



The Hon Philip Dalidakis MP

Minister for Small Business, Innovation & Trade

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Mr Mark Scott AO  
Managing Director  
Australian Broadcasting Commission  
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Dear Mr Scott

I note with concern the allegations raised yesterday by Nick Ross, former ABC Technology Editor. Mr Ross claims that he was told in March 2013 by a senior ABC manager that he should stop writing about the National Broadband Network (NBN) as the Liberals were expected to win the next election, and the continued coverage could upset Malcolm Turnbull.

This claim is particularly concerning.

This is not the first time that questions have been raised about the ABC's coverage of the NBN.

There were reports in May 2014 that the ABC had delayed the publication of an article by Emma Alberici on the NBN until after the 2013 Federal Election. Questions were raised with you by then-Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, during Senate Estimates in early 2013 about the prominence given to Mr Turnbull in ABC coverage. In an unfortunate coincidence of timing, in March 2013 Mr Turnbull was also accused of bullying Mr Ross, after several articles were published in *The Australian* that criticised Mr Ross's writing on the NBN.

I also note the ABC's Promise Tracker continues to refer to the Coalition's key promises on the NBN as 'in progress', despite the admission by Mr Turnbull that the government will be unable to deliver their promise that all Australians will have access to minimum download speeds of 25 megabits by 2016. This matter was raised with you during May 2015 Senate Estimates hearings.

Mr Ross's allegations of workplace bullying and vindictive behaviour are also of great concern. Every Australian deserves to feel safe in their workplace, and it is a particularly repugnant suggestion that a journalist may have been bullied to the point where they felt they could not report on the facts objectively.

The ABC plays a vital role in Australia's political landscape. As a public broadcaster, you have a statutory obligation to gather and present news and information impartially. This duty underpins the trust Australians have in the ABC as a credible and trustworthy source of information that will help them understand the issues and make up their own minds about where they stand.

I am aware that Mr Ross's article was criticised by Media Watch as partisan. To say that an element of a policy claim is false is not, however, the same thing as advocating the alternative. This does

create a challenge for organisations like the ABC, as the line can at times appear blurred, but good journalism does not consist of simply repeating a politician's claims without examining their veracity.

Victorians have been negatively affected by the decision to change the rollout of the NBN from a model where 93 per cent of homes and businesses were to receive fibre to the premise to a mixed 'multi-technology' model. As the Victorian Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, I am also concerned about the impact of the NBN changes on Victorian small businesses, on innovation in our state, and on our ability to compete globally.

We deserve to be able to trust that the ABC reports impartially on the issues that affect us. Given the disastrous outcome for Australians from Mr Turnbull's 'multi-technology mix', I continue to be concerned that the ABC did not allow its journalists to properly cover the policy prior to the election for fear of offending the potentially incoming Minister.

The grave allegations Mr Ross makes that his reporting was curtailed for political rather than editorial reasons have the potential to undermine the trust Victorians, as well as the wider Australian community, have in the ABC.

Accordingly, I would ask you to launch an internal investigation into the matters Mr Ross has raised, as well as to meet with me at your earliest convenience to discuss these allegations.

Yours sincerely



**Hon. Philip Dalidakis MP**  
Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade

Date: 25 / 1 / 2016