reserves the right not to publish any submission, or part of a submission, which in its view contains potentially defamatory material, or for confidentiality reasons.

3. Making recommendations

3.1 When will the department provide its recommendations to the government?

The department expects to provide its recommendations to the government in the second half of 2023.

3.2 What will happen after the department provides its recommendations to the government?

It is a matter for the government to determine next steps, including whether to accept or implement the recommendations.