

From: [ABC Alumni Australia](#)
To: [Nigel Henham](#); [Nick Leys](#); [Mark Tapley](#)
Subject: FYI: Alumni story re Chair statement
Date: Sunday, 14 November 2021 4:49:36 PM

FYI: Following on from Ita's terrific statement, we have posted the following story on our website and social media, and circulated it to key media, under the subject line **"Latest ABC Senate Inquiry: Senator Bragg has questions to answer"**.

Let's hope the Senate terminates the inquiry quickly.

Cheers,

Helen
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ABC Chair Ita Buttrose AO condemns latest Senate inquiry

In a strongly worded statement, ABC Chair Ita Buttrose AO says a new Senate Inquiry into the ABC's complaint handling process "appears to be a blatant attempt to usurp the role of the ABC Board and undermine the operational independence of the ABC".

The new inquiry announced last Thursday (11 November) by Liberal Senator Andrew Bragg, on behalf of the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee, has all the hallmarks of an ill-conceived political stunt. There are no Terms of Reference, just a short and notably vague statement:

The Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee will inquire into the complaints handling arrangements of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Special Broadcasting Service.

In particular, the committee will examine the adequacy of the existing arrangements to provide a framework that is accessible, responsive, efficient, accountable and fit-for-purpose.

Why Senator Bragg has pushed for this inquiry with such haste, and with such manifest inadequacies, is open to conjecture.

Several weeks ago, on 18th October, the ABC announced it had commissioned an independent review of its complaints handling system. It's being conducted by Professor John McMillan AO, former Commonwealth and New South Wales Ombudsman, and Jim Carroll, former Director of SBS News and Current Affairs and Head of News and Public Affairs for the Ten Network.

Unlike the Senate Inquiry, McMillan and Carroll are properly organised with detailed [Terms of Reference](#). Key figures including Senator Bragg and other members of parliament have already been interviewed and an issues paper will follow shortly, seeking public submissions.

The independent reviewers are expected to report to the ABC Board in March 2022, with the findings to be released publicly in April.

Curiously, Bragg's Senate inquiry is scheduled to hand down its report earlier, on 28 February.

One could be forgiven for asking if this is a pre-emptive strike with a pre-determined outcome, because why otherwise would the Senate Committee not wait to take into account McMillan's and Carroll's findings?

In fact, why even call for an inquiry before the ABC-commissioned independent review has been completed?

ABC Alumni understands that Labor and other non-Coalition Senators refused to support the move.

Ms Buttrose is calling on the full Senate to defend the ABC, as Australia's national broadcaster, by passing a motion to terminate or suspend the inquiry until the independent process commissioned by the ABC Board has been completed.

In ABC Alumni's view, Senator Bragg must also be called upon to answer questions.

Does he have no confidence in McMillan and Carroll, and the ABC independent process? And if so, on what basis?

Do Senator Bragg and his colleagues support the independence of the nation's public broadcaster?

How does Senator Bragg defend this inquiry which appears to be a waste of time and taxpayer's money?

ABC Chair Ita Buttrose AO's full statement can be read [here](#).

For a history and details of the ABC's complaint handling process, read [this story](#) by ABC Alumni chair Jonathan Holmes, published on the ABC Alumni website last month.

- Helen Grasswill, Deputy Chair, ABC Alumni (Acting Chair)

