

SBS SUBMISSION TO AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, NATIONAL SECURITY COLLEGE

ISSUES PAPER: THINKING ABOUT OUR NATIONAL SECURITY

(November 2025)

KEY POINTS

- SBS welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the ANU National Security College (NSC) Issues Paper: *Thinking about our national security: Community Consultations on Australian attitudes to security*.
- SBS occupies a unique and vital position in Australia's media landscape as the nation's public media provider dedicated to providing multilingual, First Nations, and multicultural media services and fostering social cohesion among Australia's diverse communities. Through its trusted services, SBS contributes to Australia's national security and resilience – including during times of crisis – by supporting an informed citizenry, countering misinformation and disinformation, building a shared sense of identity and belonging, and promoting mutual understanding and respect.
- As Australia's population grows and becomes more diverse, as media consumption continues to fragment, and as the risks of misinformation and disinformation escalate through online platforms and emerging technologies, the importance of the trusted, inclusive public media services provided by SBS will only increase. The national security risks Australia faces, as identified in the Issue Paper, include stress to trust and social cohesion – reflecting the essential and ongoing need for SBS to meet the needs of Australia's diverse communities as they evolve.
- Key priorities for the Federal Government in supporting the sustainability of public service media and their distribution networks include:
 - **Ongoing support for Australia's independent national broadcasters:** Ongoing support for national broadcasting is integral to promoting national interests and values. The Government has committed to stable five-year funding terms for the ABC and SBS and released a report outlining options to support the independence of the national broadcasters and further safeguard them against funding cuts and political interference. The Government has also announced the expansion of SBS to Western Sydney with a production hub and talent incubator in recognition of the role SBS plays in promoting social cohesion and the Government's commitment to growing and supporting SBS and to ensuring its unique value benefits all Australians.
 - **Reform to promote the sustainability of Australia's news media:** The Government has consulted on policy and regulatory responses to address anti-competitive behaviour from dominant digital platforms, and to incentivise digital platforms to negotiate fair commercial arrangements with Australian news organisations. The News Bargaining Incentive and new digital competition measures must be advanced as priorities to ensure a strong, sustainable news industry that continues to deliver trusted, accurate information to all Australians. The Government has ruled out a text and data mining exception for Artificial Intelligence (AI), however the risks of AI to the sustainability of Australia's news industry must continue to be monitored.
 - **Policy decisions on national broadcasting infrastructure:** The Government has signalled forthcoming consultation on the future of television distribution in Australia, which will consider and inform investment in the optimal mix of technologies to deliver free television services nationwide. The Government has also recognised the critical need for broadcasting infrastructure to keep communities safe, connected and informed during natural disasters and emergencies with the Broadcasting Resilience Program that improved the resilience of AM and FM broadcast sites around Australia. The security and resilience of different infrastructure and technology choices must inform decision-making, to ensure continuity of services (including

emergency communications services) during weather events, cyberattacks, or other forms of interference.

- Further opportunities to leverage the existing capability and services of SBS to deliver initiatives that contribute to a cohesive and resilient society, resistant to internal and external security threats, include:
 - **Expanding SBS's initiatives to counter misinformation and disinformation:** Through the *SBS Examines* initiative, SBS targets misinformation and disinformation and delivers fact-based reporting and explainers for Australia's diverse communities. The service helps inform and empower audiences, especially in multicultural and multilingual communities. In addition, the *SBS Learn* platform, provides educational resources for teachers and school-age students. There is opportunity to expand resources on media and digital literacy, to support young Australians to identify trusted information.
 - **Expanding SBS's capacity to tell contemporary Australian stories:** SBS is a key cultural institution creating programs that explore the communities and experiences that shape contemporary Australia. SBS and NITV are always seeking opportunities to increase production of original Australian drama, documentary, factual and children's content, with a commissioning model that supports investment in a diverse independent production sector, creating jobs and developing creative talent from under-represented communities, both on and off screen.
 - **Expanding SBS's essential services for new arrivals:** SBS provides a broad range of in-language resources that help new arrivals and migrants navigate life in Australia — offering practical information on employment, health, education, housing, and other essential services. SBS would welcome the opportunity further expand these targeted initiatives, including through new programs designed to strengthen civic participation among multilingual communities and individuals with lower English proficiency. There are also opportunities to build a stronger sense of belonging for those on the migration journey, through Government facilitated access to these materials (via official channels) when people are considering migration to Australia or once they have a confirmed entry pathway.
 - **Enhancing digital inclusion in remote communities:** Gaps in digital inclusion for First Nations communities relate to service accessibility, affordability, and people's ability to participate to their full potential. SBS and NITV are well positioned to support initiatives to enhance digital inclusion, with nationwide reach and high levels of trust. With further funding, there is opportunity for NITV to scale-up coverage of remote communities through additional journalist placements, to elevate inclusive representation of remote communities, provide culturally appropriate health and emergency information and deliver associated democratic and social benefits.
 - **Leveraging SBS in the Indo-Pacific:** SBS's programs, created to serve multilingual and multicultural audiences across Australia, have the potential to further connect international audiences with Australian stories and perspectives, including diaspora communities. SBS's reach and impact could be expanded with additional SBS content delivered through the Government's PacificAus TV initiative, for example, or other initiatives to strengthen media capacity under the Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy.
 - **Additional research to inform evidence-based policy:** SBS commissioned research from academic or other institutions can explore the relationship between social cohesion and national security issues in multicultural, multilingual communities to inform policy. This would expand on existing initiatives such as the *Sense of Belonging* research undertaken in partnership with the University of Canberra.

I. ABOUT SBS

For over 50 years, SBS has served as Australia's public media organisation dedicated to providing services that inform, educate, and entertain all Australians including multicultural, multilingual, and First Nations communities. SBS delivers television, radio, and online services driven by its Charter obligations and purpose to inspire all Australians to explore, respect and celebrate our diverse world and in doing so, contributes to a cohesive society. Through its services, SBS plays a key role in supporting Australia's social stability and resilience.

a. SBS DELIVERS PUBLIC MEDIA SERVICES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Australia's cultural diversity is one of its defining characteristics and strengths. More than half of all Australians were either born overseas or had a parent born overseas, and more than one in five speak a language other than English at home. Australia is also home to the world's oldest continuing culture, with Indigenous cultural heritage spanning back more than 60,000 years.

In a nation as diverse as Australia, initiatives to foster social cohesion can strengthen social stability and help to reduce community susceptibility to extremist ideologies and harmful misinformation and disinformation designed to sow division.

The Issues Paper identifies that, 'multiculturalism and respect for diversity', 'social cohesion and mutual respect' and 'Indigenous reconciliation and recognition' are core national values and highlights the interdependence between social cohesion and national security, noting that 'more unified, cohesive societies are considered more resilient to both internal and external security threats.'¹

SBS plays a key role in national security and resilience through the delivery of trusted, nationwide services for all Australians, with a focus on multilingual, multicultural and First Nations communities and building cross cultural understanding. The SBS Charter, as contained in Section 6 of the *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991* enshrines a range of national interests and values, such as support for public media, media diversity and multicultural society, including ethnic, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It mandates that SBS reflect Australia's multicultural society, promote understanding and acceptance of the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of the Australia's people, and reach Australians in their preferred languages.

Today, SBS is one of the world's most diverse media organisations, providing content in more than 60 languages and consistently ranking among Australia's most trusted news sources. SBS's network reaches all Australians across every state and territory. Millions of people rely on and use SBS's services, with approximately 13 million people watching SBS's television programming each month, and 1 in 2 of all multilingual audiences accessing SBS services on a weekly basis.²

SBS also plays a unique role in Indigenous reconciliation and recognition. With NITV as part of the SBS network, SBS is uniquely placed to connect the newest Australians with the world's oldest continuous living culture. This commitment and extensive body of work is reflected in SBS's Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan, which sets clear objectives and targets for SBS's activities to support reconciliation.³

SBS's nationwide reach and multilingual programming, means it is an essential and free resource for news and life-saving information during natural disasters or crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for the 5.6 million Australians that speak a language other than English at home. SBS further unites millions of Australians through its sports and entertainment programs – such as coverage of major

¹ ANU National Security College, Issues Paper, May 2025, *Thinking about our national security*, page 18

² SBS In-language Research Program for financial year 2022–23, n = 1200

³ https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/sbs_elevate_reconciliation_action_plan_june_2022_-_june_2026.pdf

events like the FIFA World Cup and the Tour de France – and connects audiences to the stories of diverse groups, building mutual understanding, respect, and sense of belonging.

Case study: SBS delivered critical information for multilingual and First Nations communities during the COVID-19 pandemic

In response to COVID-19 crisis, SBS delivered the [SBS Multilingual coronavirus portal](#), which was created in late March 2020 within days of the first reported case in the Australian community. The portal centralised all of SBS's COVID-19 content in more than 60 languages. This content was viewed by more than 11 million unique visitors. SBS also provided coronavirus and vaccine explainer videos, and live interpreting for NSW and Victoria's daily press conferences in multiple languages.

NITV also played a critical role in distributing information during the COVID-19 crisis. NITV increased news coverage and supported First Nations Media Association (FNMA) through distribution of content to Indigenous media organisations across the country, delivering health advice, including in-language, while activating social media events to connect communities – for example the Logie Award-winning *Little J & Big Cuz's* hand-washing song and the video *Everybody Wash-em Now*.

This case study demonstrates the value of SBS and NITV as essential public service infrastructure.

II. MAINTAINING THE INDEPENDENCE, SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA ARE NATIONAL SECURITY PRIORITIES

The ongoing, universal delivery of public service media is critical to national security and resilience. The national broadcasters, including SBS, underpin access to trusted and accurate information in Australia's democracy, and support national identity and social cohesion.

a. SBS SERVICES ARE OF INCREASING IMPORTANCE TO FOSTER SOCIAL COHESION

Australia's social cohesion is under pressure. The 2025 ASIO Annual Threat Assessment observed that 'many of the foundations that have underpinned Australia's security, prosperity and democracy are being tested: social cohesion is eroding, trust in institutions is declining, intolerance is growing, even truth itself is being undermined by conspiracy, misinformation and disinformation.'⁴ The Scanlon Foundation Research Institute reported in October 2025 that while the national index of social cohesion remained steady at 78 per cent between 2024 and 2025, there is a continuing downward trend over the longer term.⁵

In Australia's multicultural society, threats to social cohesion — including the spread of misinformation and disinformation, increasing polarisation, declining trust in public institutions, and intolerance towards different cultural or faith groups — present significant and compounding risks. SBS plays a vital role in addressing these risks and supporting a resilient, connected society. This role will become increasingly important as Australia's population and diversity continue to grow. The demand for SBS's services is also being amplified by the use of online platforms, where algorithmic content curation can reinforce echo chambers, limit exposure to diverse perspectives, and spread divisive narratives and misleading content.

SBS welcomes the Government's commitment to stable five-year funding terms for the ABC and SBS and its work to identify options to support the independence of the national broadcasters and safeguard against funding cuts and political interference, including its commitment to legislate five-year funding

⁴ ASIO Director-General of Security, Annual Threat Assessment, 19 February 2025. <https://www.asio.gov.au/director-generals-annual-threat-assessment-2025>

⁵ James O'Donnell, Alice Falkiner and Katarzyna Szachna. *Mapping Social Cohesion 2025*. Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, 2025, page 5. <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-socialcohesion-2025>

terms.⁶ The planned expansion of SBS to Western Sydney⁷ is recognition of the role SBS plays in promoting social cohesion and the Government's commitment to growing and supporting SBS and to ensuring its unique value benefits all Australians. The hub will become a home for increased SBS programming, including news and current affairs, multilingual audio services and screen content. It will provide local communities with improved access to SBS jobs and education pathways and greater opportunities to connect with one of the world's most diverse media organisations.

Recommendation 1: The role of SBS in contributing to national security through fostering social cohesion should be recognised with ongoing support for free and independent public service media.

b. REFORM TO PROMOTE NEWS MEDIA SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY MUST BE ADVANCED

Australia's news media industry plays a vital role in supporting Australian democracy, civic participation and an informed citizenry through the provision of public interest journalism, reporting and critical information. SBS provides vital independent multicultural and multilingual perspectives and coverage that promotes social inclusion as well as transparency and accountability of government and institutions. The Issues Paper acknowledges that 'the relationship between democracy and security can be seen as a virtuous circle'⁸ and the health of Australia's media sector has implications for Australia's civic processes, social cohesion and national security. In particular, through its delivery of news and information in more than 60 languages, SBS directly enables and facilitates civic participation of those whose preferred language is not English.

However, the sustainability of the news media industry has been under pressure, as evidenced by the significant decline in the number of Australian journalists – a decrease of 19% in the decade from 2011 to 2021.⁹ According to the Australian News Data Project (ANDP) launched in 2020 by Public Interest Journalism Initiative (PIJI), there has been an increase in areas where whole communities — especially in regional and remote areas — lack any local journalism.¹⁰

It is critical that the Government's News Bargaining Incentive be prioritised and implemented to support Australia's news industry.¹¹ SBS has highlighted the urgency of addressing the ongoing imbalance in bargaining power between digital platforms and news publishers which currently results in the use of public-interest news and other content on digital platforms without fair remuneration. The News Media Bargaining Code did not provide sufficient incentive to bring Meta to the negotiating table with news publishers, including SBS, and has not resulted in an ongoing incentive for Meta to agree terms or renew their agreements with other Australian news media providers.

The dominant gatekeeping position of global digital platforms has impacted the advertising revenues and sustainability of media providers, as well as the visibility and accessibility of news media services for audiences. The ACCC has recommended timely action to legislate a new digital competition regime to address the anti-competitive practices demonstrated by digital platforms (such as self-preferencing) and risks to consumers. Treasury subsequently consulted on a proposed new regime¹² and SBS has made a

⁶ Minister for Communications, Media Release, 17 December 2024, *Supporting the independence of our national broadcasters*

⁷ Minister for Communications, Media Release, 8 December 2024 <https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/rowland/media-release/sbs-expand-western-sydney>

⁸ ANU National Security College, Issues Paper, May 2025, *Thinking about our national security*, page 16

⁹ ACMA, March 2025, *News media in Australia 2025* report, <https://www.acma.gov.au/news-media-australia>

¹⁰ ANDP reports available at <https://piji.com.au/news-mapping-draft/reports-analysis/report-library/>

¹¹ Treasury, News Bargaining Incentive, News Bargaining Incentive - Consult hub

¹² ACCC, *Digital platform services inquiry 2020-25*, 31 March 2025, <https://www.accc.gov.au/inquiries-and-consultations/digital-platform-services-inquiry-2020-25/march-2025-final-report>; The Treasury, December 2024, *A new digital competition regime - Proposal paper*, <https://treasury.gov.au/consultation/c2024-547447>

submission, calling for this regime to be implemented as a matter of urgency, to mitigate the effects of anti-competitive behaviour on Australia's news and media industry.¹³

Addressing the evolving risks posed by AI

AI services are increasingly being used as a source of news, with the *Digital news report: Australia 2025* revealing that 6 per cent of Australians surveyed reported using AI chatbots as a source of news in the week prior.¹⁴ Meanwhile, AI services that scrape and use news content without authorisation or compensation undermine the sustainability of Australia's news industry. SBS welcomed the Government recently ruling out the potential introduction of a text and data mining exception to the *Copyright Act 1968*, which would permit AI services' use of others' intellectual property without authorisation or compensation. Further action should be considered to ensure AI companies enter fair commercial arrangements with news and other companies for the use of their work.

There will continue to be a need for monitoring the market of AI services, and the potential risks of market concentration. The market for AI products and services is dominated by a few large technology companies, including those that hold positions of market power in other important digital markets (e.g., Microsoft, Amazon, and Google). SBS has raised concerns about generative AI products and services in its previous submissions¹⁵, including the risks of anti-competitive behaviours. This requires ongoing attention to mitigate against further risks to the sustainability of Australia's news industry.

If appropriately sustained and remunerated, public-interest news media providers will be able to continue the important work of delivering vital information, transparency, and informed public discourse in a democratic society, strengthening social cohesion.

Recommendation 2: Reforms to support the sustainability of public-interest media should be implemented as a priority including the proposed new digital competition regime and the News Bargaining Incentive.

c. BROADCAST INFRASTRUCTURE IS VITAL TO NATIONAL SECURITY AND RESILIENCE

The sustainability of public service media and their distribution networks is integral to national security. These underpin the ability of citizens to access trusted channels of communication that inform, educate and entertain, with services such as those from SBS which support Australian democracy, foster social cohesion, reflect Australian society, provide accurate news and information, including during times of emergency.

Monitoring and mitigating security and resilience risks

Communications and broadcast infrastructure play a crucial role in ensuring everyone in Australia has access to national broadcaster services, including trusted news and information during a crisis. Disasters and crisis events, cyber-attacks, and climate change present challenges to the resiliency of infrastructure. There is a need for ongoing monitoring to ensure communications and broadcast network remain secure and resilient over time.

¹³ SBS, *SBS Submission to the Treasury – A New Digital Competition Regime Proposal Paper*, 28 February 2025, <https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/SBS-submission-Treasury-A-new-digital-competition-regime-proposal-paper.pdf>

¹⁴ S Park., C Fisher, K McGuinness., J Lee., M Fujita, A Haw, K McCallum. & G Nardi (2025). *Digital News Report: Australia 2025* Canberra: News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra., <https://apo.org.au/node/330740>; see also RadiInfo, 17 July 2025, *generative AI is reshaping how people discover and consume news*, <https://radioinfo.com.au/news/generative-ai-is-reshaping-how-consumers-discover-and-consume-news/>

¹⁵ For example — SBS, *SBS Submission to the Productivity Commission – Harnessing Data and Digital Technology Interim Report*, 15 September 2025, <https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Submitted-SBS-submission-Harnessing-data-and-digital-technology-interim-paper.pdf>

The Government's Broadcasting Resilience Program has recognised the importance of broadcast communications infrastructure, providing \$20 million over 3 years from 2022-23 to improve the resilience of AM and FM broadcast sites across Australia. This work established upgrades to standby emergency power facilities (for example, battery or diesel generators), backup program inputs (for example, satellite links and/or dishes), flood mitigation design and mobile broadcast assets deployable as recovery units for use in the event of outages.¹⁶

Monitoring and mitigating security and resilience risks to communications and broadcast network infrastructure is an ongoing priority. SBS is continually monitoring and investing in the resiliency of its service delivery nationwide. This includes ongoing investment in cybersecurity and the implementation of the *Essential 8 strategies*¹⁷.

SBS also has in place a Risk Management Framework that involves identification and management of climate-related risks out to 2050. SBS's *Sustainability Report 2025* highlighted the risk that increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events and higher average temperatures will create pressure on SBS offices and critical transmission infrastructure, creating a risk of disrupting core operations and making repairs and upgrades challenging, impacting television, digital and audio services. To mitigate these risks, SBS is working with transmission partners to map and mitigate risks, investigating back up transmission and energy sources, and future-proofing SBS facilities for extreme weather events and higher temperatures.¹⁸

Future of television planning must recognise vital role of broadcast television in national security

The Government has recognised that Australia's free-to-air television broadcasting market is entering a period of unmanaged transition, driven by mounting pressures on revenues as consumer consumption preferences move from broadcasting to online platforms.¹⁹ The impacts of this are reflected in the closure of digital television services in remote and regional areas where financial pressures are greatest. The Minister for Communications announced that the Government would work closely with industry on a plan to secure the future of free-to-air television, which would involve considering the optimal mix of technologies to deliver services. This will involve carefully considering the role of broadcast infrastructure, mobile, and broadband networks, and how these would evolve over the coming decades.

Policy decisions on the future of TV distribution will shape long-term infrastructure investment decisions and connectivity outcomes for all Australians. It is crucial that, as these discussions progress, the Government prioritises maintaining the nationwide service delivery of the national broadcasters, to ensure ongoing access to vital news and information including during crises and other key events, such as elections.

The national security and resilience implications of technology choices must also be central considerations. For example, decisions on the future of TV distribution must be informed with a view of the sovereignty of communications networks and resiliency to weather events, cyber-attacks, or other interference.

Recommendation 3: In considering the future of TV distribution, the Federal Government should prioritise ongoing, nationwide access to the services of the national broadcasters and evaluate the national security and resilience outcomes of different options.

¹⁶ [Broadcasting Resilience Program | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts](#)

¹⁷ Answer to Question No: 249, Budget Estimates 2021-2022

¹⁸ SBS, *Sustainability Report 2025*, https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/SBS_Sustainability-Report-2025.pdf

¹⁹ Minister for Communications, Speech, 24 October 2024, *RadComms 2024 - Melbourne*

III. OPPORTUNITIES TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH SBS

There are a range of opportunities to leverage and expand on the existing capability and nation-wide services of SBS to deliver initiatives that further support social cohesion and contribute to national security and resilience.

a. COMBATING MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION IN AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES

Misinformation and disinformation can present risks to social cohesion, undermine trust in public institutions and trust between communities. The risks of misinformation and disinformation are exacerbated by widespread use of social media platforms, where inaccurate and misleading information can spread quickly, as well as the use of AI platforms and services which can spread inaccurate, unsourced material.

SBS is proactive in identifying and exposing misinformation and disinformation and countering it, including through accurate and trusted news. The SBS Examines initiative delivers fact-based and culturally appropriate journalism and explainers to dispel inaccurate information circulating in Australian communities that may adversely impact social cohesion.

Examples of SBS Examines content includes explainers on antisemitism and Islamophobia; a four-part series *Who's Right? Who's Left?* in the lead-up to the 2025 federal election which unpacked key issues across the political spectrum; an investigation into Russian disinformation networks; and stories covering January 26, the Stolen Generation, and political debate on Welcome to Country ceremonies. SBS Examines has had a significant and wide-reaching impact, since its launch in July 2024, with more than 2,600 stories in over 54 languages produced through consultation with experts, SBS's in-house multilingual journalists, and diverse Australian communities.²⁰

SBS also delivers SBS Learn²¹ platform, providing educational resources for teachers and school-age students with a focus on multicultural and First Nations content. There is opportunity to further expand on these resources, such as through new SBS Learn initiatives targeting media and digital literacy. These would further support young Australians in navigating today's media environment and identifying trusted sources of information.

Recommendation 4: Opportunities to expand SBS Examines and SBS Learn should be explored to bolster media literacy and mitigate the impact of mis and disinformation in Australia.

b. EXPANDING CAPACITY TO TELL CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN STORIES

Through SBS's commissioned content, news and current affairs and audio language programs, SBS and NITV tell stories which explore and celebrate Australia's diverse multicultural society. SBS is Australia's destination for the world's most distinctive dramas and documentaries. Australians turn to SBS for a broader understanding of global issues, insightful stories that delve into our diverse society, and inspiring entertainment that promotes understanding and celebrates difference. SBS brings culturally and linguistically diverse content from across the world to Australian audiences, across all of its platforms.

National Indigenous Television (NITV) is Australia's leading platform for First Nations storytelling, and home to the only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander television news service. NITV helps all Australians to connect with First Nations peoples, cultures and histories. Whether news and current affairs, documentary, drama, entertainment or sport, NITV is created by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, available to all Australians.

²⁰ Available in the English language at <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/podcast/sbs-examines>, and via SBS's language services

²¹ Available at [SBS.com.au/Learn](https://www.sbs.com.au/Learn)

The planned SBS expansion to Western Sydney will enable SBS to develop and deliver additional content to our national audience. More generally, SBS and NITV are always seeking to increase production of original Australian drama, documentary, factual and children's content, with an efficient and effective commissioning model that supports investment in a diverse independent production sector, creating jobs and developing creative talent from under-represented communities, both on and off screen.

Recommendation 5: Opportunities to expand SBS and NITV content offerings with diverse and contemporary Australian stories that foster national identity and social cohesion should be supported.

c. EXPANDING ESSENTIAL SERVICES FOR NEW ARRIVALS AND MULTILINGUAL COMMUNITIES

There is an ongoing need for essential information services that support new arrivals and migrants, and those with lower English proficiency, to enable increased economic, civic, and social participation in Australia. Participation in these aspects of the Australian life is key to fostering a sense of belonging among communities, contributing to national security and resilience through social cohesion.

In addition to SBS's news coverage in over 60 languages, SBS delivers a wide range of trusted resources that support individuals to navigate life in Australia.

- *Australia Explained* is a highly valuable resource for new arrivals, assisting migrants and refugees, among others, with practical information about employment, health, education, housing, Australia's legal and justice system, and more in over 60 languages. The essential information helps people to engage effectively in work, employment, and education, and to navigate government services. In doing so, the service contributes to social cohesion and stability. In the context of the 2025 Federal Election, a collaboration between *Australia Explained* and the Australian Electoral Commission supported multilingual voter education to demystify the voting process.
- *SBS Learn English* is a free English language learning service supporting the more than 870,000 people in Australia who do not speak English well, or at all, according to the 2021 Australian Census. Its episodes are published in more than 18 languages with a particular focus on Arabic, Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese languages. In the context of the 2025 Federal Election, *Learn English* taught newcomers common election phrases and terms.

Additional resourcing to enable SBS to expand its delivery and distribution of these types of essential services would support the engagement of new Australians with government programs and services. As examples, SBS could collaborate with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) to deliver initiatives that support enrolment and voter education in the lead up to future elections, or support healthcare agencies to deliver initiatives that help individuals with low English confidence engage with health services.

Recommendation 6: Opportunities for SBS to deliver new initiatives supporting community engagement with government programs and services should be explored.

d. ADVANCING DIGITAL INCLUSION FOR FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

Inclusion has powerful social, cultural and well-being benefits for First Nations audiences and advancing digital inclusion can benefit social cohesion – enabling all Australians to engage more effectively with services, including public media services. The Government's First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory

Group (FNDIAG)²² has recommended a range of proposals to assist First Nations people and communities access essential online services and fully participate in and enjoy the economic and social opportunities that come with using digital technologies. In its Interim Report, the FNDIAG has stated that “digital inclusion is a deeply complex issue ... a critical enabler for a vast array of other benefits, including health, education and social connectedness, as well as making sure First Nations people have access to the information they need to make decisions for themselves and their families”. The report also acknowledges the interrelationships between broadcasting and internet access and the need for holistic consideration of connectivity issues, inclusive of broadcast access.²³

Currently there are significant gaps in digital inclusion, linked to service availability, accessibility, affordability, and people’s confidence and skills in utilising services. The Australian Digital Inclusion Index has highlighted that around one in five (20.6%) Australians are excluded or highly excluded and roughly one in ten (9.2%) are highly excluded. Rates of exclusion are much higher for people aged 75+ years (66.5%), those who did not complete secondary school (54.5%), public housing residents (45.2%) and First Nations people (40.9%). Broadcast services play an important role in ensuring access to news, information and entertainment, particularly among those groups that are digitally excluded and in remote communities.

SBS and NITV are essential services that have built trust with audiences over many years of operation. Consideration of measures to support digital inclusion should recognise the role that SBS and NITV already play in connecting audiences, and opportunities for the network to support targeted work in this area, such as delivering educational or communications initiatives via SBS and NITV’s trusted networks.

There is opportunity for NITV to expand connectivity with remote communities, with extremely cost effective and scalable solutions. As an example, NITV has deployed journalists with satellite connectivity to remote communities, including Waiben (Thursday Island), in partnership with the Torres Strait Islanders Media Association (TSIMA). The benefits of this initiative, relative to its cost, are significant – increasing the connectivity of a remote community and creating opportunity for stories of local significance to gain a national profile and audience, connecting diverse audiences across Australia. Further information about NITV’s role and opportunities to support digital inclusion among First Nations communities can be found in SBS’s submission to the First National Digital Inclusion Roadmap.²⁴

Recommendation 7: Opportunities to support NITV to scale-up initiatives to improve digital inclusion and connect remote communities with culturally- appropriate content, education campaigns, local journalism, greater representation and connectivity solutions should be explored.

e. LEVERAGING SBS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

SBS’s strength as a vehicle for Australia’s soft power lies in its distinctive content and services that authentically reflect the nation’s diversity. SBS showcases Australia’s inclusiveness and its deep connections with a wide range of cultures – and in doing so, enhances Australia’s reputation on the world stage at no additional cost to government, while fulfilling its obligations under the SBS Charter. This role can be further leveraged through enhancement of existing or new initiatives.

In the Pacific region, SBS currently supplies selected content to the Government’s PacificAus TV initiative, administered by industry body Free TV Australia. Through this initiative, which is a part of the

²² Available at <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-communications/first-nations-digital-inclusion>

²³ First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group, October 2023, Interim Report, <https://www.digitalinclusion.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/first-nations-digital-inclusion-advisory-group-initial-report.pdf>

²⁴ SBS & NITV submission, July 2024, https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/NITV-and-SBS-submission_First-Nations-Digital-Inclusion-Roadmap_July-2024.pdf

Government's Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy, SBS continues to engage with eleven Pacific jurisdictions through unique content offerings. This content distribution can be scaled-up either with additional support, or potentially through the development of a new initiative focused on expanding SBS's content distribution in the region.

Globally, SBS commercially licences its content for distribution in other markets. Any further support or new initiatives to amplify SBS's international content distribution would deliver further opportunities for SBS to support mutual understanding of Australia and our region and expand broadcasting and media sector engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

Further information about SBS's unique role and how it may be leveraged to boost the availability of Australian content, deepen media connections and strengthen the resilience of media outlets in the region is set out in SBS's [submission](#) to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's *Soft Power Review*.²⁵

Recommendation 8: With additional support, SBS can play a greater role in supporting mutual understanding of Australia and media sector engagement and capacity-building in the region, through existing or new initiatives.

f. COMMISSIONED RESEARCH TO INFORM EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY

Recent research by SBS and the University of Canberra, *Sense of Belonging and Media Representation among Multilingual Audiences in Australia 2025*,²⁶ demonstrates the value of the inclusive media services SBS provides. The research found that audiences who see their communities reflected in media report a stronger sense of belonging, which in turn supports confidence and willingness to participate in society.

Inclusive media services further contribute to the economic participation of diverse communities and economic growth, which in turn has positive benefits for social stability. An SBS-commissioned report by Deloitte Access Economics found that Australia has the potential to unlock a \$12.7 billion economic dividend annually by improving social inclusion, driven by improved employment and health outcomes, increased workplace productivity, and reduced costs of social services.²⁷ Public service media is a key supporting enabler to help achieve these outcomes through connecting with multilingual and multicultural communities.

The Scanlon Foundation Research Institute currently measures levels of social cohesion in Australia through its annual *Mapping Social Cohesion* report. However, there remains an information gap regarding how these indicators of social cohesion relate to another potentially measurable domain — Australia's national security risks. If the relationships between these two sets of data can be identified and monitored over time, it would provide valuable insights into how social cohesion and national security risks influence each other. Understanding these relationships will further support Australia's evidence-

Recommendation 9: SBS can play a greater role in commissioning research to support evidence-informed policy and audience initiatives.

²⁵ SBS, October 2018, *SBS submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade — Soft Power Review*

https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/wp-content/uploads/sites/sbs.com.au/aboutus/files/33_sbs_submission_to_department_of_foreign_affairs_and_trade_soft_power_review_-_final.pdf

²⁶ News and Media Research Centre, Special Broadcasting Service, 29 October 2025, *Sense of belonging and media representation among multilingual audiences in Australia*.

²⁷ Deloitte Access Economics, Report commissioned by SBS, August 2019, *The economic benefits of improving social inclusion*, <https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/2019/08/28/improving-social-inclusion-could-generate-127-billion-annual-boost-australian/>

based policy development and decision making by governments and relevant stakeholders, at multiple levels.

IV. CONCLUSION

SBS occupies a unique and vital position in Australia's media market, with a focus on fostering social cohesion among the nation's diverse communities. In doing so, SBS contributes to the national security and resilience of Australia, supporting an informed citizenry, countering the risks of misinformation and disinformation, creating a shared sense of identity and belonging, and building connections and mutual understanding across multicultural, multilingual and First Nations communities.

The ongoing sustainability of public media services including SBS, and the reliability and resilience of the distribution networks that ensure universal access to these services, are critical elements of national security. These services underpin the ability of citizens to access trusted channels of communication and accurate information and support social cohesion. Maintaining the universal reach of services, and the security and resilience of network infrastructure, must remain ongoing priorities for the Federal Government. In addition, strong policy and regulatory frameworks are required to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the Australian news industry, so that all audiences continue to have access to investigative journalism.

In this submission SBS has highlighted opportunities to leverage the existing capabilities and services of SBS to further enhance social cohesion. These include the opportunities for new or expanded initiatives to counter misinformation and disinformation, support new arrivals to engage with government services and programs, support digital inclusion, and contribute to Australia's international engagement. Building on these services would further enhance social, economic and civic participation among multilingual, multicultural and First Nations communities, contributing to a more connected, informed and resilient society.

SBS appreciates the opportunity to respond to the NSC's *Thinking about national security: community consultation on Australian attitudes to security* Issues Paper.