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Ms Christine McDonald
Secretary
Senate Committee Environment and Communications References Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
[By email to: ec.sen@aph.gov.au]

24 March 2021

Dear Ms McDonald,

Re: ABC Alumni's submission to the media diversity inquiry

This letter is to draw your attention to the fact that one section of ABC Alumni's submission to the Committee's inquiry into media diversity (submission no 3) requires updating due to recent events.

Earlier this month, Nine Entertainment Co and WIN Corporation jointly announced that from 1 July 2021, WIN Television will cease to broadcast Network Ten's programs in its license areas, and will instead revert to its traditional affiliation with Nine, and will broadcast channels 9, 9GO, 9GEM and 9Life [<https://www.nineforbrands.com.au/media-release/affiliation-agreement-signed-between-nine-and-win>].

According to at least one reputable media reporter, *The Guardian Australia's* Amanda Meade [<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/mar/19/sky-news-dumped-in-the-regions-as-win-welcomes-nine>], one consequence of the new deal will be that WIN will cease to broadcast News Corp Australia's Sky News when its agreement with Sky ends in August this year. (ABC Alumni has not so far received formal confirmation of Meade's story from WIN, but we have taken other steps to satisfy ourselves that it is broadly correct.)

Section 2 of ABC Alumni's submission to the media diversity inquiry focuses on the arrangement between WIN and Sky. We argue that Sky News does not respect the traditional convention that news and current affairs programs on free-to-air television should fairly reflect, over time, all principal points of view on matters of public importance; and that nothing in the revised Commercial Television Code of Conduct requires it to do so.

Clearly, if WIN does indeed discontinue its arrangement with Sky, this section will lose its immediate relevance.

However, ABC Alumni continues to believe that the issue is an important one. There is, it seems to us, nothing to prevent Southern Cross Australia, which is likely to resume its traditional affiliation with Network Ten, from making an arrangement to broadcast Sky News in place of WIN. Indeed, it is probably only the fact that Nine Entertainment and News Corp Australia are fierce rivals across the Australian media space that will prevent WIN from continuing to carry Sky News as well as (or instead of some of) Nine's programming. There would be appear to be no regulatory barrier.

Whether or not WIN continues to broadcast Sky News, therefore, ABC Alumni's recommendation 2 remains pertinent. We repeat it here:

RECOMMENDATION 2: ABC Alumni is firmly against government-mandated censorship, and in favour of press freedom. Yet we suggest that the Committee might consider whether some requirement that diverse points of view be fairly represented over time should be an explicit requirement of broadcasters licensed to use the public spectrum.

We would be grateful if you could draw this letter to the Committee's attention, and attach it to our submission online.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Holmes,

Director, ABC Alumni Limited