



MEDIA RELEASE

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New chair must restore ABC's reputation for independence

The incoming chair of the ABC, Kim Williams, must immediately move to restore the reputation of the national broadcaster by addressing concerns about the impact of external pressures on editorial decision making.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance, the union representing journalists at the ABC, calls on the new chair to work with unions to support staff who are under attack, reaffirm the commitment to cultural diversity in the workplace, and uphold the standards of reporting without fear or favour that the public expects of the ABC.

MEAA welcomes the appointment of Mr Williams, noting that he has decades of media experience including senior management positions at the ABC, commercial broadcast media and arts administration in the past, and that he was recommended by an independent nomination panel.

The Acting Chief Executive of MEAA, Adam Portelli, said the new chair would take office at a critical time for the ABC's future following a staff vote of no confidence in managing director David Anderson earlier this week.

"On Monday, union members overwhelmingly said they had lost confidence in David Anderson because of his failure to address very real concerns about the way the ABC deals with external pressure and supports journalists from First Nations and culturally diverse backgrounds when they are under attack," he said.

"Public trust in the ABC as an organisation that will always pursue frank and fearless journalism has been damaged, and management under Mr Anderson has not demonstrated it is taking these concerns seriously.

"Following yesterday's board meeting, the current chair, Ita Buttrose, revealed she is completely out of touch with the concerns felt in newsrooms across Australia.

"Dozens of staff have told us their first hand experiences of feeling unsupported by management when under external attack and the negative impact this is having on their ability to do their jobs and on the reputation and integrity of the ABC. But Ms Buttrose failed to acknowledge these concerns.

"ABC journalists have put forward five very reasonable suggestions to restore the confidence of staff in the managing director but at this stage, Mr Anderson has not committed to an urgent meeting as they requested.

"We are optimistic that the incoming chair, Kim Williams, will bring a more collaborative approach to dealing with issues of cultural safety and editorial integrity than has been witnessed under Ms Buttrose.

"He must understand that nothing less than the reputation of the ABC is at stake here."

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