

# Reflections of Australia

Long, Malcolm "Reflections of Australia"  
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**SBS has played a vital role as both service provider and cultural indicator for an increasingly diverse Australia.**

**Malcolm Long, SBS Managing Director, tracks the history of our only national multicultural broadcaster.**

The Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (SBS) is a national radio and television broadcaster. It was established on 1st January 1978 under the *Broadcasting and Television Act 1942* to take responsibility for the multilingual radio stations 2EA Sydney and 3EA Melbourne. In 1980, SBS assumed responsibility for the delivery of multicultural television services.

In December 1991 SBS became a corporation with its own Act of Parliament - *the Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991*.

SBS has a unique and demanding Charter, creating an identity for SBS - as for Australia itself - that is profoundly multicultural. The Charter makes the principal function of SBS "...to provide multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians, and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society."

## **SBS Radio**

Like the ECC of NSW, SBS Radio celebrates its 20th anniversary in 1995.

SBS Radio was born out of a need to provide the many community audiences with news,

information and entertainment in languages other than English. It began in June 1975 when two experimental radio stations were set up in Melbourne and Sydney with the function of advising people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) on changes to the health system with the introduction of Medibank. What began as four hours of programs a day in eight languages grew into its present weekly schedule of 66 languages.

The most exciting recent development for SBS Radio has been in the introduction in 1994 of a national network and second frequencies in Sydney and Melbourne.

With SBS Radio, Australia now has a unique multilingual, multicultural national radio network. From its production centres in Melbourne and Sydney, SBS Radio broadcasts 18 hours a day, seven days a week on the AM and FM band in those cities as well as to Newcastle, Wollongong, Geelong, Darwin, Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane. Canberra and Hobart will join the network in 1995/96.

## **SBS Television**

The logical step after the success of SBS Radio was a television network. On 24th October 1980, SBS Channel 0/28 went to air in Sydney and Melbourne. Gradually other centres joined the network. The SBS signal has been distributed via Optus satellite since 1986 and SBS TV is now available in all capital cities, most large regional centres and another 26 centres who receive the service via the Self Help Broadcast Reception Scheme (SBRBS). Its potential audience is now 15.6 million people.

SBS TV is a multicultural broadcaster, which means it provides a service which can be enjoyed by all Australians. One Australian in five was born overseas and 40% of the

population have at least one parent who was not born in Australia and SBS programming aims to reflect this diversity.

This ability to span across programs from many countries opens up a whole world of viewing to SBS audiences, helping link world cultures to the Australian reality. But, regardless of its source or language, the prerequisite for selection of a program to be part of the SBS schedule is quality.

Australians from all backgrounds have responded to this approach. In the past year 1 million additional viewers have begun to view SBS TV on a regular basis, and the increase in viewers has been most evident among viewers from NESB.