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Foreword

The ABC belongs to all Australians. It reflects not just who we are, but also where we have come from, and where we are going as a modern nation.

It has been Australia's voice for close to 90 years, delivering the stories we have loved, the news and information we needed, and services that have enriched our culture and civic life. This is as true for rural and regional Australians as it is for those who live in our cities or overseas.

I'm proud to lead the ABC and build on this rich heritage, especially during this important period of its history. It is a critical time for the national public broadcaster charged with giving a voice to all Australians, keeping them informed, and sharing their stories with one another and the world.

We must plan the right path forward to meet high expectations and deliver services that reflect the values of a free and confident society.

I am pleased to share with you that strategic pathway and an assurance that the ABC's presenters, reporters, program makers, and support teams will continue to deliver the services you expect of us.

This plan is the result of our conversations with Australians everywhere, and reflects what you have told us in terms of the services you want and when and how you want them.

The ABC of the next five years will respond to the technological changes we are all experiencing. More importantly, the ABC we will bring you will reflect your voice and the voices around you, wherever you live and however you listen, watch or read.

The ABC in this plan is a public media service that is deeply committed to its independence and its history as one of our most trusted public institutions. It is an ABC that believes in its responsibilities in bringing issues of national importance to the table for debate.

It is the ABC that provides the strong community connection we rely on during times of crisis and emergency. And it will always be an ABC that entertains, informs, encourages debate, and promotes the contest of ideas.

Australia faces the task of recovering from a summer of unprecedented bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.

It must move forward in a world that has been reshaped by social and economic upheaval and dramatic shifts in the media landscape. It is difficult to predict the longer-term effects of recent events,

and so the ABC will continue to monitor all developments, audience needs and behaviours, and make changes to its strategy as required over the coming years.

Your ABC is one that listens to Australia and is focused on being an essential part of Australian life. It will change with you and for you, reshaping itself to stay true to its purpose through the change and opportunities all around us.



David Anderson
ABC Managing Director
June 2020

Executive Summary

Since 1932, the ABC has been a core cultural asset for Australia, delivering trusted and treasured news, information, sport, ideas, dialogue and entertainment.

The ABC is still the only national media organisation whose sole purpose is to serve the common good, without any commercial obligation or agenda. The ABC's independence as a provider of news and public interest journalism, including investigative journalism, strengthens the nation's civic life, and contributes to Australia's global reputation for good governance, institutional reliability and rule of law.

A National Asset

The statistics testify to the ABC's continuing importance in the everyday lives of Australians. Even in an era of community disillusion with big institutions and organisations, the ABC remains one of Australia's most trusted brands. More than two-thirds of Australians watch, read or listen to the ABC each week.

Local radio stations in the eight capital cities attract two million listeners a week, and the ABC's extensive regional network plays a vital role in the lives of outback Australians and reflects its commitment to all Australians. The ABC's international services extend its stories to audiences all over the world, including to Australians abroad. These radio and online services serve to bring communities together and keep Australians connected with one another.

Since its creation the ABC has recorded the events that have changed the course of our nation, shaped our civic character and nurtured our cultural development.

The ABC creates a living record of Australia's history and the life of all Australians going back almost 90 years.

The ABC is also a powerful generative force: an incubator of Australian talent; a catalyst for creative and artistic achievement; a proving ground for exciting new content from women's sports to Indigenous comedy; and the world's window on Australia.

As a major customer of the creative sector of the Australian economy, the ABC helps to sustain jobs and activity across the broader media and production ecosystem around the country.

**ABC independent journalism
strengthens the nation's civic life.**

7.30



**The ABC will be alongside
communities as they build, adapt
and recover.**

The ABC's essential role in national life has once again been clear to Australians during both the bushfire disasters over the summer of 2019-20 and the COVID-19 global pandemic.

During the bushfires that devastated large areas across Australia, audiences turned to the ABC and its tireless correspondents to be informed, warned, connected, and supported in an unprecedented national emergency. In the eyes of many, the ABC saved lives through the services it provided. The ABC will be right there alongside those same communities as they build, adapt and recover over the coming months and years.

When the COVID-19 global pandemic shut down the economy and created fear and confusion, the ABC provided clear analysis and advice, and played a key role in ensuring accurate information was available to all Australians.

ABC News teams provided trusted information and updates, while other ABC teams provided entertainment and lively discussion to keep the community connected. ABC Education rolled out an expanded service to help parents and students studying at home, with a broad range of educational tools and programs available on all platforms.

Within these challenges, there are opportunities for the ABC to once again reshape itself and provide even greater value for Australians.

More than ever, Australians need a trusted source of news and information and safe, reliable online environments. People of all ages need high-quality content that informs and entertains, and that is free and accessible to all.

These challenges and opportunities have informed this Five-Year Plan. It is built on meeting the ABC's Charter obligations within its funding allocation and has a clear focus on delivering outstanding and relevant Australian content.

The Plan includes measures that will move the ABC away from older technologies and ways of working. This will set the ABC on a path that makes it more relevant for audiences into the future.

Time for a Five-Year Plan

The development of this Five-Year Plan is based on the belief that a strong and capable ABC for Australia is as important as ever; that the ABC must continue to evolve with, and for, Australia; and that a five-year timeframe will best ensure the ABC can plan with confidence and deliver on its commitments.

A five-year plan also supports consideration of a five-year funding cycle for the ABC, a measure that would reinforce longer-term planning, as well as further safeguard ABC independence.

This is a timely process because the context within which the ABC operates is changing very fast, and in significant ways. In the ABC Operating Environment and Five-Year Outlook sections, we identify the various media, audience and operational trends and factors that have been considered in the development of this Five-Year Plan. Three broad trends have been central to our deliberations.

Greater national diversity

The first is Australia's dramatically increasing population size and diversity. Australia has grown by 3.7 million people, to 25 million today, which is a rise of about 15% over just a decade. Australia is forecast to be a nation of 30 million people by 2030.

This will have a major impact on the shape of our communities, and where and how we live. By 2056, for example, the outer-suburban population of our capital cities is likely to have more than doubled.

In addition, we now have one of the most culturally diverse populations in the world, with 26% of Australians born overseas. This trend will continue. Over the next 10 years, 60% of national population growth is expected to come from net overseas migration.

The diversity of Australians, of course, extends well beyond their cultural backgrounds. There is a rising, legitimate expectation that the ABC equitably represents and reaches out to people of different genders, ages, sexual orientations and social backgrounds, and people with disabilities.

This rapid growth and increasing diversity represents a national opportunity, but it also poses a challenge to national unity, especially when there is a global trend towards polarisation and fragmentation.

In the coming years, the ABC will continue to reflect the national identity by giving expression to the many hearts and minds of this bigger and more diverse Australia.

The ABC will be the home of bold, thrilling and inventive Australian stories for this new era, and a welcoming arena in which all Australian voices can be heard and make their contribution to the national conversation.

Important to this task will be the engagement and involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Australia's original custodians and first story-tellers.

The ABC is the only institution that can ensure all Australians, within all their different geographic and social communities, are able to obtain trusted and high-quality content that is free and accessible for everyone. And in telling the stories of this diverse Australia, the ABC will mitigate the trend towards social fragmentation, and contribute to a more inclusive, confident and, ultimately, cohesive civic life.

Decline in democratic confidence

The second significant trend is the erosion of faith in the efficacy of democratic institutions, leaders and processes around the world, including a decline in trust towards media organisations.

In Australia, while the ABC remains one of Australia's most trusted brands, trust in the media by Australians as a whole has been trending down, and is, in fact, now low even by global standards.

This growing distrust has the potential to reduce the national appetite for news consumption generally, including from the ABC.

This matters enormously because democratic societies rely upon the bonds of shared information, public transparency and mutual confidence to function effectively. The fracturing of many news sources into ever more partisan enclaves, the rise in volume of extreme voices, and the proliferation of "fake news" will all continue to put pressure on democracies and could potentially weaken them badly.

The ABC will continue to resist this trend. We will be Australia's reliable source of news and information that matters to Australians, whether it is from down the road or across the world. The ABC will continue its tradition of public interest journalism that holds business, governments, and other institutions to account.

In a period of disillusion, it is more important than ever to have strong, trusted and valued institutions that all Australians and their communities can turn to with confidence: the ABC will be a leader among them.

Consolidation and fragmentation in the media landscape

The third major trend confronted by the ABC is a complex and fast-moving media landscape. Today, audiences can take their pick of devices and content from around the world, making it harder than ever to hold people's attention, let alone win their lifetime loyalty.

The big global streaming platforms are consolidating and looking for ways to grow stronger, while there is a cacophony of rising and falling smaller voices looking to take slices of the market.

The very real risk in this fragmented and globalised future is that our Australian stories get lost or don't get produced at all.

This matters in our growing and changing society, because it is only through our own unique stories that we can explore, understand, challenge and shape who we are as a nation, and dream of what we might one day become.

In a world of rapid social and technological change, the ABC will not only continue to give Australians access to the news and information they need, but offer a place where their Australian voices will be heard and deliver entertainment that reflects their own lives and experiences, thereby helping our nation imagine itself and its future.

Australia's ABC in five years... better than ever

The ABC's purpose derives from its Charter: that is, to serve all Australians through media services that reflect the cultural diversity of Australia; contribute to our sense of national identity; deliver independent news services and educational content; and encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia.

In this Five-Year Plan, the ABC, consistent with this purpose, will once again respond to the times and reshape itself to provide even greater value for Australia. The priority initiatives identified in this plan are to:

- Deliver personalised digital experiences
- Remain Australia's best and most trusted source of news and information
- Strengthen local connections
- Prioritise quality over quantity
- Invest in the workforce of the future
- Be creative, flexible, efficient and accountable.

The ABC was one of the first media organisations in Australia to recognise the reach and flexibility offered by the Internet.

In the next five years, the ABC will put a priority on embracing new technology and production techniques to deliver far more accessible and personalised digital experiences.

We will particularly focus on increasing the relevance of the ABC for younger and recently arrived Australians, converting first or part-time visitors to life-long supporters. We'll be spending a larger proportion of our budget on developing great stories for our digital platforms and ensuring that audiences are more aware of the quality content we offer.

In everything we do, we will draw upon the longstanding independence, stability, integrity, and the very Australianness of the ABC.

We will still be the nation's most trusted source of news, breaking the stories that matter to Australian life and holding our institutions fearlessly to account. We will be by Australia's side in times of crisis, with our extensive emergency broadcast and coverage capabilities.

We'll be giving more of the ABC back to Australia. We will have fewer people in our Sydney offices, and more on the streets of Australia's suburban, outer-urban and regional centres, closer to the stories that affect our diverse communities.

We'll seek to inspire and challenge Australians in new ways and work harder than ever to provide a space for citizens to raise and explore the issues that matter to them.

The ABC will be operating within a constrained budgetary environment. We will be a leaner and more flexible organisation that ensures resources are targeted at meeting priority audience needs and expectations.

This rigour will help enable new investments to underpin the relevance and value of the ABC into the future.

Five years from now, the ABC will still be the nation's trusted storyteller: more than ever, Australia's home of Australian stories.

In an ocean of global content, we'll be embracing the opportunity to tell the grand and small tales of Australia that are so important to our national life. From drama to music to the arts, we will reflect Australian identity, celebrate Australian talent, and support the local creative sector.

The ABC will be the treasured place where Australians see and recognise their part in our country's ongoing story; a place where the differing strands of our diverse nation can come together, interweave and grow stronger.

The following pages detail the rationale, pillars and priorities for a Five-Year Plan that both anticipates and responds to the challenges ahead, and ensures the ABC continues to fulfil its vital commitments under the ABC Charter.



The ABC will be the nation's trusted storyteller.

Behind-the-scenes production shot from ABC drama Operation Buffalo.



ABC Services

The ABC provides independent news and information, and a wide variety of content that enriches Australian communities and presents Australian perspectives to audiences beyond the nation's shores.

More than two-thirds of Australians watch, read or listen to the ABC each week through its suite of digital and broadcast services.

ABC content and services are delivered to audiences on mobile and digital platforms through a suite of websites and apps. The ABC News website and app are leading destinations for news and information, while the iview and ABC Listen apps provide access to ABC video and audio streaming and on-demand programs.

A range of other sites and apps are dedicated to specific audiences and interests, such as the triple j site and app for music and the ABC Kids app for children's content. The ABC also makes extensive use of social media and other third-party platforms to reach and engage with audiences.

The ABC delivers high-impact news and current affairs on both broadcast and digital services. Its reporters cover local, state, and national news, and it maintains its own network of foreign correspondents, particularly in Asia and the Pacific, to tell international stories from an Australian perspective. The coverage includes in-depth reporting and investigations into issues and events.

The ABC's audio content includes live broadcasts and programs on AM, FM and DAB+ radio, as well as via streaming and on-demand options on the ABC Listen app. The radio services range from local stations in capital cities and 48 regional bureaux to national networks that serve different audience needs and interests.

Local radio stations in the eight capital cities attract 2 million listeners a week. The ABC's regional network enables it to reach all Australians over the airwaves. These stations connect local audiences with the news and issues of the day relevant to their communities, create conversations, and provide support and vital warnings during times of emergency.

The ABC's role in emergencies continues to grow as Australia experiences more frequent and more severe natural disasters. It provided emergency broadcasting and coverage for more than 900 events between July 2019 and January 2020, compared with 371 events for the previous financial year.

The ABC's national radio networks and streaming stations offer a range of choices to match audiences' interests or moods. ABC News offers continuous news and RN is the place for in-depth analysis and thought-provoking ideas. ABC Kids caters for children and ABC Grandstand for sports fans.

The ABC's music stations and streams include triple j, Double J, ABC Classic, ABC Classic 2, ABC Jazz, and ABC Country. The ABC also produces a broad range of podcasts, from the popular *Conversations* and *The Science Show* to the gripping true crime series *Unravel*.

In the Pacific, ABC Radio Australia provides a reliable news and information service, increases awareness of Australia and encourages English-language learning. It is broadcast via FM in 13 important population centres in the Pacific and Timor-Leste and is also accessible around the globe as a streaming service, live and on-demand.

ABC video is presented across four broadcast channels and is available on-demand for digital devices and internet-connected smart TVs via ABC iview. The ABC's main channel, known for its high-quality and distinctive programming, brings together drama, comedy, factual programs, and an array of in-depth news programs.

ABC News provides dedicated news coverage around the clock, and ABC ME offers a range of genre programs for younger audiences. ABC Kids and ABC Comedy share a channel to deliver programs for children, as well as presenting comedy later in the evenings.

In addition, the ABC delivers video content to 40 countries across Asia and the Pacific through its international television service, ABC Australia. A multi-genre, English-language service, ABC Australia is targeted at English-language learners and speakers, particularly educated regional influencers and people wanting to visit Australia for trade or study, as well as Australians living or travelling abroad.

The ABC's digital and broadcast platforms make its content accessible for all Australians. It provides reliable services that inform, educate, and entertain, reflecting the diversity of Australian life and perspectives.

The ABC is committed to being where Australians need it to be, both in terms of its reach across Australia, and in terms of the devices Australians choose to use. It is also committed to achieving the highest standards of content.

Recent Innovations

The ABC is known for being an innovator in developing new products and services for Australians as technology and media consumption habits change. Recent highlights include:

- Improving the triple j, News, and ABC Listen apps to make it easier for audiences to access and move across audio streams and video.
- Launching ABC Australia iview, an app for iOS and Android devices, that opens up more ABC content for audiences around the world.
- Crowdsourcing more than 4,000 submissions on aged care as part of a *Four Corners* investigation that prompted the Australian Government to call a Royal Commission.
- Transforming the ABC's 48 regional bureaux from local radio stations to multiplatform production hubs that produce radio, TV, and digital content for local and national audiences.
- Restructuring the ABC's capital-city newsrooms to improve collaboration, resulting in better coverage of local news and issues.
- Utilising the ABC's network of rural reporters to decentralise newsgathering for the Landline program and further develop the ABC's local-to-national coverage model.
- Presenting a wide array of the ABC's lifestyle and health content and exploring new approaches to the genre.
- Extending the ABC's on-the-ground reporting to some of Australia's most remote communities, including Parnngurr and Kalumburu in Western Australia, Ivanhoe in New South Wales, Christmas Island and Norfolk Island.
- Raising the standards for inclusive content with the 30-episode drama *The Heights*, which achieved gender parity across the cast and crew, gave 30% of the cast their first screen credit, and drew two-thirds of the core ensemble from diverse backgrounds.

Five-Year Outlook

Over the next five years, the ABC will face new challenges that will shape the ways in which it meets its Charter obligations.

Audience behaviours will continue to shift in response to new technologies, and ongoing disruption in the media and entertainment sectors will continue to reshape the ABC's operating environment.

The ABC needs to adapt to these shifts, modernising its tools, processes, skills, and output to remain relevant, highly trusted and accessible. And it must embrace and achieve change through an evolving regulatory environment and within funding limits.

This outlook provides a summary of the analysis of trends and developments that have shaped the ABC's Five-Year Plan. The outlook considers relevant trends in audience behaviour, the media landscape, and other developments that represent both challenges and opportunities for the ABC.

Operating Environment

The Planning Environment

The disrupted media environment and the pace of technological change make it difficult for media organisations to engage in long-term planning. This creates a risk in relation to large-scale capital and technology projects, as well as internal restructures, if rapid changes in the environment lead to sudden changes in requirements.

The ABC faces further uncertainty in relation to funding. The Corporation can't forecast its long-term funding position because it operates within a three-year Budget appropriation.

The ABC will continue to make the case for greater funding security and an arrangement that enables better long-term planning and reduces risks to its independence. In the meantime, ABC strategy will need to be reviewed often to factor in ongoing uncertainty around its longer-term funding.

The Economic Environment

The global economy suffered a deep economic shock in 2020 due to COVID-19, leading to some of the worst financial conditions in the post-war era. The extent and effects of the downturn remain difficult to foresee.

In Australia, the Government's initial measures to support the economy were among the largest – relative to Gross Domestic Product – in the world. Despite this, many Australian households will continue to experience financial stress and some sectors, like the media, will continue to face difficult market conditions, as outlined below.

The Australian Government's priorities and further decisions in response to the economic conditions could have a substantial and direct impact on the ABC through funding.

The ABC will continue to argue for its value and the public benefits it delivers. In Australia, the bushfire crisis of 2019–20 and COVID-19 further emphasised the ABC's importance as a trustworthy source of vital information.

This, coupled with the other public and economic benefits the ABC delivers, supports the case to maintain adequate funding for ABC services. However, further budget cuts may be possible. As a proportion of total Government spending, the cost of the ABC has halved since the mid-1990s while services have increased significantly. Any further cuts will inevitably result in reduced services and a significant loss in operational capability.

The Financial Environment

Within the broader economic environment, the Corporation is already dealing with the challenge of delivering its range of services within a smaller funding envelope. Significant funding cuts since 2014–15, and an indexation pause from 2019–20, must be absorbed at the same time as the ABC grapples with new cost pressures.

These include the need to invest in technology modernisation and to meet the rising costs of producing and acquiring rights to high-quality TV programs.

To address these challenges and ensure financial sustainability, the Corporation has developed a package of measures to achieve ongoing savings in excess of \$40 million per annum from 2021–22.

The package assumes that the indexation of ABC funding will resume, and that funding for enhanced newsgathering will be renewed in the 2022–23 financial year.

The savings measures target several areas, including renegotiating third-party contracts, addressing areas of discretionary spending, finding production efficiencies, reducing the ABC's property costs, and reviewing content and services.

While these measures aim to minimise cuts to services and output, they will result in job losses and have an impact on audiences. Any further budget reductions beyond this will have an even more significant impact on services, such as consolidating TV channels, radio networks, and some regional services.

The Technology Environment

Technological changes continue to transform the media industry, presenting both opportunities and challenges for media organisations. Digitisation and network integration are enabling new, flexible

production methods and more efficient means of delivering higher-quality services and applications to audiences.

Virtualisation and "cloud" computing, for example, make possible decentralised production from any networked location and enable digital playout of media services. Likewise, better use of data, including through machine-learning-based tools, facilitates product personalisation, and more effective product development and resource management.

Technologies also continue to multiply the ways in which audiences are able to access information and entertainment, in turn forcing media organisations to adapt their outputs as audience behaviours evolve and fragment.

On the near horizon, smart speakers, smart TVs, connected homes, and connected cars all offer potential new content access points for consumers. Likewise, increasingly sophisticated user interfaces and personalised services are raising expectations around the quality of services.

In the longer term, it is possible that audience behaviours may change further as immersive technologies, such as augmented and virtual reality, and autonomous vehicles become more practical.

These developments have the potential to reduce audio use in the car and create new opportunities for growth in the consumption of video. For media organisations seeking to reach audiences, the challenge lies in making targeted investments in emerging technologies without overcommitting to those that may not ultimately be used by many people.

To realise these opportunities and meet audience expectations, the ABC must modernise its infrastructure, systems and capabilities, as well as make better use of data.

It must invest in technology and connectivity that achieves operational excellence, including end-to-end digital processes for production. Data must be used to drive decision making and give audiences the ability to personalise services.

At the same time, the ABC must maintain its established broadcast services to ensure that all Australians can continue to access the ABC. Broadcast radio and television are expected to remain important in some form for ABC audiences for at least another 20 years.

However, with a growing proportion of the Corporation's technological infrastructure approaching end-of-life, the ABC is at a crossroads where it needs to balance the replacement of broadcast equipment with investment in digital platforms. Maintaining broadcast operations while funding modernisation will be critical challenge for the Corporation over the life of this Plan.



Listening options have led to audience fragmentation.

The ABC must maintain broadcast radio while also offering streaming and on-demand services.



Stories that explain important issues, and hold governments and decision-makers to account, play a critical role in democratic societies.

The Australian Media Environment

The ABC is operating in a more crowded media environment. The competition for audience attention now includes many more platforms and international outlets, and the entertainment sector has expanded to include gaming and e-sports.

This environment makes it more difficult to capture and sustain audience attention and carries the risk that Australian content may be “drowned out”. Investment in marketing and advertising will be critical for providers to reach and inform audiences about their services.

At the same time, the ABC provides a number of unique and critical services and the demand for these is expected to grow. They include access to local news, emergency coverage, and international services.

A steady decline in local news from commercial providers accelerated with the impact of COVID-19, leaving many communities without a local news service.

The ABC may be required to focus more resources on local coverage and supporting a diversity of outlets in the local news ecosystem. The ABC will also need to ensure its emergency broadcast and coverage capabilities remain effective as the frequency and severity of natural disasters increases. Maintaining these service levels as demand grows is likely to place added pressure on the ABC’s budget.

The ABC could also find it more difficult to access Australian drama and other entertainment content. Global competition has driven up production costs and the COVID-19 crisis has disrupted the production sector.

These effects could shrink the local independent production sector and reduce investment available for Australian content.

The International Media Environment

The primary focus of the ABC’s international media activities is the Asia-Pacific region, where it has been broadcasting for more than 80 years. In particular, the Corporation prioritises services to the Pacific and Papua New Guinea, and for Chinese, Indonesian and Indian audiences.

In addition, it provides media services for Australians abroad. Alongside these international media services, the ABC contributes to development projects in Asia and the Pacific that help build the capacity of media providers and assist related organisations in areas like governance, gender, health, education, disaster response, and risk reduction.

A key challenge for the Corporation in delivering media services into the Asia-Pacific region is that there is no single regional “media market”. Instead, each nation within the region is a unique market, with its own set of domestic media providers, languages, cultural expectations, and audience behaviours. Further, the relative penetration of media technologies in the region varies considerably.

In the Pacific, the availability of mobile telephony and internet services has grown in the past decade. The large youth population is embracing these technologies.

Nonetheless, overall take-up remains low in most countries (an average of 38% across the Pacific) and providers forecast that it will increase only slightly (3%–5%) by 2025. As a result, broadcasting, particularly on radio, will remain an important way of reaching Pacific audiences.

In Asia, by comparison, most markets for media services – from the high-technology media ecologies of Japan and South Korea to the less-developed markets of the Mekong – are already saturated with local providers.

This not only diminishes the likely relevance of international services for local audiences, it reduces the number of frequencies and/or channel positions available for distributing traditional broadcasting services.

Asia and the Pacific exhibit some of the highest overall levels of social media growth globally. Engaging with audiences through social media platforms is a necessary part of any successful Asia-Pacific media strategy; it requires engaging with appropriate social media platforms and operating fluently in local languages.

At the same time, the Asia-Pacific region is becoming an increasingly contested space among international broadcasters and more nations use international media services to project cultural influence and communicate their views and values.

In particular, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has made significant investments in its global media capabilities since 2009. By 2020, these efforts had grown into a coordinated propaganda apparatus operating in parallel with the PRC Government’s One Belt One Road initiative.

The ABC has identified a number of opportunities to play a stronger role in public diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region and will continue to inform the Australian Government of the options available.

The Work Environment

Technology continues to drive workplace change in most industries along with economic factors, such as property prices, and social factors, such as an increased demand for workplace flexibility in response to changing lifestyles.

The COVID-19 crisis forced further changes with social distancing and working from home, some of which will have an ongoing influence on the work environment. The workplace of the future will bring both challenges and opportunities for the ABC.

In the area of skills and training, the ABC will require staff with new skills that are in high demand, especially in information technology. At the same time, it must retain some operational skills in broadcast production that will become increasingly rare. Continuous training will be necessary in every role as staff are required to adapt to new technologies and processes. This, in turn, will place greater demand on the need for effective and ongoing change management.

Ways of working will change alongside skills as technologies enable greater flexibility and mobility in many areas of the workforce. Travel restrictions and working from home arrangements during the COVID-19 crisis will lead to more agile work practices that reduce the need for office space and support more flexible hours for staff while increasing productivity and reducing property-related costs.

In response to this, the ABC will need to strengthen its ability to attract and retain talented staff who can deliver the content and strategic objectives of the organisation's Five-Year Plan. There will be an increased need for the Corporation to build teams with the skills needed into the future.

These efforts will require increased flexibility in hiring, an investment in training to improve digital capabilities, and initiatives to reinforce the ABC's positive workplace culture. At the same time, the Corporation must continue to strengthen diversity in its workforce to better reflect the broader community.

Audience Trends

Listening

Up until the end of 2019, live radio was the dominant form of audio listening in Australia, accounting (at that time) for more than 60% of all audio listening and reaching 80% of the population each week. Growth in digital listening largely offset the decline in analogue, with overall radio reach remaining steady over a five-year period.

However, time spent listening declined over the same period as increased listening options led to audience fragmentation. Podcasts will continue to gain listeners, but at a slower rate and in a more crowded market. In this environment, the ABC faces the challenge of maintaining broadcast services while continuing to build streaming and on-demand services.

It should be noted that the COVID-19 crisis, and the bushfire crisis before it, resulted in large spikes in audio consumption. While audiences for live audio declined after these events peaked and the need for news and community information subsided, some of the gains around listening via streaming were maintained.

Audiences for podcasts were, initially, an exception during the crises, declining in response to changes in daily habits, such as commuting or going to the gym, and the greater demand for live news.

Both the fires and the pandemic underscored the need for the ABC to offer comprehensive digital services and maintain reliable broadcast services. Both platforms are needed to reach audiences and provide critical information.

Broadcast transmission also provides critical redundancy when internet-based services are unreliable or lost altogether, as happened during the 2019–20 bushfires.

Watching

Broadcast TV remains a highly popular medium, with more than 75% of Australians still watching every week (OzTAM, 2019), and it will remain significant over the next five years and beyond. Despite this, and despite a resurgence during the COVID-19 crisis, broadcast TV reach and time spent viewing have been trending down for some time.

Audiences are embracing new ways of watching, including video-on-demand (VOD) services accessed on smart TVs, tablets, and mobile devices.

The VOD market is crowded, highly competitive, and growing, with domestic and global platforms vying for audience attention and, in the process, driving up audience expectations and the costs of making content.

In this environment, the ABC faces three challenges: drawing the attention of audiences in a crowded market, continuing to find ways to make high-quality and distinctive programs in a market with inflationary pressures, and maintaining its broadcast platforms and services in its role as the national broadcaster.

Over the longer term, high demand for both news and entertainment during the COVID-19 crisis could accelerate audience migration to streaming platforms or change media consumption behaviours in other ways.

At the same time, however, the impact of the pandemic on the economy and household incomes may eventually have a dampening effect on subscription streaming services. This, coupled with the impact of COVID-19 on the production sector, could in turn lead to some consolidation among streaming service providers.

These uncertainties are likely to persist for some time and emphasise the need for the ABC to pursue a strategy that maintains broadcast services while improving the value and appeal of its digital services.

The ABC's activity in the production sector will also be more important than ever. Like other public service media, the ABC announced initiatives to support the independent creative and production sectors in response to the impact of COVID-19. Continued support from the ABC will help these sectors to recover.

Trust in Media

Although the ABC remains one of Australia's most trusted organisations, trust in the media as a whole has been trending down. The 2019 Ipsos *Trust in the Media* report found that Australians' trust in the media had declined, with more survey respondents stating that their trust in newspapers, broadcast media, and online news had decreased over the past five years.

The annual *Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report 2020* showed that, while trust in media in Australia had improved in the previous year, it remained low by global standards.

The August 2019 Roy Morgan *State of the Nation* report recognised the ABC as the most trusted media corporation in Australia. On a Net Trust score, where the key drivers of trust are impartiality, balance and accuracy, the ABC was also the leading media brand.

This trend has the potential to affect news consumption and the perceived value of news organisations, to the detriment of democracy. By maintaining its role as a trusted source of news and information, the ABC will continue to resist this trend.

Access to Public Interest Journalism

Stories and interviews that hold governments and other decision-makers to account, or that explore and explain important issues, play a critical role in democratic societies. However, changes in technology, disruption from global digital platforms, and consolidation in the media are raising concerns about the sustainability of, and people's exposure to, public interest journalism.

The challenges are not unique to Australia. Many countries are grappling with the issue of protecting and promoting access to public interest journalism in the digital age, especially local news.

National security laws that may criminalise investigative reporting complicate the issue. Restrictions on press freedoms, tighter controls on access to government information, and weak protections for whistle-blowers have the potential to dampen the incentives to produce public interest journalism.

The ABC's skills and capabilities around investigative journalism are arguably the strongest in Australia, and its investigations have a significant impact on society. Constraints on this activity will weaken public interest journalism, with implications for the health of Australian democracy and civil society.

Further tightening of these laws would have the potential to limit the ABC's ability to undertake public interest journalism and criminalise the reporting of news.

The Australian Federal Police raids on the ABC in June 2019 further exposed the weaknesses of journalism protections and whistle-blower laws. The Right to Know Coalition, of which the ABC is a member, will continue to press for legislative change in this area.

Contribution to Society

Like other public service media organisations, the ABC was created at a time of media scarcity and nation-building towards a more modern society. Amid today's overwhelming explosion of media and entertainment services, the critical role of public service media is sometimes obscured.

However, in this period of rapid technological and social change, both societies and individuals need the benefits of media services dedicated to sharing and reflecting their cultures and identities, and to keeping them well-informed.

The ABC makes a significant contribution to society that reaches beyond the delivery of content. It makes an economic contribution through its production of Australian content and it makes a range of social contributions through its coverage of issues and events that inform important debates and shape the nation.

Likewise, it brings communities together around national events and in times of natural disasters, as highlighted during the "Black Summer" bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic in 2019–20. It also holds government, institutions and others to account and gives a voice to parts of society that are under-represented in popular media.



Contrary to perceptions, the take-up of internet services, fixed-line and mobile, is far from universal.

It will be vital for the ABC to increase its efforts to raise awareness of its contribution and positive impact on society. It must retain the support of the communities it serves and reaffirm its remit, role, and legitimacy.

This will require the ABC to adapt its products, services, and distribution strategies to ensure it remains accessible. It will also require a greater effort to inform Australians about how it delivers both direct and indirect benefits to them.

News Consumption

News audiences will become increasingly fragmented as engagement and trust in media decrease and casual users shift to more partisan news coverage. The continued threats to traditional news habits will provide a challenge for the ABC, both in terms of maintaining existing audiences in this fractured environment, and its ability to reach new audiences for news services.

The next five years will see a continual decline in audiences for scheduled news bulletins and current affairs programs as audiences switch off broadcast television and seek news or other content in the digital space.

It is also expected that commercial news operations in regional Australia will contract further. The imperative to produce quality journalism and maintain trust will remain. In a largely saturated online market for news, competition will intensify around the digital experience, including on-demand news, localisation, customisation, and personalisation.

The ABC will face these challenges, but the impact may be reduced at times due to demand for large-scale coverage of major events.

The Corporation is the only news organisation in Australia with the scale and expertise to deliver sustained coverage across natural disasters, and it specialises in election coverage. In the past, Australians have turned to the ABC for reliable and comprehensive coverage of such events through its broadcast and, increasingly, its digital news services.

If the number of these events increase, the ABC will face the different challenge of maintaining its high level of coverage and expertise across more events.

Decline in Local News

The ACCC has highlighted concerns about the reduced production of particular types of news and journalism, including local government and local court reporting, which are important for the healthy functioning of the democratic process.

At the same time, regional television broadcasting remains under threat from continued newsroom closures, with WIN Television citing changing audience behaviours and increased competition from digital content providers that do not face the same regulatory obligations. The decline of the print sector is of particular significance in regional Australia.

The news ecosystem has traditionally relied on local newspapers as a source of stories for local communities and to provide the watchdog function crucial to local democracy. Philanthropy and policy developments around local news incentives could potentially introduce some new opportunities into the market for local news providers.

In the face of these trends, it will be important for the ABC to maintain its production of local news. There will be less local coverage in the news ecosystems of suburban and regional areas, making it more difficult for audiences to learn about the issues and events in their communities.

The loss of media diversity also reduces access to different perspectives. In response, the ABC's local services will need to keep communities connected and share as many voices as possible.

There should be no suggestion that the ABC could fill all the gaps left by the loss of local outlets. Not only would this further stretch already strained resources, but a healthy media sector depends on having multiple providers. The ABC may however be able to support other local news providers through collaborations and partnerships that strengthen their reporting.

Media Diversity

Media diversity across the national, local and regional levels has historically been considered synonymous with a healthy media ecosystem. Legislative restrictions have been used to preserve a minimum level of media ownership diversity in Australia.

However, the majority of these safeguards were relaxed by the Australian Government in 2017, in part, to better position Australian media companies to compete with large online media outlets.

On several measures, media ownership in Australia has become more concentrated since the 2017 reforms as a result of cross-media mergers and acquisitions.

The most visible impact of the shifting dynamics in the media sector has been a loss of media diversity at the local news level.

As mentioned above, the loss of media diversity may have implications for the ABC as a provider of local news. Beyond this however, fewer Australian news providers also means less Australian news more generally, and this may lead to further community polarisation and a narrowing of public debates.

Further decline in, and consolidation of, traditional media outlets may be mitigated to some extent by government regulation that forces search and social media companies to share revenue with them. However, the ABC will need to maintain its efforts to keep its coverage as broad and diverse as possible.

Children's Content and Services

Children have an abundance of choice when it comes to screen entertainment options. In 2017, ACMA found that 61% of Australian children watched YouTube at least once a week, 42% watched Netflix or Stan, 20% used a Foxtel service and 38% watched free-to-air broadcast television; 37% used broadcaster VOD services at least once per week.

International competition for young and family audiences in Australia will increase further from 2020. Disney's streaming platform, Disney+, launched in Australia in late 2019 offering 300 titles from its extensive catalogue of movies and children's shows.

VOD operators continue to focus on children's programs to win audiences, and the increased competition is beginning to challenge the ABC, despite its strength in this area.

Parents cite online safety and security as their top concerns for their children, and the ABC will remain free, safe, and distinctly Australian, which should appeal to many parents.

The ABC's strategy will need to focus on producing high-quality children's content and raising awareness of the platforms and other touchpoints where it is available.

Education

The ABC produces an array of content that supports primary and secondary education, both directly through curriculum-based content, and indirectly through access to its content as reference material. More generally, ABC content supports life-long learning with documentaries, specialist programs, and digital content.

As in other areas, trends suggest an increasing demand for this content to be available in on-demand digital formats. The COVID-19 crisis is likely to have accelerated this trend, with increased demand for educational content suitable for online delivery. It is likely that schools will continue to experiment and develop capabilities in this area.

The ABC is well-placed to continue to offer value in relation to education. Its broad range of Australian content and expertise in areas like educational games and video could address a growing need for curated, short-form material that extends and explains curriculum content.

It would be suitable in Australia and for overseas markets, and could be distributed via a number of channels, including YouTube. It would support an increasing use of audiovisual content in classrooms, as well as create opportunities for more learning at home.

Specialist Content

Specialist genre content, such as the arts, science, religion and ethics, and Indigenous culture and affairs, is an area of strength for the ABC, and public expectations of the ABC to produce it are high.

There is also public value in specialist content that improves literacy in areas such as media, finance, and science. However, audiences have been consuming less of this content on TV and radio, making it important to make specialist content more available and accessible on digital platforms.

For example, ABC coverage of the arts is delivered across all platforms and channels. Australian arts and artists are explored and celebrated in special documentaries, regular radio and TV programs, and in digital content. It also appears in other programs like *Australian Story*, across local radio programs, in music and educational content, and as part of major events like the ABC's New Year's Eve coverage.

In line with broader trends, arts coverage must evolve to attract and serve audiences seeking on-demand content on digital platforms. It must also adapt to the needs and interests of younger audiences.

This approach was demonstrated during the COVID-19 crisis when the ABC used ABC iView to deliver stage productions by Opera Australia, Bangarra Dance Theatre, the Australian Ballet, and the Sydney Theatre Company as on-demand video.

This showed the potential for the ABC to become a national platform for performances, offering access to creative companies and performers to Australians everywhere, and building dynamic partnerships with performing arts organisations, as well as the best emerging stage talent.

In a similar way, ABC content focused on other areas of special interest will need to develop new 'digital-first' strategies to reach their audiences. The ABC has a long history of science journalism and exploring religion and ethics in society.

Specialist genre content is an areas of strength for the ABC.



ABC children's content will remain free, safe and distinctly Australian.



It has also produced programs and digital content focused on health, including extensive analysis and ‘explainers’ around the COVID-19 pandemic, and it has a dedicated team of rural reporters covering Australia’s rural life and industries.

The ABC also has a proud history of producing distinctive content by, for and about Australia’s First Peoples, and of fostering understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and experiences among non-Indigenous Australians.

It does so through radio programs like *Speaking Out* and *Away!*, numerous landmark Indigenous television programs and a range of social media and digital-first content.

Through the ABC Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan 2019–22, the Corporation has committed to making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander names, voices and languages an everyday part of the national vocabulary.

This strength in specialist subject areas produces compelling content that relates to both niche and general audiences. The challenge will be to make it as accessible and relatable as possible into the future.

Sport

More than 8 million adults and 3 million children participate in sports and 8 million attend live sports events in Australia each year.

This popularity translates into a significant interest in sports coverage, which in turn creates a highly competitive market for the rights to broadcast and stream events. The COVID-19 crisis disrupted and reset this market in 2020 and this may create new challenges and opportunities into the future.

Video sports rights will remain a challenge for free-to-air broadcasters into the future. Live sport attracts large audiences to free-to-air channels. This drives media companies to commit significant budgets to key sporting events to create appointment viewing opportunities, and this in turn causes TV sports rights skyrocket in value.

The COVID-19 crisis dampened this effect, with broadcasters and Foxtel seeking a reduction in fees for rights while competitions were suspended and crowds could not attend events. This is likely to have an impact on the market for rights but the rights for major sports will remain out of reach for the ABC and possibly commercial networks.

Into the future, the ABC will need to look for opportunities based on sports reporting, analysis, and results as well as seeking coverage rights for some key sporting events and competitions. This could include women’s competitions and “second-tier” sports.

Meanwhile, rights for radio broadcast coverage and coverage of sports with smaller audiences should remain more affordable over the next five years.

In 2019, the ABC secured free-to-air TV broadcast rights for A-League and W-League soccer and maintained its commitment to cricket coverage on radio.

Social Media

Social media has changed how consumers access information, communicate and distribute content. The social media platforms have continued to establish a large contingent of daily users both globally and in Australia. In January 2019, 72% of the Australian population was recorded to be active social media users – a 6% increase compared to the previous year.

With the vast array of social media platforms available and the emergence of new competitors, consumer engagement and interactions on these platforms is expected to remain popular. To put this in perspective, TikTok established 20 million new users globally per month between September 2016 and mid-2018.

The popularity of social media has raised concerns around health, privacy, and its use for the spread misinformation. However, reliance on the platforms for social connection during COVID-19 distancing requirements blunted some of the backlash against them.

Commercial news organisations have, however, continued to push for regulation that offsets their loss of advertising revenue to social media and search companies. Despite this, social media will remain an important part of the media ecosystem over the next five years.

Social media platforms play a vital role for the ABC as a way to reach and engage with audiences. In 2019, social platforms drove 17% of ABC’s web sessions and 16.5% of new ABC users and surveys showed that ABC Facebook accounts reached more than 4.5 million unique audience members per month, of whom 56% were under 45 years of age and 51% were Australian.

Other media organisations have also established large audiences on these platforms and, as a result, the ABC will continue to face competition for audience attention and time.

Further regulation and shifts in audience behaviours, such as a trend towards greater use of private groups for online messaging, will require the ABC to adapt its activity on social media over time.

The challenges will shape policies and practices and require a more customised approach to each platform. At the same time, current and emerging platforms will continue to create opportunities for the ABC to reach, and engage with, new audiences.

Diversity and Inclusion

Australia has one of the most culturally diverse populations in the world. According to the 2016 Census, at least 32% of Australians are from non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, and even greater cultural diversity can be expected in the future.

Over the next 10 years, Australia's population is projected to increase by 1.4–1.8% per annum, with 60% of this growth expected to come from net overseas migration (ABS 3222.0). Moreover, Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are custodians of the world's oldest continuous cultures.

The diversity of the Australian people extends beyond cultural backgrounds. To provide inclusive services that can be relevant to all Australians, the ABC must ensure that its outputs equitably represent people of different genders, ages, sexual orientations, social and geographic backgrounds, and those with disabilities.

Digital Inclusion

The take-up of internet services, both fixed-line and mobile, is far from universal. The ABS's biennial *Household Use of Information Technology* survey (ABS 8146.0) found that 86.1% of Australian households had some form of internet access in 2016–17, while 13.9% of households had none.

The *Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2019* likewise suggests that this "digital divide" between internet users and non-internet users is closing slowly and is unlikely to be bridged in the foreseeable future.

It further shows that an inability to access or make full use of internet services is particularly prevalent among some socio-demographic groups, such as people with lower incomes or levels of educational attainment, and those aged over 65. This gap adds further weight to the need for the ABC to maintain a level of broadcast services.

Cyber Safety and Digital Literacy

Cyber safety represents the safe and responsible use of information and communications technology.

This is an area that is receiving increasing attention from governments, the community and organisations because of the potential for malicious actors to target the online systems of organisations and consumers (including children).

Measures to promote cyber security at the organisational level, and promote better digital literacy at the consumer level, will be a focus for government policy and industry. The ABC will continue to invest in robust cyber security measures and has a role to play in providing safety awareness information to the public.

Media Regulation

The Australian media market is heavily regulated. Australia has a mixed commercial/public media model. There are fundamental differences in the purposes, motivations and operational constraints of commercial and public broadcasters, which means they are regulated differently – in large part to protect the independence of public broadcasters from government influence.

The increasing influence of digital platforms in media markets (particularly Google and Facebook), and the reality of a converged media environment, is accelerating pressure for the Australian Government to address disparities in the media regulatory framework.

At the direction of the Government, the ACCC undertook a comprehensive inquiry into the impact of digital platforms on the state of competition in Australia's media and advertising services markets, with a particular focus on the supply of news and journalistic content.

In mid-2019, the ACCC provided its final report and a suite of recommendations to reform relevant regulatory frameworks, including a process to implement a more consistent approach to regulation for all players and platforms in the market.

On the back of the ACCC report, in 2019 the Australian Government announced a series of reform commitments in the areas of competition, consumer protection, privacy and media regulation.

In the media regulation category, it is seeking to create a more platform-neutral media regulatory environment, including through a uniform classification scheme across media platforms and a more effective local content regime.

The Government has also set in train processes for stronger measures to govern the activities of digital platforms, including the development of a mandatory code to address bargaining power imbalances between large digital platforms (Google and Facebook) and Australian news media businesses, and the development of a voluntary code to help combat disinformation.

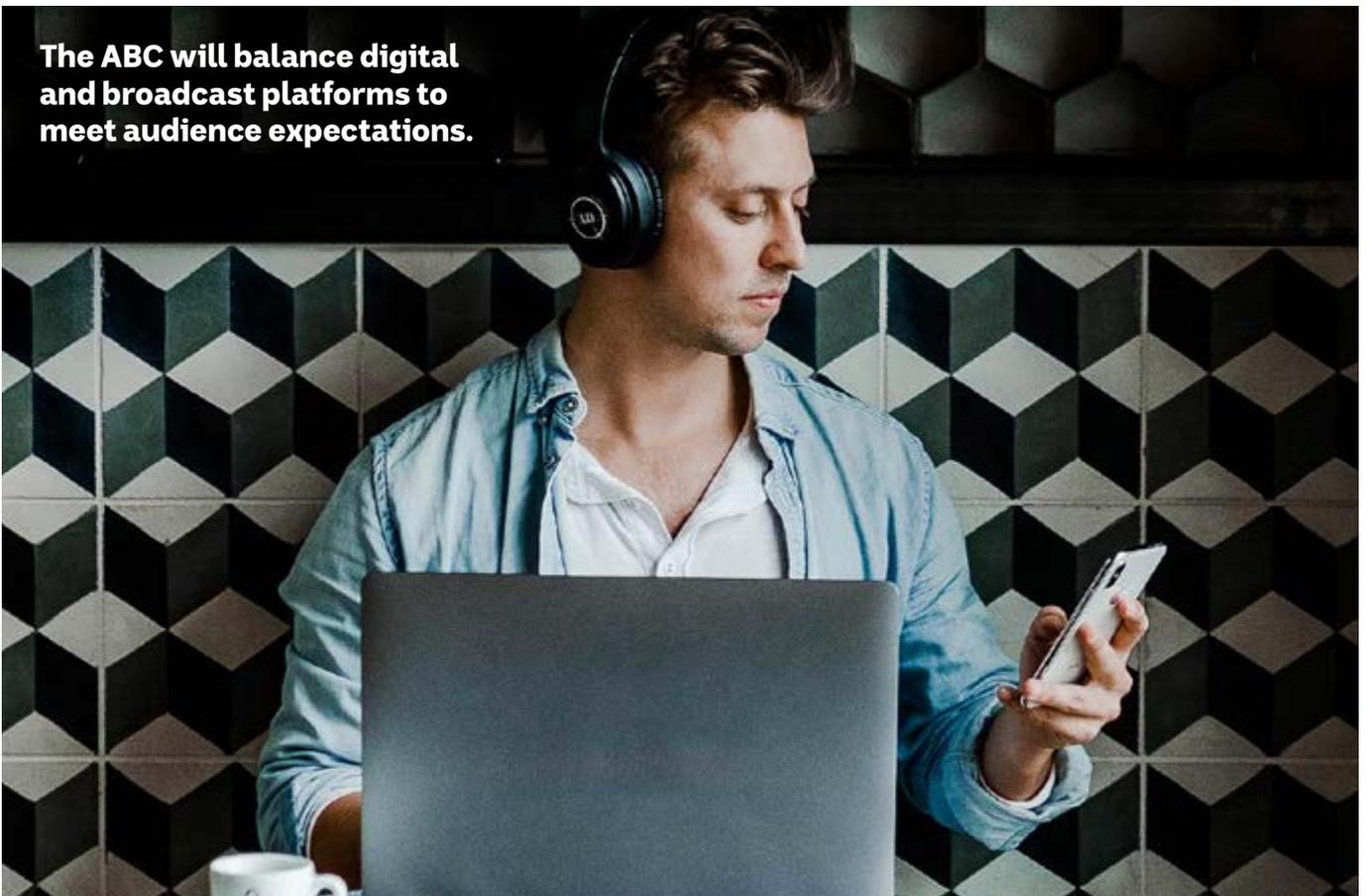
At the time of writing, many of these policy reform processes are still in train, making it difficult to determine the impact on the ABC.

It will be vital for the ABC to continue to contribute to the policy and regulatory conversations and to keep pace with emerging standards and community expectations.



32% of Australians are from non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds.

Victorian Screen Development Interns.



The ABC will balance digital and broadcast platforms to meet audience expectations.

The ABC FIVE-YEAR Plan

The Five-Year Plan responds to the need to maintain the ABC's purpose and Charter obligations in a changing media environment and is framed in the context of the challenges and opportunities outlined in the previous pages.

New technologies and audience behaviours will continue to reshape media consumption. This, in turn, will reshape the demand for ABC services and change its operating environment. A strategic response is needed to adapt the ABC to meet these challenges over the next five years and maintain the ABC's value into the future.

The ABC has been an essential part of Australian culture and society for almost 90 years.

It exists to ensure that all Australians have access to independent news and information that serves the public interest.

It supports and promotes Australian culture and the work of its creative industries. It helps education, promotes science, and provides Australian perspectives on issues and events to global audiences.

The ABC is both a foundation for, and the benchmark of, Australian media. It connects Australian communities and reflects Australia's national identity.

Over the next five years, the ABC will maintain and build on this position, evolving its services to meet the needs and expectations of contemporary audiences.

The ABC will become a leaner, more flexible operation that sharply aligns its resources to meeting audience needs and expectations. This will be a different ABC, with a greater focus on being easier to access and experience on digital platforms and devices.

But it will continue to be a valued part of Australians' lives, reflecting their identities and experiences through relevant and innovative content, and making a positive impact in their communities.

The ABC of the future will provide an individually personalised service, such that each member of the Australian public can access the content that is most relevant to them. It will also have grown its presence

in the outer suburban areas of Australia’s largest cities, increased its resources throughout regional Australia, and increased its capacity to serve the community in times of emergency.

Elements of the Strategy

The ABC Strategy sets out the purpose and vision for the ABC over the next five years. It provides a decision-making framework based on five pillars and identifies six strategic priorities where the ABC will focus its efforts.

Purpose: To deliver valued services that reflect and contribute to Australian society, culture and identity

The ABC derives its purpose from its Charter. The ABC was created to serve all Australians through media services that inform and entertain, providing content and services that:

- Reflect the cultural diversity of the Australian community.
- Contribute to a sense of national identity.
- Deliver independent news services and content of an educational nature.
- Support and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia.
- Encourage awareness of Australia in other countries and provide information to Australian citizens abroad.

Vision: The home of Australian stories – accessible, bold, creative

The ABC has been an essential part of Australian culture and society for more than 85 years. Its creative ambition is to be the place where every Australian will find stories that reflect, shape, and enrich their lives.

The ABC will:

- Give audiences entertaining content featuring Australian voices, places, and stories.
- Allow Australians, wherever they are, access to an independent, comprehensive, and local news service.
- Help to keep audiences informed during fires, floods, storms, and other emergencies.
- Support and promote Australia’s creative industries.
- Raise awareness of science and enable lifelong learning through educational content.
- Provide Australian perspectives on issues and events to global audiences.
- Serve as a foundation for, and the benchmark of, Australian media.

Pillars

Reflect contemporary Australia.	Build a lifelong relationship with Australians.	Continue to earn the trust that audiences place in the ABC, safeguarding ABC independence and integrity.	Provide entertaining, culturally significant, and on-demand content.	Make sustainable choices in allocating resources.
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Priorities

- Deliver personalised digital experiences.
- Remain Australia’s best and most trusted source of news and information.
- Strengthen local connections.
- Prioritise quality over quantity.
- Invest in the workforce of the future.
- Be creative, flexible, efficient, and accountable.

Strategic Pillars

The pillars of the strategy provide the framework that will inform and shape decision making over the next five years.

Each pillar represents a goal that will keep the ABC focused on its priorities and help to drive outcomes that will fulfil the ABC's vision. The pillars are:

Reflect contemporary Australia

The ABC will:

1. Reflect Australia's diversity in its workforce and draw on talent and experience from a wide array of backgrounds.
2. Provide content and services that are relevant to people from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, age groups and from around the country.
3. Promote Australian stories in a media market flooded with international content.
4. Share Australian stories and perspectives with international audiences.
5. Fulfil the commitments of, and continue to develop, ABC Reconciliation Action Plans and Diversity Action Plans.

Build a lifelong relationship with Australians

The ABC will:

1. Continue to provide a media space for children to learn and be there for them as their world widens.
2. Improve the relevance and promotion of its services to migrant communities who may have no prior relationship with the ABC.
3. Be a place for lifelong learning and a place to discover new Australian music, new ideas, and new perspectives.
4. Be there to keep Australians informed through major news events and elections, and during times of emergencies.
5. Provide content for audiences of all ages on the platforms and devices that they use.
6. Promote its content to ensure that audiences are aware of it and can find it, and to build bridges that help them move between services as they grow.
7. Remain free and accessible for all.

Continue to earn the trust that audiences place in the ABC, safeguarding ABC independence and integrity

The ABC will:

1. Remain a constant and reliable source of Australian news and entertainment, regardless of future disruptions in the technology or media landscape.
2. Be where audiences need it to be, reaching across as many preferred platforms and devices as possible.
3. Maintain the highest editorial standards and quality.
4. Uphold and defend its independence and impartiality, holding power to account, while always being prepared to acknowledge and correct mistakes.
5. Provide a safe environment for children to discover entertaining and educational content.
6. Respect users' privacy and protect their personal information.
7. Remain accountable and transparent in everything it does.
8. Deliver reliable news and information for audiences in Asia and the Pacific.

Provide entertaining, culturally significant, and on-demand content

The ABC will:

1. Focus on telling entertaining and distinctively Australian stories that appeal to on-demand, as well as broadcast audiences – from high-impact dramas to the unusual, surprising and often amusing aspects of everyday life.
2. Develop innovative approaches to storytelling and presentation.
3. Play an essential role in supporting and shaping the development of Australian arts, culture and creative industries.
4. Discover the musicians, comedians, and other performers who express and shape Australian identities.
5. Maintain its commitment to inform, as well as entertain, through educational content.
6. Improve the visibility and accessibility of high-quality ABC news and information through its own on-demand products, ABC iview, ABC Listen and ABC News Digital.

7. Provide content that contributes to media and science literacy, supports school curricula, and provides new perspectives on history, technology, and the natural world.
8. Reflect Australian life and culture to audiences overseas through stories that spark curiosity and build understanding.

Make sustainable choices in allocating resources

The ABC will:

1. Allocate its funding across many needs in a way that achieves the greatest impact and benefit for the Australian public.
2. Carefully assess options and innovative thinking to come up with new ways to best serve both new and established audiences.
3. Ensure its choices are sustainable in financial and environmental terms.
4. Ensure production is efficient, manageable for ABC teams over the long term, and has the least possible impact on the environment.



Strategic Priorities

Within the framework of its five pillars, the ABC will focus on six strategic priorities.

These address the changes the ABC needs to make and the areas where it needs to focus its efforts and resources. The six priorities are set out here.

Deliver personalised digital experiences

The ABC will:

1. Deliver news, information, and entertainment across the platforms and devices audiences use to connect to the world and each other, ensuring that products and services are free, reliable, and easy to find and use.
2. Provide a consistent, easy-to-use digital experience across ABC News, ABC iview, ABC Listen, and other ABC websites and apps.
3. Enable individuals to personalise their ABC experiences, allowing them to choose from options for customisation, receive relevant recommendations, resume listening or viewing across devices, create their own playlists, and filter content by topics and locations.
4. Ensure the personal data used for personalisation is kept secure and never shared with third parties without specific permission.

Remain Australia's best and most trusted source of news and information

The ABC will:

1. Uphold and defend the editorial values that have made it the most trusted source of news.
2. Focus on public interest journalism and tell the stories that are vital for strong communities and a healthy democratic society.
3. Prioritise coverage and information that audiences need during major news events, elections and emergency situations.
4. Report simply and clearly using everyday language and employ methods of storytelling that appeal to broader audiences.
5. Tell stories that provide valuable context and explain the news, with an emphasis on exploring the issues that matter most to audiences.
6. Continue to invest in investigative journalism that makes a positive difference, holding institutions and organisations to account.
7. Cover stories of global significance with an Australian perspective through the ABC's network of international correspondents.



Strengthen local connections

The ABC will:

1. Focus more on telling the stories that matter in more communities, including expanding newsgathering in outer metropolitan areas.
2. Tell stories from more places, listening to local communities to uncover their perspectives, experiences and concerns, and bringing them into national conversations.
3. Listen to, and participate in, local conversations to better understand the issues to explore, explain, and track.
4. Collaborate and seek partnerships with other media outlets and organisations to extend local coverage and support community-based coverage.
5. Ensure easy access to localised content and emergency information within ABC digital products.
6. Work with cultural and linguistic communities to increase the relevance of ABC stories for both local and overseas audiences.

Prioritise quality over quantity

The ABC will:

1. Reduce the volume of content produced in various categories to ensure more resources are available for the best and most distinctive in each.
2. Strengthen commissioning of digital content to increase quality and the relevance of the ABC for audiences using ABC iview and other ABC digital services.
3. Secure enhanced digital rights for commissioned and acquired content to make programs available on ABC iview for longer.
4. Where appropriate, seek rights that enable ABC content to travel beyond ABC platforms.



Invest in the workforce of the future

The ABC will:

1. Invest in its people to develop a creative, diverse, and highly skilled workforce of the future.
2. Provide a workplace and culture that encourages creative risk-taking and the exploration of new ideas.
3. Invest in training and support to build a workforce that meets the ABC's future needs.

Creative, flexible, efficient, and accountable

The ABC will:

1. Adapt its operations to be more responsive to shifts in audience behaviour.
2. Maintain a sharp focus on delivering against its Charter obligations as efficiently as possible, delivering the maximum value within the limits of its funding.
3. Review and increase investment in modernising its production to further improve efficiency and optimise use of its resources.
4. Investigate savings measures such as reviewing its property use and combining operations to improve flexibility.
5. Where appropriate, realise a commercial return on ABC programs and facilities in order to further the creation and discoverability of ABC services.
6. Maintain robust and comprehensive financial reporting and complaints-resolution processes.



triple j's *One Night Stand.*

Implementation

These initiatives represent activities that the ABC will undertake to implement its strategic plan.

Further initiatives will be developed in the near future, including a number that will follow reviews into different aspects of ABC operations. Implementation of the strategy will also include measures to reduce and redirect resources in line with the strategic priorities.

Deliver personalised digital experiences

Strategic Goal: By 2025, the ABC's digital services will embody a clear ABC-wide personalisation strategy that delivers compelling benefits to all audiences.

Key Initiatives

- Introduce personalisation across ABC products, giving audiences the option to sign into one ABC account that records their preferences across ABC platforms. This will allow audiences to receive content recommendations, as well as pause and resume watching and listening across different devices.
- Build ABC iview into the leading showcase for Australian content and culture by enhancing its user experience, video offering and discoverability by audiences.
- Add robust profile management features across the ABC's digital product ecosystem that respect and protect audience privacy.

- Support and enable content-makers to apply rigorous metadata within production workflows, generating the critical information needed for audiences to find content that interests them.
- Offer personalised emails, alerts, and other notifications to help audiences stay up-to-date and in touch with breaking and daily news, new programs, and coverage of events.

Remain Australia's best and most trusted source of news and information

Strategic Goal: By 2025, the ABC will deliver high-quality news that is relevant and approachable, ensuring that it remains Australia's best and most trusted source of news and information.

Key Initiatives

- Introduce new quality-review processes to ensure stories are highly relevant and consistent with contemporary better-practice storytelling.

- Deploy audience insights and analytics to commission for greater impact.
- Generate more approachable news stories by using a less formal tone, plainer language and providing more context.
- Significantly increase the number of video and audio news stories created as stand-alone digital items for distribution in different ways across on-demand platforms and broadcasts, including commissioning stories specifically for on-demand use.
- Counter news avoidance with more stories that go beyond “bad news” reporting and explore context, as well as efforts at finding constructive solutions to issues.
- Develop specialist reporting that supports greater public literacy across topics such as weather, finance, science, religion and ethics, media, and technology.
- Raise awareness of the ABC as a reliable and comprehensive source of important safety information during emergency situations.

Strengthen local connections

Strategic Goal: By 2025, the ABC will connect Australians to their communities with reporters in more locations, voices from more communities in its programs, and special coverage that shares how different communities confront issues and face them together.

Key Initiatives

- Introduce new ways of reporting and establish new outposts in outer metropolitan and regional centres that the ABC does not cover locally.
- Listen to more voices from local communities to deliver more relevant stories and support a “citizens’ agenda”.
- Introduce new services, such as personalised email newsletters and alerts, that deliver local news and news alerts on digital devices, especially for those with limited access to local coverage.
- Increase the distribution of ABC operations around the country, ensuring that at least 75% of content-makers work outside of the ABC’s Ultimo headquarters and reducing the concentration of facilities in Sydney.
- Develop resources to help communities prepare for emergencies and build resilience in the aftermath of storms, floods and fires.
- Invest in emergency coverage to ensure it remains effective and sustainable for ABC teams as natural disasters become more frequent and severe.

- Work with local media outlets and other organisations to support local news and share ABC expertise in investigative and data-driven journalism.
- Commission more stories that show how different communities around Australia come together to tackle the challenges they face and support community-building initiatives.
- Commission more stories that reflect and appeal to diverse communities and, where appropriate, provide them in languages other than English.

Prioritise quality over quantity

Strategic Goal: By 2025, the ABC’s commissioning process will create content that stands out as the best available in Australia. Its approach will seek offerings that are unique, enhance collaboration, and reduce waste.

Key Initiatives

- Increase focus on commissioning distinctive and high-quality Australian programming and reducing content that doesn’t perform well for its intended audience.
- Build a stronger and more strategic ABC iview catalogue through acquisitions and targeted investment in rights to ensure programs are available on the platform for longer.
- Deliver stronger podcasts and programs for ABC Listen and key timeslots on Local Radio, Radio National and ABC Radio Australia.
- Help more people discover Australian music, artists, and performers in a highly competitive market.
- Align commissioning decisions more closely with audience data and insights to better meet audience needs and expectations.

Invest in the workforce of the future

Strategic Goal: By 2025, the ABC’s workforce will have the skills and creative culture it needs to deliver outstanding services into the future. Its workforce will reflect the diversity of Australian communities.

Key Initiatives

- Strengthen the ABC’s learning culture by providing on-demand resources that deliver engaging and easy-to-access materials that build lasting skills for the future.
- Continue to build a workforce culture that embodies diversity, inclusivity, flexibility, creativity and a shared vision for change.
- Identify further ways to improve collaboration, eliminate duplication, and foster creativity across teams.

- Improve leadership development, talent management, recruitment, and selection practices to attract and retain diverse and talented individuals.
- Deliver strategic workforce plans that ensure recruitment and training align with current and future output needs.
- Apply the lessons learned from emergency coverage and the COVID-19 crisis to improve workplace health and safety management and processes, including capabilities for working from home and other remote locations.

Creative, flexible, efficient, and accountable

Strategic Goal: By 2025, the ABC will have embraced new tools, ways of working, and processes that enable teams to be creative and flexible in response to changing audience needs and community expectations. It will have achieved savings that ensure it remains within its budget.

Key Initiatives

- Implement modern IP-based systems and cloud services for distribution and production to improve flexibility and efficiency.
- Introduce new workflows that enhance collaboration, eliminate duplication, and improve efficiency in creating and distributing content with a sharper focus on specific audiences across communities and interests.
- Achieve production efficiencies with a more consistent approach to content-making, ensuring that similar productions use similar resources.
- Seek further efficiencies in discretionary spending and in support areas through improved utilisation of staff.
- Invest in collaboration tools and technology that enable a mobile, remote and agile workforce.
- Minimise the impact of ABC operations on the environment and update corporate plans, policies and targets for reducing the ABC's impact on the environment.



The ABC will be the nation's trusted storyteller.

Behind-the-scenes production shot from an ABC drama Total Control.



Measuring Success

The ABC's performance against the Five-Year Plan will be tracked using several high-level indicators (Key Performance Indicators) that will show the effectiveness of the underlying strategy over time.

Monitoring the indicators will also enable the ABC to respond early to any need to adjust the Plan in response to changing conditions or new developments.

The targets for the first year of the Plan are set out below. The ABC Board will set targets for subsequent years in the ABC Corporate Plan.

In addition to KPIs, the ABC will continue to track and report on other metrics, including net reach and reach by platform, engagement/time spent by platform, the Net Promoter Score (NPS), Australian-produced broadcast hours, distinctiveness, and diversity metrics across both employees and content. These additional measures will provide detail on the ABC's overall performance.

Key Performance Indicators

The KPIs are linked to the strategic priorities identified in the Five-Year Plan. The eight top-level indicators are:

1. Awareness of the ABC. Audience awareness of the ABC's services is the foundation on which understanding, value and use depend. ABC survey responses are used to track awareness.
2. Weekly Active Digital Users. The ABC of the future must meet audience demand for digital experiences on a wide variety of devices. This measure is tracked with user-analysis tools.
3. Trust. The ABC is Australia's most trusted media organisation and should maintain this position. ABC survey responses are used to track its trust score.

4. Local/Community Connection. Strengthening the role that the ABC plays in local communities is a key strategic priority that has grown in importance. Responses to specific survey questions are used to generate a percentage value to measure this.
5. Quality and Distinctiveness. The ABC needs to maintain high standards and stand out as a unique provider of Australian content. Various measures are aggregated to provide a percentage score for this.
6. Employee Engagement. This is a vital measure against the priority of being a creative, flexible, efficient, and accountable organisation. It is measured specifically using staff surveys.
7. Employee Diversity. As above, this is a critical measure of the ABC's performance. Employee data is used to track cultural diversity and Indigenous representation across the Corporation.
8. Efficiency Targets. The ABC's funding position requires that budgets are managed carefully and milestones for achieving savings are met. The Corporation will measure the achievement of all efficiency targets.

Element	Measure/s	Source	Target (2020)
Vision: <i>The home of Australian stories – accessible, bold, creative</i>	Awareness of the ABC among all Australians	ABC Corporate Tracking Program	96%
Priority: <i>Deliver personalised digital experiences</i>	Weekly active digital users	Google Analytics	12 million per week
Priority: <i>Remain Australia's best and most trusted source of news and information</i>	The ABC is trusted by Australians	ABC Corporate Tracking Program	80%
Priority: <i>Strengthen local connections</i>	The ABC connects me to my local community	ABC Corporate Tracking Program	65%
Priority: <i>Prioritise quality over quantity</i>	Quality	ABC Q&D research	87%
	Distinctiveness	ABC Q&D research	84%
Priority: <i>Invest in the workforce of the future</i>	Staff engagement	Engagement survey	69%
	Indigenous employees	Employee data	3.2% [*]
	Culturally diverse employees	Employee data	11% for content makers [†] 10% for executives [†]
	Employees with a disability	Employee data	6% [†]
Priority: <i>Be creative, flexible, efficient, and accountable</i>	Efficiency targets	CFO Report	Achieved

* See the ABC Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan 2019–22 for targets beyond 2020.

† See the ABC Diversity & Inclusion Plan 2019–22 for targets beyond 2020.

Appendix 1

ABC Purpose and Charter

The ABC's Purpose

The ABC's purpose is to support Australian culture and society by providing essential media services. This is given expression through the ABC Charter, which sets out how the ABC must serve its audiences and have a positive impact on Australian life and communities.

Embedded in the ABC's purpose is a commitment to the idea that Australians have a right to a free and independent source of news, and that there should be a place to showcase Australian arts and culture. It also carries the idea that access to educational content contributes to a stronger and more vital society. These values define the ABC as a public service media organisation (PSM).

There is a growing appreciation that PSMs play a key role in supporting democratic societies and make contributions that extend beyond informing and entertaining audiences. These contributions include supporting and stimulating creative industries; holding business, governments, and other institutions to account; and helping communities better navigate the issues that threaten to divide them.

More broadly, PSMs like the ABC also reflect the values of the societies that foster them. They stand for an independent media that should be open, credible, accessible, and accountable. Supporting a PSM actively demonstrates that a government is willing to be held to account, to engage with a diversity of views, and support the cultural life of the nation.

The ABC's purpose and public service values will continue to drive the ABC through and beyond the Five-Year Plan.

Charter of the Corporation

From the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983 (Cth).

(1) The functions of the Corporation are:

- (a) to provide within Australia innovative and comprehensive broadcasting services of a high standard as part of the Australian broadcasting system consisting of national, commercial and community sectors and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, to provide:
 - (i) broadcasting programs that contribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of, the Australian community; and
 - (ii) broadcasting programs of an educational nature;
- (b) to transmit to countries outside Australia broadcasting programs of news, current affairs, entertainment and cultural enrichment that will:
 - (i) encourage awareness of Australia and an international understanding of Australian attitudes on world affairs; and
 - (ii) enable Australian citizens living or travelling outside Australia to obtain information about Australian affairs and Australian attitudes on world affairs; and
- (ba) to provide digital media services; and
- (c) to encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia.

Note: See also section 31AA (Corporation or prescribed companies to be the only providers of Commonwealth-funded international broadcasting services).

- (2) In the provision by the Corporation of its broadcasting services within Australia:
- (a) the Corporation shall take account of:
 - (i) the broadcasting services provided by the commercial and community sectors of the Australian broadcasting system;
 - (ii) the standards from time to time determined by the ACMA in respect of broadcasting services;
 - (iii) the responsibility of the Corporation as the provider of an independent national broadcasting service to provide a balance between broadcasting programs of wide appeal and specialized broadcasting programs;
 - (iv) the multicultural character of the Australian community; and
 - (v) in connection with the provision of broadcasting programs of an educational nature—the responsibilities of the States in relation to education; and
 - (b) the Corporation shall take all such measures, being measures consistent with the obligations of the Corporation under paragraph (a), as, in the opinion of the Board, will be conducive to the full development by the Corporation of suitable broadcasting programs.
- (3) The functions of the Corporation under subsection (1) and the duties imposed on the Corporation under subsection (2) constitute the Charter of the Corporation.
- (4) Nothing in this section shall be taken to impose on the Corporation a duty that is enforceable by proceedings in a court. Appendix 2: ABC Values and Principles

Appendix 2

ABC Values and Principles

ABC Values

Respect

We treat our audiences and each other with consideration and dignity. We embrace diversity.

Integrity

We act with trustworthiness, honesty and fairness. We deliver on our commitments and are accountable.

Collegiality

We work together willingly. We cooperate and share in the ABC's challenges and successes.

Innovation

We foster creativity and distinctiveness. We encourage new thinking and strive to achieve quality in all that we do.

ABC Principles

One ABC

- We think whole-of-ABC first
- We work across teams to get the best outcome for the organisation and our audiences
- We continuously learn and grow to meet audience needs
- We inspire each other to deliver on the Charter and champion fearless and impartial public broadcasting
- When we fail, we stop, assess, learn and move on.

Straight talking

- We have brave and honest conversations with each other in our teams
- We give honest feedback on performance
- We welcome honest feedback on our own performance
- We ask why, and we encourage our colleagues to do the same.

People Focused

- We aim to be the team we are proud to work in
- We build diverse and inclusive teams
- We empower and support each other
- We act on good ideas and value creativity
- We acknowledge our success and our struggles
- We support our teams through the challenges of a changing media world
- We take action for the wellbeing and safety of all our colleagues.

Accountable

- We set goals for ourselves and the team
- We clear roadblocks that stop our team moving forward
- We take responsibility as employees to deliver results for the team, the ABC and our audiences
- We value innovation and new ways of working to get results.

Open & Transparent

- We share information with each other in our teams
- We listen, and we explain decisions
- We share decision making wherever possible
- We build trust in our teams
- We trust that our colleagues will do the right thing.



**Five-Year Plan
2020–2025**