

Statement from Colin Vickery, TV columnist

One of the reasons that 10 News+ hasn't resonated with audiences is that it is off-brand. The 10 Network has long been associated with light entertainment and The Project - for all its failings - was very much part of that DNA, taking a lighter look at news and current affairs.

10 News+ is the exact opposite. It is way too serious for the typical Channel 10 viewer. It is like Goldie Hawn suddenly deciding to do Shakespeare.

Where Ten does well is when it takes the piss out of the news - not only with The Project but with Have You Been Paying Attention? and The Cheap Seats.

Let's add to that the fact that 10 News+ goes directly up against Seven and Nine's nightly news bulletins which pretty much day in day out are the highest rating shows of the night. Tough time slot.

Plus if you are going to watch a current affairs show you really need to have watched the news so the only potential audience for 10 News+ are the viewers who have already watched 10 News. That isn't a huge audience.

But even then, 10 News+ has struggled to retain a high percentage of 10 News viewers. My guess is that those missing viewers switch to 7 News and 9 News. That is a problem because it suggests that the content of 10 News+ isn't compelling enough to stop them switching channels.

2. For me, losing half an hour of news content per night isn't a big issue because so few people are watching 10 News+. Nobody is going to mourn that missing half hour and in fact it might be a blessing because now Ten will be forced to do a shorter, sharper program which might be more attractive to viewers.

3. Some of this is answered in response to the first question. Ten has always been challenged by the ratings dominance of 7 News and 9 News from 6pm to 7pm. It has been a constant thorn in its side. Do you compete or offer an alternative? The Project in its heyday made an impact but has been on a downward trend in recent years for multiple reasons and there were cost issues. Traditionally, Ten does best when it offers an alternative to its commercial rivals rather than go head-to-head and like-for-like. That is because when you are the third-rated commercial network you have to play a different game from the big boys.

Plus - and I hinted at this before - looking back over the years/decades Ten can't decide whether it wants to be playful or serious in the current affairs space and that confuses viewers. You can see it when Ten decides to cover Federal and State elections. Their ratings are a fraction of those for ABC, Seven, and Nine because viewers don't think of Ten in that space.