

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **ABC MANAGING DIRECTOR BLAMES GOVERNMENT FOR SYDNEY-CENTRISM**

The ABC's outgoing Managing Director, Mark Scott, has admitted today that the corporation has become "Sydney-centric" as a direct result of government funding cuts.

ABC viewers and listeners across the continent have been complaining, over recent years, that news and programmes were starting to concentrate too much on Sydney issues, at the expense of the rest of the country. Taking talkback calls on ABC774's morning programme with Jon Faine, Mr Scott said the move of jobs and resources to Sydney was a deliberate undertaking.

"There's no doubt that when you get a funding cut that one of the things you instinctively do is centralise so as to drive efficiencies," Mr Scott said, "but we are looking to make the ABC into being as broad and as inclusive as possible." "I think we are conscious of trying to do more where we can around the country," he said. "I think we're conscious of [the move to Sydney, but] we are constrained as well by the budget realities that we face."

His statements were made as ABC staff and supporters across Australia anticipate further massive cuts to the national broadcast in next month's budget. Funding to the ABC has already been cut by 25% in real terms by successive governments since 1985. Despite the 'no cuts to the ABC' promise in 2014, a further \$500 million of the operating budget was slashed and 500 staff let go. It's widely expected the ABC's News budget will soon be slashed by \$20m, and that regional bureaux, the National Reporting Team, Fact-Checking Unit and other important public services will go.

"We got [an additional] \$20m in the last triennial funding settlement," Mr Scott said, "we've had to re-pitch for that this time." "Clearly it would have an impact on the services we offer, the programmes we offer and the staff we employ." "I think we've had a good hearing, but if that money goes missing then staff and programming will go missing."

"To invest in ABC investigative journalism...and regional journalism is more important now than ever," he said.

ABC Friends is calling for all ABC funds to be restored, and for an end to the slow creep of the corporation toward Sydney, as it is the ABC's responsibility to service and represent all Australians.

For further questions or comment please contact: Ranald Macdonald 0424 545 516 and/or Margaret Reynolds 0418 181 843