



APPOINTING THE ABC BOARD

The Friends of the ABC's belief, that the appointment of the ABC Board has become politicised, could not have been better supported than by the appointment in 2005 of Janet Albrechtsen, a forthright critic of the ABC and regular journalist for the Murdoch press, is associated in the public mind with values antithetical to public broadcasting.

What sort of independence can the public expect a Board member to uphold when she is so clearly identified with the government party of the day and with the profit motive of the commercial press? This appointment can only further deflate public confidence in the ABC Board – and **there are two more appointments to be made in 2006!**

Friends of the ABC believe that there should be legislation to provide a new method of appointing the ABC Board that will ensure that the appointment process is open, transparent and bipartisan.

An independent Board

The ABC Board is charged with maintaining the integrity and independence of the Corporation, and with ensuring that the gathering and presentation of information is accurate and impartial. It is up to the Board to see that the ABC is responsive to criticism, but lives up to its Charter responsibilities – to provide innovative and comprehensive broadcasting services which reflect Australia's cultural diversity.

To carry out this responsibility the ABC Board must have the trust of the Australian people.

The ABC under siege

Over the last three years the ABC has been besieged by the Government as well as by media opponents. Attacks on the ABC, for biased coverage of news and current affairs or for a self-serving and unrepresentative internal culture, put the ABC Board under great pressure. If the ABC Board is to be trusted as an umpire, by the public, by the Government, and by ABC programmers and producers, it must be believed to be above political and commercial influence.

That in turn means that the process of appointing Board members must be as apolitical as is consistent with Ministerial responsibility.

ALTERNATIVES

Friends of the ABC call for a transparent and merit-based procedure for ABC Board appointments which provides for:

- The establishment of appropriate selection criteria including strong commitment to the maintenance of an independent public broadcaster for each vacancy, ensuring that there is an appropriate mix of skills and experience on the board.
- Public advertisement of all vacancies.
- Shortlisting of applicants by an independent assessment committee.
- Appointment by the Minister, following the shortlisting process.
- An appropriate level of parliamentary scrutiny of the appointment