Ms Ita Buttrose AC OBE

Chair

Australian Broadcasting Commission

ULTIMO

NSW 2007

Dear Chair

I write to suggest enhanced ABC reporting on Covid-19 matters during the pandemic.

I believe it possible for the ABC to easily provide information on Covid 19 much more useful to individual Australians and to national public health.

Each State Health Department has a website on which Covid-19 ‘alerts’ can eventually be found. The alerts advise of premises etc. where Covid cases have recently been detected. They advise people who have been to such premises to variously: monitor themselves for symptoms; get tested; self-isolate etc. An example is: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/latest-news-and-updates#increased-testing-and-surveillance>. The websites also advise of current public health directions in the State, and attempt to summarise other matters which may affect people in the State, for example, border closure rules.

It should be possible for the mass media to include in each news report, or other suitable time, such information for at least the local region. For example, at the end of the daily Sydney edition of the 7.00 pm TV news, for ABC 2 to display - and for a newsreader to read-out - the NSW Department’s list of affected premises in the Sydney Metropolitan and adjacent areas, and related advice. Similarly, for ABC regional radio.

Such a scheme is essentially an enhanced replica of what is done for other emergencies such as bushfires, floods and natural disasters. Its benefits would be more significant than those, not least because the pandemic is likely to last for a significant time during which there is risk of a natural weakening of the public’s response to official advice.

I am also writing on this matter to the Hon. Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health and to the Hon. Paul Fletcher MP, Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts.

Your sincerely

J Austen

17 August 2020