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Government's desperate deal to get media reforms through Senate

The "inquiry" into the ABC announced by One Nation today as the trade-off for support for the government's media reform package is a dangerous step, MEAA says.

One Nation says it has convinced the government to ask the ABC and SBS to provide details of the wages and conditions of some staff and also to undertake a "competitive neutrality" inquiry into the public broadcasters and to legislate a requirement for the ABC to be "fair" and "balanced".

"The proposed inquiry is just a desperate deal by the government to get its flawed media ownership changes through the Senate," said MEAA CEO Paul Murphy.

"It is bad enough that the government's media package will abandon the 2-out-of-3 rule – effectively allowing Australia's highly concentrated media industry to fall into the hands of even fewer owners. But now the government has succumbed to the baiting of One Nation senators and their obsession with one of Australia's most trusted and respected institutions."

Murphy said: "The ABC must not be a political football. It already has a Charter that sets out its responsibilities, and inquiry after inquiry has amply demonstrated how well the public broadcaster performs its duties, despite the constant hectoring of a politically-motivated few who mount their attacks in order to appeal to their own political base."

MEAA recalls, that during the Western Australian state election earlier this year, One Nation politicians banned the ABC from reporting the party's campaign and even shut them out of the party's results on election night.

"For Australia's media industry to be subject to such political manoeuvring in order to pass a media reform package designed to promote the interests of a handful of media moguls does an enormous disservice to the Australian community," Murphy said.

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