Ian MacPhee, Shadow Minister for Communications

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Mr MacPhee: No it wouldn’t. As it is the SBS operates on a shoestring budget and it does so magnificently. The ABC could do with some more economies, I believe. And I believe the management is well aware of that and on the way to achieving those. I don’t believe they’d be achieved by virtue of this merger. On the contrary, it would only confuse the administrative reforms that are going on within the ABC itself.

Mark Llewellyn: But there are people who would argue it’s totally extravagant to have in Australia two Government-funded public broadcasting systems.

Mr MacPhee: Well, I know that there might appear to be so from the outside, but when you examine the administration both of them you will see it’s not an extravagance and I believe that the continued existence of the SBS represents a very important discipline on the ABC. And I’m convinced that for the time being Australia would be well served by having two national broadcasters, especially in television, where the programs can be complementary, each of them catering for slightly different audiences and each of them again different from those served by the commercial television stations.