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Murph (Lachy Hulme) and Nick (Merrick Watts), two members of the PM's central policy unit at work in the ABC comedy-drama *The Hollowmen*

Labor's promised new board appointment system is outlined in issue 26 of News & Views, available at www.fabc.org.au.

Change to ABC Board

A SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANT had taken literally the Prime Minister's public comments that overseas postings should be depoliticised, and has produced a list of merit-based criteria. The problem: bad timing. The PM needs to reward one of his loyal, but lacking-in-talent, colleagues in order to get him to vacate his seat in parliament. And in return that politician expects a diplomatic posting.

Murph (the PM's Senior Policy Advisor) reports back to Tony (the PM's Principal Private Secretary) that he has been unable to convince the politician to accept a public appointment other than a diplomatic posting:

Tony: Did you mention the ABC Board?

Murph: He hates the ABC.

Tony: It hasn't stopped us in the past.

We all know that this scenario from *The Hollowmen*, ABC 1's new satire on a Prime Minister's political minders, couldn't possibly depict what really happens in politics! So back to real life...

The Rudd Labor Government's plans for a new appointment process for the boards of the public broadcasters and restoration of the ABC staff-elected director position are well under way. Legislation is expected in the coming months.

The terms of two ABC Board directors have expired since the federal election. But with the Government unwilling to dissolve the ABC Board, the national broadcaster is presently in the care of five Howard-government appointees and the managing director Mark Scott, whose terms do not expire until 2010 or 2011. In the meantime, the ABC is privatised through the back door as television production is increasingly outsourced, and the ABC keeps moving further in a commercial direction.

Act Now

Contact Govt MPs about ABC Funding

DON'T DELAY in expressing your support for the ABC. While ABC funding for the next triennium will not be announced until the May 2009 Federal Budget, it could be all but signed-off before the end of November '08.

Write or phone yourself, and encourage others to contact their Labor Member of Parliament. If you are not in an ALP-held electorate, contact a Labor senator in your state. Let them know: The ABC must be rebuilt and its creative production core restored. The national broadcaster must be funded to be at the forefront of technological change, and funded in a manner that will uphold its independence from government and commercial influence.

Contact Opposition MPs about the ABC Board

THOSE IN LIBERAL or National Party-held electorates should contact their local Member of Parliament. Let

them know you want them to support legislation for a new transparent and merit-based appointment process for the ABC Board and to reinstate the staff-elected director; and ask what they will do.

This is an opportunity for all politicians to express bipartisan support for the national public broadcaster. Some Coalition politicians may view the introduction of an independent appointment process more favourably now that they are in opposition and have lost to a Labor government the power to make public appointments.

Contact Senator Fielding about the ABC Board

ALL VICTORIANS should write to the Family First senator, Senator Fielding, along the same lines as contact with Opposition politicians. His vote will be critical to the carriage of legislation if the Coalition opposes the introduction of a new board appointment process or restoration of the staff director.

The ABC Towards 2020

FRIENDS OF THE ABC is delighted the ABC has released an ideas paper to promote debate and discussion around the vital role of public broadcasting in the digital media age. The ABC's vision is outlined in a paper titled 'The ABC in the Digital Age—Towards 2020' which was unveiled in the leadup to the Australia 2020 Summit.

The Good

THE ABC'S PAPER reiterates the ABC's responsibility for innovation and diversity, and the need to be accessible to all Australians. It includes many more wonderful things the ABC is well-placed to do if it is adequately resourced:

- Additional TV channels that can cater for niche interests—for news and public information, children's programming, education, and the best of overseas content
- An extension of radio stations, supported by broadband sites providing additional content - including more local radio, specialist music, children's, sports and health information radio
- An expansion of broadband content—including internet TV and radio, archival audio video content, emerging music, video and multimedia talent, local broadband sites with community participation, constantly updated news, and partnerships with universities, research and government agencies to deliver websites providing public access to in-depth content around key genres

- An extension of the reach and operations of the ABC's international services to deepen Australia's engagement with its region

The Bad

THE ABC'S INDEPENDENCE from political influence has often been under threat. The broadcaster's independence from commercial influence is being undermined by its own expanding commercial operations.

The ABC's paper reiterates the ABC's... need to be accessible to all Australians

Missing from the ABC's vision of the public broadcaster in 2020 is an expressed interest in the ABC remaining independent. 'Independence' is not listed in its principles for public broadcasting. The only reference to commercial-free pertains specifically to the proposed dedicated children's television channel. Worryingly, the paper and Managing Director Mark Scott refer frequently to Australia's great information and cultural institution as a 'brand'.

In recent years, we have also seen the ABC's production capacity wound back. Missing from the ABC's vision for the future is the ABC's important role as a 'producer' of quality content. The paper talks only in terms of the broadcaster's role in content 'delivery'.

iView—ABC's New Net TV

LEADING THE WAY AGAIN, the ABC has launched ABC iView. ABC iView is a free internet TV service - a streaming video service that enables access to selected ABC programming on your computer at a time of your choice.

ABC iView offers 5 channels: ABC Catch-up—programs for until a week after their broadcast on ABC1 or ABC2; ABC News—news and current affairs; ABC Kazam!—a children's fantasy channel; ABC Docs—a selection of natural history programs, social documentaries and factual series; and ABC Arts.

At present the number of Australians who have the high speed broadband required to access iView is small. But it will grow. The way that people prefer, or have time, to access their national public broadcaster is changing too. So it

is critical that the ABC is at the forefront of changes in content delivery.

Just as important, the services that a modern public broadcaster should provide must be accessible to all Australians without cost. Technological change that enables the ABC to deliver its content in different ways must not be used as an opportunity to turn the ABC into a user-pays service; for example, as the ABC is doing by charging for its programming (already paid for by Australian taxpayers) to be rented or bought as downloads.

Information on ABC iView works is available at abc.net.au/iview



Perhaps the omission of these two critical aspects of Australia's national public broadcaster was an oversight. But perhaps it was not. The ABC Board appointed by the former Coalition government which was hostile to independent public broadcasting is still substantially in place. Increasingly, the ABC is taking on a commercial outlook.

The Unknown

THE WAYS IN WHICH the ABC delivers content must expand to meet the changing needs of the community if the ABC is to remain relevant. But in the end, it is the quality of the content which matters. That will depend on the funds available to the ABC. It is also the outcome of ABC's operations which, with the winding back of in-house television production and specialist program units in recent years, is resulting in less distinctive programming.

'The ABC in the Digital Age—Towards 2020' can be accessed at www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/media/s2219354.htm

Let the ABC know what you think of its vision for 2020. Tell them what sort of ABC you want and what you would like it to be doing in the future.



News Outside the ABC

Most Read Articles.

1. Nude mum stalks injured footy star.
2. Croc grabs nude model and priest.
3. News reader locked in car boot with porn star.
4. Aussie stripper hurt in quake as stage collapses.
5. "Check-out chick spat on me" - war hero.



First published The Age

Least Read Articles.

1. Greenies deported as honeymooner cull begins.
2. Anguished Palestinians plead for help and justice.
3. Grim warning about new child-care drug.
4. Habeas Corpus to go.
5. Botanical Gardens sold to developers.



Leung

THE INTEREST OF AUSTRALIA'S mainstream media to meet its public obligations is declining.

The serious journalism jobs needed to produce quality news and in-depth current affairs are disappearing - a result of the impact that technological change is having on the media landscape, a high concentration in media ownership, and media investment that is focused on short-term profit. Just as dangerous for democracy as powerful media moguls, like Murdoch who use their media outlets for influence, is media that is run solely for profit.

Fairfax Media's reliance on big corporate advertisers has increased since it lost a substantial amount of its classified advertising revenue to online sites. Its broadsheet newspapers, *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, are becoming increasingly tabloid. Possibly an attempt to increase sales income, and presumably an effort to attract the large readership that corporate advertisers expect.

The Age and *SMH* now contain more infotainment. Celebrities and sport often dominate their front pages. Advertising is moving into space previously reserved for editorial content. With the decline in classified advertising, also gone is the protection of editorial content from commercial

The closure of Sunday is the end of serious current affairs not only for Nine. It was the last earnest current affairs program on free-to-air commercial television

influence that a broad revenue base of small advertisers once provided.

The former Howard Coalition Government's weakening of Australia's cross-media ownership laws and restrictions that applied to foreign investment have resulted in significant

Is ABC news ABC news?

THE EFFECTIVE OPERATION of ABC news and current affairs and its contribution to Australian media diversity is critical, particularly in view of what is happening to serious news in the commercial media sector. So recent reports that the ABC and Nine Network in Adelaide have an arrangement whereby the collection of television news footage is divided up and footage shared "almost as a daily routine" are disturbing. (Seven Network's Adelaide edition of *Today Tonight* 11 Aug and Mark Day in *Media—The Australian* 14 Aug)

It is deceptive for any broadcaster

to use footage of another broadcaster and rebrand it as its own, which is what is claimed has been happening. And it is a betrayal of ABC audiences who choose ABC News because they trust in its integrity and expect its rigorous standards to have applied throughout the news process.

It is unacceptable for the ABC to share news footage with a commercial broadcaster in a regular arrangement. The public broadcaster is meant to be an independent and alternative source of news and current affairs.

The Federal Government should

changes in the Australian media landscape. There have been mergers, and increased investment of private equity companies with little experience in media and a single interest to maximise profit quickly.

In addition to Fairfax owning major daily newspapers in Melbourne and Sydney, it now owns two key radio talkback stations (3AW and 2UE) in those same cities, along with other media outlets. Kerry Stokes sold half of Channel 7 to foreign equity investors KKR. James Packer sold his controlling share in, and CVC (the Hong Kong private equity group) was able to take control of, PBL which owns the Nine Network.

Since CVC Asia Pacific took control of PBL, *The Bulletin*—an Australian literary and current affairs magazine of 127 years—has been axed. In August this year, Nine shut down its *Nightline* late night news bulletin and the *Sunday* program. The closure of *Sunday* is the end of serious current affairs not only for Nine. It was the last earnest current affairs program on free-to-air commercial television.

Changes in technology have not only impacted on Fairfax's classified advertising base. There is a real concern for the future of quality news and information in the mainstream commercial media. How will it be paid for, as audiences, and consequently the advertising revenue that pays for commercial journalism, is fragmented across the ever-increasing number of media outlets and platforms that technological change is bringing?

Stop Press: On top of earlier cuts, Fairfax's August 26 announcement to axe 390 Australian jobs, about one-third of them in editorial, signals an end to its interest in quality journalism.

The public broadcaster is meant to be an independent and alternative source of news and current affairs

immediately address the ABC's inadequate funding, so the public broadcaster can fulfil its obligations to the community as a truly independent news provider.

The BBC & the Future of Public Broadcasting

BY SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

IN HIS CONSIDERATION of public broadcasting, BBC doyen, Sir David Attenborough criticises the BBC for favouring populist over thoughtful programming. He laments the demise of specialist program units as centres of innovation and expertise - the result of the BBC being forced to outsource a proportion of programming to the independent sector.

The independent production sector, so-called in Britain and Australia, is made up of small producers and large commercial production companies outside the major public and commercial broadcasters. It is of serious concern to Friends of the ABC that ABC specialist television production units have been closed down in favour of outsourcing a far greater proportion of work to commercial producers than the BBC has outsourced.



HERE IS ONE DEFINITION of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB): it is broadcasting that aims to do four things—to increase our understanding of the world; to stimulate knowledge and learning; to reflect the cultural identity of the United Kingdom; and to ensure diversity and alternative viewpoints. Some of these aims can be achieved with light entertainment programs, for example gardening, East Enders but in reality PSB refers to programs that, for whatever reason, attract only small audiences.

In the early days of BBC television in 1952 PSB was a fair description of what we were doing. It was the only television in the country, transmitting from North London black and white coarse grained pictures and all live, because there was no form of recording. The cameras were large, unreliable, awkward to manipulate on bicycle wheels or castors and each had only one lens.

With such equipment, from two small studios came an ambitious and varied programming including quizzes, musical recitals, a live play every week, short stories read by an actor in an armchair, interviews and discussions, variety shows, illustrated lectures by distinguished scientists, as well as outside broadcasts of sporting and public events. There was no regular pattern to the broadcast schedules; one Tuesday's programme bore little resemblance to the next. Starting times were erratic because of equipment breakdowns, leading to viewers being treated to ten minutes or so of a kitten playing with a ball of wool. We strove

to present as varied a programme as possible covering a wide range of interests.

We thought we could play a key role in modern democracy by enabling a stockbroker in Surrey to understand what a fisherman in northern Scotland might be feeling—and vice versa. We would be able to broaden horizons, introducing people that they might never have encountered and bringing them new delights. Research discovered that the audience tended to watch TV for the entire evening, whatever the program. The whole nation could be brought together on occasion, for example the coronation in 1952, watching in homes, pubs and cinemas.

In 1955 change arrived with the introduction of Independent Television (ITV), financed by advertising rather than by licence fee; it was not “independent” but commercial television maintained the Director General of the BBC. Audiences flocked to the popular, mainstream programmes, deserting the BBC with its public service programme ideals. As a result we became a little less lofty in programming and more cunning in our schedules, sandwiching or “hammocking” a less popular program between two favourites, thus building the audience. While the third programme might suffer some loss of viewers such techniques enabled the BBC to continue to transmit a wide range of programmes and thus fulfil those four public service aims. ITV was criticised for neglecting serious treatment of the arts, sciences and

politics and tried to make some amends, even at the cost of advertising revenue. In these ways a balance was established between the two broadcasters in which neither was overwhelmingly dominant. The BBC felt it needed to maintain audience share to justify the licence fee and ITV wanted that upper end of the market for their advertisers.

Both broadcasters had to deal with the demand for programmes of special regional interest. The BBC had done this already with radio and ITV was deliberately set up as separate regional companies. One of the problems with specific regional programmes is that, per capita, they are very expensive to produce; for the BBC, with its eight regions, they were up to eight times more costly. Regional producers, as well as local reporting, also want to contribute to the national dialogue. The BBC dealt with the national aspirations by encouraging each centre to develop its own speciality. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland successfully drew on local talent and settings to produce dramas and features. Among English centres the West Region decided to specialise in Natural History.

This was of interest to me and of importance if we are concerned about quality programming because it generated the specialist production unit. The unit in Bristol pioneered true natural history, dealing in depth with the lives of birds and butterflies, introducing people to wildlife worldwide, keeping an increasingly urban population in touch with their own countryside. Unknown in

the USA such programming was cherished in the UK and the audience was carefully built up.

Over time the unit developed a variety of styles suited to different audiences and age groups and built up an expert staff of cameramen, directors, recordists and editors skilled in this specialised craft. It has amassed an unrivalled archive and its work is respected worldwide. It is a prime example of what PSB can achieve. Similar units were set up in Australia and New Zealand as well as by ITV and flourished while natural history was fashionable but sadly these units are now disbanded. The Bristol unit has suffered staff cuts but survives because the BBC believes such programmes deserve a place in the schedules of any broadcaster with pretensions of providing a public service.

Similar successful specialist Units were also established on archaeology, history, the arts, music and science but they have not survived as well as the Unit in Bristol. The statutory

The statutory requirement that a certain percentage of programmes must come from independent producers has reduced in-house production and as the Units shrank so the critical mass of their production expertise has diminished. The continuity of their archives has been broken, their close worldwide contacts lost and they are no longer regarded internationally as the centres of expertise and innovation.

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In 1964 a third network was given to the BBC with the aim of broadening the choice of programmes which could be viewed at any one time. BBC2 brought wonderful creative freedom allowing us to produce programmes which had hitherto failed to find a place on the first network. Audiences were built by careful scheduling and by each network recommending the other's programmes i.e. cross-trailing. Nevertheless it became clear that viewers develop channel loyalty and still today twice the number will watch programmes on BBC1 than those on BBC2.

Using the devices of “hammocking” and “cross-trailing” audiences were built for serious programmes on subjects such as music, science, history, archaeology, biography and politics. The occasional failure is justified in the interest of extending the range of programming.

Now we are in the middle of another broadcasting revolution—digitalisation and the proliferation of channels. Now at last there is all the space anyone could need to broadcast any subject that public service could expect. Each genre can have its own channel where it can flourish. Niche broadcasting has arrived and caters to a wide variety of topics; sport and feature films are very successful but less popular genres, the ones public service programming is concerned with, do dramatically less well. A natural history or arts programme will attract a far smaller audience than it would if shown on BBC1.

Digital channels are less successful because most people tend to watch their favourite mainstream channel automatically. Some digital channels require a subscription and some are unvaried in their nature and hard to watch for long periods of time. They cannot bolster numbers by hammocking or cross-trailing. They are hardly relevant to PSB because in effect they are not broadcasting but narrow casting.

Perhaps such programmes could be placed on commercial channels with subsidies, but they would be scheduled away from popular income earning programmes and so unlikely to attract a large audience. Furthermore the expertise would not be developed under this climate. PSB, watched by a healthy number of viewers, financed according to need not audience size, can only effectively operate as a network catering for the broadest possible range of interests.

Does the BBC do this? At times, seduced by the popularity of one type of programme, the BBC allows it to proliferate on both networks and crowd

out other genres. Do we really require so many gardening programmes, makeover programmes or celebrity chefs? Is it not a scandal, in this day and age, that there seems to be no place for continuing series of programmes about science or serious music or thoughtful in-depth interviews with people other than politicians?

This talk has been more about the history of PSB than its future. But you cannot plan the journey ahead unless you know where you are, and where you have come from. Today there are many innovations which will allow individuals and institutions to trawl through archives for material of their choice.

But *broadcasting* is something else. It is a miraculous advance that allows a whole society to see itself and talk to itself. It enables people no matter who and where they are, to share insights, to become aware of problems and collectively consider solutions. It should not be editorially controlled by governments. Nor should it be used exclusively for commercial purposes.

It should be a place where people with all kinds of interests and insights can share them with society as a whole. This can only be done with a coherent network, one that measures success not only by the size of the audience for individual programmes but the width of the spectrum of interests it manages to represent. A network dedicated primarily to the service of the public.

.....
This is an edited extract of Sir David Attenborough's address on 1 May in London, the first in the BBC's three lecture series about the role of public service broadcasting. The full text can be viewed at www.bbc.co.uk/thefuture/transcript_atten.shtml

Ads on the ABC

YOU WERE POSSIBLY TAKEN ABACK a few months ago at an indication of commercial advertising on ABC television. As you should be!

But it turned out that what some viewers initially thought to be ads were in fact depictions of commercials. Their satirical nature became clearer as they evolved over several weeks.

Their purpose was to promote *The Gruen Transfer*, the ABC series which provides an entertaining insight into the development of ads. They look to be the idea of someone who realised that anything that looked like a commercial advertisement would draw the attention of ABC audiences.

Having said that, you need to be alert. The ABC is increasingly circumventing the prohibition on advertising on ABC radio and television and continually pushing further the boundaries of its commercial activities.

'Weasel words' claim advertising of ABC shops and products to be 'promotion' or 'announcements'. In a few instances this year, the ABC has slipped product prices into ABC Shop advertisements. Presumably it is check if the audience notices and how it responds to this action that further blurs the line between announcements and advertising. This year, a presenter from the popular ABC children's program, *Playschool*, featured in an ABC 1 advertisement to promote children's products for sale at ABC Shops.

The ABC has also begun to set up websites to carry advertisements, websites like countdown.com.au. Strong community opposition to advertising on the ABC has resulted in the ABC shying away from placing ads on the broadcaster's main website. Instead, for now, it appears that its strategy is to set up websites in addition to the ABC's main website—websites



which carry advertisements and could end up only a click away from the main website.

To date, the new Labor Government has failed to indicate to Friends of the ABC that it will prevent advertising on the ABC's websites. This is despite the ABC Act's legal prohibition on advertising not extending to websites

The ABC is increasingly circumventing the prohibition on advertising on ABC radio and television and continually pushing further the boundaries of its commercial activities

only because online services were not envisaged at the time the Act was drawn up, and notwithstanding Labor's platform adopted shortly before the election. The ALP's platform clearly addresses any website that is identified as being a website of the ABC, when it states: "Labor will also ensure that advertising is not permitted on ABC branded websites".



ABC Rural is a trusted department of the ABC, producing content for ABC radio, television and online.



Recently, though not for the first time, it looks as if the ABC decided, if it can't put advertising on the ABC, it would take the ABC and its content to the advertisers. Calli Weitenberg, of online media outlet *Crikey.com*, revealed that the ABC had sold ABC Rural online content to the commercial website *EFarming.com*.

It is not only content that the ABC has sold to *EFarming.com*. Weitenberg sardonically commented on: "the relaxed appearance of Aunty's logo around commercials for New Holland Tractors and CSBP Fertilisers on *EFarming.com*...". By allowing the ABC logo to be surrounded by products for sale, the ABC is hiring out its insignia to be used for commercial exploitation and abusing the public trust its insignia evokes.

The creeping activities of the ABC's money-making arm are undermining the ABC and the public's trust in its integrity. Strong and unequivocal community opposition to advertising on the ABC is being worn down, as audiences, jaded by the ABC's endless 'promotions' and 'announcements' (so-called), fail to effectively distinguish them from any other form of advertising.

In the longer term, there is a real and serious risk that the ABC's drive to sell products to audiences and on-sell content to commercial enterprises will end up influencing the very nature of content the ABC broadcasts. It has already occurred in some instances.

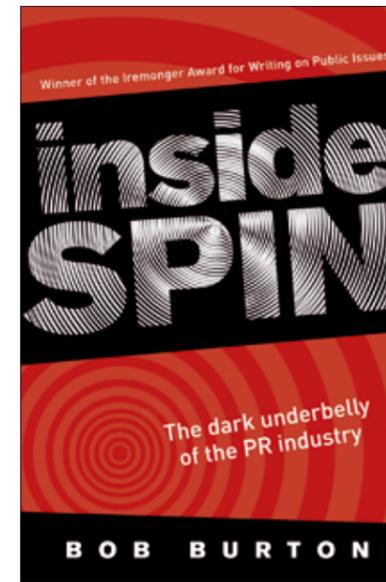
The ABC was not established to be a business. It must be properly funded by the federal government so that its independence from commercial influence can be maintained, and so that its focus is returned to what it is meant to do - produce and broadcast quality programming.

Please be alert to the ABC's commercial activities that undermine its integrity or detract from your listening or viewing satisfaction. Complain to the ABC and let Friends of the ABC know.

The only advertising you should see on the ABC - promotion for *The Gruen Transfer*, ABC TV's show about advertising

Inside Spin

BY BOB BURTON



BOB BURTON provides a disturbing example of media manipulation which highlights how critical it is that the ABC's independence from government is maintained.

"MORE THAN 20,000 PEOPLE enter Australia every day by sea and air. This is the front line against drug runners, illegal migrants and potential terrorists", the narrator sternly warned in the opening show of Channel Seven's *Border Security* 'reality' television series in October 2004. The series promised "fly-on-the-wall footage" of the work of the Australian Customs Service, the Australian Quarantine Service and the beleaguered Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.

For both Channel Seven and the government agencies, there was a lot riding on the series. The television network hoped the series, which was modelled on a series by Cream TV on the New Zealand Customs Service, would help it win the ratings war with the Nine network and bolster its advertising revenue. Having stoked anxiety about the arrival by boat of a few thousand asylum seekers before the October 2001 election, the Howard government hoped the series would reassure voters that its increasingly unpopular refugee policy was firm but fair. "There were a lot of people, including the Prime Minister, who were very interested in seeing whether this became a reality", Customs Service Director of Corporate Communications, Simon Latimer, later told a PR conference.

The deciding factor in Seven's favour over bids from Nine and Cream TV was that it offered Customs a veto over what aired. "Each episode can only be broadcast after written approval from the relevant agencies featured in the stories", Customs Media Manager, Matt Wardell later told a PR conference.

"Without the veto power, no show... For us it was crucial. It was the thing that got it over the line [with the government]", Latimer added.

The series became a ratings success story and the government had a potent communications weapon with which to shape public debate on immigration and refugee policy. Not surprisingly for a government-controlled program, there are no hard-case stories of the treatment of traumatised asylum seekers in the network of immigration prisons in Villawood, Baxter, Christmas Island or Nauru, and no images of women and children behind razor wire or embarrassing interviews people wrongly deported from the country.

Even though government advertising campaigns have been the subject of parliamentary scrutiny, the largely invisible role of the government in helping primetime television 'reality' television hasn't. In the 18-month-long



gestation period between the Australian Customs Service receiving the three pitches for the program in 2002 and the completion of more than six months of filming for the pilot program in 2004, the series escaped mention in agency annual reports. Latimer later explained to PR industry colleagues that "we are making the show because they [Seven] want to sell bucket loads of advertising".

For the government and the agencies involved, the program works far better than an advertising campaign in selling reassurance. The success of *Border Security* on an issue as politically controversial as immigration policy also confers a substantial benefit to the government in helping marginalise dissenting points of view in the lower-rating news and current affairs programs. For all the criticisms Howard government members directed at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the national broadcaster has at least a series of checks and balances to allow

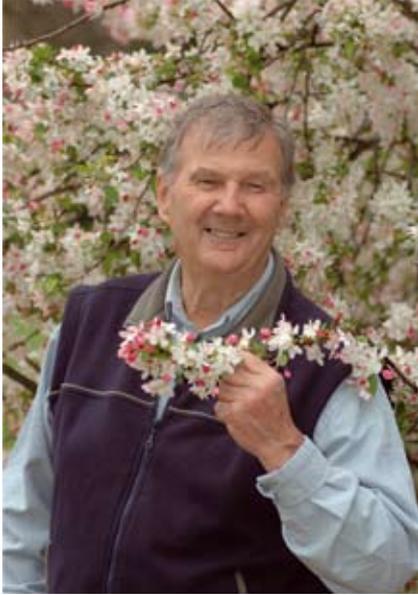
objections over bias to be heard. There are none with programs such as *Border Security*. Worse still was that what was presented to viewers as an independent documentary program was in fact used as part of a government propaganda campaign to defend the indefensible.

Bob Burton is a freelance journalist and the managing editor of *SourceWatch*, an online wiki-based database on the global PR and lobbying industry. Material for this article was adapted from his book *Inside Spin—The dark underbelly of the PR industry*, Allen & Unwin.

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Not Peter Cundall's bloomin' lot



Peter Cundall will continue to campaign for the Tasmanian environment.

SO, WE'VE HAD OUR BLOOMING LOT and not just for this week! Peter Cundall has retired from the ABC's Gardening Australia but, of course, he has not really retired but will continue to broadcast on ABC radio, write about gardening and actively participate in his community in northern Tasmania. He is also writing an autobiography which should be fascinating to read, as his life resembles a story from Boys Own Annual. Born into a poverty stricken community in the north of England, Peter grew up in an environment where the people he knew were all communists. They were committed to economic justice for themselves and their families at a time when economic depression brought misery to many.

Peter was active during the Second World War, employed as a messenger darting about during bombing raids; in the post-war occupation in Europe he was imprisoned in Yugoslavia following an inadvertent border crossing in pursuit of a beautiful girl. He makes light of six

months solitary confinement though it can't have been easy for an active, and romantic, nineteen year old.

Keen to leave the army and the deprivation of post-war Britain, Peter agreed to come to Australia to serve the military, but as a librarian, in NSW. Instead of the promised warm, cushy post he found himself in the frost and snow of Korea where the term "cold war" had real and uncomfortable meaning.

A keen gardener since childhood, once demobilised Peter turned from the destruction of war to the beauty, production and conservation of plants. As an apostle of horticulture Peter has spread his knowledge, skill and enthusiasm throughout Australia in his thirty eight years at Gardening Australia. We are so grateful for the gifts this splendid migrant has brought us: his passion for conservation, for healthy living, for commitment to a better society has enriched us all.

Gael Barrett

Friends Officers

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ABC Board; Mark Scott—ABC

Managing Director

CORRECTION—Kudelka's cartoon in News & Views Autumn 08 edition was first published in *The Australian*.

Friends Notices

T-shirt Sale



\$10 each. Phone or email FABC office for details.

FABC Help Form

It's time for FABC to update its information. Please help us by completing and returning promptly the form enclosed with this newsletter.

Booroondara Garden Night

Acorn Nursery, 673 Canterbury Road, Surrey Hills.

Wed 5 Nov 2008, 5.30–7.30pm

John Patrick of the ABC Garden Show will talk about plants and gardens. Cost \$15 per head. Delicious snacks and drinks will be served. Bookings essential, places limited. Plants for sale.

Terry Norris—Guest Speaker FABC 2008 AGM

Sun 9 November
Iwaki Auditorium, ABC Southbank
Meeting 2.15 for 2.30pm start
Guest speaker 3.30pm

John Cargher Commemoration

Victorian Opera is joining with Friends of the ABC in dedicating its Discover Victorian Opera 2009 seminar to John's life and music.

Tues 21 Oct 2008 at 6pm
Victorian Opera's home, Horti Hall,
31 Victoria Street
\$25 / \$20 concession

Bookings: Ticketmaster (booking fees apply at www.ticketmaster.com.au & 1300 723 038)

ABC Board Members

CHAIRMAN MAURICE NEWMAN—head of the Australian Securities Exchange (term expires 30 Dec 2011)

JANET ALBRECHTSEN—columnist with Murdoch's *The Australian* newspaper (term expires 24 Feb 2010)

STEVEN SKALA—vice-chairman of Deutsche Bank and board member of the right-wing Centre for Independent Studies (term expires 5 Oct 2010)

KEITH WINDSCHUTTLE—a leading protagonist in the 'history and culture wars' who disputed stories of the Aboriginal stolen generation (term expires 13 June 2011)

PETER HURLEY—a hotel owner and officer of the Australian Hotels Association which has close ties to the Liberal Party (term expires 13 June 2011)

MARK SCOTT (MDs automatically sit on the Board)—former advisor to former NSW Liberal minister and Fairfax editorial director; regularly refers to the national broadcaster as a great "brand" (term expires 4 July 2011).