

Received 19/3/08



18 March 2008

Mr Simon Finn, MP
Chair
Broadcast of Parliament Select Committee
Parliament House
George St
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Submission by the Seven Network
Sir Samuel Griffith Drive
MT COOT-THA QLD 4069

Dear Mr Finn MP

I refer to your letter to Mr David Leckie, CEO Broadcast Television, in relation to the quality of the Queensland Parliament's broadcast program.

The Seven Network appreciates the opportunity to put forward our serious concerns regarding proposals to change the way the Queensland Parliament is presently covered for the purposes of television News bulletins in this state.

Under the current system that has been in place for 12 years, two qualified, professional camera operators from the four major networks film politicians who are speaking and the real-time responses to questions raised.

In the case of the Seven Network, final shot selection rests with the political correspondent working in the press gallery. The use of pictures from parliament is subject to rules put in place by the Speaker. Sanctions are available if those rules are breached.

Free-to-air news bulletins require pictures and audio of the highest quality. The Seven Network is concerned any move away from the present system will result in poorer quality pictures and audio.

Seven submits that the new broadcast system installed in the Queensland Parliament has considerable shortcomings. Of most concern to Seven is that the quality of the image is below the standard that is provided by camera operators from major TV news outlets and of what is required for inclusion in our news bulletins.

Under the proposed system, the image is of the quality expected from consumer DV cam or high end security cameras. It lacks picture detail, colour saturation, and has a grainy finish. It is well below the broadcast standard required by free to air television news outlets. This downgrade in quality is even more concerning given the inevitable



move to High Definition broadcasting in the future and at a time when there is a considerable drive to entice viewers to take up digital television.

Under the proposed system, there is also a lack of broadcast control of the camera. The Federal Parliament has fixed robotic cameras. However, in the Federal Parliament, a qualified technical director is employed to adjust focus, aperture and framing composition, once the initial framing is set. There is no guarantee a politician will stand in the middle of frame every time they speak, hence the control of a technical director is so important. This is not provided for under the system proposed for the Queensland Parliament.

Simply put, the new system does not go close to meeting the high picture standards provided by free-to-air news services in Australia.

The Seven Network also has concerns about the ability of the present system to accurately cover parliamentary debate. Professional free-to-air news camera operators are highly trained and experienced news gatherers. They possess the ability to follow and capture politicians who speak, and then react to capture the responses to those comments. The proposed system of fixed cameras falls well short of this.

Under the proposed system, the in-house parliamentary feed will be controlled by parliamentary staff. We believe this raises concerns about transparency and accountability. Several sitting members have already expressed their opposition to removing free-to-air television news cameras and camera operators because they are concerned it portrays an attempt by some politicians to control what the public of Queensland gets to see and hear. We share this concern.

Seven is not aware of any reasonable arguments that illustrate problems or shortcoming with the present system, nor does Seven believe there are any rational arguments to support a move to the proposed system or which demonstrate any public benefit to the citizens of Queensland.

Yours sincerely

Rob Raschke
Director of News, Brisbane