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FECCA Conference 2013

Breaking Down the Barriers – A Strength Based Approach for a Just Society

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*\*\*\*Check against delivery\*\*\**

## Introduction

Can I also acknowledge the Yugambah people who are the traditional custodians of the land we meet on and pay my respect to the Elders, both past and present.

Thank you to FECCA, to its outgoing Chair Pino Migliorino and the Hon Secretary Sam Afra for providing a forum to discuss the important issues facing us, as we consider our roles and responsibilities in helping to build a prosperous multicultural Australia.

Can I also acknowledge SBS Board members participating in the FECCA Conference, Dr Hass Dellal OAM and Bill Lenehan.

There is a deep bond between SBS and FECCA because of our shared goal of supporting and celebrating the people and stories which underpin Australia's success as a migrant nation.

Today I'd like to talk to you about:

- SBS's evolving focus on delivering more services that contribute to the development of Australia as a successful multicultural nation, by encouraging greater participation and understanding;
- How SBS is taking advantage of the digital explosion to deliver more in-language content for the communities we were established to service than ever before; and
- I will also give you a glimpse of great programs we have coming up which contribute to what we've defined as SBS's primary purpose of inspiring all Australians to understand and appreciate our diverse world and in doing so contribute to social cohesion. It is this purpose that drives and motivates our employees.

## Evolution of our services

When I addressed the FECCA Conference two years ago, I spoke about how SBS is seeking to build its relevance to Australia's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and taking advantage of the digital explosion.

**Our story:** Creating a unified brand message sometimes requires a little guidance. That is why we utilise the creativity of our publicity teams at SBS and our communication partners to utilise the 'stories' element of the SBS brand expression in our publicity efforts.

*Seven Billion Stories and counting...*



Compared to when SBS was established 35 years ago, we now have second and third generation migrants who speak fluent English and a huge increase in the diversity of cultures represented in Australia.

There has been a massive surge in satellite, skype and internet services that mean it's even easier for migrants, both new and old, to access their country of origin news and information. Even in the two years since I was here last, Australia has become the number one country in smart phone penetration with 65 per cent of us owning a smart phone.

With all of these advancements SBS's role has also evolved 'from bringing the world back home' to focus on how we can support migrants to become participative members of the Australian community by providing news and information about the issues affecting their lives here in Australia, in a language they are most comfortable with, through our radio and online services.

### **SBS Today**

Today, SBS delivers news and programs across three radio networks in 74 language programs, five television channels, online and emerging platforms, and in more languages than any other broadcaster in the world.

That's our point of difference as a public broadcaster in Australia and internationally.

Our news coverage has a unique focus on bringing a multicultural perspective to national and international issues, exploring them in a way no other broadcaster does. We look at the big issues, and how they affect diverse communities here and also give context to what's happening in Australia by framing the debate with comparisons to the global setting.

We've carved out a niche for our main channel, SBS ONE which is home to the programs we are most famous for in news and current affairs, documentary, foreign film, sport and food. SBS 2 is delivering successfully on its objective of attracting younger Australians to SBS and NITV, which we were proud to launch in December last year as Australia's first national free-to-air Indigenous channel, is giving all Australians access to Indigenous cultures.

Through WorldWatch TV we bring audiences the best in international news from 24 countries.



And of course in-language radio is at the heart of SBS and we are modernising the way it's delivered.

### **New SBS Radio Schedule**

I know some of you in the room were involved in the development of our new Radio Schedule. Can I take this opportunity to again thank you for your input into this complex process.

The SBS Radio Schedule had not been through a major review since 1994 and of course, Australia's demographics have changed significantly in the past 18 years.

Almost six months ago SBS implemented the new Schedule which features:

- Six new languages of Malayalam, Dinka, Hmong, Pashto, Swahili and Tigrinya;
- More programs for language groups which have grown significantly such as Italian, Arabic, Korean and Vietnamese;
- A new digital only channel for 21 of the languages, available on digital radio and through listening to digital television, online and mobile apps; and
- Every one of the 74 language programs can be listened to anytime anywhere via our SBS Your Language App.

The new Radio Schedule is about ensuring SBS keeps pace with the changing demographics of today's Australia and delivers on its Charter obligations. We have received wonderful feedback so far from emerging communities like the Malayalam and Tigrinya communities about the impact having a radio service with SBS is having on their feeling of inclusion in Australian life.

And through our in-language programs, we ensure we get out into communities; for example in the last Federal Election we held seven outside broadcasts to facilitate discussions between the candidates and communities about issues affecting them.

In addition, we've launched three new digital music stations covering Asian pop, Arabic pop and the biggest Bollywood and Indian pop which are targeting a youth audience of second and third generation migrants who are engaging with their backgrounds in different ways.

### **Driving cultural understanding through content**

One of the other ways SBS is focused on breaking down the barriers is through our food programming.



We use food as a conduit to cultural insight and understanding of the diverse cultures in Australia today. Let me give you a look at some of the food programming you will see from SBS in 2014.

Sport of course is another genre that we all know can help break down barriers. With the A-League now on SBS 2 and the world gearing up for the 2014 FIFA World Cup, of which we are the exclusive broadcaster, we are seizing the opportunity to increase our impact on improving social cohesion by using sport to unite communities.

Last year we partnered with the Football Federation of Australia to launch a Harmony Game Resource Kit to support teachers to explore issues around multiculturalism and social cohesion in the classroom.

The Harmony Game resource kit has been used at around 150 school and community events, reaching approximately 17,000 students. It's these sorts of initiatives that SBS is perfectly placed to drive, and which we'd like to do more of in order to play our part in educating younger people about the benefits of diversity and acceptance.

### **Digital opportunities**

I've been at SBS for over 2.5 years now and it has been a period of rapid change and challenge for our organisation and for the media sector more broadly.

The number of digital devices and platform as exploded; there are 16 free-to-air channels in Australia, up from five just five years ago, and the average home has four internet connected devices.

Dual screens and concurrent viewing is a fast growing trend in which people want to engage with the content in a deeper way on multiple devices, at the same time.

We know that video consumption will be a major driver of the NBN rollout and the appetite for on demand viewing will continue to grow.

So, SBS has identified unique opportunities to grow our digital offering. We are particularly focused on using digital platforms to become more relevant to Australia's CALD communities.

We are reaching out to second and third generation migrants, who may not speak their parents' language of origin but are connected to their culture, and also to connect with new and younger migrants who are less likely to consume 'traditional' forms of media.



Some examples of our new digital LOTE offering include:

- Africa to Australia which tells the story of African migrants to Australia;
- Detention Centre which charts the lives of refugees in an Australian detention centre;
- Convenient Education about the challenges facing international students in Australia set against the backdrop of incidents of violence against Indian students in Melbourne;
- The Block about the change and challenges of the Indigenous community living in central Sydney's The Block: and
- Our most recent documentary, Exit Syria Diaries from Za'atari which documents life inside Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan.

We are also taking advantage of technology to deliver new LOTE services and align our offering across platforms with on demand viewing. So, if you are interested in Italian film, food and news you will be able to access all of that content in one destination and on a device of your choosing.

### **Our role in contributing to social cohesion**

My vision is for SBS to be the gateway for diverse LOTE news, information and entertainment because I firmly believe that by evolving our LOTE offering for the diverse communities which make up Australia today, we can make a more meaningful contribution towards society's inclusiveness.

The Scanlon Foundation's National Report on Mapping Social Cohesion for 2013 shows that by international standards, Australia is a highly cohesive society:

- 92 per cent of Australians expressed a sense of belonging in Australia;
- 84 per cent of Australians agreed that multiculturalism has been good for Australia; and
- 79 per cent of new arrivals are satisfied or very satisfied with life in Australia.

Interestingly, whilst we've seen a lot of media commentary that negativity towards immigration has increased, the report found that about 51 per cent of Australians think our immigration intake is about right or even too low.

But it also showed that in the past year there has been an increase in reports of racial discrimination in Australia as well as greater hostility towards asylum seekers...

This year there was a 50 per cent increase the number of people who said they had "experienced discrimination because of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion."



What this demonstrates is that whilst we are broadly recognised as a harmonious multicultural society, successful multiculturalism really is an ongoing journey. We've seen the impact of multiculturalism breaking down in places like Germany, France and the United Kingdom.

So, what I think about in this global setting is SBS's role is how we can help to work on multiculturalism and on social cohesion in Australia, which is also critical to our success as a modern economy.

I attended Rupert Murdoch's Lowy Institute address last week and he spoke about the dynamism that immigration adds to any economy and its importance in engaging with the world. Rupert made the important point that a nation as small as ours will increasingly depend on trade, and the more people we have with ties to other parts of the world, the greater our advantage.

I see SBS as having an incredibly important role to play in promoting the benefits of that diversity within Australia society. Our own research shows that 92 per cent of Australians agree that SBS provides an important alternative to the commercial media.

And I believe that over the past few years we've contributed to this goal through landmark programs exploring issues of diversity. I am delighted to be able to give you a look at a new series, *Once Upon a Time in Punchbowl* which will air over three weeks in January 2014.

*Once Upon a Time in Punchbowl* continues SBS's reputation for telling powerful, engaging and at times, difficult Australian stories. It presents stories about the challenges the Lebanese community has faced in Australia and how they have fought to overcome them. Let's take a brief look.

One of the other areas I believe SBS is pushing the boundaries to open up dialogue about the issues of cohesiveness in a way that no other network would, is through comedy.

We are currently airing a new SBS program *Legally Brown*, with comedian Nazeem Hussain. It is exploring social and racial divisions through comedy to encourage Australians to better value diversity. Again, it at times feels a little bit uncomfortable because it forces all of us to reflect on and acknowledge some of the tensions that do exist within our society today.

Let's have a quick look at *Legally Brown*.



## **Conclusion**

The role of a public broadcaster is to hold a mirror up to the society it represents.

SBS mirrors the true diversity of today's Australia in a way no other broadcaster does. And we help all Australians understand and appreciate the true value of that diversity.

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

- 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 double the number than when SBS was established.

As I mentioned earlier, the challenge of successful multiculturalism will never disappear and demand for SBS services will only continue to grow as Australia becomes more and more diverse.

In the year ahead SBS will increase its locally produced Australian programming by 33 per cent.

That's because our ambition is to contribute even more meaningfully to breaking down those barriers within society, to tell more stories that will contribute to shaping a cohesive society and to help all migrants participate in Australian life.