

To whom it may concern,

As a loyal Australian citizen and democrat, I believe the independence of our national broadcaster from governments of all persuasions, as well as commercial interests, is essential to the health of our democratic and egalitarian society, as well as to the health and intellectual development of our young people.

The ABC is the only organ which presents news, current affairs and factual programs free of commercial pressures and political bias. It also provides the only children's programming free of ruthlessly exploitative propaganda from fast-food retailers, a significant fact given the epidemic of obesity in our society.

In addition, it supports our writers, artists, musicians, composers, actors, directors, and other arts practitioners, whether high-brow or pure entertainers, in countless ways, including producing Australian drama, comedy, and animations, providing critiques and reviews, and supporting our symphony orchestras.

For these reasons and many others, the ABC deserves adequate financial support, which it is not currently getting, and which it has been deliberately denied for many years.

The ABC has also suffered from direct political interference in its functioning, including the current attempt to remove the outstanding broadcaster, Ramona Koval, from the board.

I can only conclude that this is because Ramona is an intelligent, fearless, and forceful critic of government policy. Governments MPs should be ashamed of this gutless attempt to silence their critics, and instead respond positively by examining their own actions in the light of such criticisms.

No government should hold itself above criticism; its role is to serve the people, not to control them.

No politician is infallible, hence the criticism just might be valid and they might learn something from it. The worst thing for them and for Australia is for them to blunder along in the dark, refusing to correct their mistakes. They should be grateful that people like Ramona Koval have the guts and the intelligence to make useful public comments, regardless of the flack they may attract to themselves.

Yours in the utmost sincerity,

Therese Ann Quinlan