

ABC stung by softer news cycle as payouts hit home

By [Calum Jaspan](#)

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ABC boss David Anderson's pay went up 12 per cent in 2023, in a year when the public broadcaster's redundancy costs ballooned and its total audience reach fell 4 per cent, according to its annual report.

The report, released yesterday, highlighted a dip in how many Australians were tuning into the ABC (television, radio and online), from 69.4 per cent in 2022 to 65.4 per cent.

The fall in reach was heavier for the broadcaster's digital products, down 23 per cent, despite its new Five-Year Plan published in June this year, which emphasises an increased focus on digital products.

In total, the ABC reached 13,039,000 Australians via its online services, including iview, the ABC News website and the ABC listen app.

"Declines in weekly users year-on-year was primarily driven by growing news avoidance in a postpandemic media environment and as people's heavy need for news during the pandemic reduced, the ABC's audience also reduced," the broadcaster explained.

Total staff provisions at the ABC rose by nearly \$22 million through the year, largely owing to significant redundancies costs, which occurred during a round of high-profile layoffs, including the broadcaster's then-political editor Andrew Probyn in June.

Total employee financial provisions reached \$176 million, the figure including leave, superannuation and redundancy costs.

Anderson's total remuneration rose from \$1,036,902 to \$1,156,969, aided by a rise in base salary and other long-term employee benefits including long service leave. His salary is set by the public remuneration tribunal.

He was handed a second term as head of the ABC by its board this year to help lead the broadcaster through its new long-term plan.

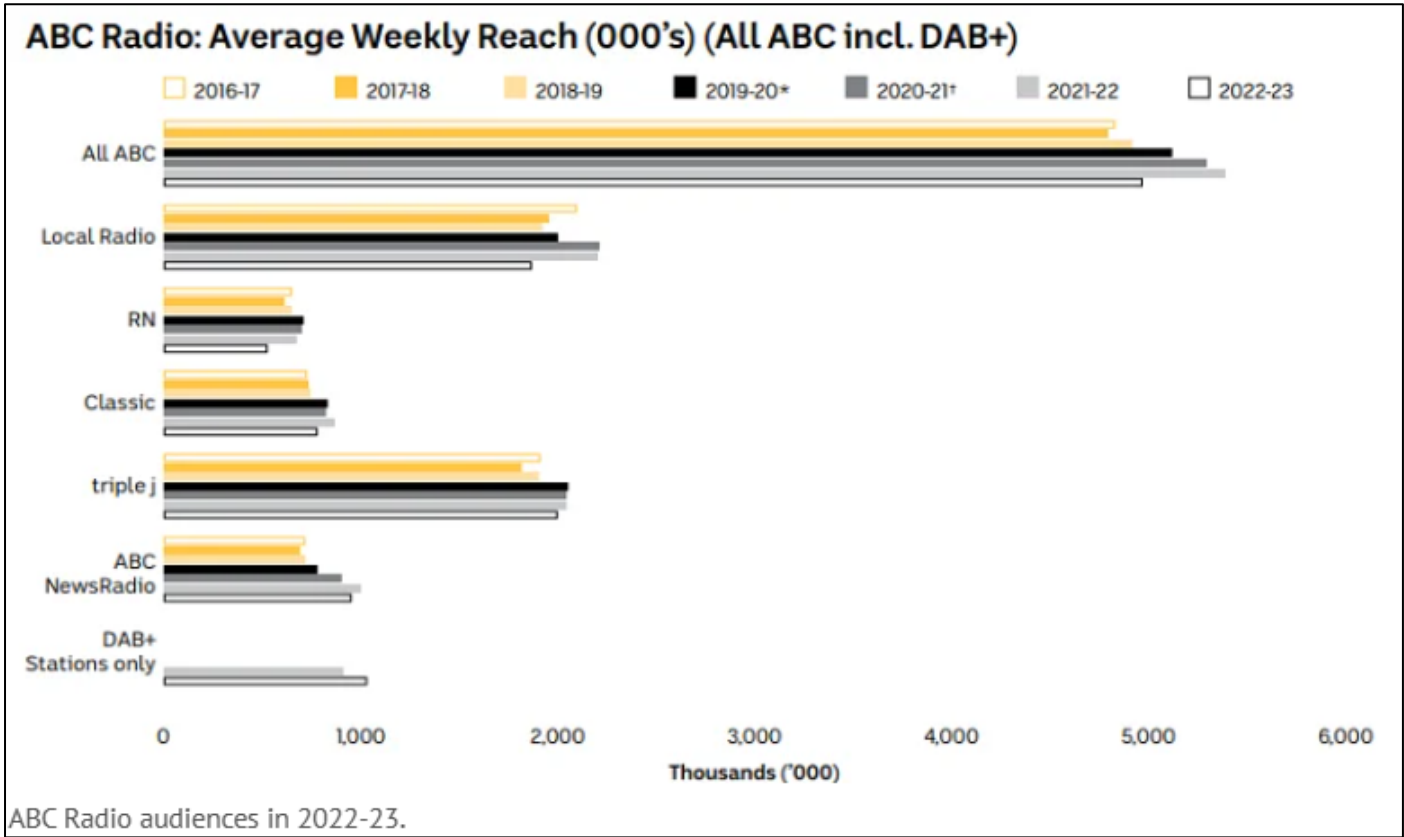
Meanwhile, Ita Buttrose, who will leave the ABC after one term as its chair in March, had her remuneration rise to \$211,297 from \$205,631. The government is in the process of appointing a successor.

The ABC's radio audience, including via digital channels, fell 7.7 per cent compared to 2021-22 figures to 4.97 million, while its five-city metro audience, listeners to local radio channels, was down 15.2 per cent to 1.87 million. Radio National listeners fell by 21.6 per cent to 529,000.

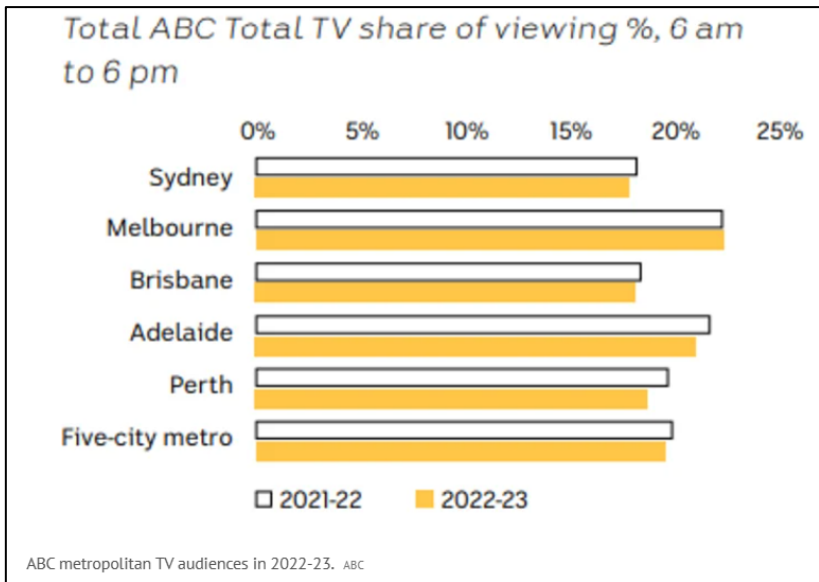
The ABC is implementing the findings of a review into its local radio operations.

The listen app, its digital streaming platform for audio content providing access to live ABC Radio content and podcasts, fell 1 per cent to 452,000 users.

Broadcast television also registered a decline in total reach for metropolitan, regional and digital channels.



The broadcaster said the dip was consistent with the continuing trend of customers moving away from scheduled viewing, with Australians increasingly using both Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD) and Broadcast Video on Demand (BVOD) services.



On social media, the ABC News You-Tube channel increased its subscriber base by 11 per cent to 1.8 million, while it ranked as the second most popular Australian news account behind *Daily Mail Australia*.

Yesterday, , Anderson also briefed staff on its long-awaited review into racism experienced by staff, sparked by treatment of veteran broadcaster Stan Grant, who has since departed.

Anderson said the review will be led by lawyer Dr Terri Janke, a Wuthathi, Yadhaghana and Meriam woman, beginning immediately, with a view to publish its findings in mid-2024.