

Submission to Senate Inquiry - Australian Broadcasting Commission Bill 2006

I am a member of the public with no affiliation to the ABC, any of its staff or any of the Board members. I am an ABC viewer or audience member.

The Explanatory Memorandum for the above Bill states that its purpose is to remove the ABC staff appointed position from the Board because the Member elected by the ABC staff may be inclined to act in the interests of staff rather than for the good of the ABC.

The ABC is the only free to air television station that does not advertise, so has no corporate masters. It is also supposed to be apolitical so that the public of this democratic nation with the right to freedom of speech, can access independent journalism. Most of the Board members being political appointments sets up a major conflict of interest. In this Bill you are being asked to believe that the Board member appointed by the ABC staff will have a conflict of interest and be inclined to vote for the good of staff rather than the ABC. Such a suggestion makes it hypocritical to overlook the fact that the rest of the Board as political appointments have a much more direct conflict of interest. Are you expected to believe that these Board members are not concerned with the portrayal of the Liberal Party but have pure intentions of ensuring the ABC has a bright future as an unbiased television station?

Decisions made by the ABC Board would be put to a vote, a vote likely to be subject to a quorum if members are absent. What difference then could one vote by the ABC staff appointed member make? It seems a token position for some level of transparency, not a threat to the rest of the Board's interests. It begs the question, why do they really want to get rid of the position? Perhaps the ABC staff appointed member may be privy to confidential information? Surely this would not be a deterrent, Board members are often obliged to sign confidentiality agreements and the like upon appointment with serious consequences for a breach. Perhaps the ABC staff appointed member provides counter arguments and information for the Board members to consider before making decisions. If all the Board members are making decisions in the best interests of the future of the ABC surely such input would be valuable in order to make an informed decision?

It's a shame that it would be too expensive for the ABC Board to be entirely elected by the Australian public with no political appointments. I hope you will at least keep one member of the Board independent.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Regards,
Kayleen Dwyer