

The Secretary

Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Measures) Bill
2017

Submission by Mark Zanker private citizen. I was unable to make this submission on Friday and make it today Sunday 14 January 2018 instead. I trust this is acceptable. I consider this legislation to be unnecessary, in so far as it concerns the appointment of directors to the board of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Successive governments have appointed persons from rural backgrounds to the board as a matter of policy. Ms Georgie Somerset, a current director has a rural background. Chapter 1 of the Legislation Handbook requires departments to consider whether policies can be achieved by administrative action rather than legislation.

So far as the proposed Regional Advisory Council is concerned, it would also be within the power of the ABC Board to establish such a council of its own initiative, rather than to create another statutory body which will just absorb further ABC funds in emoluments to members. There are plenty of people in the community who would be prepared to assist the ABC on a voluntary basis - I did myself many years ago as a member of a musical advisory committee in Sydney.

This legislation will do little or nothing to assist the ABC in carrying out its functions. The ABC has been severely damaged by substantial cuts in its funding inflicted by this government. If the government was serious about improving broadcasting to regional areas it would do so by providing more funding for the ABC rural unit and expanding the range of television and radio programs and on line content dealing with rural issues. Instead over the years, funds have been substantially cut leading to cessation of programs such as Bush Telegraph, the elimination of national rural news and the folding in of rural news content with general news content.

The government by this proposed legislation shows that it is not serious about rural broadcasting - all it cares about is window dressing and in this case the creation of an unnecessary statutory authority that will diminish the resources it can actually use for rural broadcasting and on line content development.

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