

From: Don Barrett [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 6 August 2001 10:58 PM
To: ecita.sen@aph.gov.au
Subject: ABC Board Appointments Senate Inquiry.

142 Reserve Road,
BEAUMARIS 3193

6th.August 2001

Dear Senators,

I write this submission as an avid user of ABC services who is totally disillusioned with the direction the present Board and Managing director are taking the ABC. I urge the inquiry to recommend that the Parliament adopt a system which mandates that ABC Board members are appointed on the basis of MERIT and commitment to comprehensive and INDEPENDENT public broadcasting, not allegiance to incumbent governments. Board decision making must be transparent and always in the public interest.

Over recent years there has been an alarming trend for governments to manipulate the Board and corrupt its integrity and independence. The current Government and Board Chairman have accelerated this trend to an alarming new low point.

Prior to the last Federal election we had the spectre of Mr McDonald, publicly promoting the Prime Minister, John Howard - Hardly the sort of behaviour expected from the Chairman of an institution meant to be independent of government. A government, who, itself, frequently accuses ABC broadcasters of bias!

It is disgraceful how the present Board has overseen the massive financial cutbacks, and loss of so many experienced and talented specialist staff, some of whom have produced award winning programmes and who will not be easily replaced. The consequences of the staff and budget cut-backs is now painfully obvious: a decline in quality local TV production, numerous repeats, and the loss of some of the finest natural-history and science shows that the ABC has produced. These are the type of programmes that are specified in the ABC Charter, programmes that are not produced by, or, of interest to the commercial broadcasters.

The ABC is essential to Australia's culture and democracy. It must be maintained as a properly resourced and comprehensive national public broadcaster which is independent from political and commercial influence. The ABC must be restored to its pre-eminent position, of what I believe, was once the best broadcasting organisation in the world.

I trust the members of the Senate Inquiry will be mindful of my comments.

Yours Sincerely,

Donald Barrett