

Warning...Push Pin and Poetry – walking on two legs

In a paper delivered at the national conference, Darce Cassidy identified the substance of potential attacks on the ABC and the numerous avenues they could be launched along – required reading for Friends of the ABC. The first, slightly abridged, sections are below.

Over the next year or two we are likely to see attacks on the ABC come from a number of directions. As the ABC's friends, we need to anticipate the range of possibilities, and prepare defences.

The first part of the ABC Charter states: *inter alia*,

The functions of the Corporation are:

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

Continued on Page 7



NATIONAL CONFERENCE

By FABC President, Gary Cook

Over the weekend of 16 and 17 April, NSW hosted a National Conference, with all states and the ACT represented, at the Balmain Leagues Club.

Guest speakers were Errol Simper, media columnist for The Australian and Trish Bolton, lecturer in media studies at Swinburne University. Both addresses are summarised in this edition.

Ten separate policy papers were presented, including subjects such as – Board Appointments Procedure, Digital Broadcasting, Review of our strategy for the last election, Funding, Complaints Review Mechanism and Strategies for the Future.

Naturally, with such a range of topics, debate was vigorous and thorough and resulted in the majority of the resolutions being passed unanimously.

National Conferences are important in shaping policy of the Friends for important issues facing the ABC and ourselves, particularly when confronted with the government controlling both houses from next month. While we have no formal national structure and, from time to time, different states will have different opinions, a cohesive stance on as many issues as possible strengthens our position.

Elsewhere in this edition you will find summaries of several papers presented at the Conference.

Inside:	
Around the Branches	2-4
The President's Report.....	3
A Fight for the ABC's Independence	5
Is the ABC In A Ratings Chase?.....	9
Funding: Catching Up With 8 Cents a Day	10
Things 'Friends' Can Do.....	10
ABC Bolsters Complaints Panel.....	12
Fear and Loathing at the ABC.....	14



FRIENDS AT LA PEROUSE & BARE ISLAND



Enjoying a picnic on the grass in front of the octagonal stone fort.



On a tour of Bare Island listening to the guide tell about Bare Island Fort which was built in 1885 both to protect Sydney's back door and to repel a possible attack on the colony's water supply in the Botany Wetlands. The fort has been used as one of the sets for Mission Impossible 2 and most recently for a Japanese game

BATHURST BRANCH GREETES A NEW ABC MANAGER

As *Update* was locked up being printed, Bathurst's FABC Branch held its Annual General Meeting, and prepared a public forum to welcome a new ABC Central West manager, Graham Robinson.

Graham was a guest at the AGM where he outlined the role of the regional national broadcaster and the challenges ahead.

A FABC Forum was then arranged by the branch for local Bathurst ABC listeners and supporters to meet the new regional manager and to discuss, offer and exchange ideas for what is a vital regional service.

Tracey Carpenter



Blue Mountain Friends at a Planning Workshop held at the Katoomba Youth Hostel.

BLUE MOUNTAINS BRANCH

The Blue Mountains Friends will have a stall at the Winter Magic Festival on Sat, 18 June. There will be a raffle of a basket of goodies donated by members and being organised by Joan Macadam. Anyone who would like to make a donation contact Denise at 4757 1009.

CENTRAL COAST BRANCH

Coffee proves to be a rich blend.

The Central Coast branch has continued with its well-attended coffee afternoons as "pertinent, enjoyable and fruitful."

The discussion - local president John Hale says however - always returns to ABC programs, presenters and politics. Some constructive ideas have been put forward for later discussion and consideration is being given to extending the social afternoon to walks of historical interest and excursions to other parts of the coast.

A number of issues at the May committee meeting gave rise to correspondence to the appropriate authorities on matters such as continued funding for Radio National, FABC advertising in ABC shops, the excessive exposure by "Lateline" given to Tony Abbott on a charity bike-ride and concern expressed about the lack of coverage for the Central Coast by 92.5 ABC FM.

A forum will be held at Central Coast leagues Club on Sunday, 24 July, commencing at 2.00 pm, featuring Peter Yeldham, highly regarded novelist and script writer of many ABC drama programs.

Central Coast Branch is providing an opportunity for members and the public to voice their concerns on a range of issues affecting the ABC, particularly the impact on Australian drama due to lack of adequate funding, the future of the ABC and the likely relaxation of cross-media ownership laws.

John Hale

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: Holding a Friends event? Don't forget your camera! We love your photos and we want to include as many of them as possible in future issues of *Update*.

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT



The lead story in this edition of Update is a report of the 2005 National Conference. It was a pleasure for us

to host and chair such an important forum and to have the opportunity of again meeting our interstate colleagues.

Cross-media Ownership

According to both crikey.com.au and The Australian, Communications Minister, Helen Coonan, expects to have changes to the rules governing cross-media ownership through by the last quarter of 2005.

The reforms are being described as a series of "trade-offs and compromises", with media groups, predominantly Murdoch and Packer, apparently being given the green light to divide the spoils but, at the same time, expected to lower their expectations.

Reports indicate that separate frameworks have been created for cross-media, foreign ownership and improvements to digital television legislation.

Instead of a rule limiting ownership to two of the three main media, which was previously flagged, the legislation is expected to place greater reliance in the power of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to arbitrate on potential media mergers.

Apart from strongly opposing further lessening of competition in the Australian media, if, as reported, the minister does not intend allowing public input prior to the legislation being introduced, the public will again be the loser and the prime minister's promise that the government will not be arrogant after 1 July, will rightly be regarded as hollow.

We have requested a meeting with the minister to discuss this important issue and a range of other matters important to the ABC. We call on our members to support us by writing to their local member, the minister or the Prime Minister.

Board Appointments

It was revealed last month that Australia is rated 30th in this year's "Global Press Freedom Rankings", along with Lithuania, Malta, Micronesia and the UK. On 11 May, ABC Chairman, Donald McDonald chaired an Alfred Deakin Debate where visiting US media academic, Jay Rosen presented the figures. McDonald said that he was wounded by Australia's position and couldn't understand how it could rank so poorly. Later, though, Rosen told a dinner that one of the reasons for the low ranking was the extent of political appointments on the Board of the ABC.

Cash for Comment – Alive and Well!

When the bodies of nine Australian servicemen and women killed in Indonesia were returned to Sydney airport in May, the ABC was criticised by some sections of the media for not covering the ceremony live on television. It was revealed by Media Watch that ABC switchboard operators were left to deal with complainants because the newsroom and management refused to take calls. Interestingly, of the 101 complaints logged, 98 were from Sydney, 3 from Brisbane and none from other parts of Australia. What Media Watch then revealed was that "shock jocks" Steve Price (2UE) and Chris Smith (2GB) had both urged their listeners to contact the ABC and complain at the lack of coverage, while at the same time lauding Channels 7 and 9 for their direct coverage of the ceremony. Neither Price nor Smith revealed during their tirade against the ABC that they are retained by 7 and 9 respectively for, in the case of Price, between \$10,000 and \$100,000 per annum, and Smith for over \$100,000 per annum.

Bias Revisited

Queensland Liberal Senator Santo Santoro was forced to apologise to JJJ presenter, Steve Cannane during the Senate Estimates Hearing on 23 May. Santoro, who makes former Communications Minister, Richard Alston appear almost as a moderate, had falsely accused Cannane of anti-semitic remarks. Santoro regularly

accuses the ABC of bias and of being unprofessional and during Senate Estimates his questioning of Russell Balding and other ABC executives occupied no less than 9 pages of Hansard. Santoro's staff must be almost fully occupied trawling through transcripts of ABC news and current affairs programs – all at our expense as taxpayers.

The Murdoch press is well known for its antagonism towards the ABC. Not only does it have a higher than normal proportion of columnists who are anti-ABC, but this also extends to its editorials.

The editor of The Australian has, for some weeks, been engaged in a stoush with Media Watch, having taken exception to his newspaper and columnists being accused of inaccuracy, misrepresentation and bias. Attacks by The Australian on the ABC in general, but ABC TV in particular, are a thinly disguised promotion for Murdoch's Foxtel.

Another Lesson from Britain

It's worth recalling that it was the Murdoch press that fairly brutally facilitated the Blair government's confrontation with the BBC over the war in Iraq, the "sexing up" of documents and the accuracy of intelligence about weapons of mass destruction.

The BBC certainly got no help or support from the government when, just over a month ago, it undertook a restructure to overcome a funding shortfall. What happened?

3780 staff were retrenched, that is 19% of the workforce of the BBC in Britain and almost 14% of its staff worldwide.

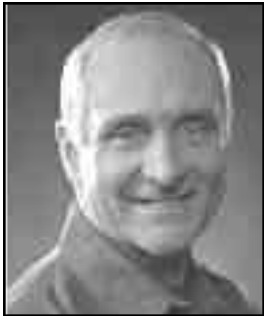
The BBC described it as the "toughest period" in memory. The broadcasters' union described it as "the worst day in the BBC's history".

420 posts in News closed, 66 in sport, 150 in drama, entertainment and children's, 424 in factual and learning, 58 in new media were among those axed.

Gary Cook, President

ARMIDALE BRANCH

HELPING TO CELEBRATE THE SCIENCE SHOW'S BIRTHDAY



Marking the ABC's *Science Show's* celebrating its 30th birthday. In honour of the occasion the Armidale branch invited Robyn

Williams to visit the city mid-May.

The branch described Robyn's topic, *On Being Thirty*, as both "informative and entertaining."

He spoke of the excellent training received at the ABC in the days when he was a mere rookie, at a time when the ABC had both the desire and the funding to encourage young staff. His anecdotes about what he dubbed "hoaxes, frauds and politicians" gave an amusing and human face to the ABC's Science Unit. He regretted that the ABC was

very different today, largely because of the funding cut-backs made by recent Federal governments. He described this as "a challenge that all Friends of the ABC need to tackle."

Beforehand, local president, Priscilla Connor, had welcomed Robyn and, for the 140 people present, reviewed his varied achievements and interests. These included guest appearances in *The Goodies*, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Dr Who*, more serious projects, such as narrating *The Nature of Australia* for ABC-TV, appearing in *World Safari* with David Attenborough, and presenting his long-term radio programs - *Ockham's Razor*, *The Science Show* and *In Conversation*.

Robyn has also chaired the Commission for the Future and the National Commission for UNESCO; and in 1987 was declared a National Living Treasure.

As Robyn had also managed to interview seven of the University of New England's research scientists during his short visit, the vote of

thanks was given, on behalf of the appreciative audience, by Dr Ian Godwin of the UNE.

Priscilla Connor

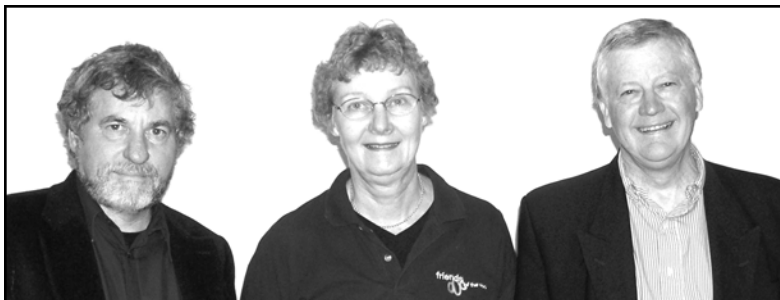
ORANGE BRANCH TOPS THE STATE

Bev Holland and the Orange Branch are enjoying victory in a state-wide competition to celebrate 60 years of "The Country Hour" for rural ABC.

Organised at short notice, Orange proposed that Cumnock, in the Central West, be recognised because the first program was transmitted from there. With backing from Cabonne Shire Council, the local federal and state members and the small but progressive community of Cumnock, Orange FABC was declared the winner.

It will be a big day in Cumnock on 9 November, when the ABC caravan hits town.

ILLAWARRA BRANCH



Workshop Guest speakers Darce Cassidy & Gary Cook together with Secretary of the Illawarra Branch Jan Kent."

On Sunday 29 May 2005 the Friends Illawarra Branch held an entertaining & interesting afternoon at the Illawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Wollongong. Headed 'Fighting for the ABC, Post July 2005 - What can you do?', the meeting explored the potential for changes to the ABC as a result of the Howard Government control of the senate next month.

Keynote Speaker was Darce Cassidy who came from Melbourne for the event. Darce worked for the ABC for thirty three years in Current Affairs (*Four Corners*, *This Day Tonight*, AM, and PM) and for Radio National in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide. He was the ABC's State Manager in South Australia between 1989

and 1997. Darce has been involved with Friends of the ABC since taking early retirement from the ABC in 1997 and has served as President of Friends of the ABC South Australia, and more recently as the FABC National Spokesperson

Another guest speaker was Gary Cook, President of the NSW Branch Executive of the Friends.

The afternoon kicked off with entertainment by local satirical group *Funkier than Alice* (Four women and a cello) and then progressed into the more serious issues of ABC funding and control. Dr Judith Stubbs, who is the lead singer in *Funkier than Alice*, facilitated the event. The intent of the afternoon was to encourage Friends to start thinking strategically rather than waiting for the changes that are bound to come.

Around fifty people attended ensuring a lively debate around the issues and the outcome was a commitment to fight it all ways possible any subversion of the ABC's ability to fulfil its charter.

Chris. Cartledge

A FIGHT FOR THE ABC'S IDENTITY AND INDEPENDENCE

Melbourne's Swinburne University's lecturer in media studies and post-



graduate writing, Trish Bolton, was the keynote speaker at the FABC's National

Conference. The following is an abridged version of her address.

The ABC has been a big part of my life for about as far back as I can remember. Like many families in 1960s Australia, mine would gather together after church for that tradition now long put to bed - the Sunday roast ... (interrupted) by the midday news on ABC national radio. "Quiet, the news is on."

I learnt that the ABC was an important feature of lives lived in the city and in the country, that people trusted and depended on the ABC, and above all, valued it. So, along with you, I fight for it today.

But it is not so much the public broadcaster's qualities I intend to focus on but the darker forces undermining what my grandfather, father and now my children treasure about their ABC. One of those forces has

been its demonising by a vindictive and ideologically-driven government. The appointment of Janet Albrechsten signalled that our Prime Minister can and will do as he pleases (after) July.

Albrechsten, like many of her ilk, accuses the ABC of left-wing bias. And why wouldn't she? Much of mainstream media is so dominated by right-wing rhetoric that anything approaching balance can be stereotyped as left-leaning, if not downright 'pinko'.

Cross Media "extraordinary"

That John Howard is feeling comfortable and relaxed is somewhat of an understatement if a story in last Saturday's (9th April) Age is accurate. It seems Mr Howard has as-good-as-told Australia's media-moguls not to approach him until they decide how the media spoils should be shared once legislation relaxing cross-media rules takes place. An "extraordinary" situation, wrote the journalists.

But while the Howard government has been cosying-up to its media-mates, the ABC has been subject to the sort of scrutiny you might expect of a totalitarian regime. I can think of no other media outlet able to emerge from such ongoing and intense examination with its head held high.

The public broadcaster has, in the past, had to negotiate interference and intimidation by governments of all hue, but pressure on Aunty has escalated to unprecedented heights under a conservative government intent on calling all possible opposition to heel.

Australia's Press Freedom Sags

One of those forces has been its demonising by a vindictive and ideologically-driven government. The appointment of Janet Albrechsten signalled that our Prime Minister can and will do as he pleases (after) July.

Dissenting voices, though, are marginalized, as relics belonging to the past and out of touch with reality. A reality that talks of bottom-lines, ratings and the commercialisation of the ABC.

Public service broadcasting is not about delivering audiences to advertisers.

The ABC is the only commercial free zone in Australia's mainstream media, but it's being compromised by fairly aggressive promotion across its entire network, and by commercial deals with private interests, to market ABC products.

Continued on Page 6

At the National Conference...



At the National Convention

- Roger Raven, WA,
- Simon Cocker, TAS.,
- Anne O'Byrne, TAS.
- Dave Barrington NSW,
- Janet Crennan, NSW



Gary Cook, Pres., Don Sinnamon, QLD., Margaret O'Connor, ACT, Jill Greenwell, ACT



Jill Greenwell, ACT .Margaret O'Connor, ACT

A FIGHT FOR THE ABC'S IDENTITY AND INDEPENDENCE

Continued from Page 5

It's a slippery slope that leads where, I wonder? Perhaps, the revenue flowing from spin-offs associated with cooking, gardening and lifestyle programming might further tempt cash-strapped managers to push light-weight populist fare at the expense of investigative journalism, current affairs and costly documentaries that are now largely outsourced.

The defence that 'in-house' marketing is not really commercial reminds me of a road safety advertisement that says "only a little bit dead."

The ABC has never been immune to ratings but now ratings are increasingly talked of as justifying the national broadcaster's existence.

Ratings are not mentioned in the ABC's Charter and for good reason. Public interest, long protected by the Charter, is at risk of being subsumed to private interests, once bums-on-seats become a priority. Yet, Sue Howard, the head of ABC Radio, was reported as saying that her unashamed goal was to increase audiences.

Hours of Patter

ABC local radio, and I can only comment on Melbourne's 774, has been dumbed down enough to earn itself some ratings cred.

There are, however, those intellectual punctuation marks, *AM*, *The World Today* and *PM*, to provide some relief from the hours of patter that are now the hallmark of 774's listening day.

However, much of the deterioration in ABC radio content is due in no small part to budgetary constraints. Programming, whether on radio or television, cannot be expected to deliver hours of serious news and current affairs or to delight its audience with innovative, energetic and creative composition without well-resourced and dedicated units. And that takes money – around \$200 million would do for starters.

What the ABC must avoid, at all costs, is the increasingly put, and in

many ways seductive argument, that a commercialised ABC is the answer to its financial ills.

Radio National & On Line Success

My affection for *Radio National* has, if anything, grown stronger over the years.

Not only do I have a great friend in *Radio National* I also have a fine colleague. Many of its programs are available on *ABC Online* as transcripts and often included in the readings I set for students. But I should not just mention *ABC Online* in passing. While not covered in the ABC Charter, *ABC Online* has the ethos of public broadcaster journalism, that is, non-commercial, culturally diverse and inclusive, offering free and universal access. It has been a hugely successful endeavour... a rich resource for students, educators and the Australian people.

(However) attention has turned to *Radio National*, which is apparently over-budget.

Why would any self-respecting government allow a radio station to expose its short-comings, ask tough political and social questions and empower its citizenry.

Radio National has been filling the gap left not only by local radio but by ABC television where international news is sometimes less a priority than what's happening in the suburbs. I can turn to commercial news or *A Current Affair* for that.

Survival

It's also disappointing to see ABC television programming dumbing it down. There's a surplus of imported British comedies which, while attracting audiences, hardly promote the creativity of our own talented and very under-employed artistic community.

If the ABC is to survive, it must attract new audiences, rather than depend on its traditional but dwindling supporters; *Kath and Kim* has been hugely successful, and cringe or not, reflected Latham's 'ladder climbing, aspirant demographic'.

Equally, programs like *The Glasshouse* draw younger, intelligent audiences, who want their politics served with an acerbic and irreverent wit. Give them more of that, along with hard-hitting docs like Mike Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* or *Outfoxed*, and they will flock, as did our generation, to a broadcaster that challenges, provokes and takes risks.

Who can forget Chris Masters *The Moonlight State*, exposing the corruption of Bjelke-Petersen's Queensland. A more recent example of courageous journalism is *Media Watch* going after the talkback untouchables, Alan Jones and John Laws, to highlight how two of the most important players in Australian politics took cash for comment. Commercial media would never have dared.

The ABC treads where commercial media fear to go - it can, because the Charter, not ratings, has been its driving force.

Weary of Change

These are uncertain times. Australia is undergoing significant political and social change with many of the shifts taking place associated with a decline in the democratic process as witnessed by Australia's withdrawal from a number of United Nations protocols

Commercial programming sees only marketing opportunities in a worryingly self-centred population that is less concerned about refugees than they are about interest rates.

But the ABC imagines a more democratic community where citizenship is not based on materialism.

The ABC offers a way of being in the world that is not available on Channel 9 or in the Herald-Sun, The Courier Mail or Today Tonight. It doesn't shy away from the truth of our past or ignore the failures of our present but encourages us to talk about who we are and where we are going.

Warning... PushPin and Poetry

Continued from Page 1

(i) broadcast programs that con-



Darce Cassidy

tribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of the Australian community...and to encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia.

In short, the ABC must provide both pushpin and poetry, both information and entertainment.

The framers of this charter could not have been clearer. This is not an "either, or" charter. It is a "both" charter.

Yet the enemies of the ABC try to drive a wedge. On occasions some of the ABC's friends fall into this wedge trap. As funding shrinks there can be temptations to abandon the aim of being comprehensive, and suggest the ABC should merely be an alternative, filling in the gaps left by other broadcasters.

No one uses the ABC – the ABC is just middle class welfare

This was a favorite from Richard Alston, and the Institute of Public Affairs. Alston claimed that only 10% of Australians used the ABC. The IPA view is that only the elites, the chardonnay swilling, latte sipping inner city trendies, use the ABC. They therefore should be the only ones to pay for it.

So the ABC should be required to fund itself directly, either by selling its audiences to advertisers, or by becoming a subscription service selling specialised programs and services on the Pay TV model.

Then there is what appears to be the opposite viewpoint: The ABC is too populist – it is just aping the commercials. The ABC should be confined to programs of minority interest.

The commercial stations like this approach, and there are those in government who see an advantage in this. Cut back the ABC Charter, sell ABC Online, local radio and Classic FM (both of which could make profits in a commercial environment) sell off Channel 2 (which could also make profits) but keep an impoverished RN and a cut down ABC 2 with Four Corners, Media Watch, arts material, kids and educational programs.

This could provide windfall profits for the government, and a huge reduction in funding for the ABC, while adhering to the requirements for the ABC to be educational, support the arts, and make documentaries.

In short, Alston and the IPA would be right – only a small minority would be using what was left of the ABC.

Now that the government controls the Senate it could rewrite the ABC Charter. It seemed that Gareth Evans, when Communications Minister in the Hawke Government, had similar ideas. He talked of "charter" and "non-charter" activities...sounds a bit like "core" and "non-core" promises.

Recommended Action

- ☛ That the Friends of the ABC support the ABC's existing charter.
- ☛ That we oppose any pressure on the ABC to move too far towards populism or elitism.

Advertising, Sponsorship or Corporate Underwriting.

This has been an effective weapon against public service broadcasting in other countries. The government may decide now is the time to try it with the ABC. We saw some of this in the David Hill era, with back door sponsorship of infotainment programs and attempts in the Johns era to sell ABC content to Telstra, (with serious implications for the ABC's

editorial independence.

There is a separate, but related, issue concerning ABC Enterprises, and the influence it might be having over program policy.

With control of the Senate the government could remove the prohibition on advertising, and then cut the ABC budget further. It could then leave it to the ABC Board, and staff to decide whether to compromise and accept some advertising, or suffer further decline.

Recommended action

- ☛ We continue to oppose all forms of advertising or sponsorship (anywhere) on the ABC,
- ☛ We critically examine any repurposing, licencing or commercial agreement between the ABC and any outside body (including government bodies) with the potential to influence ABC programming decisions.

Amalgamation with the SBS.

Another old favorite: it's argued there would be huge savings, through economies of large scale. Perhaps.

On the other hand economists also recognise the phenomenon known as "diseconomies of large scale", a situation where "managing a large organisation with many workers spread over a large area can be very difficult, due to problems in control, co-ordination, motivation, communication and co-operation."

Apart from economic debates and the concerns of ethnic audiences, the other concern about amalgamation with the SBS is bringing advertising in through the back door. It would be hard to keep it quarantined.

Recommended action.

We oppose amalgamation with the SBS to retain the unique multicultural focus of SBS, and also on the grounds that it would be difficult to quarantine SBS's commercial aspects.

Continued on Page 13

Finally Putting Alston's Complaints To Rest

Close scrutiny of complaints review mechanisms by the FABC ACT confounded Alston's bluster about bias, in a resolution so back-grounded it sets the record straight and conveys ACT Friends' anxiety that future scrutiny of ABC editorial decisions and programming should not become so intense as to produce an atmosphere of self-censorship or infringe ABC staff's individual rights

Reviewing the background, submitted to the delegates before the conference, ACT President Jill Greenwell pointed out nothing was known about or yet decided about the proposed "Australian Communications and Media Authority" and that after a brief meeting Gary Cook had with the minister just before the national conference, he could only report little progress had been made to date establishing the new regulator.

The analysis of the Alston complaints and their investigation spanned two years, covering: the complaints and the findings, the complaints process and flaws in the process

Some observations: the same complaints were heard in essentially the same way by 3 different bodies, with no justification except that the complainant was not satisfied the first time, and then the second time; journalists were never given a right of reply, even when new arguments were advanced against them, the reasoning of one review was not always engaged by the next reviewing body and the ABA's decision didn't appear to reflect the realities of current affairs journalism in the context of a war.

No Evidence

May 2003: Minister Alston lodges 68 complaints with the ABC's internal Complaints Review Executive, Mr. Murray Green. Two upheld

October 2003: Independent Complaints Review Panel upholds further 15 complaints, but said that the quality of AM's coverage overall was of a high standard, meeting the

ABC's editorial guidelines ... that "there is no evidence, overall, of biased and anti-American coverage as alleged by the Minister, nor does it uphold his view that the program was characterised by one-sided and tendentious commentary by program hosts and reporters" (<http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/ICRP.P.pdf>)

January 2004: Mr. Alston, as he'd become, puts 43 complaints to the ABA; four complaints upheld, but -

"The ABA considers that AM's coverage of the Iraq War was of a high standard overall, keeping listeners well informed of developments in the war, drawing on a variety of sources, and canvassing a range of views and... that the ABA was able to locate program material which supported a range of views."

The Processes

The ABC's Complaints Review Executive (CRE), a senior ABC manager: initiated, as a response to a request from then Minister, Senator Richard Alston, "to review complaints where correspondents were dissatisfied with ABC responses, or, on occasions, complaints of a more serious nature.

Independent Complaints Review Panel (ICRP): set up by the then Labor Government over the coverage of the Gulf War, is appointed by the ABC Board from people outside the ABC "to review cases relating to allegations of serious bias..." if a complainant is not satisfied with the CRE's findings.

The Australian Broadcasting Authority: The ABA currently may investigate when the complaint is that the ABC has acted contrary to the ABC's Code of Practice, in this case the sections relating to News, Current Affairs and Information programs - tested by the reactions of "a reasonable listener."

Flaws

The FABC ACT's paper found the ICPR's procedures were marred:

- It did not limit itself to reviewing

'serious' bias (5 of its 15 findings related to breaches it didn't consider serious)

- Gave no reasons for its decisions nor did it engage with the arguments of the Complaints Review Executive whose report is its primary focus of review.

- Extra arguments and analysis submitted by the complainant were not made available to the ABC nor made public

- Neither the journalists complained against nor the ABC were able to respond to the complainant's further arguments.

"Reasonable"

The ABA's procedures were deficient because:

The opinion of the "reasonable listener" as to what constituted bias was not relevant to the terms of reference the ABA was required to follow, viz, the ABC Code of Practice that "...every reasonable effort must be made to ensure....."

As the ABC pointed out, it is possible that despite every reasonable effort being made, some listeners would still find a program biased, or incorrect.

In its defence before the Authority (Jan 2005) the ABC argued - using the ABA's standard of reference - that the "ordinary, reasonable listener" would not reach the point of view which the ABA did.

"Indeed, if the number of complaints ... are any indication, only one listener from the program's hundreds of thousands of daily listeners came to that point of view: the complainant."

The resolution was proposed by Jill Greenwell (ACT), seconded by David Barrington (NSW) and carried unanimously

IS THE ABC CAUGHT AND STUMBLING IN A RATINGS CHASE?



Media critic and TV writer on the Australian, Errol Simper, guest speaker at the FABC's national conference this

year, berated the national broadcaster for failing to "challenge" its audiences...a less than flattering picture of our ABC TV emerged. He argues that "to get a small audience is not a crisis."

Simper said he believed the ABC went through cycles and that, at the moment, ABC TV was in one of its "terrible patches."

"If one is searching for serious challenges, right now, ABC TV is not the place to look. All it's aiming for is ratings."

"After Lateline, some sharp questions from Kerry O'Brien, a good Four Corners program and a good Sunday night drama, what else does ABC TV have to offer?"

Simper answered his own question: "little else of any substance, too much dross," he said.

"The ABC has lost the picture. When was the last instructive, interesting, informative, good rating Australian documentary seen on the ABC – one that the ABC could get its money back from overseas sales of the program.

"The ABC board has fallen for the notion that ratings is how you mea-

sure TV success.

Bogus Argument

"ABC TV ratings come up every so often – sometimes encouraged deliberately by commercial media – and the argument is that if the ABC doesn't rate it will or should suffer a cut in funding. However that's not the case. In my experience I've never heard a minister say that. It's a bogus argument, no-one sensible would accept it.

"The problem is the ABC is not tough minded enough – (Russell) Balding leaves programming to the programmers ... then persuasive people like Sandra Levy have their way, in favour of light entertainment over news and current affairs and powerful documentaries.

"It's also now easier for the ABC to go after ratings because the SBS is in decline... a few years ago, SBS kept the ABC honest. If the ABC slipped, SBS picked up and showed what ABC TV wouldn't.

"But, to get a small audience is not a crisis."

TV Nonsense

"On the other hand, commercial TV is essentially just a marketing device – designed to bribe you to watch the ads.

"Programs on 7, 9 and 10 are never going to change anyone's life. No serious attempt is made on commercial TV to reflect or portray Australian culture and commercial current affairs are nonsense.

"Yet there are people who believe the ABC should open itself to sponsors and commercials, as SBS has sadly done.

"But for the ABC to do that - an idea occasionally flirted with in the past - it would surrender itself to corporate domination.

"Instead, the ABC is the last bastion. It cannot, must not abdicate; but there's always something to worry about it for ..."

"Right now, that's lack of quality local content and, I believe, it's failure to 'educate'."

"And they of course are essential components of the ABC's raison d'être..."

On other issues, Errol supported the value of talk-back radio on the ABC as "the community talking amongst itself" - contrasted to Laws and Jones. He expressed concern about the security of Radio National's funding as well as "really worrying" anxieties about possible 'dumbing down' becoming discernible on RN and he declared he wasn't convinced that the Coalition was as committed to widening cross media ownership as some thought - for instance, the prime minister of the day might be committing his party to an uncertain, long term relationship; while the National Party at the same time might be unhappy at the prospect of media one-ownership-towns.

"If they weren't, they'd be guilty of being opposed to enhancing the ABC," Errol said.



Funding: Catching up with 8 Cents a Day.

FABC ACT brought a number of resolutions to the conference with perhaps the principal topic they'd chosen – funding the ABC.

FABC ACT & Region proposes that Friends of the ABC campaign for :

1. "14 cents a day" to restore improved ABC funding over the next triennium;
2. maintenance of funding on a triennial basis
3. operational funding not targeted or tied to particular programs or for particular periods

ACT President, Jill Greenwell said that "14 cents a day" as a formula would appeal to all those – and there are lots of them – who remembered the "8 cents a day" campaign in 1987.

She said it was a modest amount, but it sounded catchy, and it worked out to an increase of about 30% in ABC funding.

A 30% increase of the ABC's base funding was what the ABC requested in its 2003-06 triennial funding submission. What the ABC received forced program cuts as well as putting an end to the hoped-for innovations.

ACT pointed out that the coalition insists they are funding the ABC at or above the level of 1995-96, using selective quoting from the May, 2004 Senate Estimates Hearing to support their assertion.

They fail to mention that an ABC executive told the Senate Committee

that the ABC was in the order of \$42 million behind 1995-96 figures, in real terms, in money available to make programs.

2005 is also the year when the ABC will be putting together its submission for funding over the triennium 2006-09. So, the FABC should have a broad position:

- to lobby before the ABC's Budget submission has been completed, and
- to use as a benchmark, the resolution before the meeting

The resolution was supported by a majority of delegates.

Things Members of the Friends of the ABC Can Do!

- ✓ Join your local (Regional) Branch of the FABC.
 - Details of Regional Branches may be found:
 - ▶ In the latest copy of the NSW Branch's magazine 'Update'
 - ▶ <http://www.fabcnsw.org.au>
 - ▶ Look under Friends of the ABC in your local telephone directory
- ✓ Help organise/staff stalls
- ✓ Attend functions organised by your local FABC Branch
- ✓ Place pamphlets, posters etc on notice boards at your work, club, school etc
- ✓ Speak to community groups about the ABC and Friends
- ✓ Encourage your family, friends, neighbours, work mates etc, to join the Friends
- ✓ Talk to your local Federal MP about current ABC issues
- ✓ Write letters of comment and/or congratulations to Federal MPs, ABC Board, local newspapers etc - contact details and letter writing points are available from:
 - ▶ <http://www.fabcnsw.org.au> ▶ Your local FABC Branch
- ✓ Call talkback radio programmes and comment on the ABC
- ✓ Send your e-mail address (together with your name and telephone number) so you can receive notices of events, campaigns etc to: Carolyn Green (Membership Secretary), FABC NSW Branch fabcmem@abcnsw.org.au
- ✓ Join the FABCList or Digest -for further details e-mail the FABCList Moderator fabclist@abcnsw.org.au or telephone Chris. Cartledge 02) 4226 2323
- ✓ Visit the FABC web site for current activities, contact information etc.
- ✓ Write articles for newsletters etc for the NSW Branch's magazine 'Update'
- ✓ Write to the ABC National Advisory Council
 - ▶ c/o Manager Government and Community Affairs Box 9994 GPO Sydney 2001
- ✓ Telephone the ABC Comments Line 02) 9333 5566 and have your thoughts

FRIENDS REBUFF ANOTHER PUSH FOR ADS ON ABC-TV

The Newcastle Herald of 19th May carried a savage attack on the ABC by Newcastle University academic Paul Scott. Scott said that in Blue Water High commercial product placement had occurred - a breach of the Act and an argument for advertising on the ABC. Gary Cook responded as follows:

Paul Scott's piece is extraordinary for its lack of logic, and its flagrant misrepresentation of the Friends of the ABC. Mr Scott begins with his assertions about commercial product placement in *Blue Water High*.

He then goes on to argue that because the ABC has broken the rules on this occasion, the rules should be abandoned and that the ABC should "increase its income from commercial arrangements". This is like arguing that since the rules against drink driving are frequently broken, then such rules should be abolished.

His next argument is a breathtaking non sequitur. He reports (correctly) that the Australian Broadcasting Authority has found that the ABC has breached fairness and accuracy guidelines on four occasions. But the fact that ABC journalists can make errors of fact, or

fail on occasions in their duty to be strictly impartial is no argument for taking advertising, which Mr Scott concedes can lead to "instances of favourable reporting" to commercial interests.

As a lecturer in communication and media studies, Paul Scott should appreciate that the ABC's reputation for investigative journalism built over many years has only been possible due to a prohibition on advertising. Sadly, due to being poorly funded, there are fewer of these programs currently being produced.

Ironically, only this month, it was revealed that Newcastle University would be forced to cut more than 400 positions due to financial difficulties. We would regard any suggestion that Newcastle University seeks sponsorship to cure its financial ills as being completely inappropriate. Similarly, we reject any move to commercialise the ABC.

The Federal Budget, handed down this month, was notable for its failure to invest in the intellectual future of the nation in not boosting tertiary funding. The ABC's triennial funding is determined next year. We will be working hard to achieve a

substantial and deserved increase in funding to the ABC, Australia's premier cultural institution.

Our greatest concern is with Mr Scott's misrepresentation of the views of Friends of the ABC. In noting our objection to the Howard government's use of tied or targeted funding, and its impact on the editorial independence of the ABC, Mr Scott exclaims "And Labor never stacked the ABC Board?" The implication here is that Friends of the ABC is "pro Labor", and has never criticised Labor's stacking of the ABC Board.

Nothing could be further from the truth. We have criticised Labor appointments on numerous occasions. Our submission to the 2001 Senate Inquiry into the appointment of the ABC Board clearly stated "As a result of appointments by the current government, and of appointments by the previous Labor government, the ABC Board lacks credibility. The present system is in danger of developing public cynicism and mistrust of all ABC Boards, regardless of their integrity and or the independence of any particular board and its members"

ABC FM SUNDAY LIVE CONCERT

**Sunday
19 June**

Eugene Goossens Hall,
ABC Headquarters
700 Harris Stillreet,
Ultimo

**Perfect for a
winter's afternoon**

Join the Friends for the traditional June Sunday Live Concert and a glass of wine

Once again the Friends will have a stall dispensing drinks before and after the concert

The program is *Viva Espagne* with Gareth Koch on the guitar playing excerpts from *Carmina Burana* as well as the *Three Cornered Hat* and his own *Dances of Spain*

Come and meet Marian Arnold and Gareth Koch after the concert.

**FABC (NSW) Inc.
Executive Committee**

President - Gary Cook
Phone: 9810 3358
email: lourmar@idx.com.au

Treasurer James Buchanan
Phone 9371 5621
email jebuchanan@bigpond.com

Secretary - Janet Crennan
Phone 9810 1758
email: crennan@bigpond.com

Membership Secretary -
Carolyn Green
Phone 9144 1351 or 0417 650 443
fabcmem@fabcnsw.org.au

Update Editor:
C/-FABC Update
PO Box 1391
North Sydney NSW 2059

ABC BOLSTERS COMPLAINTS PANEL

The ABC announced on 5 May, that the Board had approved a number of reforms designed to strengthen the Independent Complaints Review Panel's role as an independent body and to improve its efficiency. Gary Cook summarises:

The ICRP was established by the ABC in 1991. It is the second step in the complaints process following the initial review by the ABC's Complaints Review Executive (CRE).

The Board invited two independent bodies – the St James Ethics Centre and the Communications Law Centre at the University of NSW to each nominate a qualified person for consideration as panellists.

From 1 June, 2005, three new panellists replace the former panel of five, some of whom were appointed when the ICRP was first formed.

The new panel

The Hon. Michael Foster QC (Convenor), appointed by the ABC Board for a five-year term.

Ms Susan Brooks, nominated by the St James Ethics Centre and appointed for a four-year term.

Ms Jane Singleton, nominated by the Communications Law Centre and appointed for a three-year term.

The ICRP will now also review written complaints alleging serious and specific cases of factual inaccuracy. It will now include material published on ABC Online as well as material broadcast on radio and television.

Other reforms are :

- The ICRP will provide reasons to complainants when it decides to accept a matter for review.

- The ABC will be notified and invited to provide written submissions, together with relevant program material.

- At a preliminary stage of the process, the ICRP will inform the ABC of its decision and invite submission of further relevant information. This opportunity may also be extended to the complainant.

- A 60-day time limit will be established for the Panel to complete investigations of individual matters in normal circumstances.

These reforms clearly demonstrate that the ABC has the most thorough complaints handling procedure of any media body in Australia. We suggest that the commercial media should begin to catch up.

Gary Cook, President, FABC

Research - But Only At A Price

It was announced by the University of NSW in early June, that the Communications Law Centre is to be closed. A university spokeswoman said "a three-year \$300,000 funding deal with the university had expired and the centre had failed to generate a sufficient level of substitute funding". The director of the centre, Dr Derek Wilding, described the decision by the university as hasty and ill-timed.

Derek Wilding has been a good friend of the ABC and was the keynote speaker at our inaugural Regional Conference.

The Communications Law Centre is an innovative, professional and influential source of research, ideas and actions in the public interest on media and communications issues.

Yet another independent, non-profit body disbanded in the interests of economic rationalisation.

Northern Rivers AGM is one busy event

The day began with the AGM, ran to a meeting of "ABC shareholders" and concluded with a Sunday Afternoon Breakfast Show like a morning on ABC radio with a live audience enjoying current affairs, music and comedy.

The Northern Rivers branch AGM (Sunday 29th May at the Bangalow Bowling and Sports Club) returned the following members to the executive:

: Neville Jennings President,; Doug Myler Vice President, Tony Betts Secretary, Ed Bennett Treasurer; Byron Bay Sub-branch: Val Phillips Convenor, Tweed Sub-branch Convenor - Neville Jennings.

After the AGM an ABC Shareholders' meeting was held to discuss appointments to the Board of the ABC. The shareholders condemned the practice of making political appointments to the board - recent appointments appearing to have been made on purely ideological grounds. Shareholders signed a letter to Communication Minister Helen Coonan listing 20 eminent people who would have popular support if they were elected to the board.

After lunch, members and local residents enjoyed the Sunday Afternoon Breakfast Show (for late risers) - a mock radio program in front of a live audience, there were extended interviews with former ABC cameraman and local film-maker Paul Tait, Green Party representative Susanna Flower and local film producer Cathy Henkel. Cathy and her partner Jeff Canin have produced a documentary on the life of Spike Milligan due to be screened on ABC TV later in the year.

The breakfast show audience enjoyed live music from Elliane Salisbury, impersonations of Doyle & Clarke (from the 7.30 Report) and The Goons as well as Roy and HG. Mandy Nolan kept the comedy going with insight into the thoughts of a Casino Beef Queen.

Next meeting of the Northern Rivers branch - at the Lismore Workers' Club on Wednesday 19 June at 6 pm. New members always welcome. The branch remains an active supporter of the Byron Bay Writers' Festival being planned for next August.

Neville Jennings

Warning...PushPin and Poetry

Continued from Page 7

"Tendentious Language"

Allegations of anti-government bias in the ABC go back many years. They intensified in the Hawke-Keating years and have grown into an orchestrated campaign in the Howard years. It is not just the Howard government making these claims – a wide range of conservative forces are part of the campaign.

For a long time this campaign has had very little effect. Despite being oft-repeated, there has been little in the way of evidence. Opinion polls still show great public confidence in the even-handedness of the ABC.

Despite the fact that so many of Alston's complaints were thrown out, despite the fact that neither the ABC internal inquiry, nor the ABC Independent Complaints Review Panel nor the ABA found any evidence of systematic bias, Alston scored a few points.

Favourite Phrase

The most worrying was the ABA's attitude. In the past the ABA took a very hands off attitude. More recently they discovered the sin of '*tendentious language*'. It's a phrase said to have been a favourite of David Flint, but it has now been picked up and used against the ABC by the new Chair of the ABA.

In the majority of its findings against AM based on the Alston

complaints, the ABA referred to "tendentious language", suggesting that information management or propaganda played a large role in the US war effort in Iraq. The ABA said it was not unreasonable to suggest that governments, especially in wartime, would manage information, and to put the best light on their actions. However the ABC was found to be in breach of standards on several occasions because the ABA judged that ABC reporters had suggested the view being expressed by the US military was "propaganda and nothing more".

The ABC reporters' comments on the US military claims were certainly sceptical, perhaps even cynical. It did not strike me, as a listener, that the ABC reports were suggesting "propaganda and nothing more," although they certainly made the point that the US military had a motive to putting the line that they did.

New standards

The ABA seems to be applying a more stringent standard than in the past. However we can reasonably ask that if the bar is to be raised, then everyone should be obliged to meet the new standards.

In one way the ABA's position is not unreasonable. It should be left to listener or viewer to form a judgment on the credibility of the various protagonists. But are reporters required to take every statement at face value?

It seems to me the ABA has made

a big shift here...not that their position is totally unreasonable. There can be a fine line between letting the audience judge for itself and making a legitimate comment on the reliability of information. It's a question of consistency. The ABA has gone from a very soft approach towards issues of truth, accuracy and balance (especially as applied to Jones and Laws), to a very hard approach (as it applies to the ABC). Perhaps a tougher approach is a good thing. But it must be applied equally, to all electronic media.

How would "A Current Affair" "Today Tonight" Channel 7 News and Laws and Jones fare under the standards now adopted by the ABA?

So what should Friends of the ABC do?

Individual FABC organisations consider setting up a system to monitor, and then pursue before the ABA, on a determined and unrelenting basis, with the same energy and commitment shown by Richard Alston, instances of "tendentious language" and other forms of bias on the commercial media.

FREE MOVIE OFFERS

Courtesy of Hopscotch Films,
Friends

from time to time,

are able to offer free tickets to film previews in Sydney.

Due to cost factors we are unable to tell you about the offers other than by e-mail. So, if you are interested in joining us at future previews, please ensure that your e-mail is provided to our Membership Secretary,

Carolyn Green on: fabcmem@fabcnsw.org.au

Fear and Loathing at the ABC -

- the biting heading above the new magazine, *The Monthly's* essay on the ABC, written by Margaret Simons, promising "a portrait of a beloved national institution" dealing with bullying...counselling and corner-cutting. It's a worrisome portrait. Raising a question, of course: who's to blame? Below are some edited extracts.

People will tell you it is a less consultative place than before... many think they will be punished if they question their bosses or step out of line. Radio National's Michael Duffy (Counterpoint) "fears the ABC has 'had the vigour squashed out of it ... like a whipped dog. When you manage the ABC you are in the business of managing passion. Now there is a lot less passion to manage."

Kerry O'Brien says, "If you believe in the need for a strong, independent public broadcaster, a fundamental part of the process has to be the integrity of the appointment of the board." Like others he fears the impact of constant compromise due to lack of resources. The *7.30 Report* has lost a third of its editorial staff since it went national nine years ago. "You are cutting corners all the time. We have a strong team here now, but I guess one of the realities of life at the ABC is you can't feel secure about that continuing."

(There were two images of the ABC at the beginning of the 21st century) One is a story of excellence, resilience and hope. The second is about wearing things down, ...pulling down the blinds, feeling threatened and desiring protection.

Confidence

The ABC has never been more loved ... nine in ten Australians believe it provides a valuable service. The ANU's 2003 survey of social attitudes shows 66% of Australians have confidence in the ABC.

Yet, says Quentin Dempster, its journalism is under intense pressure. *Four Corners* and *Foreign Correspondent* go off the air three

months a year, *Lateline* off for two months. All for lack of money.

As far as many staff are concerned, Helen Coonan failed her first test by appointing Janet Albrechtsen to the board – the latest in a string of politically loaded appointments.

The government's 2004 election policy was to join the ABC in conducting a review of the adequacy of the ABC's funding and its use

Quentin Dempster said this meant the ABC was at a "tilting point in its survival" and that the Albrechtsen appointment meant the Government would not be fair." But what ABC staff don't know is that the ABC requested the review... a dangerous move – inviting a government that has shown its hostility to examine how the organisation uses its money."

Simons continues: the mood of the ABC reflects something of the mood of the country. After two decades of rapid change, there are successes. On the other hand there is insecurity... the mood of the national broadcaster can be summed up in three words – defensive, weary and wary.

Bullying

The unions claim the ABC has developed a culture of bullying, driven by the need to keep costs down. Graeme Thomson of the CPSU says "It's not schoolyard bullying although that happens too. It is semi-legal bullying." He says performance review systems are used to "manage" people out of the organisation, to penalize them, rather than to support and reward them. The ABC, he says, has become a place where bullying is seen as good management.

Acting director of communications, Murray Green, says only 13 claims of bullying have been received from the corporation's 5000 employees since an anti-bullying policy was introduced last year: seven were resolved, six were investigated. None was upheld. "

However, a confidential document shows "that workplace problems were the reason employees sought counseling in 40% of cases, well above the recognized benchmark of 20-30%.

So why has Aunty turned toxic for at least some employees? The reasons are bound to be complex but bullies are usually themselves victims of bullying and recent history suggests the ABC knows all about being a victim.

Its funds already fallen by 29%, in the last days of Labor the ABC was the only major cultural institution not to get funds from the Creative Nation policy in 1994. But most present-day staff date recent history to 1996 when the Howard government broke an election promise and announced that \$65 million was to be cut over two years – the largest single cut in the corporation's history.

By 2000 Dempster was saying



the ABC was in danger of being destroyed. More stormy weather was to come...the board appointed the little-known Jonathan

Shier as managing director...(then board member) Diana Gribble when asked recently what she had to say about the appointment had just one word "Sorry."

("Sorry" refers to a detailed summary of the redundancies, cost slashing, squabbles and turmoil of the Shier era with many people convinced Shier was a political appointment armed with a hit list. Simons' article raises chairman Donald McDonald's role and she quotes both historian Ken Inglis and Diana Gribble as believing the newly appointed McDonald worked to protect the ABC).

Fear and Loathing at the ABC

Continued from Page 12

And the legacy? Shier victim, head of network Andy Lloyd-James: "ABC television is a much more timid painter of the world around it....no significant and consistent vision from the ABC...Those who wished to damage the ABC have won a large slice of what they hoped for."

Russell Balding

Of Russell Balding, Quentin Dempster is quoted: "Russell's problem is he won't assertively engage in public advocacy of the ABC's case. While Murdoch, Packer and Stokes ...are pushing their barrows in Canberra, the ABC is mute." (However) Balding insists he is an effective advocate – "there is no gain in embarrassing the government,' he says. He points to an extra \$4.2 million for program purchases he gained last financial year.

The significant figure is that this financial year, the ABC has \$35 million less in real terms for program-making than it did before the 1996 cuts, yet its trying to do more – hence the lack of TV drama, the corner-cutting in current affairs, short-staffing in radio, the ability of senior management to claim that funding is at crisis levels.

And the impending review of funding and its use? Donald McDonald tells Margaret Simons he wants the government review. But already it is running late. It will not be completed in time for the triennial funding submission. McDonald is unsure whether it will go ahead at all.

A conflicting portrait of McDonald emerges: Diana Gribble tells Simons that after he arrived she was quickly convinced he had his own agenda and was not a slave of government – "he walks a delicate political tightrope very adroitly. He's been...courageous resisting the wilder end of government desire to control the ABC." But "someone else" says of McDonald, "he is the perfect courtier."

Sandra Levy

The director of television has "become the most dominant ABC executive director. "Some call her the dragon lady. She is much admired, much feared and seems to have a talent for making enemies. Simons says there are people in her division who hate her. "She protests she doesn't know why."

"Levy has lifted TV ratings ...to record levels. This success and her personality have led to a change in the balance of power. Once, news and current affairs were dominant. Now people think Levy is."

The article then dissects and discusses the alleged contest between news and current affairs and entertainment – which Levy dismisses. Simons also notes that Levy is the most pessimistic of ABC executives - that the ABC sought \$64.5 million for drama and comedy in its last funding submission. It was knocked back

This point in Simons' article leads to exhaustive interviews with Levy, Sue Howard and Russell Balding with Brian Johns and David Marr as

'extras'. "More of those in the next issue of Update."

But to return for a moment with Margaret Simons to the ABC can-teens where "amid all the more ephemeral gossip a conspiracy theory is doing the rounds. It goes like this. The government plans to kill the national broadcaster by stifling its entry into the digital age. As Quentin Dempster puts it: "We will be stuffed, marooned, marginalised and irrelevant."

The balance of this article will appear in the next issue of Update.

MEET YOUR LOCAL MEMBER

Parramatta Friends of the ABC invite you to An Evening with Julie Owens MP,

newly elected Member for Parramatta
Friday 8 July
7:30 PM

Charles Byrne Room
Parramatta Town Hall,
Church St, Parramatta

Julie, a former musician
and
Arts Administrator
is a
strong ABC supporter.

*Enjoy fine music,
light refreshments
and discussion with Julie.*

update

Print Post Approved PP 245059/00002

Update is published four times a year by Friends of the ABC NSW, P.O. Box 1391, North Sydney 2059.

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

Extracts from newspapers and other publications appearing in *Update* do not necessarily reflect members' views.

Update goes to all members of FABC (NSW) Inc., as part of the membership fee. *Update* is also supplied to journalists, politicians and libraries across Australia. It is produced and edited in Sydney but contributions are welcome from NSW country and interstate branches. Material may be freely quoted or reproduced from the newsletter provided the source is acknowledged and reproduction is sent to FABC's President Gary Cook, Editor Pro Tem Brian Davies,, Layout, format and assembly Irwin Kurtz.

Unattributed text is by the editor. email: fabcnsw@fabcnsw.org.au

FABC Update

Post The Editor
C/-FABC Update
PO Box 1391
North Sydney NSW 2059

State and regional branches of Friends of the ABC

New South Wales
Gary Cook
PO Box 1391
North Sydney 2059
Ph: 9810 3358
fabcnsw@fabcnsw.org.au

Albury
Jim Saleeba
621 Lindsay Ave.
Albury 2640
(02) 6021 5690
saleeba1@bigpond.net.au

Armidale
Priscilla Connor
41 Judith Street
Armidale NSW 2350
Ph: 6772 3454 or 6772 2217
vsherwell@yahoo.com.au

Bathurst
Tracey Carpenter
76 Havannah St
Bathurst 2795
Ph. 6331 8305
havannah@bigpond.net.au

Bega
Alec Bacon,
25 Surf Circle,
Tura Beach 2548
Ph: 6495 9029
alecandnella@dodo.com.au

Blue Mountains
Denise Thorpe
27 Wilson St
Wentworth Falls 2782
Ph. 4757 1009
fosterthorpe@tpg.com.au

Central Coast
John Hale
21 Stephenson Rd.
Bateau Bay 2261
Ph: 4333 8107
jhale@tac.com.au

Eastern Suburbs
Nizza Siano (Secretary)
16 Holland Rd
Bellevue Hill NSW 2023
Phone / Fax 9327 3423
siano@tpg.com.au

Eurobodalla
Keith Simmons
1/29 Mathew Pde.
Batehaven 2536
Ph. 4472 9898
powellh@acr.net.au

Great Lakes
Audrey Semon (Secretary)
P.O. Box 871
Forster 2428
Ph: 6554 8507
audrey_s1@tsn.cc

Illawarra
Jan Kent (Secretary)
Friends of the ABC Illawarra
PO Box 336, Unanderra 2526
Phone/Fax: 4271 3531
jankent@bigpond.com

Newcastle
Hank Willems
c/ PO Box 265
Merewether 2291
Ph 4961 4401
gstruck@optusnet.com.au

Northern Rivers
Neville Jennings
PO Box 167 Alstonville 2477
Ph/Fax: 6674 3830 (H)
njenning@scu.edu.au

Orange
Bev Holland
26 Sunny South Crescent
Orange NSW 2800
Ph: 6362 4744
bev holland@aapt.net.au

Parramatta
Mal Hewitt
31 Queen St, Granville 2142
Ph: 9637 2900
malandal@optusnet.com.au

**Port Macquarie/
Mid North Coast**
Drusi Megget
PO Box 1752
Port Macquarie NSW 2444
Ph: 02 6583 8798
drusi@felglow.com.au

Victoria
Friends of the ABC (Vic)
PO Box 2103
St Kilda West VIC 3182
Ph: 03 9682 0073
fabcvic@vicnet.net.au

Queensland
Don Sinnamon
Suite 14B1
7/421 Brunswick St
Fortitude Valley QLD 4006
Ph 0405 721 617
don.sinnamon@aph.gov.au

ACT
Jill Greenwell
GPO Box 2625
Canberra ACT 2601
Ph: 6253 3531
jgreenwell@ozemail.com.au

South Australia
Joan Laing
P.O. Box 1758
Hutt St,
Adelaide SA 5000
Ph/Fax 08 8271 0751
jlaing@internode.on.net

Western Australia
Roger Raven
PO Box 179
Darlington, WA 6070
Phone: (08) 9370 1785
rogerfabc@optusnet.com.au

Tasmania
Anne O'Byrne
GPO Box 883
Hobart Tas. 7001
Ph (03) 6331 1108
aobyrne@bigpond.net.au

Northern Territory
Please contact
South Australia
(see above)

FABC RESOURCE
CENTRE
Darce Cassidy
www.friendsoftheabc.org

Membership form *Please fill out the form below and return it with your payment to:*

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

Use only if joining or if your membership has expired.

Name _____ Email: _____

Please Print
Address _____ Suburb _____ P/Code _____

Phone (Home) _____ (Work) _____ Mob _____

Federal Electorate _____

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

Age Group 30 or under 31-50 51+

Membership No. _____

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

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

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

I am paying by cheque in favour of FABC (NSW) Inc.
 money order bankcard mastercard visa

Card number _____

Name on credit card _____

Expiry date _____

Cardholders signature _____

Amount \$ _____