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Media Release

ABC Needs to 'Watch its Back' Over Advertising on SBS

Mal Hewitt, President of ABC Friends NSW said today that "the push by the Federal Government to increase advertising revenue from SBS has serious ramifications for the ABC".

"If we don't watch what the Federal government and Management of the ABC are doing, it won't be long before advertising is introduced into the ABC via the back door".

"The much discredited and secretive Lewis Efficiency Review, commissioned by Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull, declared that advertising on the ABC was 'beyond the scope' of the review (see page 19) but then stated very clearly later in the same report that management could use the device of a shared delivery platform with SBS to get around advertising restrictions on the ABC" (page 60):

Alternatively, the ABC and SBS could consider the creation of a joint platform to provide catch up TV services for both broadcasters. This could be achieved through a single online platform for the broadcasters' catch up services or through a joint venture between the national broadcasters or in conjunction with the other free-to-air broadcasters. A stand-alone entity, jointly owned by the ABC and SBS (with or without the commercial broadcasters), could leverage the content offerings of both broadcasters and generate revenue through the placement of advertising. The legal aspects of monetising ABC content through advertising would need to be explored further, but a joint platform hosted by SBS may alleviate this restriction.

"There is little doubt", said Hewitt, "that the government and ABC management are hell bent on destruction of the National Broadcaster and one effective way of doing this is through the introduction of advertising, anathema to an ABC audiences and a breach of the ABC's Charter".

"If we don't watch what's happening at SBS we could find that the government introduces advertising to the ABC by stealth".

"The fact that the Lewis review says advertising is 'beyond its scope' and then proceeds to recommend how get around legislation so that advertising can be introduced tells us a great deal about how the current government operates".

"We should be afraid, very afraid, for the future of advertising on the ABC now that the author of the Lewis Efficiency Review is on the Board of the ABC".

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Further information: Mal Hewitt, ABC Friends NSW & ACT

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