

Media Release
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Free TV responds to competitive neutrality report

Free TV Australia notes the release today of the Expert Panel's Inquiry into the Competitive Neutrality of the National Broadcasters.

Responding to the report, Free TV CEO, Bridget Fair said: "We welcome the conclusion of the Panel that changes should be made to increase the transparency of the business activities of the ABC and SBS."

"While the Panel has identified the issues, they have not adequately set out the governance changes needed to address these shortcomings.

"We have consistently said that we stand with all Australians who want strong, vibrant and distinctive national broadcasters. However, we do not believe the Panel gave sufficient weight to the evidence provided by the commercial sector of competitive neutrality issues associated with recent investment and programming decisions of the ABC and SBS."

Free TV is also disappointed that the Panel identified differences in the regulatory regimes applying to ABC/SBS and commercial broadcasters but did not recommend any specific changes. The Panel noted other ongoing reviews and referred any matters falling outside of those reviews to the Department for further consideration.

Ms Fair said: "Given that regulatory neutrality is a central tenet of competitive neutrality, we would have expected to see a more detailed consideration of these issues within the Panel's report.

"The Panel has also correctly identified the difficulties with accountability in the absence of a Charter complaints handling mechanism and the need for greater transparency around how the ABC and SBS approach fair competition.

"In Free TV's original submission, we proposed a new regulatory oversight model based on one already operating in the UK with respect to the BBC. This model has provided greater transparency around BBC investment decisions, without negatively impacting on its day-to-day operations. We believe this approach is worthy of further consideration."

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[Download the original Free TV Australia submission here](#)