



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Broadband,  
Communications and the Digital Economy**

our reference: SC20081100144

Brother P S Cram  
Social Justice Committee  
Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (NSW)  
PO Box 259  
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08 DEC 2008

Dear Brother Cram

**ABC Radio National programming**

Thank you for your letter dated 26 October 2008 to the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy concerning recently announced changes to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) Radio National schedule. The Minister has asked the Department to review your correspondence and respond on his behalf.

The Australian Government provides an overall level of funding for the ABC, but has no power to direct the ABC in relation to operational matters. Parliament has guaranteed this independence to ensure that what is broadcast is free of political interference. Internal ABC programming matters are the responsibility of the ABC Board and Executive.

The ABC acknowledges the concerns of some listeners regarding the recently announced changes to the Radio National schedule for 2009. The ABC advises that the planned changes are part of an effort to refresh the Radio National line-up and produce new and more relevant material.

In relation to the planned cessation of *The Religion Report*, the ABC advises that it remains committed to recognising the role of religion in the lives of many Australians. Radio National will continue to broadcast 2.5 hours of religious content each week, including *The Spirit of Things*, *Encounter* and *The Rhythm Divine*. This coverage will be complemented by *For the God Who Sings* on ABC Classic FM and John Cleary's *Sunday Night* program on ABC Local Radio.

The ABC advises that Radio National programs will continue to focus on intelligent discussion of current trends and issues concerning religion, science, the arts, economics, law, health, film, history and technology. The new schedule will feature more than 40 specialist programs each week, in addition to news and current affairs programs *AM*, *The World Today*, *PM* and *Correspondent's Report*. The mix of specialist programming, talk programming (such as *Counterpoint* and *Late Night Live*) and live flow programming (such as *Breakfast with Fran Kelly*) will remain.

The changes in 2009 will also enable Radio National to cater to its growing online audience. Radio National is working to provide more specialist coverage and improve its presence online, specifically including radio feature material, arts content and religion.

The ABC has advised there will be no reduction in funding or resources for Radio National.

If you have not already done so, you may wish to contact the ABC directly about this matter. This should be done by writing to the broadcaster at ABC Audience and Consumer Affairs, GPO Box 9994 in your capital city, or through the ABC's website at <http://abc.net.au/corp/audience/complaints.htm>. This will ensure that the ABC is aware of your concerns, and has an opportunity to respond to them.

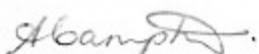
The Minister has recently announced the release of a discussion paper aimed at stimulating ideas and comments about the future roles of the ABC and Special Broadcasting Service (SBS).

The discussion paper—*ABC and SBS: Towards a Digital Future*—seeks comment on the issues facing the national broadcasters on the path to 2020. It is intended that this public submissions process will inform the Government's future policy and funding decisions in relation to the two broadcasters.

Submissions can be made to the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy before Friday 12 December 2008. A copy of the discussion paper is available at [www.dbcde.gov.au/abcsbsreview](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/abcsbsreview) or by calling 1800 025 145.

Thank you for bringing these matters to the Minister's attention.

Yours sincerely



Ann Campton  
Acting Assistant Secretary  
Broadcasting Industries Branch