



Crisis Edition: ABC Reels under 'bias' bludgeon and Fights Funding Fiasco.

The Long March defending AM

Not since 15,000 people streamed onto the steps of the Opera House in April 2001 to defend the ABC has the broadcaster been under such a concerted attack by Government. Brian Davies maps the current conflict.

To soften up the target, the Coalition, in May, laid down a barrage of Budget Cuts camouflaged as 'funding maintained in real terms'; two months later it sent the Old Guard Bias cavalry in, slashing and hacking mercilessly. The clash of arms rang across the continent, but at the clang of the Minister's charge of anti-American bias, the next sound heard was the clunk of collective jaws dropping.

'ALSTON LOSES THE PLOT', shouted a Lindsay Tanner media

release, insisting the Minister be sacked.

With the Australian communications industry at the crossroads due to his failed digital television and broadband policies, Senator Alston is continuing his reckless and petty war against the ABC.

"It's clear it's the Government that's been misrepresenting the facts of the Iraqi conflict."

In The Age - **'SPARKS FLY IN BATTLE OF THE ABC'** - Annabel Crabb wrote "Tension between the ABC and Government exploded yesterday as Richard Alston confirmed plans to force a new independent watchdog on the national broadcaster.

Continued on Page 4

In Alston v the ABC, the Winner Must Be Journalistic Integrity

What is fair reporting? The answer lies somewhere in the language that is used, writes Peter Ellingsen.

Behind the case made against the ABC for alleged left-wing bias is a skirmish more bitter than the one surrounding broadcasting standards. It is a war over what constitutes valid journalism, and it's being fought on the field of language.

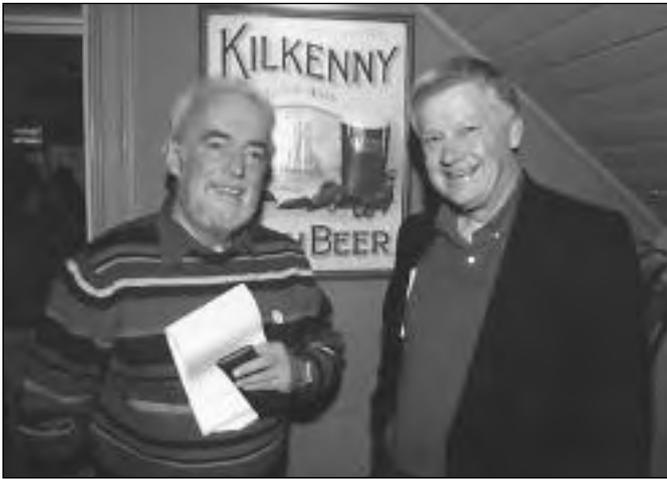
At stake is not just the standing of a particular ABC current affairs program, AM, but the shared understanding of what journalism is and how it is assessed.

There are no exact standards here. While both sides agree fairness is a goal, they differ on what it is. What Richard Alston brands as anti-American prejudice, the ABC sees as scene setting. It comes down to interpretation.

Continued on Page 5

Inside:

The President's Report.....	3
What Balding Said.....	6
Central Cst. Calls for Protest Demo. 8	
US Audiences say 'No' to Corporate Giantism.....	8
Behind the News Goes Full Frontal....	9
Great Lakes Friends Ask Questions....	9
Where Did All the Money Go?.....	11
Letters to Editors.....	12
Nailing the 'ABC' of Deception.....	13
How Aunty Handles Complaints.....	15



FABC Bathurst President, Warwick Franks, with NSW President, Gary Cook at Bathurst FABC's "Irish Night"



Jennifer Sexton, Kempsey regional radio reporter keeping FABC members in the picture at Port Macquarie.

**A public meeting to
re-establish
The Eastern Suburbs Branch
of Friends of the ABC**

**will be held at
Waverley Library Theatre
Bondi Junction**

**Corner Denison and Ebley Sts.
Parking underneath.
Entrance on Denison St.**

**Sunday, 28 September
1.30 pm.**

Speakers will be

- **Quentin Dempster**
 - **Cameron Murphy**,
NSW Council for Civil Liberties
 - **Louise Southalan**,
Australian Fair Trade and
Investment Network
- Chairperson - Tina Bursill**



Mex's with Mobiles'

*Northern Rivers Friends call for
Australia's media to be protected.*

Late August, Northern Rivers Friends ran a film evening featuring the work of local film makers (Michael Murray, David Bradbury, and Cathy Henkel) at the Bay Dendy followed by a panel session at Northern Rivers Screenworks office to examine the implications of the proposed US Free Trade Agreement for Australia's film, television and multimedia industry.

On the panel, Michael Murray spoke of the difficulties of getting local films produced in the era of the global market. Cathy Henkel noted the declining number of feature films being produced in Australia and the need therefore for a protected market. David Bradbury, noting that "we are already swamped with US product", said Australians were often viewed by Americans as "Mexicans with Mobiles" - easily exploitable.

Democrat Senator John Cherry

asked how much Australians were prepared to lose when considering the "dubious benefits the industry might gain from a Free Trade Agreement with the US." The Democrats, he said, preferred a multi-lateral agreement to a bilateral one.

Standstill Situation

Media lecturer Fiona Martin described as a "convenient fiction" the idea that opening up new types of media provided more outlets for local producers. Screenworks Director and Screen Directors Association Rep Tracey Mair noted intense lobbying taking place in Canberra over the Free Trade Agreement. She warned that the Australian government might agree to a "standstill situation" leaving the 55% local content rules on TV locked in time, but at the cost of the freedom to adjust in the future.

Panelists acknowledged that the Member for Richmond, Larry Anthony, was supportive of the local film industry and had attended

Screenworks seminars.

But this raised a question: Would National Party members hold firm on cultural objectives if a trade off offered concessions to the Australian farming and mining sectors?

Panel session participants signed a petition asking the Trade Minister to ensure the government held firm to its commitment to maintain control of social and cultural objectives; that the Australian Film, TV and multimedia industries were fully protected; that the Government retain the right to provide financial support for local media and its right to control local content.

**Coming Events for the Northern
Rivers Friends of the ABC:**

*Sunday, 12 October, 2 pm,
Byron Bay Community Centre.*

*Aunty's (totally unbiased) Arty Party -
a Concert by local performers (including
Sharni Russell and David Hallett)
to recognise the ABC's contribution to
the Arts.*

President Neville Jennings



The President's Report

By the time you receive this edition of *Update*, Friends of the ABC, together with an alliance of concerned organisations including the NSW Teachers' Federation, Association of Parents & Citizens, and Combined Public Service Unions, will have staged a Rally and Family Picnic in the Sydney Domain.

We organised the Rally because you, the members, asked us what we were doing in answer to the concerted campaign by the Federal Government, and, in particular, the Minister for Communications, Senator Alston, to systematically attack and undermine the ABC.

In early August, the ABC was forced to shed programs, in particular the popular educational program *'Behind the News'*. Current affairs programs will also suffer - all because of inadequate funding provided by the government. When the ABC made its Triennial Funding submission to the government, it made it abundantly clear that programs would suffer if the government failed to recognise that the ABC was grossly underfunded, particularly when benchmarked against other national public broadcasters.

At the same time, Senator Alston attacked the ABC's independence by

refusing to accept the ABC's response to his allegations of anti-US bias. The ABC's Complaints Review Process is more open, transparent and rigorous than other public broadcasters overseas. Beyond this process, there are two further external bodies to which a complaint can be referred, one of which, (The Australian Broadcasting Authority) is appointed by the government. This is not good enough for Senator Alston who wants to establish his own self-appointed tribunal - no doubt made up of the usual suspects.

The National Conference of Friends of the ABC was held in Perth over the weekend of 6 and 7 September and was opened by ABC Managing Director, Russell Balding. A brief report is provided below.

Concerns About the Free Trade Agreement

The Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement being negotiated this year should continue to give concern to all Australians. It has potentially adverse outcomes for public broadcasting, the audio-visual industry, the arts, culture and education. A commitment was given earlier this year to finalise negotiations before the end of 2003. It is appropriate to write to your local member or the Trade Minister, Mark Vaile, requesting that there be a

complete exclusion from negotiations of public broadcasting issues, particularly the ABC and SBS.

You will notice in this edition an advertisement on page 2 to re-launch the Eastern Suburbs branch of the FABC on 28 September. I urge you to support this meeting if you live in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held this year on Saturday, 25 October at the YWCA, corner Liverpool Street and Wentworth Avenue, Sydney. You will be receiving an official notification of the meeting in due course.

It has again been a very active period culminating in the Rally at the Domain. In June, Bathurst Branch held a very innovative and successful 'Irish Night in the Pub'. I also attended Parramatta Branch AGM, a meeting of the ACT Branch, followed in July by a workshop on 'Why Trade Matters', enabling several FABC committee members to better understand this serious issue.

The ABC remains under attack from the Minister and the Government. It needs our resolve to continue combating this onslaught and to educate and recruit members of the public who may not be as aware of the plight of the ABC as you are.

Gary Cook, President

FRIENDS OF THE ABC NATIONAL CONFERENCE

ABC Managing Director, Russell Balding, opened the conference which was held at the Heathcote Cultural Centre in Perth over the weekend of 6 and 7 September. The principal themes of his address related to ABC inde-

pendence and inadequate funding. He also emphasised that the ABC Act provided that the role of the ABC is to be a comprehensive broadcaster rather than to appeal to a niche audience.

A very productive two days were spent discussing a wide range of issues and developing policies and strategies to carry us forward for the next year.

A full report on the conference will be available in the next edition of *Update*, however, in brief, the issues canvassed were :

- ABC commercial activities ranging from product promotion to licencing use of ABC property to commercial enterprises.
- An independent and commercial free ABC
- Cross-media ownership
- The process of appointments to the ABC Board
- ABC funding
- The ABC Complaints Review Process

Gary Cook, President

Northern Rivers Panel - "Mex's With Mobiles"



Cathy Henkel, David Bradbury, Michael Murray, Neville Jennings (standing), Tracey Mair (partly obscured), Fiona Martin and Senator John Cherry.

The Long March defending AM: How it came about.

Continued from Page 1

On the same day ABC MD Russell Balding announced that he was unilaterally asking the ABC's own independent tribunal to re-examine the minister's complaints.

The Minister gave interviews to the media, but refused to speak to AM. Lindsay Tanner described the Prime Minister as "an ideological terrorist" trying to destroy the ABC. The first flurry of letters-to-the-editor began:

"The balance demonstrated by Gerard Henderson ("Pig-headed ABC must expect a funds roasting", *Herald*, July 29) must surely have him favourite to head up any Alston-approved independent ABC review panel..."



G.Henderson

"Henderson suggests the ABC will not receive a major funding increase while it is "ideologically tainted". Does he think it correct for the Government to determine the ABC budget on the basis of a political dispute rather than a dispassionate analysis of the potential benefits to society of improved ABC programming versus the cost?"

One recurring writer's question was where in the ABC's charter was the requirement to be pro-American?

"Why Alston wants an independent complaints review panel when he's already got one is one of life's little mysteries," puzzled Mark Day (*Daily Telegraph*)

In *The Australian*, Errol Simper said there were at least three distinct problems with Alston's plan. The most obvious was who would be on the panel and who would appoint them.

"A second is one of perception. You wouldn't have to be the world's most cynical person to conclude it's a reaction to having had 66 of his 68 complaints rejected (when) reasonable readings of the (ABC's) report would suggest his complaints were handled courteously and fairly."

And the third problem? "...very few human beings are totally qualified

to judge the kind of allegations Alston levelled at the ABC over its Iraq reportage. *Perceived bias can be someone else's idea of healthy probing.*"

In *The AGE* Michelle Grattan, took the view that the Howard Government was bullying the ABC. "It is vital that the national broadcaster not be cowed," she wrote.

"People who value diversity of opinion can be thankful that Donald McDonald - who was appointed by John Howard as ABC chairman - turned out very different from Coalition expectations and that he won the battle to get his preferred choice, Russell Balding, as managing director after Jonathan Shier's fall."

Muddled Messages

"McDonald and Balding are highly credible figures in the struggle to hold the line against Alston's over-the-top claims of bias and anti-Americanism. But they must wonder after the minister's behaviour this week"



D. McDonald

The tenor of Alston's attack is seen in his exchange with PM's Catherine McGrath over the first claim in his dossier: AM reporting that "international aid agencies are warning of a humanitarian catastrophe as the war unfolds. They fear hundreds of thousands of Iraqis could soon be streaming out of Iraq".

The ABC defended itself by pointing to various agencies' assessments, including UNHCR's contingency planning for a conflict had been based on a preparedness figure of a possible total of 600,000 refugees.

But Alston told PM: "Contingency planning is simply on the basis that there might be a problem. That is not in any shape or form able to be construed as the UN warning of a humanitarian crisis."

The Letters to the Editor continued:

"Why, after all, were we involved in Iraq if not to uphold the principles of a democratic society against a despot who would not tolerate free media?"

"The ABC gave comprehensive coverage to all aspects of the conflict and continues, quite rightly, to analyse the justification for war as reports continue over the content and value of intelligence used by the US and echoed by Mr Howard."

"With growing public cynicism about the Government's actions, it is unbelievable Senator Alston should try to silence the national broadcaster."

In a column, confidently headed, "*How the ABC Can Be Fixed*" one-time *AGE & SMH* Editor, Greg Hywood, ominously declared - "The pressure from this Government will not subside. Nor will the accompanying budgetary dramas. John Howard has decided the ABC has so narrowed its audience in terms of social and economic attitudes that there is little political risk for a conservative government in taking on the national broadcaster."

"Clearly the ABC needs some leadership," thundered Hywood, "It's high time it was shown."

Hywood, long off the public media scene - where has he been? - has re-emerged to join the Fairfax conservative stablemates - Paddy, Miranda, Gerard, Hugh, Paul and others...it's as though nothing can make up for Imre's absence. But what else changes?

As Phillip Adams once observed, "only the ABC's weather forecasts have escaped criticism."

Can we even be certain of that?

In Alston v the ABC, the Winner Must Be Journalistic Integrity

Continued from page 1

Is “grudgingly”, to describe Turkey’s decision authorizing US military activities on its territory, spin or analysis?

Alston and the ABC cannot agree. What is surprising is that anyone would think they could. We are not dealing with transparent, one-sided reporting, the sort of thing you might have found in Pravda or the Voice of America.

The ABC is not accused of blatant errors of fact (but) loaded comment - that is, the words used to say what the available audio cannot...but radio has neither vision nor time for long essays. So reporters doing their job need to say what they see or hear. Alston does not dispute this. As he told PM, context is OK for current affairs radio.

The problem, he says, is to remain balanced and impartial. Here we enter the realm of language. Asked the difference between analysis and bias, Alston said: “Analysis is doing your best to be balanced and impartial.”

(But) balance and impartiality are a matter of judgement, not measurement. They depend on perception, which, like belief, is notoriously subjective. Where you sit, as the old saying goes, depends on where you stand.

According to the Australian Broadcasting Authority Chair, Professor Flint, balance and impartiality mean presenting a wide range of views and not favouring one over the other. It does not involve being unquestioning.



Prof. D. Flint

On this score, according to research being done by Cardiff University’s School of Journalism, public broadcasters, at least in Britain, are in the clear.

The school’s Professor Justin Lewis found the BBC did not have an anti-war agenda. The problem was

not too much analysis, but not enough. Lewis said the research showed that by taking information straight from military sources, without subjecting it to analysis, reporters routinely got it wrong.

For example, the southern Iraq town of Umm Qasr “fell” four times, there was an “uprising” in Basra that did not happen, and “Scud” missiles were fired that were not Scuds.

Alston’s attack on the ABC, echoed by at least three writers on this page (*The Age*), Gerald Stone, Gerard Henderson and Gregory Hywood, questions not just the questioning, but the tone and values of journalists filing the reports.

Stone, like Alston, detects sneering in the AM coverage, and condemns any report that “begins with a value judgement before the fact”. Leave aside the irony that, (he is) a former executive producer of *60 Minutes*.

Henderson finds fault with the ABC for having an insider, former Victorian manager Murray Green, as the one-man complaints review executive, to consider Alston’s complaints. But is this not the way the Government investigates charges against its own ministers?

Flint, for instance, who may be called on by Howard to review Alston’s dossier, has just published a book, *Twilight of the Elites*, which critiques parts of the ABC.

Hywood, a former editor-in-chief of *The Age*, argues the ABC needs not just to crack down on gratuitous commentary, but (to) get more conservative commentators and programs...to offset what is seen as a left-wing bias, or what he calls internal culture.

He sees a conflict between what journalists think is worth covering and the demands of the market, and believes the ABC suffers from not having such a battle going on. But does not the appeal of the ABC lie in being free of market or commercial demands? In fact, the independence

demand by the charter of the ABC depends on its avoiding the commercial links other media must pursue.

And here is the nub. Questions of bias are not only difficult to establish, they exist in a web of language and ideas that inevitably have their own values. Yes, the ABC has a culture with inherent beliefs, but so does the Government. The only way around or through it is with language, and, as George Orwell warned, here we are dealing with deliberate deception and spin doctors of all sorts (wanting) to make lies sound truthful.

‘Language needs to be clear for society to stay sane,’ (Confucius). Former Czech president Vaclav Havel, put it more elegantly. “We have fallen morally ill because we have become used to saying what we do not believe.”

This, sadly, is a new battleground of the media. As Tony Hart, president of the Marketing Institute of Australia in 1999, told me, the line between editorial and advertising (is) blurred ... This, he said, is the new reality.

It is not one that Nate Thayer, who refused to accept the broadcasting world’s version of the Pulitzer Prize for his scoop on Pol Pot, embraces. “My main objection,” he told *The New Yorker*, “is that the industry has taken control of journalists, and part of our job is to fight for the integrity of our profession.”

The Age. 6 August, 2003

A Weird Idea - A Neat Response *ABC Double-Dipping*

Dear Senator Alston, regarding your thoughts on an ABC subscribers’ club (“Want a better ABC/ Let’s see the colour of your money, *Herald Aug 29*) I already subscribe to the ABC; it’s called the PAYE Tax Club. Why not focus on the real issues like the appalling content on the other free-to-air stations?

*Simon Ebbeling, Linden,
SMH Aug 29. 03*

What Balding Said...

If Alston's bias accusations appeared with all the charm of a steel-shod storm-trooper's tread, the ABC counter-attacked on the 21st. of July with deceptively mild civility:

ABC Media Release 21 July 2003

The ABC Managing Director, Russell Balding, has responded to Senator Alston's letter of 28 May 2003 which cited 68 complaints about the ABC current affairs program AM. The Minister's letter complained particularly about 'biased' and 'anti-American' coverage by the ABC.

The complaints were referred on the same day to the ABC's Complaints Review Executive (CRE), an independent office established recently under enhanced complaints handling procedures. This is the appropriate practice for complaints of this nature.

The CRE has upheld two of Senator Alston's complaints and rejected 66. The CRE also rejected the inference contained in the Minister's complaint that the ABC's coverage was biased.



The Managing Director of the ABC, Russell Balding said: "I am satisfied with both the process and outcome of this investigation. It vindicates the AM program and its staff in relation to the Minister's complaint. The ABC's war coverage was second to none and I stand firmly behind the ABC's programs."

"While noting that these allegations are most serious and are fundamental to the ABC's integrity, I also acknowledge that the ABC is accountable to the

Australian community through the Parliament of Australia and that individuals have a right to complain and have that complaint properly considered and responded to."

"Overall, I believe our coverage of the conflict was balanced and delivered in a professional manner upholding the standards of objective journalism." Mr Balding said.



Conclusions

In coming to its conclusions the CRE employed rigorous standards of research and investigation of the complaints and the coverage. All editions of AM were analysed over the period of the war from 20 March 2003 until 14 April 2003, including full transcripts and audio recordings of the programs and against transcripts of official press briefings undertaken by the White House, the Pentagon and Centcom in Qatar.



The ABC's News and Current Affairs division was required to provide responses to the CRE on the coverage. Reportage of the Iraq War was also tracked against other media.

As with any other complainant, if the Minister is dissatisfied with the outcome of this appraisal then he may have the matter further considered by the Independent Complaints Review Panel and/or the Australian Broadcasting Authority.

In view of the level of public interest generated by the release of the Minister's complaint, The ABC managing Director has taken the decision in this case to make the CRE report publicly available.

GOING AWAY???

A reminder for members: going overseas or interstate for a spell; or taking a long holiday?



Please remember to renew your membership subscription before you go. Thanks!

An Extra Role for Update.

Some advice from a Friend at Picton: Don't simply file Update away or discard it after reading, give it a wider circulation – pass it onto a friend or neighbour, put it in a letter box, or leave it, without littering of course, for someone else to pick up and take away to read. It expands our circulation and hopefully membership



Cartoon courtesy Tandberg

Why Not Start an FABC Group in Your Area?

Friends of the ABC is happy to help you begin a group in your area. If you live in an area not covered by FABC, we are more than happy to assist you with written material, advice, politicians addresses, how to

arrange meetings - anything you want to know. Email us at: fabcnsw@fabcnsw.org.au or phone us on: (02) 9810 3358.

Hunter FABC Jazzes It Up

From Hunter President Hank Willems

At the Hunter Committee's June meeting the question was raised as to how to apply further pressure on the Government to support the ABC properly...and to keep our membership involved. The Branch decided on a letter writing campaign targeting all local Federal members and the Minister.

Gary Cook urged us to combat public attacks on the ABC, particularly when the Minister responsible for maintaining the ABC's independence is busy creating the impression the ABC should act as a mouthpiece for the Government.

But to avoid a stack of identical form letters, Hunter District decided to tackle a number of topics per mail - censorship, funding, achieving real independence on the ABC board and the hidden dangers of trade agreements.

We also decided to arrange a peti-

tion for all our members to pass around and gather signatures, but this is also something that could possibly be better arranged on a statewide basis, organised by the NSW branch.

Membership Drive to Double Membership

Because of increasing threats to the ABC, a membership drive was proposed with each current member recruiting a new one so as to double our membership; membership forms are to go out with the next Hunter Newsletter.

We also set up a membership stall at a Jazz concert venue. We were made extremely welcome (after all most commercial television and radio no longer do jazz any more) with many enquiries and requests for our petition to sign.

With feelings running high, some members cc'd us their letters to Alston - these below for example, (extracts only.)

Talleen Rd, Nelson Bay, 2315

Dear Minister,

Your continuing attempts to discredit, indeed, vilify, the ABC with your fatuous charges of bias are contemptible while depriving the corporation of adequate funding only exacerbates the damage you do. If any of the ABC's reporting of the Iraq war was biased against America, it had the fair-minded effect of off-setting biased information your government put out to justify its indefensible stand on the war and the lies that went with it.

It is obscene that excellent, high achieving programs (especially those benefiting children) have to be axed because you can't find the funds needed to maintain the independence of our national broadcaster - - or don't you want it to be independent ?

Yours faithfully,
George D' Aran

Turrarna Street, Wangi Wangi NSW 2267

Dear Minister,

You have reduced the income of the ABC regularly until services are approaching a level which is not consonant with performance expected of our national broadcaster, eg English and other language services which enhance our state in this region of the world. Next is the so-called bias the ABC has shown against the United States in its reporting of the unprecedented and undeclared attack against Iraq. President Bush, Prime Minister Howard and Prime Minister Blair should at this time be facing a war crimes tribunal at the Hague for their totally unacceptable waging of military action against Iraq.

While the regime was vile and bestial, how can we support unilateral action of this kind without protest, and if the ABC was not slavishly following the CNN line then you should be backing the reporting up, not lambasting them (the National Broadcaster) for their accuracy. You can leave all the sycophantic boot-licking to apostate Australians/pseudo Americans such as Rupert Murdoch.

Yours faithfully,
James R Everard

Blue Mountains Branch High Tea at The Carrington

ABC presenter, Geraldine Doogue, entertained more than 100 Blue Mountains branch members and ABC supporters in the charming ambience of the renovated Carrington Hotel, Katoomba on Saturday, 30 August.



Geraldine, who presents "Life Matters" on radio and "Compass" on television, explained that, despite a lack of funding for the ABC, it remains a stimulating and creative environment, providing unparalleled "brain food" for its audience.

She suggested that a method of counteracting critics of the ABC could be to be more inclusive and demonstrate to them the excellence of the product the ABC produces.

Earlier, FABC President, Gary Cook addressed the audience to refute the claims by the Minister, Senator Alston, that the ABC triennial funding had been maintained "in real terms".

Blue Mountains President, John Derum exhorted members to become involved in letter writing to the Minister and their local member in support of the ABC

Have you remembered to renew your membership? You can renew or join on our secure web site: www.fabcnsw.org.au/

Central Coast Friends Call for Protest Demonstration

The last meeting of the Central Coast FABC was attended by more than 70 people, with fewer than 50 financial members, but 12 of the newcomers signed up immediately.

The meeting had been well publicised with visitors invited to hear the guest speaker NSW ABC Local Radio manager, Roger Summerill, who described his career in public and private broadcasting, and, naturally, his commitment to ABC local radio.

Roger also forecast the opening of the Central Coast transmitter and studio on the Central Coast broadcasting on 92.5 FM.

The meeting was very strongly critical of the Federal Government's complaints of bias and lack of adequate funding to maintain existing services and, without any dissent, carried a motion that NSW FABC be asked to consider the organisation of a demonstration to protest on these issues.

The meeting later enjoyed afternoon tea, and was entertained by the Jazz League group.

At our Christmas meeting on Sunday November 30 we are planning to have the veteran Australian actor, John Bluthal, as guest speaker.

John Hale, Convenor



US Media Audiences says "No" to Corporate Giantism

How they do things in the USA: Buckling to public pressure, the U.S. House of Representatives has overwhelmingly approved an appropriations bill to block one of the Federal Communications Commission's proposed new rules ...a Bush administration decision to allow big owners to grow bigger and own more.

The bill prohibits expanding the number of American TV viewers one media company may reach to 45%. It holds the cap at 35%. "This is great news, but it's not over," said US activists.

The TV cap is the least substantive rule change. The rules relaxing bans on newspaper/broadcast cross ownership and local TV consolidation (duopolies) are what really hurt media diversity and independence.

The White House and the Republican majority in Congress oppose repealing these rules and the Republicans tried to derail support by calling a surprise vote

People Action

"But, thanks to you, phones rang 'off the hook' according to House staffers. In the hours before the critical vote, voices from the public changed minds in the Congress. Although the amendment lost, it received a remarkable 174 votes, including 34 Republicans --- Getting a strong vote was the mission, and we accomplished it."



The complex Congressional process and the House battle will resume in September.

After years in which media companies have rolled their agenda over Congress with few objections, Congressman Inslee said a "tsunami" of public pressure was starting to change the course of Congress. "Growing numbers of Americans are realizing that democracy demands democratic media, and Congress is listening," the activists said..

The New York Times' William Safire - a staunch conservative - remarked: the general managers of 75 stations owned and operated by the Big Four television networks swept into a meeting of the House Appropriations Committee yesterday. Big Media's lobbying purpose was to squelch the bipartisan movement in Congress to nullify the FCC's cave-in to the networks' lust to gobble up more independent stations.

"But to everyone's amazement, the networks' power play was foiled. Representative Frank Wolf urged his GOP colleagues to vote their consciences, and an amendment to hold the cap on a huge conglomerate's ownership to 35 percent of the national TV audience was passed by a vote of 40 to 25.

How it Happened

Safire continued: "Take the force of right-wingers upholding community standards who are determined to defend local control of the public airwaves; combine that with the force of lefties eager to maintain diversity of opinion in local media; add in the independent voters' mistrust of media manipulation; then let all have access to their representatives by e-mail and fax, and voilà! Congress awakens to slap down the power grab."

"Unfortunately, the any-merger-goes F.C.C. chairman, Michael Powell, has derided objections as "garbage," and the White House strategist Karl Rove dismisses the depth of voter resentment

"But public opinion is on the march. Some in-house pollster should awaken President Bush to a bipartisan sleeper issue that could blindside him next year. "

(Update will keep you posted on this fascinating American struggle.)

Behind the News Goes Full Frontal

Mick O'Regan summed it up on The Media Report: "The decision by ABC management to axe 'Behind the News' met an angry response from students, teachers and parents. When educators argue media literacy is of fundamental importance, winding up BTN is viewed as a disaster." Teachers responded -

- "The ABC has produced BTN for over 30 years...the only news program this country has for children. Many European countries have a half an hour news time for children presented in a way appropriate for children to understand...put in a way that doesn't scare the living daylights out of them. BTN is the only program that does that in Australia, and now we're wiping it out."
- "I couldn't believe that a program that's been going for over 30 years, targeted specifically for

children, is going to be axed. We've already informed students at our school today that it's going to be terminated, and they are genuinely distressed about it."

- "To be able to at age 10 and 11 to process and understand contemporary issues, it's absolutely crucial."
- (Alan Parker, Deputy Head, St John's School, Adelaide) "I understand that budget cuts are necessary in any organisation, but surely someone has to do a rational inquiry into which programs are the most valued. Over the years, the ABC has continually axed educational programs; this is one that's just got to stay, and we as a school for a start, will be organising letters and so forth to the ABC, because we won't rest until we feel we've done our bit to try and get it restored."

Great Lakes Friends Meet a Local Member: Questions - but not many answers

Great Lakes Friends headed off to meet local member, Bob Baldwin, (MP - Paterson) after first forwarding him written questions - "Questions submitted for Answers and Consideration", each reinforced with unchallengeable background; for example:

- Why does the government believe this country's most significant provider of information and culture, the ABC, can continue to provide an effective service with insufficient funds?
- Triennial funding not restored since the Coalition Government cut it by \$66m annually in 1997.
- Federal Budget 2003 failed to provide sufficient funds to operate two digital television programs.
- Failure in the budget to commit funds to continue the ABC's regional production and programming scheme. One-off funding of \$17.8m

per year for 4 years runs out this triennium.

Other questions were just as pertinent and just as well-backed.

- The ABC is an independent national broadcaster accountable under law to parliament, not to the government
- Senator Alston has accused the ABC of a "strong anti-US military bias" re the recent Iraq war.
- News Radio is still confined to the larger population centres. Why does the rest of Australia have to remain second-class citizens?
- In negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the US, what is the government doing to protect Australia's cultural heritage and diversity?
- Why does the government have the view that the ABC should have covered the recent Iraq war in a manner acceptable to its cause?

So what sort of answers did our Great Lakes Friends get?

Continued on Page 10

When Fat is Fat ...or is it?

For want of Donald McDonald or Russell Balding re the demise of Behind The News, The Media Report's Mick O'Regan turned to a former ABC Chairman Mark Armstrong.

Mick O'Regan: In cutting Behind the News, has the ABC played for maximum public outcry? Is the Minister correctly telling the public that it's the ABC's priorities that have led to this cut?

Mark Armstrong: I don't think it's for the government and the Minister to be making detailed comments about ABC programming. I'd really like to know which are the areas of programs that nobody cares about. Can I give you an example, when I was Chair, mostly under Hawke and Keating and then the Howard government, we received a lot of hostility for expanding Triple-J. There was enormous demand for Triple-J, every bit of analysis showed that people in that teenage to 20 age group, were being seriously neglected, and yet there were howls of unhappiness when we fulfilled what we thought was our social responsibility. Every member of the community's got different priorities.

Mick O'Regan: What happens in a Board Room discussion when a proposal is mooted, to axe a particular program?

Mark Armstrong: It's a matter of looking at what's the least worse cut to make. I have to add something here. This is against the disgraceful situation where politicians are saying, and the occasional editorial, 'the ABC has too much fat and it should cut from its administration'. Now that is one point which makes my blood boil. It's obscene to think that politicians, with extravagant superannuation schemes and perks, have got the ignorance and effrontery year after year to say that the ABC has too much fat and it should be cut.

The ABC has been cutting fat for ten years, and that goes back to when I arrived, and I'm pretty sure it's been cutting fat since long before that, how much fat can you cut off any organism before it dies altogether?

How Aunty Handles Complaints

Age Staff writer, Ross Warnecke, reviewed Alston's angst and put it into the context of the tens of thousands of contacts the public makes with the ABC every year. Warnecke asked: *Is the criticism fair? Here's an extract:*

While the fury of Senator Alston, focuses on the ABC's handling of his allegations of an anti-American skew in news coverage of the Iraq war, the vast majority of submissions received by Aunty are positive or requests for information. Of the 35,000 or so complaints received in a year, most are about programming - fewer than 2000 are about bias.

So What Is All the Fuss About?

The ABC already has a comprehensive complaints handling system in place. If complainants are not satisfied with the response to their claims of bias or factual inaccuracy, they - and Senator Alston - can ask that the matter be re-evaluated by the ABC's Independent Complaints Review Panel, a committee of five outsiders with experience in the law and the media.

In 2001-2002, only 14 of 1971 such complaints made it as far as the Review Panel and only two were accepted for review.

Alternatively, those dissatisfied with the ABC's response to their complaints can take the matters out of the broadcaster's hands and refer them to the Australian Broadcasting Authority

But the ABC's own review system works so well that in 2001-2002, only 17 complaints about bias, lack of balance or factual inaccuracy were referred to the ABA. Of those, only six were upheld. And in each case the ABA was satisfied with the action that the ABC had already taken.

So, What Is All the Fuss About?

The ABC already has its high-powered independent watchdog.

The Independent Complaints Review Panel is headed by

- Ted Thomas, a former chief executive of the Seven Network in Sydney and includes:

- a member of the Australian Press Council, Margaret Jones;

- a former Channel Seven news executive, Bob Johnson;

- the dean of the law faculty at the University of NSW, Professor Michael Chesterman;

- Stepan Kerkyasharian, Chairman, Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales and former head of SBS Radio.



Flashback:

ABC Publicity 'snap' circa 1960: brand new film editors - Hans Pomeranz (l) and David Leonard. Hans set the pace for editing at Weekend Magazine and ABC documentaries, went freelance and eventually set up Spectrum Films, one of Australia's major feature film post facilities; David Leonard flourished from Newsreel/Newsroom days to become an

Continued from Page 9

Questions - but not many answers

This is an extract from the letter Great Lakes branch sent Mr. Baldwin after the meeting:

Dear Mr Baldwin,

Thank you for meeting us (etc) and giving us your answers to the prepared questions...all (your) answers followed the party line with no obvious individual view...the hackneyed quote, "Would you like us to take additional ABC funding from health or education?" (was) an obvious smokescreen (to) dodge the issue of funding.

Many items in the 2003 Budget (are) of dubious

merit when compared with the value provided to the people of Australia by the ABC. Might we now direct your attention to the statement issued (4 August) by the ABC MD, Russell Balding, announcing cuts to programs and non-program functions amounting to \$26.1 million per year.

Axing programs such as *Behind the News* (provide) examples of quality television this country cannot afford to be without. But as Balding said: "If funding difficulty is the price of editorial independence, the ABC must be prepared to pay it."

Yours etc
Grahame Burns,
Great Lakes FABC

Where Did All the Money Go? The ABC's Funding Myth

The BTN drama led to yet another scrutiny of the cost of running the national broadcaster and comparisons with others. On *The Media Report*, Mick O'Regan was joined by Professor Glenn Withers Executive Director of the Graduate Public Policy Program at the ANU.

Mick O'Regan:
How does the ABC compare with the commercial free-to-air broadcasters?



Glenn Withers:
Well it's actually very efficient. People think that's a strange finding, but indeed, the ABC for instance spends about \$140,000 per employee, whereas commercial television spends about \$313,000 per employee. The cost of the ABC network is less than half that of the average commercial network. What people don't realise is how much those commercial networks have to spend on gathering, running, maintaining, operating their marketing and advertising and commercial operations on top of regular programming.



Mick O'Regan: Now when you undertook to look at the funding of a public broadcaster like the ABC, what were you specifically setting out to establish?

Glenn Withers: I was wanting to look at how the ABC compared with BBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, European equivalents and so on, so we could benchmark the ABC, particularly when this was back in the times of Jonathan Shier...What I found was that the ABC was actually very cheap compared to its international counterparts. It receives much less funding per viewer and listener than organisations like the BBC and the CBC.

Mick O'Regan: I want to ask you about the criticisms that the ABC, is a form of middle-class welfare, that only a small audience watches the ABC and everyone must pay for it.

Glenn Withers: The higher the level of education, the more the average Australian, as it were, listens to the ABC. But study after study, seems to show that most Australians get something out of the ABC, some time each week or month. There's something there for everybody, for people who don't fit that middle-class image, particularly in rural and regional Australia.

Mick O'Regan: So how would you compare the Federal government's thinking about funding the ABC, and what your study suggests the public feels about ABC funding?

Glenn Withers: Well the fact is that the government, or at least those who are taking the running on this, Mr Alston, the Prime Minister I guess, primarily, they're way out of touch with the public view... I think people feel that the squeeze on the ABC's gone far enough, and it's a big majority in favour of this, and if they have to pick out one or two or three areas, along with health and education, that they'd like to see some improvement in spending, they actually nominate the ABC. I think Mr Alston and Mr Howard are a bit out of touch here, or they're more interested in the minor political games they want to play with the ABC, in the belief that overall people are not going to change their votes on that. But it's reaching a point where it may actually start influencing some votes.

Mick O'Regan: Do you think that what we're seeing here is a decision by the ABC to really focus the community's attention on this funding debate by actually deciding to cut those programs which the public are most likely to complain about?

Glenn Withers: There's a possibility. I have no inside knowledge. In public policy there's a thing called the Washington Monument Gambit: whenever the U.S. Department of the Interior was threatened with cuts, it always closed the Washington Monument, which outraged Americans because it was so unpatriotic. The result was the cuts were always removed. I think the ABC could be playing that game.

Why it is so important to be a member of the Friends of the ABC.

- To help defend the independence of the ABC,
- To keep good programs on the air with funds to support them.
- Attend social activities with like minded people
- Receive special invitations to functions, interesting tours, etc
- To find out ways to make your opinion felt.
- Receive a 10% discount at ABC Shops.
- Receive regular issues of *Update* which give "Friends" the real story. Update collates and presents important items from various sources. These include articles from Australia and the rest of the world.

What if there were not strong 'Friends' in Australia? What would life be like in Australia without the ABC, even as it is today? And a starting point to that is the determination and energy of its "Friends" to fight to preserve and protect it from government and commercial interference or any decisions to its detriment.

How to get a friend to become a "Friend".

It's simple!

Just have them *fill out the Membership form on the back of this Update* and send it in to the address on the form. And don't forget to tick the 'give my details' box so your name can be sent onto your local Friends' Branch.

Or phone 9990 0600 or visit our web site at:
www.fabcns.org.au/
and fill out the on-line membership form.

Letters to Editors

Senator Alston Does a U-turn

On Tuesday (5/8), *The Age* reported the minister's praise for the "prudence" of recent program cuts by the ABC. They will "have minimal impact on the ABC's core programming", he said. Yesterday (6/8), *The Age* reported he attacked the ABC for producing *Media Watch* and what he describes as "frothy" lifestyle programs, at the expense of programs like *Behind the News*. Senator Alston clearly had not anticipated the public reaction to the program cuts forced onto the ABC. However, he was silent on the real cause: the decision of the Howard Government to run down funding for the public broadcaster.

Ian Hundley,
North Balwyn

Death Squeeze

The ABC board is unsuccessfully juggling \$26.1 million of cuts to ABC programs and services. But it is the Federal Government, and not the ABC, to which public protest should be directed.

The Government has failed to adequately fund the ABC. By seriously undermining its capacity to be a comprehensive broadcaster catering for a diversity of interests in the community, the Government is pushing the ABC along a path that will ultimately lead to its demise.



The existing strong and broad community support for the national broadcaster will drop away as the quality, depth and the breadth of ABC programming is lost.

Even politicians who misrepresent the scrutiny of government as bias should consider carefully what is happening. Australia is in danger of losing a great cultural institution that enriches our lives with quality information and entertainment, and enhances our democracy. Imagine life without it.

Terry Laidler,
President,
Friends of the ABC
(Victoria)

No Tears For Aunty

I do not feel sorry in the least about the ABC's budget being trimmed. As an American-Australian, I am acutely aware of the ABC's anti-American bias. It makes me sick every time that I listen to both ABC radio and television to hear anti-American and anti-Israeli tirades. As a taxpayer I object to the use of my tax contribution going to such despicable propaganda.

Thinking people will not be fooled in the least about the ABC cutting children's programming and keeping one-sided propaganda programs.

Warren A. Sapir,
East Bentleigh

ABC Not A Propaganda Tool

The ABC is not a propaganda tool. Senator Alston's charges against the ABC of anti-American and biased or one-sided reporting are astonishing, and it's not at all surprising that they have been dismissed (*The Age*, 22/7). The Australian media coverage of the war in Iraq was outrageously skewed, biased and one-sided - in favour of the US.

The ABC dared to explore issues and offer alternative points of view. It dared to be more than the propaganda machine of the Howard regime. And now the ABC is being attacked for not saying what the Howard Government wanted people to hear. Senator Alston's determination to condemn the ABC only confirms this.

Clearly the expectation from the Howard Government is that the ABC, as a government-owned broadcasting service, will act as its propaganda tool. Is this the famous free speech that US-led conflicts such as the war in Iraq are supposed to protect and uphold?

Julietta Cerin,
Thebarton, SA

US Home Truths

If Senator Alston read a little more widely and took notice of what is really happening, he would find that the most anti-American sentiments he can find anywhere come from within the US itself.



The little digressions of the ABC that he is so upset about pale into insignificance when compared to the vitriol dished out by US commentators of all colours. The hardline right-wingers bag George Bush and his mates for not getting the economy right, while the pinko lefties bag him for going to war.

No, Senator, the ABC is by no means anywhere near as anti-American as many Americans are. I think your biases are showing far more than AM's.

Shane Elson,
Morwell

Dear Fellow Friends

The time has never been so appropriate as now to encourage you to spread the word about the Friends of the ABC.

Funding cuts, the false assertions of biased reporting, programmes needing to be axed because of the unwillingness of the Howard government to adequately fund the ABC, are a disgrace.

Send letters and emails to the politicians, speak to your friends, recruit new members.

The main task for the Friends is to save the ABC from any further cutbacks and to restore the funding we have lost due to the actions of the Howard government.

The Australian population need to realise that the targets for their anger should be Senator Alston and Prime Minister Howard not the ABC Board. Howard and Alston should be shown that a democracy is based on fearless independent reporting.

21st August 2003
Era Wellsmore
Carey Bay

Nailing the 'ABC' of Deception

Having failed to intimidate the ABC into describing good, inquiring journalism as something other than good, inquiring journalism, John Howard and Richard Alston want to enlist an "independent" review panel to haul the broadcaster into line. A panel, that is, whose independence would consist in its having been appointed by them, rather than by the ABC.

Ray Cassin, Senior Editorial Writer with *The Age*. writes:

Here is the Prime Minister, indicating his disappointment in the response of the ABC to Senator Alston's complaints about its reporting of the Iraq war: "I guess it's inevitable: if you have an internal review assessment, there's always a tendency to declare yourself 'not guilty'."

I leave readers to discover for themselves the falsity of this insinuation about the integrity of the ABC's complaints review executive. Its 130-page response to the Communications Minister's dossier of complaints, available on the ABC's website, is not marked by a tendency towards anything except a fair assessment of each of the 68 complaints.

The Prime Minister's remark is revealing, however, in a way that he presumably did not intend.

Allowing the examination of complaints to become a process of automatic self-exoneration is not in fact typical of Australia's major news media organisations. They are keenly aware that doing so would quickly erode the credibility with audiences and readers on which they depend. (Again, sceptics on this point should read the ABC's response to the Alston dossier).



I think John Howard has implicitly admitted a great deal about how allegations of distortion and deception are typically dealt with by governments. If he had added, "and subordinates should always be prepared to take a fall rather than implicate the boss", he would have given a pretty good description of how his minders handled the babies-and-truth overboard scandal, and how they are now handling the collapsing casus belli for the invasion of Iraq, Saddam Hussein's supposed

weapons of mass destruction.

Howard has got used to getting away with it. Babies in the water didn't dent his image, and, although a Newspoll indicated that two out of three Australians believed the Government misled the nation this belief does not appear to be changing anyone's vote. We have low expectations of public officeholders in this country, and they do not disappoint us.

Expectations are different in the US and Britain, the countries where the assault on truth began and from which it was directed. And, in case anyone has forgotten how emphatic the claims about Iraq's elusive weapons were, here's a sample.

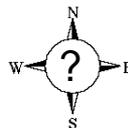
"There is no doubt Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction." - US Vice-President Dick Cheney, August 2002. Note: he didn't talk about weapons programs. He said "weapons".



In January this year, as the coalition was poised to strike, here is the then White House spokesman, Ari



Fleischer: "We know for a fact that there are weapons there..." US Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, told an interviewer on the (US) ABC network in late March: "We know where they are. They're in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad, and east, west, south and north somewhat."



Somewhat, Mr Secretary?... it is now evident that the strong factual claims coalition governments used to portray Iraq as a threat were not justified by the intelligence they had at the time.

So why did they want to hear it? What was the real reason for invading Iraq? It is also beyond belief that this was chiefly a desire to liberate the people of Iraq. We are not at war with lots of other monsters.

Motive (however)

brings me back to the question of bias. I and others have been accused of misrepresenting Rumsfeld's deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, by repeating, in elided form, a quote attributed to him in *Vanity Fair* magazine, that WMDs were chosen as the casus belli for "bureaucratic" reasons:..."(they were) the one issue everyone could agree on." In the full quote, Rumsfeld enumerated the other reasons invoked: the regime's oppression of its people, support for terrorism, and the possible link between the latter and WMDs.

(But) those who say that homing in on Wolfowitz's term "bureaucratic" was unfair have a problem, because the "one reason that everyone (that is, senior members of the US administration) could agree on turns out to have been largely spin-driven speculation. They must have known that as they were agreeing to it."

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the US administration decided to go to war first, and then went looking for justifications. Wolfowitz's use of the term "bureaucratic" is noteworthy: it is the sly rhetoric of those who cloak strategic gambits with moral imperatives.

AC Nielsen research found that 70 per cent of Australians believe ABC coverage of news and current affairs is more balanced than that provided by the commercial networks.



TIPS FOR WRITING GOOD LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

1) Be quick. Respond while the issue is still fresh. Ideally, try to send your letter within 24 hours of publication of the article.

2) Be clear. If you cannot summarise your message in one or two sentences, it's not clear enough in your mind. Pinpoint in stark, unambiguous terms what you want to communicate.

3) Be specific. Why was the article unfair? Did it show lack of context, unbalanced reporting, or omission of key facts?

4) Be concise. Most publications will not print a letter to the editor longer than 250 words. And editors tend to publish letters they don't have to spend time shortening.

5) Be focused. While an article may contain numerous instances of bias, focus your critique on just one or two. It's better to fully explain one point than to inadequately cover five.

6) Know the goal. You want your letter to inspire the media to change. When possible, ask the media to issue a correction based on your points.

7) Request a reply. Let the media know there is a consequence to biased reporting - even if the consequence is having to answer hundreds of e-mails! You could end your letter with: "I would appreciate a response explain-

ing why you have allowed such a biased article to appear in your fine publication."

8) Stick to the facts. Preserve your integrity by keeping comments clean and respectful. Hostile or overly-emotional language is counter-productive. This is not the place to vent your frustration.

9) Write as a concerned individual. Mentioning that you are part of an organized campaign may lessen the impact of your letter.

10) Use the CC button. Maximize your efforts by sending a copy of your letter not just to the editor, but also to the reporter, foreign editor, publisher, advertisers and Members of Parliament.

11) Include contact information. Before publishing a letter, most papers will call to verify that you wrote it. Remember to include your full name, title (if applicable), address and phone number where you can be reached.

12) Follow up. When possible, follow up with a phone call to the comments Editor to ask if your letter will be published. If the Editor doesn't remember your letter, offer to immediately email it or fax it urgently, claiming some priority for it since the Editor seems to have missed it.

From: HonestReporting.com

Just a sec!

Thinking foreign trade deals? Talking level playing fields? Racing off to sign a US Free Trade Agreement? Clearing the decks for an exciting new wave of US entertainment and infotainment?

A US federal rule limits indirect foreign ownership of U.S. broadcasters to 25%.

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Become a Friend of the ABC - Join Now
Have you asked your friends, neighbours, relatives and business contacts to join the Friends of the ABC?



Cartoon courtesy Phil Somerville

Missing Hugh

Hugh MacKay wrote a guest column for the Update that marked the ABC's 70th anniversary.



The piece also appeared in Hugh's regular column in the Sydney Morning Herald - a column

that's been a salutary reminder or a comfort for regular readers of the Saturday edition.

Ironically, the question posed was 'What sort of a place would Australia be without the ABC.' The question now being asked is what sort of a Saturday paper will it be without Hugh MacKay - unceremoniously dropped by the Fairfax group, without warning. Why?

Update wants to wish Hugh MacKay well. For nearly a decade in the Herald he was a voice of reason, of social concerns, of thoughtfulness and perceptive insights into Australia's psyche. We're hard-pressed to understand the Fairfax decision, except that the Fairfax papers, particularly the Herald, are bolstering their conservative world view. The paper overflows with columnists like Miranda Devine, Paddy McGuinness and Paul Sheehan, to mention only three. We'll miss Hugh MacKay.

It's worth looking back to his column on the ABC's 70th birthday in which, among others points, he said this:

"In the present climate of

uncertainty there's almost an eagerness to disconnect from serious discussion about serious issues. Without the ABC it's easy to imagine an acceleration of that process. We tend to opt for ever simpler, more easily digested, bite-sized chunks in media programming, audiences demand 'relevance' - but that usually amounts to little more than a plea to be left safely tucked up in their comfort zone: we like to hear things that confirm our prejudices and reassure us that the status quo is just fine.

A challenge to think differently

The ABC is prepared to resist the siren call of populism in favour of doing things that are unashamedly elitist, appeal to special-interest groups, tell us things we didn't already know or challenge us to think differently about the things we thought we did know.



Radio National is a paradigm: by presenting thoughtful innovative programs that challenge our complacency. It adds unique dimensions to the Australian media landscape creating programs of uncompromising quality and breadth. Yes, they appeal to minority audiences (but so does Alan Jones: 80 percent of Sydney's radio audiences don't listen to him). Yet the accumulation of all those minorities means that Radio National in any given week, reaches about one million Australians. "

Broadcasting Authority Clears the ABC

In the six months to June 2003 the Australian Broadcasting Authority investigated complaints against radio and television broadcasters - in all three sectors, commercial, public service and community. It found nine occasions in which commercial stations were in breach of a relevant code.

No complaints against the ABC were upheld.

There were nine findings against community radio stations, and one against a commercial station.

There were no findings against ABC radio.

In the period October-December 2002 three complaints were made against the ABC:

1. *New Dimensions*, ABC TV. false information - that genetically modified foods were labelled.
2. *Lateline*, ABC TV. inaccurate fact - the number of people marching across the Harbour Bridge in 2000.
3. *News Bulletin* (Radio National). Palestinian report omitted key facts and was inaccurate, racist and anti-Semitic.

The ABA dismissed all three complaints. No breaches of the code of practice were found.

update

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*The Treasurer, Friends of the ABC (NSW) Inc.
 PO Box 1391, North Sydney NSW 2059.*

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Phone (Home) (Work) Mob

Federal Electorate Give my details to my local FABC Branch

Age Group 30 or under 31-50 51+ Membership No. _____

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

I/We apply for membership of FABC (NSW) Inc. and accept it's objectives and rules. *Signature* _____

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

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

Cardholders signature

Amount \$