



ABC Submission to the Victorian Government Economy and Infrastructure Committee – Inquiry into the cultural and creative industries in Victoria

February 2025

Introduction

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to Victorian Government Economy and Infrastructure Committee’s inquiry into the cultural and creative industries in Victoria. This submission describes the ABC’s relationship with Victoria’s creative and cultural industries.

As Australia’s national broadcaster, the ABC plays an important role in shaping Australia’s national identity, fostering social inclusion and encouraging myriad forms of cultural and creative expression. The ABC is a major producer of Australian content across television, radio, and digital platforms. This includes Australian drama series, documentaries, and children's programming that tell distinctively Australian stories and showcase local talent. In accordance with section 6(c) of the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth) (ABC Act), the ABC supports and promotes the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia.

In fulfilling this role, the ABC produces a range of content in, for and about Victoria and promotes and creates opportunities for the state’s cultural and creative industries.

ABC Presence in Victoria

The ABC contributes to Victoria’s cultural and creative industry with its broad physical presence within the state. It operates from 10 locations spread across the state, including its Melbourne office in Southbank and nine regional offices located in Ballarat, Bendigo, Sale, Warrnambool, Wodonga, Horsham, Mildura, Shepparton and Geelong.

Within those 10 ABC locations, the ABC has a headcount of 937 paid active employees in Victoria at 1 December 2024, spread across all divisions. Among the 937 employees, 93 were based in regional Victoria.

The ABC makes a significant contribution to the creative sector in Victoria. In 2021 the ABC published research by Deloitte Access Economics which found that over a three-year period the ABC commissioned the production of 102 projects in the state. These projects contributed \$208 million to the state economy and supported more than 2,433 FTE roles across multiple sectors within Victoria, building the capability, capacity and depth of the local screen production.¹

ABC Production in Victoria

In the period from 2020/21 to January 2025 the ABC commissioned 75 projects with the independent sector where the majority of production has taken place in Victoria. The ABC has committed \$157 million to these projects. Collectively they will generate over 300 hours of content. The total production budget of these projects exceeds \$318 million. The ABC looks to partner with VicScreen where possible on external productions. On average, VicScreen contributes around 5% of the total production budget.

ABC external commissions produced in Victoria include award-winning programming, such as *The Newsreader*, *Hard Quiz*, *Fisk*, *The Weekly with Charlie Pickering*, *Utopia* and *Gold Diggers*.

In addition to these external projects, over the same period the ABC spent \$80 million on 52 internal projects. These projects included broadcasts of key Victorian cultural events like the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, Classic 100 in Concert with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and triple j's One Night Stand. *Gardening Australia*, *Back Roads* and *Offsiders* are also produced in Victoria and many segments are filmed within the state, adding more investment to the state's creative and cultural industries.

The ABC produces 16 unique regional local radio programs in Victoria. These collectively represent 6,751 minutes (112 hours) of content each week.

For the past three years the ABC's Radio Residency has collaborated with the City of Greater Geelong and Deakin University to bring ABC Radio Melbourne's pop-up studio to Deakin University's Waterfront campus, where it covers engaging and relevant content on local topics, sharing stories and issues from the region's residents.

ABC Takeover is an ABC initiative creating a powerful platform for local high school students who want their stories to be heard. ABC Takeover encourages young Australians to share their ideas and stories in a creative and honest way. Engaging with Government and local community organisations, ABC Takeover aims to empower communities to embrace and hear their young people.

¹ For further detail see <https://www.abc.net.au/about/media-centre/press-releases/abc-commissions-drive-australian-storytelling-and-boost-the-econ/103727036>

Since 30 January 2023, the ABC has held four ABC Takeovers, of which three have taken place within Victoria; they were held in Mildura, Latrobe Valley and Melbourne.

When the ABC reintroduced triple's j One Night Stand concert after a five-year absence on 14 September 2024, it did so in Warrnambool, Victoria. The ABC partnered with Music Australia to revive the event with the goal of raising funds for the music industry. The event had over 15,000 attendees and raised over \$150k with all proceeds going to Support Act, an industry charity. In this way, it helped support Australia's music and festival industry, which had been depleted by Covid-19 restrictions and a series of cancelled events.

The ABC has partnered with VicScreen, Blackfella Films and GoodThing Productions to offer two 12-month internships in producing and development for early to mid-career Victorian screen creatives. The VicScreen internships help to build participants' skills and knowledge of Australia's current commissioning, funding, and production environment.

The ABC also partners with the Victoria based Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC) for the annual Indigenous Documentary Placement. This program is designed to provide one mid-career Indigenous practitioner with a unique opportunity to undertake a four-month paid placement with the ABC.

In addition, the ABC produces a number of significant news television programs, including *News Breakfast* and its Asia Pacific News service, in Victoria.

As the national broadcaster, the ABC is an important Australian cultural institution and plays a key role in supporting Victoria's cultural and creative industries. It achieves this through its large operational footprint across the state and the broad content catalogue that it produces and broadcasts.