

To: Chief of Staff **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **ABC efficiency review – weakening and commercialising the ABC**

"Leaks from the Government's efficiency review of the public broadcasters that propose the merging of some ABC and SBS operations and the ABC find new ways to raise money are alarming," said Glenys Stradijot, ABC Friends national spokesperson.

"However, the proposals are not surprising.

"The establishment of the review into how efficiently the public broadcasters manage their operations was itself government interference. The ABC and SBS are independent statutory authorities with their own governing boards and are meant to operate at arms-length from government.

"Minister Turnbull's review appeared to have been established at the outset to cut the ABC and to push it in a more commercial direction.

"'Efficiency review' has become government lingo for 'cuts'.

"The appointment of a former finance head of a commercial media outlet to run the review was a strong indicator that outcomes it proposed would be for the ABC to operate along more commercial lines.

"ABC Friends believes the Minister's appointment of Peter Lewis was improper as well as inappropriate. After having been given access to confidential information about the internal operations of the ABC and SBS, Mr Lewis is soon to commence a position as chief financial officer of a major commercial competitor to the ABC.

"The Government cut ABC funding in the May Budget and plans to axe the Australia Network international broadcasting service. Now it appears there are more cuts, outsourcing and the merging of some ABC and SBS operations ahead – the result of so-called 'efficiencies' identified by a commercial operator.

"Any step to merge ABC and SBS operations is a step towards losing the distinct and unique nature of each of our public broadcasters.

"The Government appears intent on weakening the ABC and pushing it in a more commercial direction.

"The Liberal-National Coalition's promise not to privatise the ABC is beginning to look as misleading as its pre-election promise not to cut the ABC," said Glenys Stradijot.

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*ABC Friends is a national campaign. It comprises ABC Friends and Friends of the ABC organisations across Australia.*