

The Friday Forum

On Teams

4 March 2022
3.30pm - 5.00pm

Public Broadcasting: Impacts, Legacies, Future Directions

This year marks the centenary of the founding of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the world's oldest and largest national broadcaster. Established to 'inform, educate and entertain', the BBC model was copied to varying degrees throughout the world during the inter-war period, with public broadcasters established in Japan (1924), Denmark and Switzerland (1925), Finland (1926), Australia (1932), and Norway (1933). In the post-World War II era, public broadcasters increasingly integrated television into their offerings, which not only popularized the networks but also embedded them into the cultural life of the nation. At the centre of civic life over generations, it is little wonder that public broadcasters have generated loyal, and even affectionate, audiences (in Britain the BBC is "the Beeb"; Australians know the ABC as "Aunty"). But these publicly funded entities face distinct challenges not shared by their commercial rivals. During wartime, public broadcasters are expected to unite the nation; in times of natural disaster, public radio becomes a vital medium to dispense life-saving information. Public broadcasters are also mandated with specific cultural requirements, such as promoting the arts and supporting linguistic minorities. With limited avenues for commercialization, the financial viability of public broadcasting is an ongoing concern.

This Friday Forum takes stock of one hundred years of public broadcasting, addressing such issues as its association with empire; questions of political bias; and its cultural legacies. Arguably, public broadcasters around the world face their greatest test to date: how to thrive—or simply survive—in an increasingly competitive and globalized digital landscape dominated by media conglomerates.

Chair: Dr Rachel Stevens, IHSS, ACU

Speakers:

Professor Bridget Griffen-Foley, Centre for Media History, Macquarie University

Associate Professor Daniel Ryan Morse, Department of English, University of Nevada, Reno

Associate Professor Emma Robertson, Department of History, LaTrobe University

Associate Professor Anna Potter, School of Business and Creative Industries, University of the Sunshine Coast



Children gathered to listen to the ABC 'National Kindergarten of the Air' broadcast, 26 March 1952. Source: NLA