

## Australia calling: ABC to go global

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The ABC chief, Mark Scott, will tonight launch his multimillion-dollar plans for global domination, arguing for a huge expansion in the broadcaster's overseas services in an effort to rival the BBC, CNN and the emerging Chinese media offensive.

In a lecture he will give at Macquarie University, Mr Scott will say that Australia's new-found influence as a member of the G20 nations means it needs to expand its "soft diplomacy" campaign to win support not just in the Asia-Pacific region but around the world.

"We have an important role to play and we have to use all the tools at our disposal to continue to do so - one of these tools is soft diplomacy - using the media to put our nation's culture, values and policies on show," Mr Scott will say. Under his plan, the ABC would:

- Merge the international television service Australia Network and radio service Radio Australia into a single brand.

- Expand its broadcasts to reach 53 countries in Africa, 22 in the Middle East and up to 21 in Latin America.

- Create an additional five news bureaus in the Asia-Pacific region, bringing the total to 14, more than the BBC or CNN.

But Mr Scott will need to persuade senior government decision-makers in both foreign affairs and communications, who will need to chip in several hundred million dollars a year to make the plan a reality.

Mr Scott pointed out that Britain spends \$868 million on the BBC's overseas services, France more than \$600 million and Germany \$532 million on their overseas broadcasters. China is in the midst of an \$8billion international media expansion which involves its bilingual Chinese- English television service going global by the end of next year.

He contrasts this with the \$34 million funding for the ABC's overseas broadcasts.

The expansion would dramatically increase the audience of the Department of Foreign Affairs-funded Australia Network, which broadcasts to 44 countries across the Asia-Pacific, and Radio Australia, which has a network of 11 around-the-clock stations covering almost every Pacific capital city.

Michael McKinley, a senior lecturer in international relations at the ANU, said he was sceptical of the benefits of broadcasting in- to closed societies with a hope of achieving change.

"You might actually confirm their prejudices," he said.

**Ari Sharp**

Communications Correspondent