

8<sup>th</sup> September 2011

Letter to the Editor, The Age & SMH



Dear Editor

Re: **ABC arts unit essential / 'ABC's coverage of the arts must keep pace with the times' *The Age* Comment 7.9.2011**

Comments of ABC managing director Mark Scott ('ABC's coverage of the arts must keep pace with the times', *Age* Comment, Sept 7) have missed the point. They fail to address the central concerns of the 62 prominent Australians who wrote to the ABC protesting not only against the axing of one program (*Art Nation*), but the dismantling of the TV arts unit which will leave the national broadcaster without the capacity to record and maintain an archive of Australia's cultural achievements.

A team of specialist arts programmers is critical to the ABC's capacity to create and commission a diversity of arts programming, and to record our art history. It is also an important advocate for arts content when the ABC is divvying up scarce resources and increasingly directing them to populist programming produced outside the ABC.

The work of Radio National and triple j championed by Mr Scott is valuable. However, consistent, well-curated arts programming on television offers the highest profile engagement with Australia's artists and celebration of their work. It's marvellous that Nick Cave will be able to watch himself next year on ABC2 – the question is, what will he watch after that?

Yours sincerely

David Risstrom  
President  
Friends of the ABC (Vic)

GS: media folder

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**Shortened version submitted 9.9.2011 after above version not published:**

Comments of ABC managing director Mark Scott missed the point ('ABC's coverage of the arts must keep pace with the times', *The Age* Comment, Sept 7). The 62 prominent Australians who wrote to the ABC were opposed not only to ABC TV axing its only program that informs audiences on a range of current arts events, but to the dismantling of the ABC TV arts unit.

A team of specialist arts programmers is critical to the ABC's capacity to create and commission quality arts programming, and to record and maintain an archive of Australia's cultural achievements. Without a viable arts unit, who will advocate for arts programming within a public broadcaster that is increasingly directing its limited resources to populist programs produced outside the ABC?