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Abstract	<p>This paper provides a comparative overview of the way Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) in Japan and Australia have navigated the transition into Public Service Media (PSM) services, and the effects this transition is having on :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the way they are regulated;</li><li>• how they adhere to their core values; and</li><li>• how they relate to other media industries.</li></ul> <p>Furthermore, this paper argues that despite the abundance of commercial channels and new media platforms that have extended the media landscape over the last twenty years or so the provision of a "free-to-air" PSM that educates, informs and entertains is one of the best ways to ensure equal participation and inclusion in contemporary civil society. This analysis is conducted through a brief examination of global trends in PSM and communication policy, and a more in-depth examination of the way the core values of PSM have been expressed in the most recent annual reports published by the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) and NHK (Japanese Broadcasting Corporation). In addition, these values are analyzed and compared against their respective charters, and in the case of NHK, the Broadcasting Law. Overall this paper offers general conclusions and recommendations on content quality, licensing, regulatory structure and style in a time of unprecedented technological and regulatory change.</p>
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# Learning Curve: Regulating Public Service Broadcasting in Japan and Australia in Digital Age

Zorana KOSTIC\*

This paper provides a comparative overview of the way Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) in Japan and Australia have navigated the transition into Public Service Media (PSM) services, and the effects this transition is having on:

- the way they are regulated;
- how they adhere to their core values; and
- how they relate to other media industries.

Furthermore, this paper argues that despite the abundance of commercial channels and new media platforms that have extended the media landscape over the last twenty years or so the provision of a “free-to-air” PSM that educates, informs and entertains is one of the best ways to ensure equal participation and inclusion in contemporary civil society. This analysis is conducted through a brief examination of global trends in PSM and communication policy, and a more in-depth examination of the way the core values of PSM have been expressed in the most recent annual reports published by the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) and NHK (*Japanese Broadcasting Corporation*). In addition, these values are analyzed and compared against their respective charters, and in the case of NHK, the Broadcasting Law. Overall this paper offers general conclusions and recommendations on content quality, licensing, regulatory structure and style in a time of unprecedented technological and regulatory change.

## Global Overview of Challenges in Communications Policy

The pressures on public service broadcasters (PSBs) around the world emanate from the way they have been perceived in the increasingly competitive marketplace. Traditional forms of PSB are currently seen as being “protected” from market competition through being funded or subsidized by governments. However, this situation only really existed in those times when statutory arrangements entitled PSB to hold a monopoly in the market. From the early 1980s the foundations of PSBs have been shaken and its continued legitimacy questioned. While, as Syvertsen

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persuasively argues: “PSB is challenged by neoliberal and postmodern sentiments, convergence, internationalization and globalization, privatization and commercialization (Syvertsen, 2003),” it is perhaps in the arena of technological development that the challenges to PSB are manifest most profoundly.

With increasingly rapid technological changes mainly through digitization, and the seeming overabundance and continually expanding number of terrestrial and satellite channels, and services available online, PSBs suddenly found themselves competing in a dynamic commercially dominated multi-platform environment. This moment, opportune for some, has given ammunition to the critics of the BBC, the oldest PSB system in the world, who accuse them of “dumbing down” public service values at the same time that they complain of the protected status of PSBs around the world. Multi-platform networking has created a confused situation that urgently requires clarification and greater transparency in terms of PSB regulation and funding. Moreover, in the field, and among the plethora of new content and user-generated services, these challenges of, and for, regulation have caused a set of “strategic” issues for public broadcasters. This new media environment has also raised the issue of where PSB’s traditional remit and role stands in relation to the rest of the market.

These arguments by their nature not only undermine the role and remit of public broadcasters but are also understood as a threat to the licensing system that many public broadcasters were founded on. Furthermore, these claims bring the entire concept of PSB funding into question by claiming that commercial competitors are more than capable of providing the same services free of charge. For example, in Germany funding for public broadcasting is regulated under Article 5 of the Constitution. This Article does not guarantee that new or expanding services will be funded and the “ARD and ZDF (German PSB’s) have had to open up their accounts to independent auditing in order to justify the public funding awarded to them on the grounds of the last license fee settlement and to apply for future funding (Priebis, 2004: 121).” Securing future funding for expanded services while continuing to provide regular services thus becomes a potent prize in the digital end game. Other claims against PSB include arguments from commercial competitors in regard to PSB funding models and the rising cost for providing user-generated services. These kinds of statements could have an ongoing and damaging effect on the willingness of the public towards covering the cost of licensing fees into the future. I will examine this point further when I discuss the situation in Japan and the NHK.

In countries such as, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, a public value test (PVT) has been introduced to assess the value created by services and their impact on the market. PVTs, it has been argued by Michael J Copps, former commissioner of the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC), can also reinvigorate the spirit of the original licensing agreements that broadcasters made

with their public. In Britain, the BBC's PVT has been introduced as a component of the BBC's system of governance, which took effect with the Charter and Agreement of January 2007. The stated aim of the PVT is "to respond to changes in technology, culture, market conditions and public expectations ([www.bbccharterreview.org.uk](http://www.bbccharterreview.org.uk))."

The BBC has renewed its Charter twice since the 1990s, both times in response to the diverse broadcasting environment engendered by multichannel digitization. At the beginning of the processes that ultimately renewed the 2003 BBC Charter a broad range of decision-making procedures, particularly those relating to the provision of value for money, were overhauled by government ministers or by bureaucrats in the Department of Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS). Alongside these reforms the BBC was required to make a "statement of programming policy" which built on the "statement of promises" required by the 1996's BBC Charter. These statements required the Board of Governors publicly affirming to:

- represent the interests of license fee payers;
- evaluate how effectively the BBC meets its promises;
- make those results public in its annual reports; and
- set out the following year's objectives for BBC management.

The 2007 Charter added reviews of the Purpose Remit (consisting of six public purposes, one of which is: maintaining citizenship and civil society, this sets priorities such as independent journalism of the highest quality; and engaging a wide audience in news, current affairs, and other topical issues) and Service License to be conducted every five years. The Charter also makes it clear that the BBC should be able to change its UK-based public services in response to changes in technology, culture, market conditions and public expectations. As Tessa Jowell, the former Minister for Culture, Media and Sport in Britain, describes the potential effects of these reforms: "For the first time the public has been given the power to move the discussion ...public broadcasting is intended for its audience (DCMS, 2003). These new sets of assessment implementations, as Nakamura (2009) describes them, while still in their relative infancy can, it is hoped, to provide a framework for re-establishing public trust between PSBs and their audiences.

Recent results on PVTs, however, suggest a possible downside to these kinds of evaluation of performances for PSBs (Moe, 2010). Despite this there is enough evidence to suggest that this kind of approach will have a positive impact on the broadcasting industry itself rather than just aiming to strengthen the core values of PSBs (Moe, 2010). From this point on it is apparent that the implementation of regulatory measures in the multimedia environment is a complex process that requires long-term resolution with meticulous and careful planning. In addition to this new resolve there is an evident genuine public desire to support a sustainable public broadcaster that justifies the public's faith in the vital contribution to western society as a pillar of democracy that PSB has made in the past and can continue to make into the future.

### ***Public Service Broadcasting in Japan and Australia***

After the BBC, NHK is the oldest of the world's public broadcasters and the longest operating public service broadcaster in the Asia-Pacific region. As a public organization NHK was formed from the amalgamation of three radio stations in Osaka, Nagoya and Tokyo in 1925. Today NHK encompasses all of Japan's major urban centers and numerous islands and serves a population of nearly 128 million people through a combination of terrestrial, satellite, mobile and internet based platforms.

The ABC was inaugurated in 1932, with, in the words of Prime Minister Joseph Lyons, the mission: "to provide information and entertainment, culture and gaiety" and, to "serve all sections and to satisfy the diversified tastes of the public" (Inglis, 1983: 5). Since then the ABC has expanded to cover all of the vast island continent and its nearly 23 million people with a similarly complex suite of media platforms to its Japanese counterpart. The table below outlines the main components of the respective services and their funding.

### ***Japan: Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK)***

NHK had a monopoly in Japanese broadcasting until the end of WWII. The post-war regulations of the Japanese Broadcast Law and Radio law that authorized the re-formation of NHK as a public corporation were formulated during the Allied occupation and came into effect on 1st June 1950. In accordance with these laws, Japan established a dual system of broadcasting, which consisted of both a commercial and a public sector. The dual system, according to Shimizu (1993: 6), aimed at "providing high-quality programming through fair competition between public and private broadcasters, each excelling in its own field." However, according to the principles stipulated in the Broadcasting Law itself, this ethos had a much stronger application for NHK's public broadcasting obligations rather than to any expected standard from commercial networks.

This has led to some commentators labeling the broadcasting system in Japan as a cozy duopoly between NHK and its commercial competitors. Rapid technological challenges have made regulation difficult as the boundaries between the traditionally separated industrial sectors of broadcasting, communications and telecommunication are blurring. Regardless of all these obstacles, NHK has been playing an important social role as a disseminator of information, education and entertainment. As contemporary society is experiencing more television services online, it is time to begin to readdress structural regulation from the point of its value in fulfilling the commitments to the viewers. Consequently, it is assumed that these structural differences have left a significant mark on their market performances (Asai, 2006: 281).

Table 1. Comparison Table NHK and ABC (created by the author).

<i>Services provided</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General TV, Educational TV, Educational TV, BS1 and BS Premium. In April 2011, NHK consolidated its three satellite channels into two, BS1 and BS Premium.</li> <li>• Multiple Services for the Digital Age: Data Broadcasting, Multi-channel Programming, “One-Seg”, Catering to Special Needs, NHK Online and NHK Online English (PCs and smartphones), Social Network Services (SNS), NHK On Demand (NOD), NHK World etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Television, Radio, Online and other platforms, International, Commercial: ABC1, ABC2, ABC3, Online audiences, BC iView, Social media. ABC delivers four commercial-free, free-to-air digital television channels</li> </ul>
<i>Audience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NHK television average weekly reach is 77.6%.</li> <li>• NHK’s BCRI survey shows that average TV viewing time per head is 3 hours and 45 minutes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ABC television average weekly reach is 9.4 million people or 62% of the five-city metropolitan market (*Reach here measures the total number of people who have watched ABC television over a week.)</li> </ul>
<i>Funding model</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receiving fees 626.9 billion (96.6%) (pay services: digital TV channels)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of funding from the federal government via a direct taxation levy</li> </ul>
<i>Receiving fees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrestrial contract (two months payment ¥2,450)</li> <li>• Satellite contract ¥4,340)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>
<i>Number of households</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45.5 million</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>
<i>Total budget</i> - Income - Expenditure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ¥648.9 billion (operating income)</li> <li>• ¥648.9 billion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revenue from government by output 2011-12, Sources of Funds 2010-11 \$972.6m (Au \$).</li> <li>• Government funds for 2011-12, \$800 million. The ABC also received \$183.1 million from other sources, including ABC Commercial.</li> </ul>
<i>Regulatory model</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadcasting Law (1999); Governmental Guideline (2002); Self-regulating, Broadcasting law, (last amended in 2008) Independent auditing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board of Governors, Internal Audit, Meeting the ABC’s Reporting Obligations etc.</li> </ul>
<i>Competition framework</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial broadcasters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial broadcasters</li> </ul>

### ***Broadcast Law***

The Broadcast Law in Japan came into force with the purpose of regulating radio broadcasting and providing for the implementation of television services. The Broadcast Law established three major operational principles:

1. maximum distribution to the public,
2. freedom of speech, and
3. contribution to a healthy democracy (NHK, 2002: 97).

In addition to these principles, clauses specifying public welfare and freedom of programming were also inserted to ensure that the Law's main objectives are met. One of these clauses stipulates that television broadcasting must maintain a balance between program types (Articles 3-2). The Japanese Broadcasting Law stipulates NHK "regulations concerning its organization, and business operation and also certain standards for its programs" (Ito, 1978: 25).

Additional obligations concerning NHK's public service mission are set out in Article 44 of the Broadcasting Law, which stipulates that the public broadcaster shall:

- exert all possible efforts to satisfy the wishes of the people as well as to contribute to the evaluation of the level of civilization by broadcasting;
- keep local programs in addition to national programs; and
- strive to be conducive to the upbringing and popularization of a new civilization as well as to the preservation of past excellent civilization of our country.

### ***License Subscription Fees***

In terms of funding, NHK's system is unique. It is based on a voluntary "receiving fee" subscription, which is levied directly from subscribers in exchange for the provision of broadcast services. NHK's total operating income derived from subscription fees for 2012 was 648.9 billion Japanese yen. The origins and the implementation of voluntary fees stem from changes and revisions to the three radio laws (including the Broadcast Law) which were introduced in 1950. Before the Allied occupation at the conclusion of World War Two people wishing to listen to radio broadcasts first had to enter a contract with the broadcaster and then obtain permission from the Government to install a receiver. While this contract was ostensibly voluntary it was to all intents and purpose compulsory. The Broadcast Law changed the term used for describing the fees from the initial wording of *choshu-ryo* ("listening fee") to *jushin-ryo* ("receiving fee"), which denoted that the subscription fee system was now indeed "voluntary", and not enforceable by law (NHK BCRI, 2002: 96).

This voluntary system of licensing fees and its palatability for the Japanese population has been challenged recently through several episodes of misconduct by NHK managerial staff with regard to inappropriate usage of funds. The first result of

this was public outrage; the second was that many subscribers to NHK's licensing fees refused to pay their monthly subscriptions, damaging not only NHK's reputation but also its financial viability. It was reported that up to 1,000,000 users refused to pay their subscription fees. In response to these events, NHK devised a plan to restore public trust by announcing "a list of promises" to the public and establishing an independent committee with a mission to focus "on the structural changes in the environment of public broadcasting, examining the issue from a broad perspective, utilizing the most up-to-date assessment methods" (Matsunaga, 2006: 1). Moreover, further pressures and constraints on budget and stringent criteria have been introduced on NHK similar to those imposed on the BBC "to demonstrate the validity of spending from license fees" (Nakamura, 2009: 16).

### ***Governance***

While the MIC (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications) "is in charge of setting regulation and policy for both the broadcasting and telecommunications industry" (Asai, 2006: 272), the Broadcasting Law sets out the role and direction for NHK and establishes the Board of Governors as NHK's highest decision-making body. The main characteristics of the Japan's Broadcasting Law are:

- a basic law to ensure freedom of broadcasting, impartiality, the provision of broadcasting as a public service, and technical standards
- an autonomous administrative commission to regulate broadcasting enterprises (NHK, 2002: 96).

The Board is responsible for NHK's overall management and policy directives. The Board is also responsible for developing the "optimal plan of NHK's operations, budget, business plan, funding plan, broadcasting station installation planning, openings, suspensions and closures, and basic planning on program standards and broadcasting programming (Article 14)." The Board of Governors is not able to be involved in specific broadcast programming or other day-to-day operations of NHK (Article 16-2). All decisions of the Board must be impartial and in the public interest.

There is also an Executive Board, which is in charge of operational process within NHK, and the Audit Committee is independent from the Board of Governors and the Executive Board. The responsibilities of the Audit Committee are to oversee the Board's operations and reporting to the Board of Governors on NHK finances and operations. While the auditing procedures of public broadcasters vary from country to country in their complexity, the way they function is now of vital importance to the operational and regulatory structures of public broadcasters (see Brieb, 2004 for a detailed discussion of how this operates in Germany and Japan). Revision of the Broadcast Law in 2008 aimed at reinforcing NHK governance. The audit system was abolished, more than three of governors are required to be auditors, and more than one to be appointed on full-time basis. In addition, audits must be



conducted by an independent body (Article 40-2) and the Board of Audit of the Japanese government (Article 41). A compliance committee has been set up as an advisory organ of the Board of Governors for reinforcement of the Board's monitoring and audit functions and to implement a compliance regime within NHK (Murase, 2009).

### ***Annual Report***

If the Broadcast Law sets out NHK's mission statement, then NHK's Annual Report outlines the corporate strategies for fulfilling its legislative and corporate responsibilities. The 2012/2013 Annual Report states that: "NHK, as a trusted broadcaster, will continue to deliver distinctive programs and services and strengthen our broadcasting capabilities in order to build a prosperous and secure society and promote the development of culture in the new era" (Our Core Mission, NHK Annual Report 2012/2013). In fulfilling these obligations NHK must be: *Impartial, Insightful, Professional, Creative & Interactive*.

The NHK Corporate Plan for the period 2012-2014 describes four pillars of action to establish a positive work environment that improves the quality of programs and services and strengthens NHK's public values:

- "Serving the Public"
- "Maintaining Trust"
- "Creating the Future" and
- "Reinforcing and Invigorating."

Each of these elements is further attached to a goal. Through serving the public, NHK will enhance its broadcasting capabilities to ensure public safety and support reconstruction efforts in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake. Through maintaining trust, NHK will produce high-quality programs of international standard and promote the development of the Japanese nation, its regions and communities. Through creating the future, NHK will offer audiences greater choice by utilizing new platforms in the digital era. Through reinforcing and invigorating NHK will:

- maximize the value of public broadcasting through efficient management.
- promote understanding of the receiving fee system and reform collection strategies in order to accomplish the equitable sharing of the receiving fee burden (NHK Annual Report, 2012/2013: 26).

NHK provides services on four national television services, two of which broadcast terrestrially and two via satellite; there are also three national radio stations. The first two terrestrial television services are General TV and Educational TV. General TV broadcasts on Channel 1 and has been in service the longest. In April 2011, NHK consolidated its three satellite channels into two; BS1 and BS Premium. Programming on BS1 focuses on world news and economic information as well as live sports broadcasts (NHK, Annual Report 2012/13). The reduction in satellite channels came as a result of pressure from NHK's subscribers to reduce

their fees.

The content programming for each channel has been developed in terms of its “public interest” value with an emphasis on news, education, culture and entertainment. The breakdown evaluated this performance in percentage as follows:

- General TV—news 48.2%, education 10.5%, culture 21.3% and entertainment 20%
- BS1—news 51.6%, education 15.5%, culture 20.5% and entertainment 12.4%
- Educational TV—news 3.3%, education 79.2%, culture 17.5%
- BS Premium—news 1.8%, education 20.1%, culture 43.8% and entertainment 34.3% (NHK, Annual Report 2012/2013).

#### ***Australia: The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)***

The Broadcasting Inquiry Report (2000), held primarily to examine the Australian broadcasting industries readiness to implement digital television and convergent media services, determined that broadcasting was “in a state of flux” (Productivity Commission, 2000: 47) and that the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (BSA), the primary means of regulating the “complex mix of national (public), commercial and community broadcasting services, would have difficulty in remaining relevant because of the constant change in its environment. While the BSA provides the framework for regulating broadcasting in Australia, the ABC and SBS were established under their own Acts of Parliament.

The report found that the so-called digital revolution promises consumers new and better broadcasting services throughout Australia. Broadcasting, telecommunications and the internet are converging rapidly, not only in terms of technology and services, but also in company structures (Productivity Commission, 2000: 2).

This situation, however, carries with it challenges as well as opportunities. Without new players entering the market, the digital environment could bring increased concentration through converging ownership, and current policies aimed at Australian social and cultural objectives could become obsolete (Productivity Commission, 2000: 5). While the 1 January 2009 deadline for the conversion to digital broadcasting has been and is now long gone, one of the main concerns of the report was the effect that convergence would have on spectrum allocation and management (Productivity Commission, 2000: 13), an issue that was central to the formation of public broadcasting monopolies in the industrialized world in the 1920s and 1930s. What has changed quite fundamentally since then is the saturation of the market with new technologies, new players and above all the compression in time that it takes them to become absorbed into the mainstream, and the ability to effectively regulate them and the effects that this might have on the structural diversity of the media landscape. Cable and satellite services make it possible to

deliver a great deal of diversity in programming and new digital services, including datacasting and multi-channeling will significantly enhance the ability of broadcasters to deliver multiple services.

In Australia, as yet, there is no Public Value Test to assess the absorption of these new technologies and their effects, real or imagined, on public broadcasting in this country. At the time of writing this paper public debate such as it is has centered on the outcomes of the Australian Government's Convergence Review: Final Report 2012. The Review examined the operation of media and communication regulation in Australia from the basis of ten principles, the most fundamental of these states:

Citizens and organizations should be able to communicate freely and, where regulation is required, it should be the minimum necessary to achieve a clear public purpose (2012: viii).

This principle was taken by the authors of the report to mean that unnecessary regulation should not only be reformed, but also removed. Despite this focus on removing red-tape the notion of introducing a PVT for the Australian media industry has been received with vehement criticism from the owners of all major media outlets who view it as nothing more than a "political interest test" that has the capacity to be misused by politicians of all persuasions to block the acquisition of media companies by people they do not agree with or simply do not like (Knott, 2012)." In fact, a number of submissions to the review made by commercial competitors to the ABC, Foxtel in particular and the Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA) questioned the ABC's role (if not rights) in producing content that is "already provided by and directly competes with the private sector (Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy 2012: 85)."

Just over a decade on from the Productivity Commission's Inquiry the Convergence Review finds that broadcasting in Australia is over regulated and that the current system of managing access to the media scape through the issuing of broadcasting licenses should cease. The report, however, does despite its expressed desire to reduce regulation find three areas were "continued government intervention is clearly justified in the public interest (DBCDE, 2012: 3)":

- media ownership
- media content standards across all platforms
- the production and distribution of Australian and local content.

Continued regulation in these areas will help to ensure that media ownership does not become too concentrated in the future, that the highest quality of broadcasting will exist across multiple platforms and that Australian and local content it is hoped will be protected in the face of global pressures such as the Multilateral Agreement on Trade.

As the Convergence Review correctly points out that while commercial broadcasters have to focus (successfully or unsuccessfully) on programming

designed to attract the largest audiences the two public broadcasters are beholden to their Charters. The ABC charter is set out in section 6 of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983. One of the key public service objectives of the ABC is to provide all Australians access to broadcasting services irrespective of where they live. While this function has traditionally been provided by ABC radio and television, more and more content is being provided to the Australian public online. A consideration, which has led the authors of the Convergence Review to recommend that the ABC charter which is largely silent on the issue of digital media and online delivery of services should be “updated to expressly reflect the range of existing services, including online activities. (Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, 2012: 84). One of the reasons given for this recommendation by the reviewers is that the absence of any such provision “could limit the extent to which the ABC and the SBS can extend the delivery of their services to new platforms.”

The ABC Charter in its current form while stressing the contribution to the sense of national identity that public broadcasting makes its first item is “to provide within Australia innovative and comprehensive broadcasting and television services of a high standard”. Another priority is the export of this to countries outside of Australia as a means of garnering regional influence and extending Australia’s broadcasting market. Domestically, the latest ABC Annual Report the new way of providing these services as entering a form of “national conversation” that can be accessed and enjoyed through a variety of media platforms.

### ***Conclusion “Restating Public Service Values”***

There is an old Japanese proverb that states: *By learning about others, one learns about oneself*. This nicely figures one of the central concerns of PSB—to inform, educate, and entertain. But it also conveys another possibility that various PSBs around the world, such as, the ABC and NHK should take advantage of their capacity to learn from each other and learn from other public broadcasters around the world. Yet, despite the fact that both countries are situated geographically in the Asia-Pacific region and members of the Asia Broadcasting Union, little co-production, or co-development occurs between the two countries. This is a wasted opportunity.

Comparing the Japanese NHK with the Australian ABC provides various contrasts for debate on the future of PSB, such as geopolitical positioning, diminishing government commitment, changing national priorities, size, funding method and digital disruption. While Australia is a vast country with approximately 25 million people, Japan has a much smaller and varied landmass with almost five times Australia’s population. NHK is the second largest public broadcaster in the world, after the BBC. Modelled on the BBC, NHK’s budget system is uniquely based on a “voluntary” license receiving fee system paid by the public. This

provides, NHK with an annual budget of 716.8 billion yen, while the annual budget of its Australian counterpart provided directly from the government is just over \$1bn, which is a comparatively much smaller figure. Furthermore, the Australian government has announced the freezing of the ABC's annual funding indexation for a triennial period commencing from July 2019. This comes on top of around \$240m in cuts to the ABC's budget since 2014.

This trend is concerning for the future of digital development in the ABC. Under immense pressure the ABC is relying on a small number of talented and creative teams specializing in innovative production techniques and values to both further the aims of broadcasting while trying to cut costs and pursue value for money. Indeed, under these pressures "Innovation" has become one of the ABC's strengths allowing it to push boundaries and work across simultaneously across different genres and platforms. For example, the Digital Story Innovation team is working with the flagship current affairs program *Four Corners* to create specific digital content in the documentary/current affairs genres. However, the limits of such innovation can only be pushed so far before the basic tenets of PSB such as accuracy, independence and impartiality begin to suffer. Yet, this team is continuing to explore journalism's new frontier in finding new ways of telling stories on digital and social media platforms while attracting new audiences. While NHK does not suffer from this kind of budgetary constraint the type of innovation forced upon the ABC might be appealing to its Japanese counterpart.

For the ABC these most recent innovations have been proudly branded as unique distinctive broadcast journalism, characterized by sophistication and quality designed to suit contemporary formats such as mobile-first use. The outputs from across various disciplines have been incorporated into sources such as 'data analysis and visualization, interactive design, motion graphics, front-end development and audience engagement to produce explanatory journalism which attracts attention, explains serious issues and engages digital audiences' (ABC News, 2019). On a positive note, this project is enabling the smooth transition of ABC News and current affairs to a platform-agnostic oriented, story-based approach.

Operating PSB in the contemporary digital media ecology has not only transformed the interaction among traditional players, but has also stimulated active audience participation, and interaction through online and social media. The ABC audience development specialist Michael Workman argues that in order to target new audiences, it is significant to acknowledge the prerequisite step in the connection between sophisticated audience behavior and good journalism. This is to ensure that ABC journalism reaches 'new audiences in a fragmented and fickle media landscape (Workman, 2018)'. Most importantly, the future of the ABC depends on digital and social media, as these platforms represent enormous opportunity for growth at the same time the ABC continues to develop and train quality journalists.

PSB values are one of the main driving forces behind protecting the public interest and can be used as a barometer to measure the influence public service broadcasters have in maintaining their goal as stipulated in their respective Charters or Broadcasting Laws. In spite of the abundance of available channels and multiple entrants into the media market that extend the mainstream media landscape well beyond that originally envisaged, free service by PSMs is one way of ensuring continued public access to accurate unbiased information which has been one of the fundamental underpinnings of modern western democracies. To ensure that the transition from PSB to PSM is as smooth as possible, it is vital to ensure that the traditional principles of PSBs remain inscribed in the Charters and Broadcasting Laws as they are extended to encompass new technological platforms and services. This is because public broadcasting can be said to symbolize a joint attempt of unity between the state and public as figured in the ABC's idea of a "national conversation".

In this respect PSBs strengths are their competitor's weaknesses. PSB-PSM should continue to work on programs and genres that are innovative or unique. In doing so PSB should "take risks and work at the edges in order to create a new mainstream." There is an evident trend to suggest that many commercial stations follow PSBs path in the provision of successful broadcasts programs. For example, once these programs are seen on PSB channels they are recycled by the commercial stations. In Australia, for example programs of various genres such as *DocMartin*, *Midsomer Murder*, *The Chaser* series, are now staple programming on commercial networks after being either first developed or broadcast on the ABC.

In this paper I have argued the original PSB remit that has sustained almost 80-90 years of international public broadcasting defines the role and mission that is engrained in the Charter (ABC) and the Broadcasting Law (NHK). There is not only one solution to the challenges faced by PSBs, their audiences and the way they are regulated. That is why research on PSB is so crucial. It is a learning curve that will enable us soon enough to take a step forward in reaching new solutions, adjustments and recommendations to establish PSB-PSMs preeminent place in the digital multi-media landscape. In terms of improving PSM values, this kind of strategy offers a transparent viewpoint on what PSB has achieved so far and what they have yet to achieve. This represents a unique role in the relationship with the public and provides a very different format from commercial television. In this regard, although the idea for PSB was created almost a century ago, it does require continual refreshing and redefining to suit the needs of the digital age. However, despite this requirement PSB still possesses a solid foundation for the continuation of its mission well into the future.

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