

# Inquiry into the competitive neutrality of Australia’s national broadcasters

## Submission – Abigail Watkins (21 June 2018)

### Question 8: Considering the commercial activities of the national broadcasters (e.g. where they are selling or purchasing goods and services), is there evidence that they have taken undue advantage of their government ownership, to the detriment of competitive outcomes?

### No, I don't believe so. Considering that there is a healthy array of viable commercial stations operating alongside the ABC and SBS, it is unlikely that the ABC and SBS have taken undue advantage of their government ownership. They provide a service that is different from, and not necessarily in competition with commercial broadcasters.

### Question 9: What is the differential impact of regulation on commercial and national broadcasters, and is there evidence of consequent adverse impacts on competition and outcomes?

### I am not sure of the exact rules of regulation on the commercial and national broadcasters, however, again, there is room for both, clearly, as there is a lot of commercial radio and television happily living alongside the national broadcasters, and each station offers something different. It would be a profound loss to commercialise the ABC and SBS. Indeed, I have grave concerns that, for example, commercial television is influencing a potential rule change of our great game, Australian Rules Football. They want the game to be shorter and more conducive to the time slots and pace of a commercial station. This is outrageous. If commercial interests, as fickle as they are, can influence a 150 year old game in this way, then they will surely influence the type of information the public will receive. I trust the ABC and SBS to provide a balanced view of the world, because they are not driven by commercial interests. Commercial interests are self interests of corporations, and are not necessarily in the best interests of the public.

### Question 10: Is the reporting and accountability by the national broadcasters on their best endeavours to observe competitive neutrality adequate?

### I trust that there are stops in place to do this. I do not want to live in an Australia that does not have a non commercially driven media. It would be quite terrifying. We must keep the ABC. It is one of Australia's most valuable social assets. Social assets should not be degraded by commercial interests. Question 11: Are you aware of any specific instances where the ABC or SBS may have received any other competitive advantage, due to their public ownership, to the detriment of a private competitor?

### They are in a different category, and not necessarily competing, and should remain so. Again, there is room for both a well-funded national broadcaster and commercial television and radio. They provide different services. They each have their own character. It is important to have both a nationally owned and operated broadcaster and commercial radio and television stations.

### Question 12: The SBS Charter requires it to take into account the activities of the ABC and community television on radio and television. In the context of the competitive neutrality principles how in your view, is the SBS complying with this requirement? From your perspective does it adequately cover the activities of the SBS?

### Again, I believe that the ABC and SBS are separate from commercial tv and radio. The multi-cultural programming that the SBS provides would not exist in a solely commercial broadcasting arena and therefore must continue to be funded. The multi-cultural programming of the SBS is so very valuable to Australia, as we are a nation of immigrants. We would be a poorer country without it.

### Question 13: From your perspective do the national broadcasters seek a balance between competing in the market and complementing the market? Is that balance the same for traditional broadcasting and for new digital platforms?

### Yes, I believe that the national broadcasters do seek to complement rather than compete in the market. If they were competing, then they'd be more like the commercial stations, and they are not. They provide a service that complements the commercial offerings. It is a very nice balance in Australia, to have the both. We are very lucky.

### Question 14: Do you have comment on these guiding principles?

### I support a well-funded national broadcaster and believe that without it, Australia would be a far poorer place to live. I've lived overseas for much of my adult life, and, since returning, have really come to appreciate the value of the mix of national and commercial broadcasters in Australia. It is quite unique and very valuable to us. Please do not allow those would gain from a commercially driven media to kill our very valuable social assets, indeed our heritage, that are the ABC and SBS.