

**From:** Doug Everingham [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, 29 July 2001 5:07 PM  
**To:** ecita.sen@aph.gov.au  
**Subject:** ABC Appointments enquiry.

**SUBMISSION**  
by  
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re  
**APPOINTMENTS TO ABC**

The Secretary,  
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology  
& the Arts References Committee,  
S157, Parliament House,  
Canberra ACT 2600.

Dear Secretary and Senators

My concern is that non-elective appointments be seen to be made on a non-partisan, non-secular basis.. This calls for transparent criteria and processes of appointment.

**Public perception.**

Governments, academic experts and others have drawn attention to a global trend to distrust public authorities because

- they tend to make claims that imply that a single mark on a voting paper is evidence that the voter consents to every policy of the chosen candidate rather than any alternative policy of any other candidate on that ballot paper;
- they cite dubious grounds for withholding data that could influence policy making: for example, claiming commercial confidence for privatization or contracting arrangements where there is little or no clear disadvantage to anyone but partisan office holders in informing the public how public money is being spent;
- they use public funds to promote government policies rather than provide information in a form balanced in a way similar to that used in informing voters in a referendum.
- they tend to employ public opinion polls for testing knee-jerk reactions of voting majorities rather than develop adequately informed (intensively and extensively deliberative) polling of relevant experts, watchdog groups, infrastructure providers and other stakeholders, or even a random sample ('jury') of voters.. I **attach** part of an oration by Dr Lyn Carson exploring the slow development of this rational approach to lasting democratic decision making.

### **The ABC's special role.**

Like the judiciary, the supreme news and commentary organ of a democracy must strive to be, and be seen to be, an exemplary arbiter of what is fair and balanced reporting, expert analysis, public disclosure and a model of sensitive multicultural harmony building. It can be democratic only if it seeks to assess social and environmental impacts of events and policies alongside the currently dominant short term criteria of profitability and economic growth.

### **Recommendations.**

To achieve the above role and remedy the above public disillusionment I suggest you recommend to the Government

1. Existing ABC community advisory committees be democratized, at national, regional and local levels, developing a formula such as, for example, one third of the committee to be chosen by direct election at the time of local, State and/or federal elections for the appropriate region(s), one third chosen by interested non-profit organizations in proportion to their memberships, and one third nominated by your own committee or similarly non-partisan local and State government committees.
2. National, regional and local committees to have the authority
  - (a) to call evidence of relevant ABC officials and employees and their associations and to encourage them to make suggestions for ABC decision makers including suggestions for ABC appointments; and
  - (b) to nominat one or more persons for an ABC appointment of interest to the particular committee, and seek the reasons of the appointing authorities if none of the committee's nominees is chosen.

Sincerely

**Doug EVERINGHAM**

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**ATTACHMENT**

Alison Burton Memorial Lecture  
**Random Selection:**

**Achieving Representation in Planning**

Presented by **Lyn Carson**

Royal Australian Planning Institute, Canberra, ACT, 31 August 1999