

Professional
Historians
Australia



29 September 2014

Scott.mark@abc.net.au

Mr Mark Scott
Managing Director
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Dear Mr Scott,

Professional Historians Australia Inc. (PHA) is concerned to learn of the proposed cuts in the Arts area of Radio National. We are particularly alarmed that features such as the well-regarded *Hindsight* program may be affected by these cuts.

Our organisation represents some 450 professional historians working in a variety of roles across Australia, in every state and territory. A number of our members have been involved with *Hindsight* and have a high opinion of its work, as a forum for the presentation of historical research as well as supporting life-long learning in the community.

This program brings engaging history programs to Australian audiences and has a productive and rich relationship with the wider history community, especially in Melbourne and Sydney. It is a highly significant program for the history community – particularly for those working in the public arena as professional historians. But its appeal goes beyond the history professional, to the broader community interested in the many and varied aspects of Australia's past.

The recent award of the 2014 NSW Premier's History Prize to the ABC Radio National *Hindsight* program *Public Intimacies: The 1974 Royal Commission on Human Relationships*, produced by Michelle Arrow, Catherine Freyne and Timothy Nicastrì illustrates the appeal of *Hindsight* to a wide audience. The Prize judges commented

This insightful radio production revisits a seminal but often overlooked moment in recent Australian history — the events around the 1974 Royal Commission into Human Relationships... In a fascinating journey through a period of social transformation in Australia, *Public Intimacies* outlines the successes and failures of the commission through a rich store of archival material and interviews with the key players. It brings to life the political debates behind women's and gay rights, as well as some of the weird and wonderful public responses.

Public Intimacies is an important study of the connections — and disconnections — between social and political change. The program is a timely reminder of just how rich a genuine political debate can be. *Public Intimacies* skilfully addresses a passionate debate, and, importantly, it is well-crafted radio that reminds us of the value of this media for historians.

Your own 2013 Appreciation Survey published on your website outlines how 85% of Australians “believe the ABC provides a valuable service to the community” and that there has been an increase in the number who responded that ABC Radio does a good job of providing appealing content. *Hindsight* attracts tens of thousands of listeners every week, and the online articles and podcasts allow for a longer access period valued by researchers and community members alike.

As a body of accredited professional historians, working in both the private and public sector, we urge the ABC to continue to value the role of history in upholding a number of aspects of its charter, namely:

- *broadcasting programs of an educational nature;*
- *being distinctively Australian and contributing to Australia’s national identity*
- *broadcasting programs that are different from the sort of programs you would get on commercial television and commercial radio stations; and*
- *broadcasting programs that reflect the cultural diversity of the Australian community*

In the opinion of PHA, *Hindsight* fulfils these aims in presenting a wide variety of historical stories relevant to the Australian community, addressing not only topical themes such as the centenary of the First World War, but a diversity of social, technical and cultural history programs.

The recently released Australian Government’s draft Australian Heritage Strategy aims to recognise, manage and celebrate Australia’s unique heritage through national leadership as well as community engagement. We firmly believe that the programs offered by *Hindsight* complement these aims, presenting history through a diversity of voices, opinions and interpretations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judith Nissen', written in a cursive style.

Judith Nissen MPHA
President