

Aussie TV in trouble over PM comedy sex scene
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CANBERRA, Sept 20 — Australia's national broadcaster faced calls for a review of funding today over a television comedy scene with a fictional Prime Minister Julia Gillard draped in a national flag after having sex on her office floor.

Conservative opposition lawmakers said the Australian Broadcasting Corporation had overstepped good taste with a scene in which actors playing Gillard and her partner Tim Mathieson cuddled naked and used the flag — with its historic ties to Britain and Australia's Queen Elizabeth — as a sheet.

"Having sex in the prime minister's office under the Australian flag is the last straw for me. It is sick. I'm offended and we should take a stand," one lawmaker who could not be named told a closed door meeting of MPs, a conservative spokesman told a press briefing.

Another MP called for a rethink of taxpayer funding for the ABC, saying the programme degraded the office of prime minister, currently held by centre-left Labor rival Gillard, while monarchists said the use of the flag was disrespectful.

"I think a bit more discretion when using the flag is appropriate, even when you are trying to make a joke," Australians for Constitutional Monarch head David Flint told Australian media.

Commenters on newspaper websites were also upset with the show "At Home With Julia", which is based around the fictional home life of the country's first female leader.

"Rude, negative, abusive, disrespectful and now grubby," a viewer named Andrea Moore wrote in The Australian national newspaper's website.

Gillard herself has laughed off controversy over the satire, but a government protocol officer said the national flag, with its stars and Britain's Union Jack in one corner, should not have been shown lying on the ground.

An ABC spokesman for the programme said Gillard had only been shown in a "very gentle, tender scene".

"If it's okay for others to drape themselves in our flag for all manner of occasions, I really don't see why it can't be draped over our prime minister as a symbol of love," the spokesman said. — Reuters

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