

update

Friends of the ABC (NSW) Inc.
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friends of the abc

Planning Election Strategies... at '13 cents a day'

Stemming from last year's FABC national conference in Perth, state office-bearers conferred on a national phone hook-up on 1st Feb. Focal point was the expectation of a Federal election in 2004.

Some discussion turned on that sturdy slogan of the 1980s 'our 8-cents a day ABC'. So what is 8-cents in today's currency? Darce Cassidy undertook to unravel the maths. He reports that since 1985 ABC operational funding declined by 30.2% in real terms; and that 8 cents in 1987, the first year of the slogan, is today worth 14 cents - a conclusion reached using the consumer price index and adjusting for inflation.

Darce Cassidy points out that next year the special funding of 2001, \$17 million a year for four years, runs out. If it is not renewed, two new regional stations and fifty new broadcaster jobs could go. (See Budget Day report – opposite columns)

Russell Balding has explained that he can't wait until the money is gone before he does anything. Staff are entitled to redundancy and other termination benefits. It costs money to undo things.

Darce says this kind of stop/go funding is wasteful, inefficient and demoralising. "What's the point of new initiatives," he asks, "if they're going to be dismantled a few years down the track?"

Continued on Page 7

Inside:

Free Trade or Fair Trade -
the FTA analysed.....9
ABC's Walkley Award triumphs.....11
FABC quizzes Lindsay Tanner.....12
Friends farewell Edith Waller.....14
Black Friday - now a documentary...15



It's that one day of the year again... ABC Budget Day

Stalking the financial 'buds of May', what is the ABC's MD thinking? Russell Balding, since 702's Angela Catterns knocked the parrot off his perch, has been publicly almost invisible - except for one extended interview with Lyndall Crisp in the *Australian Financial Review* of January 10-11. Below is an edited version.

Russell Balding likes to keep a low profile. He works hard at it, and despite the ABC's bumpy ride financially and politically last year he has stuck his head above the parapet only when absolutely necessary.

That tactic hasn't impressed staff who think the managing director should be out there whipping up support for increased funding and confronting the feder-

al government about its habitual carping.

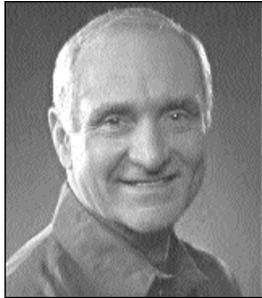
After all, isn't it the perfect time to thump the bushes now the government is gearing up for an election?

"Not necessarily," says the former accountant. "When you ask for money from government, timing is an issue, but it's also the argument you put forward... the rationale behind it and the benefits that will flow through to the Australian public."

"We're not going to get any additional funding by enraging the government - that has never worked in the past. What I've got to do is engage with government and build a relationship."

Continued on Page 6

Robyn Williams at Great Lakes Friends - with some advice for all of us



More than a hundred people turned up on the last Sunday of last November at the Memorial Services Club, Forster, to listen to Great Lakes Friends' guest, Radio National's Robyn Williams

Robyn, presenter of Radio National's Science Show since 1975 and the only journalist to be elected a fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, drew on his long association with the ABC, in both television and radio, to offer us some advice.

The Friends of the ABC, he urged, should not concentrate only on complaining about funding cuts as "too negative." They should cultivate relationships with rising young politicians of all parties so that in years to come we might get Ministers familiar with, and friendly towards, the ABC.

He cited the case of the Minister for Science, Peter McGauran, who had been invited to ABC functions and kept informed about the position of the ABC for some years. This Minister was instrumental in obtaining an extra funding grant which established *The Lab*, one of the most popular areas on the ABC's web site. Because of *The Lab's* success, funding was continued and, in fact, later increased.

ABC science unique

Robyn pointed out that in Australia only the ABC broadcast science programs. He said Australia was ahead of the rest of the world with such programming. In most of the world science was seen as "educational" but not of much interest to the general public. Even the USA, he said, did very little to promote interest in science.

Robyn believes that the culture of any organisation must be constantly renewed in order to maintain its vitality.

He said development and innovation were even more important than core activities – "if all your projects succeed, then you have failed, you have not ventured or taken any chances. Fresh young talent is needed and staff recruitment should be from as wide a base" as possible."

He quoted Microsoft's Bill Gates' theory that the way to build a successful company was to hire the best talent available and then let them do what they want. An engaging and pertinent question time followed.

Board resolution carried

An overwhelming show of hands supported the following motion put by Graham to send from Great Lakes Friends to the Minister for Communications, Daryl Williams:

"That a new system of appointments to the Board of the ABC be adopted by your government to provide for greater transparency in the process of electing its members. The appointments would be made by the Minister on the recommendation of an independent panel. This would ensure the selection of people with integrity and the necessary skills to a Board that has the responsibility of governing Australia's only independent national broadcaster."

(Janet Lawrence and Max Smith)

Central Coast buckles up for an election

Central Coast FABC's AGM last February put the branch on a 'war' footing for the next Federal election with plans laid and targets for campaigning chosen.

Each member at the meeting was to write to MPs, particularly the independent Senators, demanding that the Free Trade Agreement not be signed. Similarly a campaign would be run for increased funding for the ABC in this year's budget to restore *Behind the News* and the corporation's cadet training scheme.

At their March meeting format letters would be presented and ideas exchanged for another round of letters to MPs of their choice; properly drafted petitions to parliament would be prepared for members to enlist continuous public support for increased funding. Central Coast decided also to invite local Federal candidates to a public meeting in July to canvas the funding issue and the goal of an independent ABC Board chosen in similar fashion to Britain's Nolan Rules.

Because it is an election year the AGM decided all local members would be invited to future Branch committee meetings.

The tone of the AGM was in marked contrast to Central Coast's end of year meeting and social get-together at the Central Coast Leagues Club, Gosford. Some 60 Friends attended including NSW FABC President, Gary Cook, and the special guest of honour - film, radio and TV star, John Bluthal; with a prominent colour photo spread devoted to the event in the local media.

John Hale

Parramatta Picnic & Historic Walk

Sunday 18 April

Picnic first near the ferry wharf at Parramatta, then go on an Entertaining Guided Walk visiting Aboriginal sites, Gaol Green, old Kings School and convict history.

River Cat from Circular Quay at 11am

Riiver Cat departs Parramatta at 4.00pm.

For early leavers there's a 2.30pm River Cat

Cost is \$15 per person

To book and for more information please call Frouke on 9642 6485, Jason 9489 1420, Ivey 9481 0381 or Ireen 9745 4487



The President's Report

Welcome to the first edition of Update for 2004 – a critical year for

all Australians, and, of course for the ABC. It is expected that the Prime Minister will call an election during the last quarter of the year. Having appointed an Election Strategy Sub-Committee in late 2003, we will be prepared should the election be called earlier than anticipated. We will again be targeting marginal electorates, in particular, by convening public forums and inviting candidates of all parties to state their position on the ABC, and what they and their parties will do to preserve and strengthen the ABC.

It was a pleasure to welcome more than 250 members and guests to our annual Christmas Party at ABC Headquarters in Ultimo in December. The evening was highlighted by the presentation of our Annual Award for Excellence in Broadcasting to Caroline Jones, who, during 2003, celebrated the fortieth anniversary of her having joined the ABC.

Meeting with Lindsay Tanner

In early February, in company with our ACT colleagues, I attended a meeting with Opposition Spokesman on Communications, Lindsay Tanner. Although we were not expecting full details of the ALP Policy as it relates to the ABC, there were some positive indications given during the meeting (see a full report on Page 12). You will recall from my column in the last Update for 2003, that I had written to the new Minister for Communications, Daryl Williams, congratulating him and requesting a meeting. Three months later the Minister remains silent and, apparently he sees no value in meeting with the Friends in an election year.

The Hutton Report in the UK, released in January, was scathing in its criticism of the BBC, to such an extent that the Chairman,

Director-General and the reporter at the centre of the controversy, Andrew Gilligan, all resigned soon after the report was made public.

It is a watershed year for the BBC with its Royal Charter under review and the new communications regulator, Ofcom, commencing with a review of the provision of public service broadcasting across all channels. There is speculation that the Blair Government may seek to exert more control and permit less independence to the BBC. Such action would not be lost on the Australian Government, although they appear to have more than enough issues to contend with at present. With the new minister being less confrontationalist and an election within the next nine months, the ABC can expect a quieter time this year. However, should the Howard Government be re-elected, there will be pressure from some of its members to bring the ABC to heel.

That great defender of the ABC, former Minister and Senator, Richard Alston is at it again.

Not prepared to accept a resounding rebuttal of his ridiculous claims of anti-US bias against the "AM" program by the ABC Complaints Review Executive and the Independent Complaints Review Panel, he has appealed to the Australian Broadcasting Authority ("ABA").

Mr. Alston, in his submission to the ABA, apparently sent the wrong document and, in correcting his error, apologised profusely to the Chairman of the ABA, Professor David Flint. He also requested that his submission not be made public – a rather naïve expectation. It has been appropriately leaked and can be accessed on the web.

Inaugural Regional Conference

Our inaugural Regional Conference was held in August, 2002 and was hosted by our

Illawarra Branch in Wollongong.

The conference focused on improving the constitution to enhance the effectiveness of our branches. Those resolutions were passed at our last AGM. At the conclusion of the 2002 Regional Conference, a commitment was given to hold the next conference in 2004 in the Hunter Region. Planning has commenced and we look forward to providing more details in the next edition of Update.

Analysis of the full text of the Australia – US Free Trade Agreement gives rise to concern about a loss of sovereignty and independence. Apart from the damage which will be caused to our audio-visual sector and our unique identity and culture (see full details Page 9), all Australians will be adversely affected by the agreement as it relates to agriculture, pharmaceuticals, extension of copyrights and our quarantine laws which have protected us for many years.

Gary Cook,
President

Roll Up! Roll Up!



**ABC features
in
Politics in the Pub**

**"It's Our ABC!
How Do We Save It?"**

Speakers

Eva Cox - Senior Lecturer, Social Inquiry, University of Technology

Robyn Williams - Science Program, ABC Radio National

Gary Cook - FABC President

**Friday, 2nd April; 6pm-7.30pm
Gaelic Club**

**No fee, donations welcome
Devonshire St., Surry Hills
(50 metres from Central Railway exit)**



Armidale hosts Phillip Adams

An audience of more than 300 people in Armidale in early October heard Phillip Adams discuss his chosen topic, The Americanisation of the Australian media, in which he deplored the undermining of Australia's national identity and culture by increasing US influences.

He was informal, but wide-ranging, often provocative and included personal reminiscences of historical trends and key political figures.

FABC (Armidale) organized the visit with the support of Rural Australians for Refugees and the Friends of Armidale Dumaresq Library.

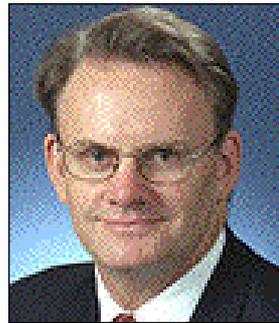
Phillip told the audience that the ABC might not be perfect but it was one of the few avenues in Australia offering the public informed discussions and debate.

Armidale Friends very gratefully acknowledged that Phillip made the trip to Armidale at his expense and in between his heavy schedule of commitments.

To cover other expenses, as a fund raiser the Armidale group followed Phillip's visit up with a film-night that drew another 80 FABC members and their friends.

Priscilla Connor, Chair (FABC Armidale).

Northern Rivers Branch wins pledge from Mark Latham



Northern Rivers branch was well represented at a meeting addressed by Opposition Leader Mark Latham last month. On media issues, he agreed that both major parties had stacked the ABC Board in previous years and he pledged himself to introduce an improved system for appointing people to the ABC's board.

He strongly defended the role of the ABC as a source of life-long learning and as an agency providing important background information on current affairs.

February also saw a visit to Lismore by Geraldine Doogue to help launch the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University on February 20.

Throughout the day-long conference that came after the launch, positive reference was made to Life Matters on Radio National and ABC TV's Reality Bites series featuring students at Canterbury Boys' High.

Members of the Northern Rivers Branch remain concerned about the likely impact on Australian audio-visual industries of the Free Trade Agreement with the US. They are concerned about continued pressure to introduce advertising on the ABC and Branch members will be asking local candidates for the federal election to provide early detail on the parties' communications policies.

The Branch held a Christmas luncheon at The Palms restaurant in Hastings Point at which twenty members from the Lismore, Byron Bay and Tweed Districts were entertained by a jazz band.

Our first branch meeting for the year was held in Lismore on February 18, where plans were finalised for a visit to Lismore by ABC correspondent Sean Dorney on **Wednesday March 24**.



Sean Dorney has had long experience as the ABC's correspondent for PNG and the South Pacific.

He will speak to journalism students at Southern Cross University at lunch time and then address branch members from **7.30 pm at the Lismore Workers' Club**.

Neville Jennings

Another FABC Free Film Night

Hopscotch Films invite FABC members to a free screening

of the Oscar winning foreign language film –

“THE BARBARIAN INVASIONS”

Screening at Hayden Cremorne Orpheum
Monday, 5th April; 6.45pm ,

"The Barbarian Invasions" - the work of the Canadian writer/director, Denys Arcand - is regarded as his most moving film.

It was lauded at last year's Cannes Film Festival, winning both Best Actress and Best Screenplay. The Barbarian Invasions is a social drama/comedy that centres on a man who spends the last days of his life trying to make peace with those around him, and is a touching, true and open-hearted film that is full of wit, compassion and lyricism, vibrant with love and life.

RSVP (double passes): Ph 9319 0233 or
e-mail: sandie@hopscotchfilms.com.au
specify FABC screening.

This is a FREE event, but we would appreciate a donation on the night to assist FABC in this election year. President Gary Cook will provide an update on our activities.

For Broadcasting Excellence - Caroline Jones AO

The Friends' Excellence in Broadcasting Award, presented at the end of each year, usually goes to a program. In 2003 however for the first time the award went to an individual - Caroline Jones.

Caroline received her award at the Friends' Christmas party in the Dot Strong Terrace of the ABC centre, Ultimo, where she was guest of honour.

President, Gary Cook, presented her with the award to honour and celebrate "the fortieth anniversary of her joining the ABC and for her dedicated career of broadcasting, reporting, writing, producing and directing radio and television programs."



Gary Cook and Caroline Jones with her FABC award for Excellence in Broadcasting

FABC ensured the Christmas party included a host of Caroline's friends and associates who had worked with her over the years each of whom she called up to acknowledge the support she had enjoyed from them on many programs. For more than 200 Friends and guests present it was an intriguing glimpse behind the media scenes and a reminder of some great programs.

Caroline has been writing for film, television and radio as a reporter, presenter and producer since 1963.

From Murrurundi to ABC Radio Canberra, from This Day Tonight, as its first female reporter, to City Extra on BL; from Four Corners to ABC radio's The Search for Meaning and TV's Australian Story.

She has won Logies, Sammys, gold awards, Media Peace Prizes, and published five best-selling books. In 1988 she was made an Officer of the Order of Australia -AO, and was also appointed an Ambassador for Reconciliation, by the Aboriginal Council for Reconciliation.

In 1997 she was voted one of Australia's 100 National Living Treasures.

Snaps taken at the FABC Christmas Party at ABC headquarters in Ultimo.



Students from William Clarke College, Kellyville



Treasurer, Peter Burke (left) and Membership Secretary, Carolyn Green (right) with guests.



Members and guests

Lasting values –Ratings not the point

The Australian's television 'scribe', Errol Simper, welcomed the end of television's summer holidays and the resumption of 'proper' programing with a special word for the ABC

"Yes, ratings for the ABC were good through the summer. But that wasn't the point and it's not what the government had in mind in establishing an Australian counterpart to the BBC. And isn't it grossly unfair to pick on the ABC?"

Commercial television, after all, also presented a great deal of summer nonsense. Well, Nine's Sunday morning fare excepted, commercial television unflinching serves up a lot of nonsense.

To isolate the ABC is, in truth, a compliment to it. It's confirmation that we continue to expect something a little different, a bit better, from the national broadcaster.

To witness a concerted attempt from one of the three commercial channels to give the corporation some serious competition at the thoughtful end of the market would be a fine and wonderful thing, a consummation devoutly to be wished. But the commercial schedules insist that you not hold your breath.

The Australian Feb 19, 2004

It's that one day of the year again...ABC Budget Day

Continued from Page 1

"That's not to say I'm not going to turn the heat up; we will, but we'll do it in a very constructive and considered way."

\$26 million enforced cutbacks

Despite all the bad vibes coming from Canberra and the \$26 million enforced cutbacks, the broadcaster earned enormous respect and support from the community.

What better ammunition to back Balding's latest submission in the lead-up to the next budget.

Balding would like to have a relationship with government - and the new Communications Minister, Daryl Williams - which better reflects the ABC's relationship with its public.

"Despite controversies and distractions, the ABC has had a good year - we've put a lot of runs on the board. More people are watching than ever before, they are coming to the ABC and they're using and enjoying ABC programs," he said.

ABC meeting expectations

"That demonstrates we're meeting expectations - more than the commercials, we satisfy expectations. Hopefully it's sending a message to government that what we're doing is meeting our charter responsibilities."

Last May, the ABC received \$448.7 million for 2003-04, \$501.4 million for the following year and \$512.9 million for 2005-06. Balding had asked for an extra \$250 million over the three years, but got a promise to maintain only the ABC's funding in real terms.

He regrets that he didn't engage the government on a lot more detail. It was a tight fiscal environment... but there was also a budget surplus of \$2.2 billion.

Now there's a surplus of about \$4.6 billion, "so I'm feeling more confident going into this year," he says. "I think the government can do better."

Pulling off programs?

Being midway through the triennial funding, theoretically (Balding) shouldn't be approaching the government, but he needs a commitment in the next budget to continue the \$70.8 million funding for the National Interest Initiatives program. The funding ceases in June 2005 and if Balding doesn't get a commitment by the beginning of next financial year, he'll need to pull some programs off air around November or December.

10,000 Hours of local regional content would have to go

"The hard reality," he says, "is that the two new regional stations in Ballarat, Victoria, and Wagin, Western Australia, would have to close. And the local version of the 7pm weekend news in Darwin and Canberra would be replaced by the Sydney news. About 10,000 hours of local regional content would go."

"It would mean more repeats and, on radio, vital local regional programming would be replaced by metropolitan programs."



"Our strength is our reach, but it's also the localism aspect. Again, it comes back to our success, because in local radio we truly engage with our local audience."

"I don't think it will [come to that]. I'm confident we'll get renewal and we'll continue delivering the benefits."

Balding admits his biggest disappointment was the non-funding of content for the digital multichannels, *ABC Kids* and *Fly TV*, which had to be closed. That hurt. A lost opportunity in the new digital environment, but not lost forever, he says. The decision to drop the popular children's program *Behind The News* hurt us too - and no, that decision was not politically motivated. "I don't work that way," he says.

Cut Cadet Journalists or lose programs

"Cutting the cadet journalist intake program - a disaster in terms of nurturing the next generation of qualified journalists - saved \$500,000. It was that, or take a couple of programs off air."

"Things look brighter now. The new Minister has a different approach to Richard Alston," Balding says. "Daryl has said publicly that he's not going to get into arguments and debates in the media. Any issues he has with the ABC he will bring to us and I welcome that."

"I think you'll find this minister will be much more engaged with the ABC from an internal aspect rather than through the media, and hopefully much more supportive."

"The first months have been positive. The minister, at our invitation, has been to Ultimo for a tour of the new facilities so that he better understands the complexities of broadcasting we're facing. He has met with the board, he opened the Canberra facilities, he spoke very positively."

After Shier's crash-tackle approach, Balding has had a calming effect; his is a very hands-off approach. This was put to the test when Radio National called a 24-hour strike on December 10 over management style.

"There's a broad range of issues and I think it best that management address those issues directly with staff rather than me talking to the media about it," (Balding) says.



While RN was striking, 702 was toasting Angela Catterns winning the breakfast slot - the program has a huge following in Sydney - but ABC purists wonder if it's good ABC fare.

"I reject that; we haven't dumbed down," says Balding. "But there's nothing wrong with being popular...popular doesn't mean dumbing down."

Planning Election Strategies at 13 cents a day

Continued from Page 1

Restoring the ABC budget

This has led the Friends of the ABC to develop a proposal to restore the ABC to reasonable and affordable funding, consistent with past practice, public opinion, and international standards. This requires an immediate increase of 30% in the ABC budget: a total national funding of approximately 13 cents a day

Gary Cook pointed out that a National Social Science Survey in 2000 revealed Australians were prepared to pay around 30% more for the ABC, even if it involved increased taxation, while a 2001 News poll Survey showed most Australians thought the ABC should be better funded; as did 60 per cent of those surveyed in a similar, independent poll.

A thirty percent increase in ABC funding would:

- ✓ Restore the ABC budget to its 1985 level.
- ✓ Be consistent with the public's willingness to pay.
- ✓ Bring the ABC from 17th to 13th, in public broadcaster funding in developed countries.
- ✓ Cost 13 cents a day.

Focus Groups

At two focus groups in Victoria, Terry Laidler reported he had been

able to add 20 minutes of ABC-related questions. The answers - comments - were these:

→ Our current funding message is too sophisticated; keep the message simple.

→ "We've had cut-backs for years and years, when are we going to receive the dividend?"

→ Respondents thought we should stress raising funding by the amount the ABC is underfunded.

→ We've gone through Shier's restructuring upheavals and belt-tightening with Balding...but the bottom line' remains: since 1985 the ABC has been about 30% under-funded.

→ If it isn't restored, our children won't have access to Australian culture and education.

→ Send a message to Labor linked to Labor's education drive.

What else transpired?

WA: intending to advertise WA's website in newspapers.

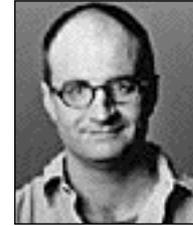
QLD: starting up several regional groups, with incentives for new members to join..

NSW: with ten marginal seats ones, has appointed an election sub-committee:

VIC: with only one marginal (Deakin); is focusing on grass-roots contacts.

ACT: courting candidates, including a Green ex-member of the ACT Legislative Assembly and a strong ABC supporter who could defeat the coalition candidate.

The ABC has re-invented *The Inventors*. Its weekly successor, *The New Inventors*, was



due to go to air March 10 hosted by James O'Loghlin.

The original program was one of the ABC's many success stories of the mid-1970s and a source not only of some very clever inventions but of several spin-off programs on new ideas and science such as *What Will They Think of Next* and *Beyond 2000*.

This generation's inventors program will have a rotating panel of Australian inventors with an international reputation and once again 3 inventions a week.



Original program panelists, Vic Nicholson, Di Fisher and Leo Port.

Bone to Pick With It

brickbats from Michael McGirr in the SMH (18 Feb.2004) miss the point.

I live in regional Australia and we'd all die of boredom without Radio National.

My affection and gratitude for the ABC is genuine. It has been one of the most formative cultural institutions in my life. But I do have a bone to pick with it.

The ABC's self-promotion has reached saturation levels. It used to be a challenge to get to the toilet between programs on ABC TV. It's now possible to have a bath.

I have come reluctantly to the view that if there has to be so much advertising on the ABC, it may as well get paid for it...

The ABC is not supposed to run ads within programs but it does. Gardening Australia regularly advertises a magazine, Gardening Australia, a commercial publication which has paid advertising and is published by the Federal Publishing Company...It is not fair that only one of the gardening magazines in Australia gets to promote itself on the ABC.

The same applies to Limelight, the successor to 24 hours. It's a commercial operation, published by State of the Arts and takes paid

advertising. Limelight promotes the ABC and the ABC promotes it. No other entertainment magazine is allowed access to the ABC's broadcast audience.

Unfortunately the ABC does have to supplement its income. It may be the lesser of two evils for it to take paid advertising between programs just like on SBS. Merchandising and self-promotion are seriously undermining the quality of what *Aunty* has to offer.

(What Michael McGirr fails to suggest is appropriate increased funding for the ABC, and while the promos drive many of us mad, it's surely drawing a long bow to connect them with program quality - Ed.)

New Media & Digital Services' win six AIMIA awards including 'Best of the Best'

At a ceremony in Sydney last month ABC New Media & Digital Services won six awards at the prestigious **Australian Interactive Multimedia Industry Association (AIMIA)** annual presentation night.

ABC New Media & Digital Services had 14 projects as finalists in this year's awards, and took out six of the total 16 categories:

- ★ **Winged Sandals** – Best of the Best and Best eLearning or Reference. ABC Online in association with The University of Melbourne's Centre for Classics and Archaeology, abc.net.au/arts/wingedsandals
- ★ **Kylie Kwong** – Best Arts Lifestyle or Non-Profit. ABC Broadband and TV Online, abc.net.au/kyliekwong
- ★ **Grow Your Own** – Best eInclusion, ABC Rural Online and Radio National, abc.net.au/grow

★ **Game On** – Best Electronic Entertainment or Game. ABC Online, Film Victoria and South Australia Film Corporation, abc.net.au/gameon

★ **Health Matters** – Best Health. ABC Health Online, abc.net.au/health

Winged Sandals, the only entry to receive two awards, is a rich interactive website that brings Greek mythology to students with modern interpretations of classical Greek myths and characters.

Other ABC finalists included

- Black Friday** – abc.net.au/blackfriday;
- Kath and Kim 2** – abc.net.au/kathandkim;
- ABC Asia Pacific Online** – www.abcasiapacific.com;
- Planet Slayer**– www.planetslayer.com which was awarded the prestigious Prix Italia award last year.



Perseus, in a scene from the *Winged Sandals* website, a Who's Who of gods, heroes and monsters from classical mythology

ABC New Media and Digital wins 26 Awards for 'most accessed' websites

ABC New Media and Digital Services also received 26 'Top 10 Awards' in their categories, with five of them ranked number one, in the Hitwise industry awards recognising the top 10 most accessed Australian websites.

21 ABC sites were among the most visited Australian websites, measured in the final quarter of 2003 from over 450,000 websites worldwide.

Five ABC New Media websites were recorded as the most accessed Australian sites in their categories and acclaimed as number one :

- © Entertainment: Books and Writing - abc.net.au/arts
- © Lifestyle: Children's sites - abc.net.au/children
- © Lifestyle: Environment - abc.net.au/science
- © Lifestyle: Pets and Animals - abc.net.au/creaturefeatures
- © Sports: Olympics - abc.net.au/olympics

The awards are based on information collected regarding the Internet usage of over 25 million users worldwide, covering websites sourced for home, work and educational purposes.

The ABC websites recognised with a Top 10 award include **ABC Rural**: abc.net.au/rural, **ABC Science Online**: abc.net.au/science, **ABC Arts**: abc.net.au/arts, **ABC Kids**: abc.net.au/rollercoaster and abc.net.au/children, **ABC Broadband services**: abc.net.au/broadband,

abc.net.au/broadbandkids and abc.net.au/streaming, **Triple J**: triplej.abc.net.au, **Radio National**: abc.net.au/rn, **ABC News**: abc.net.au/news, **ABC Health Online**: abc.net.au/health, **Gardening Australia**: abc.net.au/gardening, **ABC Shop**: shop.abc.net.au.

If you haven't already, check out some of these abc websites. You're in for a treat.



From Lifestyle -Environment: abc.net.au/science website

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Is a Free Trade Agreement the same as a Fair One?

Are we trading away our national identity? An urgent call goes out to lobby Federal MPs.



This issue of Update was delayed to coincide with the release of the full text of the negotiated Free Trade Agreement with the US so we could scrutinise and consider its impact; and foremost what is its effect on Australia's culture, our media and local content?

Loss of Australian content

FABC President, Gary Cook, says that predictably the worst fears have been realised – “despite the government’s rhetoric during the negotiations, there is no question that over time there will be a definite loss of Australian content in film, television and the internet.”

“It is astonishing that an Australian government is prepared to surrender local content and all that it means so as to give greater space at home to another country’s culture; as some of us feared the FTA makes a commodity of national self-awareness – makes it as tradeable as a sack of potatoes or a bushel of wheat.” Gary said.

“And it happened in creeping fashion: in November 2002, the Arts Minister, Rod Kemp, declared that ‘cultural support mechanisms’ would be safeguarded from trade deals; in May 2003, Trade Minister, Mark Vaile said he would ensure that our capacity to support Australian culture and national identity, including audio-visual media, would not be watered down in the negotiations.”

“Yet in November last year, Prime Minister John Howard said “the line to date is that existing local content rules ought to be preserved in relation to existing media. As to some discussion about what might apply to future arrangements, then that might be

part of the negotiation.”

“And there you have the devil in the detail,” Gary said.

“There is a ratchet clause which permits the Australian Government to lower the local content quota for free-to-air TV, and having reached that level it can never be increased – the emphasis is mine and another question is raised. ”

“What can we expect to get from the United States to fill the vacant space? It certainly wouldn’t be anything with an Australian accent, as it were.”



“Similarly, Australia must consult with the US before we raise local content quotas for Pay TV or set local content quotas for interactive services. Again, we must defer to America’s enormous entertainment industry.”

A reason why

“This is an agreement from an Australian government that all along kept reassuring enquirers as to why local content was even on the negotiating table, that everything had to be on the table - but nothing would be conceded when it came to Australian culture and its expression.”

Gary Cook said Australia’s negotiators may well have fought the good fight and bargained strongly in Australia’s interests – but: “to appreciate the real reasons for the agreement one has to go no further than the startlingly frank admission by the Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer on 2nd March that a major factor in committing troops to the war in Iraq was the fear of damaging Australia’s alliance with the US.”



Gary referred to the role the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET) had played in monitoring the progress of the negotiations, endorsing their criticism of the contents including their concern that in a side deal the Government had pledged to privatise Telstra - when the issue was still subject to parliamentary debate and parliamentary decision – “a clear abrogation of the democratic process,” AFTINET declared.

“Dr Patricia Ranald from the Public Interest Advocacy Centre was spot-on when she said the USFTA announcement was supposed to be a public relations dream for the Government able to claim great economic benefit and reassure us that health and cultural policies would not be affected.”

““Instead, quite a different picture in key areas has been painted,” she said.

Time to lobby

With the enabling legislation required to go through the Australian parliament, Gary Cook said it was time to campaign vigorously.

“Let us voice our disapproval of an agreement that is neither free nor fair and write to the Opposition, the Democrats, the Greens and the Independents to overturn the agreement in the Senate,” he said.



See AFTINET’s website www.aftinet.org.au for more information.



Guest's Column

Song of Praise for RN

Our Guest Columnist this issue is past-President, Penelope Toltz, a Radio National addict and keen – as Tennyson put it – ‘to stir a little dust of praise’.

Radio National is said to have a small audience, but it covers all Australia and is often the only radio signal able to be picked up in our more remote areas.

To me, Radio National is like a friend. For the many years I've worked at home, spending time on my own, after a busy morning Radio National is brain food; or, if I'm working around the home, Radio National is my constant companion.

Nowhere else on our radio waves can I hear the specialist programs I'm so fond of. I love hearing about medicine, the law, the media, religion and, yes, even sport, when it's covered intelligently and forensically as it is on Radio National.

RN is the place where I can listen to music with commentary and explanation. I can hear poetry read or listen to the intelligent questions of the *Radio National Quiz*. It's also where I learn about science and the latest developments in that fascinating world.

But Radio National not only informs and entertains, it can often do even more. At a party some years ago, a guest came up to Robyn Williams and thanked him for the Science program. He said his wife was suffering from cancer, and he was dissatisfied with the progress she showed under her current treatment regime. He had listened to the *Science Show* and discovered there were new treatments not on offer from her current medical practitioners. Better informed than before, he was able to challenge her doctors and insist that they look at some newer treatments for her. It enabled his wife to live years longer and in far more comfort. Not a 'miracle cure' of course but just one lesson in the value of information of the sort we only get on RN.

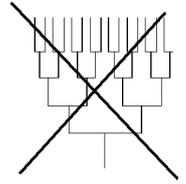
What else is there? I like the fact that I can hear about indigenous arts and culture; that I hear many positive stories about the indigenous community - stories thin on the ground in other media. And I'm a devoted fan of Earth Beat, another RN program that covers the positive as well as the negative about ecology.

To do as I do, study Radio National's programs in the weekly television guide in the Sydney Morning Herald or consult the Radio National Web Site to see the depth and breadth available to you in Sydney on 576 on the AM band, otherwise just switch it on. You can't go wrong!

Radio National's website gives the details of its frequencies right around Australia; for anyone without a computer there's a Radio National leaflet with the same information in it.

Phone Trees 'Disconnected'

The NSW branch at its Committee meeting February 16 decided to discontinue the Telephone Tree network in its traditional form.



The committee agreed the system had been proving extremely time consuming while becoming less effective, due to our ever-changing membership base, a base which includes more than a thousand Friends on e-mail.

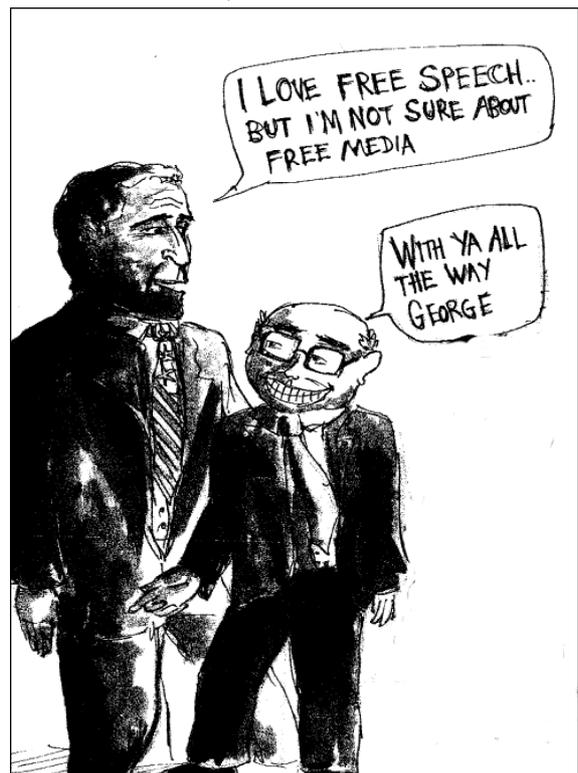
So in lieu of using a Phone Tree, important messages will be sent directly to those members with e-mail. In turn individual branches can communicate on a local basis ... more value from being able to exchange information when members have agreed to do so.

Friends President, Gary Cook, said all Friends were undoubtedly most appreciative of the work done over recent years by members of the Telephone Trees, in particular its co-ordinators, most notably Nan Manefield.

"However, with the growing proportion of members with e-mail, it is a realistic move to change the system, particularly when we are all facing a very busy year."

"A flexible membership base means phone trees can become unwieldy and hard to monitor for breaks in the chain; efficiency, cost and effectiveness mean it's time to embrace the e-mail list."

"Other branches of course will still run their own phone trees as well, if that suits them."



Cartoon courtesy Jennifer Harwood

ABC Staff Honoured at 2003 Walkley Awards



The ABC's success at last year's Walkley Awards for Journalism was a forceful rebuttal of its critics. Senator John Cherry, Democrat spokesperson on broadcasting and communications, launched into a spirited defence of the Corporation at the awards ceremony and later had his speech incorporated into Hansard...with particular reference to Senator Santoro. (Slightly abridged, it's certainly worth 'incorporating' in Update.)

As the Democrats Communications spokesperson I wish to congratulate all those journalists honoured this year, and all of those journalists who continue to pursue truth and accuracy, regardless of the pressures imposed on them.

I particularly congratulate Richard Moran, Paul McGeough and Jason Southon on their awards at the top of the list. The ABC, which has been under attack by the Howard Government all year, won all three awards in the radio category and two of the four television awards, with a Walkley to Andrew Denton's *Enough Rope* for broadcasting interviewing. Given the intense pressure the Government has placed on ABC journalists throughout the year, this is a credit to the ABC's continuing high standards.

I particularly note the award for Radio Current Affairs Reporting went to AM and Mark Willacy for his report, *"The Fall of Saddam"*

I also congratulate Matt Peacock, the ABC's then London based correspondent, who last week won the British Foreign Press Association award for the best story by a foreign journalist: another radio story related to the Iraqi war, this time for PM, on Tony Blair's "master of spin" Alistair Campbell.

The ABC's coverage of the Iraqi war, particularly that of AM, senators would recall, has been the particular subject of complaints by former Communications Minister Senator Richard Alston and the new Queensland Senator, Santo Santoro.

Since May, Senator Santoro has spoken in this place on six different occasions, using the Senate to attack various journalists and journalistic decisions within the ABC.

On August 13, his most virulent attack on AM's coverage of the Iraq war, (targeted) Linda Mottram, when he said her comments "...highlight the instinctive anti-Americanism and the institutionalized hostility to this government that has become part of AM's stock in trade. But it is not only bias. It is sloppy and shoddy journalism, which should have no place at the ABC - the sort that perennially transmits the leftist coda of the media elite."

Senator Santoro declared himself a "friend" of the ABC and his 'careful monitoring' as "the key to securing an ABC (to) match the best in the world in the professional and objectivity of its reporting."



Well, I say to Senator Santoro, three out of three radio Walkley's, and two out of four television Walkleys is in my view, a pretty clear indication that ABC radio and television does in fact match the best in terms of professionalism and objectivity.

The ABC does not need Senator Santoro as its self-appointed moral guardian to set its standards. What to Senator Santoro is 'hostility' is to me and millions of ABC listeners and viewers a healthy scepticism towards Government and power that is necessary if a public-spirited media organisation is to do its job.

The audience is clear in its views. According to Newspoll, 90% of AM/PM listeners regard the programs as balanced and even handed.

Even the Independent Complaints Panel, in dealing with the 68 complaints lodged by Senator Alston, concluded, and I quote:

"The Panel finds no evidence, overall, of biased and anti-Coalition coverage as alleged by the Minister, nor does it uphold his view that the program was characterised by one-sided and tendentious commentary by program presenters and reporters. The Panel believes that the AM coverage of the war was competent and balanced."



Senator Alston's Travel – the Million Dollar Man

- The former Minister for Communications and the Arts Senator Alston since being elected in 1996 has spent the best part of \$1 million dollars on overseas travel. This is an incredible amount for a front bench Senator who is not the Foreign Affairs, Trade or Prime Minister.
- It could well have been more, but for the fact that the Prime Minister knocked back his request to travel to London during the Winter recess last year – Alston's self-indulgence was too much even for him.

TRAM RIDE

Join Friends Wednesday 26th May at 11 am to tour the Sydney Tramway Museum at Sutherland.
- a 2 1/2 hour 'trip' including tram rides through Royal National Park or Sutherland.

Admission - \$13 or \$10 concessions; BYO lunch

Ring – Jason 0407 065 512, Ken 9850 2453, Gillian 9144 2891 or Ivy 9481 0381 by 3 May.

Friends quiz Lindsay Tanner



Margaret O'Connor (ACT President and National Spokesperson), Gary Cook (NSW President), and Jill Greenwell (ACT Secretary) met Lindsay Tanner, Opposition

Shadow Minister for Communications, on 9 Feb.2004 at Parliament House, Canberra. Jill Greenwell - Secretary, FABC ACT and Region - reports.

ALP's commitment to the ABC

On the ALP's commitment to the ABC, our first question to Lindsay Tanner was directed at the level of support for public broadcasting generally, and for the ABC in particular, outlined by the ALP before the last election.

Mr Tanner said that the ALP's position remained substantially the same, but with the significant addition of the policy, which he had ushered in last year, on appointments to the ABC Board.

He had used the UK's Nolan Rules as a guide to making the appointment process transparent and to making it as independent of political influence as would be consistent with his responsibility as Minister; he added that that was not necessarily the end of the process of developing policy on the ABC.

Political independence

Mr Tanner made it very clear that as a Minister he would not be interfering in ABC programming, management or budget priorities. He stressed the point that he regarded it as important that the ABC should be kept at arm's length from politicians.

That theme also ran through his comments about government funding of the ABC: that it should not be tied to particular programming decisions or management initiatives, as these are the prerogative of the ABC itself.

Funding – Tanner challenges FABC

He threw out a challenge to Friends of the ABC to identify the

sorts of improvements extra funding would make possible. He suggested, as one possible example, the extension of programs and services to rural and regional areas. In his own efforts to secure extra funding for the ABC he expected that this approach would be received more sympathetically than if he came up with a figure or formula.

He pointed out that the ABC's budget allocation always had to be considered in the context of the Government's over all budget strategy. Outside that context any figure, such as going back to the levels of 1995 (the ALP pre-2001 election promise), or formula based on overseas comparisons, is arbitrary. Nevertheless he would be seeking an increase in funding for the ABC.

The future

The Shadow Minister made it a bit hard for himself to answer questions about his vision for the ABC because of his concern to be seen as not interfering in ABC management. However, he did say that digital broadcasting was one of the challenges facing the ABC; and that with its intermediate-sized markets the ABC could be eased out by 'borderless broadcasting'. On the other hand, the ABC's importance as 'the Australian broadcaster' could enable it to retain a viable audience.

Interestingly, in discussions in 2002 with the Friends of the ABC, Lindsay Tanner made essentially the same suggestion - that the advent of digital television, and a multi-channel environment, would be a threat to the survival of the ABC. It was that suggestion which at least partly prompted Darce Cassidy to write his paper 'Fifty seven channels and nothin' on' (<http://www.friendsoftheabc.org/nothin.htm>)

Perhaps next time we meet, FABC should tackle Lindsay Tanner on what proposals he has developed to strengthen the ABC's capacity to survive the digital age, what he is doing to enable the ABC to cater for the needs of particular communities around Australia and to contribute to our sense of national identity?

WANTED – ALIVE - A NEW HON. TREASURER

How would you like to be an important member of a highly motivated team - working for a cause in which you passionately believe?

Yes? Then this may be for you!
We need a new Hon Treasurer.



Peter Burke has announced that, after five years, he's retiring from the post.

The Hon Treasurer is responsible for:

- ✓ Keeping track of the monetary resources of our organization – bank accounts and cash. This is largely done using MYOB for simple book-keeping of deposits and payments.
- ✓ Processing all incoming monies – i.e. membership subscriptions and donations. "Processing" involves listing (using MS Excel or similar) for regular (usually weekly) bank deposits and for transmission to the Membership Secretary for issuing new membership cards. One list serves both.
- ✓ Making all payments. Two cheque signatories are required and payments are made against authorized invoices and signed expense claim dockets.
- ✓ Producing a simple one-page report on income and expenditure each month for the regular committee meeting.
- ✓ Producing accounts for presentation to the AGM each year – possibly needing help from some one with accounting experience. The outgoing treasurer will be pleased to assist.
- ✓ Handling all insurance matters, which mainly means filling in forms at renewal time.



The job requires on average about 3-4 hours per week. The main attribute needed is a methodical and orderly approach. A PC computer using Excel and MYOB is essential. Computer skills can be learned quickly. Tuition from the incumbent Treasurer is available as is his help at any time.

Applications to: Peter Burke on 9144 2668 until March 26 and thereafter Gary Cook on 9810 3358.

Rupert Murdoch's 'plans' for the BBC



Lifelong activist and founder and former CEO of the Body Shop, Anita Roddick, connects Tony Blair's attack on the BBC with the conservative assault on public broadcasting in the US and the debt Blair owes Rupert Murdoch.

Roddick describes the diminution of public space, especially public broadcasting, by the powerful forces of privatisation, as a *fait accompli* and the context in which Blair is now operating.

She says the assault on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) as a 'left-wing network' dates back more than a decade. Originally, \$300 million in appropriations from Congress was held up by then-Senator Robert Dole and other conservatives who launched carefully co-ordinated ad hominem blasts against supposedly 'left-wing presences' on public television and branded as 'hard-line Marxist' a human rights series titled *South Africa Now* and *Rights and Wrongs*.

Eventually the Republican-controlled House of Representatives, led by then-Speaker Gingrich, tried to get rid of PBS entirely. The effort failed but it left PBS weakened and more vulnerable than ever.

"Here in Britain, she says, "the BBC has one great advantage over PBS in America - freedom from such political pressure afforded by the annual licence fee TV owners pay."

"The tax raises US\$4.2 billion for the BBC annually and nobody in government can reappropriate it or redistribute it. Thus the BBC is not only well funded, but also well protected from politicians."

BBC in Murdoch's crosshairs

Every ten years, however, there is a charter review which reassesses the BBC's budget and performance. The next one is in 2006. Since the BBC is one of the most influential institutions in British life, the review will become one of the nation's most profound political battles. As Michael Wolff puts it, it's all 'about getting a piece of the pie. Or at least a fight about Murdoch's piece.'

Not surprisingly, then, Rupert Murdoch and his political cronies have begun to lay the groundwork for an all-out assault on the BBC and the annual fee. While they will probably not be able to eliminate it, endless attacks, slanted polls, and political pressuring may well result in a reduction in the amount the BBC receives annually, thus weakening its strength as a 'public' competitor to private corporate interests, especially Murdoch's BSKyB network.



This impending assault should be viewed through the prism of what otherwise appears the oddest of couplings: Rupert Murdoch and Tony Blair. Blair first became PM owing in large measure to the endorsements of the

traditionally rightwing Murdoch press. It now seems apparent that Blair made a devil's pact years ago to garner Murdoch's support and Murdoch is now collecting his payback.

Couple this scenario with the BBC's controversial Iraq war reporting, (the Hutton inquiry) and the Blair government's ensuing assault on the BBC and the convergence between the interests of Blair, Murdoch and the American rightwing becomes clear.

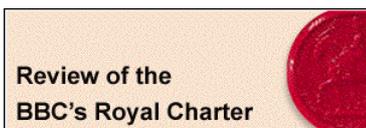
Everything is 'up for grabs'

Announcing the formation of a charter advisory panel, Labour's culture secretary, Tessa Jowell, recently announced that everything was up for grabs, including how the BBC 'should be funded and regulated and whether it delivers good value for money.'

Add to this, the next salvo from Murdoch crony Tony Ball who recently claimed growing public antagonism was the real threat to the BBC's future. Citing his own poll, Ball claimed that more than half of all Brits don't think they are getting their money's worth from the license fee - an 'unfair tax' Ball calls it.

Ball posits that the forthcoming BBC charter review provides an opportunity to start 'from first principles.' In other words, let's throw out the past and re-examine the purpose of the BBC from scratch - a highly dangerous proposition, of course, when dealing with 'compulsory taxes' like the licence fee.

In the ideal world then, from Murdoch's vantage point, the BBC would become something much more like public television in the U.S. - there, but barely so.



Cartoon courtesy Horacek

Friends and ABC lose a passionate 'Defender of the Faith' – A Founder and Life Member, Edith Waller, dies



Direct links with Friends' first days are gradually unraveling. Edith Waller died late last year, aged 85, and profoundly mourned by all who knew her. Word of her passing was circulated to members by her friend, Walter Bass; while her death

was reported in a moving obituary in the Sydney Morning Herald under the heading - "Age did not weary her passionate idealism".

Edith Waller embarked on her political and community work in the mid 1970s, including membership of Amnesty International and the original Friends group in which she was a tireless champion of Radio National and a passionate defender of the ABC's Independence, inspired by her commitment to a life of ideas, cultural values and humanist principles. Her family quoted friends who described her as kind, loyal, wise and witty, feisty in argument as she clung to beliefs - but modest in regard to her own talents as a writer, occasional poet and a regular astute observer "often tinged with wry human empathy."

Born in Sydney as Edith Riley, she studied at Sydney University with such contemporaries as Donald Horne, James McAuley and Amy Witting and was profoundly affected by the teachings of the influential philosophy professor of the era, John Anderson – a lifetime factor in her thinking. She married fellow philosophy student, Neville Waller, in 1948.

Between then and the seventies, she raised three children and cared for her ill mother.

When she switched to publicly pursuing the public issues she did so with characteristic flair, incisiveness and commitment - lobbying politicians, drafting countless elegantly-written missives in letter-writing campaigns, protesting early mornings and late nights for Amnesty International, targeting Pinochet's Chile, raising interest in China long before it was common to do so, or saving suburban Seaforth's trees (she was also passionate about the Australian landscape and was a founding member of the Sydney University Bushwalking Club).

She was Secretary of the Friends of the ABC and for about 20 years edited "News and Views", *Update's* predecessor. Her own contributions to the magazine were always incisive and sharply perceptive. In the 80s she also served on the ABC's State and National Advisory Councils.

Another close friend, Joan Michie, told *Update* that Edith believed in tackling issues, concerned with substance not shadows, believing in fighting the good fight for egalitarianism, but not in promoting herself or her role.

She wistfully recalled Edith's "quirky" little illustrations for News & Views and Edith's dedicated concern, as a vigilante for malapropisms, for the English language, its word meanings and structure. She recalled too Edith's 'absolutism' about the "News & Views" editor's editorial independence.

Among Edith Waller's writings whose sting and turn of phrase still linger in memory, one of the most telling was her submission to the 2001 Senate inquiry into the appointment of the ABC board.

"Jonathan Shier", she wrote, "is apparently about to fulfill the PM's long-cherished wish for 'a more mainstream ABC', although that would seem to be a market already well-served by the commercial sector. Perhaps there is always room for more mediocrity. The PM once, surprisingly, said he would like to have a 'right-wing Phillip Adams'. One wonders why. Phillip Adams might interview Henry Kissinger, Ralph Nader, Salman Rushdie - but it is John Laws who interviews our prime minister. That is fine and appropriate. Commercial radio does what it does best and *Radio National* does what nobody else does at all. Its audience may not be large, but its voice is."

Walter Bass concluded his tribute, this way: "...my wife and I were extremely saddened by the news of Edith's death. She possessed great warmth, quick wit and a wonderful sense of humour. She was passionate about the causes she held dear. We spent many wonderful weekends with Edith and Neville in their cottage at Mt. Wilson. I last visited her in hospital. She was frail and could hardly speak, but her eyes understood what I was saying. Goodbye, old friend

update

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Phone 9810 3358 Fax 9144 1351 To become a member phone 9990 0600 or visit our web site at: www.fabcnsw.org.au/

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FABC Update

Post The Editor
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New Documentary zeroes in on the day Victoria burst into flames

Scoured deeply into the Australian psyche is the knowledge of Black Friday, January 13, 1939 – the day bushfires roared across the State of Victoria – a firestorm consuming a million hectares of mountain ash forest and hundreds of settlements and townships enclosed in the bush. 71 people died.

“About a million hectares of ash forest were burnt – the equivalent of 5 thermonuclear weapons or 5 hydrogen bombs. If anybody thinks we have the capacity to control that, they're totally mistaken,” a Fire Management Consultant says in a new ABC interactive online documentary that explores the events and consequences of Black Friday, 1939 called – *Black Friday*.

It is compelling and troubling and frightening. *Black Friday* is a powerful new interactive online documentary. On that day in 1939 hundreds of bushfires burning out of control for at least a week suddenly converged into a terrifying firestorm that swept across Victoria, almost from Gippsland to the South Australian border – and across it...the most terrifying fires since the European occupation of Australia.

Black Friday, an initiative of the ABC-Film Victoria Multimedia Production Accord, is produced, written and directed by Moira Fahy

“The widespread and devastating 1939 Black Friday bushfires remain, arguably, the most significant event in the 160 year history of park and forest management in Victoria, and one of the most significant events in the recorded history of south-eastern Australia,” Moira Fahy said.

“The Black Friday bushfires shocked Australian society to its core and burned into the national conscience.”

The on-line documentary - at <http://abc.net.au/black-friday> - is an evocative, comprehensively resourced account of the tragedy and scale of an awesome natural disaster.

The *Black Friday* site includes survivors and eyewitnesses telling their personal stories, with some speaking publicly for the first time in sixty-five years. There are also

- an interactive map providing details on the fire-affected areas
- a time line placing the fires in local and international history
- an online archive of newspapers from the time
- details of the findings and recommendations from the Royal Commission that followed Black Friday and
- expert opinions and analysis of the fires contributed by leading firefighters, scientists, historians and today's key decision makers

“Mum went to the stove and she bent down to look at the cake and this ball of fire come through the win-

dow, the house just exploded,” says 75-year-old Daphne Fowles who was trapped at Jeeralang.

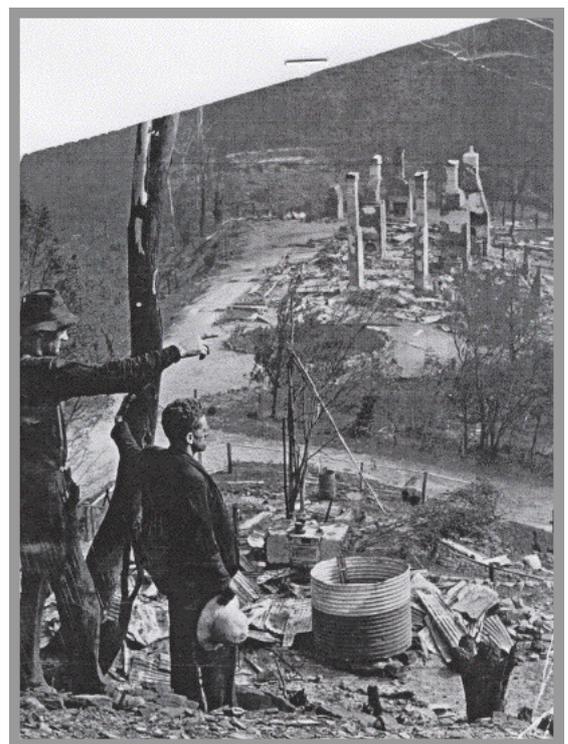
Seventy-two year old Ray Dafter, then a child, sheltered with his mother in a river as the fires exploded around them. His uncle Bill was one of only two people who came out of the Matlock region alive.

“(Searchers) were going through to Matlock and they saw this animal, but it wasn't an animal...it was Bill. He told me Gallipoli was nothing, absolutely nothing, compared to the '39 fire,” Ray says.

Moira Fahy is a producer/writer in film, television and new media and has also written and produced new media programs for major corporations and government and education organizations.



A fire line



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 www.friendsoftheabc.org

Membership form Please fill out the form below and return it with your payment to:
 The Treasurer, Friends of the ABC (NSW) Inc.
 PO Box 1391, North Sydney NSW 2059.

Name: _____ Email: _____

Please Print
 Address: _____ Suburb: _____ P/Code: _____

Phone (Home): _____ (Work): _____ Mob: _____

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**My details will be passed on to my local FABC Branch.
 (Strike out if you disagree)**

Age Group 30 or under 31-50 51+

Membership No. _____

I would like to join I would like to renew I am interested in helping I would like to join the email network
 (and help pass on information to members)

I/We apply for membership of FABC (NSW) Inc. and accept its objectives and rules. Signature: _____

- Individual \$20
- Family/Household \$25
- Student \$15
- Pensioner \$15
- Corporate (covers 3 members) \$60
- I would like to make a donation \$ _____

I am paying by	<input type="checkbox"/> cheque in favour of FABC (NSW) Inc.
<input type="checkbox"/> money order	<input type="checkbox"/> bankcard <input type="checkbox"/> mastercard <input type="checkbox"/> visa
Card number _____	
Name on credit card _____	
Expiry date _____	

Cardholders signature: _____ Amount \$ _____