



David Davis MP

Shadow Special Minister of State
Shadow Minister for the Arts and Creative Industries
Member for Southern Metropolitan Region

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8 May 2023

The Hon Michelle Rowland MP
Minister for Communications

By email: Michelle.Rowland.MP@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister,

I am aware of the Commonwealth's proposal to move the SBS headquarters to Western Sydney and, on behalf of the Victorian Liberal and National Parties, am writing in opposition to it. We think it is a mistake and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these matters.

Your news release of 27 April 2023 establishing the feasibility study and a steering committee has excessively narrow terms of reference. I would encourage you to widen the terms of reference for the steering committee's feasibility study to include the prospect of relocating SBS facilities from Artarmon to a location in Melbourne, either a central city location or a business district such as Dandenong.

I note the panel are all based in New South Wales or Canberra. I would recommend that a Victorian with knowledge of broadcasting be appointed to the panel.

Both the ABC and SBS, Australia's two government-funded broadcasters, are based in Sydney. It is my contention that, given the proposed relocation of SBS is under consideration, that the option of moving SBS to Melbourne should be formally considered. Noting that Melbourne is Australia's largest city and noting the current and increasing diversity of our city, it is the most suitable location.

I particularly draw your attention to the forward projections of population growth in Melbourne and Victoria and the multicultural composition of that growth. Recent estimates show Melbourne is growing faster than Sydney and expected to gain 73,100 foreign migrants this financial year, followed by 74,500 next year and more than 71,000 each year after that.

The Centre for Population report also said that Victoria would claim a disproportionately large 34 per cent share of Australia's annual average overseas migration intake over the next decade.

For this reason alone, Melbourne must be regarded as the prime contender for the SBS headquarters and as the major centre for SBS television production.

I note the SBS Annual Report for 2021-22 shows at Appendix 22 at Table 1 "All ongoing employees current report period" that of the 1,141 employees listed, 934 are based in Sydney while 171 are based in Melbourne. When non-ongoing employees are added, of the 1,269 employees, 1,040 are based in New South Wales whilst just 181 are based in Victoria, that is 82% of SBS' employees are based in New South Wales, while just 14% are based in Victoria.

I would make the following points in reference to the worthy proposal to move the SBS headquarters closer to the multicultural Australians that it serves:

- Victoria is now Australia's most diverse state and Melbourne Australia's largest city; and



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- The corridor comprising the Monash and Dandenong councils is one of the most diverse corridors in Australia with two of Victoria's three most diverse municipalities (as measured by the proportion of the population born overseas) and these two councils both in the top ten in Australia.

I draw your attention, in particular, to the SBS Charter, which I have attached to this letter, and in particular the following:

1. The principal function of the SBS is to provide multilingual and multicultural broadcasting and digital media services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society.
2. The SBS, in performing its principal function, must:
 - g) Contribute to the overall diversity of Australian broadcasting and digital media services, particularly taking into account the contribution of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the community broadcasting sector;

Clearly, the SBS has a responsibility to ensure the multicultural nature of Australian society is fully reflected in its broadcasting. I would argue this is not being achieved.

Unfortunately, the ABC is heavily Sydney/New South Wales centric with around 50% of its staff resources in New South Wales and Sydney in particular.

I would further argue that, given the centralisation of ABC resources, SBS under 2g in its Charter should consider greater resources in Victoria.

Should it be possible to meet with you to further discuss these matters, I can be contacted at david.davis@parliament.vic.gov.au or 03 9827 6655. I would of course be happy to come to you to meet you in Sydney or in Canberra.

Yours sincerely,



The Hon David Davis MP
Shadow Minister for the Arts and Creative Industries

Cc: George Savvides AM, Chair, SBS Board of Directors



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Appendix 1 of the SBS Annual Report for 2021-22 “SBS Charter”, states the following:

The SBS Charter, contained in the SBS Act, sets out the principal function of SBS.

- h) The principal function of the SBS is to provide multilingual and multicultural broadcasting and digital media services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia’s multicultural society.
- i) The SBS, in performing its principal function, must:
 - a. Contribute to meeting the communications needs of Australia’s multicultural society, including ethnic, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
 - b. Increase awareness of the contribution of a diversity of cultures to the continuing development of Australian society;
 - c. Promote understanding and acceptance of the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of the Australian people;
 - d. Contribute to the retention and continuing development of language and other cultural skills;
 - e. As far as practicable, inform, educate and entertain Australians in their preferred languages;
 - f. Make use of Australia’s diverse creative resources;
 - g. Contribute to the overall diversity of Australian broadcasting and digital media services, particularly taking into account the contribution of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the community broadcasting sector;
 - h. Contribute to extending the range of Australian broadcasting and digital media services, and reflect the changing nature of Australian society, by presenting many points of view and using innovative forms of expression.



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