



<https://www.actu.org.au/get-involved/retired-unionists-network>

*We may be retired from the workforce but we will never retire from the workers' struggle!*

30 August, 2023

## **RETIRED UNIONIST NETWORK (RUN) SUBMISSION**

The **Retired Unionists' Network (RUN)** is a national network of retired union members who want to stay informed and active in the movement. RUN is administered by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and connects with retired activist groups right around the country.

Many RUN members listen, watch and read information, news and entertainment and value the independence of the national broadcasters and value their roles in contributing to a strong, civil and democratic Australia.

RUN members have expressed concern regarding the culture of political interference on the national broadcaster Boards and welcome this review to ensure the ABC and SBS Board positions are independently selected and that governments ensure certainty of funding for both the ABC and SBS.

### **RUN calls for Stable Funding mechanisms and**

- ◆ supports five-year base funding for the ABC and SBC.
- ◆ supports indexation to ensure funding is maintained at its real value over the five years.
- ◆ opposes tied funding, or one-off or short-term allocations for specific projects or initiatives that hold the ABC and SBS hostage in delivering government directed programs that undermine the national broadcasters' independence.
- ◆ provides sufficient and adequate funding for the ABC and SBS to fulfil their Charters and obligations.
- ◆ opposes efficiency dividends that require the ABC and/or SBS to make 'savings' or reductions to yearly funding.
- ◆ supports the creation of an independent statutory body to make recommendations to Treasury regarding adequate and sufficient funding for the ABC and SBS to enable it to fulfil its Charters and obligations; and that the ABC and the public have the opportunity to make submissions to this statutory body.
- ◆ supports the restoration of the public service ethics, employment conditions and principles for the national public broadcasters.
- ◆ supports the emergency broadcasting role that the national broadcasters play in times of increasing climate disasters.

### **Effective Governance arrangements**

- ◆ that the process of formal, arms-length, merit-based appointments to the ABC and SBS Board be strengthened and if it is abused, be referred to the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC).

## Board's composition

- ◆ that ABC and SBS Board Directors must demonstrate substantial experience and commitment to public interest journalism and/or public service and/or community sector experience.
- ◆ that the ABC and SBS Board have a majority of Directors who have backgrounds in public interest journalism, the Arts, education, science, academia, union backgrounds; and a minority of ABC Board Directors who have backgrounds in conventional commercial corporations.

## Nomination Panel appointments and functions

- ◆ that the ABC & SBS Board Nomination Panel consist of members who have a commitment to public interest journalism; public and independent broadcasters; and experience in making independent appointments.
- ◆ that the ABC Board Nomination Panel includes a union representative.
- ◆ that consultation occurs with the ABC and SBS Board about skills and experience needed on the Board to promote diversity.

## Role of the Minister

- ◆ that the Minister for Communication and/or other parties involved in the appointment processes not breach the independence of the ABC and SBS.
- ◆ that the Minister for Communication or Prime Minister be prohibited from making 'Captains Picks' or selecting appointments who have not been recommended by the Nomination Panel.
- ◆ that the Minister for Communication be provided with a choice of **three to five** before selecting a Board Director for recommendation to the Governor-General.
- ◆ that the Prime Minister property consult on the final appointment of the ABC and SBS Chair with the Leader of the Opposition and a genuinely cross-party committee before making a recommendation to the Governor-General.

## Other Governance approaches

- ◆ that the review cooperates and takes advice from with the work of Ms Lynelle Briggs AO's Review of Public Sector Board Appointments Processes (Briggs Review) in relation to ABC board appointments processes.
- ◆ that government **cease** to fund to commercial media that undermines the ABC's broadcasting capacity and that the ABC and SBS should be the priority of funding before commercial media
- ◆ that legislation be made to ensure a Minister of the Crown or an MP cannot sue the ABC or SBS.
- ◆ That the Minister for Communications must admit publicly and honestly about the true nature of the budget and any budget cuts to the ABC and SBS.
- ◆ That the Minister for Communications should not leak correspondence to the ABC or SBS Board to the commercial media.
- ◆ That the Minister for Communications be censored by Parliament if s/he makes inflammatory abusive claims against the statutory independence of the national public broadcasters.
- ◆ That the Minister for Communication when making statements about the ABC and SBS acknowledge their contribution to Australia's culture and democracy.
- ◆ That any Ministerial or Department of Communications misconduct towards the ABC and SBS be referred to the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC).

**RUN strongly supports reforms to ensure Australia's national broadcasters are independent and that they both have certainty of funding. RUN also urges the Government to ensure that both the ABC and SBS have their funding levels restored after decades of cuts by the previous Coalition government.**