

Labor Response to Friends of the ABC

Q 1, 8 and 9 ***If you and your party are elected to government, or hold the balance of power in the Senate, will you: Ensure the ABC is fully funded and supported by the Federal Government to fulfil to a high standard its role as an independent and comprehensive national public broadcaster; adequately fund the ABC and fund it in a manner that upholds its independence; increase transmission funds and facilities to provide full access for regional and rural Australians to all national ABC networks.***

As set out in its Platform, Labor is committed to ensuring adequate funding and support for the ABC. Labor recognises the ABC as a bastion of Australian culture. Labor considers that the ABC under a Rudd Labor government will continue to tell Australian stories, for all Australians. It will produce high levels of local content such as:

- Local news, current affairs and community activities;
- Programs and services relevant to young Australians;
- Services and programs relevant to Indigenous Australians and their communities; and
- Sporting and artistic programs.

This is by no means an exhaustive list.

To keep abreast of Labor policies and views, we would suggest that you monitor the ALP website: www.alp.org.au .

Q2 ***If you and your party are elected to government, or hold the balance of power in the Senate, will you: not change the charter in any way which might diminish or weaken the role of the ABC, or increase the potential for government or commercial influence of the ABC?***

The ABC is a great Australian institution. Labor supports the ABC and its role as an independent and comprehensive public broadcaster, which caters for a broad range of community interests. Labor has no plans to diminish or weaken the role of the ABC or to increase the potential for government or commercial influence of the ABC. As set out below in response to question 3, it is Labor's policy to end political interference in the ABC and to ensure there is no advertising on the ABC.

Q3 & Q 4 ***If you and your party are elected to government, or hold the balance of power in the Senate, will you: uphold the independence of the ABC – from commercial and government influence over ABC programming, editorial and management decisions & legislate to require the ABC Board to operate with greater public transparency with regard to policy matters?***

Labor is concerned by any leaning towards commercialisation by the ABC. Labor has long stated that it will not accept advertising on any part of the ABC, including ABC branded websites. Should advertising be allowed on the ABC, Labor considers that that ABC programming decisions may become more conservative and less innovative. Labor considers it critical that the ABC maintain its independence and that it is not swayed by advertising dollars.

Labor is committed to an independent ABC. Labor has been advocating for an open and transparent process for making appointments to the ABC Board since 2003. In

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order to ensure that the ABC Board is non-political, Labor will insist that appointments to the Board are made on the basis of merit. In addition, the position of Staff-Elected Director will be reinstated. These are fundamental to Labor's ABC Board Policy.

Q5 If you and your party are elected to government, or hold the balance of power in the Senate, will you: amend the ABC Act to guarantee full and free access, without individual cost, to services a modern public broadcaster should provide – radio, television and online services.

Labor considers that all ABC viewers and listeners should have access to news and current affairs programs on ABC TV and radio free of charge and that this should not change. New technology, such as the internet, brings with it new opportunities for broadcast, such as pod and vod-casting Labor considers that the ABC should make use of such technology and provide such services to its viewers and listeners. Notwithstanding the above, Labor has long supported ABC Shops and the sale of ABC material and merchandise through ABC Shops. Labor does not see any philosophical difference in ABC viewers buying a copy of a DVD of an ABC program in an ABC Shop or paying to download a copy of the same show online.

Q6 If you and your party are elected to government, or hold the balance of power in the Senate, will you: legislate to ensure ABC services have full access to the digital and multimedia services environment and present and future means of transmission.

As set out in Labor's Platform, a Rudd Labor Government will ensure that the ABC will be in a position enable the ABC to exploit the potential of new technology so that the ABC is in a position to deliver innovative content across new platforms such as digital television and the internet, as well as traditional media platforms such as radio.

Q7. If you and your party are elected to government, or hold the balance of power in the Senate, will you: ensure Radio Australia has access to transmission facilities, including shortwave, which enable it to independently broadcast its full range of programs to at least its reach and extent prior to the closure of the Cox Peninsula transmission system?

A Rudd Labor Government is committed to rebuilding Radio Australia. Labor recognises the important role that Radio Australia plays in encouraging awareness of Australian values around the world and in forging closer ties with neighbouring countries, as well as serving the needs of Australians abroad. Labor recognises that Radio Australia's broadcast footprint for shortwave services has been curtailed by the Howard government through its decision its decision to sell the Cox Peninsula transmitters and through the cutting of its regional language programs. A Rudd Labor Government believes it is important to rebuild Radio Australia in order to ensure that Australia can transmit messages to local communities in the region.

Q8 & 9 : see question 1

Q10 If you and your party are elected to government, or hold the balance of power in the Senate, will you: remove the effective bar on the ABC producing some genres of television programs by redressing the situation whereby

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government assistance to private producers, that is not available to the ABC, results in it being more expensive for the ABC to make programs than to purchase them?

Labor recognises that the production of television programs is expensive. As noted above, Labor is committed to ensuring that the ABC is adequately funded so that it will be capable of producing a range of quality programming for all Australians. Labor considers that an adequately funded ABC will be in a position to determine the appropriate balance of internally and externally produced programs.

Q11 If you and your party are elected to government, or hold the balance of power in the Senate, will you: make any change to the process or mechanisms by which formal complaints can presently be made against the ABC.

We have no current policy on changing the complaints processes and mechanisms at the ABC.

Please monitor the ALP website – www.alp.org.au – for further information.