

QUALIFYING STATEMENT

Senators Short and Vanstone wish to qualify their concurrence with this report in the following terms.

We believe that the central issue in this report is the question of whether or not the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's claim that certain information should not be made available to Estimates Committee C, on the ground of commercial confidentiality, was justified.

The trigger for this reference to the Committee was the refusal of the A.B.C to provide information to the Committee on the salary of Ms Geraldine Doogue. While the A.B.C. initially used the blanket claim of 'Market Confidentiality' to support its refusal to provide information, it soon became clear that Ms. Doogue's services were retained by virtue of a contract for service and that the nature of that contract would be central to the Committee's enquiries.

We believe that it was necessary to make some enquiries into the use of contract employment by the A.B.C. as a means of gaining a clearer perspective on the reference. At no stage did we hold the view that the committee's enquiries with respect to contract employment were anything other than that.

The report as it stands, is open to being interpreted as making a policy decision by advocating that the A.B.C. use as little contract employment as possible. We do not believe it was the function of the Committee with respect to this reference to make such a decision and would not necessarily support such a decision in any event.

Accordingly we would have preferred the following paragraph in place of paragraph 2.46. Such a replacement would then require the deletion of all words including and after "However" in each of paragraphs 2.19 and 2.44.

SUGGESTED REPLACEMENT FOR PARAGRAPH 2.46

The Committee accepts the need for the A.B.C. to use contract employment in a variety of circumstances and does not seek to make a policy decision with respect to the use of contract employment. Rather, the Committee points out that the A.B.C. should have a clear policy with respect to the use of contract employment and that policy should be apparent from a clear set of guidelines to be used by all those associated with employing personnel for the A.B.C.

It follows that we believe the report is inappropriately named. It is not a report solely about employment contracts in the A.B.C. Rather it is primarily about the accountability of the A.B.C. to Parliament. The trigger and vehicle for some conclusions being drawn about accountability simply happened to be a particular contract.

Senator J. Short

Senator A. Vanstone