

2026–27 Pre-Budget Submission: Funding for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Submission by ABC Alumni

This submission is made on behalf of the [ABC Alumni organisation](#).

Executive Summary

The ABC Alumni organisation recognises the action by the government to increase resources, address, at least in part, massive funding cuts imposed from 2014 to 2022, and provide greater funding stability and certainty to the ABC.

To ensure the ABC can meet its legislated policy role, the ABC Alumni recommends the following budget actions:

- Additional ABC funding for emergency media services
- Additional ABC funding to extend regional and local media
- Adjust the formula and increase the rate of indexation applied to ABC operational funding
- Extend international media funding for the ABC at a rate of \$20 million annually, plus indexation.

About ABC Alumni

ABC Alumni is an association of former Australian Broadcasting Corporation workers who believe passionately in the importance of a well-funded and independent national broadcaster as a vital part of Australian democracy. While not formally connected to the ABC, we have worked since [formation in 2018](#) to advocate for the importance of public service media, especially the ABC, as a key component of a diverse Australian media system.

Public service media and subscription streaming services

The Albanese government’s three-year, \$50 million funding commitment, announced in November 2025, builds on the improvements for ABC operational funds delivered by the government since May 2022. The funding will assist the ABC in an expanding and increasingly competitive Australian content market. As the government’s 28 November announcement recognised, “the ABC remains the largest commissioner of Australian scripted content”, delivering free content on multiple platforms to Australians each day.

Free screen and audio programs, especially first-release Australian content, are particularly important during a period when many Australians are experiencing economic hardship.

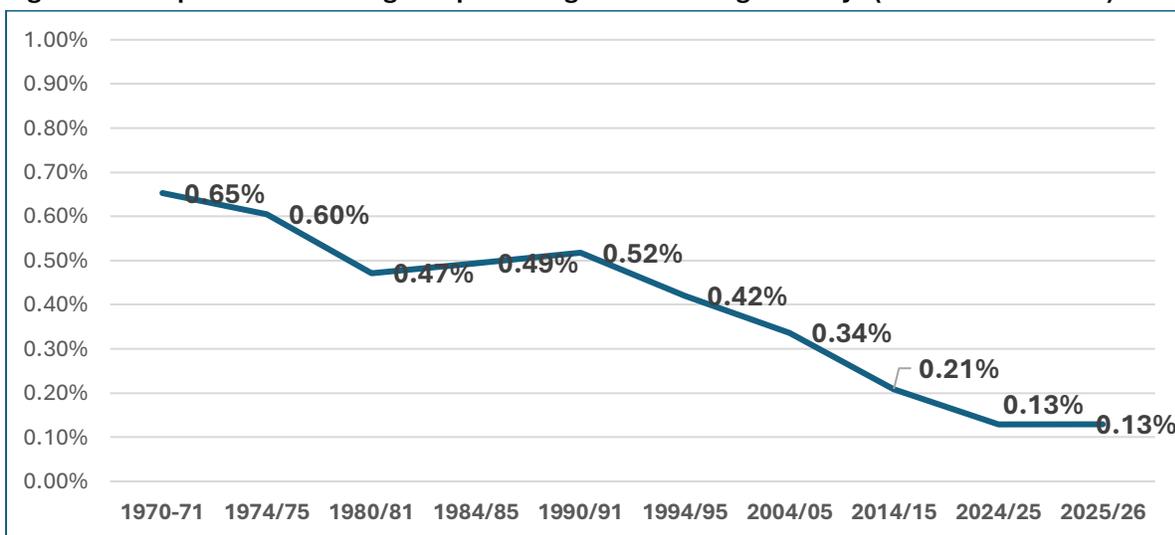
The level of take-up is demonstrated by the significant numbers of people accessing ABC programs. For example, according to ACMA data, a majority of Australians watch the free broadcast video on demand service, ABC [iView, each week \(62 per cent\)](#). The ability to aggregate significant community engagement and support across ABC platforms is important as the number of streaming services proliferates, with consequent fragmentation of audiences.

Increased funding

ABC Alumni recognises the considerable increases in ABC funding, now totalling over \$350 million, made by the Albanese government since May 2022. We also acknowledge the important commitment to introduce five-year funding for the ABC. These represent substantial policy support for sustaining the role of public service media in Australia.

Nonetheless, the ABC is still funded at a considerably lower level in real terms than it was and much less as a proportion of the federal budget compared to historical levels (see Figure 1 below). ABC Alumni’s detailed analysis of the scale of the funding cuts can be found at [Following the money: An Analysis of ABC Funding](#).

Figure 1 ABC operational funding as a percentage of total budget outlays (1970/71 to 2025/26)



Sources: ABC revenue, PBS relevant year & Jolly, R., Australian Parliamentary Library, 2014, pp. 58-59. Budget outlays: Relevant year Budget paper number 1, 1970/71 to 1994/95: 1994/95; Budget Paper number 1; 2004/05, p. 6-4; 2014/15, p. 6-6; 2024 /25 & 2025/26 figures, 2025/26 Budget Paper number 1, Statement 5, p. 117.

Further increases in operational funding will help the ABC deliver key content to more Australians, especially when combined with the government’s commitment to five-year funding for the ABC. Four specific areas for enhanced funding – emergency media, local and regional content, indexation and international broadcast– are outlined below.

Emergency media

There is strong evidence that the frequency and severity of extreme weather events are increasing. While Australians living in major metropolitan areas are experiencing their share of such events, regional, rural and remote communities in all states and territories are at greatest risk of extreme weather.

In the lead-up to, during and after such extreme events, communities must be provided with ongoing, clear and up-to-date information. The ABC has shown itself to be a leader in ensuring such information is provided promptly to Australians.

The ABC's extensive digital and analogue transmission and distribution network is also critical to delivering these services. For example, State-wide AM transmitters have again demonstrated their resilience recently in Victoria when television and FM transmitters were knocked out by fire at Mount Alexander.

While the government has committed extra resources to the community to improve resilience and address the impact of extreme weather events, increased funding for the ABC for emergency media services will ensure continuing and improved services are delivered. Further, given the announcement by the ABC in 2025 that such media will be provided free of charge to all media organisations in any affected areas, any funding allocated to the ABC has the potential to be of even greater value as it can be delivered across multiple media outlets.

Regional and local media services

The long-term decline in media trust (University of Canberra, 2025) and reduced access to Australian news outlets pose threats to democracy, especially impacting regional Australia. Over 350 news outlets either closed or contracted over the five years to 2024. The government's News Media Assistance Program and Journalism Assistance Fund provide important support for media access and diversity.

However, more funding is needed. Cuts to ABC funding in the period 2014-2022 had a major impact on the ABC's services, including for regional and local Australians. Nonetheless, the ABC still provides analogue and digital media services across Australia, including 44 local radio services with the greatest population and geographical coverage of any media. As for metropolitan services, these are an essential component of the ABC's role in providing fact-checked, accurate and fearless content in a historic period of misinformation and unrest.

Increased funding can increase local content levels provided by these services.

Increased rate of indexation

The ABC's operational funding is indexed: that is to say, it receives an annual increase to offset the impact of rising costs. These increases "are updated to reflect the forecast economic conditions of the year in which costs are expected to occur." However, the combination of the ongoing impact of an indexation freeze applied from 2019/20 to 2021/22, and the failure of the current indexation methodology has contributed to a decline in the real value of ABC funding over time.

ABC Alumni submits that a calculation based on average changes in the Wage Cost Index and Consumer Price Index does not take into account the costs of operating a media organisation, and a revised, more appropriate formula that fully funds increased costs should be implemented.

ABC International media role

The ABC also plays a key, legislated role in international broadcasting and delivery via digital platforms. In 2022, \$32 million was provided over 4 years for ABC International, under the Pacific Security and Engagement Initiatives, to extend ABC's services and partnerships to ensure more Australian voices are heard across the region. This funding is now scheduled to end.

The ABC has demonstrated the ability to deliver on its Charter obligations and meet government policy objectives. That demonstration provides the basis for extending and enhancing the funding at an increased level of \$20 million per annum, indexed annually. Increased funding would also provide an opportunity for extending the service into the south east Asian region.

While doubling the allocation may seem large, it is a small amount in comparison to other countries' international media efforts. For example, China is estimated to spend over AUD 5 billion annually, and the BBC World Service budget is over AUD 800 million.

The funding is even more critical now. Australia's international media commitment must be considered in the light of the freezing of US Agency for Global Media funding, effectively silencing Voice of America and Radio Free Asia. This is especially important, given the ABC is the pre-eminent Australian source of independent news, information and media support to the Indo-Pacific region and to Australians across the globe.

Conclusion

The increased funding described in this submission is required to ensure important media services are delivered to Australians. Over time, ABC operational funding needs to return to pre-2014 levels to ensure the organisation can deliver a complete range of media services for the Australian community.

The ABC plays a vital role in that media system, providing independent and accurate news and information as well as entertainment across multiple platforms, supporting the health of Australia's democracy. Recently, the ABC Managing Director spoke of Australian values of looking out for each other, valuing fairness and seeking social cohesion: values that are more important now than ever. The ABC has a national role to "inform Australians about their society, our institutions and the issues that matter" in contributing to those values.

The ABC Alumni organisation is available to provide further comments about our submission.



Dr Michael Ward

Chair
ABC Alumni