



28 January 2022

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer
by email: prebudgetsubs@treasury.gov.au

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION: 2022-23 FEDERAL BUDGET

Dear Assistant Treasurer

GetUp welcomes the opportunity to engage in the Pre-Budget Submission process for the 2022-23 Federal Budget. This submission is focused on calling for a strong, fully-funded public broadcaster to meet the needs of our communities with confidence, independence, and integrity.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or require any further information. We will be engaging and mobilising GetUp members throughout the Budget process, throughout the upcoming Federal Election, and beyond.

Emma Bull

Political Director
emmab@getup.org.au

Our team acknowledges that we meet and work on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past, present and future – and acknowledge the important role all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play within Australia and the GetUp community.



A FULLY FUNDED AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION (ABC)

GetUp members are calling for a strong, fully-funded ABC to meet the needs of our communities with confidence, independence, and integrity. Given the next triennial funding period is beginning at a time of significant pressure and upheaval in Australia due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the ongoing impacts of climate change induced disasters, a comprehensive Government response to these calls is more important than ever.

GetUp recommends that the 2022–23 Federal Budget:

1. Immediately **restores and fully funds the ABC**. This must be to a level determined by non-partisan and evidence-based assessment, aimed at ensuring the ABC can fulfil its vision and purpose according to its charter, and with the full involvement of, and consultation with, the ABC.
2. **Ceases tying the ABC's funding to particular uses**. The tied funding mechanism allows undue control by the Government to selectively resource specific work from outside the ABC, leaving scope for other work to be left under-resourced or neglected.
3. Introduces a **stable five-year funding cycle**, allowing the ABC to resource work and forward-plan with certainty. Deviations from this rhythm should *only* occur in extreme circumstances, such as genuine national emergencies, for which an appropriate and formal case must be made. Any such case for funding should be supported by evidence, made in consultation with the ABC, and made publically available, and should include a detailed and evidence-based report of the ABC's anticipated costs.

More than being the most trusted news source in the country, the ABC keeps us safe, connected, and informed in times of crisis. The ABC's emergency alert system has been instrumental in supporting Australian communities through unprecedented bushfires, floods, cyclones, and other natural disasters. During the 2019–20 bushfires, the ABC undertook emergency broadcasting for over 200 emergency events across the country.¹ More broadly, ABC coverage throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been central to disseminating information and combating misinformation as a trusted and informative voice.² At a time of unprecedented national and international upheaval, the ABC has continued to provide a world-class service to Australia, including expanding existing services as well as creating content to keep communities safe and informed (such as developing the *Coronacast* podcast, which has accrued approximately 2.6

¹ Australians turn to the ABC during bushfires crisis, ABC, viewed 21 January 2022, <https://about.abc.net.au/press-releases/australians-turn-to-the-abc-during-bushfires-crisis>

² Disinformation and Misinformation, ABC News, accessed 24 January 2022, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/topic/disinformation-and-misinformation>



million downloads per month, making it one of the most popular podcasts in Australia).³ In light of the pivotal role the ABC has played in guiding Australia through this crisis, it is both disappointing and alarming that the Government chose in June 2020 to exclude the ABC from its legislated funding response to COVID-19, instead directing it toward the private sector.

Despite its unique public value, the pressure on the ABC – particularly since the Abbott Government levied its devastating first cuts – has been unrelenting. At a time when the ABC is more and more essential to our communities, its funding is threatened like never before.

As has been well documented, the Government's funding cuts and freezes since the 2013 financial year (including the 2014 Federal Budget, 2014 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, 2016 Federal Budget, and 2018 Federal Budget) has left the ABC approximately \$783 million worse-off at the end of the current triennium.⁴ On an annualised basis, as a result of the indexation freeze, by the end of the current triennium, the ABC will have had \$83.749 million less to operate over the three-year period, with \$41 million of that taking effect in the 2022 financial year.

Furthermore, the Government's practice of tying the ABC's funding to specific content and operational initiatives through tied-funding grants, has served to corrode the ABC's true independence.

We can't afford to lose the emergency services, world-class children's programming, regional news, and current affairs, nor the dedication to Australian music, drama, and arts that the ABC provides our communities. The ABC exemplifies the kind of significant investment the Government should be making in socially productive ventures. Its contribution to the cultivation of our national identity is self-evident, its broadcasts, services, and publications are world class, and its efficiency has been repeatedly audited and confirmed.⁵ This is in addition to the critical role played by public broadcasters in the functioning of a healthy democracy.

The Government has the responsibility to restore and fully fund the ABC to a level that empowers the broadcaster to fulfil the vision and purpose embedded in the ABC Charter. That level should be based on non-partisan judgement, based on evidence published in a transparent manner.

³ Coronacast... exquisitely tuned to the audience: Norman Swan #PodcastDay24, RadiInfo Australia, viewed 21 January 2022,

<https://radioinfo.com.au/news/coronacast-exquisitely-tuned-audience-norman-swan-podcastday24/>

⁴ Emma Dawson, It's Our ABC, Per Capita (May 2020), https://percapita.org.au/our_work/its-our-abc/ (estimated figures accurate as at May 2020).

⁵ Department of Communications 2014, ABC and SBS efficiency study, viewed 21 January 2022,

https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/ABC_and_SBS_efficiency_report_Redacted.pdf?acsf_files%20redirect



ABOUT GETUP

By combining the power of one million members, movement partners and a central team of expert strategists, GetUp works to have extraordinary impact on the issues that matter.

GetUp members come from every walk of life, coming together around a shared belief in fairness, compassion and courage. It is GetUp members who set our movement's agenda on the issues they care about, in the areas of Environmental Justice, Human Rights, First Nations Justice, Economic Fairness and Democratic Integrity. Our work is driven by our shared values, not party politics.

GetUp is an independent, not for profit community campaigning organisation, incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. GetUp receives no political party or government funding, and every campaign we run is entirely supported by voluntary donations. GetUp's purpose is set out in our constitution – to advance progressive public policy in Australia. We do this by empowering everyday people to have their say.

GetUp is also guided by a Statement of Independence, which defines us as an active values-led participant in our politics, independent from the control, direction or influence of political parties and politicians.

