

ABC ONLINE INQUIRY

Introduction

1.1 On 17 February 2000, the Senate referred the following matters to the Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee for inquiry and interim report on the matters specified in paragraphs (a) and (b), by 3 April 2000 (subsequently extended to 12 April 2000); and final report on the matters specified in paragraph (c), by 30 October 2000 (subsequently extended to 29 March 2001):

- (a) any existing commercial arrangements for the production, supply or distribution of Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) material online, including, but not limited to, mechanisms for ensuring ABC editorial control and independence;
- (b) any proposed commercial arrangements for the production, supply or distribution of ABC material online, including, but not limited to, mechanisms for ensuring ABC editorial control and independence; and
- (c) any extension to legislation which could be considered to ensure that the ABC is able to effectively provide an independent, innovative and comprehensive service in the online delivery environment.

1.2 The Committee tabled the interim report on paragraphs (a) and (b) of the reference: [www.abc.net.au/ Inquiry into ABC On-line](http://www.abc.net.au/Inquiry%20into%20ABC%20On-line), on 12 April 2000.¹

1.3 During the course of the first part of its inquiry, the Committee received seven submissions relating to paragraph (c) of the terms of reference. The Committee agreed to re-advertise part two of its inquiry in *The Australian*, on 24 October and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, on 25 October 2000. No additional submissions were attracted as a result. The Committee thanks all those who made submissions. A list of submissions is at Appendix 1.

1.4 Since the tabling of the interim report, the ABC has been the subject of comprehensive questioning at four rounds of estimates hearings and numerous Senate debates, relating to its delivery of online services. As a result, the Committee considers that, at this point in time, any extension to legislation to ensure that the ABC is able to effectively provide an independent, innovative and comprehensive service in the online delivery environment, is not warranted.

1.5 Therefore, the Committee has resolved to take no further action on its inquiry into paragraph (c) of this reference. Should any concerns in relation to the ABC's

1 A copy of the Report is available from the Committee's website:
http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/ecita_ctte/index.htm

delivery of online services become evident, then the Committee may seek a further reference.

Senator Lyn Allison

Chair

March 2001