



The SBS Must Be Special

The Special Broadcasting Service was established by the Fraser coalition government, building on the creation of the publicly funded multi-lingual radio stations 2EA and 3EA by the Whitlam government. 'EA' stood for Ethnic Australia.

Concrete government support for multiculturalism was a bi-partisan issue in the mid-seventies, but recently the special nature of the SBS has been under threat.

Since the introduction of sponsorship and advertising to SBS-TV in the 1990s the service has steadily become more generalist and less specialist and multicultural. While SBS radio has remained a specialist multilingual network, SBS-TV is in danger of losing its way. English language lesson programs, greatly valued by new arrivals, have been phased out of the TV schedule.

Ethnic communities are concerned. Both the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council (FECCA) and the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council (NEMBC) have spoken out.

As the SBS Board and management have sought to increase audience share, languages other than English (LOTE) have been pushed out of prime time. Coverage of community events and customs on SBS-TV has declined. Meanwhile big money is going into a locally produced motoring program. The general is overtaking the special. Mainstream is replacing multicultural. Not only is SBS-TV becoming less special, but it is also losing sight of the original idea of the service. The SBS should focus on the special needs of viewers, rather than on selling consumers to advertisers.

Since late 2006 SBS-TV has been interrupting programs of all kinds for advertisements by forcing breaks into programs.

The Special Broadcasting Service was never intended to be like other broadcasters and was certainly not created to mimic the look of the commercial networks. The SBS is a taxpayer funded public service broadcaster and should, as its creators intended, be both special and committed to serving its audience.

The above statement was prepared by Save Our SBS Inc, and has been endorsed by the following:

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