



Senate Environment and Communications Committee
Suite: S1.57
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Tuesday, 9 November 2010

Re: CPSU Response to Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications: Inquiry into the National Broadcasting Legislation Amendment Bill 2010

Please find below responses to the questions on notice put to the CPSU by Senator Fisher.

1. How many members do you have at the ABC and how do you get to be the voice?
 - a. As we note in our submission, the CPSU shares industrial coverage of ABC staff with the Media, Arts and Entertainment Alliance (The Alliance) and with the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia (APESMA). The ABC Staff Union amalgamated with a number of other unions in 1989 to form what is now the CPSU. The CPSU represents ABC employees other than Journalists and Senior Executive Bands 2 and above. Our involvement with staff at the ABC is longstanding and detailed. In addition to actively informing and educating staff about issues some of the other engagement with staff is outlined below: We have regular workplace meetings on issues of importance to staff where members and non-members are invited to attend.
2. Does the BBC have a staff-elected director?
 - a. We cannot provide expert advice on this issue.
3. What consultation have you actually had with staff members on the issue of support for a staff-elected position? For example, have you polled staff members? What evidence or other evidence do you have of ABC staff support for reinstatement of the staff-elected position?

- a. When the SED position was being abolished, CPSU members in all locations called for meetings to discuss the issue. There were votes taken at these meetings (which were open to union and non-union members) and there was very clear support for the continuation of the SED position among staff.
4. What evidence do you have of support amongst ABC management for the same thing?
 - a. APESMA is the union primarily covering management staff at the ABC.
 - b. Anecdotally we know that ABC management is committed to good governance and therefore would support the employment of a SED to ensure the decisions of the Board are in the best interests of the organisation and take into account the operational intricacies of running a national broadcaster.
5. Do you concede that a staff elected representative can have a conflict of interest between representing the interests of the ABC and staff simultaneously? I expect I know your answer. If not, are you suggesting that once appointed a staff elected representative then turns his or her back on those who have elected him or her to that position?
 - a. The commitment of the SED to ABC staff is the same as any other director. They are bound by the same obligations as any other director.
6. Finally, in respect of the years since there has not been a staff elected position, would any of the decisions made by the board have been influenced in a positive way by the position on the board of a staff elected person and, if so, how?
 - a. We are not privy to the inner workings of the Board in relation to specific decisions. Importantly, the ABC faces a number of challenges as it heads into the emerging digital landscape and there is no doubt that the Board would greatly benefit from having a member who works at the ABC and is able to bring their first hand insights into the decision making forum.

My apologies for the delay in responding. If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Dr Kristin van Barneveld