

Submission to
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology & the Arts
References Committee

Options for Methods of Appointment to ABC Board

It is irrefutable that public confidence in the independence, representativeness and performance of the ABC is at a low ebb. It is clear that this lack of confidence is due to policies enacted following the appointments of the C.E.O., the Chairman and at least one board member with very close connections to the government and the Liberal Party.

It is outrageous that the Chairman of the Board should have publicly extolled his support of the Prime Minister prior to the last federal election and absolutely incomprehensible that a C.E.O. should have been appointed who had no previous experience in managing a large Public Broadcasting or similar organisation.

A more equitable and more efficient method of appointing Board members is clearly required as a matter of urgency and would, hopefully, result in the appointment of Board Members of a higher and more suitable calibre. Following the establishment of such a method of making appointments, the present board and C.E.O. should be dismissed or forced to resign and a new Board established based on the new selection criteria. The urgency of these actions is predicated on the need to avoid further irreparable damage to the traditional areas of excellence of the ABC which are generally not matched by commercial interests.

- In my view all future appointments must be made in a transparent manner and clearly free from political agendas.
- Candidates must be appointed on the basis of merit and of the contribution they will be able and willing to make to the organisation.
- Their areas of expertise should be stated and their views on the future directions of the ABC, particularly in their area, should be canvassed and publicised.
- The selection of Board Members should be made by a suitably constituted committee and that the deliberations of this committee be conducted openly.
- There should be positions on the Board reserved for persons having demonstrated experience and management capabilities in various specialised fields such as drama, music, literature, sport, journalism and business acumen as well as for a representative of the general public such as a member of the Friends of the ABC.
- The position of C.E.O. should be subject to a similar selection process with a considerable emphasis on a proven record of successful management of a large organisation within public broadcasting or a similar field.

I trust that the Committee's deliberations will result in the evolution of a system of appointment of Board Members dedicated to the restoration of the ABC as an organisation of professional excellence and independence.

Submitted by

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