

To: The Secretary,
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the
Arts Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
References Committee ecita.sen@aph.gov.au

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**Submission Regarding 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 am writing this submission because of the great value I place in the ABC as an independent national broadcaster. Australians should be proud of the ABC and value its independence. It is what makes us different and better than other democracies. As to representativeness, we have other broadcasters who represent the commercial side of broadcasting so it is vital that ABC maintains its independence and can cover those areas not served by commercial interests. We must work out a system for appointing board members so that no political or commercial interference is possible. There is talk these days of *balance*. It would take more than one corporation to balance the commercial interests of the other radio and TV services. ABC itself, presumably in the interests of balance, suggested in *Media Dimensions*, 6 August, that advertising could be used to make up the required income. Admittedly, greater funding is necessary but it must come from the public purse and not in any way be corrupted by commercial interests. I can only put before you some suggestions about appointing the Board.

1. It is probably very difficult to find members who have neither political nor commercial backgrounds.
2. Therefore the appointments should be at least de-politicalised by bi-partisan consultation before an appointment is made.
3. Somehow it must be possible to find people with a genuine allegiance to the ABC.

4. These people must be vetted for their understanding of the importance of an independent, non-political ABC.
5. All Board members should be Australian citizens resident in Australia.
6. Members should have an understanding and knowledge of public broadcasting or a qualification which makes them especially suitable.
7. Board vacancies must be advertised in the media.
8. The Board should elect its own Chair.
9. A staff elected member of the board is essential.
10. When the Board selects a Managing Director or Chair, although a courtesy to run short-listed names past the incumbent government, that government should not have the final say. (The excellent choice of Malcolm Long was seen to be unsuitable by Senator Alston – by what right?)
11. The Managing Director must have knowledge and experience of public broadcasting and satisfy requirements similar to those used above to select board members.

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7 August 2001

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