

**Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Inquiry into the National Broadcasting Legislation Bill 2010**

The following answers, received on 3 November 2010, are from Mr Quentin Dempster in response to 3 written questions on notice from Senator Mary Jo Fisher.

1. In paragraph 19 of your submission you mention many European jurisdictions, including Germany, for examples of the best argument for the retention of staff elected positions. How does the fact that the BBC doesn't have a staff elected position affect this 'best argument'?

I acknowledge that the ABC staff-elected director position existing as a statutory position is unique. My submission canvasses the history of the position since the 1970s and its value to the ABC over the years, becoming structurally integral to the ABC's policy development as an independent public broadcaster. SBS as a 'multi-cultural' broadcaster is also an Australian invention, and, in my submission, a good one. With Australia's accelerated migration rate over recent years SBS offers a sense of inclusion for new arrivals with an invaluable contribution to social cohesion in what is now a polyglot Australia. Both the ABC and the SBS are cultural institutions first with Charter and prescribed obligations. They are not GBEs, although they have sometimes contentious commercial partnerships. I am arguing that SBS also needs a staff-elected director so that the position also acts as a conduit to the SBS Board to contribute to the success of the entity. It represents enlightened governance. Maybe it is something we colonials can recommend to the British Broadcasting Corporation to improve BBC governance.

2. Have you spoken to or consulted with any current ABC staff members about the proposal to reinstate the staff elected ABC Board Member?

Yes, informally from time to time.

3. Do you have any evidence (and if so, what) of any support (and if so, how much) amongst ABC staff for the reintroduction of a staff elected ABC Board Member?

I am sorry but I do not have the resources for a contemporary survey of the 4000 plus staff of the ABC. But with many years of involvement with the issue I am confident that the overwhelming majority of staff support the reinstatement of the position, including senior and middle management.