

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**  
**Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings November 2014**  
**Communications Portfolio**  
**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

**Question No: 547**

**Program No. Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

**Hansard Ref: Page 136, 20 November 14**

**Topic: ABC Board**

**Senator Canavan asked:**

**Senator CANAVAN:** When we were talking about the editor-in-chief role you mentioned you are ultimately responsible for editorial content. Are you ultimately responsible or is the board ultimately responsible?

**Mr Scott:** I suppose I am responsible to the board for it. The board has editorial responsibility in its charter but I am the managing director. I am on the board, I am the CEO, so finally I think I am responsible for the board, for the delivery of that editorial content and for ensuring that the standards, the guidelines, the editorial policies that we might have—policies that are considered by the board and then set by the board—

**Senator CANAVAN:** You are the agent of the board, I suppose, but the principle here is the board—

**Mr Scott:** Editorial responsibilities are spelt out with the board in the ABC Act.

**Senator CANAVAN:** Yes, and the board is the one responsible under that act—

**Mr Scott:** We can go into it. There is not a lot of time.

**Answer:**

The ABC Act does not specifically describe the Managing Director as “Editor-in-Chief”. However, the Act does make it clear that:

- The Managing Director manages “the affairs of the corporation”.
- He/she must act in accordance with policies set by the Board.
- The Managing Director may delegate some of his powers to other ABC employees.

In summary, as has been long standing practice at the ABC, the overall and ultimate responsibility for editorial content is a fundamental part of managing the corporation, and therefore falls to the Managing Director. However, it is open to a Managing Director to delegate some or all of that power to others.

While daily responsibility for editorial decision making rests within divisions, the Managing Director is, and has always been, the final arbiter in the long chain of responsibility known as “upward referral”.