



24 August 2020

Budget Policy Division  
Department of the Treasury

### **2020/2021 Pre-Budget Submission: GetUp members on the ABC**

GetUp welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on behalf of our members to the consultation process for the 2020-21 budget.

143,444 GetUp members from across the country have signed a petition calling on the Federal Government to restore and increase essential operational funding to the ABC so that it can meet the needs of our communities with confidence, independence and integrity.

Additionally, on 3 Aug 2020, GetUp members were asked if they would like to contribute to this submission, in support of a well-funded ABC, by answering the question: *'How was the ABC there for you in 2020?'*

We received 2,714 submissions from GetUp members, detailing how the ABC keeps them safe in times of terrifying danger, connected in time of isolation, informed of the world around us and engaged no matter our age or location. All submissions are included in a supporting document. Below is a summary of key themes raised by our members, as well as selected responses.

#### **The ABC provided unmatched information for people threatened by the 2019/2020 bushfires.**

- Many of our members relied on ABC broadcasts for up-to-date information on immediate bushfire threats in their own or a family member's vicinity.
- A number of members shared that ABC radio broadcasts from battery-run radios had been their sole source of information on immediate bushfire threats due to power and internet outages.
- In some cases, members had received updates from ABC radio broadcasts before they were updated by the RFS Fires Near Me app.
- Members stressed that the ABC was an essential safety service, and were very concerned about the under-resourcing of this service.

*"I am Senior Deputy Captain of the Narooma RFS.  
During the bushfire emergency in January our brigade relied on the ABC local radio for information in our larger area about the fires, traffic, road closures. At the height of the crisis we*



*were without mobile phones, television, Internet for about a week and all roads in and out of our town were closed.*

*ABC radio was our only source of accurate information.*

*For the last six months I have relied on the ABC for ongoing information that I can trust about the covid 19 crisis.” Peter P, VIC 2546*

*“We were without electricity and phone reception for a couple of weeks over 2 periods and we absolutely relied on our (battery powered) radio and the local ABC for updates and information. It was up-to-date and reliable (unlike the FiresNearMe app) and LOCALLY focused. We had no other source of information at that time. We would have been much more worried and feeling lost without it. It was reassuring and incredibly helpful.” Wendy T, NSW 2030*

*“When the sky went dark orange and then black and the heat enveloped us all and the charred leaves fell out of the sky, when there was no power, no telephone and no internet, we sat huddled by the sea with the battery radio. News and information flowed regularly out of that little box bringing reassurance and comfort and we trusted what we heard because we knew it was the ABC! Thank you ... Long may the ABC last we can't do without you!” Vera M, NSW 2545*

*“My family relied on the ABC as the emergency broadcaster during the bushfire crisis on the far south coast of NSW, January 2020. We were isolated, had no power, no internet, no phone and only the radio to rely on for emergency information in this extremely volatile and dangerous situation. The information was reliable and timely. It allowed us to stay safe and evacuate safely, without getting into dangerous situations or becoming a burden on stretched emergency services. Commercial stations were not up to scratch and mostly off the air. The ABC is also once again proving this through solid coverage of the evolving Covid-19 pandemic. More than a key Australian cultural institution, the ABC is an essential service and it's funding must be increased, not frozen or cut.” Shaun L, QLD 2211*

**For isolated community members, many of whom are experiencing exacerbated isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ABC provides comfort and connection.**

- Members shared that ABC radio broadcasts and television entertainment programs provide much-needed comfort, hope and connection.
- Some members explicitly mentioned the positive effect that the ABC has on their mental wellbeing.
- Members noted that the reliable, measured news and safety information provided by the ABC during this year's crises was important to their wellbeing.

*"I am an 84 year old pensioner who has been often alone during 2020 because of the virus. The ABC has provided a lifeline. It keeps me sane. It keeps me up to date with the latest reliable news which is needed in our ever changing world. I also appreciate ABC entertainment, especially those, fiction or documentaries, which have Australian content. The fact that the ABC is free of ads and does not show overly hysterical so called 'reality shows', is also a great plus. For the above reasons I would like to see the ABCs funding increased which is essential to counteract the 'alternative facts' sometimes shown on other stations." Alva G, NSW 2478*

*"I've been living w/ ME/CFS for 17 years. It's forced me into home-bound reclusiveness. The ABC is my lifeline. I listen to many hours of radio through the day, Classic and RN. And enjoy iview in the evening. Local news reports about the local bushfires was invaluable.*

*The wonderful RN music programming is now long gone. I dread what else we'll lose w/ new cuts. The Coalition's opposition is cruel and ongoing. They seem to want a total Murdoch lockdown of our media.*

*I've long ago lost my ability to articulate and communicate, another way my illness has narrowed my world. Rich, healthy, powerful people can have no idea how much the ABC means to us." Ahmo G, NSW 2448*

**The ABC is highly-valued as a quality news and analysis source, and viewed as an integral part of our news media landscape.**

- The ABC was frequently recognised as a reliable, high-quality source of unbiased reporting, particularly so in the context of increasing disinformation.
- The ABC's independence is highly-valued and seen by members as an important check to corporate and government power.
- Members appreciated the ABC as a forum for democratic participation and public debate.

*"I live in Paul Fletcher, Minister for Communications electorate of Bradfield. I am a teacher/educator and so have relied on the ABC all my life developing my knowledge of history, culture, current affairs and the environment. The ABC have provided so many superb shows that are vital to an informed and educated public.*

*I watch the ABC TV every day - and especially rely on the ABC for up to date information on the coronavirus crisis. It was when I heard ABC's Norman Swan commentary on the pandemic in*



*March 2020 that I stopped all my activities and stayed home. It was his knowledge that I respected and listened to.*

*The ABC for me cuts through the misinformation that is rife in society. Monday night is one of my favourite nights of ABC TV- with Four Corners, Media Watch and Q&A - that shines a light on power. I rely on the ABC to hold those in power accountable particularly at a time when there is so much disinformation - particularly through social media and the shockingly poor journalist standards of the Murdoch media empire.*

*I lead a very busy life but I love listening to Radio National and the most wonderful informative talks on their shows.*

*My message to the Government is - Marise Payne travels to US concerned about the disinformation of the Chinese media interfering with democracy. Hypocrisy. Look after the independence of the ABC - so that Australia is not captured by the media misinformation of the Murdoch media empire - that has a shockingly poor history of misinformation, sensationalism and dog whistling.*

*It is time that the Government stopped its ideological attacks on the ABC and funded it properly. As a taxpayer, I demand that there be no cuts to the ABC in the October 2020-21 budget and that instead additional funds are provided to it." Janine K, NSW 2072*

*"The ABC consistently provides excellent news coverage. I will not be voting for the liberal party if the budget to the ABC is cut. This pandering to the private sector has to stop. We need a government funded broadcaster .*

*All it's tv programs are exemplary. Our country will be just little bit worse if the budget cuts are imposed." Lorraine S, WA 3046*

*"Hello, I am a young Australian and find it hard to rely on various new sources to tell me whats really happening around the globe right now. The ABC highlights voices from around our country, provides a forum for people to debate and discuss ideas and issues and for me is a trusted news source.*

*We have so many pieces of information put in our faces all the time now, please continue to fund one source that is funded by the people and is there to support the people. We need the ABC now more than ever to bring people together and create an understanding of whats happening around our country." Rosie H, VIC 3095*



**The ABC's children and young people's programming is relied upon by parents and teachers, and to a greater extent during COVID-19 lockdowns.**

- ABC Education programs provide invaluable curriculum materials for teachers and parents to support students in their learning.
- Parents felt comfortable letting their children watch increased hours of ABC's children's programming during lockdowns.

*'I'm a teacher living in the Illawarra, originally from the Bega Valley. The ABC's coverage of this terrifying bushfire summer was essential to me to keep up to date with what was happening in my hometown, providing unbiased, regular updates. In this COVID-19 time, the ABC is the only source of news I use regularly, and I rely on it to understand the ever changing situation and restrictions. In my work as a teacher, I use ABC resources on at least a weekly basis, with ABC Education providing valuable curriculum materials to support my students in their learning. BTN (Behind the News) remains one of my students' favourite parts of the week, and I consider it essential viewing to inform students about what is happening in the world and provide a catalyst for discussion and debate. On a personal level, ABC Life, iview and Triple J enrich my life and it wouldn't be the same without them. We are so lucky to have this wonderful national broadcaster, and I call for funding to maintained, and cut funding restored, in the upcoming budget.'* Amy V, NSW 2515

**For rural Australians, the ABC is a 'window to the world' as well as a crucial source of local information.**

- Members felt that the ABC plays an important role in keeping rural Australians connected to the broader community through a wide range of news and entertainment services.
- Members relied upon the ABC for services and programs that cater specifically to rural Australians, like ABC local radio and ABC Rural.
- Members from rural Australia relied on ABC local broadcasts during emergency events in 2020.

*"The ABC is a vital part of running a rural enterprise. Weekly Landline keep farmers up to date with farming trends and market information. ABC radio country hour give daily information of stock and wool prices yarding sizes which is invaluable information*



*I really enjoy Grandstand and listening to the cricket on the radio in summer which has become a way of living in an isolated environment. In the bush we need the ABC as it provides services that are not available on commercial stations." Jamie K, QLD 4370*

*"Without a well funded ABC I, and many people like me, would lose: a pertinent trusted news source for state, national and international current affairs; accurate, detailed weather reports for my locality, which are crucial to my oyster farming business; and, most of all, a source of information in natural disasters when no other source is available. I live in a rural, mobile black spot area and during last summers bushfires it was the local ABC that kept me connected. While at home on my own 4-6km from the fire front, I had no contact with my husband or his RFS brigade who were fighting the fire. Without the ABC's fire coverage, already heightened levels of anxiety, would have been totally unbearable. The Morrison government can't justify cuts to the ABC in the next budget or thereafter. If anything it is a funding increase that should happen." Yvette B, SA 2550*