

4. Funding arrangements

Regarding finance for national broadcasters, I submit that the 5 year plan makes funding more practical and the ABC and SBS acts should be changed to state that base funding must be provided over a 5 year period. There should also be some instrument that prevents politicians promising before an election not to cut funding, then breaking that promise when in government. National broadcasters need certainty in funding to maintain an acceptable standard, and maintain adequate staffing levels.

5. Appointments to the ABC and SBS boards

As an ABC viewer for almost as long as the ABC has been in existence, I submit that the existing method of appointing a Chair, Managing Director and board members is the obstacle to achieving independence for our national broadcasters.

The current situation at the ABC clearly demonstrates the weakness in this system. The current Chair was the choice of the disgraced former Prime Minister and the board (apart from the staff-elected director) was selected by the previous Coalition government, and approved by a Governor-General who repeatedly demonstrated that he would comply with whatever the former Prime Minister wanted. In contrast, ABC staff recently chose the more independent Laura Tingle as their representative.

While David Anderson does have the experience for the position of Managing Director, he has defended, in Senate Estimates, importing Sky journalists to the ABC, and is reported as saying that he wants News Corp journalists' views and opinions on shows such as *Q and A*, *The Drum*, and *Insiders*. Murdoch media are known for spreading misinformation and have nothing but criticism for the current government. These journalists have been encouraged to express their opinions during broadcasts.

Sixteen months ago the majority of Australians voted to get rid of the Coalition government. Despite this, *ABC News*, *News Breakfast*, *The Drum* and *Afternoon Briefing* continue to bombard viewers with opinions from Opposition politicians, allowing them to make all sort of claims without any challenges, and ignoring news that might reflect poorly on the Opposition. The current government was not afforded this courtesy when they were in opposition. The open bias against Labor shown by David Speers as host of *Q and A* and *Insiders*, has only exacerbated the problem with his appointment as ABC's national political lead. His habit of not asking hard questions of Coalition politicians and allowing their claims to go unchallenged is in glaring contrast to his constant cutting short, or talking over politicians from other parties. His persistence in asking Government ministers 'gotcha' questions is tedious, and has resulted in fewer viewers of these programs.

The Coalition had nine years in government to address the issues now facing government, as they did not happen in the last 16 months. Consequently, we are heartily sick of hearing what the Opposition thinks the current government should be doing, when their agenda is to defeat all Labor policies to reinstate a Coalition government. ABC management has crossed the line in allowing the current situation to continue. We want more balanced and comprehensive news reporting such as provided by SBS.

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I submit that the selection of the Chair and board for a national broadcaster must not be influenced by whichever government is in power. They should be selected by an independent panel of people who are intelligent, unbiased, and experienced in the broadcasting industry, plus respected, experienced journalists including people such as Kerrie O'Brien and Barrie Cassidy. Government members and the Governor-General would only be able to veto a proposed director if they can demonstrate a valid reason.

Thank you,
Sincerely,
Lyn Bagnall