



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**BROADCASTING SERVICES AMENDMENT  
(MEDIA OWNERSHIP) BILL 2002**

**In Committee**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 26 June 2003**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 26 June 2003  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Cherry, Sen John

**Source** Senate  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

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**Senator CHERRY** (Queensland) (12.06 pm)—I seek leave to withdraw Democrat amendment (3) on sheet 2987.

Leave granted.

**Senator CHERRY**—I move Democrat amendment (R3) on revised sheet 2987:

(R3) Schedule 2, item 4, page 14 (after line 6), at the end of subsection 61F(2), add:

; and (d) the entities, or parts of the entities, that run those media operations, where those media operations involve a television station and one or more daily newspapers in the same market, have established an editorial board for the news and current affairs operation of the television station which will:

(i) have complete editorial control over the news and current affairs output of the television station, subject only to a right of veto by the entity over any story which is likely to expose the entity to a successful legal action for damages; and

(ii) consist of three members, one appointed by the entity, one elected by the staff of the news and current affairs operation, and an independent chair appointed by agreement between the entity and the Authority; and

(iii) have the power to appoint or dismiss the news editor, who in turn shall have the power to appoint or dismiss all staff of the news and current affairs operation within the budget set by the entity; and

(iv) abide by any commercial objectives set by the entity and approved by the Authority consistent with the objectives of this Act and this section.

We debated this amendment yesterday. As a result of discussions with Senator Murphy and Senator Lees, I have put this revision in. The first change I have made is in subparagraph (ii) to make it clear that, with this editorial board, the three members would consist of one appointed by the entity—that is, the media proprietor; one elected by the staff—that is, the journalists; and an independent chair appointed by agreement between the entity and the authority. This was to try to get around the concern that people, including the minister, expressed yesterday that the government itself would be appointing an independent chair. I think it is reasonable to expect—and, as I said, I have great confidence in the authority to ensure that a genuinely independent person is put into that chair position—that the proprietor should probably be part of that process. So I have made that change at the request of Senator Lees and Senator Murphy.

The second change that I made was to clarify in subparagraph (iii) that the board's role in staff management will cease with the appointment of a news editor. I should have put that in the original draft. I thank Senator Murphy for pointing that out. It makes it clear that the news editor is appointed by the board and the editor is then the person who has the independence to appoint staff. But obviously the board would set a broad code of editorial independence for television newsrooms in a cross-media situation. With those changes, I think this amendment is much better than it was yesterday. I commend it to the chamber.