



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## End of ABC funding freeze won't bring back lost jobs and programming

Today's announcement of an \$87 million increase in funding to the ABC is a drop in the ocean after more than half a billion dollars of cuts by the Coalition Government since 2014, says the union for Australia's media workers.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance says the announcement by Communications Minister Paul Fletcher today merely reverses the indexation freeze of 2019 and continues the Enhanced News Gathering Program for another three years.

During the past three years since the indexation freeze was in place, the ABC has been forced to cut programming and content and make more than 250 jobs redundant.

"The freezing of the indexation funding in 2019 was a punitive action taken to satisfy the Coalition backbench that should have never happened in the first place," said MEAA Chief Executive Paul Murphy.

"The decision to end the indexation freeze is little comfort for hundreds of media workers forced out the door over the last couple of years.

"The freeze has seen hundreds of years of newsgathering experience depart the ABC.

"Today's decision doesn't bring back the programs and content cut – like the 7.45 am news bulletin or ABC Life – or the international and local coverage which has had to be scaled back.

"Since the Coalition has been in power \$526 million has been slashed from ABC and 640 jobs have been lost.

"Now, with an election imminent, the government has finally heard the message that the majority of Australians of all political persuasions want public broadcasting funding increased. But it will have to do much better than today's announcement to convince voters that the ABC is safe as a much-loved public institution independent of government interference."

Mr Murphy said another government announcement today of \$10 million over two years in public interest journalism grants to regional areas barely scratched the surface in tackling the crisis in regional journalism.

The Australian Centre for Future Work in its November 2021 report into the future of journalism said the regional media sector needed \$250 million annually in support to be sustainable.

"This is a woefully inadequate funding announcement," Mr Murphy said. "It actually falls far short of the \$50 million previously provided by the government through its Public Interest News Gathering Fund. Since that previous round of funding, the crisis in regional media has continued."

Mr Murphy said the one positive out of today's announcements was that both the ABC and SBS now had certainty about their funding from the government for the next three years and could plan accordingly.

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