

Second submission to Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications, Legislation Committee, inquiry into Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015

29 September 2016

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a second submission on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015.

Since our last submission we have published a research report relevant to this inquiry, *No politics at Aunty's table: Depoliticising the governance of the ABC*. This report addresses the issue of political interference in the governance structures of the ABC, including its charter. A copy has been uploaded with this submission.

The Australia Institute advocates that the ABC equitably serve regional and rural communities and be adequately funded to do so. However, changing the ABC Act is not an appropriate mechanism for enforcing granular decisions on operational matters. The ABC's strategy needs to evolve faster than federal legislation can. It must remain the purview of the ABC board and the executive.

It remains problematic that this proposal comes from the National Party. While support for increased regional ABC coverage goes beyond rural areas, it is the Nationals' electoral base that would primarily benefit. Changing the ABC Charter to primarily benefit the constituents of one party sets a dangerous precedent. A future Labor government could mandate a degree of coverage of union-related content. The Greens could require coverage of environmental issues. One Nation could push for a level of content devoted to their view of Australian culture.

Far better options exist for expanding ABC rural coverage, such as tying additional funding to rural and regional content, or grants aimed at restoring and expanding ABC facilities in regional Australia.

We would welcome the opportunity to expand on this submission in the future either at a public hearing or in writing.

Yours sincerely,



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