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The Secretary,
Senate ECITA References Committee,
S1. 57, Australian Parliament,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

SUBMISSION RE: ABC BOARD APPOINTMENTS

As a dedicated consumer of the ABC in its many forms as the National Broadcaster, I welcome the opportunity to participate in the current inquiry.

The information I receive from the ABC assists me in making decisions that influence my life in many ways including how I vote, thus underpinning my effectiveness as a citizen. The ABC has the ability to engender and maintain trust precisely because it is not a commercial enterprise and is not subject to the necessity to reward shareholders and retain advertisers. It is a truism to state that any variation from that practice would compromise its independence and therefore its integrity, thus undermining its status as a public broadcaster.

Similarly, it must be, and be seen to be free from interference from the government of the day, unlike the present situation which is rank with political taint. I refer to the appointment of Donald McDonald, the Prime Minister's friend as Chairman of the Board, his recent re-appointment despite widely-expressed electoral disquiet and the appointment of Jonathan Shier as Managing Director. Shier with his past links to the Liberal Party has been only too successful in carrying out the agenda of his Minister Richard Alston. Both men's claims of non-partisanship are an insult to the people of Australia. They and all present board members should be dismissed without delay as soon as new and democratic procedures are installed as a result of this inquiry.

To be truly representative of all Australians, nominations could be made by members of the public. Candidates should be unconnected with any political party and have wide experience in many fields e.g. arts, science, public broadcasting, trade union, gender, ethnic and indigenous affairs. Members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives would then elect the required number of Board members, who in turn would elect the Chairperson and Deputy Chair. Furthermore, if the Minister of the day did not approve of appointments thus made he/she would be required to table the reasons for rejecting the recommendation in Parliament. This would allow public scrutiny, and enhance transparency in the process.

Yours faithfully,

Jill Keogh B.A.(Visual Arts)