

April 27 2025

**ON THE RECORD COMMENT FROM ALAN SUNDERLAND, FORMER ABC EDITORIAL DIRECTOR**

ABC Board Members, including the Chairman, have important duties and responsibilities to maintain the independence of the Corporation, ensure its journalism is accurate and impartial, and ensure its broader functions are performed to the benefit of the Australian people.

However, specific decisions about programming and content are properly the responsibility of ABC management and staff.

While, in my experience, board members can and do pass on program and content ideas to ABC management, normally via the Managing Director, great care needs to be taken to ensure such comments are not seen as lobbying or pressuring for a specific editorial outcome, especially if board members may have a specific personal or other interest in the matter.

In this case, it appears that the Chairman was clearly intervening on behalf of someone he knew, describing the decision by some parts of ABC Regional radio not to run an interview with that person as a 'strange attitude', stressing that the person seeking an interview was 'talent' and making it very clear he was on the talent's side.

This sort of pressure on program teams from any board member, let alone the Chairman, is in my view inappropriate.

The fact that it was not only passed on but acted upon by program teams who felt pressured to change their editorial judgement, indicates a significant failure of process and judgement, both on the part of the Chairman and senior management.