

From: Oonagh Sherrard [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 8 August 2001 8:27 AM
To: 'ecita.sen@aph.gov.au'
Subject: No confidence in the ABC Board, Chairman and Managing Director

To the Secretary,
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology & the Arts References
Committee,
S157

Dear Secretary,

I am writing to express a vote of no confidence in the ABC Board, Chairman and Managing Director, to state that I believe my views are shared by the general public and that the ABC board and MD should resign immediately.

Through their decisions this board, its chairman and MD have consistently demonstrated allegiance to the government of the day over upholding the independent, innovative cornerstone of Australian broadcasting which has been the heart of the ABC's identity until now.

Mr McDonald publicly promoted Prime Minister Howard prior to the last election. Such behaviour is entirely inappropriate for the head of a major institution, meant to be independent of government. There have been ferocious cuts to the ABC's funding which this board has shown little resistance to.

On the contrary, the Board has distracted attention from the government's responsibilities and its actions. The board sought only partial funds from the government for the ABC's transition to digital technology. Recently, instead of seeking to restore funds cut from the broadcaster's core operating budget, the Board applied for funds for specified new services, allowing the government to pick and choose what the ABC will do and what it will not do.

The ABC Board has overseen: loss of talented staff, decline in quality local production, increased repeats of overseas programs, the news and current affairs budget cut, and loss of important programs such as Quantum and Media Watch and television's only dedicated book program. Under the present regime, a quality drama such as "Blue Murder" would have no hope of being made.

The ABC's focus has been diverted from producing quality programs to raising funds from outside commercial sources in ways which risk the ABC's independence. There are even plans for user-pays services. I urge you on behalf of the Australian people to ensure that this board, its Chairman and Managing Director stand down immediately and that the Parliament introduce a system which ensures members of the ABC Board are appointed on the basis of merit and commitment to independent and comprehensive national public broadcasting, not allegiance to the government of the day.

Yours Faithfully,

Oonagh Sherrard
8/08/01