

I wish to complain about a response I received from the ABC. On 24 June 2021, I submitted a complaint to the ABC about the 27 May episode of Q&A. I received a response from the ABC on 28 June. I have attached both my original complaint and the ABC's response.

I believe the ABC's response was inadequate as it did not address many of the issues raised in my complaint. I would like the ACMA to have the ABC properly respond to each of the points raised in my complaint.

Impartiality vs fair and honest dealing

The ABC response noted that my complaint was assessed against the ABC's editorial standards for impartiality. However, one of the four ABC editorial standards I claimed the ABC had breached was in regards to fair and honest dealing. The issue I raised in reference to fair and honest dealing was not at all addressed in the ABC response to my complaint. I would like the ABC to address that aspect of my complaint.

Balance of panel

The ABC's response appeared to be pre-prepared, and often ignored what I wrote in my complaint. This indicates that they did adequately consider my complaint.

For instance, in my complaint, I noted that Dave Sharma, who, though being sympathetic to Israel, represents a political party. I also noted that he was balanced by Ed Husic, who is sympathetic to the Palestinians and represents another political party. My complaint pointed out that Mr Sharma cannot be considered to have balanced Dr Abdel-Fattah and Ms Robinson, since one is a Palestinian advocate and the other professionally represents the Palestinian cause as a lawyer. In its response, the ABC noted, 'While Randa Abdel-Fattah and Jennifer Robinson criticised aspects of Israeli government policy, Australia's former Ambassador to Israel, Dave Sharma MP eloquently addressed and contested the claims of Ms Abdel-Fattah'.

If the ABC considers that Mr Sharma's presence provided a pro-Israel balance to the show, then it remains that Mr Husic, Dr Abdel-Fattah and Ms Robinson all provided the pro-Palestinian view. The ABC's response noted (correctly) that 'the editorial obligation on the program was to present a diversity of relevant perspectives on the issue, and to not unduly favour any one of those perspectives over any other'. Clearly, the make-up of the panel unduly favoured one of those perspectives, as did the cumulative time provided to them when the Israeli-Palestinian dispute was being discussed.

Further, by not mentioning Mr Husic or Ms Robinson in its suggestion that Mr Sharma balanced Dr Abdel-Fattah, the ABC's response was disingenuous, by implying that one person (Sharma) balanced one other person (Abdel-Fattah).

Audience members vs panel members

In my complaint, I specifically noted that the ABC invited Israeli or pro-Israeli people to be in the audience (as opposed to the panel), and this could not be considered as balancing the obviously pro-Palestinian panel. In its response, the ABC noted that it had invited an Israel advocate (Alex Ryvchin) and the Israeli ambassador (Jonathan Peled) to be in the audience. (The ABC's response disingenuously states that Mr Peled was invited 'to participate in the program', which implies 'appear on the panel', when he was actually only invited to sit in the audience and ask a question.) The ABC response thus did not respond to my complaint's allegation that inviting people to sit in the audience does not balance a panel.

REPRESENTATION. ADVOCACY. CONNECTION.

• President Jeremy Leibler • Chief Executive Officer Ginette Searle •

• Constituent Organisations State Zionist Councils of: ACT • New South Wales • Queensland • South Australia • Victoria • Western Australia

• Affiliated Organisations: Ameinu • ARZA • Australian Forum of Russian Jewry • Australasian Union of Jewish Students • Australian Zionist Youth Council • Friends of Likud • Jewish National Fund Australia
• Maccabi Australia • Mercator Masorti Australasia • Mizrahi Organisation • National Council of Jewish Women Australia • Union for Progressive Judaism • United Israel Appeal Australia
• Women's International Zionist Organisation •

Further, given that the ABC argued that the panel was not imbalanced, why did it feel the need to invite Israeli or pro-Israeli people to the audience? That Q&A's producers invited these people to be in the audience is an implicit acknowledgement that the ABC knew the panel was imbalanced.

Similarly, in my complaint I noted that (pro-Israel) questions from the audience don't act to balance the (pro-Palestinian) perspectives on the panel. The ABC response appeared to ignore this part of my complaint, merely stating, 'we observe the segment on the Middle East presented two audience questions from the Israeli perspective'.

I believe that the ABC did not adequately respond to my complaint. If the ACMA concludes that I am correct, I would ask that the ACMA urge the ABC to re-visit my complaint, and address the issues it ignored the first time as well as the issues raised in this complaint to the ACMA.

Thank you for your time in this matter.

Sincerely
Bren Carlill