



We Say Hands off Our ABC

Full reports on both Melbourne and Sydney rallies on page 4 and 5.

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Update

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From the Editor (and National Vice-President)

Rallies, Protests and Activism by ABC Friends.

The people of Australia have sent a very strong and clear message to the Morrison Coalition Government in Canberra – "Hands Off Our ABC!" Many thousands of ordinary Australians rallied in our capital cities and regional centres in July to express their outrage at the devastating cuts to the ABC budget since 2014, the loss of almost 1,000 staff and many programs, the constant attacks on the ABC by Government members, and endless debilitating inquiries. The message is clear – do not interfere with the independence of the ABC, and its ability to report and comment fairly, objectively and impartially at all times and on all matters, without fear of government pressure and threats. We report on those rallies in this Update.

Several recent by-elections, culminating in the Wentworth by-election to replace Malcolm Turnbull, have featured the ABC as a major election issue, and sent a very clear warning to the government – "Hands Off Our ABC!" In Wentworth particularly, one of the safest Liberal seats in the country, was won by Independent Dr Kerryn Phelps, herself a strong ABC supporter. ABC Friends had a high profile throughout the campaign and on election day, and we thank all who worked so hard and gave so many hours to ensure that a properly funded and independent ABC was foremost in the minds of Wentworth voters as they went into the polling



Ed Davis and Angela Williamson working hard during the Wentworth By-election.

booth. Friends NSW President, Prof Ed Davis, a resident of Wentworth, ably led the Friends campaign, and lessons learned in Wentworth will be useful as we plan our Marginal Seats Campaign in the forthcoming Federal election. Ed's report on that campaign may be read in these pages.

It may be no surprise for you to read that further cuts to the ABC in the May 2018 Budget, and the increasingly strident attacks on the ABC from Government members and Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd. have resulted in unprecedented growth in membership of ABC Friends as Australians ask themselves the question: "Where would we be without our ABC?"

We warmly welcome all new members of Friends, and thank you for the many thousands of dollars which have been donated to the fight to keep our ABC strong and free of political interference. You have enabled Friends to be a very real presence and force in the Federal Election, which could be as soon as March 2019.

Turmoil at the Top of the ABC

The sacking of Managing Director Michelle Guthrie and resignation of Board Chairman Justin Milne have shone a very bright light on the leadership conflict at the top. It is hoped that lessons have been learned, as Friends have been openly critical of the politicisation of the ABC, the pressure being placed on the ABC by the various Government inquiries, and the continuing attempts to pressure management and directors to bend to the will of Government, including changing the Charter to suit political ends.

Fundamental to the health and independence of the ABC is the adherence to a Board selection process which is at arm's length from the incumbent government. Clearly, that does not apply to the current ABC Board, most of whom are appointments by the minister rather than the product of a rigorous selection process, and it is rather difficult to determine what they bring to the position in terms of background and experience useful to a public broadcaster.

ABC Friends is hopeful that out of the wreckage of recent events will emerge

changes and improvements to the process of selection of the Chair, appointment of Board Members and adjustments to the Management structure which will result in a politically independent, properly funded and courageous ABC, serving the interests of all Australians. The health of our democracy depends upon it.

Labor Promises to Restore Short Wave to Remote Australia

On 19th November, Labor made a promise that, if elected to government in 2019, it would provide \$2m to restore the ABC shortwave radio service to outback areas through the transmitters in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Darwin.

Since the service was turned off by ABC Management in February 2017, many thousands of residents of remote Australia and travellers have been denied an essential service – news, weather and road information, sport broadcasts, music, entertainment and emergency information in an area especially prone to cyclones. City-dwellers should understand that the short wave signal, although “old technology,” works in all weathers and conditions, has a range of at least 1,000k and can be received by a hand-held radio costing less than \$100.

ABC Friends has tirelessly lobbied ABC Management and government members for restoration of the service, but until now our pleas on behalf of those dependent on short wave have fallen on deaf ears. We applaud the promise from the ALP – you will find their Press Release in this edition of Update.

The Prime Minister’s Pacific Announcement

Prime Minister Morrison’s announcement on 8th November of his plans to support our commercial media broadcasting into the Pacific could well be regarded by Pacific governments and communities as a hostile act. Why would anybody want to inflict our ghastly commercial media and their relentless product advertising upon unsuspecting viewers and listeners in Pacific islands? Especially as, until 2014, our ABC provided world news, current affairs, entertainment and, most importantly, emergency information and bulletins via television (the Australia Network) and radio (Radio Australia), on a short wave signal that was reliable, even when the cyclones raged.

DF wrote to Crikey on 12th November: “When I was working in Vientiane in Laos, Radio Australia was beamed in on FM96, clear as a bell. In a Communist country, it was a welcome relief for the locals from the Government propaganda. In addition, people used to tune in to the learning English shows. When people praise Julie Bishop (who supported the turnoff) as a good Foreign Minister, I can only think their perspective is from someone who has never lived outside Australia.

When I worked in Fiji, and stayed overnight in remote villages, I was woken every morning by the sounds of Radio Australia’s news broadcasts coming floating across the village from the radios in people’s homes.

When Prime Minister Abbott cut Radio Australia and Australia Network TV, he

did more damage to Australia’s national interest than he will ever be capable of understanding.”

More coverage of this issue can be found in this Update.

Farewell Chris Cartledge

NSW technology and management guru Chris Cartledge is stepping down from the various positions he has held in ABC Friends for many years. We have all benefited hugely from his vast experience and expertise, and the unfailing generosity with which he shared both. National President Margaret Reynolds farewelled Chris with these words:

“Chris Cartledge was a wonderfully supportive member of the inaugural National Committee. He led the work to establish a national website, managing logistical challenges with quiet determination, focussing only on a positive outcome for us.

As a committee member Chris was invaluable in summarising the issue and suggesting our best strategy. We greatly value the skills and advice that Chris contributed to ABC Friends National. I will miss his charm and insights, but wish him a relaxed and satisfying retirement.”

I have deeply appreciated Chris’s support in the role of Assistant Editor, Update, but I warmly welcome Angela Williamson to that position, ably supported by D Diana Wyndham as chief proof-reader.

Mal Hewitt

National Vice-President
ABC Friends



“Gentlemen, it’s a reply tweet from President Trump: ‘You are very welcome. Most gratified you’re satisfied with all recent suggestions for policy decisions. Happy to continue advising re future management directions.’”



Melbourne Town Hall Rally 15 July

Leonie Millar, Vice President,
ABC Friends, Victoria

What a great day it was! A capacity crowd of over 2,500, banners and placards, great videos, a stirring song, passionate speakers and unanimous endorsement of our resolution.

There was a panel of four – Fiona Stanley, Magda Szubanski, Jon Faine and Margaret Reynolds chaired by Peter Greste. All were passionate in their defence of, and support for the ABC, noting that the ABC is integral to the social and cultural life of Australia, emphasising the role played in the capacity to hold governments to account for their actions in an independent way, the development of new talent, in emergency services and in promotion of community relationships in the Asia Pacific region, until, that is, this role was curtailed by the Abbott Government's cuts.

Additional speakers and input from the audience made it clear that the destruction of the ABC would be a tragedy, something akin to the loss of a limb. As Robert Manne said "there are many battles that liberal minded Australians need to fight ... almost none is more vital ... than the fight to save our public broadcaster, the ABC."

A major achievement was the leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, committing the ALP to support for our resolution which reads as follows:



Peter Greste addresses the crowd.

This meeting of friends and supporters of the ABC demands the following:

- A clear commitment from all political parties and individual politicians that the ABC will not be sold off or privatised
- That additional funding will be provided to allow the ABC to meet its Charter requirements to service the needs of all Australians
- That the independence of the ABC Board and Management, as set down in the ABC Act of 1983, be adhered to
- That the governance of the ABC in the interests of our democratic principles be clearly independent of any political or external interference

- That the ABC resumes its important role as Australia's voice into Asia and the Pacific with sufficient funding to ensure in-depth reporting into the region, as well as coverage back to Australians, of international news events.

In Victoria we are now doing our best to keep this fight front of mind through ads in trains, a presence at markets and public meetings, meetings with politicians, and generally gearing up to keep the future of the ABC as an important election issue. Recent events mean that we need to maintain pressure on the major parties – on the ALP to honour or improve its commitment to funding and on the LNP to reverse its current positions.



Sydney Rally to Save the ABC

9 July

Prof Ed Davis AM, NSW President

The Sydney Rally was the first of a series of rallies organised by ABC Friends and held around Australia. The rallies were held to protest against federal government planned budget cuts to the ABC, the establishment of government inquiries designed to weaken the ABC, a stream of attacks on it by the Minister for Communications and other Ministers, and a decision by the Liberal Party's National Council to sell-off the ABC.

The NSW Teachers Federation venue was selected because, in addition to the auditorium, it has a large overflow room, which could receive a video stream of the event. The Teachers Federation provided extraordinary and very generous support. I thanked their Vice President, Tim Mulroy, at the beginning of the rally and he spoke briefly, confirming his union's strong support and its endorsement of a motion demanding that the ABC should be properly funded and independent.

The four main speakers were: Phillip Adams, *Late Night Live*; Tom Keneally, iconic author; Kerry O'Brien, former host of 7.30 and *Four Corners*; and Magda Szubanski, actor and author. Additional addresses were given by Ebony Bennett, Australia Institute; Katelin McInerney, Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance and Sindy Ealy, Commonwealth Public Sector Union. Their organisations had partnered ABC Friends in this campaign. A late addition to the line-up was Julian Morrow, from *The Chaser* and *Checkout*. A feature of the rally was delightful music organised by Mal Hewitt, at the beginning, middle and end.

There was an overwhelming response to invitations to the rally and the auditorium and overflow room were packed with people sitting on the auditorium stairs and on the floor in front of the stage. The speakers delivered stirring addresses and these were met with enthusiastic applause



Above: Article from the Sydney Morning Herald covering the event.

The rally achieved strong coverage the next day in the *SMH*, *Australian* and *Guardian*. The *SMH* had a half page photo, showing the packed auditorium and there was extensive and favourable coverage in the *Australian* and *Guardian*. This was very important in taking the strong message to the government: "Don't mess with the ABC".

The rally passed the following motion, unanimously and with great enthusiasm:

This meeting of ABC Friends demands that the Turnbull government restore funding for the ABC to 2013 levels and commits to funding certainty for the ABC. We demand that the government implements policies to ensure the independent governance and operation of the ABC. This meeting calls on the leaders of all political parties to demonstrate their unequivocal support for these steps. The ABC must be well funded. It must have certainty of funding. It must be independent.



Above: Phillip Adams.
Below: Kerry O'Brien, Magda Szubanski and Tom Keneally.





Kerry O' Brien's Address to the Sydney Rally, 8 July 2018: Selected Extracts.

The technology that spawned the ABC was radio. When television came along the same arguments about the same need for the quality and diversity of product applied. Now the internet is the new technology, so there are more platforms for delivery but the same arguments about the need for ABC content apply. In some ways even more. This is the era of fake news, where the kind of integrity, of credibility, of trust that is the ABC's stock in trade, is needed more than ever.

I don't have a problem with any process that is genuinely about keeping the ABC honest. For many, many Australians it is a critically important public institution. It is funded by taxpayers. It should have oversight. And it does. From its own Government-appointed board for a start - from the Department, from the Australian Communications and Media Authority, and from those endless Senate Estimates hearings. It answers to the Parliament. It answers directly to its critics. It should have scrutiny. So long as the scrutiny being applied to the ABC is itself honest, and the government driving that scrutiny

has honest intent, and not a hidden agenda driven either by political prejudice or by ideology or by commercial interests. And, of course there's the constant vigilance from News Ltd's ABC re-education committee, ably led by Andrew Bolt, Piers Ackerman, Miranda Devine, Janet Albrechtsen and the rest. Boringly repetitive. Dripping with poison.

The ABC is the most scrutinised institution in this country. And yet, somehow, with its unique reach across the nation from its radio, its television and its on line presence, it manages to please most of

“
**I'm not sure about
the YouTube *Four
Corners* or the
YouTube *7.30*, but
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find something
of quality
somewhere.**
”

the nation most of the time. Independent survey after independent survey, over many years now, has measured a far higher degree of trust and regard for the ABC than any other institution in the country - public or private.

Credibility and trust in the public domain do not come easily. Particularly in this day and age. The ABC has earned that trust, time and time again.

(Kerry turned his attention to the IPA's *Against Public Broadcasting*, written by Chris Berg and Sinclair Davidson)

We all know, even two blinkered economists like Berg and Davidson, that the kinds of quality programs that are a fundamental part of the ABC brand and a part of its charter are expensive - programs like *Four Corners* and *7.30* and *Australian Story* and *Foreign Correspondent*. Do they survive in the fractured marketplace of the digital age? And if they don't survive, does it matter? Berg and Davidson would say no, because you can find quality all over YouTube if you want. Just dial it up. I'm not sure about the YouTube *Four Corners* or the YouTube *7.30*, but they say you'll find something of quality somewhere. It may or may not be relevant to Australia but that doesn't matter. Maybe it'll even be well-researched and well-sourced. Even factual. Or not. How will you know what to trust?

So, imagine *Four Corners* has disappeared and you're looking for something to fill the void that you won't actually find on YouTube or Netflix. Well the *Sunday* program on the Nine Network on Sunday mornings used to be pretty good. But that's gone. Unviable in today's disrupted industry. *Sixty Minutes* used to be pretty good - about 20 years ago, but it's gone more and more down market. There's always *Sunday Night* on the Seven Network as an alternative. That's the program that paid Barnaby Joyce and Vikki Campion \$150,000 for their self-serving interview. Oh well, never mind.

And when *7.30* disappears, where do viewers turn then? Well, Nine has *A Current Affair*. I can remember Ray Martin telling me once over dinner when I was at *7.30* and he was anchoring *ACA*, that they avoided politics there as much as possible because every time they had a politician on they knew they'd automatically lose at least two ratings points. And when they had to have those interviews, they'd keep them as short as possible. And Ray was and is a serious journalist. So, no *7.30*, no more politicians held to account on any

sort of regular basis. What about *AM* and *PM* and the *World Today* on ABC Radio. Do you think John Singleton would find a place for them alongside Alan Jones and Ray Hadley. A natural fit there.

Tom Switzer (has also been mounting a) case for privatising the ABC. Part of his case was to name eight ABC people who had worked for Labor politicians or represented Labor in Parliament. I was one, and Maxine McKew was another. Switzer didn't apply the same measure to ABC journalists with conservative connections but I will.

It took me no time at all to compile a list going well beyond eight. An impressive number worked for conservative prime ministers going all the way back to Menzies and Holt (Tony Eggleton), Malcolm Fraser (Owen 'Ocker' Lloyd and Jim Bonner), John Howard (Gary Dawson), Tony Abbott (Mark Simkin), and Malcolm Turnbull (Simkin and Hayden Cooper). 7.30 Report's Business Editor, Mark Westfield also worked for Turnbull when he was Opposition Leader. Pru Goward, who was the state-based 7.30 Report's Canberra correspondent before Paul Lyneham, has been a Liberal MP in the NSW Parliament for years, and now a Minister. Sarah Henderson who worked with me for the national 7.30 Report in its early years went into federal Parliament as the Liberal member for Corangamite. Paul Davey, who worked in the ABC's Canberra bureau for radio current affairs in the late seventies, left to become the National Director of the National Party. There are many more.

Mark Simkin was the ABC's chief national political correspondent when he joined Tony Abbott. His journalism up to that point was straight down the middle. So was Hayden Cooper's at 7.30, and that's the relevant issue. That's the benchmark. Fair enough that their professional connection to a political party should draw some scrutiny, but they should be judged on their journalism, not their professional association with a political entity. Sarah Henderson couldn't have been more professional in our Melbourne office before she went into politics as a Liberal MP, and the same was true for Maxine McKew before she ran for Bennelong in 2007 and unseated John Howard.

Update congratulates Kerry on his new book, A Memoir, launched by Gleebooks on 20 November. ABC Friends are partnering with Gleebooks to support this event.

LAUNCH of ABC ALUMNI

Matthew Peacock
Journalist, Author,
Former Staff-Elected
Director on the ABC Board



The next few months are potentially the ABC'S most important in decades.

It is at its most vulnerable – rudderless, with a discredited Board, a hostile Government and feral Murdoch opponents. It's still reeling from savage cuts and organisational shake-ups, and is facing a media revolution.

The staff keeps the shows on air despite all this, but it's getting harder. During the past few years around a fifth of the ABC's staff have been made redundant or have left.

Which is why ABC Alumni has been formed (www.ABCAlumni.net). Its aim is to harness the knowledge, commitment and affection felt by thousands of ex-staff for the ideals of quality public broadcasting – free, fearless, ethical and independent. We hope also to forge a strong alliance with the ABC's existing supporters – the Friends, the unions, other public media, academics and politicians – to ensure that at the next election and those to follow it is clear that Australian voters want the ABC to continue as a vital part of our culture and community.

In a few short months we have signed up nearly 200 former ABC staff and associates, and we have a great many more supporters. Some were already hard at work trying to rebuild the vandalised public broadcasting effort the ABC had built in Asia and especially in the Pacific. Some are about to provide training, mentoring and editorial reviews for the continuing staff, with the assistance of ABC management. We have already prepared Alumni submissions for the Government's review into this, as well as its competitive neutrality review. Others have collaborated to write the Alumni

submission to the current Senate inquiry, after lobbying to secure wide terms of reference.

We want to ensure future Board appointments are free from political interference and that Directors have experience in and commitment to public media. And we want to ensure greater funding certainty for the ABC, with the recent Budget cuts reversed. Above all we need to support the continuing staff at the ABC, who feel beleaguered and demoralised and are now working in an organisation that's suffered huge disruption.

ABC Alumni can provide advice, assistance and speakers for ABC Friends; we can collaborate during election campaigns, as we did in the recent Wentworth by-election, where the pro-ABC stance of the independent candidate Kerry Phelp's clearly helped her to capture a seat from the conservatives for the first time in its history.

We are still a fledgling organisation with virtually no money and rely totally on voluntary efforts, so we do need help. But in the months ahead, we hope to organise a national network in all capital cities and across regional Australia. And of course we also hope to organise social events, where former ABC staff can catch up with their old friends, relax and swap notes.

At our recent official launch at the ABC in Ultimo, the acting Managing Director David Anderson wished us well and urged Alumni to continue their support for the ABC.

Former 7:30 host Kerry O'Brien left little doubt how urgent the need is to mobilise support. The ABC is at a critical time. The next few months will decide whether it continues to be one of Australia's most trusted and cherished institutions, or falls victim to the attacks that have seen media organisations throughout the world crumble.



From the National President

People's choice not "captain's pick"
- Professor Fiona Stanley a trusted
ABC Board Chair!

In October ABC Friends National invited community nominations for a person committed to independent public broadcasting to be considered as Chair of the ABC Board.

The Federal Government had asked a Sydney-based recruitment agency to seek suitable candidates for consideration by the Nomination Panel before an appointment is made by the Prime Minister with agreement from the Leader of the Opposition.

ABC Friends National wanted community support to help prepare a short list of suitably qualified Australians to present to ensure that a diverse range of individuals was fully considered by Scott Morrison and his counterpart Bill Shorten.

National President Margaret Reynolds said "The Chair of the ABC must be a person with a commitment to independent public broadcasting and trusted by Australians

to guide the ABC through a complex period of media disruption and change." ABC Friends considers it is well placed to gauge community opinion about this appointment because it has a track record of working with the community to defend the ABC.

Recent ABC turmoil with the removal of the former ABC Managing Director Michelle Guthrie and the resignation of ABC Chair Justin Milne highlights the need for a highly respected and experienced person to negotiate a period of calm for the national broadcaster.

Over a three week period ABC Friends received over 50 nominations naming many eminent Australians and including a number of respected current staff. The community engaged in this process because they are concerned about yet another "captain's pick" - perhaps someone with corporate credentials but limited media experience or commitment to public broadcasting.

The most frequently nominated individual was Professor Fiona Stanley who has experience as an ABC Board Member as well as being a highly respected medical professional and academic. She was an Australian of the Year 2003 and National Living Treasure 2014 and is now the People's Choice as a leading contender to become Chair of the ABC Board. Short-listed nominees included Michael Kirby, Kerry O'Brien, Malcolm Long, Tim Fischer,

Peter Doherty, Quentin Dempster, Fred Chaney, Marcia Langton, Saul Eslake, Julian Burnside, Gillian Triggs and Tony Windsor.

The opening up of this somewhat secretive process is entirely appropriate because all Australians, not the government of the day, are shareholders in the ABC so are entitled to have a say about who is chosen to lead it.

ABC Friends National will be closely monitoring the ABC Board appointment process in coming weeks to ensure that legislative requirements are scrupulously followed by Mr Morrison and his advisers.

ABC Friends already has received support in several by-elections campaigning with the slogan

"VOTE FOR THE CANDIDATE YOU TRUST WITH YOUR ABC"

Now, the Federal Government and Leader of the Opposition have the opportunity to ensure that the New Chair of the ABC Board is a trusted Australian who will be a strong advocate for public broadcasting, a champion for its independence and a defender against political interference or manipulation.

Margaret Reynolds

President

ABC Friends National Inc.



Wentworth By-election

My
vote is
for the
ABC

Vote for the Candidate You Trust with Our ABC

The ABC is Australia's most valued and trusted institution. Under the Coalition government it has suffered:

- X Crippling budget cuts, with more ahead
- X Constant political attacks and interference
- X Liberal Party calls for the ABC to be sold.

If you believe that strong and independent public broadcasting is important then send a message to all political parties:

VOTE FOR THE CANDIDATE YOU TRUST WITH OUR ABC

ABC
Friends

Authorised by
Margaret Whealy,
1 Kings Cross Road
Darlinghurst, NSW 2010



Sybille Frank, Robert Gubbins, Ed Davis, Meredith Pragerat on the day.

speak to me, I received an email from the Liberal Wentworth campaign office which emphasised the Liberal Party's support for the ABC. The email stated:

The ABC is a vital public news and cultural institution that strengthens media diversity and represents the largest and most important Commonwealth contribution to civic journalism. The Government has a very clear policy regarding the ownership arrangements of the ABC – it is and always will remain a public broadcaster. It will never be privatised nor sold. This is our clear commitment... The Liberal Government stands for an ABC that is independent, appropriately funded and publicly owned.

Friends may need to remind the Liberal Party of these commitments in the future.

Friends' How to Vote card placed Dave Sharma in the "low level of support for the ABC" column on the basis of the Liberal Party's major funding cuts to the ABC, the establishment of inquiries designed to undermine the ABC, relentless attacks on the ABC from the

Communications Minister and other Ministers, the vote at the Liberal Party's National Conference in June to sell-off the ABC and apparent interference with ABC management and governance.

Looking back on the campaign, it is difficult to evaluate the impact of either the Wentworth Courier or Facebook ads. Certainly, the ads in the paper were expensive, at \$4000 for two half page ads; this was approximately half the total amount spent! The strongest impression was that Friends made the most impact where we handed out flyers and How to Vote cards and engaged in conversation with voters. Additional benefits included the number of people who told us of their passion for the ABC and their willingness to join the Friends.

It is possible that Friends' involvement in this by-election contributed to the ousting of the Liberal Party candidate and the making of political history.

For certain, a strong message was sent to all political parties that voters demand a well-funded, strong and independent ABC and they will punish those parties that attack and undermine public broadcasting in Australia.

The Wentworth By-election

Professor Ed Davis AM
President of NSW Friends



The polls closed on 20 October and the ABC's renowned Anthony Green called the result after just over an hour of counting. Polling on the day showed extraordinary and consistent swings of 20-25% against the Liberal Party candidate, Dave Sharma. Independent and high-profile candidate Dr Kerry Phelps appeared likely to be a clear winner. Commentators on the ABC and in the following day's newspapers dwelt on the historic swing against the government. The swing appeared to be around 22%, smashing the previous swing of 16% in Canberra in 1995. However, counting of postal ballots led to a revision of the result, as early postal ballots strongly favoured Sharma. The final result was a victory for Phelps by a margin of 51%-49%, two-party preferred, reflecting a swing of 19% against the Liberal Party.

ABC Friends were active in the campaign. Activities included:

- The development of a short questionnaire for candidates, seeking their views on a range of ABC-related issues e.g. restoration of funding and independence
- Face-to-face or phone interviews with the main candidates

- Design and distribution of a flyer at market stalls and railway stations
- Development of a scorecard based on candidates' views and other evidence on support for the ABC- this became the How to Vote card
- A social media/video interview on the ABC with Independent Licia Heath
- Ads designed for the Wentworth Courier and placed on Facebook
- Promotion of the campaign on social media
- Attendance at candidate forums and raising ABC issues
- Attendance at pre-polling and staffing 8 "busy" booths on the day.

Approximately thirty Friends were involved in the spread of activities, with Sybille Frank coordinating who did what, where and when. Among lessons learned was the importance of Friends' contact with the candidates. The Labor, Green and leading Independents (Heath and Phelps) made regular and well reported references to the importance of proper funding for the ABC and their determination to see restoration of funding to pre-Abbott government levels. While the Liberal candidate chose not to return the questionnaire and did not



National Web manager, ABC Friends' NSW&ACT Web Manager, former Membership Secretary, former Update Assistant Editor, Liaison for Access Database, Illawarra Branch President, etc., etc.

For close on two decades Chris Cartledge has been a stalwart of ABC Friends NSW & ACT, and for the last eighteen months he has been a mainstay of the developments in all manner of ways with the creation of ABC Friends National.

Chris is still working on the project called *NationBuilder* which will see ABC Friends National cohere nationally in databases of members, facilitation of interactions on our website, and handle a multiplicity of queries, host shopping for our merchandise, engage with all social media, enable membership additions and updates to be co-ordinated more smoothly. This work is ongoing, and is expected to be completed by mid-2019. Chris will see this work through to its completion.

Prior to this, Chris was sole creator and maintainer of the ABC Friends NSW & ACT website, a significant job that has been much appreciated by all online members in our part of the world. All of it is run from his computer and none of us NSW&ACT people wants it to vaporise. It's probably perceived as unconventional in nowadays' terms, but it is a great resource, appreciated by NSW & ACT members, especially with its currency of news items. Since 2013 our members have been able to log in there and renew their memberships; new people can join as well.

Chris maintained the NSW & ACT Committee Contact list, circulating each year. For a time in the 'noughties' he looked after our Membership database, before handing over to Angela, whose nine-year tenure of the role was punctuated by back up from Chris whenever she was away from her 'desk'.

Chris has maintained the virtue of ABC Friends NSW & ACT during James Buchanan's Secretary & Treasurer-ship and beyond into Margaret Whealy's time. As well, Chris has held the role of Update Assistant Editor for some years, keeping 'the back page' current, offering commentary on inclusions and exclusions to the Editor, seeking items from papers, photos of pertinent people, liaised with printing companies, and so on. Chris



Christaan Cartledge, ABC Friends

“
No challenge was ever beyond Chris, even if it meant countless hours of his time...
 ”

has maintained and added to all his IT knowledge from his career, and provided those skills to explore the options available to ABCF, whether that be extracts from the database, into excel, and manipulating the resultant files or teaching one of us how to do the same sorts of things.

His work in developing the business model of ABC Friends National has been invaluable. He has been the lynchpin for many facets of this tortuous process. The tributes that have flowed from the personnel in all States and Territories once Chris advised he would be stepping down, are indicative of how much Chris's quiet, unobtrusive and carefully considered contributions have seen ABC Friends

National launch from a safe and steady platform.

At no time has anything ever been too much for Chris, always willing to help, advise, recommend, and provide step-by-step processes to ensure our chain of volunteers has the best path to follow and ensure a seamless environment for our members and various committees' members. We have indeed been fortunate, and his departure from our ranks with his non-existent ego are already dimming the lights.

Angela Williamson

We could have a plethora of tributes to Chris, but this Update issue will contain itself to one more (below) from the person who has probably enjoyed the most benefit from Chris's contribution to our organisation. Herewith the words of Update Editor Mal Hewitt, OAM:

CHRIS CARTLEDGE – a Tribute

The Macquarie Dictionary definition of a polymath is “a person of great and varied learning,” and I can think of no person more worthy of that title than our retiring Web Manager, former Membership Secretary, Assistant Editor of Update and Illawarra Branch President, Chris Cartledge. Throughout my ten years as ABC Friends NSW President and Editor of Update, Chris was beside me, willingly and generously sharing his many and varied skills, his vast knowledge and his breadth of experience in support of me and in service to his beloved ABC Friends. His recent award of a Life Membership is some recognition of his huge contribution to Friends.

Chris's working life as a Telecom/Telstra technician and Technical Manager through the years of computerisation and the revolution in technology equipped him well to fill vital and essential roles, first with NSW Friends and then with the new National Friends, leading us through the maze as we successfully adopted new technologies.

No challenge was ever beyond Chris, even if it meant countless hours of his time in solving a problem, establishing a new system, or making existing systems work better. A phone call requesting his help was always met with “Sure thing, Mal – when do you want it?”

Chris, you have earned your retirement from ABC Friends – very best wishes to you and Julie as you pursue your many other interests.





Walter Bass, painted by his wife Corin

Walter Bass Founder of the Friends of the ABC

The Friends of the ABC [FABC] was launched at a public meeting on the 20 April 1976 in the Anzac Auditorium in Sydney, in response to the Fraser government's threats to the ABC. Five months later, 35,000 supporters had signed a petition in a "grass roots" campaign to secure the ABC's independence. The founder was an innovative thinker who looked like Thomas Keneally or a friendly, bearded uncle but no one could ignore Walter Bass (known as Bassie to his friends) - a compassionate, feisty man who befriended prime ministers, premiers and media personalities. For the next 20 years he, his wife Corin Fairburn, and a loyal band of supporters tirelessly cultivated contacts, identified threats to the broadcaster and took steps to combat them. Ten years into his term as the President of FABC (NSW) he was able to intensify his activities when he retired from his job as a surveyor with the Water Board. He had come to Australia as a child of seven after his parents fled from Nazi-occupied Austria in the late 1930s. He told journalist and broadcaster Andrew West:

"I was born in Vienna during very turbulent times into a political household [and] was always aware of the great danger a country is in once its media is threatened. The first thing that always happens in a coup of revolution is that the radio stations are attacked and taken". He finds the most troubling aspect of the Australian media is the concentration of owners. No organisation which depends on commercial sponsorship for profit can remain truly free of editorial influence, he says. Of course, these highly-paid talk-back kings say no-one ever interferes with their freedoms. But the only people they ever offend are the aged, the infirm and the poor'. (SMH, 3 March 1988).

Bassie collected a vast media-related archive and, from his encyclopaedic knowledge, wrote or spoke, wise, witty and succinct responses to questions, asked politicians provocative questions when they wished he wouldn't, made submissions and lobbied to save the ABC, and also tried to right a great number of other wrongs.

Corin suggested to Bassie that FABC should garner support from 'big names' and publicise the responses. He wrote the letter which was signed by 13 Australian icons: Patrick White, His Honour Mr Justice Michael Kirby, Nigel Butterley, Frank Moorehouse, Patricia Lovell, C. J. Koch, Lloyd Rees, The Hon James McClelland, Edmund Campion, Les Murray, Thomas Keneally, Nancy Keesing, Her Honour Judge Elizabeth Evatt.

... [W]e refuse to believe that a society capable of producing the diverse talents that Australia is now doing cannot maintain a national broadcasting service devoted to cultural quality... The ABC was once truly the voice of Australia; now we switch on to the tones of trendy hucksters who are not even good at selling. ... One of the great lies being put about by purveyors of mediocrity is that the ABC should make itself "relevant" by abandoning the transmission of cultured excellence altogether, instead devoting itself to adding yet more "pop" culture to the existing flood. The broad masses, the lie goes, want nothing else'... (SMH, 12 August 1985)

Corin said there were a great many replies from all quarters and it was a real success.

Bassie was not bothered by his opponents. He was so amused when Mike Carlton wrote 'What a silly, self-important, know-all snob you are' (and signed it with an impressive flourish at the bottom of the page) that he framed the letter and hung it in his office. He thanked Gerald Stone for his advice on how to run the ABC but said one thing bothered him. 'Why aren't there any Friends of 60 Minutes?' When Gareth Evans (the Minister for Transport and Communications in the Hawke government) informed staff at the ABC of the government's plans to prune the ABC's charter and possibly introduce advertising, he added that "thuggery" and 'street marches" did not impress the Government'. Bassie, who often gave politicians 'Save ABC' stickers to put on their bumper bars, told Senator Evans he should put the sticker on the dashboard of his car. The Minister was not amused. Bassie commented to the Herald 'He is a rather humourless man when he's under pressure'.

In his fight to keep the ABC ad-free Bassie noted 'The argument that "discreet sponsorship"... would not affect the ABC's current affairs and news operations is like saying that one needn't worry about bowel cancer because it is such a long way from one's head'.

Bassie met New Zealand-born Corin Fairburn when she was 23 and he was 24. She had come to study piano at the Sydney Conservatorium. After they met at a friend's house in the 1950s they discovered their shared love of music, married and moved to a purpose-built house in a bush-land setting in Turrumurra where they raised their three children. Bassie wrote copious letters to The North Shore Times – one reader complained because one issue didn't have a letter

from him. The paper wrote a profile of him in April 2002, including the results of a competition they ran to find the 'best of Bassie' questions. Here are some of them and his responses:

Q: If you were PM, what would you do with budget surpluses?

A: Disengage Australia from the war on terror immediately, take money from defence and keeping refugees out and put it instead into education and health.

Q. Why do you continue whinging? Why don't you help others and bring happiness to your life?

A [Corin] Walter is the most humorous, most effervescent and happy person I have ever met. I've hardly heard him whinge in 45 years of marriage. And he's the funniest man I know. [Walter] I find my happiness in living my life and writing letters. As far as community work, I worked for the Friends of the ABC and and, as a surveyor, I have stayed in many country communities.



Legitimacy crisis rattles public service media, not only here in Australia but worldwide

Dr Tanja Meyerhofer,
External Senior Researcher
at the European
Broadcasting Union.

Address to the NSW
Friends' State Conference,
25 August

Currently, there is an acute sense of urgency among European public service media as something, until now, unthinkable is happening: public service media in some of Europe's most-established and longest-standing Western democracies encounter unprecedented

pressure from neoliberals and figures on the right fringe of the political spectrum to legitimise their *raison d'être*.

In Austria, the far-right Freedom Party, which currently governs in coalition with the Christian democratic and conservative Austrian People's Party, is in

Q. What do you think of your critics?

A. They do a great service by giving their abuse with no points. I make a lot of points in my letters, but it shows they have no point when they don't ask or answer any questions.

Q. Would you fund an on-going anti-salinity rehabilitation program?

A. This is a most important issue because it's destroying the Murray Basin and our water supplies, everything the Greens say

is true, even though I don't vote for the Greens. [When asked was he trying to keep the bastards honest? He replied 'the best way to keep the bastards honest is to get rid of them'].

Bassie died on 17 November 2015. That night Phillip Adams introduced his program with the words 'the wise and witty Walter Bass, dead at 84'. Corin found this 'a bit bald for me to hear, but a nice tribute just the same'. Mal Hewitt, then the President of FABC (NSW), said he 'fought tirelessly

and with great passion and determination for his beloved ABC'.

Bassie would have been delighted by the magnificent rallies to Save our ABC and to know that his baton has been passed to another worthy campaigner – Ed Davis, the new President of ABC Friends, NSW.

Diana Wyndham
Committee Member,
ABC Friends, NSW



Image Credit: RÚV: Our RÚV – Together Towards The Future, <http://www.ruv.is/i-umraedunni/2021-en>

neoliberals who felt being forced to pay a licence fee for programs that they did not use was unfair. At the same time, these young people assumed that Swiss public service content was so good that it could easily be self-funded through pay-per-view and with more advertising. Seeing “No Billag” as an opportunity to lobby against left-wing journalism and to put forward their conservative ideas, the right-wing Swiss People's Party joined the “No Billag” campaign.

With this political backing, polls in December 2017 predicted that 51% of Swiss would vote for scraping the license fee. This was a wake-up call for the Swiss public broadcaster, SRG SSR and it became clear that public service media is about the society. Therefore, the SRG SSR reached out to the public and connected with representatives at cultural, educational, sporting and grassroots organisations, with independent producers and other media players to ask for support. The “NON à No Billag” movement was born. With the strong support of ambassadors similar to ABC Friends, SRG SSR was able to reverse public opinion. Three months later, in March 2018, 71.6% of Swiss people voted for the continuation of the licence fee¹.

These recent developments point to the key issue public service media is facing nowadays: politicians, market players and, most importantly, the citizens do not always understand what public service media stands for and what value it delivers. This lack of understanding results in a decline in support for public service

media and poses a very serious threat for the legitimacy of public service media because it makes it vulnerable to attacks by commercial or political opponents.

Realising that providing political stakeholders with the data necessary to confirm that the legal charter obligations have been fulfilled, is no longer sufficient at times when consumers can access a dazzling number of easy-to-access content options from all around the world, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) launched the Public Service Media Contribution to Society initiative in 2015. The purpose of this initiative is to support EBU Members (such as SRG SSR) in better identifying and explaining the value and benefits they add to the whole of society. This will enable public service media organizations to better respond to criticisms, renew their legitimacy, and bolster their political, market and social support.

For more information on the EBU's Public Service Media Contribution to Society initiative, visit: <https://www.ebu.ch/psm-contribution-society>.

The European Broadcasting Union is the world's leading alliance of public service media (PSM). It has 119 Members in 56 countries in Europe, and an additional 34 Associates in Asia, Africa, the Americas and here in Australia. Together, the EBU community reaches an audience of more than 1 billion people around the world. The EBU's mission is to make public service media indispensable.

1. <https://www.publicmediaalliance.org/the-no-billag-swiss-saga/>



the process of collecting signatures to abolish the licence fee in an attempt to exert political pressure on the Austrian public broadcaster ORF. In Denmark, the conservative-liberal government together with the right-wing populist Danish People's Party announced in September that public funds for the public broadcaster DR will be cut by 20 percent over the next five years.

However, perhaps the most telling example of the legitimacy crisis of European public service media is the “No Billag” referendum in Switzerland in March 2018, which also called for abolishing the licence fee. The “No Billag” campaign was initiated by young

ABC Loathed in the Asia Pacific - by the Morrison Government

by Dr Mark Hayes

Dr Hayes worked as researcher, reporter and producer with ABC TV's 7.30 Report in Brisbane and Darwin. Recently retired, he taught media and journalism at five Australian Universities and University of South Pacific in Suva. His special interests include Pacific Islands media and journalism, climate change in the Pacific and nonviolent social movements.



The Morrison Government has pre-empted its own Review of Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific by declaring that commercial broadcasters will be invited to contribute to a revived Australian broadcasting presence in the Pacific.

"I've been speaking to Free-TV Australia and the commercial TV networks about how we get more of our Australian content into the region," Prime Minister Scott Morrison said in a wide-ranging speech titled **Australia and the Pacific: A New Chapter**, delivered in Townsville on 8 November 2018.

"Our Pacific family is switching on to the same stories, news, drama and sports we are watching at home. What better way of staying connected than through the people, the lifestyle and the everyday experiences we are lucky enough to enjoy," he said. "That's why I am pleased to announce that the Government will be working with our commercial media operators to ensure our friends in the Pacific have access to more quality Australian content on television and other platforms. This will include things like lifestyle programs, news, current affairs, children's content, drama and sports potentially. This is an initial step towards providing more Australian content that is highly valued by the Pacific community," Mr Morrison said.

The commercial television lobby group, Free TV Australia, quickly responded.

According to Free TV's CEO Bridget Fair: "Free TV broadcasters are the powerhouse of local Australian production. Australia's commercial television networks invest over \$1.6 billion annually in great Australian content and deliver the most popular and well-loved programs on television. More importantly our drama, children's entertainment, news and sports programs reflect our Australian community and our values. We are excited to be able to share the best of Australian programming with our Pacific neighbours. We look forward to working with the Government to finalise this important initiative."

Not even an oblique nod to the ABC, which has been broadcasting into the Asia Pacific Region for decades, as part of its Charter responsibilities. And certainly no indication of how this will be paid for.

What is not known by way of publicly released reviews, reports, or detailed, referenced, explanations is why PM Abbott ordered FM Bishop to unilaterally break the DFAT-ABC ten-year \$223 million contract to operate the Asia Pacific Newsroom and Australia Network Television, formally announced in the 2014 budget, along with the first major domestic cuts, of \$43.5 million to the ABC and SBS. This was a viciously and brilliantly targeted attack on the ABC, doing catastrophic damage to Australia's soft diplomatic broadcasting presence in the Asia Pacific.



Dr Mark Hayes climbs the highest point of land on Funafuti Atoll, Tuvalu, 3.5 meters above mean high tide.

Then the ABC closed its shortwave services in January, 2017, amidst widespread criticism from both Pacific Islands countries and remote Australian audiences.

This was an ABC decision, saving reportedly \$4 million per annum. A Senate Inquiry into this closure could not agree on how the shortwave service could be restored.

It's a decision the Acting ABC MD and Board could readily reverse, assuming the transmission facilities at Shepperton, Victoria, were only mothballed and not demolished, and the required radio frequencies, quickly occupied by Chinese Radio International, could be retrieved.

Subsequently, the government announced in September 2017 that "The Department of Communications and the Arts and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will conduct a review into the reach of Australian broadcasting services in the Asia Pacific region, including examining whether shortwave radio technology should be used. The review will include public consultation and the report of the review will be made public." Submissions to the Inquiry closed on August 18, 2018, and have yet to be released on the

relevant Departmental web site. There is no indication of when this Inquiry is due to report to the Government.

This Inquiry is proceeding on the demonstrably false premise that Australia never had a significant broadcasting presence in the Asia Pacific, but needs one in the rapidly more contested "soft diplomacy" space now dominated by China.

A number of major Submissions have been released by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute and the Lowy Institute, with inputs from highly respected Pacific scholars, analysts, and long-term Pacific specialist journalists.

Among the suggestions is the establishment of a new Australian International Broadcasting Corporation, or similar, separate from the ABC, and funded by Government, sourcing content, including news and current affairs, from, preferentially, the commercial broadcasters.

But, as seems highly likely, the Morrison Government will exclude the ABC from any input into a revived Australian overseas broadcasting presence, yet another clear indication of how the Coalition Government loathes the ABC.

Further reading – with links to other useful reports and analysis:

"Demise of the Australia Network", by Nick Bryant, *Lowy Interpreter*, 16 May 2014

"International Broadcasting: Raising Australia's Pacific Voice", by Bruce Dover and Ian Macintosh, *Lowy Interpreter*, 14 November, 2018

"Hard News and Free Media as the Sharp Edge of Australia's Soft Diplomacy", Graeme Dobell, Geoff Heriot, Jemima Garret, *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*, 26 September, 2018

"Is Australia losing our soft power in the Asia Pacific?" ABC Radio RN *Late Night Live*, 11 October, 2018 – (Jemima Garret and Graeme Dobell) <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/losing-our-soft-power-the-the-asia-pacific/10342398>

"Walking the Talk: Is Australia's Engagement with the Pacific a 'Step Up' or a Stumble?" Dr Tess Newton Cain, *Cairns Institute Policy Papers*, November, 2018



ABC FRIENDS REJECTS PRIME MINISTERS PLANS TO COMMERCIALISE PACIFIC BROADCASTING

The Prime Minister's announcement in North Queensland today that he plans to commercialise Pacific broadcasting will not provide quality public interest journalism to our Pacific neighbours.

If Mr Morrison wants to restore a fresh initiative like the Australia Network he is dependent on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation which has the experience and professionalism to create strong partnerships with Pacific nations.

The voice of Australia through Radio Australia, and more recently via a wider range of ABC media platforms, has long been valued by people in the Pacific and many ABC broadcasters have become popular in the region.

Australian foreign policy will not be enhanced by the commercial news judgements of Fox or Sky News, which does not provide independent analysis of complex issues.

Furthermore, professional broadcasting in the Pacific depends on two-way respectful communication that enhances understanding of diverse perspectives in the region.

In recent months Pacific leaders have made clear their expectations of Australian/Pacific public broadcasting. Vanuatu Prime Minister Charlot Salwal has called for rebuilding public interest broadcasting.

In a speech to the Lowy Institute Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Saitile called for the Pacific voice to be heard in Australia and other Pacific leaders have echoed this call, as well as Secretary General of the South Pacific Forum

Significantly, if Australia were to accept this approach to Pacific broadcasting it would become the only nation to rely on the commercial sector to deliver its "soft power" diplomacy. Just imagine Canada or Britain giving such a significant national task to commercial interests!

ABC Friends President Margaret Reynolds urged the Prime Minister to reconsider this public policy shift and take advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs which is more familiar with the needs of Pacific nations and managing diplomatic relations.

Margaret Reynolds
ABC Friends National President

Good riddance to Guthrie and Milne

The ABC needs grown-ups in charge

Dr Margaret Simons
academic, journalist
and author



The most powerful message to emerge from Four Corners' sad story about the tumult at the top of the ABC is that neither the former chairman Justin Milne nor the former managing director Michelle Guthrie appeared to be friends of the public broadcaster.

In the wake of the breakdown of their toxic working relationship, both seem to have given top priority to winning the battle – first before the board, then in the court of public opinion and now headed for the courts.

The idea of self-sacrifice because of their high public duty doesn't appear to have occurred to either one of them. Did either say a word about the future of the ABC in last night's program? No. It was all he-said she-said scrapping.

Both were pretty flaky with the truth. Guthrie's claim that there had been no conversations about sacking the economics editor, Emma Alberici, clearly flew in the face of the evidence. Her claim that what had been discussed were "external development opportunities" for Alberici will surely go down in media history as one of the great euphemisms. As in, "haven't been fired. I've been offered external development opportunities."

Milne, on the other hand, completely failed in his attempt to explain his emails away as not meaning what they clearly said.

We can conclude that neither Milne nor Guthrie was suitable to lead and care for our most important cultural institution. This, together with unprecedented pressure from the government, is the

Insiders tell me they are astonished at the naivety of some members of the board who, having accepted appointment despite knowing they were not recommended by the arm's-length appointment process, are now horrified to find themselves in reputation-damaging dust-up.

Despair would be easy, were it not for the fact that the Four Corners program itself – the ABC telling its own story – demonstrated the organisation's greatest strength. While board members, politicians and senior management behave badly, the journalists and other content makers keep doing their jobs.



explanation for why the leadership of the ABC imploded this year.

When Guthrie was appointed in December 2015, a former colleague of hers told me that she was "a good team member in a well-led team, but never the leader of that team". Time has proved him right.

Guthrie has many strengths, but she was given the most difficult job in Australian media, and one of the most difficult in public life.

She didn't have either the skills or the self-knowledge to grow into the job and succeed. Milne, meanwhile, seems to have completely misunderstood his role and been prepared – even eager – to compromise the ABC's independence.

Meanwhile the board, stacked by the government with too many political appointees, was incapable or unwilling to manage the growing conflagration.

“

The ABC represents one of our best chances of political cohesion and a shared sense of nationhood. No other organisation has equivalent reach or greater respect.

”

The program gave us plenty to worry about. The ABC has been weakened systemically through poor appointments, constant attacks and budget cuts.

Last night we learned that the minister for communications, Mitch Fifield, was frequently on the phone, first to Guthrie and then, allegedly, to Milne, to discuss “issues”. Guthrie had been miffed that once Milne was appointed she no longer got the calls.

Neither Milne nor Guthrie seemed to have seen a problem with this apparent frequency of informal personal contact. For an independent public broadcaster, it’s not healthy.

The other big revelation was that Guthrie accused Milne of touching her inappropriately. She stopped short of describing this as sexual harassment or assault.

What are we to make of this? There is enough on the public record to show that Milne was behind the times in his understanding of how to behave with female colleagues.

He has admitted to referring to women as “chicks”, as he said “to try and relax people”. It has been claimed that he called Guthrie “the missus”.

We can see from his emails that he used the kind of aggressive, hyper-masculine language that appears to show both a lack of maturity and a lack of consideration for his colleagues.

Milne has strongly denied ever behaving inappropriately towards Guthrie. He also specifically denied an allegation that he had rubbed her back at a board dinner at Billy Kwong’s restaurant in Sydney in November 2017.

“I’ve had no physical relationship with Michelle at all,” he said. “I never, ever acted inappropriately with Michelle, or indeed with any other woman in the workforce, or any other woman at all.”

This kind of thing polarises. Most women who have worked in the media will find it easy to believe Guthrie’s claims and sympathise with her for having to deal with this all-too-common form of sexist undermining behaviour.

But the program presented plenty of evidence that her management and leadership were also lacking.

What about the future of the ABC?

There has never been a stronger argument for ABC funding to be guaranteed. Milne’s shameless suggestion that the government had to be appeased because of its role as the organisation’s “banker” makes the case better than any true friend of the ABC could do.

Guthrie as managing director was pushing hard for the organisation to make an inevitable transformation towards digital media. She wasn’t wrong.

For years now, including under the reign of the former managing director Mark Scott, there has been consensus about that broad direction. The difficult questions have all been about how, and how fast, and how to retain an audience at a time of fragmenting media.

Guthrie wasn’t wrong about the direction but she never managed to convince her staff or her executive team that she understood public broadcasting or had a clear and cogent plan to bring about its necessary evolution.

Milne was pushing Project Jetstream – which at one level is also about digital transition, but flies in the face of the approach taken by every other major media organisation.

Meanwhile, the politicians have been negligent. The great majority of Australians –almost 70% of us each week – use the ABC. Most believe it is doing a good job. The ABC represents one of our best chances of political cohesion and a shared sense of nationhood. No other organisation has equivalent reach or greater respect.

Yet the organisation is almost never sensibly discussed. Instead ideologues on all sides of politics foam over non-issues and little time is spent in public discussion or serious strategic thinking about the organisation’s present and future.

For that we should blame the politicians, their thin skins, their neglect and their short-term opportunism.

We need the ABC’s funding and stability to be guaranteed and fostered. We need politicians with maturity and policy nous. We need a good managing director and an impeccable chair.

We need some grown-ups in charge.

Quiz Night Question can you answer it?

ABC Friends WA held a successful fund-raising quiz night in September.

You may like a chance to see if you can answer the ‘President’s Question’ from that night.

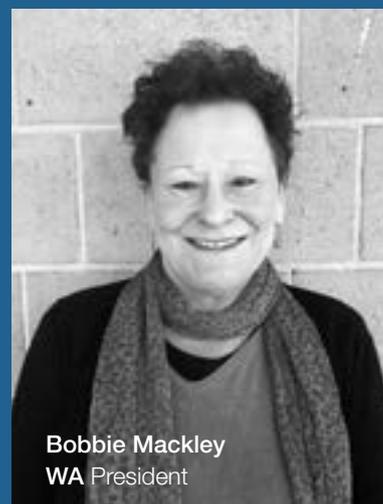
The question:

Name two federal government ministers who are members of the Institute of Public Affairs?

The Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) describes itself on its website as an “independent, non-profit public policy think tank, dedicating to preserving and strengthening the foundations of economic and political freedom”.

As many of you who follow matters ABC in the press may know, the IPA frequently passes negative comment about the ABC. In May this year it launched a book by Chris Berg and Sinclair Davidson titled *Against Public Broadcasting – Why we should privatise the ABC and how to do it*.

For the answer to the quiz question, see ‘WA News’ later in this newsletter.



Bobbie Mackley
WA President



Shenanigans at Ultimo's Level 14



Paul Collins – formerly Religion Editor and regular ABC presenter



Monday's *Four Corners* on the ABC's management shenanigans – the Guthrie-Milne, she said-he said fiasco – and the failure of the rest of the ABC Board to own-up and answer publicly for their performance tells you everything about what's wrong at the top of the national broadcaster. It's not imagined left-wing bias, or 'inaccurate and unbalanced reporting', or Emma Alberici, or Andrew Probyn. It's the bevy of management and business clones appointed by government to the Board of the ABC and the kind of person they chose to run the organisation.

The shenanigans also tell you a hell of a lot of what's wrong with contemporary government. Political parties have increasingly become elite cabals cut off from democratic processes, accountability and grass roots. The boards of statutory organisations like the ABC have become opportunities for patronage to reward mates and ideological fellow-travellers. The public interest is completely ignored.

The present government didn't invent this situation. It goes back a long way. It's just that the Howard, Abbott and Turnbull regimes turned it into an art form. And given that the ABC is the most important cultural and news organisation in Australia, appointment to the board is certainly a prestigious reward for mates.

The other thing the present fiasco tells us is that the ABC Board and Management have become fixated on technology, on things like Milne's pet project Jetstream which was going to cost a cool half a billion dollars. Just think of all the great programs that would fund, as well as the

staff to make those programs. Sure, Milne was not alone in his fixation on technology. Previous general manager, Mark Scott was also a complete technophile. He moved the Corporation in an increasingly commercial direction, possibly under the influence of several of his board members who were essentially right-wingers appointed by John Howard.

What these technology-besotted guys don't get is that the ABC is not there to have endless brand-spanking-new platforms. It's there to create content,

“
The ABC is well rid of Milne and Guthrie and one can only hope that the rest of the present board have the decency to resign or, if not, be sacked...
”

to report the news as truthfully as it can, to promote the cultural, artistic and educational life of Australia and to serve the people, especially by providing services to those cut off from or isolated from mainstream media.

The ABC is well rid of Milne and Guthrie and one can only hope that the rest of the present Board have the decency to resign or, if not, be sacked, probably best by the incoming government after the forthcoming election. What is needed is

an interim Board Chair who works with the Acting General Manager and a small committee to draw up a whole new process for appointing board members at arm's length from government.

However, this should not happen until after the next election. The last thing we need is Scott Morrison or Communications Minister Mitch Fifield, who is 'close to' the Institute for Public Affairs and who has said that 'Conservatives have often floated the prospect of privatising the ABC...There is merit in such proposals', making decisions about the future of the ABC.

In a previous article I referred to the way in which the BBC now gets its board. It is much more representative than the ABC process. In that article I made some tentative suggestions as to how the ABC board might be formed. The key principle here is that there must be public input and public accountability and that the majority of those appointed not be selected by government.

The ABC must also have guaranteed funding. Labor has guaranteed that it will restore the \$84 million that Turnbull cut from the ABC. That's good, but it's chicken feed given that the Coalition has cut about \$270 million from the ABC Budget since 2014. The Corporation is massively underfunded to fulfil its charter obligations. Again, some type of arms-length formula has to be developed so that funding is guaranteed and dependence on government minimised.

I see the present contretemps as an opportunity. It is a chance to start again on-board appointments and funding and it needs public support. But the people who should butt-out are the present government and especially Fifield. This fiasco has occurred on his watch. He's not the person to solve the problems he partially created.



How 'TRUMPISM' is affecting the ABC



Ranald Macdonald
ABC Friends National
Media Adviser



Too many Government Ministers - and that includes 'newish' PM Scott Morrison - adopt the Donald Trump approach of telling blatant untruths as a cover to what they actually stand for.

Nowhere is this more apparent than over the way the Government is treating, and has treated, the ABC.

From Tony Abbot ('No cuts') to Malcolm Turnbull ('I am a friend of the ABC') to the genial 'ScoMo' ('Each and every year the budget is going up')

All the while the Minister for Communications Senator Mitch Fifield poses as a friend and defender of the ABC.

Any Budget reductions, inquiries, criticism, proposed changes to the ABC Charter are all, as he puts it, just 'good housekeeping'.

(As cartoonist Pope in the Illawarra Mercury depicts the Minister, he is 'Guardening' the ABC.)

The Prime Minister announced on November 8 that the commercial outlets would be charged with giving Australia a voice in the Pacific Region, NOT the ABC, which used to have a huge presence through its Australian Network and Radio Australia before the Abbot Government cancelled the contract.

So - the fight to preserve the ABC as an independent, properly-funded public broadcaster serving the Australian community has been joined.

And it is a fight - as ranged against it are the commercial rivals - with the

Murdoch outlets being particularly brutal, supported by the right wing shock-jocks and a raft of Conservative media commentators.

All are attempting to weaken or destroy the ABC and attack its enviable high level of trust and credibility in a community seeking counters to 'fake news'.

ABC Friends National has just given a submission to the Senate Inquiry and has and will to all other inquiries which potentially affect the future of the ABC.

The Major Vision or Mission Statement is set out in ABC Friends National Update, August 2017, p. 5, or can be found on www.abcfriends.org.au

The ABC Friends Vision Statement was launched by Margaret Reynolds, National Presidents of ABC Friends, on 2 July 2017 at Federation Square, Melbourne



THIS WEEK ON "GUARDENING THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTER"!...



PRESS RELEASE: 19 NOVEMBER 2018

LABOR WILL RESTORE ABC SHORTWAVE RADIO TO NT

In Alice Springs today, Shadow Minister for Regional Communications, Stephen Jones MP, joined with Senator Malarndirri McCarthy and the Hon Warren Snowdon MP to announce that a Shorten Labor Government will provide the ABC with \$2 million in funding to help re-establish shortwave radio services across the Northern Territory.

Australians living in remote areas already face significant communications challenges and the loss of access to ABC services from shortwave radio cuts people off from emergency broadcasts as well as being an important connection to the rest of Australia.

The Liberal Government's budget cuts to the ABC forced some bad decisions on the organisation, including the decision to cut their shortwave radio transmissions in January 2017.

Since then, organisations like the Northern Territory Government, NT Cattlemen's Association, Northern Territory Seafood Council representing commercial and tourist fishing businesses, Amateur Fisherman Association, Indigenous Rangers, long haul transport drivers and the Toyota Land Cruiser Club representing Grey Nomads have raised concerns about the loss of these services.

The Territory is a draw card for grey nomads with around 600,000 visits each year.

For remote First Nations communities, shortwave radio equipment is relatively cheap to purchase and does not require external power to operate. By contrast, other forms of communication such as mobile phones, TV and broadband all rely on mains power.

In January 2017, Opposition Leader Bill Shorten wrote to then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull asking him to work with the ABC to restore the shortwave.

Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Nigel Scullion criticised the ABC's decision but was unable to convince his own government

to reverse it, again leaving Territorians without a voice in Cabinet.

Labor believes that it was premature to cut ABC shortwave radio services and that if the ABC had not been under intense budget constraints, this decision would never have been made.

Labor has been campaigning against the ABC's decision to cease shortwave transmissions since it was announced in mid-December 2016. We know how important shortwave is, that's why we are switching it back on.

By switching the shortwave back on a Shorten Labor Government will ensure, towns, communities and travellers are connected to the rest of the nation.

Labor's funding commitment of \$2 million to restore ABC shortwave services is in addition to Labor's commitment to reverse the Morrison Government's \$83.7 million unfair cut to the ABC, as well as our guarantee of funding certainty over the next ABC budget cycle.

Stephen Jones MP

Shadow Minister for Regional Communications Regional Services, Territories and Local Government

The Hon Warren Snowdon MP

Shadow Minister for Indigenous Health, Shadow Minister for Northern Australia
Member for Lingiari

Senator Malarndirri McCarthy

Senator for the Northern Territory

Luke Gosling MP OAM

Member for Solomon



Left: M McCarthy and S Jones at the announcement at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station. Right: Roe Creek Short Wave Transmitter, just outside Alice Springs.

State News

Queensland

After an approach by Queensland President Ross McDowell to ABC Friends Victoria to assist in developing an online membership application/renewal format, ABC Friends (Qld) members and new members can now carry out the transaction online at the ABC Friends National website. This finally has the Queensland branch fully electronic and able to meet the demands of the digital age.

"A special thank you to Simon Strong of ABC Friends Victoria for his excellent work in delivering this much needed enhancement to our registration processes," ABC Friends Qld. Treasurer, Mr Kent Eising said.

Memberships in Queensland are at a new high and continuing to grow at a rate not seen in Queensland for a very long time.

"We are encouraged by this surge in membership indicating that our message is getting to Queenslanders who care about the ABC," Mr Eising said.

ABC Brisbane held its Open Day on

Saturday, 13 October, 2018, as part of Brisbane's annual Open House programme.

Though the weather was rather inclement, and it coincided with ABC Friends Queensland's Annual General Meeting, some ABC Friends set up a table for a couple of hours outside the ABC's South Bank premises, and received several interested inquiries.

ABC Friends Qld. held a promotional market stall at Milton Markets in Brisbane's inner West, on 4 November. The stall was staffed by more than a dozen Friends' members who volunteered about two hours each to answer questions about the ABC and engage in conversations about what the ABC means to them.

"It was a great crowd at the market and we had lots of people showing support and asking questions about the ABC. We signed up over 70 people to receive ongoing information to keep them informed," organiser Mr Garth Sherman said.

Dr Mark Hayes

Publicity Officer, ABC Friends Qld

Tasmania

Members gathered in Oatlands in late September for one of the most informative AGMs we have held.

Prior to the meeting, we heard from our guest speaker, Jenny Buckland, CEO of the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF).

Key Points from Jenny's Address

The recent Government inquiry into Australian content involved the whole industry and we are waiting to hear the outcome. The most enthusiastic participants were the commercials. They have obligations in respect of children's TV and they want them scrapped. They may have a point. They operate in a disruptive environment, creating local content is a costly exercise and they are the only ones required to screen Australian content for children. They are saying it should be left to the ABC and we need to consider if that is arguable.



Jenny Buckland

The requirement is that commercial networks screen 32 hours of first release Australian children's drama every year. ABC and SBS have no quotas. The ABC Charter doesn't mention children.

Children's TV is most often described as a genre, alongside drama, news, current affairs. It is not a genre. Children are a percentage of the population, an audience with different needs to the rest of the population. They should have the same sweep of programs that adults have.

Who should provide that? How should it be funded?

The commercial quotas have produced quality Australian content that gets an overseas market, especially those programs with really strong Australian content.



Above: Milton Markets - Kent Eising, Garth Sherman, Kathleen Cardwell, Ross McDowell. Below left: Queensland ABC Friends Committee. Below right: Open Day at the ABC, Brisbane.



State News

Surprising that the requirements have lasted as long as they have. The commercial broadcasters have been arguing to get rid of them for years. The politicians have been less concerned. When asked what will happen if the requirements go, many say they are not concerned – ‘doesn’t the ABC do it?’

For years, the ABC has had *Play School*, the Bananas and hours of imported kids’ shows, mainly animation. And it has played politics with children’s content. It axed *Behind the News* (BTN) as a political statement following one round of funding cuts but that backfired. Following a public backlash questioning the ABC’s priorities, BTN was reinstated.

In 2006 ACTF started lobbying for a public broadcaster children’s channel. It won eventually, with ABC 3, now ABC ME. It was done with additional funding that transformed kids’ TV in Australia. That kind of funding brings out the people who are ready to write and produce more and better quality content.

The audience reaction was dramatic.

But the funding was not tied to the children’s department. ACTF assumed it was and thought ‘mission accomplished’, regardless of what happened with the commercials.

History of concerns re tied funding were seen to cut across the ABC’s independence. The argument has been put by Friends. And ACTF naively assumed that ABC content would be 50% Australian as it was announced as such. But there was no actual agreement on that so, within a few years, the funding started to be reallocated.

With 2014 funding cuts, ABC used kids’ TV in its PR war. Mark Scott threatened the end of *Peppa Pig*. It was never in danger as it is British and a marketing juggernaut that was always going to survive.

ABC now has a more enlightened attitude to kids’ TV than in the lazy days when its only offering was yearly revisiting of Bluewater High. But its levels of Australian content are still very low, representing less than 30% of the schedule and including lots of imported cartoons.

ABC is at the mercy of government funding but is also at the mercy of its current executive body.

Should the commercial broadcasters be let

off the hook? They think so. What does the ABC think? The Government inquiry was an opportunity for the ABC to step up. The ABC could have responded to the review with a vision for a comprehensive service to kids of all ages. They could have made it clear that, if the government wanted to relieve the commercial broadcasters of their obligation, the ABC was ready to step up. Instead the ABC argued: ‘Trust us’ and ‘quotas should remain for them’. ‘No quotas required for us; it’s in our DNA’. That was the full sum of the submission.

It is imperative that Parliament intervenes. The ABC should be required to, and be funded to, provide high quality kids’ content. For Friends - if a tied funding proposal, in your thinking, means interference with the independence of the ABC, think about the BBC. The BBC has same requirements that ACTF argues for and the BBC is the best in the world in respect of programming for children.

We still need commercial requirements too. Competition increases the drive for higher standards. ALL should have obligations and those who already do, should have them updated to be more relevant to today’s children and media environment.

Motion

Noting the informative contribution of our guest speaker, the meeting unanimously passed the following motion:

That this meeting

- calls on all candidates for the coming Federal election to declare their position on the value of the production of quality Australian media content for Australian children;

- calls on the ABC to make the production of quality Australian media content for Australian children a core priority and to structure its internal budget in line with that priority; and

- seeks the support of ABC Friends National to pursue these goals nationally.

What next in Tasmania?

After the meeting, we had a free-flowing discussion so that all present could ask questions of those presenting their Reports and indicate areas for action to be followed up by the incoming Committee. All of these ideas and others contained within the Reports themselves will form part of the Committee’s agenda for its 2019 planning meeting and some will be referred to the National Committee for attention.

Navigating the News

ABC Tasmania and the University of Tasmania jointly presented this conference in Hobart in September. Tasmanian Friends’ had two representatives at the conference, Margaret Reynolds and Belinda Wright.

The conference explored the public’s declining trust in the media, the response of news organisations and media literacy responses.

Dr Jocelyn Nettlefold, the convenor, stressed the importance of collaboration in responding to misinformation and spoke of the idea of truth being secured by reason and our ability to think for ourselves.

Dr Nettlefold and fellow academic, Dr Kathleen Williams, head of journalism at the University, have co-authored a report titled *Insight Five: A Snapshot of Media Literacy*, which investigates the challenge



Incoming Tasmanian Committee (L to R): Fay Gervasoni (Vice-President), Kevin O’Dea, Peta Fitzgibbon, Belinda Wright (Treasurer), Peter Tatham, Kate Durkin (Secretary), Rowan Wylie, Anne O’Byrne (Northern Convenor), Margaret Reynolds (President)

Absent: Roslyn Stoddart (Northern Convenor)

of teaching young people how to separate fact from fiction in an age of online media manipulation. The report was launched at the beginning of the conference by Dr Rufus Black, the University's Vice-Chancellor.

Over two days there were a number of presentations and panel discussions which addressed a range of topics: the definition of public journalism and its future; making sense of 'Information disorder'; how to build trust in contemporary journalism; literacy in science and health journalism, and how to communicate certainty in uncertain times; media literacy and education; and how to engage with the younger generation in meaningful and constructive ways.

The conference participants discussing these issues came from a variety of media outlets. There were journalists and managerial staff from the ABC, Fairfax Media Ltd, News Corporation Australia, BuzzFeed Australia, and Google Australia and New Zealand, as well as academics and researchers from universities, research centres and institutes such as the Digital Media Research Centre, QUT, the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies and the Australian Academy of Science.

Belinda has prepared a detailed report on the conference so, if you would like to read more, email our Secretary, Kate Durkin, at tas@abcfriends.org.au.

Kate Durkin, Secretary, ABC Friends Tas

South Australia

The Mayo by-election, held on 28 July, provided us with an opportunity to advance the cause of the ABC and test our election strategy for next year's Federal election. Well before the by-election we sent a letter to each of the Mayo candidates with questions about their support for the ABC. Responses were then summarised and sent to Mayo Friends supporters with the pointer 'Vote for the candidate who best supports the ABC'.

Before she was re-elected on 28 July, we presented a Defenders Badge to Rebekha Sharkie (a long-time advocate for the ABC) to acknowledge her commitment to working towards restoring the \$338 million slashed from the ABC budget since 2014.

Leading up to the Mayo by-election we represented ABC Friends on stalls the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) ran at Victor Harbour and Mount Barker.



Top: ALP-ABC Rally Aberfoyle Park Middle: Rebekha receiving her Defenders badge. Bottom: Rebekha and ABC Friends.

At the CWA, on 19 August, we held our AGM at which the new committee was elected for the New Year. The following were people were elected Sue Pinnock (President), Sandra Coopman (Secretary),

Mihir Makwana (Treasurer), Rosemary Abbott (Membership Officer) and committee members: Wendy Parsons, Tina Phillips, Andrew Johnston, Aussie Kanck and Chris Adami. We thanked

State News

Aussie Kanck (past Treasurer), Dianne Jones (past Secretary) and Jessica Knight (committee member) for their generous and extensive work on behalf of Friends of the ABC. Aussie is also continuing in his role on the National Committee's IT subcommittee. Our speaker, Cassandra Hough, a very experienced reporter and presenter from ABC Adelaide, spoke passionately about her role as presenter of the Country Hour. She told the audience about the ABC Adelaide's Regional team and the ABC's digital focus and she stayed after the meeting to speak with members over afternoon tea.

During August I wrote a submission on behalf of ABCF National to the Government's Review of Australian Broadcasting Services into the Asia Pacific. In it, I broadly argued for the restoration of shortwave radio in its digital form Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM) with our national broadcaster, the ABC, providing content and with financial support by DFAT to cover transmission costs. You can imagine our surprise and chagrin when we heard that PM Scott Morrison announced on 8 November his plans to commercialise Pacific broadcasting. Our National President responded immediately in a media release soundly rejecting the PM's plans. She pointed out that commercialisation will not provide quality public interest journalism to our Pacific neighbours and that it is the ABC that has the experience and professionalism to create strong partnerships with Pacific Nations and enhance Australian foreign policy.

Several of our committee members, on 9 October, attended Politics in the Pub 'In Conversation with Senator Tim Storer' hosted by The Australia Institute. One of the issues he covered was the lack of independence of the ABC Board, brought to light by the sacking of Managing Director, Michelle Guthrie, and the subsequent resignation of the Chair, Justin Milne, at the end of September. Senator Storer has introduced a bill into Parliament to enhance the independent nomination process to ensure the independence, integrity and transparency of people wishing to be Board directors

The ABC's only Gardeners' Market for the year (rain having caused the postponing of April's market) was held on Saturday 13 October. Our stall caused an unusual amount of visitor interest. The events



Top left: Dianne Jones, Jessica Knight, Aussie Kanck and Sue Pinnock. Top right: Cassie Hough. Above: Gardeners Market.

of September have crystallised for the community the ABC's dire situation. There was much concern about the attempts by the Government to politicise the ABC and undermine its independence, with ongoing funding cuts potentially compromising the ability of the ABC to meet its Charter commitments and service all Australians. Several people signed up for membership of the Friends on the spot, very unusual!

On Sunday 4 November, we held a stall at the Uraidla Show in the Adelaide Hills to promote the Friends. Once again there was concern expressed by those we talked to about what is happening to the ABC. This was explored in a 'Save the ABC' rally hosted by Amanda Rishworth, Labor MP, at the Aberfoyle Hub, south of Adelaide on 10 November. As one of the speakers, along with former Classic FM presenter, Bob Maynard, I explained why the situation for the ABC has never been so serious.

Our End of Year (early Christmas) luncheon is being held at The Public Schools Club on Sunday 18 November. ABC Defender, Mem Fox, is our guest speaker. It will be good to hear what Mem has to say and

enjoy the company of members in a more relaxed atmosphere. December 16 to 18 will see us holding a stall at the National Labor Conference at the Convention Centre in Adelaide. The committee has been wonderfully supported by members who will help out on the stall over the three days.

All in all, this has been a very busy five months! I wish all our SA and NT members a wonderful Christmas and a safe and happy New Year.

Sue Pinnock
President, ABC Friends SA

Western Australia

Dear WA members and other readers, this has been a busy year with the ABC under continued attack through funding cuts and the negative attitudes towards it by some members of the federal government and parts of the media. That the ABC has become very much an election issue in response to this is underlined by the large increase in membership we have had throughout the year, welcome though that is.



Left: Dr Vanessa Guthrie. Above: WA Quiz Night.

AGM

ABC Friends WA held its Annual General Meeting on Sunday 16th September in the 'Hub' area on the 2nd floor of ABC Perth. The meeting was well attended. Guest speaker was Vanessa Guthrie, WA's ABC Board member, who gave an interesting speech and stayed to chat with members during refreshments. This was a matter of days before the departures of MD Michelle Guthrie and Board Chair Justin Milne – such a pity we didn't know what was about to occur!

The new committee for the next year are:

Bobbie Mackley, another term as President;

Cathy Bardon, another term as Secretary; Janet Matthews, taking on the Treasurer's role for the first time;

Terri Brown, remaining on the committee after a couple of terms as Treasurer;

Michael Dowling, another year on the committee;

Jenny Meyrick and Leuba McMaugh who both join the committee for the first time

The Vice-President's position was not filled.

Bevan Carter flagged his interest at the meeting and agreed to join the committee the next day.

Elizabeth Long could not attend the AGM but later joined the committee for a further year.

At a short committee meeting following the AGM, Cathy Bardon was appointed as one of the two state representatives on the committee of ABC Friends National Inc.

According to our Rules of Association, the President automatically assumes the other spot.

Congratulations to all office-holders and committee members on their appointments - WA now has a full committee of nine people for the first time in many years.

Quiz Night

We held a very successful fund-raising quiz night on Wednesday 17th October at Rosie O'Grady's in Northbridge, raising a very encouraging \$2,000 towards ABC Friends' national campaign fund.

Thanks to everyone who came along, and special thanks to those who donated prizes. Much of the funds raised were through ticket sales, but two raffles also raised a significant amount thanks to the great prizes. Alannah MacTiernan MLC (who booked a table and came along herself) donated a lunch for four hosted by herself at WA Parliament House; the other raffle prize was a weekend in holiday accommodation at Eagle Bay, near Margaret River, for up to 8 people, donated by a long-time member and former president.

The night was a lot of fun, but we did get some feedback, including that the questions were too hard! We will bear all the comments and suggestions in mind when we plan the next event. I'd particularly like to thank Cathy and Elizabeth for the huge effort they put in to make it a success.

Bobbie Mackley

President, ABC Friends WA

Answer to the WA President's Quiz Night Question (P.17)

The question was answered correctly and the winner awarded the President's prize.

The President then proceeded to read out the full list of parliamentarians who are members of the IPA with the audience reacting loudly to each name as it was spoken.

Federal Government Ministers who are members of the Institute of Public Affairs are:

Scott Morrison, Prime Minister

Josh Frydenberg, Treasurer

Mathias Cormann, Senate Leader and Finance Minister

Mitch Fifield, Minister for Communications (with responsibility for the ABC!)

Simon Birmingham, Deputy Senate Leader and Minister for Trade

Michaelia Cash, Minister for Small and Family Business

Kelly O'Dwyer, Minister for Industrial Relations

Other parliamentarians who are members of the IPA:

Tony Abbott, Eric Abetz, George Christensen, Ian McDonald, James McGrath, James Patterson, Scott Ryan, Tony Smith, Alan Tudge and Tim Wilson.

NSW and ACT

1. State Conference 25-26 August

Members of the NSW Committee and delegates from regional branches met for two days to discuss what ABC Friends can do to maximise its impact in its commitment to defend and advance the cause of the ABC. A number of guests were invited to participate in our discussions. These included:

- Social movement activists Daren McDonald and Tim Gartrell and Ruby O'Halloran (GetUp!) on Campaigning
- Jane Connors (ABC Staff-elected Director) and Judith Whelan (ABC Specialist Content) on challenges facing the ABC
- Peter Monie (Victorian President and National Treasurer) on Marginal Seats campaigns, and



Dr Tanja Meyerhofer and Prof Ed Davis.

- Dr Tanja Meyerhofer (European Broadcasting Union) on public sector campaigns in Europe.

Matt Peacock, former Staff-elected Director and long-time ABC journalist, attended the whole conference. Matt also brought news about the ABC Alumni, which is about to be formed as another organisation committed to fight for the ABC, alongside and with the Friends.

Themes from the discussions included the need to be ready for an early election; the importance of ABCF having a clear focus and a message that can be transmitted with impact; the need for national consistency; the need to lift recruitment and donations; the need to report-back to members on how we are spending their

money; and the importance of partnering with other like-minded organisations and seeking unlikely allies.

Two Friends' stalwarts were recognised for their extraordinary service to ABC Friends over decades: Margaret Foy and Chris. Cartledge who were awarded Life Membership and all agreed this was richly deserved.

2. Annual Dinner 21 September

Paul Barry, host of *Media Watch*, was our Guest Speaker and delivered a thoughtful and informative address, reflecting on his experiences as a journalist and stressing the critical importance of a strong and independent ABC. He emphasised the critical role of ABC Friends. The house was full, with approximately 150 Friends in attendance. The event also saw the award of Life Membership to Jason Lowe, for his outstanding support for the past 20 years; and Angela Williamson spoke about her new book, *The 2015 Kangaroo March: A Century On*. Jason and his team were thanked for their magnificent work in organising the dinner. I took the opportunity to encourage all attendees to take NSW Membership brochures away with them, to join up at least one friend and/or family member. One Friend picked up 30 brochures and said this would solve what to give her friends for Christmas!

3. AGM on 27 October

Former Chair and Managing Director of the ABC (1987-95) David Hill was the Guest Speaker and delivered a thoughtful and entertaining address which dwelt on the importance of the ABC and the saga of government attacks over decades. He emphasised the absolute imperative that the ABC MD and Chair must resist government attempts to influence ABC news and current affairs. The ABC must be seen to be independent. He noted that the strongest weapon in the fight for the ABC was its very high level of public trust and support. He praised ABC Friends for their strong actions in support of public broadcasting and commented that the Friends were able to take up issues when the ABC saw their hands were tied. He was warmly thanked and applauded.

Around 90 members attended and received reports from the President, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Web Manager and the Events Report. Nizza Siano acted as the Returning Officer and declared the following as re-elected: President, Ed Davis; VP, Mal Hewitt; and, Treasurer, Margaret Whealy. Angela Williamson will be the new Secretary and



David Hill and Prof Ed Davis.

Gayle Davies, Membership Secretary. The elected Committee members are: Ireen Allanson, Geoff Brann, James Buchanan, Sybille Frank, Professor Russell Lansbury, Peter Lindenmayer, Jason Lowe and Diana Wyndham. Chris. Cartledge was sincerely thanked for his years of outstanding service to the Friends. While he did not stand for a position on the Committee he will continue to assist until the *NationBuilder* project is completed

The AGM approved a motion endorsing Life Membership for Chris. Cartledge, Margaret Foy and Jason Lowe and endorsed a rule change dealing with the process for electing representatives to the National Committee.

Other Activities

In addition to the major events of the past few months already outlined, other activities have included a visit to the AGM of the Hunter Region Branch, an address on the importance of public broadcasting to the NSW Retired Teachers Association, a lecture on the same topic to the U3A at Kincumber and the presentation of a submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the role of the ABC in the exercise of soft power in the Indo-Pacific region. NSW ABCF was also very active in the campaign for Wentworth and this is the subject of a separate report.

Prof Ed Davis

President, ABC Friends NSW

Victoria

Victorian Marginal Seats Campaign Up and Running

The Marginal Seats Campaign (MSC) in Victoria is well under way and is expected to have a real impact in the upcoming 2019 federal election.

The five marginal seats (required swing of less than 4%) that were initially identified

have now been complemented by some additional seats as new electoral boundaries have been confirmed and current polling indicated a shrinking of some expected margins. We are already detecting great nervousness amongst sitting MPs when we contact them and meet with them to ask about their ABC policies.

The campaign kicked off in July with a prominent billboard and demonstration by the Eastern Group in Julia Banks' Chisholm electorate.

Was it a coincidence that Banks announced shortly afterwards her unwillingness to stand again?

As a follow-up, signage in metropolitan trains travelling through the Melbourne south and eastern marginal seats were contracted over 8 weeks through September/October with another 8 week burst to come in 2019. These in-carriage signs were designed to raise ABC awareness and support generally.

The MSC sub-committee then embarked on a program of providing the tools (flyers, banners, corflute signage, stalls, electorate demographics, 2016 election results, candidate profiles and questionnaire, digital artwork toolbox) and assistance to local groups that would help them be effective campaigners in the marginal seats. A 'contact your PM and your MP' flyer was produced for each marginal seat, and new flyers are now in the pipeline to highlight the ABC issues and compare



Above: One of the in-carriage signs. Below: The Eastern Group's demonstration.



party policies regarding the ABC. A special flyer for our bushfire season will also appear shortly.

The on-going news around the ABC management and Board has of course heightened the sense of public dismay about Aunty's circumstances and most people across the State are happy to receive our information sheets and discuss what's happening.

Fantastic work on the ground - at railway stations, festivals, events, playhouses and cinemas - by the Eastern, Geelong and Southern Bayside local groups are really getting the message out to these marginal electorates that the ABC needs friends desperately, and that their vote is going to be critical if the ABC is to be saved. Other local groups in Inner Melbourne and La Trobe are right now being resurrected as 'people power' arises in these areas. There is a swelling of concern all over Victoria as ABCF local groups are increasingly active and effective – great work and congratulations to you all.

After the Christmas and New Year period ends, the real MSC work in 2019 begins in the run-up to the federal election. A new 'ABC Rally' is in the mix along with a focus on actively campaigning against candidates with 'poor or no' written and committed public broadcasting policies in place. If you live in a marginal Victorian federal seat and haven't already volunteered to help next year please contact the Victorian office now!

Marcus May
Publicity, ABC Friends Vic

VICTORIAN FRIENDS ANNUAL DINNER HEARS FROM DR GILLIAN TRIGGS

Former Human Rights Commissioner calls for ABC "guaranteed funding"



Dr Gillian Triggs speaking at the dinner.

The Human Rights Commissioner who withstood the combined wrath of the Federal Government and its News Ltd supporters, and emerged strong and dignified, Dr Gillian Triggs, stressed the importance of the ABC to democracy at the ABC Friends Victoria Annual Dinner on 22 November.

"Thank you so much ... and I can't think of a better group in the whole of Australia to be talking to: friendly; comfortable; safe!" Dr Triggs said to great applause.

"Partly because we just love it!" she said to laughter.

"But a deeper reason is because the ABC in all its forms is a vital part of our democracy."

"Public broadcasting makes an important contribution to democracy for the public must have an opportunity to be objectively informed through trusted sources," she said.

"Without access for Australians to accurate information and reasoned opinion, we cannot have a truly representative political system to ensure social justice, accountability or even reform."

"The ABC's independence from commercial and political interference enables it to report without fear or favour, but to achieve that objective of independence - as I know too well - it must be adequately funded by government and independent of government influence."

Dr Triggs called for funding reform as an answer to the unending pressure on the ABC.

"I believe the ABC should have some form of guaranteed budget to take away one of the most powerful tools of government that use to diminish its genuine independence," she said.

Peter Monie
President, ABC Friends Vic

NSW Branch News

Armidale

The Armidale branch started the second half of 2018 with a letter writing evening in July. The evening attracted about 20 members, who spent a couple of hours in the ancient practice of producing hand-written letters, seeking support for the ABC from a range of current government ministers. This seemed to be a successful exercise, with most letters ultimately attracting a response from their recipients and so keeping the importance of our national public broadcaster in the minds of our politicians.

At our regular August meeting we decided to present a petition to the good folk of Armidale protesting at the political bias that is apparent in the appointment of ABC Board members. We did this at the September market and managed to get 245 signatures over four hours. This petition, asking for politically independent appointments and a resumption of ABC funding to pre-2014 levels, was then sent to the Standing Committee on Petitions for the House of Representatives in Canberra. As with the letters, our current position is that every bit helps.



Debbie Spillane AM.

In October we sponsored a talk by Debbie Spillane, titled *The Media and the Future*. To our knowledge, Debbie was the first full-time female sports broadcaster in Australia, reporting through the ABC in

the 1980's. We are grateful to Debbie for coming to Armidale and providing a fabulous talk.

In November the president of our branch gave a talk to the Armidale branch of the National Seniors.

This talk identified the connections between a healthy democracy and independent public broadcasting. This included dispelling a range of myths concerning the ABC, as Australia's major public broadcaster, and highlighted the activities of the ABC Friends in trying to create the optimal environment in which independent public broadcasting can flourish.

Bruce Stevenson

President, ABC Friends Armidale

Blue Mountains

Our branch has been very active this year. Currently, we have around 140 members, with an average of 20 loyal members attending our lively monthly meetings at the Grandview Hotel at Wentworth Falls. We have welcomed new members this year, and "old" members, returning to the Friends.

A real highlight for us this year was the awarding of an ABC Friends Life Membership to our Senior Vice President, Margaret Foy, at State Conference in August. Margaret has been an extraordinarily active ABC Friends member for 34 years. As a passionate supporter and defender of our ABC, she has served ABC Friends in many roles, including Blue Mountains President for seven years. Locally, Margaret has enthusiastically led our branch in campaigns, rallies, forums, local festivals and events. She has represented us at National and State conferences, and maintains contact with her wide network of Friends. She has established a great rapport with many ABC identities over the years, thus securing big-name guest speakers for our meetings and



Top left: ABC acting Managing Director David Anderson with Blue Mountains Friends at Blackheath's Rhododendrum Festival

Left: Damien Beaumont, guest speaker at BM branch AGM, with Mal Hewitt and Tony Young (media co-ordinator)

Top right: Margaret Foy's Life Membership Award at State Conference, with Mal Hewitt and Sue Noske

forums. Congratulations Margaret!

At least 25 Blue Mountains Friends attended the July Defenders Rally in Sydney. Proudly brandishing the bright new ABC Friends posters and wearing our blue "I LOVE ABC T-shirts," around ten of us set off from Central station. We managed to pick up Robin Williams (ABC Science Show) on the way to the Teachers Federation Auditorium. He was crossing the road outside Central, as we were. However, he was heading in the opposite direction to us, wearing his smart black and pink "I Love ABC" T-shirt. We persuaded him to join us. He stood at the side of the stage, until Ed Davis kindly offered him a seat ON the stage!

Our dedicated Letter Writers Group, led by our Junior Vice President Barry Redshaw, has had letters published in the Blue Mountains Gazette, the Saturday Paper and the Sydney Morning Herald. The group will continue in this vital role next year, particularly with the Federal election looming.

Our monthly Blue Mountains Branch newsletter, produced and edited by Barry and Bev Redshaw, keeps our local members up to date with media reports concerning the ABC. Barry has a very fat, (and getting fatter), scrapbook titled, "Dramas in Pyjamas", which he passes around at our meetings. Barry's and Bev's contributions to ABC Friends cannot be understated.

One of our recent recruits, Shirley Lewis, aka Shirley the Bag Lady, spoke at two of our meetings this year about her ASAP: As Sustainable As Possible campaign. She launched Radio ASAP here in the Blue Mountains. She is a tireless crusader in the War on Waste, visiting Eco schools in Northern NSW. She has met with the ABC Head of Education, and is seeking cooperation with the ABC to cover her campaign, promoting Eco-schools.

Earlier this month, a group of Blue Mountains Friends staged a colourful stall at the Blackheath Rhododendrum Festival, generating much interest. Lots of people took away ABC Friends Membership forms, and the new bold campaign bumper stickers proved very popular. We hope to spot lots of cars displaying vibrant stickers, up and down the Great Western Highway! The new "Imagine Life Without Your ABC" tote bags were a big hit as well. Many people gave donations. A lucky encounter topped off the day. Acting ABC Managing Director, David Anderson, just happened to be visiting the mountains

for the weekend and was very pleased to have his photo taken with our group. He spoke about how important ABCF is to the ABC. David has offered to visit our branch next year. Quite a coup for us!

Also this month, our branch was well represented at a community forum to "Protect the ABC and the Future of Public Broadcasting", at Wentworth Falls School of Arts, organized by our Federal Member Susan Templeman, and presenting Michelle Rowland, Shadow Minister for Communications. Michelle was very interested in ideas from concerned locals, and spoke passionately about the importance of a well-funded and independent ABC.

At our AGM recently, our guest speaker was Damien Beaumont, popular ABC presenter from Classic FM's Evenings program. He is also a presenter of concerts and events on ABC TV and in demand as a Master of Ceremonies, guest speaker and performing narrator. He lives in the Blue Mountains and was invited by our Vice President Margaret Foy, a friend of Damien's. His presentation was both entertaining and enlightening. The first part of his presentation focussed on Classic FM's history, structure and funding. The second part paid homage to female composers, from early composers such as Clara Schumann to contemporary Australian composers. Fascinating and delightful!

Next year will be another busy year for us, with the Federal election looming. We plan to host a Candidates' Forum, inviting all the Macquarie seat candidates to speak to us on a range of ABC-related issues, such as restoration of funding, and the independence of the public broadcaster. At our AGM, Mal Hewitt, National and NSW Friends Vice President and a member of our branch, spoke to us about the local Friends' campaign in the Wentworth by-election.

Next year we will have a Friends stall at Springwood Foundation Day on the 29th April. If the Federal Election occurs in May, this local April event will be an opportune time to publicize our candidates' views on the ABC. We will borrow strategies used at the Wentworth by-election, and utilize strategies from our member Phil Greenidge's "Save our ABC Grass Roots Campaign", for local action and ABCF promotion.

Our final event for the year is our End-of-Year dinner, which promises to be a festive, fun-filled evening, Our Barry

Redshaw-devised quiz, "Do You Know Your ABC?" should be entertaining and revealing!

Sue Noske

President, ABC Friends Blue Mountains

Central Coast

On Friday 16 November Dr Fiona Martin addressed the Central Coast branch of ABC Friends. Dr Martin is a senior lecturer from the University of Sydney, researching digital journalism as well as the uses, politics and regulation of online media and its implications for media industry change. She is also a former community and ABC radio broadcaster and cross-media journalist. Her speech focussed on women and leadership within the ABC, starting with history of women's work within the organisation, largely in administrative roles, the creation of the Australian Women's Broadcasting Cooperative (AWBC) in 1974, and its subsequent training of hundreds of female broadcasters. She described the progress that has been made in achieving gender equality in employment, as well as the future hopes for women in public broadcasting.



Dr Fiona Martin.

In the early 1990s Dr Martin had worked as a producer of the seminal ABC Radio National women's program *The Coming Out Show*, produced by the AWBC, whose team over the previous two decades had included investigative journalist Liz Jackson, film critic Julie Rigg, comedian and political commentator Julie McCrossin, film and arts executive Sandra Levy and community radio executive Nicola Joseph. *The Coming Out Show* provided innovative and informative programs on issues of great significance from women's perspectives, including issues of race, indigeneity and immigration. Dr Martin then described how women are currently

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represented across the various pay scales and positions within the ABC. In many of these areas they are now approaching parity with men numerically, but are still underrepresented in the more highly paid and technical positions.

Part of the lecture was devoted to Michelle Guthrie's record as Managing Director, and the difference between her top-down executive leadership and the bottom-up collective leadership of the AWBC. Dr Martin drew attention to Guthrie's expertise in digital media and her experience as a commercial executive with Google. However, she indicated these strengths were mitigated by Guthrie's inability to obtain the necessary collective support from ABC staff for the changes she wished to implement. Dr Martin drew attention to the unique demands of managing public institutions compared to those in the commercial sector. Michelle Guthrie's lack of experience as media worker and a public sector executive, along with her difficulties in managing the forthright, articulate and intelligent staff of the ABC, contributed to her eventual removal by the Board. Questions from the audience included the role of traditional flow programming in the digital "appointment media" era, the difficulties confronted by arts programmers when expenditure cuts are implemented and the current state of regional services within the ABC. Our audience expressed their admiration for an informative and insightful presentation.

Looking towards 2019 our branch will be hoping to emulate the efforts of the NSW executive and the Eastern Suburbs branch during the Wentworth by-election within our own electorates, both of which have changed hands in the past. The seat of Robertson has been identified as a marginal one. Our continuing challenge will be to attempt to widen our demographic. Although our membership base has grown considerably this year, like all branches we are restricted to an age group of sixty and older. In 2019 we will give more thought to the ways in which we can appeal to younger generations. We are also hopeful

that the ABC will be able to overcome its current travails and continue to produce quality journalism and programming into the future.

Ross McGowen

Convenor, ABC Friends Central Coast

Dr Fiona Martin assisted in the writing of this article.

Hunter Branch

Forty members attended the Hunter AGM which was held on 24 September 2018 in the South Newcastle Leagues Club. We are very grateful to our two interesting guest speakers, Sharon Claydon, Federal M.P. for Newcastle who spoke about "Protecting our ABC" and Professor Ed



Alan Thomas, Sharon Claydon and Ed Davis.

Davis, NSW President of ABC Friends who outlined the in-depth preparations that are being undertaken by the national organisation in readiness for the federal election in 2019. Little were we to know that a few days later, the ABC itself would become the headline news.

The following members have kindly agreed to work on the Hunter branch committee for the 2018-19 year:

Allan Thomas (President), Colin Lawrence (Secretary), Greg Struck (Treasurer), Margaret Connors (Publicity Officer) and Anne Kirsten (Minutes Secretary). We are pleased to welcome new committee members, Robin Connell, Mary Copping and Graham Steele who will join returning members Alan Baker, Margaret Christiansen, Robert Connors and Hank Willems.

Meetings will continue to be held every two months to plan for pre-Federal election publicity activities in the Hunter region.

Margaret Connors

Publicity Officer, ABC Friends Hunter

ACT Region

Our world has never been more complex. Never before have we had so many people, so many nations, so many technologies and competing interests and ideas. Technological, social and political change is rapid and accelerating across every field, with implications that we can only dimly comprehend.

How do we try to grasp the enormity of these future challenges? How can we as Australians and global citizens make the economic, political and ethical decisions that might nudge our own lives, and the future of our country and our planet, in the directions we think they should go?

Our only chance of doing that is by getting accurate information about the world, and access to thoughtful, informed discussion of the implications of what is going on around us.

Of course, the ABC is not the only source of that quality information and discussion about the world - but for Australians, it's easily the most important, and has the broadest reach across regions and demographic groups.

So the campaign to support the ABC is a campaign for wise, well-informed and humane policy across many fields. And the ABC is arguably also the most important single contributor to quality Australian cultural and creative content.

Such a precious national resource needs protecting from those who fail to see its importance. And so the ACT Region group is organising to do our bit.

Our next big opportunity will be the 2019 federal election. We will be asking candidates to commit to promoting a strong and independent ABC if elected, and we will encourage people to vote for those who do. We'll be actively campaigning, not just in Canberra, but in the surrounding areas, which include parts of the marginal electorates of Eden-Monaro and Gilmore. We'd be particularly keen to hear from members in those electorates who may wish to be involved in local campaigns - get in touch at the email address below.

And if you'll be near Canberra in January, make a date for our next meeting:

6.00pm, Tuesday 15 January 2019 at Fellows Bar, University House, ANU.

Warm regards

Peter Lindenmayer

President, ABC Friends ACT

Northern Rivers

Over July – September, the Tweed Valley Sub branch of ABC Friends Northern Rivers decided to support the ABC Friends who were organising protests

against funding cuts and threats of privatisation in various capital cities. A series of market stalls in different locations in the Tweed Shire and Byron Bay were held, collecting signatures for a “letter of protest” against attacks on the ABC. In addition ABC Friends

merchandise was promoted and donations received.

Nearly 600 signatures were taken in just a few hours. People queued to sign, to request promotional materials and to make donations to ABC Friends. There was a palpable sense of anger about the government’s treatment of the ABC.

After the Super Saturday Election all the signatures were sent, with a covering letter, requesting a response, from the then Minister Mitch Fifield (copy to the then PM Turnbull). After 2 months, with no response, a further letter was sent. Again, no response.

Letters from Friends supporting the value of the ABC were published in the local press.

In August approximately 150 people and a well dressed black dog attended a public rally in Lismore to protest against the ongoing budget cuts and the dumbing down of the ABC. Patrick Deegan, Labor Candidate for Page, organised the event. Joel Fitzgibbon, Shadow Minister for Rural and Regional Affairs, addressed the crowd, prior to his evening appearance on the Q&A program.

It provided an opportunity to emphasise the Friends’ role in supporting an independent and free public broadcaster, prepared to take on the big issues crucial to our democracy and to speak about the impact of the \$254 million in cuts since the 2014 Budget.

I explained that while we are prepared to support political parties which share our values, we don’t expect to be invited to rallies sponsored by the Young Libs or One Nation.

Peter Dickson

President ABC Friends,
Northern Rivers



Above and below: ‘Attendees’ at the Lismore public rally.



Parliamentary Round-up

Gayle Davies

For the latest Parliamentary Roundup, please refer to ABC Friends website www.abcfriends.org.au

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.

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