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To: ecita.sen@aph.gov.au
Subject: Submission on ABC board appointments

To the Standing Committee on Environment, Communications, Information Technology
and the Arts References Committee in the Senate
re ABC Board Appointments

from
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There are three stages in the process of appointing to the board of the ABC:

- nominations and nominators
- compilation of a short list
- final choice.

At present all three of these functions belong to the government of the day. We, the public, are unaware, except in the briefest terms, of the qualifications which appointees bring to the service of the broadcaster. We do not even know whether they have a commitment to public broadcasting. All we know is that they have the approval of the Cabinet.

When one function of a public broadcaster is to lay open the processes of government it is quite inappropriate for government to appoint the controlling board and, indirectly, the managing director.

Thus, any system of appointment must exclude political appointments, that is, people chosen for their closeness and loyalty to the government.

A better system must not only exclude political appointment but ensure the appointment of people with a commitment to public broadcasting and experience relevant to governing a complex broadcasting organisation.

To obtain good people the nomination process should be opened up to the public, by inviting nominations by newspaper advertisement. Criteria for selection should be published in the advertisement.

Selection of a short list should be by a multi-party committee. They should be charged to select a list of people representative, up to a point, of the mix of Australian people by state, sex and culture; committed to public broadcasting and with life and work experience relevant to the supervision of a large and complex broadcasting organisation. Cabinet to make the final selection.

Cabinet to select the Chairman and deputy chair, preferably with the endorsement though not the right of veto of the mpc. These may or may not be from the short list.

The first board selected under a new method should be appointed on a 5yr, 4yr or 3yr term - to stagger replacements - and directors should be eligible for reappointment for a second term and no more.

Joan Laing