

From: Maria Rizzo [REDACTED]  
Sent: Thursday, 9 August 2001 11:18 AM  
To: ecita.sen@aph.gov.au  
Subject: submission to senate inquiry - ABC

The Secretary  
Senate Environment Communications, Information Technology & the Arts

Dear Sir/Madam

I write to the Senate Inquiry to lodge my concerns over the methods of appointment to the board of the ABC and its recent errors in judgement which have adversely affected public confidence in the independence and representativeness of the ABC as the national broadcaster.

The Board's Chairman, 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. It is astounding, given the Government cut the ABC's budget by 12%.

This ABC Board has rarely protested at the government's ferocious cuts to the ABC, nor challenged the Government's regular attacks on the broadcaster's integrity and independence. 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', 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.

I support the recommendation 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

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