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The development and implementation of options for methods of appointment to the board of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) that would enhance public confidence in the independence and representativeness of the ABC as the national broadcaster.

I thank you for the opportunity to express my view on this matter and welcome a change to the current system of appointments to the board. May I state from the outset, I am not one usually moved to protest, however, the current situation at the ABC with an exorbitant amount of money being paid out in redundancies, loss of quality programs such as media watch and Quantum, (allegedly to be replaced with cheaper poor quality, “lifestyle” programs emulating those on commercial stations) and little talk of future drama productions incite me to take action. My blame for the decline of quality programs on the ABC rests with the board of directors. Perhaps they are not suitably qualified or lack the relevant public broadcasting knowledge or experience and therefore we need to look at an alternative method of appointment. My suggestions for options and methods of appointment to the board of the ABC are as follows:

- I understand that the board is appointed as vacancies come up by the government of the day, but am unsure of the criteria for appointment. I would like to see a set of criteria where board applicants have experience in as many of the following areas as possible; Public Broadcasting, The Arts, Education, Media Studies, Science, Humanities. I feel there should be no chance of a conflict of interest arising by members serving on other boards, for example tobacco company boards. Perhaps we could start from scratch with a new board and call for nominations from interested persons. A senate committee could be given the responsibility of interviewing and selecting candidates. To give the community some input, there could be a list of nominees on a website and the public could be invited to comment. The senate committee could make a list of recommendations, and the rationale for these, and give the public 28 days to comment on these recommendations. Appointment could be for a period of 2-3 years.
- The appointment to the board of directors should not be political. Obviously any government in power would like to have influence on what is aired on the ABC. The intention of the a public broadcaster is to give facts and conduct background research on issues so that the Australian community can make fully informed decisions. Imagine the situation if a politically appointed board makes it difficult for reporters to fully investigate an issue that adversely affects the government of the day.

- **The current situation of the chairman of the board being a close friend of the Prime Minister, and publicly praising and endorsing the Prime Minister at liberal functions is not acceptable. The board, and in particular the chairman of the board should be bipartisan in their decisions, rather than favouring a political party.**
- **The ABC does not have to be self funded nor does it have to compete for ratings with commercial channels. The role of the public broadcaster is to provide well researched, factual investigative current affairs programs so we, the Australian community can make fully informed decisions. The role of the ABC is also to maintain and encourage our cultural identity, through the production of high quality drama programs. Yes these are expensive to produce, as opposed to real life type programs but they are necessary to maintain our sense of cultural identity.**

I thank you for the opportunity to make comments and look forward to your final report.

Kindest Regards

Frances Beilby