

From: Anna McCormack [REDACTED]  
Sent: Monday, 6 August 2001 6:26 PM  
To: Senate Inquiry  
Subject: FW: Inquiry into ABC Board Appointment System

To whom it concerns

This submission is in response to the Senate Inquiry into the development and implementation of options for methods of appointment to the Board of the ABC that would enhance public confidence in the independence and representativeness of the ABC as the national broadcaster.

The present politicised system of appointments to the ABC Board is insulting to the Australian population and ABC staff. If the Federal government wishes to appoint Board members who will carry out its own political agenda it is easily able to do so - and does.

We have a Federal government at the moment which is hostile to the ABC as a presenter of critical and analytical programs on current affairs. Independence and critical political analysis is regarded as a threat by the government. The Federal government would prefer a dumbed down ABC similar to commercial media outlets. This is not a new development; previous governments of both political persuasions have attacked the ABC and reduced its moderate funding base. Presently, the dumbing down process and attacks by Government Ministers and Board members are at their most extreme.

Commercial media is beholden to advertisers, almost always big corporations whose interests lie in selling products and services, not in providing independent information and investigation. Commercial media therefore does not produce independent current affairs programs. This is one reason why it is so important for the ABC to be able to operate independently, to be able to investigate political and other issues of interest and importance to the Australian population.

When a Federal government appoints its political 'friends' to the Board of the ABC, it muzzles the ABC. This is the intention of having political appointments and this is precisely what happens. We deserve better. So too do the highly skilled and committed staff of the ABC, who have had to watch the present moves to censor and dumb down their programs. The present government has taken political Board appointments to a new low; at the same time, it is overseeing a program of 'intellectual expulsion' from the ABC through retrenchments and forced resignations.

ABC Board members should be appointed on merit, not politics. As a basic requirement, they should be people who have a commitment to developing and expanding the role of the ABC not overseeing its destruction as a national independent broadcaster. A merit system should replace the present system.

Yours faithfully

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