

From: Martin [REDACTED]  
Sent: Friday, 3 August 2001 8:02 PM  
To: ecita.sen@aph.gov.au  
Subject: ABC Appointments Inquiry Submission

The Secretary.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to inform the inquiry members of my dissatisfaction with the current ABC Board and its appointed Managing Director. Both seem to have lost any understanding of the concept of independence from government and the ethical and moral responsibilities that come with it. Having heard Mr Shier in person and through the media I have received the impression that he is an accomplished salesman, and able to confidently say whatever he feels his audience would like to hear. His blatantly dishonest suggestion that he could be a 'political cleanskin' can only be seen to be one step removed from his claim to be fighting for the Corporation's independence as a free to air broadcaster. His stated desire to improve ratings (already a doubtful goal for such a body), his muddled attempts at managerial reform (with certainly no 'bottom line' fiscal gains to show for it) and his steady moves towards 'user pays' broadcasting (the new childrens' channel being a recent, obvious example) all suggest that he treats taxpayers (and effectively his shareholders) with the same respect that many sales people have for arm's length customers. That he has been appointed by and received constant support from the current Board can only cast doubt on the intentions of its members. It would be naive to hope to find members and senior management without political background, affiliations or opinions. But this country needs public servants who can be relied upon to show the moral integrity required to act in the service of all Australians, regardless of the opinions or policies of the government of the day. They should, of course, obey the government. But they should also clearly state the benefit or disadvantage to the public of all their decisions, irrespective of the government's views.

The appointment system must ensure that the principles of the ethical and moral responsibilities of the Board members are clearly grasped and espoused by all appointees, and the parliament needs a system of regular review to oversee their adherence to these responsibilities. The parliament needs the power to admonish and in extreme cases suspend or remove board members who do not live up to such principles in the service of all Australians.

Yours sincerely,

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