

# FAQS

## **Why is News proposing making these changes?**

This proposal builds on our existing strengths – deploying our available resources most effectively to further strengthen our journalism and make it more accessible to a broader and bigger audience.

Restructuring our national reporting teams is designed to strengthen our commitment to investigative journalism at a local and national level, across programs and platforms, and give us an increased focus on specialist rounds such as the arts, science, social affairs and business and finance.

Our proposal for television reinvigorates primetime on the ABC News channel, extends our news offering on the main channel to late-night viewers, and reinforces 7.30 as the nightly destination for Australia's best analysis and storytelling.

We would also strengthen coverage of our region and of the economy and finance sector with the creation of the two senior roles of Chief Asia Correspondent and Chief Economics Correspondent, adding insight and analysis across programs and platforms.

## **What are the next steps?**

Consultation on this proposal with staff and unions begins today and will continue until issues raised during the process have been considered, responded to and consultation is closed. A decision will then be made regarding implementation of the proposal.

We will keep you fully informed throughout this process. In the meantime, more details are in the Proposal for Change, which can also be found on the intranet, or you can speak to your manager. More information can be found [here](#).

## **Would any jobs be lost?**

Although this proposal is not about finding cost or job cuts, we anticipate it would result in a small number of redundancies. Exact numbers would be known after consultation with staff and unions, and following the process in which staff have an opportunity to express a preference for redundancy.

## **Would the ABC have fewer journalists and do less journalism?**

No. The proposal would not affect our base spending and we would keep the same number of content makers overall.

In fact, under the proposed new structure we would produce more quality journalism to be delivered across all platforms, with the redeployment of existing teams allowing us to strengthen existing news and current affairs content while better meeting the demands of the digital audience.

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## **Why is it proposed to discontinue *Lateline* and *The Link*?**

It's always tough to finish programs, but like all news organisations ABC News has to make choices about how we invest our budget to deliver the best service for audiences.

*Lateline* has been a highly valued part of our television line-up since its launch in 1990. Initially it was founded to take advantage of the then new satellite technology, which allowed the program to host live discussions with several guests in different locations. Over the years, however, its point of difference has faded, and its audience is steadily declining, by about 9 per cent a year. Its average 2017 metro audience across ABC TV and the ABC News channel is about 185,000 viewers.

*The Link* has done wonderful, creative work since its launch in March, with an average metro audience of about 337,000 viewers.

However, the proposal to discontinue these programs is not about ratings, and it is also no reflection on the excellent work of their teams. We believe the resources from these programs can be better utilised by being reinvested into initiatives to strengthen the amount of original, in-depth and investigative journalism across all our TV, radio and digital services.

Viewers would be as well-served as ever with daily and weekly television news and current affairs on ABC TV and on the ABC News Channel.

## **What new programs are being proposed?**

At 9pm Monday-to-Thursday on the ABC News channel, a news discussion program giving audiences context and analysis on a key story or issue of the day with panel conversations and special interviews, presented by Stan Grant.

At 10.30pm weeknights on the ABC TV main channel, a half-hour late-edition national news bulletin updating the big stories of the day for the late evening audience.

## **What is being proposed for 7.30?**

We would invest more resources in 7.30, including some additional dedicated reporting positions, renew the format, and raise the bar on our storytelling for the nightly current affairs audience. Our focus is on strengthening 7.30's position as the nightly television destination for our best journalism and analysis.

## **Who will be 7.30 EP?**

With Jo Puccini becoming Editor of ABC Investigations, we will be recruiting for a new EP of 7.30.

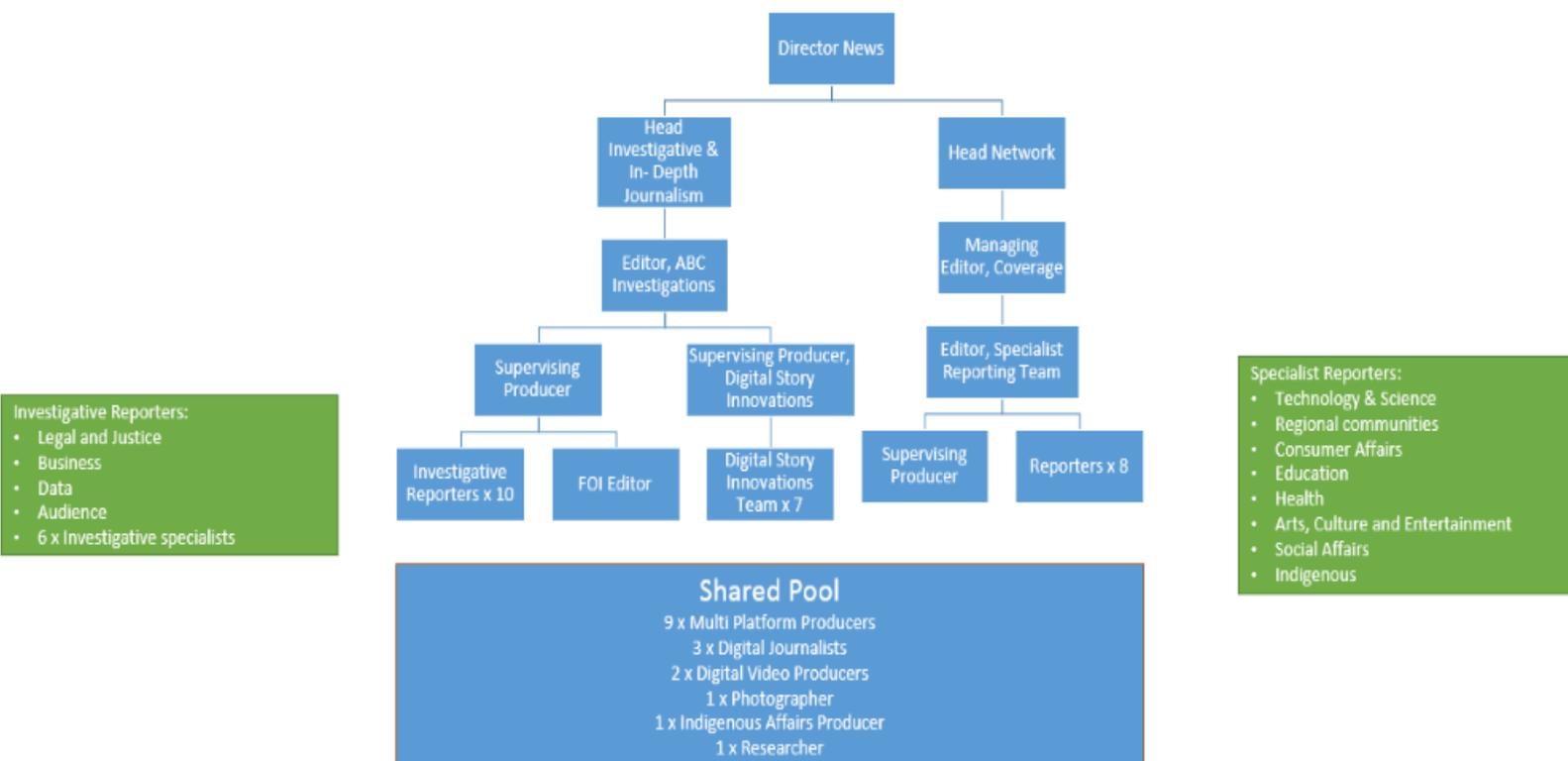
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## How would the new teams be structured?

Under the proposed new structure the National Reporting Team would be disbanded in its current form and we would create two, more focused teams, better harnessing our skills and efforts and helping us create more in-depth content. The staff and resources from the NRT, as well as the discontinued television programs, would mostly be redeployed into the two new teams:

- ABC Investigations
- Specialist Reporting Team

Each of the teams would have its own Editor, Supervising Producer and dedicated reporters. The teams would share a pool of Producers and other roles.



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## Specialist Reporting Team

Audiences are increasingly looking to ABC News for the essential context they need to understand a complex and rapidly changing world. Under this proposal, our specialist reporters would be brought together and supported to thoroughly explore key areas with digital explainers, interactive features, long-form analysis and original breaking stories.

The team would produce content that is original, engaging and high impact – breaking exclusive stories and responding to breaking news, adding context and analysis, producing innovative and creative storytelling to engage the audience on all platforms, improving audience understanding of important national issues, and providing an authoritative voice.

Led by Editor Lisa Whitby, the team would have specialist reporters covering eight rounds:

Science and Technology	Scientific discovery and research, technological developments, environment
Regional Communities	Rural and regional economy, social issues, development, government services
Consumer Affairs	Household economy and personal finance, workplace relations, consumer protection
Education	Pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education
Health	Medical discovery and research, consumer protection, hospitals, health services
Arts, Culture and Entertainment	Creative arts and performance, creative economy and policy, trends in genres such as high art, books, music, film and popular culture
Social Affairs	Social trends, family, ageing and disability issues and services, modern life
Indigenous	Indigenous services, culture, history, land rights, the economy, Indigenous lives

## **ABC Investigations**

Envisaged as Australia's most formidable multi-format daily investigative journalism unit, ABC Investigations would work with content teams across Australia to produce high-value, in-depth journalism for existing programs and across platforms, combining resources from the National Reporting Team and *Lateline*, including the Freedom of Information Editor.

Led by Editor Jo Puccini, a team of 10 specialist investigative reporters would produce content that is high-impact, agenda-setting, original, innovative and in-depth, uncovering exclusive stories, breaking new ground on big issues and driving the national agenda forward. We want its reporting to illuminate the audience, bring a new level of understanding to important national issues and respond to issues of significance to the community.

Sitting alongside teams such as *Four Corners*, *7.30* and *Background Briefing*, this would reflect our commitment to providing the best original journalism to our audiences across television, radio and digital.

## **Opportunity to express a preference for redundancy**

The proposed new structure also includes a number of roles, including new digital roles, which are presently unfunded. As a result, News is also proposing to provide an opportunity for News employees to express a preference for redundancy if they wish to do so, to fund the gap. The ABC will consider preferences for redundancy from individual employees in News.

The ABC will assess the OEPs depending on the circumstances and whether it's operationally feasible to make the functions of the role redundant and whether some of the functions or the funding can be applied to the new structure. These considerations are not exhaustive and may change depending on any matters the ABC deems relevant.

The ABC will, in its sole discretion, determine which positions/people will be made redundant and will be the final arbiter in determining whose employment will be terminated due to redundancy.

If you are interested in expressing your preference for a redundancy you can contact Alexandra Quirk from People & Culture on 82 2437 or email [ect@abc.net.au](mailto:ect@abc.net.au). You are encouraged to express your preference for a redundancy by 19 October 2017.

## **How does this proposal fit within the broader News strategy?**

The proposed new structure builds on all the great work we have already done this year, which includes relaunching Fact Check; starting the process to unify the News and Radio editorial teams in the ACT's Northbourne office; improving collaboration and workflows under the Audio Current Affairs Project; strengthening our online opinion and analysis; significantly increasing short-form video production around the country; and forming a team of digital journalism specialists to develop

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cutting-edge storytelling formats and work with program teams to translate their work online -- which is already increasing reach and engagement for targeted stories.

By November we will launch an ABC Politics online section, including enhanced coverage of national affairs and policy analysis out of Canberra, increasing the focus on providing audiences with context and analysis to help them understand complex issues facing the nation.

Following the success of investigative podcast *Trace*, News will also increase investment in long-form journalism for audio audiences and foster more collaborations with Audio Studios and TV Factual.

What unites all these initiatives is our overarching strategy under the Equal Digital Life banner to enhance the quality, reach and impact of ABC News content across all platforms to serve all Australians – finding new audiences for our best journalism while retaining the trust of those we already serve.

### **How does this proposal fit with the ABC-wide strategy?**

The proposed changes align closely with the aims of the *Investing in Audiences* strategy outlined by the Managing Director in March, which are based on four strategic pillars:

- Creating extraordinary relevant and valued content
- An outstanding audience experience
- Reaching and engaging more people more frequently in the most relevant way
- Building a great place to work

This requires an ongoing reallocation of resources to high-quality and innovative content along with significant investments in technology and in our workforce.