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The Secretary  
Senate Environment, Communications Information Technology and the Arts Legislation  
Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2006

Dear Secretary

Please find attached a submission to the above committee from Friends of the ABC  
Tasmania

Anne O'Byrne  
President  
Friends of the ABC Tasmania (Inc)



## **SUBMISSION TO THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING AMENDMENT BILL 2006**

Friends of the ABC (FABC) represents the public's interest in its national public broadcaster. It is comprised of Friends of the ABC organisations from every Australian state and territory working together.

Friends of the ABC's objectives:

To support the maintenance and advancement of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

- to fulfil to a high standard its role as an independent and comprehensive national public broadcaster
- to be adequately funded by government to fulfil its role;
- to remain independent of government influence, commercial sponsorship and advertising; and
- to promote Australian culture in all its diversity.

Friends of the ABC in each state and territory are independent, non-profit community organisations. They have a diverse range of members, and earn their income from membership subscriptions, public donations and fundraising activities. They receive no government funding. Most have local groups that operate in regional and some metropolitan areas.

Friends of the ABC engages in a range of activities at national, state and local levels. These include: informing the public, communicating with Members of Parliament and media, presenting submissions to government reviews and inquiries, addressing public meetings, conducting rallies and publishing newsletters.

FABC is politically unaligned. It works for the best interests of independent and comprehensive national public broadcasting, challenging governments of any political persuasion that attempt to dismantle or interfere in the ABC's independence



This submission has been developed in consultation with Tasmanian members of FABC

On behalf of the Friends of the ABC Tasmania I would like to make a submission re the above amendment to the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* to abolish the staff-elected Director and deputy staff-elected Director positions.

Tasmanian members strongly believe that the staff-elected position is a most important one for the Board of the ABC.

The staff-elected Director provides important input from those at the coal face of the ABC, these are the people making the day to day decisions, who are aware of the difficulties, problems and the successes of their work. At the same time it is a conduit for the Board to use to provide information to the staff when necessary.

Direct staff representation gives the Board the advantage of having a person with broadcasting experience and an understanding of public broadcasting on the board, possibly the only person on the present Board with such experience able to question advice presented to the Board from the ABC's executive.

Staff-elected Directors have shown that they are committed to maintaining the integrity of the ABC. In the past staff Directors have raised important issues such as the possibility of breaches of the ABC Act (ie.1995 in areas of backdoor sponsorship). They are also able to report back to ABC staff, while maintaining Board confidentiality.

It must not be forgotten that in 2001 a Senate committee recommended that the staff-elected director's position be retained.

Tasmanian members of FABC Recommend the retention of the staff-elected Director.

Anne O'Byrne  
President  
Friends of the ABC (Tas inc)