

update

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national magazine

friends of the abc

Regional Conference sets out Friends' election campaign

The pressing topic at the FABC regional conference in Newcastle last month was to plan for the ABC during the forthcoming Federal election campaign – specifically to “determine the most effective strategies, methods and tactics to promote the ABC’s interests during the campaign.”

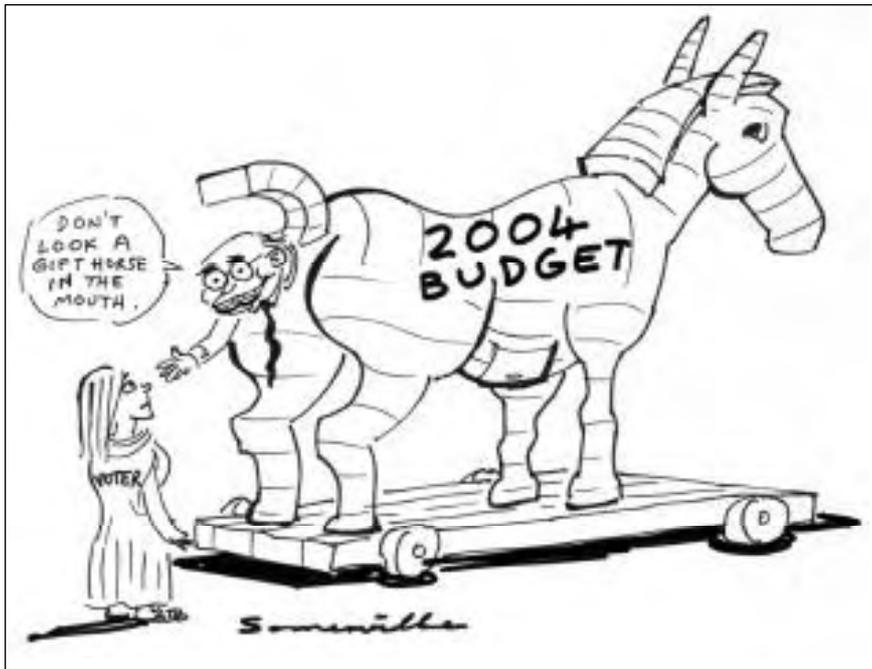
More than 30 delegates representing eleven branches attended the two-day conference at which the other main topics were to develop strategies to combat current and future threats to the ABC and to review and define changes to improve the operations of FABC (NSW) and other branches in the State.

On the Federal election campaign, delegates discussed ways and means of using the media, as far as possible, challenging candidates, particularly in marginal seats, the distribution of the Blue Mountains’ “ABC IS the balance” cards and sustaining urgent, widespread momentum throughout the election campaign.

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Cartoon courtesy Phil Somerville

The FTA Struggle: Trading off Content and Culture

It's incredible: our national government agreed in a trade deal with the US to limit on air time for Australian material and further re-duce its place in New Media... while denying it. It was surely something we shouldn't even have been debating; but what's more, where the votes were defenders of Australian content were in a minority. Fortunately, if only a modicum of access for our own culture was salvaged, at least our pride was.

FABC's point of view was unqualified: we regarded the proposed Free Trade

Agreement with the U.S. as possibly the most serious issue the Friends had yet faced.

Our original purpose was to act as a lobby group to protect the ABC from the country's politicians - and it still is - but the FTA was a much wider attack from outside against not only the ABC, but every aspect of our culture and national identity, except perhaps painting and sculpture.

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Central Coast 'muster' - Andrew Denton - enough to rope in a packed house.



An audience of more than 300 crowded into the Central Coast Leagues Club in Gosford when the *Enough Rope* presenter, Andrew Denton, was guest of the Central Coast Friends at a forum about the ABC.

Asked about the title "*Enough Rope*" Andrew said the idea was not "to give people enough rope to hang themselves, but hopefully to do rope tricks" and explain themselves.



The format of the evening was question and answer mode with the audience peppering the astute visitor with questions about the ABC, his program and himself.

Andrew said all governments, both Labor and Liberal, attempted to muzzle the ABC because it was an independent voice questioning government. He said that he wasn't at the forum "to throw out the government;" he was there because he believed so strongly in "an independent national broadcaster."

When asked how best to get one's message across to the government to support the ABC, Andrew replied that there was "no quick fix". "To be visible and vocal with one's opinions," he said, "it's important to contact one's local member and the relevant Minister, preferably by letter."

"Politicians feel that one individual letter is equivalent to the opinion of 200 people," he said.

Andrew felt that the ABC, as an independent broadcaster, was the only medium guaranteed not to try to

influence people to do what the government wanted to get people to do.

He felt it was too easy to view politicians as only 'one-sided.' Most politicians "are complex with complex views," Andrew said.

For over an hour Andrew kept the audience laughing and attentive as he answered questions about "*Enough Rope*", as well as his personal experiences.

Asked about his dress code,

Denton Forum Background

A brief early mention in the local media and later publicity, much of it by word of mouth, was so effective the forum was eventually sold-out and further requests for tickets had to be refused.

Branch President, John Hale, said that in addition to admission charges income, new members were signed up and application forms and information sent out to other enquirers. Margaret Hale handled the ticketing and mail-out arrangements.

"As well as 'live' we also invited ticket-holders to write down questions as they arrived and Carol Bailey handled these as well as her own to put to Andrew," John said.

Klaas Woldring introduced Andrew and subsequently thanked him for coming and presented him with a framed photograph of a Central Coast seascape.

The ABC shop at Erina Fair donated two CDs as lucky door prizes. The store gave the FABC greatly appreciated further support in the form of posters, stickers and gifts.

Andrew replied: "Style took out an AVO against me years ago."

Whom would he most liked to have interviewed, living or dead? Andrew said Leo Tolstoy and John Lennon would top the list. He would also like to interview Bill Clinton (which he did in a subsequent telecast) and Kerry Packer. Tony Abbott had been asked to appear but had so far declined.

The average time to prepare one of his programs takes three days to a month's research, going back as "far as necessary" into a person's history to find out things about them "not generally known."

Andrew conceded there was a lively debate about whether Chopper Reed should have been given air time, but he said that in the end getting Chopper's view of "right and wrong" and to "challenge him morally on the air" justified the space and the program. Andrew said that often the best interviewing technique was just to listen.



A String Quartet conducted by Chris Bearman also entertained the forum. The players were from four different schools but each attends the Central Coast Conservatorium of Music.

See FABC Great Lakes 'Person-to-Person' Interview with Andrew Denton on Page 14

Who can you trust?
The ABC, that's who!
Support the candidate
who supports the ABC



The President's Report

This "Special Election Issue" of Update has been produced to provide you, our members, with the most current information, issues and policies of the parties as they relate to the ABC, at the outset of the election campaign. It must be remembered that the major parties will progressively release their policies over the lengthy campaign period of six weeks and, therefore, the content within this issue will not be complete.

Please note that the Friends of the ABC is a political lobby group which is not linked to or affiliated with any political party. We reserve the right to pressure or criticise any party which acts against the interests of the ABC, even by omission, whether they be in Government, Opposition or on the cross benches.



Remember, on 9 October, when casting your vote, support the candidate who genuinely supports the ABC.

On page 1, we feature an item on the Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the United States. You will know from recent editions that we vigorously opposed the FTA, particularly as it related to local content rules and Australian culture and identity. We believe that the FTA is neither free nor fair. The short-sighted vision of the Government in failing to protect local content for new media is particularly disturbing. While Labor succeeded in persuading the Government to support changes to local content rules for existing media (and also to the PBS), this was only a token effort. We will be burdened for generations to come by the Government's capitulation to the Americans. The Government stands condemned as does the Opposition for not standing up for Australia's best interests.



Conference members hard at work

Ten FABC branches and the NSW Committee convened in Newcastle on the first weekend in August for our second Regional Conference. A report on the main issues addressed by the conference is on page 1. A very productive two days were spent analysing election strategies, issues confronting the ABC and reflecting on how to improve the efficiency of the Friends. The energy, commitment and cooperation of the delegates was refreshing and at the conclusion of the conference there was unanimous agreement that much had been achieved.

The first branch to put the election firmly on the agenda was Eastern Suburbs which held a public forum in July at which candidates for Labor, Democrats and the Greens attended. together with sitting member (and possible Independent) Peter King. The Liberal Party candidate, Malcolm Turnbull apologised due to a prior engagement. A lively exchange ensued with the panel responding to a list of questions provided in advance amid speculation whether Peter King would nominate as an Independent.

The decision by the ABC to restore a digital television channel for children is welcome news. When *ABC Kids* and *Fly* were axed in May, 2003, as a result of Government rejection of the ABC's submission for a funding boost, we were critical of the Government's indifference and hostility towards a legitimate

request. That the ABC had to scrape the funds together by cost-cutting is an unsatisfactory position. The ABC should be sufficiently well funded to enable it to create, to produce and to develop and not have to continue to cut what is already a lean organisation.

Several of our Committee are not standing for re-election at this year's AGM. I wish to record my appreciation for their valuable service on your behalf.

Gary Cook
President

NSW COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The NSW Committee meets on the third Monday each month (except December and January) at 6.00 pm at the Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire Street, Surry Hills.

Members are welcome to attend as observers. Please make arrangements in advance by contacting a member of the Executive (contact details on page 17).

"Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you."

Pericles (430 B.C.)

FABC Events coming up...

MEET THE PARRAMATTA CANDIDATES

All candidates for the marginal seat of Parramatta, including sitting member Ross Cameron, will be invited to a Public Meeting in the Parramatta Town Hall **Thursday, 30 September, Commencing at 7.30 pm/**

The candidates will address the meeting to outline their commitments to supporting the ABC into the future.

Jazz Concert and Picnic

at Berry Island
on Sunday 21 November



Berry Island now joins the mainland but still retains its unspoilt bushland. Originally a fishing and hunting campsite for local aboriginal communities, this island now provides a wealth of information to visitors about the area's history (both aboriginal and European). The island features aboriginal rock carvings, the Gadyan Track (a free, self-guided walk), an excellent children's playground, and a picnic area.

Join the FABC from 12.30 – 3.00
for a casual afternoon of
music, wine and food (byo)

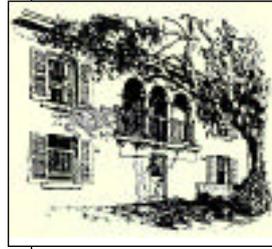
To get there, go to the bush hill on Berry Island, at the end of Shirley Rd, Wollstonecraft.

For more information see
www.sydnejazzclub.com.

Great Lakes Friends of the ABC



The Great Lakes Friends of the ABC recently held a successful coffee afternoon. Committee members Janet Lawrence, Audrey Semon, Grahame Burns, and Marty Morrison are pictured.



Visit to Nutcote Beautiful Harbourside Home of May Gibbs, Snugglypot and Cuddlepie Sunday 26 September

Nutcote was the house which was specially designed for May Gibbs by the well-known architect B. J. Waterhouse and she lived there for 45 years. From her lovely studio overlooking the harbour at Neutral Bay she wrote and illustrated most of her wonderful books and the long-running cartoon strip *Bib and Tub*.

Meet the friends there at 11am for a walk around the house and gardens, followed by refreshments in the tea house – or byo picnic for later enjoyment along the harbour foreshore.

Cost: \$7 for adults, \$5 concession
and \$17 for families.

Address: 5 Wallaringa Ave, Neutral Bay.

For more information see www.maygibbs.com.au or
Ph: 9953 4453.

There are ferries to Hayes St, Neutral Bay from 10.50 am on Sundays or Bus 225 from Neutral Bay Junction (corner of Wycombe Road/Military Road) to Kurraba Road stop (Sunday hourly from 9.53am) then a short walk down hill. You will need to check ferries & buses beforehand! There is only limited parking in nearby streets.

For further information, Ph Jason: 9489 1420,
Ivy on Ph: 9481 0381 or Frouke: Ph: 9642 6485

Future Fairs Granny Smith Fair at Eastwood Saturday 16 October

As usual, the FABC will have a stall and we're looking for people to help out.

To volunteer for a 1 to 2 hour stint, please phone
Jason on Ph: 9489 1420 or 0407 065 512
or Gillian on Ph: 9144 2891



Newtown Fair Sunday 14 November

Again, FABC will have a stall
at this very busy and popular fair.

We'd like some more helpers, so please phone
Jason on 9489 1420 or 0407 065 512; or Frouke on
Ph: 9642 6485 for a stint.

It's lots of fun and you meet a lot of FABC members!

Regional Conference sets out Friends' election campaign

Continued from Page 1

There and then the conference election 'workshop' finalised, from drafts, the campaign bumper stickers, leaflets and posters to be made available to all branches and soon after the Conference a media kit was prepared and sent to the branches. The other material soon followed

The focus

The conference was picking up on the fact that many branches were already in election mode, particularly those in marginal seats. The focus on the election was fixed in a pre-conference statement in which NSW President, Gary Cook, said that the Friends, like the Blue Mountains 'balance' card, had to make a strong statement about the ABC and balance. He said the ABC's enemies

alleged bias about things they didn't like to see or hear broadcast when the ABC's only competition was the commercial media. "It is in fact the ABC that injects 'balance' into Australia's media coverage, just by being honest," Gary said.

Members to 'lend a hand'

Conference delegates compared notes between branches as to how to conduct their campaigns, with a keen suggestion that members in safe seats should lend their hand to helping in the marginals.

Forums, letters to newspapers, possibly paid ads - funds permitting, and talk-back radio were emphasized, where they applied of course; with a uniform need for the leaflets and posters as soon as possible to start 'decorating' friendly coffee shops, libraries, arcades, book stores, and wherever else they're appropriate - with a common theme - *"Support the candidate who supports the ABC"*.

At the same time, Friends would be calling on and telephoning all candidates to - # support the restoration of funding to the ABC, # the reform of the way board members are appointed and to # guarantee the ABC's independence and its integrity.

Great Lakes had recorded an interview with Andrew Denton over the internet which they planned to circulate through the media as part of their campaign. Northern Rivers were inviting keynote guest speakers from the ABC to address meetings; NSW would make extra funds available to branches in marginal seats and the rest of the branches present were each planning forums at which to 'test' the candidates.

Marginal electorates and corresponding branches and Presidents are: Dobell (Central Coast - John Hale), Lindsay and Parramatta (Parramatta - Mal Hewitt), Paterson (Great Lakes - Grahame Burns), Richmond and Page (Northern Rivers - Neville Jennings), Eden-Monaro (Bega - Alec Bacon).

What's Needed

- ◆ Restoration of the ABC's base triennial funding to at least its 1995/96 level in real terms, plus additional funding to permit the ABC to fully participate in the digital environment, including online services?
- ◆ Legislation to change the method of appointing the ABC board to provide for an open, transparent and non-partisan process which ensures that directors are appointed on the basis of merit and strong commitment to independent and comprehensive public broadcasting?
- ◆ Legislation to extend the prohibition on advertising and sponsorship which now applies to ABC radio and TV broadcasts to all ABC services, including ABC Online?
- ◆ Ensuring Radio Australia access to transmission facilities and restoring Radio Australia's ability to provide at least its 1995/96 level of service?

There was virtually a similar column in the Updates 2001 Election issue.

Nothing has changed!

Do The Write Thing



Please write to:
Mark Latham
Leader of the Opposition
c/ Parliament House,
Canberra 2600.

Tell him you want some commitment to core funding for the ABC, independence from the government of the day and a commitment to find a better way to appoint the ABC Board.
Fax: ACT- (02) 6277 8495

Please write to:
John Howard
Prime Minister
c/ Parliament House
Canberra 2600

and tell him the ABC's core funding needs to be raised to 1995 levels at least, there should be a commitment to one of funding to provide programming for digital broadcasting and that there should be an end to government interference in the running of the ABC.
Fax: ACT - (02) 6273 4100

**I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts."*

Will Rogers (U.S Comic)

MEMBER'S BEQUEST

We were recently the recipient of a bequest from the estate of a late member, Bessie Bransen, of the Blue Mountains.

Friends of the ABC is grateful for her generosity which contributes to the ongoing battle to defend our ABC.

FABC would be grateful to any of our members who are prepared to do likewise. You can be assured that any bequest or donation will be used responsibly and, if requested, according to your wishes.



Professor Frank Morgan, of the University of Newcastle receiving his "appearance fee", an FABC gift of some Hunter Valley wine from Gary Cook



David Barrington (NSW)



Allan Thomas (Hunter), Hank Willems (Hunter), Jason



Peter Youll, David Barrington (NSW), Lou Rochelli (Orange)



Hank Willems (Hunter), Frank Morgan and Bronween Bashford, Program Director, ABC Radio, Newcastle



Janet Simpson (NSW), Annie Nielsen (Parramatta)



Audrey Semon (Great Lakes), Mike Hudson (NSW), Liliane Leroy (NSW)



Gary Cook (President), Des Moore (Central Coast), Valerie Sharman (Central Coast)



Lou Rochelli, Bev Holland (Orange), Brian Davies (Update Editor)



Conference in session



Media Syndicate discussion

ABC: “sadly short of friends”



Keynote speaker at the regional conference, Professor Frank Morgan, of the University of Newcastle, compared 8-cents a*

day for the ABC, once upon a time, with today's phone call, newspaper and video rental charges. He reflected on the importance of friends and friendship.

The ABC is sadly short of ‘friends’. Both sides – the Hawke and Keating governments and the Howard coalition of conservatives – have been craven and shameful in their demand that the ABC bend the knee to the party in power. Some ABC people have been heroic in their search for an independent organisational voice; some have been sadly selfish and shortsighted and some of the ABC’s friends have also been selfish ‘wannabees’ rather than helpful. So tonight, I want to look at what makes the ABC worth caring about and how best we can be its friends.

Friendship is central to Australian culture – which is why it’s vitally important to the ABC and to ABC programming. Our political leaders, sadly, want us to take their word for friendship and not argue the toss. They go on at length about the mythologies of mateship and military traditions, about the supposedly rising values of Americanism and entrepreneurship in Australia. I suspect they often misunderstand or misconstrue the point. It’s important, I believe, to hear and see a range of points of view and have them examined in detail. This might be done in news and current affairs. It might be explored in drama. It might even be the stuff of entertainment and humour.

One reason why this is so important is that Australia has changed so much in our lifetime – and the ABC’s. The ABC is just over 70. Radio had begun in the 1920s, largely run by department stores. 2GB was Grace Brothers; 2FC was Farmers and so on.

Role Models

The purpose of producing radio programs was to sell radio sets. However, people came to rely on news and weather and talks as well as on drama and entertainment. Then, in the Depression – at the end of the 1920s – these companies went broke and there was a widespread demand for the government to take over the Australian Broadcasting Company and provide a reliable service to the public. The ABC modeled itself on the British Broadcasting Corporation and the commercial broadcasters largely rebuilt themselves along the lines of the American industry

“Another country”

I grew up on ABC radio in wartime - with *Kindergarten of the Air, the Argonauts, Blue Hills and The Country Hour, Wilfred Thomas, Bill Beatty's Australoddities*, symphony concerts, sport and so on...It was not surprising the Menzies Government in 1956 introduced television within the existing structures.

Nor, I guess, is it that surprising that the commercial television networks cloned themselves on the American networks or that the ABC became an outpost of the BBC.

Spoken English

Forty years ago when I went to work in ABC television I was sent to the Training School to learn to

speaking like a home counties Englishman – because that was how the ABC then thought the English language should be spoken... (however)... none of us, I suggest, has any doubt that the ABC is one of the world’s great public service broadcasters. The irony of the situation is that one of its best friends is Kerry Packer. If the government of the day attempted to sell off the ABC, (whose buyer would want to make it profitable), Packer would I believe pick up the phone and warn the PM of the day of the error of his ways. Life is hard enough for Packer having to compete for his share of the commercial marketplace. The ABC is welcome to the twenty-odd percent of radio and television audience who would be too troublesome (for) commercial operators.

Let me take you back to the early 1980s - the Fraser Government had just received the Dix Report, had liberated the ABC staff from the Public Service Act and redrafted the ABC legislation to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

Wran's revenge

But soon after ‘Four Corners’ would take Premier Neville Wran to task for some funny business in the NSW Rugby League. (Geoffrey) Whitehead would fall foul of Wran’s Revenge, David Hill, and go on his way, (and) the optimism of the ABC charter would get lost in the welter of politics. The charter is worth recalling.

Under the Act, the ABC shall

(a) provide within Australian innovative and comprehensive broadcasting services of a high standard as part of the Australian broadcasting system.

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ABC: "sadly short of friends"

Continued from Page 7

Secondly, contribute to -

- (i) a sense of national identity... inform and entertain, and
- (ii) broadcast programs of an educational nature; and
- (iii) promote the musical, dramatic and other creative cultural life in Australia

Furthermore - broadcast outside Australia programs to encourage awareness of Australia's world view and meet the needs of Australians living abroad.

The ABC suffered fairly badly at the hands of the Labor governments during the 1980s and early 90s. It was then the victim of a dreadful conspiracy in 1996 when Howard and Alston commissioned Bob Mansfield to hack the ABC back into budgetary shape. Its overseas services were ransomed to meet domestic needs.

Meanwhile the ABC was conspicuously short of 'friends' when it came to dealing with the remainder of the Charter, working out how best to -

- balance specialised and popular programs
- deal with multicultural Australia
- balance state responsibility for education.

ABC board and management have struggled against the odds to deal with these matters but they might have expected stronger and more useful support from their 'friends'

I recall a comment made by Barry Jones.



We were in Paris (for a UNESCO conference). He remarked that three organisations caught his imagination and inspired his great passion: the ALP, the CSIRO and (as he put it) 'the bloody ABC'. All ran on impossibly meagre budgets. All wrought wondrous miracles. All drove you to despair. My response was to imagine our despair if any of them sank from view...and, likewise, I'm proud of my continuing association with ABC people. They all deserve our friendship and support.

**Frank Morgan, once an ABC producer and a Deputy Director of the Film and Television School, is also President of the International Association for Media and Communication Research.*



Conference Sessions

**Post-conference media release
FABC questions ABC Code of Conduct Proposal**

8th August 2004.

At their regional conference in Newcastle today NSW branches of the Friends of the of the ABC (FABC) called on the corporation to re-think a draft code of conduct for ABC staff as being too punitive and intrusive and an excuse to gag staff.

The conference also called on the ABC to make its archival material accessible for legitimate users.

The code of conduct, drafted by ABC Human Resources, has been rejected by ABC staff, particularly in regards to possible intrusion into their private lives and affairs, virtually 24 hours a day.

FABC President, Gary Cook, said the proposed code was Orwellian; for example, threatening staff who might 'bring the ABC into disrepute' because of their private activities.

"Who will be the judge and how will the punishment be determined," Mr Cook asked.

"This is a document that says 'personal behaviour must not reflect on the standing or integrity of the corporation'; that won't guarantee confidentiality when performance or disciplinary issues are being dealt with; that requires award or prize-winning staff to hand over any cash prize to the ABC; a document that virtually bans staff from making any comment about the ABC to just about anybody."

Mr Cook said the code seemed open to the exercise of favouritism for some, and a gag for others.

"The FABC's prime purpose is to support, promote and lobby for the ABC, but sometimes friends have to be frank with each other."

"It's not in the nature of the ABC in an open society like ours to be laying down a draconian like this."

"Prominent broadcasters are usually great ambassadors for the ABC, enhancing the corporation's reputation and standing."

"We can't support a gag of this sort, the watch-dogging of staff's private lives, or what could be regulation of association."

The conference took strong exception to the corporation's recent refusal to make political archival material available to a documentary-maker and called on the ABC to ensure equity of access to its archival material for all Australians, for legitimate purposes.

"As it stands it requires ABC staff to make a political decision about who gets what," Mr Cook said. "That recent action dented public trust in the ABC."

The two-day conference developed strategies for promoting and defending the ABC as an issue during the forthcoming Federal election, particularly regarding threats to the ABC that lead to cuts in programming.

Conference delegates, representing branches across NSW, expressed concern about gaps and dead spots that deprive rural audiences of some of the ABC's favourite entertainment and information programs.

Conference: Building the ABC's Defences

On Day One, Conference workshopped the threats the ABC always faces and possible new ones:

On ABC budgets the conference recommended that instead of haphazard and unpredictable funding, on the whims of the government of the day, the ABC should receive set funding – a fixed percentage of some fixed measure of the size of economy – for example, the amount of GST collected. It was assigned to FABC NSW to work out a formula subject to national and expert overview.

Tied to funding issues were other conference concerns for restoration at the ABC – training scheme, better children's programming, and expanded local content...with Friends required to look into the necessary funding levels. The worrisome companion to those issues was creeping commercialization - something Friends should be leading the community to resist at all cost.

Delegates expressed concern about a proposed Code of Conduct for staff the ABC was planning, subsequently expressed in an FABC media release (see P 8).

Being "frank"

Gary Cook said the role of the Friends was to support the ABC, but sometimes "friends had

to be frank with each other."

Criticism of the ABC was limited, but concerns were expressed as to how well the corporation and its senior management were standing up to pressure from Government, direct and indirect, public or through the Board, and delegates urged the FABC to try to establish 'what's really happening' through close talks, the media, or our own links.

Most criticism however was directed at the FTA and the unknown future of New Media, with implications for local content as it stands now and even worse for how it may be in the New Media. The FABC was in the role of watchdog; its bite was to lobby, what was needed however was information.

'Housekeeping'

Concerned with improving communication between branches, delegates canvassed video and tele-conferencing as obviously expensive, but depending on the scale of crisis, merited only 'as needed'.

Elsewhere in some branches the old-fashioned telephone tree still worked effectively and was not to be discounted. Suggestions that *Update* be issued more often were ruled out

on the grounds of expense. Dot point emails were a practical alternative and FABC NSW would keep the web site up to date, as it always strives to be.

Other issues discussed:

closer links with appropriate voluntary organizations to share 'information', contacts and effort ie – Toastmasters/mistresses, schools, and universities; in the 'bush' CWAs for example.

try/plan to establish more branches in metropolitan Sydney, because of its numbers.

membership and fees with the priority being to increase FABC members across the state, goal – 10,000.

Conference was the 'guest' of the Hunter Branch whose arrangements were applauded by all. And received the formal thanks of delegates and the President.

Gary Cook made the point that NSW FABC was the only one to stage regional conferences – an event, he said, "well worth the cost, discussing issues, solving problems, renewing acquaintances and meeting new members...achieving important outcomes - all told a very worthy expenditure

Ailing film industry*



Australian Film Commission chief executive, Kim Dalton, said last annual AFC survey suggested the Australian industry might be struggling to survive.

He said 15 feature films a year, given the level of sophistication of Australia's industry, was unacceptable.

"It means we don't have the critical mass in terms of the talent base and the technical base."

"Local television production is the bedrock of the industry. If that's beginning to look shaky, that has enormous implications for the whole of our industry...."

The survey showed declining government funding and private investment in the industry last financial year.

Executive director of the Australian Writers' guild, Megan Elliot, attributed the poor box office performance of some Australian films to a lack of investment in their development.

"We're actually forcing our films into production prior to them being ready," she said.

"If the government does not commit to having a vibrant industry, then you will turn Australia into a service industry where we'll be servicing the stories from Hollywood and Bollywood."

**SMH, August 5, 2005*

FABC visits Senator Helen Coonan



ACT FABC President, Jill Greenwell met recently with the Minister for Communications, Information

Technology and the Arts on behalf of other State FABCs.

In response to FABC's policy of transparency and merit in appointing Directors to the ABC Board, similar to the UK Nolan Rules, the Minister agreed that it deserved to be investigated, although, realistically, no consideration would be given until well after the election. This was reinforced on 31 August when the Government extended the terms of Directors Ross McLean and Judith Sloan by six months rather than be accused of making further political appointments.

On the question of additional monitoring of ABC programs for balance (which we consider to be excessive), the Minister stated that that was an ABC management decision. She added that the process for complaints against the ABC should be allowed to continue as it is currently structured.

A request for consideration of additional funding for the ABC was not responded to.



Jazz man goes

Australia's leading jazz broadcaster Jim McLeod has retired after 48 years with the ABC, for 28 of which he presented *Jazztrack*. 'For service to the promotion of jazz music through media and encouraging Australian composition and performance'



Jim was awarded an OAM. *Jazztrack* continues on ABC Classic FM presented by Mal Stanley. (*abcXchange*)

Labor drafts media shake-up

Age Political Correspondent, Jason Koutsoukis, reported from Canberra on June 9 that the ALP was finalising a range of policy options that could lead to the biggest shake-up of Australia's media industry since the cross-media laws were passed in 1987.

A federal Labor government would move to liberalise cross-media laws to maximise buyers for a fourth commercial television licence. Labor would also lift foreign ownership restrictions to encourage new entrants into Australia's \$3.5 billion commercial television market.

Labor believes it could raise more than \$1 billion from the sale of the fourth licence to pay for election promises. It wants as many bidders as possible.

The rules now prohibit media companies from owning more than one of the three main media - television, radio and newspapers - in a single metropolitan market.

A Buyers' Market

Under changes being considered by Labor, pay TV could be added to the list of the three media, with media companies allowed to own two out of the four.

That would prevent Rupert Murdoch's News Limited and Kerry Packer's Publishing and Broadcasting from expanding their existing Australian media interests.

News Limited owns a major newspaper in every capital city, plus a 25 per cent stake in pay TV operator Foxtel. PBL owns the Nine Network and also has a 25 per cent stake in Foxtel.

But newspaper owner John Fairfax, publisher of *The Age*, or Southern Cross Broadcasting, owner of the national talkback radio network that includes 3AW, could bid for the new TV licence.

"Labor wants to diversify media ownership - what the federal Labor caucus will not allow is Kerry Packer or Rupert Murdoch getting their

hands on Fairfax or, say, a fourth free-to-air network," one senior Labor source told *The Age*.

Ample Revenue

Labor's communications spokesman, Lindsay Tanner believes overseas interests such as US-based General Electric - which owns NBC - or the British-based Pearson Publishing Group, should be allowed to own a major slice of a fourth free-to-air network.

He said this would help overcome difficulties a fourth network might have sourcing programs.

Australia's three free-to-air networks each spend about \$100 million a year on overseas programming.

While the three fiercely oppose a fourth network, Labor believes that with advertising revenues up 10 per cent by June 2004 - on top of \$3.5 billion last year - the market can support another player.

But some Labor figures are nervous at the prospect of angering Australia's media moguls before the election. The Seven Network's Kerry Stokes - who sat next to the Prime Minister at recent celebrations to mark Mr Howard's 30 years in Parliament - and Mr Packer are already strongly aligned with the Coalition.

Cartoon courtesy George Aldridge



On the Hustings or – how the land lies for the ABC.

FABC REPORT CARD

At the last election *Update* published a 'report card' on how the major parties had performed for the corporation. Here's their card for the current term.

Australian Democrats.
Still very consistent work.
Commitment high. **A**

Australian Greens.
Unlikely to be prefects,
but keen commitment **A**

Australian Labor Party.
Improved behaviour; showing
Promise (s), but needs extra
test for durability.

For the moment **A+**

The Coalition Parties.
Have not completed the
course.

Keep inquiring into texts
etc, Have failed to
complete policy papers **C-**

This is not a how-to-vote guide. FABC members will make up their own minds!

Greens Outspoken



Senator Bob Brown (Australian Greens) sent this message to Friends of the ABC, at the Newcastle regional conference.

"The ABC is one of Australia's crown jewels. Like our environment, pharmaceutical benefits scheme and manufacturing industry, it has been put on the auction block by the Coalition government, backed by Labor, in the AUSFTA which is set to go through parliament next week. The FTA extends copyright, fails to guarantee local content in new media and potentially puts funding of the creative arts by the ABC, along with SBS and the Australian Film Commission, under challenge from US corporations. The Greens oppose the FTA and will continue to champion the ABC in the Senate."

In the limelight

According to readership data from Roy Morgan Research, the ABC's monthly arts and entertainment magazine *limelight* is the fastest growing magazine in readership in Australia.

In the past year *limelight* increased readership numbers by 63 percent. (abcXchange)

Key Issues

- The ABC is not a single issue matter. By ensuring news and policies and their discussion, open and uninhibited, is broadcast that usually means on the ABC, to that extent the ABC covers every issue,

- That's what is meant by 'the ABC IS the balance'.

- It's a feature of the ABC's history that whatever party is in office, there are frequent clashes between the Government and the national broadcaster. What sort of a tame, independent, national media organization would it be, if no Government ever felt annoyed, angered or embarrassed by it?

- That's particularly important, in troubled times. Why should a Government's version be the only one that's true or correct? Let's subject them to scrutiny. Isn't that what any sensible person expects of the ABC?

- "Who else, when the different Radio services are combined, is the most listened to broadcaster in the country? The ABC is. Is there another broadcaster in the country that covers rural affairs, music, law, politics, business, social issues, drama and literature as the ABC does?"

Brian Davies

"No man's life, liberty, or property are safe while the legislature is in session."

Mark Twain (1866)

**WHEN YOU VOTE
REMEMBER THE ABC**

Medals of another sort

Radio National won three World Medals in the 2004 New York International Radio Programming and Promotion Awards which recognizes "The World's Best Work" in radio programming.

Entries are judged by panels of radio experts from stations and companies throughout the world for their production values, organization, presentation of information, creativity and use of the medium.

Radio Eye won a Gold World Medal in the Human Relations category for *The Asylum Seekers*, written and narrated by Linda Neill.

A Gold World Medal in the Religious Programs category went to *The Spirit of Things* for *The Monk and the Modern Girl*, presented by Rachel Kohn.

Claudia Tarantino won a Silver Medal in the Social Issues/Current Affairs category for her *Street Stories* program 'Now She's Just Singing'. (abcXchange)

New Funding Formula Needed

In Melbourne's Age of July 2, Rodney Tiffen, Associate Professor in Government and International Relations, University of Sydney, suggested the best way to work out how much money the ABC needs to function might be to look at its competitors.

One of the recurring motifs in Australian political life is the ABC saying it needs more money, and the Government saying it won't give more.

The essential problem is the ABC's funding has no relationship to its performance. Its revenue does not go up if its audiences rise, or vary with their relative satisfaction. Rather, its budget is determined by extraneous factors, such as the Government's general budgetary strategy, or its degree of political hostility to the national broadcaster.

Although there is no objective basis for saying at what level the ABC should be funded, the debate does not have to proceed in a data vacuum. We have three sets of available comparisons, and each suggests that the ABC is not generously funded.

A first source of data, which is used quite often, is to look at trends over time. ABC Managing Director Russell Balding said last year that in real terms the ABC's budget in 2003 was about 70 per cent of what it had been in 1985, a substantial cut.

A second, more rarely used source of data is to look outward, to compare the ABC with public service broadcasters in other advanced democracies. The ABC ranks near the bottom, compared with national broadcasters in 16 other countries. In 1999, it ranked second-last in terms of revenue per head of population. It received \$US29 per year, compared with the mean

for the others of \$US63.

A third source of data has almost never been used, namely to compare the ABC's budget with that of the commercial networks. This is a strange omission because this comparison is directly relevant to the environment the ABC must operate in. Moreover, the results may surprise many, especially those who like to contrast the flabby and inefficient public sector with the lean, mean private sector.

According to research by Professor Glenn Withers at the ANU, the average hour of ABC television costs 42 per cent as much as the average hour on commercial television, while for radio the equivalent figure is 40 per cent. Moreover, both figures fell over time. In 1981, the figures were 71 per cent and 48 per cent respectively.

So, in relation to commercial television, the ABC's costs have fallen dramatically. While some economists may see this as an increase in efficiency, many viewers probably suspect it has meant a decline in quality.



By all measures, the ABC is relatively poorly funded. What level should it be funded at? Friends of the ABC might think it deserves to be funded at the same level as the commercials. But no Australian government in 2004 would dispense such largesse.

Perhaps ABC lobbyists could adopt the modest request: "Give the ABC half" what the commercials get."

Rodney Tiffen and the SMH's Ross Gittins are co-authors of 'How Australia Compares' (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Friends quiz ALP's Tanner



Given that both Lindsay Tanner and Mark Latham have made

statements that the ALP would significantly increase funding for the ABC, on our behalf, Jill Greenwell, President, FABC (ACT and Region) and Rick Godfrey interviewed Lindsay Tanner.

When would the increase be announced?

Mr Tanner explained that the timing of the announcement was not his province, and that it had been complicated by the implications of the US Free Trade Agreement legislation. Technological change would diminish the control that can be exercised over content; new media would operate in an increasingly borderless environment without the local content regulation currently possible in radio and free to air TV. In that context the ABC will be even more important than it is now. Funding would have to be viewed in the light of the impact of the Free Trade Agreement.

The position he is recommending is that the ALP be guided by past ABC budget requests as to the funding needed for the ABC to meet its Charter obligations.

Other policies?

Mr. Tanner said the ALP re-states its position on keeping commercial influence out of the ABC. He would like to see

reforms to the internal complaints review process so that the complaints mechanism includes both SBS and the ABC.

Board appointments?

Would the ALP legislate to implement its ABC Board appointments policy - Mr. Tanner said that the answer was probably, YES. Certainly an ALP Government would adopt the practice now outlined in the ALP platform.

Political Independence?

This government was creating a "climate of intimidation", and there were "resonating signals" that the ABC has been forced into a "culture of compliance". He cited Rehome's 'pre-election' monitoring as an example.

He was particularly concerned to maintain commitment to the principle that the ABC should be independent of Ministerial interference.

He said that the ALP was not in the business of telling the ABC what content it should or should not include in its programs.

THE BACK COVER

Please photocopy the back cover and post it on bulletin boards, in shop windows, in Shopping Centres, in schools, etc.

Downer and the ABC -

Here is yet another example of government ministers attempting to control or censor ABC news and current affairs, revealed emphatically on Media Watch (5th July) by David Marr.

David Marr: Of course governments are eager to control the media when their own reputations are at stake. Last Monday, the Foreign Minister Alexander Downer persuaded - or perhaps bullied - the ABC into pulling this promo off air.

(Media Watch runs tape of the program being 'promo-ed', a BBC documentary, 'The Third World War - Al Qaeda'.)

Marr then quotes Alexander Downer: "The "promo" contained significant errors and



was deliberately construed to make offensive and ill-founded allegations against myself and the

Australian Government - namely that we were aware the bombing was to take place and failed to protect Australian lives. Given this was only the "promo" one can only wonder what deceptions and slurs are to be found in the full program." (Letter to Russell Balding 28th June 04)

Marr then refers to Russell Balding's response in a media release headed 'The ABC Will Not Bow to Pressure.' While the promo was itself accurate, the ABC still felt it should be edited as it drew attention to the Australian references in the program and may have uninten-

tionally conveyed a particular focus (2nd July 04).

Mr Downer's office was told no changes would be made to the documentary.

David Marr: Alexander Downer, meanwhile, was requesting something I don't think I've ever seen before on Australian television - a government notice to be run either at the top or bottom of the BBC documentary which would begin -

"Australian Government.
Department of Foreign Affairs
and Trade.

This program's description of Australian Government travel warnings about Bali prior to the tragedy there on 12 October 2002 is incorrect."

The ABC refused this amazing request:

Marr returns to Russell Balding's media release: "ABC management reviewed the program and satisfied themselves it was in accordance with ABC editorial policies and guidelines. As such there was no need to even consider the statement."

(Media Release 2nd July 04)

Media Watch plays the Prime Minister backing up the Minister's position on ABC radio on 2nd July.

David Marr: And that's just the place for the Minister to make his case: in public. He was free to bag that BBC doco on radio and television across the land if he wished. It's called

debate. Our concern is that he first tried a different course: the threatening letter, the intimidating complaint, the request for official clarifications - without which, he said, broadcasting this documentary would be "...conduct...unbecoming of a national broadcaster".

As a test of the ABC's fairness and balance, the doco was supposed to be packaged at the direction of the Foreign Minister to present the government's point of view. As Russell Balding said last week:

"This is a crucial period for the ABC. In the heightened atmosphere of a looming Federal election, the public can be assured that the ABC will stand firm and protect its editorial independence."

Marr: The Minister's complaint has been sent to the ABC's Complaints Review Executive - perhaps to follow former Senator Alston's complaints all the way up to the ABA.

Life members

Owing to a clerical/archival 'hiccup'/computer crash or just a plain stuff up from the past - would all life members please put their hands up. We also need your permission to record your names in *Update*.

**WHEN YOU VOTE
REMEMBER THE ABC**

update

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FABC Update

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An Interview with Andrew Denton



Andrew Denton is the provocative Presenter and Executive Producer of ABC TV's, "Enough Rope". Denton's return to the ABC with this program might

just be giving us his most successful work to date. The Great Lakes Friends of the ABC recently caught up with Andrew Denton and Grahame Burns asked him his career and "our ABC":

FABC: Your early success was as a writer in commercial radio for Doug Mulray. Career forming?

Denton: Not so much career-forming as incredibly good fun. Plus, I learnt the value of working with the best people and not being threatened by them.

FABC: Mulray at the time referred to you as "the boy wonder". Still true?

Denton: Never really was. These days, I'm more "the man wondering".

FABC: Having worked in the commercial media, was it difficult coming back to the ABC culture?

Denton: No. Both sides have their frustrations, but the chance to chew on some real brain food again made coming back to the ABC both a delight and a privilege.

FABC: Your current program on ABC TV, "Enough Rope", has been a great success. Exceeding your expectations and those of the broadcaster?

Denton: Yes, on both counts. But the ABC is exceeding expectations right across the board at the moment. In the last year, the ABC's national audience has grown 9.3% -- phenomenal when you compare it to the new golden child, Ten's much-trumpeted growth of 3.1%. Unfortunately, for most media writers, it's only sexy to write about the ABC when it's in trouble (it) doesn't suit the First Of The Cosy Prejudices, ie - "nobody watches it anyway"

FABC: You interview a lot of celebrities who have done it all before, how do you get them to say something new?

Denton: Ask them something different.

FABC: What if one of your guests is telling a porky, would you feel a duty to expose the lie?

Denton: Question, rather than expose – and only if it was fundamental to that person's character or public record.

FABC: Andrew, the ABC; it's having a struggle at the moment with the politicians about money. How important to Australia is its independence?

Denton: Crucial. Information is the lifeblood of democracy. The ABC, as the only truly independent supplier of information, is as fundamental to the country as the heart is to the brain.

FABC: Ever had any editorial interference on your ABC programs?

Denton: Once, during an episode of 'The Money Or The Gun' on prostitution. A scene featuring prostitute Dolores French using a microphone to demonstrate how she could to put a condom on with just her mouth (we were discussing the need for safe sex in her industry) was arbitrarily censored by someone in middle-management – whose name I forget – filling-in for his boss who was on leave. Bizarrely, the scene was censored simply by blacking it out and leaving the sound, which only served to make it even more intriguing and risqué. As the old saying goes "pornography is whatever gives a judge an erection".

FABC: What about when you were at the commercial stations?

Denton: No. In fact Channel 7 were admirably protective of my editorial independence – if not so wild about my taste – as were 9 for the Logies. Its not always a wolf in wolf's clothing, you know.

FABC: ABC funding has been cut by both sides of politics. What programming has suffered the most, ... stifled innovation?

Denton: I'm not in a position to fully answer this question as I don't

have access to ABC budgets. I do know that shows like 'Foreign Correspondent' have been severely affected. It may soon have to be re-titled 'Nearby Correspondent'. I don't know if the budget cuts have stifled innovation. I do know that they have, in some cases, set the ABC against itself as various departments scramble for the same, dwindling resources. I liken the effect of this to that of a torpedo. Everything may look the same on the surface but, below decks, there's panic.

FABC: Should the ABC resist pressures to the death – or take advertising as a least worse option?

Denton: The ABC is the only media organization in this country that you can unequivocally guarantee is not trying to cut a deal with somebody: Government, Opposition or private enterprise. That is its great – and irreplaceable – value. It should resist advertising at every turn.

FABC: The ABC suffers from a perception, mainly by some in the media and certainly by more than a few in politics, that it's biased in its news and current affairs coverage? Has it been evident to you?

Denton: The toughest interview I ever saw Paul Keating sit through was with 'Red' Kerry O'Brien. This is the Second of the Cosy Prejudices; "the ABC is a Labor stooge". The truth is, EVERY Government – from Menzies to Howard – has complained bitterly about the ABC. Which is as it should be. If the ABC – as an independent statutory authority – doesn't include, as one of its key functions, critical oversight of the government of the day, then taxpayers' money truly is being wasted.

FABC: The ABC now has procedures in place to monitor alleged bias. Do the commercial radio and TV stations make any efforts at all to do the same? And should they?

Denton: No. The commercial networks do, of course, stringently self-regulate – something which carries all the power and intent of a fierce lamington. I do think the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal needs to grow a lot more teeth.

Continued on next page 15

An Interview with Andrew Denton

Continued from previous page 14

Cash For Comments was a serious case of bias – against the ordinary listener and in favour of large, wealthy companies. How 2UE, for instance, can be in breach of the code 96 times (as it was) and still keep its licence is beyond me.

FABC: Both sides of politics have, in some way, been hostile to the ABC while in government, generally slashing funds. How can we prevent this from continuing to happen?

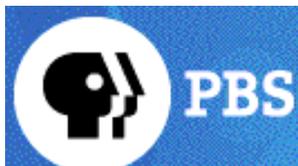
Denton: There's no quick fix. The old-fashioned ways still work. Maintain reasonable and constant pressure on your local MP. They notice. Write letters to the editor. People read them. Bring new people to the cause. It's the quickest way to double your reach. And knock down any of the Cosy Prejudices – "the ABC is for the elites" is another -- whenever and wherever you hear them.

FABC: If, let's say, there was a palace coupe at the ABC tomorrow and you were installed as the Managing Director. How would you change it to be an even more effective national broadcaster?

Denton: By trying to get everyone in the organization – not just the program-makers - involved in the excitement of creating great broadcasting (what the ABC is there for), rather than thinking – as many have been encouraged to do – simply in terms of their own department and its bureaucratic needs. Every technician, human resources co-ordinator or accountant involved in getting something like *'Australian Story'* to air, should feel just as proud of it as the producers, directors or editors

FABC: One last question... how would you interview Andrew Denton to get him to reveal something new and significant about himself?

Denton: That would be telling.



The Decline of Public Broadcasting in the U.S.

Searching for right-wing broadcasters in the US isn't something that takes a lot of time. But it's sad to see their encroachment into PBS, whose latest acquisition is a weekly current affairs program hosted by a Tucker Carlson, Rory O'Connor explains.

He says women want "to be listened to, protected and amused" and "to be spanked vigorously every once in a while." His "guilty fantasy" is "Hillary. Every time I see her I think I could, you know, help."

He thinks that if journalists carry guns, it makes them safer, and he was prepared to "shoot first" and ask no questions in Iraq, where "I could have done anything."

And he noted at a PBS Annual meeting that television was "not a good medium for spreading information to the general public." Who is this enlightened free thinker?



He's the conservative commentator, Tucker Carlson - bow-tied poster boy of the ascendant right, and his eponymous weekly publicaffairs program "*Tucker Carlson: Unfiltered*" began on PBS this week*.

Given his flippant, callow demeanor, reactionary views and disbelief in TV's informational aspects, one might reasonably wonder why Tucker Carlson was chosen to host a weekly public affairs program on America's only publicly-owned network.

Board tactics

"The whole thing is confusing to me," Carlson e recently told Newsday. "I'm still confused by

how the whole works - the stations, PBS, the Congress." Maybe his father can explain things to him.

After all, Carlson senior used to head the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), which partially funds PBS, and also contributes to the production of - you guessed it - "*Tucker Carlson: Unfiltered*"

Or maybe Tucker could read a recent New Yorker dissection of public broadcasting's latest conservative swerve...fostered by political pressure from Bush appointees to the CPB board and their congressional allies. As a result, PBS handpicked Carlson in order to 'balance' the hard-hitting journalism (and insufficiently conservative commentary) on PBS's other weekly public affairs program, "*Now with Bill Moyers*" (which of course has never received a penny of support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting).

A reality check

To his credit, Carlson is not doctrinaire. He's abandoned, for example, his support of rightist positions on the Iraq war and the death penalty. "I enjoy changing my mind based on reality," he told Newsday. He even went so far as say he "didn't know" if he would vote for Bush this fall, given the situation in Baghdad.

Moyers, meanwhile, will step down as host of "*Now*" after the elections, and the program is to be cut in half .

**From the US MediaChanel group - Published June 21, 2004.*

"Honestly, I think we should just trust our president in every decision that he makes and we should just support that."

Tucker Carlson

Govt. warned ABC and digital TV union will fall apart, unless...

The ABC has sent a submission to Canberra arguing that it lies with the Government to generate consumer support for the ABC's digital transmission; hamstrung for lack of content. MD Russell Balding explained.

The ABC argued in the submission that unless there is an increase in choices for consumers, there is little prospect of digital television taking over the current analog signal by the government's deadline of 2009.

ABC Managing Director, Russell Balding said that the ABC should be permitted to offer additional services, through digital multichannelling, without artificial constraints.

"If the ABC is allowed to broadcast a full range of programs, such as news, drama, comedy, on digital multichannels, it would encourage more people to make an investment in digital television," Mr Balding said.

"There has been an increase in the take up of digital on pay platforms, (but) this does not benefit the millions of consumers who have not and may never subscribe. What we need are incentives for people to buy digital set top boxes, so they can enjoy free to air digital television."

"The Corporation is currently developing future strategic options in respect of digital television, however, such options are extremely limited by the genre restrictions, currently excluding national news and current affairs programming, sport and drama series."

"(It's) of paramount importance that parliament lifts the genre restrictions that apply to the ABC."

"There would be a significant incentive for people to upgrade to digital if they could have the flexibility of watching some of their favourite programs at different times and access to new programming from Australia's national broadcaster," Mr Balding said.

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- New Editor - Update Editorial Handover

After two years as editor of Update, I'm very regretfully standing down - the victim of too many irons in the fire. There is a certain continuity between my term as editor and my in-coming successor Alison Rahill: as I had a long association in news and current affairs with the ABC and as a contributor, Alison too has a close ABC connection.

Coming from a strong academic background at the University of Adelaide, Alison joined the ABC in Sydney, worked as a producer on Tony Delroy's *Nightlife* program on 702 and in ABC's Archives Division where she was involved in major ABC productions, radio and TV, including Radio National's Centenary of Federation program, *One Hundred Years in a Day*, *The Fiftieth Anniversary of WW2*, and specific issue programs such as French nuclear testing, Uluru, and PNG and South Pacific events and forums. She was heavily involved in the Save the ABC internal staff campaign against Jonathon Shier 2001.

Alison is now a national organiser with the CPSU (she was ACTU Organiser of the year in 2003) and privately pursues local government and environmental issues in Waverley-Bondi where she is a Resident Action Group activist. As one of the founders of the new Eastern Suburbs Friends branch, Alison is the branch Vice-President.

I regard my editorship of *Update* as an honour and one of great responsibility on behalf of its readers - all those keen-minded, dedicated and challenging people who are the Friends of the ABC.

Thanks for your patience and support.

Brian Davies

- New Treasurer -

We have a new Hon. Treasurer, James Buchanan, who retired recently from a 30 year career as an accountant and an earlier career in the Navy.

James has been Business Manager of St. Andrews Cathedral School, and before that Financial Controller for divisions of several major companies.

Welcome, James and a solid vote of thanks to Peter Burke for exemplary service as our Treasurer for the past 5 years.

*A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul."

George Bernard Shaw

The FTA Struggle: Trading off Content and Culture

Continued from Page 1

Whatever dangers the ABC faces, whether with budgets or to its independence for example, even if protracted, they can usually be 'fixed' or ameliorated, if only rarely absolutely resolved; but the FTA is an arrangement set 'in concrete' subject to international law and treaty arrangements with our powerful ally, the United States.

Before the Government shifted its ground, NSW FABC President, Gary Cook, said: "Reference to local content, public broadcasting and Australian culture should form no part of a free trade agreement. The Opposition's amendment to preserve a local content quota of 55% doesn't go far enough."

Avoiding 'Swamped'

Mr Cook urged both major parties to embrace the \$100 million per year scheme proposed by the Film and Television industry to restore local production before it was swamped by Hollywood. The proposal includes \$50 million a year to the ABC for drama production.

Local feature film production has fallen by almost half since the 1990s, down to 15 a year – "on the verge of collapse", said Australian Writers' Guild executive director, Megan Elliot. (See "Ailing Film Industry" p 9)



Indeed, at the height of the so-called debate - it hardly extended beyond letter columns - Toni Colette and David

Wenham shared space in the SMH in the week beginning June 27th:

David Wenham said Trade Minister Vaile's claim that there was "nothing in the FTA (to) undermine Australia's ability to continue to nurture our culture, or ensure Australian stories and voices are available on both existing and new forms of media" was simply not true.

Patriotic "win-win"

Wenham then said that New



Media - in years ahead perhaps to become our greatest access to programming - had no local protection. "The free trade agreement is a win-win for

the US and will pass with flying, patriotic colours through the US Senate. (As it did – Ed.) The Australian Government tells us the free trade agreement is good for Australian culture. It is not."

Toni Colette said we were talking hearts and minds. "We want a separate and recognizable identity that is celebrated on our screens...we have a choice to make. We don't want Australian kids to grow up with American accents," she said.

"If the free trade agreement goes ahead, the limited protection in place for Australian free-to-air television will not apply to new media...(but) we don't know how our programs will be delivered in 10 or 15 years and that could be a disaster for us.

What IP means

Ross Gittins in the SMH of July 24-25 said the FTA's most debatable feature had little to do with ordinary exports and imports.

"It's our agreement to change our intellectual property rights to conform with those in the US and, in the process, beef them up," he said. "...you have to be up to speed on intellectual property or IP - IP rights are granted (for) copyright, trademarks, patents and industrial design. And copyright covers items such as books, recordings, movies, computer games and software."

An Australian academic, Jock Givens, pointed out that film and TV were central to our knowledge and perception; that they're at the core of societies so that, he said, 'most national governments are reluctant to surrender their capacity to support and shape them.' But, the FABC would have to add - "not Australia's government."

Gary Cook again: "I quote another expert, former DFAT chief economist, Paul Urban: "the last thing the US wants for IP goods and services is free trade. It wants monopoly or oligopoly pricing, not competitive pricing."

"A decent Australian concerned with Australia's welfare would decline to sign the agreement," Mr Cook said. "What we need is a fair trade agreement."

A History Lesson

Before the World Trade Organisation, GATT recognized cultural diversity in its many forms and accepted individual quotas to protect sensitive cultural practices and industries. When, in 1995, the WTO replaced the GATT organisation, those measures were retained. The Americans were furious.

According to Paul Urban the US motion picture lobbyist, Jack Valenti, said the Europeans had erected 'a great wall to keep out non-European' creative works, and a US trade representative of the time, Mickey Kantor, promised that 'Americans would fight this one for ever'.

David Wenham was one of those who made a very simple observation: "I'm not anti-American – I'm just pro-Australian."

At Least One... (or two or three)

Ask a friend, relative, business associate or neighbour to join the Friends of the ABC.

Every person who joins makes the Friends a more effective organisation when it presents views to government.

Members also receive a 10% discount when buying items in ABC Shops.

Please use the application form on the inside back cover.

**WHEN YOU VOTE
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Latham Charms ABC Viewers - Promises...promises!



Here's an extract from Mark Latham's first appearance on Lateline after becoming Leader of the opposition

TONY JONES: All right, Mark Latham, a question on something you haven't talked about yet. The ABC, close to our hearts here obviously. There's a feeling you mightn't be as big a fan of public broadcasting as some of your predecessors. I want to see now if you'll rule out under a Latham government making the ABC move to take advertising?



MARK LATHAM: Yes, I can rule that out. I'm a fan of the ABC. I cut my political teeth here on *Lateline*, you see, I'm your proudest product. Debating Christopher Pyne all those nights made me Labor Party leader.

TONY JONES: Ladder of success?

MARK LATHAM: The ladder of success through *Lateline*. I'm a fan of the ABC. And we've announced some ideas about making it more independent, particularly in the board appointments, and quite frankly we

want to see public broadcasting as a major institution in Australia rather than something that's run down in terms of funding and loss of independence. So I'm a fan, a supporter. I think we're going to have a policy that's very good for the institution. It is one of our most important national institutions and we need to respect it.

TONY JONES: Would it be letting anything out of the bag to say you have in mind a funding boost?

MARK LATHAM: We have in mind some grand plans for the ABC. As long as you know that, we can all go home happy. And this fine institution, which quite frankly, had too many political appointments when we were in government, and the Howard Government have been even worse. So let's get some of the politics out of the ABC, rebuild its independence and its capacity to service the Australian media consumers who really look to it as a fine institution. [It has] always done a good job and we need to keep that up for the future.

Lateline. ABC Online transcript 8 apr04

Mission Voices... haunting echoes of the past.



ABC New Media, the Koorie Heritage Trust and Film Victoria have collaborated to deliver a rich, definitive exploration of the experiences of Aboriginal people on Victorian missions and reserves from 1858 until the present.

Mission Voices examines six prominent Victorian 'missions' Ebenezer, Lake Tyers, Coranderrk, Cummeragunja, Framlingham and Lake Condah and uses the voices of individual Koorie people to shape the historical story of both the missions and the people who called them 'home'.

The program challenges previous conceptions of Australian history and documents a more complete and compelling understanding of Koorie cultural heritage.

By streaming audio and video, historic and contemporary images, documentary footage on its web site, as well as superb artwork and detailed history sections, *Mission Voices* relates untold stories of indigenous Victorians and their lives - an exceptional, emotive recounting, examining the impact of mission and reserve life on Aboriginal people through the impacts of Christianity, education, war, work and wages, rules and regulations, borders and boundaries, justice and land rights and activism.

It goes almost without saying that it includes separation and the Stolen Generations.

The program looks at the deep spirituality and the traditions of Victorian Aboriginal cultures and how the people maintained deep connections with the land and their traditions within the often strict confines of the missions and reserves.

Mission Voices Executive Producer, Ricci Swart, said it was "a privilege to help to bring Koorie voices from south-eastern Australia together in

such a unique way",

THE Australian community, as well as the global community, will finally have the opportunity to hear stories from the people who were there and those who personally, or through their family, experienced the diversity of life on reserves and missions," Swart said.

Mission Voices displays extensive Koorie art throughout the site and expresses the strong, continuing culture and identity of Victoria's indigenous people.



The program includes exercises to entice upper-primary and secondary students to explore some of the burden Australia's indigenous cultures experienced and in turn, deepen their understanding of the Koories and their communities.

Hear the voices and stories of Indigenous Victorians recounting this important part of Koorie History at <http://abc.net.au/missionvoices>

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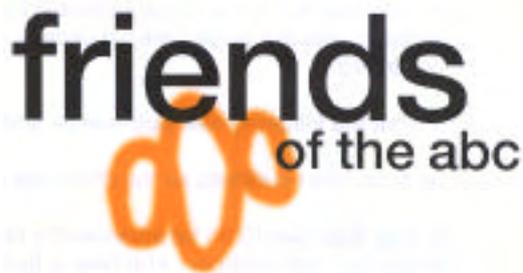
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