

4 September 2006



ABC
Australian
Broadcasting
Corporation

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Dear Mr Leonard

Thank you for your letter of 9 August regarding the ABC's *Behind the News* program of 25 July 2006.

Since my letter to you of 1 August, and following further review of the matter, ABC Television has taken appropriate steps to correct this broadcast and the associated teaching materials. *Behind the News* broadcast an apology during the 8 August edition of the program, which also directed viewers to new, correct information available on the *Behind the News* website. The scheduled repeat of this edition of *Behind the News*, which featured the apology, was broadcast on 9 August. This program was also broadcast on ABC2, our digital channel, on 10 and 12 August.

Further, the *Behind the News* website includes an apology and acknowledgment that the program failed to meet the ABC's editorial requirements for balance and impartiality. New teaching materials have been developed and were posted on the *Behind the News* website on Tuesday 8 August.

The ABC recognises that the editorial team made a significant error of judgment in approving the script for this edition of *Behind the News*. The relevant staff have been counselled and the entire team has received additional expert training in how to communicate Middle East issues.

With regard to your concerns that my letter of 1 August referred to "the current crisis in Lebanon", this was simply a description of the program which indeed focused on events in Lebanon, rather than Israel. The ABC acknowledges that the program was inaccurate and, of course, agrees with your view that it would have been preferable if this program had not been broadcast.

While acknowledging the serious nature of this lapse in program standards, the ABC does not accept your suggestions that there is an "ABC culture favouring those seeking to destroy Israel" and an "inherent bias" within the Corporation. Errors were made in the case of this *Behind the News* report, and the ABC sincerely regrets these. However, these errors are not symptomatic of any broader editorial failings. Appropriate steps have been taken to correct the original broadcast and to ensure that there is no repetition of this failure to adhere to ABC Editorial Policies.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address your concerns.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Denise Musto'.

Denise Musto
Audience Liaison Manager
ABC Audience & Consumer Affairs