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27th

The Secretary,
Senate Environment, Communications,
Information Technology and the Arts Reference Committee.

SUBMISSION

It would seem evident from the recent, continued, and quite unprecedented public outcry against changes made in management, staffing, funding, presentation and content of services by the ABC, that the needs of a large number of users of those services are not being met.

There would also appear to be much dissatisfaction with the public and international image that the ABC now presents.

As the public disaffection seems to coincide with changes in management style, composition, and may I say it, awareness of what a significant proportion of the public wants from a national broadcaster, in addition to a significant drop in real funding, I wish to submit the following.

A well-balanced composition of the ABC Board should be sought for the effective administration of a national broadcaster. Board members would ideally form a diverse group chosen for interests and expertise which are pertinent to ensuring continuity of the wide programming coverage which ABC supporters have come to expect. This of course should be combined with an appropriate level of experience in the broadcasting field.

It has been argued that the ABC should not be seen to be serving a cultural elite or specific interest groups. However, any decision *not* to serve such groups of people would be active discrimination, as their interests are not catered for in any other area of the media.

It is my preference to see ABC audiences not as an elite group, but as representing an increasingly well-educated, thoughtful and aware community. The proportion of supporters of the ABC among the public at large is not inconsiderable. It is to be hoped that the ABC will continue its educative function, and its

role in stimulating discussion and debate on issues of national importance, and that the viewing and listening audiences will continue to follow the existing pattern of increase.

I would not wish to see the ABC seeking mass appeal by entering into competition with commercial media outlets and watering down its level of programming. Rather I would like to see it develop further to the point where it can earn a well-recognised place in the international field.

To facilitate the aims or recommendations either implicitly or explicitly contained in the above, I propose -

- 1) The appointment of a bi-partisan standing committee of parliament;
- 2) Chairman of the Standing Committee to be appointed from its own membership
- 3) All ABC Board positions to be -
 - (a) made vacant immediately,
 - (b) or, as Board Members' terms expire, their positions would be declared vacant.
- 4) New Board appointments to be made, not on the advice of the government of the day, but on the advice of the Standing Committee.
- 5) The Board to report and to be accountable to the Standing Committee, not to the government of the day.
- 6) The Standing Committee to publish its own reports, and then to report to the Parliament as a whole.

Thankyou for the opportunity to make this submission.

Chopra

Audrey