

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

August 8, 2001

Introduction:

To calculate the full value of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) to me personally is a difficult thing to do. It has been there since before I was born, my active association with it probably began with Romper Room & Mr Squiggle some 35 years ago. Since then neither 'Aunty' or I have let go our close ties. In a world of impermanence to have such a cultural icon as the ABC is to have a bedrock upon which to build a future. It has represented us, informed us, entertained us & challenged us to be better! In the times ahead our major challenges & solutions will (I believe) be cultural. It is vital that we support & use the ABC fully; it is (I believe) our best resource for achieving cultural change. As the National Carrier the ABC plays a pivotal role in the culture & health of our Nation.

Text:

I would appreciate your taking the following views into account in regard to any deliberations you make in reference to the ABC: -

I regard its independence as paramount to its proper function.

Clearly the current funding arrangements are well below what is necessary to maintain a satisfactory service. And this unfortunately has implications for its independence. A return to 1995-6 funding levels (in real terms) would seem adequate.

The current Managing Director & Board no longer enjoy my confidence as a shareholder. In an organisation such as the ABC morale is exceedingly important. Under the current regime this appears to have deteriorated drastically, contributing to the problems we now see and hear.

I would like to see a new system of appointment for Board members to ensure impartiality; appointments being made on merit & support of the ABC's independence.

Thank you for you time & consideration,
Ian Johnston.

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Vic.