

# ABC NEWS – PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE

## OVERVIEW

In 2016, ABC News presented a long-term and far-reaching suite of content and operational initiatives to deliver its Equal Digital Life (EDL) strategy. At its core, EDL is about making the ABC's best journalism and topical content compelling and accessible to all Australians – wherever, whenever and however they choose to experience it, ensuring digital and broadcast audiences are served equally.

The EDL strategy sets out a roadmap for ABC News to be the undisputed leader across three main pillars of content:

- Live & breaking news
- Investigative & in-depth journalism
- Essential context & analysis

We've been moving ahead quickly to implement the EDL strategy and this proposal is about delivering on our commitment to be the undisputed leader in high-value, in-depth journalism.

Public interest reporting of the highest quality remains the priority of ABC News. Investing more resources to raise the quality, distinctiveness and impact of our journalism is the purpose of this proposal.

ABC News seeks to create two new teams – ABC Investigations and the Specialist Reporting Team.

These teams will include the country's leading investigative journalists and subject specialist reporters to tell agenda-setting stories and provide analysis and context on complex issues. The teams will have producer and researcher support and include digital production specialists. We propose to accelerate the digital transformation of ABC News by recruiting digital journalists, video producers and a digital photographer.

To help explain the central issues of the day, we're proposing to launch a nightly 9pm news discussion hour – with audience involvement – on the ABC News Channel and simulcast on ABC News on Radio, as well as delivering a new 10.30pm nightly news on the main television channel.

At a time of rapid and complex economic change, the network business and finance reporting team will be bolstered with the addition of a Chief Economics Correspondent role. This role will break stories and explain the shifts in Australia's economy and our place in the world. It'll play a key role in presenting key economic events across broadcast outlets and providing written analysis for digital audiences.

As events across Asia become ever more central to the news agenda and Australians are hungry to understand issues as diverse as the rise of China and the dynamism of Southeast Asian economies,

potential conflict in North Korea, the terrorism threat in countries like the Philippines, ABC News proposes a new role of Chief Asia Correspondent to be based in Sydney. The role will work in partnership with our Asian newsgathering bureaus, the Asia Pacific news team in Melbourne and the Chief Foreign Correspondent to provide original multi-platform reporting and analysis on the region and to present broadcast programs on the ABC News Channel.

Two additional journalists will also be reassigned to ensure 7.30 is the 'must watch' destination for nightly television current affairs in Australia and the 7.30 team will work to renew the story-telling for the broadest contemporary audience possible.

To reduce the duplication of broadcast programming, to strengthen 7.30 and to enable the new journalism teams to be adequately resourced, *Lateline* and *The Link* will be discontinued. Despite the hard work and dedication of these teams, both programs have faced challenges in retaining audiences in 2017 as television viewing habits change.

*Lateline* would sign off at the end of 2017. *The Link* would finish at the end of October.

To create ABC Investigations and the Specialist Reporting Team, ABC News is planning to restructure the existing National Reporting Team. ABC Investigations will move under John Lyons as Head, Investigative and In-Depth Journalism with a new editor overseeing it. It will bring together daily reporting and research resources and work on network and local stories ensuring the disciplines of investigative and original reporting are developed in all parts of the ABC network. The Specialist Reporting Team will remain under Craig McMurtrie's Network News team with a new dedicated editor and additional rounds like network reporting roles for Arts & Culture and Education. Both teams will have access to digital production specialists to ensure the value of the story-telling is available to audiences on any platform.

This proposal is not about cutting costs or journalist numbers. It's an investment in investigative, specialist and in-depth journalism at a time when many other media outlets are retreating from these areas. They are designed to use our available resources most effectively so we can produce more of the high-quality content our audiences value and ensure we continue to be Australia's most trusted news outlet.

Our plan 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 single nightly destination for our best journalism and analysis.

Ongoing staff in affected teams will be directly transferred to new roles where appropriate, others will be assessed against available new roles. Those who don't meet requirements will be potentially redundant. Where there are more employees than relevant roles a selection pool will be used to select the most suitable candidate/s for the roles.

A total of 3 redundancies is anticipated from directly affected staff.

With the addition of digital specialists there are more new roles than existing FTEs under this proposal and there are some positions which have been retained in the proposed new structure which are currently unfunded, so we will be giving all News employees an opportunity to express a preference (OEP) for redundancy if they wish to do so, to fund this gap.

We will only capture positions to fund roles identified under this proposal, subject to consultation. Another 3 to 6 redundancies are anticipated.

If we do not get these additional redundancies we will need to revisit the proposed structure and may need to phase in the new roles or undertake additional forced redundancies.

Current organisational charts are in Attachment A and proposed organisational charts are in Attachment B.

## **LATELINE**

There has been a gradual decline in the average audience and share of Lateline since 2013 and it has declined at a greater rate than other news and current affairs programs.

Most comparable broadcasters have one nightly current affairs program on television and News seeks to focus effort and resources on ensuring 7.30 is the strongest possible audience proposition. Creating a more seamless hour of news, analysis and in-depth reporting between 7pm and 8pm is a priority in 2018 and significant work is underway to revitalise 7.30 with a focus on refreshing editorial treatments and production values and exploring new story-telling techniques.

## **THE LINK**

The Link is broadcast on Friday nights at 7.30pm on the main channel. It commenced on 24 February 2017. While News sought to experiment with a different concept and more field interviews on running issues, audiences haven't responded as strongly as we would like. In fact, numbers are down on the same timeslot last year. Television believe, and News agrees, that a different approach should be taken to serving television audiences on Friday nights.

## **THE SPECIALIST REPORTING TEAM**

The Specialist Reporting Team would increase expertise and focus to improve coverage and context/explainer content on key topics:

- Technology & Science
- Regional Communities
- Consumer Affairs
- Education
- Health
- Arts, Culture & Entertainment
- Social Affairs
- Indigenous

The Specialist Reporting Team will work closely with other ABC content teams to share information and coordinate content and coverage. This includes sharing News prospects where appropriate and working on joint projects.

Lisa Whitby currently occupies the position of Executive Producer, Lateline and will be directly appointed into the new role of Editor, Specialist Reporting Team (subject to implementation of this proposal). The Editor, Specialist Reporting Team will report into the Managing Editor, Coverage who in turn reports to the Head, Network News.

## ABC INVESTIGATIONS

ABC Investigations will become Australia's leading multi-platform, multi-format daily investigative journalism team. The team will work across all output and with existing ABC teams, including Local content teams, to increase high-impact original reporting.

Jo Puccini is currently the Executive Producer of 7.30. Jo was responsible for creating the National Reporting Team and ran it successfully for two years. Jo will be directly appointed to the role of Editor, ABC Investigations (subject to implementation of this proposal) which will report into the Head Investigative & In-Depth Journalism role recently taken up by John Lyons.

ABC Investigations will include 10 specialist investigative reporters assigned to the following roles:

- Investigative Reporter - NSW
- Investigative Reporter - QLD
- Investigative Reporter - VIC
- Investigative - (legal & justice focus)
- Investigative Reporter – (business focus)
- Investigative Reporter – (crowd source focus)
- Investigative Reporter – (data focus)
- Investigative Reporter x 3 – (general)

The Digital Story Innovations (DSI) team was launched in July 2017 and includes specialists in digital design, development and data visualisation. Under this proposal, the DSI team will join ABC Investigations and report to the Editor, ABC Investigations. The changed reporting line will provide greater editorial direction and oversight for the DSI team and will provide more opportunities for the team to collaborate with investigative specialists.

Existing operations staff (camera, edit and studio) will be reassigned to the new teams except for one studio director role which is no longer required with one staff member becoming potentially redundant. The Specialist Reporting Team and ABC Investigations will draw on pooled resources in the same way as the National Reporting Team currently does.

The ABC Investigations Team will have reporters and producers in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. It is envisaged that this team will provide support to reporters in other centres who successfully pitch investigative story ideas. It's also envisaged that in future reporter roles will be added in other centres as we seek to create a national team.

Support staff for the National Reporting team and other Network program teams are pooled. The Specialist Reporting Team, ABC Investigations and existing Network program areas will be supported by an existing pool of production managers and news operations assistants.

## **9PM NEWS CHANNEL PROGRAM AND 10.30PM NEWS BULLETIN**

As part of this proposal News will create a new 9-10pm program to be broadcast on the ABC News Channel Monday to Thursday. The program will usually be presented by Stan Grant and explore in detail one or two key stories with context, interviews and analysis. The program will be broadcast on Facebook live, giving the audience a say by inviting them to send in questions. The program leads an effort to revitalise the News Channel evening schedule – which has become static outside of major breaking news coverage.

News will create a new 10.30pm news bulletin on ABC TV to be broadcast Monday to Friday.

## **7.30 STRENGTHENING**

Two reporter roles will be added to 7.30 to strengthen the program in accordance with efforts, noted above, to revitalise the program and strengthen the 7-8pm timeslot.

## **CHIEF ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT & CHIEF ASIA CORRESPONDENT**

A new role of ABC News Chief Economics Correspondent will be created to become the face of the ABC's business coverage across programs and platforms

A new role of Chief Asia Correspondent will also be created to strengthen our coverage of the region and provide more in-depth context and analysis on the news events shaping Asia and Australia's future.

## **DIRECT APPOINTMENTS & SELECTION POOLS**

The tables below illustrate proposed direct appointments together with details of the selection pool.

## PROPOSED SPECIALIST REPORTING TEAM STRUCTURE

ROLE	NUMBER	LOCATION SPECIFIED	WHERE	HOW
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>2</b>			
Editor, SRT	1	Syd		Direct appoint
Supervising Producer, SRT	1	Syd		Direct appoint
<b>Producers</b>	<b>8</b>			
Multiplatform	3	1 x Syd 1 x Syd 1 x Melb		Direct appoint EOI EOI
Indigenous Affairs Multiplatform producer	1	NSW		Direct appoint
Digital Journalist	2 * (* 1 with high level data skills)	Syd Syd		Direct appoint EOI/External
Digital Video Producer	1	Syd		EOI/External
Photographer	1	Syd		EOI/External
<b>SPECIALIST REPORTERS</b>	<b>8</b>			
Reporter, Regional communities	1	Bris		Direct appoint
Reporter, Consumer Affairs	1	Melb		Direct appoint
Reporter, Education	1	Syd		Direct appoint
Reporter, Health	1	Syd		Direct appoint
Reporter, Technology & Science	1	Syd		EOI/External
Reporter, Arts, Culture and Entertainment	1	Syd		EOI/External
Reporter, Social Affairs	1	Melb		Direct appoint
Reporter, Indigenous	1	Syd		Transfer

## PROPOSED ADDITION OF CHIEF ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

ROLE	NUMBER	LOCATION WHERE SPECIFIED	HOW
<b>BUSINESS TEAM</b>	<b>1</b>		
Chief Economics Correspondent	1	Syd	Direct appoint

## PROPOSED ADDITION OF CHIEF ASIA CORRESPONDENT

ROLE	NUMBER	LOCATION SPECIFIED	WHERE	HOW
	1			
Chief Asia Correspondent	1	Syd		Direct appoint

## PROPOSED ABC INVESTIGATIONS TEAM

ROLE	NUMBER	LOCATION SPECIFIED	WHERE	HOW
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>2</b>			
Editor, ABC Investigations Team	1	Syd		Direct appoint
Supervising Producer, ABC Investigations Team	1	Syd		Direct appoint
<b>Producers</b>	<b>9</b>			
Multiplatform	5	1 x Bris 1 x Melb 2 x Syd 1 x Syd		Direct appoint Direct appoint Direct appoint EOI/External
Digital Journalist Producer	1			EOI/External
Digital Video Producer	1			EOI/External
FOI Editor	1	Qld		Transfer
Researcher	1	NSW		Direct appoint
<b>INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS</b>	<b>10</b>			
Reporter (NSW)	1	NSW		Direct appoint
Reporter (QLD)	1	Qld		Direct appoint
Reporter (VIC)	1	Vic		Direct appoint
Reporter (legal & court focus)	1	NSW		Direct appoint
Reporter (business focus)	1			EOI/External
Reporter (data focus)	1	NSW		EOI/External
Reporter (crowd source focus)	1	Syd		Direct appoint
Reporter	3	1 Syd 1 Melb 1 Bris		EOI EOI EOI



**PROPOSED STRENGTHENING OF 7.30**

ROLE	NUMBER	LOCATION WHERE SPECIFIED	HOW
<b>730 Reporter</b>	<b>2</b>		
Reporter	1	Syd	Selection Pool
Reporter	1	Syd	Selection Pool

**PROPOSED CHANGE OF REPORTING LINE – DSI TEAM**

ROLE	NUMBER	LOCATION WHERE SPECIFIED	HOW
	<b>8</b>		
Supervising Producer	1	Syd	Transfer
Data Journalist	1	Syd	Transfer
Editorial Developer (front-end)	1	Melb	Transfer
Editorial Developer (front-end)	1	Melb	Transfer
Digital Journalist	1	Syd	Transfer
Audience Development Producer	1	Syd	Transfer
Digital Video Producer	1	Syd	Transfer
Digital Designer	1	Syd	Transfer

**PROPOSED 9PM NEWS CHANNEL PROGRAM**

ROLE	NUMBER	LOCATION WHERE SPECIFIED	HOW
<b>Roles</b>	<b>4</b>		
Supervising Producer	1	Syd	EOI/External
Associate Producer	1	Syd	Direct appoint
Interview/Segment Producer	1	Syd	EOI/External
Presenter	1	Syd	Direct appoint

**PROPOSED REDUCTION OF STUDIO DIRECTOR BY 1**

ROLE	NUMBER	REDUCTION	HOW
Studio Director, Lateline	1	1	Direct Redundancy

## **NOTIFICATION ABOUT SUBSTITUTION**

The ABC is prepared to consider a comparable substitute from employees within and outside the selection pool, who meet the selection criteria and have relative competency, experience and efficiency. This will be considered when the selection pool process has been undertaken and an employee is identified as potentially redundant.

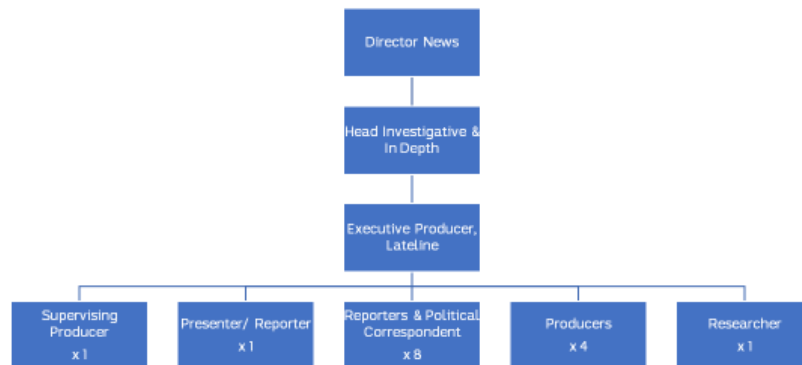
This proposal represents an opportunity to add significant digital, investigative and specialist capacity, and will be a crucial enabler for meeting EDL targets and better serving growing digital audiences.

## ATTACHMENT A

### National Reporting Team



## Lateline

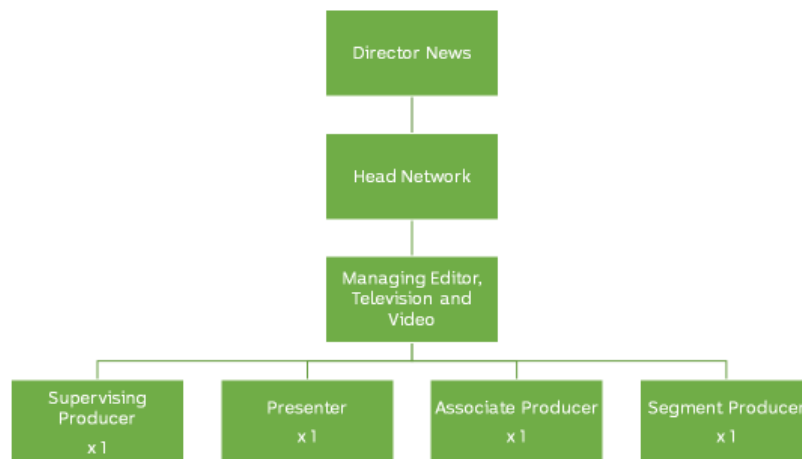


## ATTACHMENT B

### Proposed Specialist Reporting Team



### Proposed News Channel Discussion Program



Proposed ABC Investigations Team

