

8 March 2022



AUSTRALIAN  
BROADCASTING  
CORPORATION

Office of the Chair  
Ultimo Centre  
700 Harris Street  
Ultimo, NSW 2007

Australian Privacy Foundation  
Mr David Vaile, Chair  
Dr Juanita Fernando, Deputy Chair

Email: [Secretary@privacy.org.au](mailto:Secretary@privacy.org.au)

Dear Mr Vaile and Dr Fernando

I refer to your letter dated 2 March 2022.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me about your concerns in relation to ABC iView.

As you can imagine, the ABC team has spent a lot of time considering the issues which you have identified. There are complex public policy considerations which the ABC has taken into account. The ABC has aimed to strike the right balance between privacy considerations and serving our digital media audience, including by ensuring that we collect only a small amount of personal information to inform content decisions.

It is important to the ABC to ensure that leaders in the privacy community like yourself have confidence in the measures we take. Your views will no doubt influence others and that influence can have an important impact on public policy outcomes.

We are keen to make sure that Australians receive an informed, balanced perspective in relation to why Login to Watch is being introduced for ABC iView, and that people are not unduly cautious about logging in. Any unfounded concerns could have negative public interest outcomes, such as lower login rate, and consequently people choosing to go to other, less reliable, sources of information with lower levels of privacy protection.

I would like to respond to the points made in your letter.

**Points 1 – 3**

Login to Watch allows the ABC to gain a better understanding of how audiences are engaging with ABC content, and therefore contributes to our understanding of how best to deliver on our Charter.

The minimal level of invasiveness associated with an individual creating an account and providing a small amount of information about themselves, being name or nick name, year of birth, location and gender (with prefer not to say as an option) is outweighed by the public benefit of better serving audiences, including by allowing for better informed program commissioning and licensing decisions. In contrast, I refer you to the bottom of page 11 in the ABC's draft Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) for a brief description of the deficiencies in modelled demographic data, which is informed by broadcast measurement.

**Point 4**

A vast majority of Australians surveyed by the ABC desire Video On Demand (VOD) features that can only be made available by logging into an account, such as ‘continue watching’ across devices, recommendations, and profiles. Our research indicates that if we do not require people to log in to access those features, then they will not take the time to do so, and those features will not be available to them. In the long term, this would be likely to lead to a loss of viewers, and it would also mean that the value to Australians from the investments the ABC makes in quality content would be diminished.

The cost of this to the Australian community would be real. It is not in the Australian public interest for audiences to migrate to platforms that hold little in the way of quality Australian content, offer limited privacy protection, and promote misinformation and filter bubbles for the sake of profit, while the ABC becomes increasingly unappealing and irrelevant to audiences by failing to deliver a viewing experience that audiences have come to expect. I direct you to pages 9-11 of the draft PIA for discussion around why providing a voluntary login function was not deemed to be in the public benefit.

**Point 5**

Where appropriate, the ABC releases relevant data and research. Any further release of audience research will be made public on the standard ABC website.

**Point 6**

The ABC does not share user behaviour linked to account information with third parties. For example, see the information about Encrypted Email Promotion Requests on pages 39-43 of the draft PIA, where Facebook and Google do not receive any data about behaviour on ABC platforms linked to an account.

**Point 7 -8**

The ABC does not offer opt-out of an account. Once an account is created, the ABC offers an opt-out of “Promotions on Digital Platforms” and “Personalised Recommendations”. It is not a complicated process. Users go to their Account Settings and opt out via the Data and Privacy section. The ABC will delete a user account upon request.

**Point 9**

The draft PIA was a result of extensive consideration and information gathering from the Australian public, public broadcasters internationally and consultation with the OAIC and others.

**Point 10**

Individuals may create an account by way of an email that does not include identifying information. The ABC’s position on this accords with the Australian Privacy Principles Guidelines, published by the OAIC. The draft PIA expressly addresses the pseudonymity issue on pages 29– 31.

**Point 11**

There are no current plans to make a login requirement necessary for other ABC digital products. The login requirement has been introduced for the VOD component of ABC iview so that the ABC can provide a modern service with the features Australians expect, and also to improve the ABC's capacity to provide and make discoverable, quality content that reflects all Australians.

**Point 12**

All broadcast services and other online services provided by the ABC, including the broader suite of ABC apps and websites, are available without logging in. Viewers will remain able to access all live ABC broadcast streams on ABC iview on web, including web accessed by way of mobile device, without logging in. These broadcast streams include ABC TV, ABC NEWS, ABC Kids and ABC ME.

In relation to accessibility, please see pages 14-24 of the draft PIA.

**Point 13**

Utilising a log-in function for a VOD service is not a radical and unnecessary departure from the behaviour citizens have come to expect of a public service broadcaster. You may be aware that 80% of the European Broadcasting Union members (the world's foremost alliance of public service media) have a login requirement, including the BBC.

I trust this address your concerns, however the ABC welcomes any further feedback you may have. You may direct your correspondence to the ABC Privacy Officer, Michael Boland, who is contactable at: [boland.michael@abc.net.au](mailto:boland.michael@abc.net.au).

Sincerely



Ita Buttrose AC, OBE  
Chair