

From East to West, North to South only the ABC covers Australia with reliable, up-to-date news, information and entertainment.

### Public Broadcasting and GATS deals "problematic" ...and Free Trade may re-define "free"

Public Broadcasting is not only a cornerstone of democracy and a watch dog when the teeth of other institutions have been pulled, it is also the way that people who live in a sparsely populated country like Australia share and enjoy their culture and can identify with their own area, their state, their nation and the world.

The Federal Government has been cruising along fairly comfortably with little heed being paid in public to the details of the GATS and the FTA negotiations, with the FTA presented as a great prospect for the nation. But the invitation for

submissions on the FTA was timed over the Christmas-New Year break with only a few weeks available to the closing date: a scramble to get them in and not exactly 'a window of opportunity'.

Here's a summary of the FABC submission:

To put public broadcasting into the Free Trade mix is problematic to say the least.

Trade Minister, Mark Vaile, has said that there are no "no go" areas in a Free Trade Agreement.

This puts cultural material in the position of merely being a commodity and the ABC, for example, as merely a transporter of such material.

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## ABC Funding 'On the Table'

### Seeking to expand Australian content, regional broadcasting and Radio Australia services

The Federal government and Richard Alston are at present brooding over the national broadcaster's budget submission for 2003/4-2005/6 calling for an extra \$47 million for the first year - a 7 per cent increase over its \$675 million appropriation for this year.

The government's response will be made as part of the Federal budget in May.

The ABC's funding request - described by ABC managing director Russell Balding as "modest" -- outlines a need for an extra \$89 million in 2004-5, rising to \$115 million for the third year, with calls for \$26.5 million in 2005-6 for the production fund and \$36.6 million for digital television.

The submission earmarked \$12.5 million for a new production trust funding partnership with private drama producers.

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## Northern Rivers Meeting 'Airs' the Issues



Roger Summerill

In late February, Neville Jennings from the Northern Rivers Branch of the FABC met with the ABC's Manager of Local Radio and acting NSW Manager, Roger Summerill – a meeting arranged by ABC North Coast station manager Martin Corben.

Neville raised the issues that concern us all:

- triennial funding for the ABC,
- the ABC's independence,
- appointments to the Board,
- the importance of regional stations.
- increased funding for regional production.

Local concerns discussed were changes of format to the Coast FM station on the Gold Coast and in-house advertising of ABC programs.

Roger Summerill suggested that Managing Director, Russell Balding, would probably be willing to address meetings of the Friends in regional areas. He felt confident that regional broadcasting would enjoy continued support when the triennial funding package was finalised.

Mr Summerill believed that plans were under way to extend News Radio services to regional areas.

On ABC 'in-house' advertising Neville Jennings pointed out that on the same night 'Media Watch' was criticising commercial channels for promoting their own shows during sports broadcasts, the ABC 7 pm news team was heavily promoting '4 Corners' and 'Australian Story'.

Neville stressed that the Northern Rivers Branch greatly valued the links that it had established with the local ABC station through activities such as the Poetry Competition, adding that Northern Rivers people were particularly grateful for the service given by the ABC North Coast station during flood crises and election campaigns, as well as its promotion of local festivals and events.

## **WANTED!** Members to Join FABC Events/Recruitment Committee

The NSW FABC Events/ Recruitment Committee is an informal group of members arranging the FABC presence at fairs and festivals, the Christmas party and the outings/ events that members have enjoyed over the last three years.

We meet once every 2 months in a person's home (each has a turn) usually over a bottle or two and enjoy catching up on the ABC issues while planning our next event.

We would dearly like new members to work with us, so if you would like to join, please contact  
Frouke on 9642 6485 (H)  
or  
frouke@ozemail.com.au  
or Jason on 9489 1420 (H) or  
swidgel@ozemail.com.au.

If you can help at stalls etc. but don't want to join the Committee, you could also phone and leave your details.

## Hunter Branch **Triennial Funding Forum**



The following Hunter Federal politicians have agreed to attend:

Bob Baldwin, Joel Fitzgibbon,  
Sharon Grierson, Jill Hall,  
Kelly Hoare

We urge all Friends who can make it to attend. We need a strong contingent.

**7:30 pm Wednesday  
2nd April**

Newcastle Trades Hall  
406 King St  
(Opposite Workers Club Nova)  
Any Friends from other branches  
most welcome.

Allan Thomas  
Vice President, Hunter Branch



# The President's Report

As we commence 2003, the world is on the brink of war in the Gulf. At the time of writing, despite world-wide demonstrations, that threat remains real. During such crises the role of the ABC assumes even greater importance. Its team of experienced, credible journalists on the spot around the world will, as usual, bring Australians balanced reporting of events as they unfold, that is, provided that they are not subject to censorship by the Australian Department of Defence or the United States.

## Journalists to be Censored?

Here is a Media Release from FABC National Spokesperson, Darce Cassidy.

"The Friends of the ABC are very concerned about recent "Media Watch" allegations that the Australian media's access to preparations for the Iraqi war is being restricted and controlled.

\*see Media Watch transcript page 8

These restrictions appear to apply to all media, including the ABC. Monday's "Media Watch" alleged that the Department of Defence has hired a prominent law firm to prepare a strict agreement with which journalists agree to comply before being accredited to cover military operations by the US led coalition.

Friends of the ABC spokesperson, Darce Cassidy, commented: "Even more disturbing are reports that accreditation must be obtained from United States Central Command Headquarters in the Gulf."

"The Australian public values the high standard and objectivity of ABC news and current affairs. It has the right to be informed about all relevant aspects of our involvement in military operations, subject only to legitimate concerns about the safety of our forces. There should be no opportunity for our government, or any foreign government, to "manage" the reporting of the war by the Australian media".

Just what is in the agreement which journalists are expected to sign and will the Australian Government tell the public?

## Funding Important Issue

At this critical time, the issue of Triennial Funding for the ABC is to be determined. The ABC has submitted a compelling argument for additional funding and this has been supported by a national submission from the Friends of the ABC.

Members are encouraged to lobby their local member in support of increased funding for Everyone's ABC, or to write to the Prime Minister, the Treasurer or the Minister for Communications.

Hon. John Howard, MP,  
Prime Minister,  
GPO Box 59,  
Sydney. NSW 2001

Hon. Peter Costello, MP,  
Treasurer,  
4 Treasury Place,  
East Melbourne, Vic. 3002

Hon. Richard Alston,  
Minister for Communications,  
4 Treasury Place,  
East Melbourne, Vic. 3002.

## Implications of GATS

The other major issue, which is covered in detail in this edition, is the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and US – Australia Free Trade negotiations (FTA).

Both have serious implications for Public Broadcasting and Australian content in film and television.

One of the key principles adopted in the "ABC Shareholders' Charter" on 29/4/2001, was that there must be "an end to creeping commercialisation by banning backdoor sponsorship".

SBS staff are mounting a campaign to fight reported moves to extend commercialisation by permitting sponsorship of 'The Business Show'. It is a timely warning to all of us that the ABC, itself, could be subjected to similar treatment. Last year, 'The Business Show' was sponsored by a Funds Manager and, at the same time, its Head of Equities was one of the Panel of Experts on the program. This was a clear breach of SBS editorial guidelines.

"The greatest potential threat to editorial independence and integrity is in news, current affairs and programs

that provide information. It is not acceptable for any outside organisation to fund news and current affairs programs which are produced or commissioned by SBS".

Shortly after the sponsorship was revealed, it was dropped, but the SBS Board has now redrafted the station's editorial guidelines to allow sponsorship of "specialist information programs" with journalistic content (e.g. programs about business, science, information technology etc.).

According to SBS, "The Business Show remains available for sponsorship".

Meanwhile, the matter is before the Industrial Commission after SBS staff signed an open letter to the Board.

It is a timely warning. Commercialisation would destroy the independence of the ABC and its involvement in investigative journalism and would not solve the issue of funding. The Government would reduce ABC funding by the level of sponsorship funds received.

This year all Country and Regional Branches will be represented by a Committee Member to raise issues of concern and to provide a voice for each Branch.

It is pleasing to note that, since the appointment of Balding as Managing Director, a period of stability and improved morale has been evident within the ABC. To use Russell Balding's own words, "The ABC is reporting the news, not making it".

## Radio 702 Rating

A clear measurement of that philosophy is the excellent results for the ABC from the latest Sydney radio ratings, particularly 702 Sydney which is now the number three rated station.

Externally, there are still ongoing major challenges for the ABC and, of course, for the Friends of the ABC.

We encourage you to maintain your membership as a strong and tangible commitment to the ABC and to persuade your relatives, friends and work colleagues to support the ABC by becoming members of the Friends. Our joining form is on the back page or download it from our Web Page at: [www.fabcnsw.org.au](http://www.fabcnsw.org.au)

Gary Cook, President

# ABC Funding 'On the Table'

Continued from Page 1

The ABC is also seeking extra funding necessary to extend its services to areas still unable to receive radio networks such as Triple J and Radio National.

The Communications Minister, Richard Alston, noted immediately that the ABC had received \$807.7 million in the last triennial budget and warned the latest submission came in "a tight budgetary climate".

## 'Friends' Endorse Submission



Friends' national spokesperson, Darce Cassidy of Victorian FABC, responded in a national media release that pointed out that a Macquarie Bank study demonstrated that the ABC, on a per capita basis, was one of the most poorly funded public broadcasters in the western world.

"Of eighteen western countries, Australia comes second last, behind Portugal and ahead of Greece.

Austria funds its national broadcaster at more than three and a half times the rate that Australia does. Denmark pays more than twice as much per capita," Darce said.

"Compared to commercial media, the figures are equally dramatic. Professor Glenn Withers of the ANU has calculated that per broadcast hour ABC TV costs only 36% of that of the average Australian commercial station."

The media release pinpointed initiatives Friends, not surprisingly, endorsed and called for the necessary funding.

- Encourage the takeup of digital TV and broadband through quality content.

- Extend the full range of ABC services to all of regional Australia.

- Extend the reach of Radio Australia, especially in Asia and the Pacific, where services were cut as a result of the 1996 budget cuts.

- Generate increased Australian program content, especially on TV.

"Few would argue with the need to offer Australians in regional areas the same range of services enjoyed by their city counterparts," Darce Cassidy concluded.

"Digital television and broadband technologies have languished, largely because of content. The reduction in Radio Australia transmissions to Indonesia and to other trouble spots in our region has been a diplomatic disaster."

"This submission should allay any ABC critic who might want to question the national broadcaster's cost-effectiveness."

# Public Broadcasting and Free Trade Problematic

Continued from Page 1

The FABC believes that cultural material is essential to the healthy state of a nation's vision of itself.

Australia suffers greatly by being an English-speaking nation, as do Canada and New Zealand. Were we French or German speaking, we would probably have a film and television and radio tradition without the necessity of local content rules.

In a free trade agreement where there are no "no go" areas, Australian content simply cannot be sustained. It would break the rules of free trade and, unless media - especially the public broadcaster and Australian film - are excised from such an agreement, the market in the United States is so huge as to overwhelm us.

## Cost Factor

With a population of 250 million people to sell to, most US film and television products recover all their costs and make a profit at home, enabling them to sell such programs relatively cheaply to other

English speaking nations. To make an hour of drama for television in Australia costs between \$500,000 and \$800,000; and comedies between \$80,000 and \$100,000 per half hour.

Given that most dramas have at least a 12 week season, this is very costly indeed. So the scales are heavily weighted in the United States' favour. Add to this that distribution companies and many theatre chains are part or all US owned, then we have a very uneven playing field indeed.

Another problem is the US call for investment to be free from any rules in Australia; that the market be allowed to work unfettered. Government funding through tax payers dollars is seen as a restriction on investment. It could be insisted that the ABC's funding be left to the highest bidder, which would immediately put the corporation in the untenable position of being answerable to the company or advertisers who provided the funding.

## Security An Issue

Another unfortunate link in a US-Australia FTA is one of markets and security. Courageous investigative reporting could have 'security' stamped on it and that would be the end of enquiries.

There are many other issues worth thinking about. Time and time again -- most recently this year, (2002) -- the US gave \$32 billion subsidy to their own farmers and graziers to protect them from agricultural products like ours - \$32 billion and most of it to big agricultural companies!

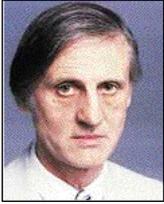
With the scales tipped so firmly in America's favour, there may be little in any such agreement for Australia.



*Mailed on 28 December, 2002 to the US FTA Task Force, Office of Trade Negotiations, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ACT etc.*

# Funding Cuts Will Dump Programs

## If funding goes, so do Digital TV, 'The Insiders' and 'Business Breakfast'



The ABC is threatening to dump its digital television channels and such recent free-to-air TV initiatives as 'The Insiders' and 'Business Breakfast' if the federal Government rejects its bid for an extra \$250 million over the next three years.

Well-placed sources say at least 50 jobs in rural and regional radio may also be in jeopardy.

The broadcaster's 2003-4 to 2005-6 funding submission, made public yesterday, calls for an extra \$47 million for the first year, a 7 per cent increase over its \$675 million appropriation for this year.

More than \$17 million of the extra money would be spent on developing and expanding its little-watched digital television network, while \$12.5 million is earmarked for a new production trust fund in partnership with private drama producers.

Regional TV and transmission facilities would also get money to extend services to areas still unable to receive radio networks such as Triple J and Radio National.

The funding request -- described yesterday as "modest" by ABC managing director Russell Balding -- outlines a need for an extra \$89 million in 2004-5, rising to \$115 million for the third year.

The 2005-6 request calls for \$26.5 million for the production fund and \$36.6 million for digital television.

Mr Balding said the corporation had been careful not to make unreasonable demands and did not want to appear threatening or aggressive in foreshadowing cuts.

"It's a constructive ask," he said. "It's not a wish-list... Without an increase in funding for program content there will need to be a reduction in ABC programs and services. This isn't a question of the ABC crying wolf." Mr Balding said the digital channels would come under scrutiny.

However, sources say preliminary consideration has already been given to what programs might have to go. Strong suggestions that 'The Insiders' and 'Business Breakfast' are in the firing line indicate the broadcaster will adopt a last-on-first-off policy.

The disappearance of the digital channels 'ABC Kids' and 'Fly' -- the only digital channels on air -- would be embarrassing for the Government.

Mr Balding yesterday told his staff -- via a personal memorandum leaked to *The Weekend Australian* -- there should be "no distraction" from the corporation's "key message" that a funding increase "will not only enable us to continue our current acclaimed work without cuts to programs, but to do more".

Labor communications spokesman Lindsay Tanner said the ABC had no hope of getting its funding request. "This Government is still at war with the ABC," he said.

*Errol Simper,  
The Weekend Australian  
18/01/2003*

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## Striking Fear Into the Hearts of Australia's Commercial Broadcasters

### *The ABA in Action Again...*

*Although many of us may have no idea who "shock jock Steve Price" is we are indebted to that lively, informative electronic newsletter, 'Crikey', for the following item.*

### Price Gets Under the Regulators' Radar

Is 2UE shock jock Steve Price slipping under the guard of the sleepy old ABA in his latest incarnation as Qantas's best mate?

We reported yesterday that the 2UE website records no contract between Price and Qantas - which means the stumpy shock jock may be

broadcasting good tidings on the air-line out of sheer joy at the Flying Kangaroo's outstanding service. Or he may be taking advantage of this apparent regulatory loophole, pointed out by a subscriber:

"Dear Mr Mayne,

The Australian Broadcasting Authority after the 'Cash for Comments Inquiry' introduced three standards that the radio licensees had to implement.

One of these standards was the Disclosure of Commercial Agreements made by 'on air' presenters of talk-back shows - Messrs Laws, Jones,

Price, Clarke etc.

The standards were introduced for **three years** and were to be replaced by new 'Codes of Practice' which would incorporate these standards.

The standards expired in January 2003 and NO NEW 'Codes of Practice' have replaced these standards."



## Central Coast FABC Hosts Chris Masters

Central Coast branch closed last year with an informative and provocative address from Chris



Masters. Chris spoke of the extreme pressure that he has endured during and following his investigative journalism for the 'Four Corners' programs.

The end of year function, held at the Central Coast Leagues Club, attracted 75 guests and members who were also entertained by the Central Coast Harmony Chorus.

Earlier in October an information booth was organized in conjunction with the Brisbane Waters Historical Society to further publicise the work of the FABC on the Central Coast.

"Our branch is encouraging its members to continue to write to the ABC programmers and presenters in praise of their outstanding contribution to public broadcasting. We also recognize that now is the time to be applying pressure to the government to ensure increased funding for our ABC.

"Plans are progressing to invite other ABC personalities to speak to our membership during the year, with the next function planned for April."

John Hale, President,  
Central Coast FABC

## Great Lakes Friends - Week in Week Out

Great Lakes Friends of the ABC celebrated the end of year and festive season in style with supper and song. The glorious sunset, ocean views, and light breezes made for a perfect evening. Guest artist, Marie-Cecile Henderson, delighted us with songs from Lehar to Sondheim.

Another special guest, Jennifer Sexton, ABC Mid North Coast News Journalist from Kempsey, brought us up date with future plans for regional ABC and told how much they appreciated feedback from local people.

Imagine life without the ABC!!! Impossible we say. Ms Sexton delivered the clear message that grass roots support from groups like Friends of the ABC is imperative. With the 'sobering' business out of the way, camaraderie, laughter and great jollity followed, with more singing and good cheer.

If you enjoy Macca on a Sunday morning and/or wish to have balanced news and current affairs reporting (and that's only the tip of the ABC iceberg), we invite you to contact us and come along to our meetings in 2003. After all, it is our ABC, and there is nothing like it anywhere in the world.

Telephone contacts:  
6555 2442 and 6554 5942

Audrey Semon  
Secretary, GLFABC  
Email: asemon@tsn.cc

*"We live in dangerous times. More than ever Australians are looking for information they can trust about foreign affairs and defence, our economy and the world. ABC radio current affairs represents experience and independence at home and abroad. 'AM', 'The World Today' and 'PM' focus that experience to bring you the details and analysis behind the news - on ABC local radio."*

*An ABC radio promotion*

## Merle Glasson 1912 - 2002

The Mid-north Coast branch of the Friends of the ABC mourns the passing of active member, poet Merle Glasson. Merle was a founding member in 1991 of the branch and came to meetings up until 2001.

She was educated at St George Girls' High School and graduated in modern languages from Sydney University, then was a teacher for a time, a housewife and mother of four children. Her poems first appeared in The Bulletin and various women's journals in the 1950s. However these early poems did not appear under her name because her husband was mortified by the thought that people would know that his wife wrote poetry! How outrageous! More than a hundred of her poems were published and won prizes including the Henry Lawson Award (1968) and the Mary Gilmour Award (1980).

Her poems were full of the trials and rewards of motherhood and life. Here for example is 'Roses Round the Abattoir' from "Landscape" (Black Lightning Press 1982).

### Roses Round the Abattoir

The mayor's proud of his city,  
Takes us to view the sights.  
"Must see the abattoir."  
Its rosary delights.

The Manager is flattered,  
Walks with us through the rows.  
"This Peace had won blue ribbons  
at all the local shows."

Through pergolas and arches  
Manager, Mayor guide.  
The others sniff, admire.  
My thoughts have strayed inside.

The ghost of Auntie Betsy  
Slaps me. Nice girls think  
Meat starts in butchers' cool rooms.  
No pain, no fear, no stink.

Did Belsen really happen?  
Grandmother's lips protrude.  
Look at the pretty flowers.  
It isn't nice to brood.

"Isn't this one gorgeous!"  
(Is that a frightened bleat?)  
"Look only on the bright side,"  
I hear myself repeat.

Merle had an acerbic wit. I heard from another friend that when Merle's deteriorating eye-sight meant she had to borrow big print books from the Library, Merle said "big print, narrow mind". When we had street stalls she helped us by buying up all the cakes and one had to remonstrate with her to leave one or two items for our other customers. Truly she was a great Friend and it was a privilege to have known her.

Drusilla Megget President,  
FABC, Mid-North Coast Branch

Blue Mountains FABC  
Branch warns -  
"Don't Be Fooled..."

One of the Friends' most active branches, Blue Mountains, also publishes a regular newsletter, 'Blue Mountains Air', from which the "Don't Be Fooled" warning comes.

In the latest issue, President John Derum makes these points: there are many activities and issues that demand our attention particularly at a time when an invasion of Iraq, refugees, drought and natural emergencies dominate our considerations daily. But all these issues demand an independent, well-resourced ABC to inform Australian people.

So - do you think Blue Mountains Friends should hibernate until the next emergency arises?

"The GATS negotiations have the potential to affect the ABC by rules of international trade 'surrendering cultural integrity'. Board appointments are still totally at the whim of the Federal Government. Funding also is at the whim of the Federal Government with no formula or guidelines for independence."

And as to "Don't Be Fooled" - the newsletter's editor said this: "...if we do not lobby our politicians (we) could see the public broadcaster emasculated to the point where it is irrelevant. Don't be fooled by attractive new studios... these were essential. Those attending any of our major functions last year will be aware of the stress on programmers of the funding cuts with (many) stretched almost to breaking point.

How long will they want to continue in these conditions, even if they are totally committed to the ABC and what it stands for."

## Russell Baldings's Letter to The Daily Telegraph

It seems not even the managing director of the ABC can get his letter published in The Daily Telegraph. Piers Akerman can spray whoever he likes but the targets are not allowed to respond. Pathetic really. This is what Russell Balding wanted to tell Tele readers:

Daily Telegraph  
2 Holt Street  
Surry Hills

Dear Editor,

Piers Akerman (25/02/03) asserts that the ABC sponsored a conference and concert in aid of the West Papua independence movement. This is factually incorrect. However, on present form we do not expect that Mr Akerman will correct the error.

Without its permission, the ABC was listed as a supporter on a concert website.

As soon as the error was noticed the ABC demanded its removal.

Unlike some columnists, such as Mr Akerman, the ABC cannot and does not advocate on behalf of political causes.

Mr Akerman also criticises an ABC indigenous affairs program, Speaking Out, for interviewing the representative of the West Papua independence movement.

Just because there may be differences of opinion on a subject does not preclude the ABC from examining it. For the record, recent subjects dealt with on Speaking Out include, indigenous weather knowledge, a book reading, the aboriginal community of Iga Warta and sports legend Eddie Gilbert.

The litany of errors contained in Mr Akerman's column of last week (18/02) was compounded this week through the wholly inaccurate claim that the ABC "was forced to apologise for fabricating a news story which had the potential to damage Australia's relationship with Indonesia".

When ABC News management identified the error they moved to rectify it. The Corporation was not "forced" to apologise. It chose this course of action because it was the proper thing to do.

Nor was the story "fabricated". It was a mistake and the ABC was not reluctant to admit to it. If only some other media practitioners had the fortitude to admit fault when wrong, and make the necessary correction.

Yours sincerely,  
Russell Balding  
Managing Director

Our thanks for the above, again, to 'Crikey'

# IRAQ: Just Where Are Our Soldiers Deployed Media Watch Asked?

Information was freely afforded American and British citizens as to the whereabouts of their troops and their activities in the middle east, while as late as March nothing was forthcoming about Australia's soldiers. 'Media Watch' raised the question as it combed through various media reports searching for an answer:

"Three hundred of Australia's finest steamed out of Sydney Harbour this morning, bound for the Persian Gulf. They're marching orders, 'Prepare for war against Saddam Hussein'. (Channel 10 News, 23/1/03)

David Marr: That was a month ago and just about the last we ever heard of them. The three ships that left Australia have now arrived in The Gulf, but as far as the Australian public goes they might almost have fallen off the map. It's all very peculiar. The day he farewelled SAS forces on their way to The Gulf, the Minister for Defence Senator Hill was asked -

Reporter: Senator, the troops are going with great fanfare, what assurances can you give that there will be proper media coverage of Australia's involvement?

Senator Hill: What assurances can you give me? You're the media.

Reporter: [indistinct] laughter

Senator Hill: A lot of media have already pre-deployed but not many Australian media I noticed.

(Doorstop interview, 24/1/2003)

David Marr: There's a simple reason for that, minister, you're not letting them. American journalists are already with American units in the Gulf and their reports are now wall to wall on American television. But Canberra hasn't allowed our journalists anywhere near our forces.

It's all the more peculiar because the minister claims he's all FOR the media keeping Australia informed about what our troops are up to.

Senator Hill: We will, as we have done in the past support the Australian media in their efforts to do that, if that

is their wish and as you probably know there has been some discussion between defence and media representatives in that regard and we do understand the need for a public to have the right to evaluate circumstances as they develop. (Doorstop interview, 24/1/2003)

David Marr: Unhappy discussions. The Department of Defence had hired mega law firm Clayton Utz to draw up a stricter agreement for journalists to sign before they're given their accreditation. Following resistance from the ABC, News Ltd and Fairfax, more work is being done on that document, and (last Friday), the military gave the press the amazing news that: "all journalists intending to cover coalition operations must seek accreditation from US Central Command HQ in the Gulf"

(The Australian, 22-23/1/03)

So - the Americans will be running not just the war, but the media too. But that's not solving the immediate problem. Journalists like ABC Foreign Correspondent's Evan Williams have no trouble reporting our partners' preparations.

Williams on air in 'Foreign Correspondent': "Here in the Kuwaiti desert, US forces are gearing up for a massive ground assault on Iraq but pressure to make this a quick war and threats of chemical and biological attacks could mean a combination of tactics we've never seen before."

(ABC Foreign Correspondent, 18/1/03)

David Marr: But no such reports have appeared of Australian preparations - which raises the question: how are we going to frighten Saddam into submission if he doesn't know we're there? Well that doesn't seem to be the point. Ian McPhedran, News Ltd's bureau chief in Canberra, believes the black-out is part of a political not a military agenda. "It's all to do with the government not admitting it's going to war." McPhedran said.

David Marr: This statement is backed by Fairfax's Tom Allard in The Sydney Morning Herald: "The government's media strategy at the moment is to pretend we are not going to war- it's ridiculous."

## Protecting Australian Content

The unique story of Australia's values and characteristics can be told only by people who have experienced that story, in all its cultural and historical diversity.

Friends of the ABC believe the ABC Board should have the power to give preference to Australian productions in order to contribute to a sense of national identity, and should have the power to promote Australia's musical, dramatic and other performing arts above those of

other countries.

That there is an Australian perspective on the world is an essential realization if Australians are not to be absorbed into an amorphous world view dominated by the largest and loudest peoples

The US is arguing very strenuously for local content quotas to be reduced or completely abolished.

The US has listed a dozen "objectives for negotiations with Australia", including trade in industrial goods and agriculture, pharmaceuticals, quarantine services, govern-

ment procurement, electronic commerce, intellectual property rights, trade in services, competition and investment.

The inference to be drawn from the last three is that the Free Trade Agreement could force the abandonment of Australian content rules and the restriction on foreign ownership of media and other culturally significant investment opportunities.

*FABC submission to Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the US Free Trade Agreement negotiations and GATS*

# More Pictures From the Archives

Down the arches of the years - memories of the '80s



Eric Lofting, ABC cameraman, at SGIO Mini Games, Commonwealth Games - Brisbane, 1982.



Bush Tucker Man, 2nd series: Major Les Hiddins.



Keith Michell as Captain James Cook in the series of that name. 1987.



John Crone, acting head of Radio Australia's Chinese Service, surrounded by thousands of letters received from listeners in China. 1988.

Archival photos courtesy of ABC Document Archives.

Thanks to Geoffrey Harris and Guy Tranter.

### Red Address Label:

If your Update arrives in an envelope with a red address label this indicates that it is time for you to renew your membership.

Thank you for supporting the Friends of the ABC.

# Reith Rumours Run Riot!



*Rumours that the former Defence Minister, Peter Reith, was the Government's choice to replace Michael Kroger on the ABC Board sent distress signals soaring*

*across the country with most ABC supporters, taking comfort only in a sense of disbelief: It surely couldn't be true. Even Melbourne's prominent conservative columnist, Andrew Bolt, didn't think it was a good idea...and said so.*

## REITH WRONG RIGHT MAN

Don't believe the denials - former Defence Minister Peter Reith is likely to join the ABC board. Which is bad news for conservatives.

Yes, the ABC must air a wider range of views, if only to relieve the monotony of Left-wing droning. But one Liberal headkicker on the board won't achieve that, even if that person is as tough and smart as Reith. What's needed in the ABC are leaders of moral and intellectual stature to show staff it's not just interesting to challenge the Left's bankrupt ideas, but respectable. "Kids overboard" Reith is not that man. His enemies in the ABC will easily dismiss him as a man who has lied, and who shouldn't oversee an outfit that's in the truth business. He'll just make the Right seem all wrong.

*The Herald Sun  
12/05/2002.*

*On the other hand, The Australian's Matt Price, took an alternative point of view - Reith was just the man for the job!*

## ABC BOARD BECKONS FOR A GREAT COMMUNICATOR

Excellent news this week that the Prime Minister is considering appointing his old buddy Peter Reith, the former minister for Chinese whispers, doctored photographs and long-distance phone calls, to the board of the ABC. Clearly John Howard's intention is to inject a bit of much-needed clarity, integrity and honesty into the national broadcaster.

Reith, you'll recall, was a tremendous communicator, especially in getting the message across to pesky

army generals and naval captains not to dare bother the PM with useless information during hectic election campaigns. Aunty luvvies and the Latte-Line set have already started squealing about the prospect of Reith being called upon to defend their beloved ABC charter. They forget Howard is a great student of history.

The ABC is a close relative of Britain's BBC, whose founding father was Lord Reith. According to the BBC website, "Reith's vision was of an independent British broadcaster able to educate, inform and entertain the whole nation, free from political interference."

Reith would have no qualms about sticking to his namesake's guidelines, especially the part about political interference. Naturally Reith would need to oversee a few minor adjustments, since we all know the ABC has been serially interfered with by Labor, the Australian Greens, the Communist Party and all sorts of left-wing loonies.

Reith would start in children's television, where the insidious brainwashing begins. Bob the Builder must go...(and) those famous, if unfeasibly large, fruit might finally get to shed their nightwear. Instead, the Bananas in Balaclavas would "inform, educate and entertain" the kiddies by smashing up the stairs, catching the Teddy Bears unawares, and terrorising them on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, whenever. 'Play School' remains essentially unchanged but shifted to pay TV for the enjoyment of those who can afford the hike in 'Play School' fees.

ABC news and current affairs programs are probably beyond salvation.

'The 7.30 Report's' Kerry O'Brien has survived more knife jobs than Michael Jackson, so Reith might need to adopt an innovative tack. It's been suggested he'll leave O'Brien's program entirely alone, bar one small detail; it would be broadcast at 7.30 in the morning.

## PROMOTING MR.CREAN

Being a conciliatory figure, Reith would want bipartisan support for his subtle changes. To this end, Simon Crean could be relied upon to back the introduction of government advertising on the ABC. The Opposition to get involved (in the government's) TV campaign warning Australians about terrorism. It's understood cabinet has agreed to allow Crean to present the commercials. They'd start out short -- less than a minute -- but feature lots of Crean close-ups and talking, and they'd gradually increase in length.

By the next election campaign, the Labor leader would be given carte blanche to appear for as long as he wanted during prime time. Crean is convinced this would be educative, informative and entertaining. Certainly Reith and his mates in Government would be laughing.

*The Australian  
30/11/2002*

*Thanks Matt, but unfortunately it's not funny at all. We Friends must be prepared to resist the suggestion and campaign accordingly.  
Stay alert!*



# Radio Ratings Report

ABC Local Radio stations are standing out like beacons on the horizon. Strictly speaking the ABC is not in the business of chasing ratings. It offers its listeners and viewers programs of a particular sort and presenters of a particular style - style, content and programs one is not likely to encounter on commercial stations. Quite clearly it's a winning formula. If one adds up the radio figures for all the ABC's radio - FM, Local, National, News Radio and Triple J - the combination becomes the most listened to radio output anywhere in the country. The trend continues, with ABC local radio setting the ratings pace, as - at year's end - several of the nation's media writers pointed out.

"THE ABC got the glory in last week's eighth ratings survey, the final one for the year. Its Melbourne news-talk station 774 came top in talk and equal first overall.

Meanwhile, in Sydney ABC 702 outperformed 2UE to be second highest rating in news-talk after 2GB for the second survey in a row. The ABC's talk stations were also top in Perth and Brisbane. "What's becoming clear is that as things become more global there's a need for a local perspective that radio can provide," says Michael Mason, head of ABC local radio. "The ability to talk about yourself and your neighbourhood is a key strength and will continue be key." (Sally Jackson -The Australian, 12/12/2002)

## Top of ratings dial a first for Aunty

Melbourne ABC station 774 has crowned a strong year by finishing equal top in the latest radio ratings survey - for the first time. Although not its best result for the year, 774's audience share of 12.1 per cent was enough to match rock station FOX FM and relegate 3AW, usually dominant in talk radio, to third. The survey period of September 15 to November 23, the eighth and last for 2002, included a host of big news and sports stories, including the Bali bombing, the shooting at Monash University, and the football finals. In the hotly contested Sydney market, 2GB, home of Alan Jones, has convincingly won the battle for talk supremacy over 2UE and its resident superstar, John Laws ... For 2UE it has been an annus horribilis. The station started top in talk and second overall, and finished third in talk, behind 2GB and ABC 702." (Sally Jackson The Australian, 4/12/2002)

## Brisbane

"ABC won the battle of the AM band with 9.6 per cent, beating 4KQ (8.5 per cent), 4BC (8.3 per cent) and 4BH (8.2 per cent). The final months of Susan Mitchell at ABC 612 ... spurred a ratings increase. The station now has the second-most listened to breakfast slot behind B105.

Alternative youth station Triple J has slowly been winning back its audience, rising from 6.1 per cent of the total market to 6.8 per cent." Courier Mail 4/12/2002

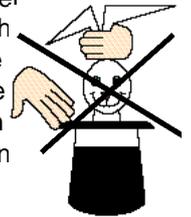
# Alston Acquits ABC of Institutional Bias...

## The Programs Are the Problem

The ABC was not biased "as an institution" but "certain programs" could do more to provide a more balanced view of current affairs, Communications Minister Richard Alston told a Senate committee hearing. While declining to name offending programs, Alston told the hearing he did not believe there was bias at the management level of the ABC but some program directors and presenters had a "one-eyed view" of events.

"There can certainly be occasions where the selection of talent or stories can be accused of presenting a one-eyed view," Alston said. "I don't think there has ever been any suggestion that the ABC as an institution is biased...but there will always be individual programs."

While Alston's remarks were the highlight of the ABC's 90-minute appearance before the Senate Communications Committee, managing director Russell Balding told the committee the broadcaster could not maintain its program quality without an increase in federal funding. "There are no more rabbits left in the hat and the ABC needs additional funding to maintain the quality of services it has been providing," Balding said.



Labor Senator Kate Lundy questioned the ABC's director of radio, Sue Howard, over Radio Australia's capacity to broadcast to and from Bali after the recent bombings. Howard replied some additional air time had been possible, but Radio Australia had only recovered about 20 per cent of its capacity since its budget was slashed in 1997.

Luke McIlveen The Australian, 28/11/2002

## Is Two a Crowd?

One ABC Friend, James Tedder of Stuarts Point, dashed off a letter to the Corporation - cc: Update:

Dear (News) Producer,

Why have you adopted the commercial style of two news readers... Please return to the one reader - alternate each night if you wish between male and female, but why waste resources with two readers.

Also the background... It is a mess. Why cannot we have a plain background with one reader.

Yours etc.

# A Short Cut to Success

ABC New Media Produces Its First Interactive Television.

The New Media division made history when it worked closely with Television to produce 'Long Way to the Top – Live in Concert' as the national broadcaster's first interactive television (iTV) program. It was broadcast on Austar's digital satellite subscription service on 1 December last year.

The iTV documentary was named *Best New Digital Content* at the Australian Interactive Multimedia Industry Association (AIMIA) Awards last December.

## Live in Concert

The iTV program is just one component of the ABC's 'Long Way to the Top – Live in Concert' project, which originated when ABC Television created the two-hour concert for broadcast on the ABC main channel. ABC New Media has also created a comprehensive online experience at:

[abc.net.au/longway](http://abc.net.au/longway).

The website features video on demand footage from the concert, interviews, stills from the concert

tour, 360 degree iPIX photos from the last concert and additional biographical material.

Director of ABC New Media and Digital Services, Lynley Marshall, said 'The Long Way to the Top' project was an example of how digital technology enabled us to take a single linear TV broadcast and provide a range of additional content and services.

"This means we can give audiences a whole new experience, and in this case, a more extended insight into an aspect of Australia's cultural identity," she said.

'Long Way to the Top – Live in Concert' features performances from BillyThorpe and the Aztecs, The Atlantics, Little Patti, Dinah Lee, John Paul Young, Marcia Hines, Stevie Wright, Ross Wilson, Chain, Spectrum, Lobby Loyde and others.

## Viewers Go Back Stage

The iTV program takes viewers on a backstage tour of the concert, features exclusive interviews with the stars, rare archival footage and puts viewers at the concert itself with some of Australia's greatest rock legends. All this in addition to a sizzling two hour concert.

The production of 'Long Way to the Top – Live in Concert' interactive comes after ABC New Media's successful broadcast of the BBC's 'Walking With Beasts' Interactive program on the ABC channel on Austar and Optus in July and August.

An ABC survey following the broadcast of 'Walking With Beasts' Interactive program found that 98% of those who responded wanted to see more interactive television documentaries.

"We received such a positive response from audiences to the BBC 'Walking With Beasts' that we were encouraged to develop our own, distinctly Australian iTV content," Ms Marshall said.

This result is a dynamic interactive television experience that enables audiences to not just watch the high-energy, two-hour concert, but also interact with a great range of additional material, looped and available for audiences to explore continuously for a total of 24 hours after the broadcast.

To find out more about 'Long Way to the Top – Live in Concert' visit: [abc.net.au/longway](http://abc.net.au/longway)



**IN CONCERT SPLIT SCREEN THE VAULT BACKSTAGE**

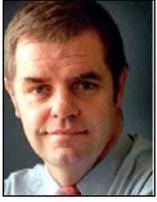
Split Screen 

**SIT IN THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR**  
Press the green key to watch the 2 hour concert experience from beginning to end and from different views around the venue, a favorite technique used in the '60s and '70s music films!

Picture from the 'Long Way to the Top' iTV program

# Capital Crisis...

Aunty and the capital magnificent in adversity



Two oft-maligned national institutions -- Canberra and the ABC -- performed superbly over a weekend no-one living within 100 km of Lake Burley Griffin will ever forget.

As the sun all but disappeared midway through Saturday afternoon and the air filled with ash and embers, public address systems in shops, malls and local swimming pools spat out calm but ominous warnings. By early evening it was clear the fire damage would be much worse than feared.

Local ABC radio -- 666 on the AM dial -- went into emergency mode and became compulsive listening. Other media outlets simply rehashed Aunty's blanket, authoritative, but never sensational narrative.

You sensed those fighting the fires were tuning to the ABC as well. For what seemed an eternity, one reporter was regularly updating the gripping story from Devonport Street in Lyons, where a clutch of houses had already burned down and desperate residents were trying to save the rest.

This continued for more than an hour until, like a B-grade movie, the cavalry arrived with red trucks and hoses. No further homes were lost.

Canberra is often accused of being a soulless place, too full of transitory types less interested in the local community than the large national institutions that

give the compromise capital its bad reputation. The weekend put an end to that lie.

Death seemed almost inevitable but when confirmed there was barely time to comprehend this loss of life as fire raged through the night.

A visit to the main evacuation centre, a converted high school, proved both bleak and inspiring.

Scores of volunteers offered warm food and kind words to hundreds of displaced Canberrans. The army provided mountains of blankets and mattresses. Individuals arrived bearing breakfast cereal and scones. First aid, welfare and accommodation assistance was freely provided.

Those Canberrans fortunate enough to switch off ABC radio and get to bed Saturday night thought perhaps 100 homes had been destroyed. They woke to be told this figure had all but quadrupled, with days of blistering hot weather and more wicked westerly winds lying ahead.

The federal Government promised all possible assistance and, of course, the priority must be helping thousands of people reassemble their shattered lives.

But ABC chief executive Russell Balding could do worse than package a sample of local radio's coverage of the fires as part of Aunty's campaign for more public funding.

As a city burned, its people -- and the national broadcaster -- were magnificent.

*Matt Price (abridged) -  
The Australian 20/01/03*



ABC  
Australian Broadcasting Corporation  
New Media

## The Right People checking The Wrong Crowd'... *with a close personal link*

The Australian Film Commission and ABC New Media have combined again to launch a new online documentary, now on the corporation's web site, 'The Wrong Crowd', a story of Queensland police corruption.

'The Wrong Crowd' stretches the boundaries of the on-line medium. It is a powerful and personal journey that follows writer, producer, director Debra Beattie, from childhood in the 1950s to young adulthood in Queensland in the 1980s

The documentary examines the highly publicised police brutality, allegations of cover-ups and the political battlefield that took place on the streets of Brisbane in those same years.

It begins with the custodial beating that resulted in the death of her mother's first husband, James Michael Jorgensen. Debra's estranged father, her mother's second husband, was a police officer. Debra's uncles were also policemen - one of whom was the subject of allegations of brutality at a student demonstration in 1976. This documentary investigates the cover-ups and inconsequential findings of a series of Inquiries into Police for three decades until Fitzgerald in 1987.

### The Joh Years

It explores what Debra describes as the "increasingly oppressive atmosphere of prejudice" building within the communities and political corridors of Queensland during Joh Bjelke-Peterson's premiership.

The powerfully personal and politically controversial documentary is now available online at HYPER-LINK <http://abc.net.au/documentaryonline>

'The Wrong Crowd' integrates photographs, storyboards, director's notes and video streaming to communicate Debra's personal journey.

### Interactive

Each part of the journey can be selected individually from childhood, adolescence, young adulthood and the epilogue. Photographs, video and audio footage - and links to newspaper articles from Queensland's Courier-Mail - document the director's notes, providing an historical and media perspective.

'The Wrong Crowd' is the last of four online documentaries the Australian Film Commission and the ABC New Media have shared in, displayed on a highly interactive site which invites personal contributions and feedback.

**Guided  
Heritage Walk  
of Rookwood  
Cemetery**



**Sunday 4th May  
Tour Starts  
10:00 am sharp.**

**Cost \$12.00  
(No concession unfortunately )**

**BYO Picnic 12:30 PM**

**• Join the Friends on a Heritage walk in one of the world's largest cemeteries which is regarded as one of the best surviving examples of a Victorian garden cemetery.**

**• Take in history, plants, famous people eg Anthony Horden, Bea Miles, David Scott Mitchell (Library fame) and many others.**

**• Have the symbolism of the plantings explained.**

**• During the picnic, tuition in how to find graves of long lost relatives.**

**Meet 9:45 corner of  
Necropolis Crt. & William Dr.  
Public transport, Train to Lidcombe  
Station, walk up Joseph St, turn left into  
Victoria St East, enter via gate and follow  
Necropolis Drive to meeting location.**

**Bookings Essential.**

**Please call Frouke 9642 6485 or  
Jason 9489 1420**

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Phone 9144 1351 or 0417 650 443  
greenaa@ozemail.com.au**

## So once again the ABC is encircled -

Surrounded by GATS, FTA, Triennial Funding and unresolved issues such as Board appointments and ministerial manipulation through inadequate funding and political bullying.

What can we do to resist the forces of darkness?

For continuous information on GATS and the AFT visit the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network site on: [www.aftinet.org.au](http://www.aftinet.org.au)

Compare that with the Coalition's information in a regular DFAT newsletter on services.  
[negotiations@defat.gov.au](mailto:negotiations@defat.gov.au)

For Labor's GATS information refer to  
[Craig.Emerson.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Craig.Emerson.MP@aph.gov.au)

Write to:

The Hon Mark Vaile, Minister for Trade, Parliament House, Canberra 2600.

Hon John Howard  
Prime Minister  
GPO box 59, Sydney 2001

Hon Peter Costello  
Treasurer  
4 Treasury Place, Melb. Vic. 3002

Hon Richard Alston  
Minister for Communicaitons  
4 Treasury Place, Melb. Vic 3002

## ABC NEWS GOES LOCAL IN DARWIN

ABC News is now broadcast seven days a week from the Darwin studio heralding a new era in Territory television news coverage.

"The ABC is the only television network to provide a comprehensive local seven-day news service to the Territory," said ABC Territory Head of News John DuBois.

"Big stories break over the weekend and now we cover them in detail and give everyone the full picture."

The new extended news service brought 13 new staff to the ABC.

"We are employing three new journalists, plus technical and production people which can only be a good thing for the Territory," Mr DuBois said.

# Paging Senators Meg Lees and Len Harris!

Rupert's watching you like  
a hawk - about to swoop...

*FABC wondered how the Brits were dealing with GATS and audio-visual services, and encouraged by the sanity of the BBC and the Nolan rules, past president Penelope Toltz dashed off a note to our counterparts, 'Voice of the Listener and Viewer', in the UK. We're sorry we asked...*

Dear Penelope,

Many thanks for your messages - and all our good wishes to you for the next year... and future.

We also have had a horrendously busy year and it looks like getting worse.

We have new legislation going through Parliament among several controversial proposals (and) the government is determined to throw the British media open to take over by any multi-national - with no reciprocity - and to lift the limits on cross-media ownership, thus allowing Rupert Murdoch to buy Channel 5 TV.

This channel has far lighter (public service) obligations than any other; so, with his backing and money, (he) could buy up all the popular sports and movies and knock ITV and Channel 10 out of the water.

News International already has 40% of our press, the dominant satellite and pay TV services, major publishers like Harper Collins, magazines, and interests in commercial radio. We are fighting, but the public knows nothing because the papers tell them nothing. Even the rest of the press is silent and at the moment very anti-BBC for other reasons.

As to GATS: Yes, we are trying to fight on that too. But the going is tough.

Our Department of Trade launched a 'public' consultation in December and gave until 3 January for replies! We did not receive a copy until someone alerted me at the last minute, so our reply was minimal... even though the official concerned spoke at our 2002 conference.

A coalition is beginning to build and we must keep in touch on this. I think the Asia Pacific public broadcasters will support the cause and also the European public Broadcasters but the BBC told us nothing until I asked. I will be in touch again

Meantime - every good wish.

Jocelyn

*If the two Senators now juggling deals with the Government really believe they can vote in media ownership changes in Australia that don't disadvantage the rest of us - good luck to them! (Ed.)*

From the SMH 3/3/03

## Media Set for Musical Chairs

*When the tape stops, the ownership shuffle begins. It's not far away. Ladies and gentlemen, pick your partners for the next dance, as a prospective change of cross-media legislation sets the scene for a round of takeover activity.*

It's been a long time coming, but, the next few months may see the structure of the industry changed fundamentally

It is almost certain the Federal Government will manage to change media ownership rules, opening the way for many of the existing players to expand by wholesale acquisition ... "It will be like the banks, one after another," one fund manager said of the prospective change in the media sector.

The Government is negotiating with the four independent senators to win support for its planned changes although ultimately it may prove to be easier to do a deal with the Democrats.

The Democrats are not particularly concerned about further consolidation in the media sector, especially radio, and are willing to look at changes involving regional media, as well as opening the door a little wider to foreign companies to participate.

One flashpoint in any debate over further consolidation of the sector in the capital cities, where there is caution about the prospect of a single company dominating both newspapers and television...even so some consolidation of TV and radio is inevitable, especially in rural markets.

*Brian Robins*

### update

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web site: [www.fabc.org.au/nsw](http://www.fabc.org.au/nsw)

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#### FABC Update

Post

The Editor

C/-FABC Update

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Address	Suburb <span style="float: right;">P/Code</span>
Phone (Home)	(Work) <span style="float: right;">Mob</span>
Federal Electorate	<b>Give my details to my local FABC Branch</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
Age Group <input type="checkbox"/> 30 or under <input type="checkbox"/> 31-50 <input type="checkbox"/> 51+	Membership No. _____
I would like to join <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to renew <input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in helping <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to join the phone/fax/email network <input type="checkbox"/> (and help pass on information to members)	
I/We apply for membership of FABC (NSW) Inc. and accept it's objectives and rules. <i>Signature</i> _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$20 <input type="checkbox"/> Family/Household \$25 <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$15 <input type="checkbox"/> Pensioner \$15 <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate (covers 3 members) \$60 <input type="checkbox"/> <b>I would like to make a donation \$</b> _____	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 \$