

****CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY ****

It is great to be here with you this morning.

I also acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet.

Thank you to Screen Australia for providing us with a forum to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing our industry.

I'd like to talk briefly about the impact SBS screen content has on our society.

From time to time, the value of public broadcasting is questioned and debated.

I don't shy away from this debate, because I firmly believe that SBS is more relevant to Australians today than when we were first created 35 years ago.

As a first generation migrant, I also know that Australia has benefited from this modest investment in services which celebrate, debate and challenge what it means to be Australian, in this wonderfully diverse country of ours.

The need for SBS is more striking now than ever before when you consider that:

- One in four Australians was born overseas; and
- Four million out of 23 million people speak a language other than English at home. That's more than double the number than when SBS was first established.

In contrast to the Australian experience, we are witnessing the failure of some European and UK versions of multiculturalism.

SBS is modelling the values of multiculturalism and diversity which are critical to our success as a migrant nation and we do that across all our platforms in more languages than any other broadcaster in the world.

That's our point of difference as a public broadcaster.

We deliver content that breaks down the barriers and brings diversity, inclusiveness, tolerance and social cohesion to the fore.

This is of course is not just about multiculturalism, which is but one element of diversity. As multiculturalism has evolved over the past 30 years, so too has SBS broadened its focus to include diversity in all of its forms.

Whether that's through our main channel, SBS ONE or our new SBS 2 where edgier content is attracting new and younger audiences.

Or through NITV, which is reaching four million Australians only six months in on free-to-air, and tapping in to remote producers to bring Indigenous content to a wider Australian audience.

Or whether that's through our subscription television channels, World Movies which showcases films from more than 200 countries, and is one of the fastest growing channels on Foxtel, or STUDIO which is shining a light on grass-roots arts and entertainment that unites communities.

Our other point of difference is that audience engagement with our content lives off the screen. We use local content to drill down into the local issues and challenges Australians are facing.

Our recent documentary JABBED drove debate by exploring a diversity of views, balanced with facts, about immunisation.

One clinician contacted SBS to report being “blown away” by a doubling of attendance at a vaccination session. She spoke of a client with three children who’d received immunisation only as babies and none since because of external pressures. But after watching JABBED, she felt better informed and wanted to get them up to date as soon as possible.

We are also proud of our Outreach program in which we partner with external organisations to open-up a deeper dialogue within communities around our key commissioned programs, to maximise their public value.

For example, for Go Back to Where You Came From, SBS partnered with the Refugee Council of Australia and Amnesty International to produce a teaching resource about asylum seeker issues which was distributed to every secondary school in Australia. Eighty per cent of teachers said they watched Go Back after receiving the pack and many used it in classes.

It has been a period of change and challenge at SBS over the past two years.

We’ve had some big successes like Go Back, Once Upon a Time in Cabramatta, Dirty Business about how immigration shaped the mining sector, Murdoch and JABBED.

We’ve got some great content coming up. One of the big ones is Better Man which airs next month. It’s a drama about the last Australian hung overseas in Singapore in 2005 and features a star studded cast of Claudia Karvan, David Wenham and Bryan Brown. It gets SBS back into the drama genre for the first time in three years with content that inspires change.

There is a lot of work happening on Once Upon a Time in Punchbowl which will give audiences unheard perspectives by those involved and affected by the 2005 Cronulla Riots. It will broadcast in November and also be accompanied by an Outreach program in the local community.

We are the network that brought Australians Wilfred and South Park and we want to stay in the comedy space. That’s why we’ve commissioned Legally Brown, a new series with great new talent, Nazeem Hussain. It will explore social and racial divisions through comedy, to encourage Australians to better value diversity.

We have a growing and successful food offering in which we take audiences on a cultural journey through food.

We are excited to be partnering with Screen Australia on four new projects including a series with our Gourmet Farmer host Matt Evans which examines the seafood we eat and how it’s produced. And more are in development.

Can I take this opportunity to thank Screen Australia for its ongoing funding support for SBS and pay tribute to Ruth Harley for her leadership and support for SBS. Let me pause for a moment to show you some of our content.

It is unlikely any other Broadcaster would commission or air the sort of content you’ve just seen.

I don't need to tell this audience that the level of locally produced content Australians see on SBS is subject primarily to the level of government funding.

Making local content and telling Australian stories is expensive but it's essential for the development of our society and capturing our stories for future generations.

The fact is that SBS is lean and agile. We deliver impactful content, despite operating on one fifth of the average budget of all the other broadcasters.

But we want to, we need to, and we are capable of doing more.

That's why SBS would have supported the Convergence Review recommendation for a local content quota of 28 per cent being adopted by the Federal Government, given our current levels are about 16 per cent. And we would welcome the extension of the producer off-set.

We will continue to advocate for more funding to deliver the level of Australian content that we believe our audiences should be getting and which we think is needed for the health of the local production sector.

Let me go back to where I began.

Diversity is about more than just ethnicity; it's diversity of views and perspectives about the world we live in.

SBS helps Australians understand and appreciate the value of that diversity.

SBS is a recognised cultural institution. We are an irreplaceable part of our national story, bringing the stories to life that help us to understand who we, what we stand for and where we are going.

The challenge of successful multiculturalism will never disappear. Demand for our services will only continue to grow as Australia becomes more and more diverse.

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