

From: Edwin Hugh Sheppard

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Consent to being identified in public response to invitation for representations: Yes

This response relates to new or substantive evidence on the question of commitment to broadcasting standards and on Ofcom's assessment of these matters.

Previous correspondence to the Secretary of State on the subject of the proposed merger of Sky plc with 21st Century Fox has been as the past chairman and current media representative on the committee of the BBC Pensioners' Association. This is as a personal submission because my perspective relates to my knowledge and experience of Australian media is not shared by the majority of the Association's members. I was the BBC Director in Australia from 1987, subsequently taking dual-citizenship, with a home when retired and living in Sydney until 2011.

On broadcasting standards, I wish to endorse the submission to Ofcom encapsulated below:

'Extract from the Ofcom report to the Secretary of State:

Public interest test for the proposed acquisition of Sky plc by 21st Century Fox, Inc

A2.81

The Ed Miliband, Ken Clarke, Sir Vince Cable and Lord Falconer submission also addressed what it described as 'Rupert Murdoch's approach to media ownership', stating that throughout his career, Rupert Murdoch has exhibited a consistent attitude towards media ownership, namely: 'a preference for acquiring high-impact, politically influential media assets; strong opposition to media ownership rules and strong hostility to publicly-funded media'.

A2.82

The submission gave examples of Murdoch acquired assets from Australia, the UK and the US that carry political influence but are loss making. It drew attention to what it calls Rupert Murdoch's consistent, and sometimes extreme, hostility to politicians who have advocated stricter rules on media ownership, and support for politicians who have gone on to dismantle existing media ownership rules, again giving examples from Australia, the UK and the US.

A283

It gave evidence that Rupert Murdoch has long been hostile to publicly funded broadcasting, with reference made to the BBC and to ABC in Australia. Several quotations from Rupert and James Murdoch arguing for the BBC to be scaled back were given. In addition, examples of what the submission calls Rupert and James Murdoch's 'hostility' to public subsidies for journalism are given'.

I have since read the Ofcom report in detail with respect to other matters concerning Murdoch/Foxtel in Australia. My I draw the attention of DCMS and hence the Competition and Markets Authority to an ongoing matter of concern to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). This concerns a proposed joint bid for interests in Ten Network Holdings Limited. Formerly known a Channel 10, this network was

owned by Rupert Murdoch at the time he acquired US citizenship in 1985 which led to its disposal. Now the network is in administration and subject to a proposed takeover by Birketu Pty Ltd and Illyria Nominees Television Pty Limited. My understanding is that the ongoing ACCC consultation relates to the role of Lachlan Murdoch of Illyria Nominees, and others, in withdrawing financial support for the Network while proposing its acquisition.

For this reason, I believe that the CMA should be required to note this matter in its assessment of the Murdoch Family Trust and the suitability of its executive members in respect of the Sky merger proposal. That the closing date in Australia is in ten days time should not be taken as sufficient reason not to investigate. There would appear to be ample evidence already in the public domain for DCMS and the CMA to establish whether or not this matter amplifies grounds for UK concern at ownership suitability in the case before you.

The starting point would be the ACCC website entry at:

<http://registers.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/1202693/fromItemId/750991>

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