

The ABC's Inaugural Public Meeting



Professor Ed Davis AM
NSW President of ABC Friends*

The ABC presented its inaugural Public Meeting at 10 am, 9 February, 2018. The host venue was Studio 22, at the ABC's headquarters in Ultimo, Sydney. Two other audiences were linked to the event, at studios in Launceston and Rockhampton. The proceedings were also streamed by the ABC. The

meeting had been advertised for some weeks by the ABC and interested people were encouraged to seek seats at one of the venues and to submit questions. All seats were taken. The ABC's Chair, Justin Milne; Managing Director, Michelle Guthrie; Chief Finance Officer, Louise Higgins and five other Directors were on the stage at Sydney.

The host was Michael Rowland, a well-known face from ABC News Breakfast on TV. He welcomed all-comers warmly

and with gentle humour sought sympathy for his plight in having to perform on the same stage as his bosses. He outlined the format for the meeting and explained that some 350 questions had been submitted. These had been examined by an independent organisation which had grouped the questions into nine themes; a question would be selected from each and put to the senior managers in the room. First, the ABC's Chair, MD and

continued on page 4.

Inside Update

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|----|--|----|
| From the Editor | 2 | Political bias and ABC Friends | 9 | Use of Social Media to promote ABC Friends and Raise Funds | 15 |
| Somerville Cartoon | 3 | A public broadcaster that bows to political pressure isn't doing its job | 10 | State News | 16 |
| Letter to the Editor | 3 | ABC Furores: Then and Now | 11 | NSW Branch News | 21 |
| NSW Friends' Meeting with Classic FM | 6 | From The National President | 12 | Parliamentary Roundup | 22 |
| ABC library closures | 8 | ABC Friends National Committee 2018 | 13 | ABC must spend 'more time talking to ordinary Australians' | 23 |
| Why ABC Friends is sounding the alarm | 9 | | | | |

Update

Publication Information

Update is published three times a year by **ABC Friends National Inc.**
GPO Box 4065 Melbourne Vic 3001

Print Post approved: PP245059/00002.

Extracts from newspapers and other publications appearing in Update do not necessarily reflect the views of the members of ABC Friends.

Update is distributed to all members of ABC Friends as part of the membership fee. Update is also supplied to journalists, politicians and libraries across Australia.

Update is edited and produced in Sydney and contributions are welcome from state and regional branches. Email your contribution (in Microsoft Word) to editor_update@abcfriends.org.au or post to address below

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Who to write...

Anyone seeking basic information about writing to persons of influence might find it helpful to go to www.fabcns.org.au where there are some menu items under "Be Active" leading to pages of information: Who can I write to? What can I say?

Update Editor - Mal Hewitt

PO Box 1391 North Sydney 2059
editor_update@abcfriends.org.au

Assistant Editor - Chris. Cartledge

webadmin@abcfriends.org.au

Cartoonist - Phil Somerville

Editorial Cartoonist for
The Sun-Herald (Sydney)
phil.somerville@somervillecartoons.com

Layout Artist - Paul Martens

paul@martens.name



From the Editor (and National Vice-President)

2018 has not started well for the ABC, thanks to some highly questionable decisions by ABC Management, and the largely negative reaction from the public and the media. We have witnessed the Cabinet Secret Documents fiasco and the treatment of Emma Alberici – in both cases ABC Management appears to have reacted to Government pressure. Randal Macdonald refers to a "premature knee buckle" in his analysis in this Update. Friends will always advocate that the ABC must remain independent of the government, and must not react to the kind of pressure that we have seen, even when the government does not like what the ABC is reporting. We also witnessed a Senate Estimates hearing in which ABC Management seemed to be very poorly prepared for the grilling which they received from both major parties, and the announcement of the closure of ABC sound and reference libraries in Adelaide, Hobart and Perth, the reduction of services in Sydney, and redundancies for 10 specialist librarians. Let us hope that the year improves.

I highly recommend to Update readers Dr. Diana Wyndham's "ABC Furores, Then and Now" for a fascinating insight into a very different world, the 1940s, and a different ABC.

The First Public Meeting

It was a spectacular and highly stage-managed event at Ultimo, covered in this Update by NSW President Prof. Ed Davis, with a personal account from Margaret Foy in the Blue Mountains Branch Report. However, not everybody was impressed by the ABC's "performance," as you will read in Harold Levien's Letter to the Editor. I believe that the ABC has yet to learn how to create a forum in which genuine dialogue can take place without the micro-management that seems to be considered necessary, and management must show a willingness to listen to what its shareholders – we, the audience – are saying. My experience of the ABC Board Forum in Alice Springs last July did not

fill me with confidence that the Board was listening, and that action would follow.

Rural and Remote Service, but only to some.

New Director of ABC Regional and Local, Michael Mason, has announced that live streaming will now be possible for 42 regional stations: "Listeners to all our stations – whether they are in our major capital cities or in remote regional areas – will now have access to our content on-the-go. Making our live content available online or through an app extends our audience significantly and gives expats and family members living outside their communities the means to connect. This can be particularly important in times of emergencies."

Unfortunately, this still does not address the problem of the many thousands in remote areas, especially travellers, who are beyond the reach of signals from existing transmitters (around 40k), or lack the technology required to access the satellite. These Australians were well served by the short wave service, turned off by the ABC on 1st February 2017 despite the protests of those who depended on it, especially for emergency information. Friends will continue to agitate for the reinstating Short Wave (DRM). Those who are really remote are entitled to a service that works in all conditions – their lives may depend on it.

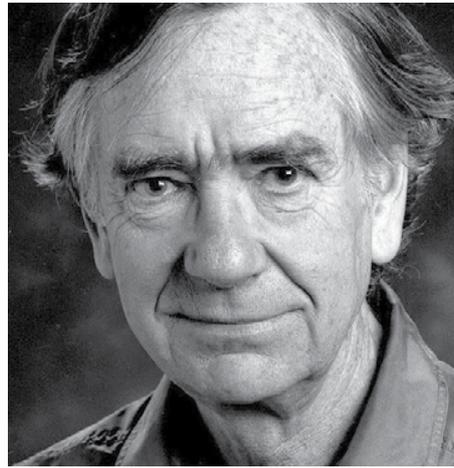
Meeting with Classic FM

I report positively on a meeting with the Senior Management of Classic FM, held in the Ultimo headquarters on 24th January – Friends raised a number of concerns about current and future directions of our world-leading classical music broadcaster, concerns which had been communicated to us from listeners all over the country. Those of us who live within reach of Sydney are acutely aware that our national broadcaster has become extremely Sydney-centric – Board and Management are located there – and we are privileged that we have access denied the rest of our

vast country. Successive governments of both sides have starved the ABC of funds to maintain the network of offices, studios and staff it once had. We are mindful of our responsibility to use that access wisely, hence we took to this meeting the views expressed by Friends from right across the country, and were listened to respectfully. A full report of that meeting is in this Update

We Remember Ken Inglis

On behalf of ABC Friends National, we extend our sympathy to the family of Professor Ken Inglis, who died on December 1, 2017, at the age of 88. Ken



was the author of the two-volume definitive

history of the ABC – This is the ABC 1932-1983 and Whose ABC? 1983-2006. A great historian, his early book “The Stuart Case” led to the commutation of the death sentence imposed on Aboriginal man Max Stuart. His publisher at Black Inc, Chris Feik, said the following: “Ken made many contributions – as teacher, writer for The Nation, university administrator and scholarly editor. His historical writing set new standards and broke new ground – in particular his pioneering work on the religion of ANZAC remembrance, and his deep institutional history of the ABC.”

Mal Hewitt

National Vice-President, ABC Friends 



My Shortwave Country

*I love a sunburnt budget
A land of mindless cuts
Of lunches-long in Sydney
Out here a plate of butts.*

*I love Michelle's cool thinking
I love her jewelled will,
Her beauty and her terror
So she can save One Mill.*

Letter to the Editor

On Friday February 9 I attended an ABC Inaugural Public Meeting (in Sydney) to which I was invited. However it was not the Meeting to which I thought I was invited. The latter was a meeting designed to make comments and suggestions based on questions and comments requested for submission in advance of the meeting. I submitted four questions two weeks in advance of the meeting.

On the stage were the full ABC Board and CEO. To my great surprise the first hour of the one and a half-hour meeting was devoted to some information about the ABC and elaborate and unabashed self-promotion. Only the last half-hour was set aside for questions/comments/suggestions. However the latter were, with one exception, 4 or 5 questions on film from the stage rather than from the floor. Each of these was immediately followed by prepared “answers” from one of the ABC’s departmental heads which invariably failed to really connect with the questions. The answers consumed 80%--90% of the “question” time.

Attendees might well have expected a selection of the questions/comments to be submitted to the 354 audience with a roving microphone inviting some response from the audience followed by Board/ CEO departmental-head dialogue with the attendees.

The function was a monumental disappointment. It was an insult to to both the audience and ABC viewers and listeners throughout the nation.

I have always been a strong ABC supporter and critic of funding cuts. There could not have been a more effective meeting to discourage me from further active support.

Harold Levien

Dover Heights



The ABC's Inaugural Public Meeting

Continued from Page 1.

CFO would give short addresses (1). As a warm-up, there was a video reflecting on the ABC's extraordinary history. This would prove to be the first of six videos, touching on various aspects of the ABC's role and experience. While the videos were certainly well made and interesting, they took up considerable time and many in the audience and watching the streamed version may have preferred more time on discussion of the issues pressing the ABC.

Chairman Justin Milne's address began by recognising the unique quality of the ABC and its place of deep trust in the Australian community:

"The ABC is loved and trusted by the majority of Australians. Well over 80% of us trust the ABC more than any other media organisation in the land, including all of the other TV networks, radio networks, newspaper publishers, the huge overseas online platform players, and the social media businesses. The ABC is indispensable, particularly in far-flung parts of the country where few media companies venture. It reaches out to Australians at home and work at every stage of their lives. It's unique in its ability to unite the nation, facilitate the important conversations we must have, and to nourish the minds of our children. It is the keystone for independence, trust and quality in a splintering and increasingly shrill media sector."

At the same time, he noted the rapid change occurring in the media industry.

The impact of computers and the internet had revolutionised the media with far-reaching implications for the ABC. The ABC had determined that it would not be left behind by the digital revolution; indeed, arguably it had led the way in iView and the development of podcasts. A new strategy had been developed: ABC 2.0 and this would involve using multiple platforms to deliver content to audiences. He went on to provide this reassurance:

"ABC 2.0 is not a substitute for broadcast. It is additive. We have absolutely no plans to reduce our presence on TV or Radio. We see both Radio and Television extending for many, many years into the future and we will continue to invest in them, love them and improve them."

Managing Director, Michelle Guthrie, followed suit and in similar terms stated the ABC's commitment 'to the core broadcast services the ABC has always provided.' Her emphasis was on the distinctive and invaluable role of the organisation:

"The ABC matters now more than ever before. Australians are increasingly faced with programming that is generic and superficial. Audiences are having to make choices in a fragmented media landscape. And there is a crying need for depth, independence and critical analysis."

She outlined with pride the ABC's achievements:

"We are the news source Australians trust more than any other. Our news

teams break stories that start national conversations, frame debates, lead to Royal Commissions, and hold accountable politicians on all sides. Our investment in public interest journalism is an investment in both diversity and in democracy."

And, Radio National received a favourable mention as the unit to 'set the national conversation.' She finished by stressing the critical nature of the ABC's role in providing independent and high quality news and analysis. This had never been more critical and underlined the importance of proper funding for the ABC: 'A well-funded ABC is a strong ABC.'

The message about funding was driven home by the next speaker, the ABC's Chief Finance Officer, Louise Higgins. She stated that the ABC's funding had declined in real terms by approximately a third since the mid-1980s. Its funding had declined by more than \$200 million over the past five years. In the mid-1980s, the ABC's then Managing Director, David Hill, had highlighted that the ABC cost each Australian 8 cents per day. In real terms, the cost was now 4 cents per day. Further, the ABC received a budget one eighth the size of the BBC's while serving a population one third and spread over a dramatically larger landscape. Indeed, the ABC appears a poor relation in terms of the funding enjoyed by many OECD public broadcasters. Looked at another way, as indicated by commentator David Tiley, around 1980 the ABC accounted for 0.6% of federal government revenue; it is now 0.3% (2).



“

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The three addresses and five videos to this point had taken up 55 of the scheduled 90 minutes for the meeting. The next section canvassed nine questions to be put to ABC Managers. The questions related to the frequency of 'promos' on radio and tv, the alleged dumbing down of news and current affairs, excessive repeats, the ABC's duty to protect democracy, bias, cutbacks in rural and regional programs, reliance on public funding, the status of RN, and threats to adequate funding for ABC News and Current Affairs.

The questions were fielded by Justin Milne, Michelle Guthrie and senior managers in the room. In brief, Michelle Guthrie defended ABC efforts to inform its listeners about forthcoming programs and how they might be accessed. Gaven Morris, Head of News, emphasised that the ABC was lifting its investment in investigative journalism and spreading its reports across a wider range of programs. David Anderson, Director of TV, acknowledged that the ABC saw international acquisitions as important; at the same time there had been a substantial investment in Australian content and he referred to programs to be shown later in 2018. Justin Milne agreed that the ABC had a most important role in protecting the function of democracy in Australia and pointed to the ABC's sterling work on state and federal elections. Head of Editorial Policy, Alan Sunderland, made the familiar point that the ABC is routinely accused of being too left and too right. He pointed to the strict editorial standards that guided the ABC's coverage of issues.

Fiona Reynolds, Director of ABC Regional, provided strong reassurance that rural and regional interests remained a priority. Michelle Guthrie emphasised her view that public funding was a major part of the ABC's strength; it was owned by and belonged to the Australian people. Michael Mason, Director of Radio, sought to calm fears in relation to the survival of RN. He proclaimed that RN was a 'national treasure'; its specialised audience was highly respected and valued. RN would not be cut. Finally, Justin Milne tackled the question of alleged funding cuts to News and Current Affairs and deleterious repercussions. He stressed that demonstrating accuracy in reporting was essential to maintaining community trust in the ABC; the ABC would continue to maintain the highest possible standards in its reporting.

Michael Rowland asked the audience to thank the ABC Executives for their addresses and participation, thanked all attendees for coming and closed the meeting around 11.25.

Various members of the NSW ABC Friends were in attendance in Sydney and several members of the National Committee watched the streamed version. Initial reactions appear to be that the ABC has reminded the broader community about the extraordinary and most important role played by the ABC, most especially in these perilous times of ferocious attacks from extreme politicians wishing to see the ABC neutered and from the Murdoch camp, unwilling to brook any competition in the media market. Reassurances about ABC Management's commitment to continue with existing radio and tv broadcasting and commitment to RN were also most welcome. There was great appreciation that the ABC had taken steps to communicate with its loyal audience on the issues facing the organisation and on its strategic intentions.

The main disappointments related to the excessively managed feel of the event and the lack of time and opportunity for more discussion and even audience participation. Perhaps it would be naïve to expect a braver approach but the ABC can certainly be encouraged to allocate less time at the next Public Meeting to videos, less time to addresses and more to discussion. Taking contributions from the floor might be considered. Further issues include timing and location. The 10 am Eastern Standard Time start meant an early rise for streamers in the West. There is already a feeling in some quarters that the ABC is overly Sydney-centric. ABC Management may wish to weigh up the benefits of an alternative location for the next one. Finally, the ABC is certainly to be congratulated for holding this event, for its determination to communicate with its audience and for its very strong message in regard to the unique role played by the ABC and the absolute imperative that it must be properly funded.

(1) The Addresses by the ABC Chairman, Justin Milne; Managing Director, Michelle Guthrie and Chief Finance Officer, Louise Higgins are available on the ABC's website: <http://about.abc.net.au/apm/>

(2) David Tiley, "ABC downhill for thirty years- here's how", screenhub, <http://www.screenhub.com.au/news-article/news/policy/david-tiley/abc-downhill-for-thirty-years-heres-how-255197>

* My thanks to Sue Pinnock and other members of the National Committee who contributed their views.





NSW Friends' Meeting with Classic FM

Chris Scaddan, Mal Hewitt, Toby Chadd, Margaret Throsby, Damien Beaumont, Gayle Davies and Birthday Cake.

Mal Hewitt
Editor and
NSW President



On 24th January Ed Davis, Gayle Davies, Angela Williamson and Mal Hewitt met Chris Scaddan (Head of Music), Matthew Dewey (Head of Classic FM) and Toby Chadd (Classic FM Development).

We were treated to a tour of the Classic FM studios, and met Producer Don Bate, Presenters Russell Torrance, Damien Beaumont and Margaret Throsby, and shared a birthday cake for CFM's 42nd birthday, to the day (thank you, Angela!)

OUR AGENDA ITEMS

1) Loss of highly valued staff. Perhaps the catalyst for growing concerns from ABC Friends was the departure of both Phillip Sametz and Graham Abbott, and a sense of bewilderment that the ABC would get rid of its finest classical broadcasters. Phillip was popular, entertaining, knowledgeable – just right for the early morning shift. Graham had enormous credibility as a performing musician,

music educator, a great radio voice, encyclopaedic knowledge, and Keys to Music, was, in the opinion of many, the best thing on Classic FM. So why scrap it? Colin Fox is another experienced presenter whose experience, knowledge and broadcasting skills is sorely missed.

RESPONSE - To our surprise, they reported that the ratings figures for “Keys to Music” were on a steady downward trend, resulting in the scrapping of the program and its presenter. No reason was given for the departure of Phillip Sametz. Educational programs were still considered to be a high priority, but clearly not this one! We questioned the accuracy of their audience surveys – we were a group of constant Classic FM listeners, none of whom had ever been surveyed.

2) Concern at a loss of quality and a lowering of standards with some of the new presenters, and a lack of preparation, training and support to enable them to do the job adequately. Examples given are poor diction (the “gunna” syndrome), poor expression, difficulty with musical terminology (allegro, scherzo), frequent mispronunciation of composers and titles of works, and too much expression of personal opinion about music rather

than objective presentation. As part of the search for a new audience, is there a policy that presenters should sound young and have rather broad Australian accents?

RESPONSE - There is some training for beginning presenters – Margaret Throsby is being used in this, and there is (they say) monitoring of foreign language usage – clearly not enough, we said. But a variety of accents is considered acceptable, even desirable. There was no reply to our suggestion that young, short-term employees are cheaper than experienced permanent ones.

3) Friends have commented on the seeming lack of co-ordination or oversight of the programming of works, leading to frequent repeats of pieces, even from one presenter shift to the next – Gabriel's Oboe gets a mention, and the Mendelssohn Octet is certainly a work of genius, but it has had huge exposure since Christmas. It is clear that, if listener requests are included in programs, a certain amount of repetition will be inevitable. Is there editorial oversight of what goes to air?

RESPONSE - Matthew Dewey has editorial responsibility for what goes to air. It was acknowledged that there has been frequent duplication of broadcast

material, but listener requests make this difficult to monitor and moderate. Detailed forward planning of broadcast material (other than live broadcasts) is difficult, and exacerbated by shortage of staff. Will try to do better! Realities and complexities of presenters operating across four capital city studios.

4) Frustration at the lack of future program information on the website. Many listeners like to plan their listening, but have expressed frustration that this is not possible because programs are not available in advance.

RESPONSE - Acknowledgement that the website is a mess, but Toby Chadd is working on it, and improvement has been promised.

5) Radio is still the preferred medium for Classic FM listeners – Friends accept the inevitability of new technology, but wish to remind ABC Management that radio is still the source for the majority of the Classic FM audience, and will remain so. Digital alternatives are neither practical nor possible for many listeners. The loss of short wave radio broadcast to vast areas of remote Australia is an excellent example of ABC Management ignoring reality in branding short wave “outdated technology” but failing to recognise that for many thousands in remote areas, it actually works, and is the only medium that does work.

RESPONSE - Strongly stated that there

are no plans to take the FM out of Classic FM, and acknowledgement that the radio audience is by far the largest.

6) The constant and even desperate desire for dialogue between presenters and audience, and the requests for audience feedback may well be part of management’s strategy to seek new audiences for Classic FM, but it is a major source of irritation to many listeners, who would much prefer that Classic FM just got on with the business of presenting fine music.

RESPONSE - Management supports the practice that presenters should be able to interact with audience as much or as little as they choose. The ability to message is apparently popular with many listeners, and in keeping with the Guthrie push for more audience involvement.

7) There is no doubt that, at its best, Classic FM does a brilliant job at bringing Australian performers and performances to a national audience (especially the live broadcasts from our national music festivals, and of our outstanding ensembles). Friends is very aware of the effects of funding cuts on Classic FM, especially the broadcasting of live



Classic FM Producer Don Bate renews an old musical friendship with Mal Hewitt

performances, and we appreciate the opportunity to discuss our concerns with representatives of ABC Management, so that we can communicate to our members the reasons for the changes which they may find difficult to understand. Since this meeting, the Classic FM programs and presenters have seen some changes as we move into the year. We expressed our appreciation at the willingness of Management to meet and talk.

RESPONSE - A firmly stated willingness on the part of management to maintain dialogue with Friends on any matters of concern. Classic FM is committed to broadcasting our leading music organisations, and negotiations are proceeding to broadcast Opera Australia productions.



6am to 10am presenter Russell Torrance at his desk (he presents standing), explaining the merits of CFM software.

ABC library

closures



Gayle Davies
NSW Membership
Secretary and
former librarian

The delights of our visit to Classic FM on the 24th January were dashed barely a week later, when the Guardian reported on 30th January, that the ABC had announced a proposal to close its sound and reference libraries in Adelaide, Hobart and Perth, to reduce library services in Sydney, and 10 specialist librarians were to be made redundant, (“ABC dismantles sound libraries and axes staff to improve budgets”). On 6th February, the Guardian further reported that the “ABC plans to send its entire book collection to Samoa to save money”

The ABC’s CDs and vinyl records, comprising more than half a million items, provide unparalleled collections of sound recordings, representing both Australian and overseas musicians and performers, in a variety of genres. Although all the items are commercially produced, many are now hard to find, and cannot be easily replaced. The Perth library for example, contains a large collection of World Music, assembled over many years by Radio National’s Doug Spencer and Lucky Oceans, now unused since the Daily Planet was axed, in last year’s purge of music from RN.

Between them, the 10 specialist librarians (often combining library training with musical ability and broadcast talent) have more than 200 years’ worth of skills, knowledge and experience. This corporate and collection knowledge is irreplaceable.

The Australian Library and Information Association has written to the Minister for the Arts, Chair of the ABC Board

and ABC Managing Director. It has also communicated with the Department of Communications and the Arts, sought support from ABC staff, cultural institutions and peak bodies, and has co-ordinated a collection of submissions, including from ABC Friends, which were sent to the Minister and the Board on 5th March. The ABC Friends’ submission can be read on the ABC FriendsNSW/Act web-site here:

www.fabcnsw.org.au/PDFs/ABCFriends_ABC_Libraries_submission.pdf

Copies of the Friends’ submission have also been forwarded separately to the Shadow Minister for Communications, the Greens spokesperson for Communications, and other selected politicians in Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia.

No official response has yet been received to ALIA’s representations, but the Minister’s response to an individual submission included this gem: “...whilst the Australian Government provides an overall level of funding to the ABC, the ABC has independence in relation to operational matters. **Parliament has guaranteed this independence to ensure what is broadcast is free of political interference.** Decisions regarding how the public investment in national broadcasting is expended is a matter for the ABC Board and Executive” (tell that to Emma Alberici !)

Individual representations can be made to the Minister, Shadow Minister, Managing Director and Board.

Lists of Federal Members and Senators for all States can be found online at :

https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members

Contact the ABC Board and Managing Director:

ABC Managing Directors Office
Box 9994 GPO Sydney NSW 2001
Telephone (02) 8333 5342

Email managingdirectorsoffice@abc.net.au

Contact the ABC:

<http://about.abc.net.au/talk-to-the-abc/>
(please use the ABC’s own contact pages to make comments/complaints etc about the ABC directly)

ABC Offices

National Telephone Number **139 994**

Callers will be connected to local State or Territory switchboard for the cost of a local call.

If you don’t have Internet access, librarians at your local public library can assist you to find the information on the web-sites referred to in this article.

Public library services are, like the ABC, free, and everyone has a right to access them.

Public libraries are supported by funding from national, state and local governments.



Why ABC Friends is Sounding the Alarm

Ranald Macdonald
ABC Friends National
Media Adviser



It must be obvious to all that the ABC is currently in a perilous position.

Sadly its decision-makers are giving the enemies grounds for being critical, and also desperately kowtowing to them.

My experience is that if you give a bully your wallet in the hope of being left alone, he/she comes back to demand your car and house keys as well

ABC editorial Director Alan Sunderland responded to articles, including one by myself, about the corporation's "Premature Knee-Buckle" to its detractors with the politically insensitive declaration that 'there will be no change'.

And how many bullies are being given airtime on radio and TV by the ABC who have proven to be irrational or conflicted critics of our public broadcaster?

The latest to bask in being treated as a serious commentator on Q & A was former Media Editor of The Australian, Sharri Markson (now with the Daily Telegraph) who attacked Media Watch and the ABC relentlessly.

On Saturday March 3, columnist of the Daily Telegraph Tim Blair (sorry, who?) produced a column headed "Privatise the whole damn thing" (he was referring to the ABC)



Anyone who takes on the ABC seems to be given air time on TV or radio allowing them to be seen as serious commentators.

Just think of the Daily Telegraph's record for 'fair and balanced' reporting, think of 'conservative columnist' Tom Switzer who is on ABC RN and wrote a recent schoolmasterly article using the Communications Minister Mitch Fifield's terms (and formerly Fox news's credo in the US of A) of the need for "fair and balanced" news reporting.

Quite apart from the fact that "impartial and accurate" are already in the Editorial Policy – our anger as Friends is the continued disregard of the ABC's statutory guarantee of being free of political interference i.e. Independent.

Think of all the others - journalists, IPA and politicians - that the ABC gives platforms to so they are allowed to appear to be serious and informed commentators.



Political bias and ABC Friends By Gayle Davies

ABC Friends is funded entirely by membership fees and donations. It does not receive funding from government, political parties or other corporate entities.

The Friends NSW Executive Committee recently considered whether to promote the Australia Institute's campaign on behalf of the ABC, because the Australia Institute is perceived to be a "left-wing" think tank.

As the ABC itself uses spokespersons and presenters from a variety of "think tanks", we thought it might be useful to provide some sources of information about them, so that members can decide for themselves what viewpoints they represent.

Who's who: Australian think tanks – Sunday Extra – ABC Radio National, Sunday 8 June 2014, listen again here (no transcript available, but the take-home message is "follow the money trail". Significantly since this program was broadcast, there have been some changes at RN – the presenter of Sunday Extra is now Hugh Riminton,

Senior Reporter with 10 Eyewitness News, and Tom Switzer, Executive Director of the think tank Centre for Independent Studies, is the presenter of "Between the Lines")

www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/sundayextra/905-segment/5502446

Presenter: Jonathan Green

Guests:

Terry Moran National president of the Institute of Public Administration Australia

Bob Burton Author of 'Inside Spin' & former editor of Sourcewatch & writer for PR Watch

Damien Cahill Senior Lecturer in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Sydney

Are Think Tanks Undermining Australian Democracy? / Glenn Savage. Democracy Renewal. Melbourne University School of Government

<http://democracyrenewal.edu.au/are-think-tanks-undermining-australian-democracy>

Think Tanks Australia (US Centre for Media and Democracy) – lists the web-sites of 24 Australian think tanks (last updated one year ago)

www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Think_Tanks/Australia

Think Tanks Based in Australia.

Wikipedia. Lists web-sites of 46 Australian web-sites (last up-dated 7 months ago) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Think_tanks_based_in_Australia

Senate Select Committee on the Political Influence of Donations

– due to report 28th March 2018

www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Political_Influence_of_Donations/PoliticalDonations

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

Inquiry into the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Bill 2017. Submissions closed 9 March 2018. Due to Report 28th March 2018

www.aph.gov.au/efdr





A public broadcaster that bows to political pressure isn't doing its job

The Conversation

February 20, 2018

Johan Lidberg - Associate Professor, School of Media, Film and Journalism, Monash University

The ABC's chief economics correspondent, Emma Alberici, did her job the other day. She wrote a well-researched analysis piece investigating whether the Turnbull government's proposed company tax cuts would grow the economy and break Australia's wages deadlock.

Alberici's article came in for a lot of criticism from the Turnbull government for its one-sidedness and lack of balance. Later, the ABC took down the article from its website.

If you read her piece, you'll see that, yes, she could have included more voices, and yes, the case for company tax cuts was forcefully argued against. But the argument and analysis was built on sound research, as Saul Eslake (one of Australia's most senior and respected independent economists, who was quoted in Alberici's story) has pointed out.

So, why on earth did ABC take the article down?

Part of the answer to this lies in the very editorial policies that are supposed to safeguard the ABC's independence. The current wording of these policies function as a straitjacket on ABC journalists and make it hard for them to toe the line between analysis and opinion.

And that in turn makes the ABC look less independent.

High level of trust

One of the ABC's greatest assets is the high public trust it enjoys compared to many of its commercial media competitors.

That trust is to a large extent built on the broadcaster maintaining and defending its independence from commercial, political and any other societal interests.

There are a lot of misconceptions regarding what a public broadcaster is. But one thing it is not is a government or state broadcaster.

There are certainly examples of some public broadcasters that are. One prominent recent case was when the Polish government in practice took control of the country's public broadcaster and turned it into a government mouthpiece.

A serious case of self-doubt

The ABC Act and the ABC Charter are the safeguards of ABC's independence from the government of the day. This independence was challenged to unprecedented levels by the Abbott government a few years ago.

A new major challenge to the ABC's independence is the current change, driven by One Nation, to the ABC Charter requiring it to be "fair" and "balanced" in its reporting. If you recognise these terms, that's because it used to be Fox News' catchphrase.

The ABC is not turning into the Polish Broadcasting Corporation, but it has clearly lost a lot of confidence lately. In Alberici's case, it appears it bowed to government pressure when it should have stood its ground.



“Alberici's article came in for a lot of criticism from the Turnbull government for its one-sidedness and lack of balance.”

But getting heat from the government of the day (regardless of the particular side of politics) is an indication that a public broadcaster is doing its most important job (provided you get your facts right): holding power to account. If you bow to political pressure, you're not doing your job.

A public broadcaster with a confidence problem is a serious issue for political and democratic wellbeing.

Globally, there are between ten and 15 properly funded public broadcasters (depending on what level of funding you define as proper) with enough funding and safeguards to be able to call themselves editorially independent. This means there are only ten to 15 large repositories of in-depth public interest journalism – globally.

So, the case is strong for the Australian public to get behind the ABC and ask it to snap out of its crisis of confidence. Then it can get on with the job of keeping power to account – just like Alberici tried to do.



Speakers at the ABC's 'Population unlimited?' debate, 23 August 1944. Jessie Street speaking, Enid Lyons facing her and Norman Haire in the far left (Colin Clark spoke by phone from Melbourne).



ABC Furores:

Then and Now

By Dr Diana Wyndham



Cartoon by Thomas Challon

'A new Aesop: The Haire and the Lyons – Population Unlimited'
 Norman Haire: 'My dear Dame Preventions is better than curette'
 Enid Lyons: 'My dear doctor! A litter is better than a letter!'

Senior ABC managers have recently come under fire over their mishandling of the secret cabinet files and their failure to back chief economics correspondent Emma Alberici. A 2017 survey found that only 17% of ABC staff believed that senior management valued them. In contrast, a story about a 1944 radio debate on population - the ABC's 'largest controversy during the war years' - shows the vision and bravery of these ABC senior managers who resolutely withstood strong political, media and religious criticism.

The ABC began broadcasting in 1932 when radio was in its infancy. A decade later the ABC executives made the risky decision to launch *The Nation's Forum of the Air* in support of 'tolerance, reason and justice' and to 'establish radio as an active force in political education'. It was proposed by the ABC's Director of

Talks B. H. Molesworth who had worked in university extension courses and adult education. In response to General Manager Charles Moses' 1939 memo on 'Controversial Subjects', Molesworth suggested that the debates should be discussed with minimal censorship and should allow the other side the right of reply. His scheme was approved by the ABC's executives and commissioners. It was a great win because Moses shared Prime Minister John Curtin's dislike of too much talking and too much serious music and preferred light entertainment to cheer people up.

One of the brightest thinkers was W. Macmahon Ball, formerly Chief Executive of Radio Australia, who returned to the ABC to run *The Nation's Forum of the Air*. He selected the subject and the four speakers for a forum on the birth rate. Macmahon Ball's job was difficult because his superior (the ABC's Director-General of Information E. G. Bonney) shared the views of the anti-intellectual Arthur Calwell who

became Minister for Information in 1943. Macmahon Ball clashed with Bonney, and the ABC was also harassed by the Gibson Committee, an all-party Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting, which Moses dubbed the 'Standover Committee' after Calwell became the chairman.

Despite the war, Moses approved Macmahon Ball's selection of birth control advocate Dr Norman Haire as the key speaker (in favour of limiting the population) supported by the feminist and peace activist Jessie Street. Dame Enid Lyons and Mr Colin Clark argued that Australia urgently needed a large, rapidly growing population.

Complaints began *before* the broadcast. In response to the 'strong opposition' from the Rev David J. Knox (on behalf of Moore Theological College's Public Morals Co) Prime Minister Curtin informed the theologian that 'Macmahon Ball had made enquiries of leading members of the medical profession in Sydney' and in their opinion Dr Haire 'would be the most competent man available in Australia

to put the case [and] that under the provisions of the Australian Broadcasting Act both National and Commercial broadcasting stations are permitted almost complete freedom in the selection of their programmes’.

Dame Enid Lyons was a Catholic convert and mother of eleven who had entered parliament in 1943 after the death of Prime Minister Joe Lyons, her husband. Her debating partner was Colin Clark, a Catholic convert and father of nine. He was an economist and head of the Queensland Bureau of Industry and Statistics and his task was to provide facts and figures. However, he departed from his agreed script and claimed that

contraception was condemned by all religions and that contraceptives and the people using them were filthy, vicious and disgusting. In response, Haire (the youngest of eleven children) described how his mother’s eighteen years of unrelenting childbirth had prematurely aged this previously young fit woman. This caused pandemonium in Parliament with several politicians calling Haire ‘despicable’ and accusing him of mocking motherhood. No one criticised Clark’s offensive outburst.

The ABC’s efforts to implement innovative programs and to foster free speech caused a furore but the Chairman and the General Manager defended Haire and the

program. Haire’s stance was denounced by conservative groups, particularly Roman Catholics, some Anglicans and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. The ABC Board was brave to choose Haire to lead a debate which opposed Australia’s ‘populate or perish’ policies. In the following ruckus they withstood calls for censorship and strong political, religious and media criticism. The ABC did not buckle under pressure - the issue concerned the right to use contraception and the broadcaster’s right to defend free speech unfettered by outside interference.

Dr Diana Wyndham, author of *Norman Haire and the Study of Sex* (Sydney University Press, 2012)



Margaret Reynolds, Peter Monie, Ranald Macdonald meet Parliamentary Friends

FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

MARGARET REYNOLDS

The invitation to meet with the Parliamentary Group of ABC Friends was originally issued for December 2017 but was postponed when that sitting week was cancelled so it was rescheduled for the second sitting week of 2018.

ABC Friends National Media Adviser, Ranald Macdonald, Treasurer Peter Monie and President Margaret were in Canberra from Tuesday 13th to Thursday 15th February .

On Tuesday evening we attended a Forum organised by Peter Lindenmayer who has been working to re-establish the ACT Branch. It was chaired by former ABC personality Di Martin and attended by about forty members and supporters, so we engaged in a useful discussion about current threats to the public broadcaster and the need to rally our Defenders Campaign.

On Wednesday we met Members of the new ABC Government Relations Team working with Fiona Reynolds (formerly Regional Director) who has taken on this position while Mick Millett is on extended leave.

In Parliament House several hours were spent calling into senators’ offices to deliver ABCF information packs, which contained our Vision Statement, copies of submissions to Senate Inquiries, Survey Report and the John Clarke calendar.

Special contact was made with new Tasmanian senators Richard Colbeck (Lib) and Steve Martin (Ind) Greens Spokeswoman Sarah Hanson Young and Xenophon Senator Stirling Griff and Chair of Communications Estimates Senator Anne Urquhart (ALP).

We also met with Director of the Australia Institute Ben Oquist to consider 2018 priorities for public broadcasting.

On Thursday we were welcomed to the Meeting with ABC Parliamentary Friends by Co Convenors Andrew Willkie (Ind) and Mike Freelander (ALP) and joined by the Shadow Minister Michelle Rowland and Parliamentary Friends Josh Wilson, Andrew Leigh, Brian Mitchell, Warren Snowdon, Sue Templeton, Claire Moore, Helen Polley and staff from offices of Cathy Mc Gowan and Rebekah Sharkie.

KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED

- **ABCF National Committee structure and 2018 Focus- Defenders, Protecting ABC Charter and its Independence**
- **May Budget and Triennial Funding. Competitive Neutrality Inquiry, Senate Inquiries**
- **ABC Public Meeting .**
- **Concerns about Changes to Radio National and ABC Sound Archives.**

2018 is shaping up as a crucial year for defending the national public broadcaster so we know there is good support in the Parliament. However, we must do more work in alerting all parliamentarians to the risks facing our ABC from within government and those competitors who seek to undermine its independence.

We must always remind ourselves that whatever frustrations we take up directly with Management and Board, our prime focus must remain on the parliament where the future of the ABC will be determined.



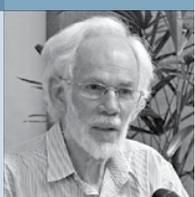
ABC Friends National Committee 2018



MARGARET REYNOLDS
PRESIDENT
(President TAS)

During her parliamentary career as a Senator from

1983 to 1999, Margaret Reynolds first made contact with the Townsville ABC News Room as a young anti-Vietnam activist in 1969; throughout the 1970s she was frequently interviewed about a range of local issues. As an elected alderman of the Townsville City Council, she was elected to the ABC's North Queensland Advisory Committee to represent the views of regional listeners and viewers. During her parliamentary career from 1983 to 1999, Margaret continued her interest in the ABC's role in Australian democracy. Since moving south in 1999, Margaret has been an active member of ABC Friends Tasmania. In 2015 she worked with other branches of ABC Friends around Australia to create a national organisation committed to protecting the public broadcaster. In January 2017 she became its inaugural national president.



MAL HEWITT OAM
VICE-PRESIDENT
(Vice-President NSW/ACT)

Mal Hewitt, National and NSW Vice-President, spent

his childhood in country NSW and, like many of his generation, grew up in pre-television days with the ABC Radio as a constant companion, almost a member of the family. News (local and international), weather, entertainment, music, arts in general, religion, current affairs and, most importantly, education came from the ABC. Mal has spent 50 years in music education, working with children of all ages as well as adults, and as a conductor of bands, orchestras and choirs. Classic FM is the constant companion, with occasional switches to RN for specialist programs, although there are constant reminders that both these networks have

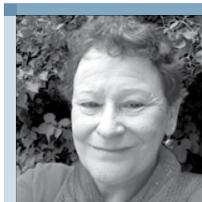
been starved of funds, resources and staff over recent years - the performing arts have suffered greatly from the loss of government funding.



PETER MONIE
TREASURER
(Treasurer VIC)

Peter Monie has been actively involved with ABC Friends for more

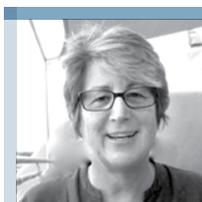
than 20 Years. Before that he worked in employment, education and training policy and research. He also set up and ran a company, Cottages and Castles, which let houses in Europe for self-catering holidays - the company ran for 25 Years.



BOBBIE MACKLEY
SECRETARY
(President WA)

Bobbie Mackley retired in 2010 after 30 years as an ABC staffer where she

was a veteran of many campaigns to 'Save the ABC'. Bobbie forged a strong connection with ABC Friends during these years and later joined herself. She was elected to the Friends' Committee at the end of 2011 and became President for a first term in November 2012. She believes the ABC plays a crucial role in all aspects of Australian life, and that its independence and viability must be preserved. She is particularly concerned about the down-grading and depletion of the national broadcaster's smaller capital city centres. She believes the current cuts to an already lean ABC will seriously compromise its ability to fulfil its Charter.



KATE DURKIN
National Committee
(Secretary TAS)

Kate Durkin joined ABC Friends upon

her retirement and took on the role of Secretary of ABC Friends in Tasmania in early 2016 and has worked since then to improve the infrastructure of the State branch, updating the Rules, upgrading systems and improving the level of communication with members. Kate is Tasmanian through and through, living in Hobart where she is primary carer for her mother and shares her tin shed house with Shirley, her partner of 30 plus years. Kate majored in Ancient Civilisations and later completed a Social Work degree. Her working life was spent in both government and non-government sectors, in both policy and service provision largely with children and people living with a disability. Activism in is Kate's blood and she has been part of many community groups over many years - working on environmental, peace and feminist issues. She knows that the efforts of any social justice advocacy group are undermined when the community does not have access to accurate and impartial information about the way the world works. She is a staunch defender of publicly funded media.



CATHY BARDON
National Committee
(Secretary WA)

Cathy Bardon grew up in rural Queensland. After

studying geology at the University of Queensland she worked as a technical librarian in the mining industry, then in publishing as a book editor, then as a petroleum geologist. After moving to Perth in 1994 she retrained in computer science and worked in IT at Curtin University for 16 years. At a May Day Festival in Fremantle she joined the ABC Friends (WA) and was soon on the WA Committee and then Secretary of the branch. She joined the National Committee in 2016. She believes an independent adequately funded public broadcaster is essential for a healthy democracy.



SUE PINNOCK
**National
Committee
(President SA/NT)**

Sue Pinnock has had a long career in secondary

education and for much of that time held the role of Head of Science, transitioning to Indigenous Student Coordinator in the last three years of her working life. Joining the Executive of the Friends of the ABC (SA/NT), and this year becoming a national committee member, has suited her interests in retirement. The ABC has always been an important part of her life: ABC Television was one of the few reliable stations when she lived in Port Pirie in her teens, and now she automatically tunes in to ABC TV and radio for entertainment and information. She says that, in this time of “fake news” and a 24/7 news cycle, there is too much to be lost if we don’t support the ABC to continue in its vital role as Australia’s independent, national broadcaster, free of advertising or corporate sponsorship and providing a reliable voice for all Australians.



JESSICA KNIGHT
**National
Committee
(Committee SA/NT)**

Jessica Knight’s ten year association with

Zonta International gave her experience in various committee positions. In July 2012, with the help of a dedicated committee, she used this experience to take on the role of President of a rather ailing Friends of the ABC-SA and rebuild it. Prior to retirement, Jessica was coordinator, at Western Sydney University, of a program for disadvantaged women wishing to enter university. For over 30 years, she was a Civil Marriage Celebrant and, since the age of 5, has been involved in theatre. Currently Jessica is a Gallery Guide at the Art Gallery of South Australia.



ROSS McDOWELL
**National
Committee
(President QLD)**

Ross McDowell says that he enjoys helping the

ABC through his involvement with ABC Friends Queensland. He has been the Qld president for several years. He has been working on those difficult exercises of communication between committee members vs traveling to a meeting place and notes that some members unfortunately do not use email. To relax he likes to get away in the caravan to places like Caloundra where he used to swim as a 5 year old with his family.



KENT EISING
**National
Committee
(Treasurer QLD)**

Kent Eising joined the ABC Friends (Qld) committee in

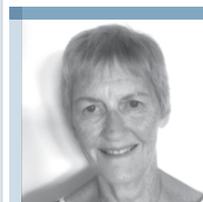
2014 and has been Treasurer since that time. ABC radio played an important part in his working career, keeping abreast of the latest developments in agriculture and animal production by listening to the Rural Report presented by Russ King on ABC Tropical North, Mackay. This led to a wider listening to ABC local radio. Having retired, he now spends more time listening to and watching the ABC. He sees ABC Friends National as having a role in keeping ABC management focussed on the Charter of the ABC so that all sections of the community receive high quality journalism and entertainment. Kent says that it is great being part of the National Committee as so much information is forthcoming. Queensland supporters of the ABC are benefiting from this work.



**PROFESSOR
ED DAVIS AM**
**National
Committee
(President NSW)**

Ed Davis is President of NSW ABCF. He

is passionate about public broadcasting, seeing it as essential to the quality of life of all Australians and key to the function of democracy. He believes that democracy cannot be sustained in the absence of accurate and impartial news and analysis. Ed is an Emeritus Professor at Macquarie University; he was Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Financial Studies from 2002-08. His focus in teaching and research has been Industrial Relations. He was a frequent commentator for the ABC’s PM in the 1980s. He was appointed a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2006 for “service to education and to the community in the areas of equity in employment, industrial relations and human resource management”.



LEONIE MILLAR
**National
Committee (Vice
President, Victoria)**

I have been a member of ABC Friends for over 15

years and have had a couple of stints on the Victorian Committee, the first from 2011 to 2014 when I resigned for personal reasons, and the second from mid 2015 until now.

My background is in education. I studied at Monash then worked in technical education then TAFE for over 30 years and I can’t remember watching or listening to anything other than the ABC from childhood.

On my return to the Committee I became Secretary and am currently Vice President of the Victorian Branch. While Peter was away last year I took over his role on the subcommittee overseeing the publication of the Clarke Calendar. It took a lot of time and was hard work but the result has been very satisfying.

Use of Social Media to promote ABC Friends and Raise Funds - July 17 - Feb 18

Paper for National Committee by Jeff Waters March 2018

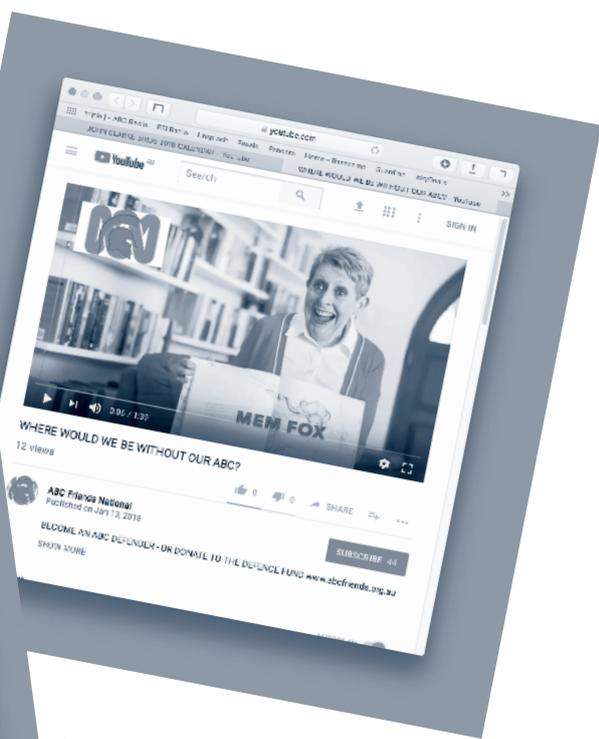
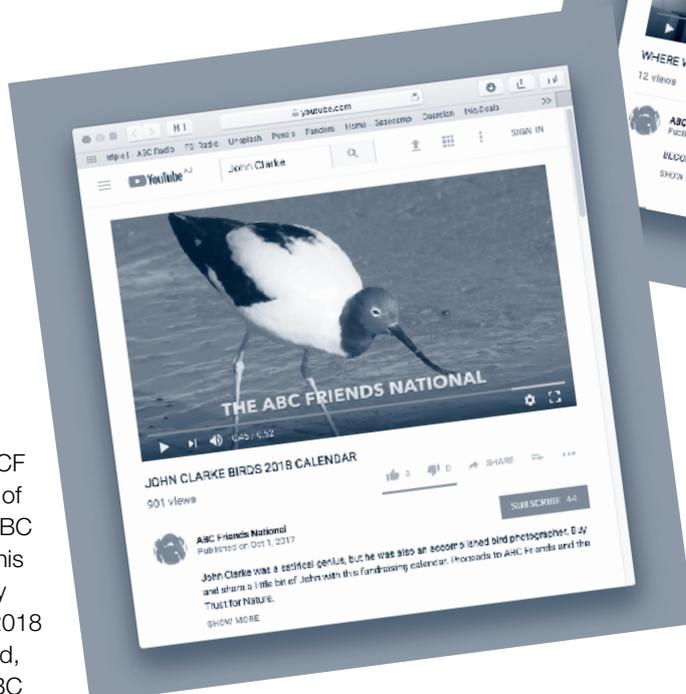
Over the past eight months ABC Friends' social media presence and support base has continued to grow. Although our posts to social media and the ABCF website include a gamut of subjects relating to the ABC and its political travails, this period was dominated by both advertising for the 2018 John Clarke calendar, and, to a lesser extent, our ABC Defenders Campaign.

The calendar posts and subsequent boosting were overwhelmingly successful, with the audience being particularly attracted both to our self-composed musical advertisement, and our almost daily posts of archival John Clarke-related content. This has emphasised the value of general archival ABC content to our audiences. There is an enormous amount of ABC archival material to be exploited in this regard in the future.

[HERE IS A LINK TO THE JOHN CLARKE CALENDAR FILM, ONE OF OUR MOST SUCCESSFUL VIDEOS](#)

ABCF also nimbly posted irreverent material based on political events, that resounded very well with the public. For instance our treatment of Nick Xenophon buckling to Pauline Hanson's calls for so-called reforms in the Senate.

Since July 2017 traffic to the ABC Friends website has been significantly driven by social media, varying between 47% in February to 87% in January, with the number of visits ranging from 3300 in February to 11400 in December.



[HERE IS A LINK TO A SUCCESSFUL COMPILE VIDEO OF THE ABC DEFENDERS CAMPAIGN](#)

Women make up 57 per cent of our Facebook following. Forty per cent are 55-years or older, with 43% aged between 35 and 54. Although overall numbers have grown, this represents a slight slippage back over the period toward the older demographic. A state-by-state breakdown is unavailable, but our capital city support by numbers is entirely proportional to the size of each city. However it is evident that we have far, far greater support in Queensland regional cities (including the Gold Coast) and Darwin than we do in largely more populous southern regionals, including Hobart.

In this period, we had 1.5 million video views, up 142% from the previous 214-day period. This increase is attributable to videos promoting the calendar. Our videos were viewed for 478,100 minutes, up 182% over the previous period. All but one top ten performing videos related to John Clarke. The one that didn't - the

second most popular - was the long "Defenders" video set to the ABC song, which is being repeated. We can expect a dramatic decrease in video views over the next period due to the calendar's absence.

Our videos have an average reach of 22,400, with an average of 1000 post clicks. Our posts of still images and graphics: 17,700 / 879, and links to external sites (normally media reports about the ABC) 9800 / 730.

During this period our "organic" (or unpaid) reach decreased by about 10 per cent, but our paid reach trebled. This can be attributed to the paid calendar advertising. It is clear that there is a positive proportionate return on expenditure on Facebook boosting.

The number of comments and reactions to our posts has increased by about 25% over this period, which suggests the audience has become/is becoming more politicised about the ABC. Anecdotally, negative responses are countered by very many more positive reactions from the audience.

Nobody has blocked us or, "unliked" us, and 22 people have opted to "hide" our posts. In the same period we gained almost 5000 new supporters, lifting our total number to just over 46,000.

We have increased our Twitter following by about 30 per cent to 1,820 followers, simply by replicating all Facebook posts on Twitter as they are posted.



State News



on 24-25 February. There were a lot of changes to the Writers Festival this year, perhaps reflecting a change in management. Unfortunately one of our Committee was stopped from handing out the flyers early on the first morning and informed we had to get accreditation from Festival Marketing. This was not forthcoming in time for the remainder of



Western Australia

Greetings to all our WA members. I am acting President while Bobbie takes time off overseas.

Our Committee has held two meetings so far this year, and prepared a WA flyer 'The REAL facts about your ABC' based on one prepared by Friends in Victoria but with some specific information on the dire ABC situation in Perth. See under for the adverse outcomes for ABC WA listed in the flyer. These are a direct result of the massive cuts to ABC funding – and there will be more cuts this year.

- Despite WA being the largest and most remote state, with about 10% of the population, in 2017 ONLY 4.6% OF ABC STAFF WERE BASED IN WA. This is down from 8.3% in 1974.
- There is no outside broadcast (OB) capability in WA. If an OB van is requested and approved, IT IS DRIVEN ACROSS THE NULLARBOR.
- The carefully curated Radio National music programs produced in Perth ARE NO LONGER ON AIR and the program-makers have been made redundant.
- The PERTH SOUND LIBRARY, built up over the years by RN and CFM program-makers and carefully curated by experienced Sound Librarians, is being dismantled with the loss of 2 staff positions.
- There is no longer a State Director, or finance or human resources personnel, at ABC Perth.



Top: ABC Perth Building. Above: The tenants of the second floor.

- There is NO RECEPTIONIST and the switchboard is CENTRALISED IN SYDNEY.
- All non-News and Current Affairs production staff in Perth have gone.
- THERE IS NO LANDLINE REPORTER BASED IN WA – a reporter is sent over three times a year.
- Most of the second floor of the custom-built ABC Perth Centre is now leased to screen production companies.

The flyer was prepared in time to be distributed at the Perth Writers Festival

the event; we were advised instead to seek accreditation in advance of next year's Festival. This is the first time this has happened in the 4 years we have been there.

We hope to hold more events this year, including a larger version of our popular and successful Quiz Night, and also intend to seek further meetings with WA federal parliamentarians to push the case for a properly funded independent national public broadcaster, free of commercial and government interference. The cutbacks to ABC Perth need to be given greater air

– lack of local coverage has far-reaching effects on the recognition of Western Australian issues nationally. We hope that our members will be able to help us with lobbying and events – if you want to do your bit, please email us at wa@abcfriends.org.au.

A reminder that we will have a stall again this year at the May Day Festival on Fremantle Esplanade on Sunday 6 May. It's a fun day for all the family with live music, stalls, children's activities and a minimum of speechifying! Hope to see you there, and if you'd like to help out on the stall, please email us at wa@abcfriends.org.au. Your assistance will be appreciated.

Cathy Bardon

On behalf of the WA Committee

Tasmania

Broadcasting Excellence Award Goes National

For many years, NSW/ACT Friends has presented this award to the ABC to recognise outstanding achievement. Past awards have honoured both individuals and programs. They have acknowledged distinguished careers, long histories of quality program content and one-off groundbreaking efforts in investigative journalism.

In 2017, following the formal incorporation of Friends nationally, we agreed that this award would take on a national focus.

On 13 December, Friends in Tasmania hosted an event with Michelle Guthrie as guest of honour and Margaret Reynolds (Tasmanian and National President) presented her with the first National Award, acknowledging the career of Mark Colvin and his extraordinary contribution to quality journalism in Australia.

The text of the Award reads:

Mark Colvin was a highly respected journalist and broadcaster whose reports from around the world inspired so many Australians. Born in England and educated at Oxford, Mark made Australia his home in 1974 and became one of the ABC's most familiar voices. His award-winning career with the ABC spanned more than four decades and he was a highly respected journalist, presenter and foreign correspondent, recognised as being a great interviewer with an in-depth understanding of world affairs. While reporting from the Rwandan genocide in 1994, he contracted a rare illness



Margaret Reynolds, President ABC Friends National, and Michelle Guthrie, ABC Managing Director

which seriously affected his health but he continued to be a major influence in ABC broadcasting until his death in 2017. He has been lauded as "one of Australia's finest journalists, admired and respected by his workmates and audiences alike for his intellect, wit and absolute integrity". His legacy to Australian public broadcasting is a gold standard of quality journalism which guarantees news and current affairs is independently reported and interpreted.

In accepting the award, Ms Guthrie spoke of the loss felt by her personally and the ABC as a whole on the death of such a fine journalist.

Kate Durkin
Secretary

PS. A huge thank you from Tasmania to NSW/ACT, especially Jason Lowe, for sharing your long history with this as we took on being the first State to make this presentation on behalf of Friends nationally.

South Australia/Northern Territory

It is over 12 months since the ABC ceased broadcasting shortwave (SW) radio into the NT and South Pacific on 31 January 2017. I can't imagine what it feels like to have a reliable radio service when you are working and travelling remotely, and then, have nothing. In SA, and through our national organisation, we are still advocating on behalf of those affected by this dreadful decision, to reinstate SW but via DRM (digital radio

mondiale). It is quite clear from the ABC's inaugural annual meeting on 9 February (a promising initiative to engage Australians) that their 2.0 Digital strategy is now their focus and that financial resources are being directed there. What is ironic is that with regard to radio broadcasting, DAB technology, suitable across Europe with denser populations over smaller geographical areas, does not suit the sparser populations of a vast Australia, whilst digital radio mondiale does. It is relatively cheap to set up, very reliable, overcomes the problem of "black spots" and can cover large distances from a single transmitter. It provides a high quality listening experience. What is more it would allow the ABC to meet its Charter obligations of a broadcaster for all Australians. We will persist!

It is going to be a busy year. Our FABC (SA/NT) Executive has mapped out our activity and we have already set in place our AGM (Sunday 19 August). This year at the time of our AGM, our Secretary (Dianne Jones) and Treasurer (Aussie Kanck) will be stepping down. They have provided sterling service to the Executive for which we will be thanking them. Treasurer and Secretary are important roles and these upcoming vacancies represent an opportunity for members, with interest and skills in these areas, to join us on the committee. We meet monthly, over dinner, on the first Wednesday of each month at The Prince Albert Hotel in Wright Steet in the city. Please get in touch with me if you would like more information.

We have a social sub-committee, busy making plans for more social events and, as an Exec, we are following up on the decisions we took last year. Some of these are: tapping into young ABC supporters, attending country shows to gain support and political and ABC connection building.

On 22 February, we set up an ABC Friends stall at Adelaide University's O Week Community and Volunteer day. It was good to engage with students about the work we do, tap into how and when they access ABC content and tell them about the RN podcasts that are an excellent resource for many courses. International students were interested in our public broadcaster, often coming from countries where having one that is independent is not a given! Cupcakes with the ABC logo were happily accepted and our free raffle with first prize of Triple J's Top 100 CD was popular. Thank you to John Swan, on Exec, for spear heading this initiative.

State News

On 31 January I met with Graeme Bennett, ABC Adelaide Radio Manager, to present him with ABC F National's Excellence in Public Broadcasting Award in honour of Mark Colvin for 2017. Graeme was very generous with his time and showed me around the newly refurbished ABC offices. It was good to meet Graeme and get some insight into operations at Collinswood.

Senate Inquiries into two Bills have taken place within the last 2 months: the ABC Amendment (Fair and Balanced) Act 2017 and the ABC Amendment (Regional and Rural Measures) Act 2017. ABC F National made submissions to these inquiries. We do not support the Bills. The ABC Act

information about what we do and encouraging membership, we will have a free raffle for visitors to the market to participate in. There is a special prize of Sophie Thomson's new book, "Sophie's Patch: Inspiration And Practical Ideas From The Popular Gardening Australia Presenter". Very apt!

Sue Pinnock
President

New South Wales

It has been a very busy start to the year. The first major event for NSW Friends was a visit to meet the senior management team at Classic FM. Mal Hewitt (NSW Vice President), Angela Williamson, Gayle Davies (Secretary) and myself were warmly greeted and treated to a tour of the ABC's studios. We then raised a list of concerns and explored them with Chris Scaddan

and his team. Mal has written an account of this important meeting in this Update.

Next was the ABC's inaugural Public Meeting on the 9th February. Several Friends had managed to secure seats, including Angela Williamson, Chris Cartledge, Gayle Davies, Margaret Foy, Sue Noske and myself. A report is included in this edition of Update. The Meeting stirred a great deal of discussion amongst Friends and varied views were expressed via email and other channels. The NSW Committee at its meeting on the 12th February resolved: "That this NSW Committee congratulates the ABC on holding its first annual public meeting. The Chair, MD, and CFO reminded attendees of the ABC's extraordinary contribution to the quality of life of Australian citizens. At the same time, funding for the ABC has been cut in real terms by nearly a third since the 1980s. David Hill ABC MD in late 1980s calculated that the ABC cost every Australian 8c per day. In 2018 it is now a derisory 4c a day. Restoring ABC funding especially in the context of broad media upheaval and concern over false news is imperative. While managers fielded a number of selected tough questions about dumbing down, bias, commitment to RN, etc. - ABC Friends will welcome the opportunity for more discussion and more audience engagement at future public meetings."

A significant number of members have contacted us over the ABC's planned changes to its libraries and collections of books, CDs and records across Australia. Gayle Davies, a former senior librarian, has taken up the issue, liaising with the Australian Library and Information Association. In her submission to Minister Fifield on this matter she



Above: Adelaide Uni Open Day stall.
Below: Sue Pinnock with Graeme Bennett.

1983 and Charter, therein, should not be tampered with simply to suit political or commercial agendas. The ABC must be properly funded so that it is able to, more than, fulfil the existing obligations of the Act and its more than adequate Charter, for all Australians. In particular, the second Bill is an attempt by the Government to shift blame to the ABC, for the impact of budget cuts (\$355 million over 5 years since the 2013 budget). If the Federal Government really cared about the ABC, and its regional and remote viewers and listeners, it would fund the ABC properly. FABC (SA/NT) will be seeking the support of local Federal politicians for our position.

To end on a brighter note, we are looking forward to the coming ABC Gardeners' Market to be held in the ABC's Collinswood carpark on 14 April. Look out for our stall. As well as providing





Ed Davis with Armidale Branch.

wrote: "Reports of the proposed closure of the ABC's sound and reference libraries, centralisation of collections, the digitisation, then disposal of hard copy materials, followed by the retrenchment of ten librarians to save wages, are profoundly disturbing, and require clarification by ABC management." Her report on this is also in this Update.

At the end of February, my partner, Sybille, and I set off for a series of meetings with Branches up the coast. Our first meeting was at Armidale, where I met with media and communication academics at the University of New England and then attended the local Branch's AGM. Bruce Stevenson gave an excellent overview of the year's activities and intentions for the period ahead. I was then invited to talk and my focus at this and subsequent meetings was on the critical importance of public broadcasting; the major threats posed by political parties intent on cutting funds to public broadcasting and curbing the independence of public broadcasters; the threats posed by commercial competitors such as the Murdoch stable who appear to seize every opportunity to attack the ABC and press government for its emaciation if not extinction; digital disruption; and, the most important role for ABC Friends. Our next Branch was at Bangalow; some sixty Friends were in attendance. Our final two stops were Port Macquarie and Central Coast. My sincere thanks to Bruce Stevenson at Armidale, Peter Dickson and Jennie Hicks at Bangalow; Drusi Megget at Port Macquarie and Ross McGowen, Central Coast, for all their work in arranging the events and for their kind hospitality. It was a delight to meet with them and so many members and to hear their concerns and views first hand. While there is a familiar list of concerns about the ABC-dumbing down of TV News and 7.30 Reports, frustration at the number of BBC repeats on TV, distress over the loss of talented presenters on Classic FM- there is an absolute determination that the Friends

must fight for the ABC to be properly funded and independent of government meddling. The ABC is seen to be essential to the quality of life of all Australians and vital for the functioning of democracy in this country.

The NSW Committee is in the process of exploring links with media, journalism and other departments in Universities to see whether there might be areas of mutual assistance. For instance, might the Friends be able to assist university students doing assignments on public broadcasting and can we find out who is doing research on areas that are of concern to us? Are there students who might be able to assist us with submissions to government inquiries or with IT?

Finally, NSW is hoping to run a State Conference in mid or late August this year. We have sought expressions of interest in hosting the event from our Branches. We will be finalising the location, dates and agenda in the next couple of months.

Professor Ed Davis
NSW President

Victoria

One of our current emphases in Victoria is a campaign to increase our Membership and support base. So, we have recently written to Members, requesting that they invite friends and family to "Join the Fight". Our letter was couched in these terms:

"Dear Friend

Very recently, President Margaret Reynolds, Ranald Macdonald and I visited Canberra where we had been invited to a meeting of the Parliamentary Friends. There are now more than 50 federal Parliamentary representatives on this Group.

The ABC is under attack as never before and we need your help! The Government, as a result of a deal with One Nation has

proposed bills now before the Senate which would change the charter of the ABC, and ABC Friends strongly opposes the changes which could force the ABC to interview people with extreme views, such as those of holocaust deniers.

We need more "friends" to show our strength and to build a war-chest to stop this nonsense, and to forcefully present the case for better funding of an independent ABC.

Please join the Fight for the ABC by signing up two friends or family.

If every member can sign up two friends, we'll meet both our financial and member number goals overnight. Attached are two copies of a letter you can send to people you think may be interested in joining the fight. It's that easy! And you can personalise the letter with your handwritten or emailed comments. You may choose to make a gift subscription to your friend or relation.

I do hope you can help. And, if you'd like to discuss your ideas with me as well, please ring me on 0498 111 259.

Yours sincerely

Peter Monie
President, ABC Friends (Victoria)"

And this was the letter for Members to use as a recruitment tool:

"Dear

You may be aware I'm a member of ABC Friends and I'm asking you to join us. Here's why.

The ABC is under attack from powerful adversaries. One Nation has proposed bills before the parliament to change the Charter of the ABC which we believe would make it less impartial. Conglomerate news rival, News Ltd, and others, continue to undermine the ABC for their own commercial interests.

ABC funding is still being cut.

It's death by 1000 cuts. In the past 30 years the ABC's budget has been cut in real terms by 28% Further cuts of \$55M are proposed for 2017-18 and a further \$27M by 2018/19. Cuts to date have already impacted badly with 100s of staff being lost and the quantity and quality of programming being badly affected. You have probably noticed. Lateline – AXED; World Today – HALVED; PM - HALVED and much less local programming.

We can't let this go on.

In 2018 we are preparing for a Federal

State News

election and the Federal Budget is due in May. Now is the time to put pressure on our government to STOP THE ROT. ABC Friends is determined to put up a fight and is launching a year-long campaign to obtain better funding for the ABC.

ABC Friends can and does make a huge difference.

Since being formed in 1976, we've had many successes holding governments of all persuasions to account with high-profile activities in so many ways. While interference and cuts have happened, the government knows it's vulnerable and we've been able to minimise the damage.

We need more members to be even more effective.

ABC Friends urgently need your support for the campaign. Please join us. Our membership rates are moderate and a membership form can be found on the back of this letter. We publish a Newsletter, Update, 3 times a year and keep you informed in many other ways, as well. <https://www.abcfriends.org.au/>

Yours sincerely"

We have had a very good response to this membership drive – many are opting for gift subscriptions, and some members are arranging bequests.

In the first two weeks of our campaign, we increased our membership by 6% - a very good start.

Peter Monie

President, ABC Friends Victoria

Victorian Groups Report

Southern Bayside Group – this group meets on a regular basis to plan activities to both raise the profile of ABC Friends and to raise money. They did a sterling job in selling more copies of the calendar than any other group and should be congratulated on their efforts.

Contact Ivor Donohue 03 9580 6402 or ivor_donohue@hotmail.com

Boroondara Group – the group meets on a monthly basis for lunch and to plan activities. Currently the group is planning to hold a stall at the Kew festival in cooperation with the Eastern group. Nine members attended the latest meeting.

Contact Gael Barrett 03 9859 5185 or barretts75@gmail.com

Castlemaine Group – the second meeting was held last month with 18 members attending and 10 apologies. Graeme Connelly from the Victorian Committee spoke to the group. The next gathering will be in April when Ivor Donohue will be the guest speaker.

Contact Margaret Hanrahan 0421 338 155 or Margaret@nashcc.com.au

Eastern Melbourne Group – the group is organising letter writing sessions and has held a very successful street stall at the Glenferrie Festival. The group also held a street stall on Saturday March 3rd at Brentford Square; the main purpose

Inner Melbourne Group – the group did an excellent job organising the AGM and dinner in late November 2017, a very successful night attended by 150 members and friends.

Contact Russell Huntington 0401 080 762 or huntingtonrk@gmail.com.

Northern Melbourne Group – eight people attended the most recent meeting in February. Two street stalls were held on the 3rd March as part of the Batman by election campaign. One of these was in Station St in Fairfield and the other in Reservoir. Both Labour and the Greens had been contacted to ascertain their



Sally Moseby (Victorian Committee and Eastern Group member) and Victorian Vice President Leonie Millar with promotional car flag.

of which was to hand out the newly printed Fact Sheet which corrects some of the common misconceptions about the ABC; and to recruit new members. A flag suitable for flying from a car has been designed and a few printed on a trial basis to raise the profile of ABC Friends. Committee member Sally Moseby has been spotted flying the flag for the ABC, along with Vic VP, Leonie Millar.

Contact Neil Barter 0411 487 348 or jenbneilb@gmail.com

Geelong/Corangamite Group – this group is very active and meets on a regular basis. The focus is on getting the name of the ABC and ABC Friends into the public arena through attendance at community events.

Ivor Donohue, former Victorian Committee member, has been very active in supporting the group. The Group has interviewed sitting member for Corangamite, Sarah Henderson MP

Contact Ivor Donohue 03 9580 6402 or ivor_donohue@hotmail.com

views on the ABC via a questionnaire.

The responses of the candidates to questions provided the focus for the stalls and these responses were handed to members of the public.

The Fairfield stall was extremely positive with good awareness of the plight of the ABC while there was less awareness in Reservoir. Ged Kearney, the successful candidate, is a current member of Friends and has indicated that she would join the Parliamentary Friends.

Contact Margaret Hanrahan 0421 338 155 or Margaret@nashcc.com.au

Wodonga Group – this group has not yet formally been organised. However, Ivor spoke to over 30 people at a meeting at U3A and there was some interest in forming a group which will be followed up in the future.

Contact Margaret Hanrahan 0421 338 155 or Margaret@nashcc.com.au or

Ivor Donohue 03 9580 6402 or ivor_donohue@hotmail.com

NSW Branch News



followed by the entertaining, informative and inspiring talk given by ABCF president, Ed Davis (reported elsewhere in this Update). This was attended by about 25 members who really appreciated the visit of Ed and the opportunity to talk with him and his wife.

The AGM's elections did not produce any change in the executive, despite pleas for 'new blood', but three 'new' people offered to serve on the committee, including a possible new treasurer and a media savvy publicity officer. They were all appointed – with gratitude and acclaim.

The group continues to be represented at Sunday markets and occasionally to enrol

Above: Ed Davis with Northern Rivers Branch. Below: Addressing the gathering.

Northern Rivers

The highlight of our activities so far this year was the recent visit on March 4th, of Prof Ed Davis, newly elected NSW President of ABC Friends. Prof Davis addressed a crowd of approximately 60 people at the Bangalow Bowling Club, including local ABC Friends members as well as supporters from the general public. His message to us was clear: all political parties must be pressed to provide adequate funding to the ABC and the SBS. The Friends must focus on continuing to advocate for the independence of the ABC, and for its vital role in providing high quality broadcasting.

With the Federal budget in preparation, we contacted our Federal National Party member, to remind him of the support he expressed for the ABC when we met with him last year and to urge him to re-commit to adequate funding this year. We can only hope he puts his words into concrete action!

Recently one of our members in Murwillumbah raised the matter of frequent repeat programmes over the holiday period with Michelle Guthrie. The response he received on Ms Guthrie's behalf, indicated that whilst the ABC does not intend to annoy its viewers with repeats, factors such as the high cost of programme rights, the increased number of freeview TV channels and streaming opportunities, as well as budget constraints make it difficult for the ABC to bring new and different content to its viewers. An example of this was the



signing of a contract by BBC Worldwide with Foxtel, which allowed them to have first run of programs from July 2014. The ABC was not given the opportunity by BBC Worldwide to compete for the contract, and this means the ABC is unable to acquire these programs, which include a number of the first rate drama series, until 12 months after their premiere on Foxtel.

This amply demonstrates some of the funding issues faced by the ABC which must underpin our ongoing efforts as Friends.

Jennie Hicks
Secretary ABC Friends Northern Rivers

Armidale

The highlight of the last few months for Armidale Friends was its delayed AGM

new members there. It is working on ideas of attracting busy young and middle-aged people to its ranks – not an easy task. Suggestions from other ABCF groups will be welcomed!

Priscilla Connor
Secretary

Blue Mountains

**Inaugural ABC Annual Meeting
Ultimo Studios Sydney
February 9th 2018**

This was obviously going to be something big. Special, and important too.

The hype and advanced briefings, instructions and directions were very precise and unequivocal.

The excitement and advanced planning reminded me of my friends and I preparing



Ed Davis with Armidale Branch

for our day at the Toowoomba Royal Show in the 1940's and 50's!!

When I knew my application to attend was confirmed, I was happy to hear other members of the BMABCF were also attending. Oh joy!

At last the Big Day arrived. Naturally I missed my early train. I was going to be late. I would not be allowed inside. Frantic texts went back and forth between friends---

I would be able to attend after all. I was seated in time to hear the honoured "welcome to country". 450 members from all over the Nation filled the studio (where Q and A and The Book Club are also produced). A palpable sense of wonder and expectation filled the air.

The stage was regaled with illuminaries, The Chairman of the Board Mr Justin Milne, 4/5 members of the Board, the Managing Director of the ABC, Michelle Guthrie, retiring Staff Representative on the Board Matt Peacock, and 2 ABC presenters, Pip Courtney Landline, in Launceston Tasmania, Michael Costa Gardening Australia, in Rockhampton Queensland, each with several local ABC fans. All the above Speakers were articulate and passionate about their jobs and the ABC. Listening to all of them seemed to spread a feeling of "all's well with our Public Broadcaster." The increase in online programming and the staggering number of podcasting and vodcasts were eye openers. There is no doubt that the attraction of viewing or listening to suit

the individual has changed programming into the future. Many changes have had to take place, all media is suffering from huge changes, with the printed media the worst affected. I truly wanted to believe how great everything was with Aunty. However so much seems to be lost over the last few years. Then again the millions of dollars that have been pulled out of the ABC Budget, is it any wonder so many familiar faces and programs have been lost?

I must enthuse about the Presentation of all the above and it showed the extraordinary creative skill of ABC producers, camera and sound crew and everyone else involved in creating a 21st century, futuristic show. It was often quite breathtaking.

A Q and A followed, with the most often asked questions sent in by the public being answered by the most appropriate person from the ABC.

90 minutes and it was all over. It was certainly a packed hour and a half.

We all retired to the foyer where a sumptuous lunch was laid out for everyone. This was a great opportunity to network among so many of the staff present and to mingle with our favourite presenters. It was a top hour or two, and mixing with so many people that we felt we already knew. Because we hear and see the talented staff so often it was a very enjoyable time.

Margaret Foy, Past-President



Parliamentary Roundup

Some of the bills currently before the parliament affecting the ABC

Gayle Davies

If the links don't open from here, copy and paste them into your browser.

Australian content on broadcast, radio and streaming services:

Status: Accepting submissions. To report: 9 May 2018

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/AustralianContent

National Broadcasters Legislation Amendment (Enhanced Transparency) Bill 2017

Status: Accepting Submissions. To report: 26 March 2018

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/EnhancedTransparencyBill

Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015

Government Response to Report 9th March 2018

https://www.aph.gov.au/sitecore/content/Home/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/ABC_Rural_Regional_Bill/Additional_Documents

Senate Estimates Committee: Environment and Communications (February 2018)

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate/Estimates/ec

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (Fair and Balanced Bill) 2017 - Report 16th February 2018

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/ABCFairandBalancedBill/Final_Report

Future of Public Interest Journalism – Report 5th February 2018

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Future_of_Public_Interest_Journalism/PublicInterestJournalism/Report



ABC must spend 'more time talking to ordinary Australians' about hip pocket issues, internal review finds

Michael Koziol

Sydney Morning Herald
16 March 2018

I find Michelle Guthrie's comments here very concerning – is she telling us that she wants the ABC News coverage to be more like the commercials? (Editor)

ABC journalists should focus more on economic and hip pocket issues and “spend more time talking to ordinary Australians”, an internal review at the broadcaster has found.

An audit of the network's news coverage, designed to investigate claims of left-wing bias and “elitist” story selection, has concluded the ABC should be more concerned with the effect of issues on “average citizens”.

In response, ABC managing director Michelle Guthrie flagged more coverage of “hip pocket” issues, a greater number of human interest stories and more localised news bulletins.

The ABC's Editorial Policies unit examined eight weeks of news coverage across radio and TV and compared the ABC's stories to those offered by commercial news networks and the SBS. The period examined coincided with the campaign on same-sex marriage between September and November last year.

Senior ABC bosses Jane Connors and Alan Sunderland, who authored the report, found the ABC did select “substantially different” stories from its commercial rivals, including more foreign coverage and more social policy stories.

However, they found there was “no discernable difference” in the level of same-sex marriage coverage, which they described as “surprisingly low” on all news networks.



Connors and Sunderland found the ABC's extra attention to social policy issues did not come at the expense of economics or cost-of-living. “Rather, it happens at the expense of covering more general interest stories which affect fewer people, or replaying footage for footage's sake,” they wrote.

The review nonetheless recommended economic and hip-pocket issues be covered differently.

“At the moment, we focus on the politics of these stories or on the broad economic implications,” Connors and Sunderland wrote. “Both of these approaches produce important and legitimate coverage. However, we should also be more consistently concerned with effects on average citizens and spend more time speaking to ordinary Australians about their daily challenges.”

The reviewers said there could be an increase in the number of “lighter, human or general interest stories” offered by the ABC without dumbing down or trivialising its news content.

According to Connors and Sunderland, the recommendations did not amount to “wholesale change” but to a “strategic means of tweaking the mix of content here and there”.

But the report will comfort right-wing critics of the ABC who have argued it gives

too much weight to supposedly left-wing or progressive issues, such same-sex marriage. Even former ABC chairman Jim Spigelman has pointed to this, telling the National Press Club in 2013 that all journalists - not just those at the ABC - had a “social and educational background” which made them predisposed to taking an interest in such causes.

The ABC's eight weeks of research determined the commercial news networks had more than twice as much coverage of crime and local disasters than the public broadcasters. It also found the commercial stations ran twice as many “general interest” stories “without strong news value or other editorial significance, which are included primarily because of colourful pictures or lighter subject matter”.

The report gave special attention to ABC radio in Sydney, which it suggested had ignored several important local stories. It noted that on October 17, there was “nothing on the ABC” about the NSW government's plan to spend \$2 billion on stadiums, which “not surprisingly” became a major political story. The station also neglected to cover Salim Mehajer's failure to appear in court.

“Silence again from the ABC despite demonstrable local interest in a home-grown Sydney villain,” Connors and Sunderland wrote.

Join the ABC Friends

There is strength in numbers, and every membership counts at this time of unprecedented attacks on 'Our ABC'.

To join go to www.abcfriends.org.au or phone your local contact below.

State Branches

Victoria/National Office – ABC Friends

GPO Box 4065 Melbourne VIC 3001
Phone: 03 9682 0073
office@abcfriends.org.au

Queensland – Friends of the ABC

Ross McDowell
5 Dunn Ct Bunya Qld 4055
Phone: 07 3870 7718
kookaburrapa@gmail.com

Western Australia – ABC Friends

Bobbie Mackley
PO Box 534 Subiaco WA 6904
fabcwa1@hotmail.com

NSW & ACT – ABC Friends

Ed Davis
FABC NSW PO Box 1391 North Sydney 2059
Phone: 0438 166 986
president@fabcnsw.org.au

South Australia & Northern Territory – ABC Friends

Sue Pinnock
PO Box 7158 Hutt St Adelaide SA 5000
Phone: 0407 035 701
sa@abcfriends.org.au

Tasmania – ABC Friends

Kate Durkin (Secretary)
55 Feltham St North Hobart Tas 7000
Phone: 0447 645 345
tas@abcfriends.org.au

NSW/ACT Regional Branches

ACT Region

Peter Lindenmayer
Phone: 0497 976 945
abcfriendsintheact@gmail.com

Armidale

Priscilla Connor (Secretary)
41 Judith Street
Armidale NSW 2350
Phone: 02 6772 2217
priscilla.connor@iinet.net.au

Blue Mountains

Sue Noske (President)
Phone: 02 4751 8320
Mobile: 0421 020 610
sue_noske2002@yahoo.com.au

Central Coast

Ross McGowen
11 Weemala Cres
Terrigal NSW 2260
Phone: 0439 440 955
ross.mary1@bigpond.com

Eastern Suburbs

Nizza Siano (Secretary)
16 Holland Rd
Bellevue Hill NSW 2023
Phone/Fax: 02 9327 3423
nizzamax@gmail.com

Hunter

Allan Thomas
7 Cantwell Road
Lochinvar NSW 2321
Phone: 02 4930 7309
allan.thomas2@bigpond.com

Publicity Officers

Margaret and Robert Conners
4 Wattle Street
Bolton Point NSW 2283
Phone: 02 4959 8464
margaret.conners@bigpond.com

Illawarra

Jan Kent (Secretary)
PO Box 8
Keiraville 2500
Phone/Fax: 02 4271 3531
gunthorpe44@gmail.com

Mid North Coast

Drusi Megget
24 Arncliffe Ave
Port Macquarie NSW 2444
Phone: 02 6583 8798
fabc.midcoast@gmail.com

Harry Creamer

PO Box 1888
Port Macquarie 2444
Phone: 02 6582 6187
Mobile: 0431 158 252

Northern Rivers

Jennie Hicks (Secretary)
Phone 0431 958 911
northernrivers@fabcnsw.org.au

Byron sub branch

Jill Keogh
Phone: 02 6688 4558
jilldkeogh@gmail.com

Tweed sub branch

Sandy Copley
Phone: 02 6677 1570
aco9780@gmail.com

Lismore sub branch

Therese Crollick
Phone: 02 6624 2289
therese.crollick@bigpond.com

Victorian Groups

Borondoorra Group

Gail Barrett
03 9859 5185
barretts75@gmail.com

Eastern Melbourne

Neil Barter
0411 487 348
jenbneilb@gmail.com

Inner Melbourne

Russell Huntington
0401 080 762
huntingtonrk@gmail.com

Southern Bayside

Ivor Donohue
03 9580 6402
ivor_donohue@hotmail

Castlemaine Group

Margaret Hanrahan
0421 338 155
margaret@nashcc.com

Geelong Group

Ivor Donohue
03 9580 6402
ivor_donohue@hotmail

Northern Melbourne

Margaret Hanrahan
0421 338 155
margaret@nashcc.com