

More than eight cents a day keeps ABC competitors at bay

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Published: November 21, 2013 - 1:36AM

The managing director of the ABC Mark Scott has ordered an investigation into the leaking of how much it pays star news and current affairs personalities and leading administrators.

The embarrassing publication came as the public broadcaster girded itself against a sustained noisy campaign for the Abbott government to rein in ABC spending.

Mr Scott said it was unfair ABC staff alone should have their salaries revealed while other media companies had no such requirement.

"I want to apologise that information like this has not been securely managed," Mr Scott said in a staff email. "I have asked for a full and complete investigation about how this highly confidential material was accessed."

Mr Scott said ABC pay details by *The Australian* on Wednesday were "wrong and out-of-date". The newspaper claimed the ABC paid eight broadcasters more than \$250,000 a year, with *Q&A* and *Lateline* host Tony Jones top of the pile with a salary of \$355,789.

Among the administrators, Mr Scott's salary was put at \$678,940.

But he said high-profile ABC talent were not overpaid compared with commercial counterparts.

"The matter of whether ABC staff salaries should be publicly disclosed was subject to debate and a special 'in-camera' hearing by a Senate committee some years ago," he said. "Whilst the public might be curious about what particularly on-air talent earn, the ABC operates in a highly competitive media environment. For the ABC to be the only media organisation where salaries are revealed puts us at a significant disadvantage to our competitors."

Mr Scott later told ABC Radio Melbourne host Jon Faine (\$285,249): "Private sector media executives looking down that list will not believe the salary rates of the ABC compared to what's paid in commercial radio and television land. I'm concerned that this gives people like [Nine chief] David Gyngell a list, a target, and it hurts the ABC's ability to attract and retain talent."

Not all ABC talent were mollified.

Phillip Adams, of ABC National's *Late Night Live* took to Twitter: "Just learned that my fellow b'casters at ABC get paid lots more than me. Despite LNL's enduring success.naughty management."

Gruen Transfer host Wil Anderson tweeted: "What I learned from The Australian article today is you can get about 12 quality ABC employees for the same price as one Alan Jones."

Friends of the ABC's Glenys Stradijot said the community was entitled to know how the ABC spent money and remunerations should be public.

"Having said that, *The Australian's* failure to report the salaries of ABC staff in the context of the remunerations of other media outlets indicates that its motives are not about informing the public," she said. "Its report appears more likely to be part of a News Ltd campaign to have the public broadcaster curtailed, if not shut down entirely."

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/business/media-and-marketing/more-than-eight-cents-a-day-keeps-abc-competitors-at-bay-20131120-2xvq8.html>