



SHAUN BROWN,
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BRYCE IVES,
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Non-commercial media

Convened by Malcolm Long, ACMA Member, with Robin Foster, Special Advisor to Ofcom, Bryce Ives, General Manager SYN, Shaun Brown Managing Director, SBS.

National broadcasters, such as the SBS and ABC, and community broadcasters are both affected by the changes to the media landscape. New opportunities emerge and established conventions are challenged. What are the implications for the regulation of content or broadcast planning? Malcolm Long looked at the role of non-commercial media in the future.

Shaun Brown saw the task for SBS as engaging more Australians more regularly with services that contributed 'diversity and distinctiveness' to the media mix and met today's need for 'social harmony and discourse'. Commissions by SBS Independent had helped invigorate the local production sector and to communicate the broadcaster's vision.

As sequential programming is challenged by the 'authority of audiences', the threat to SBS is not engaging with new media: it has the infrastructure, the platform in place and bandwidth, but is uncertain

about the next steps because resources tend to be thinly spread at SBS.

He saw a presence for the broadcaster across all platforms, and the possibility of a particular brand identity for national/public broadcasters, reflecting their place in the 'zone of truth'. This was a reference to the video interview with Professor Pat Aufderheide, of the Centre for Social Media at the Washington College of Law. Professor Aufderheide had spoken about citizens' need for credible and trustworthy sources of information, such as the large vertically integrated media organisations, compared with the views of friends and relatives, which one can so easily access but which are not subject to quality control in any journalistic sense.

In seeking to fund his vision for SBS in the future, Mr Brown was very much aware that simply asking the government for more money was not the solution and that the national broadcasters had also to develop funding strategies to

support an expanded presence in new media.

As a project that serves secondary school age kids and other youth, SYN has had to move fast to integrate new technology into most facets of its work. Bryce Ives described the educational and other projects run by the broadcaster. They particularly aim to re-engage young people at risk by providing training in use of various media and involving them in a community that 'participates and creates' and 'cares about the views and beliefs' of young people.

As well as serving particular communities of interest, such as youth in the case of SYN, Mr Ives saw an important role for community broadcasting to provide for a form of local content, especially in areas where there is no local commercial or national media.

Robin Foster presented Ofcom's vision for public service into the future, as it had been developed in its recent review of Public Service Broadcasting (PBS) in the UK.

In conceptualising the role of PBS, Ofcom sought to identify the gaps in provision by the market, and how PBS would meet the needs of consumers as citizens. Rather than focusing on particular genres of programming that PBS might provide, the review looked at outcomes that citizens would expect from such services.

Perhaps not surprisingly there was some cross-over with Shaun Brown's vision for SBS in Australia. This included a well informed society, fostering of knowledge, supporting national and regional cultures and building understanding between different communities. A longer term threat to the BBC's licence fee revenue is the reduction of audience numbers relying on terrestrial transmission.

In the meantime, the BBC is leading the way with new services that take advantage of advances in broadband technology such as providing non-commercial content for citizens in the online environment.