

**From:** Simon Neville [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 24 July 2001 11:30 AM  
**To:** ecita.sen@aph.gov.au  
**Subject:** INQUIRY INTO ABC BOARD APPOINTMENT SYSTEM

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The Secretary,  
Senate Environment, Communications, Info Tech & the Arts References Committee,  
S157, Parliament House,  
Canberra ACT 2600.

Dear Sir

RE: INQUIRY INTO ABC BOARD APPOINTMENT SYSTEM

Please accept the following views on the ABC Board.

The ABC is clearly a vital part of Australian culture and society - as much now as it ever was. It is under attack in many ways, not the least being political interference in its budgets and running. Rather than being given an amount of money it feels is necessary to fulfill the role as identified by the community, it is given the amount of money that politicians feel they can get away with. Where the government of the day feels threatened by the ABC for its critical analysis - as is clearly the case currently - this threat is only greater. In such a situation, the role of the Board risks becoming an accessory to ongoing cuts, rather than a champion for the ABC.

The present system of appointments to the ABC Board is clearly unsatisfactory, in that it allows any government, so-intentioned, to stack the board with its allies. And what Australian government would resist such temptation?

For the good of all Australians, our national broadcaster must be independent of government and commercial influence. What we need is a new system which ensures the board members are appointed on the basis of merit and commitment to independent and comprehensive national public broadcasting, not for their allegiance to the government of the day.

One alternative is to allow for community appointment - in particular from within the audience of the ABC. This could be reasonably done through ballots from interested and suitably qualified applicants, using the ABC website at the forum for conducting the ballot. From memory the site could be [www.abc.net.au/board\\_ballot](http://www.abc.net.au/board_ballot).... why not?

While we are not sure that this is the only way to conduct such appointments, it is clearly superior to appointment by the government. Let those who do use the service make the decisions on who would best serve our interests.

Yours faithfully

Simon Neville & Louise Duxbury.