



24-1070

17 December 2024

Mike Fitzpatrick
Head of Capital City Network and Sport
ABC Southbank Centre
120 Southbank Boulevard
Southbank VIC 3006
Via email: fitzpatrick.mike@abc.net.au

Dear Mr Fitzpatrick

Re: Urgent Appeal to Maintain the ABC Country Hour in Adelaide

I write to express Livestock SA's concern and disappointment regarding the decision to remove the second half of the ABC Country Hour from Adelaide's 891AM programming and request that you urgently reconsider this change.

Livestock SA is the peak industry organisation for South Australia's red meat and wool producers and represents over 5,200 sheep producers and more than 2,700 beef cattle producers across the state. South Australia's \$4.3 billion livestock industry is a key economic contributor to the state which supports 21,000 South Australian jobs across the red meat and wool industries. Our industries have existed since colonisation and underpinned this state through its booms and busts and will be a key pillar of its future success.

The ABC Country Hour has been fundamental to connecting metropolitan audiences with the challenges and successes of regional industries. For our producers, the program provides essential coverage of weather, market trends, and policy updates that directly impact their livelihoods. Equally important is the role it plays in informing urban residents about food and fibre production, and raising awareness and understanding of the issues faced by South Australia's agricultural sector. In 2022-23, primary industries and agribusiness revenue contributed \$18.5 billion to the state¹.

Australia is one of the most urbanised countries in the world – a trend that continues to grow. Adelaide is recognised as one of the most liveable cities in the world and even though over 83% of the state's population already live in greater Adelaide, we continue to become more urbanised. Most people no longer have a natural connection to agriculture or a general understanding of things past generations took for granted, such as knowing how their food is produced or the environmental stewardship role of farming.

¹ PIRSA Primary Industries Scorecard 2022-23,
https://pir.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/463990/primary-industries-scorecard-2022-23.pdf

Programs like the Country Hour play a critical role in filling the knowledge and understanding gaps that are ubiquitous today. It also provides a unique platform for enabling critical discussions on challenges such as climate variability, land management, biosecurity, and geopolitical market challenges – issues that are relevant to everyone. Removing the program from Adelaide’s metropolitan frequency diminishes the ability to bridge the divide between city and country.

While the ABC has cited alignment with other capital city programming to justify the decision, we note that Darwin and Hobart have retained their tailored programming and there are special elements in South Australia that need to be considered. Adelaide is often described as a “large country town”. It has a unique relationship with its surrounding regions, and this enviable arrangement is one of the reasons why it is globally recognised as such a liveable city.

As a taxpayer-funded broadcaster, we consider the ABC has a responsibility to serve all Australians equitably. Cutting rural programming from metropolitan schedules limits the capacity for urban residents to engage with the realities of primary production. It’s these realities that shape the lives of producers and the food security of all South Australians. Maintaining the current Country Hour programming recognises the need to foster these connections and ensures a platform for rural voices to reach a metropolitan audience.

This decision is more than just a programming issue – it will have real impacts on the public discourse of rural and regional issues that over time will have a profound impact on society. Livestock SA urges the ABC to reconsider this decision and retain the Country Hour in its entirety on 891AM. This program is more than rural news; it is a vital conduit for building understanding and ensuring support for the agricultural sector, which remains crucial to South Australia’s prosperity.

Thank you for your consideration on this significant issue. Please don’t hesitate to contact me on 0438 035 519 to discuss it further.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Travis Tobin.

Travis Tobin
Chief Executive Officer