

Historic Wollongong Conference



Discussing an issue at the Wollongong Conference are Liliane Leroy (NSW), Audrey Semon (Great Lakes) and Grahame Burns (Great Lakes)

FABC MEDIA RELEASE FOLLOWING THE CONFERENCE...

ABC Friends Sound Ominous Warning Bell

Friends of the ABC (NSW) have sounded warning bells that Australian broadcasting - radio, television and the net - would have to be alert and on guard as the next round of international trade talks approaches.

NSW FABC President, Penelope Toltz, said that in trade terms applying under GATS, the General Agreement on Trade in Services, the broadcasting service was a "commodity."

"We will also have to be very wary in negotiating a free trade agreement with the US to see that the ABC's stature and scope is not diminished in any way, by any degree," Mrs Toltz said.

"Of course trade agreements are vital, particularly to people on the land, but the danger is that the Australian 'commodity' could be traded away - sacrificed for unlimited access for a tidal wave of relatively inexpensive American material."

"In that event, with local content threatened, would local commercial stations continue to fund local drama productions?"

"For the ABC, its funding for drama and entertainment is basically rock bottom."

Continued on Page 13

Is It Time for a New Constitution?

"Why are we here?" was a rhetorical question raised at the Conference. Penelope Toltz offered this answer at the outset.

Why Are We Here? It's time we formalise our relationship with each other in our constitution. The first constitution I came across when I joined the Friends was extremely long and complicated and required 'translation' into easily understood English. Once we were incorporated a new constitution was needed. The then secretary, Hugh Sykes, and I were determined that it would be easily understood and as unambiguous as possible and it was written in 1997 with the help of Graham Wheeler, a lawyer specializing in law pertaining to non-profit organizations.

Now I happen to believe constitutions are living documents, not cast in stone. A constitution which is never amended would belong to an organization that fails to change and move forward with the times. Ours has already been amended from time to time.

But when it was written there was no mention of regional groups; in fact for many years Friends had single membership all over Australia. It is only in recent times with constant attacks on the ABC many groups began to spring up. In NSW we made our first amendment to include groups at our last AGM.

Now I hope at this conference some good amendments - some wonderful brainstorming - will move us ever further forward.

Conference Reports Pages 8, 9, 10



Come One,
Come All
to The Friends
Stall
at the

ABC Gardening Australia Live Exhibition

The Sydney Showgrounds

Homebush Bay

10:00 - 6:00

Thursday, 26 September

Friday, 27 September

Saturday, 28 September

Sunday, 29 September

Volunteers interested in assisting on the stall
please call Gary Cook 0404 829 372

GRANNY SMITH FESTIVAL,

EASTWOOD

SATURDAY, 19 OCTOBER

9.00 AM - 4.30 PM

VISIT THE FRIENDS OF THE ABC STALL

MERCHANDISE, INFORMATION,
MEMBERSHIP FORMS

Your Friends Need YOU

to go out and recruit!

Start a new Friends' branch in your neighbourhood.

Regional NSW has 13 branches! Sydney has one - at Parramatta, a lively and active one - it even has an orchestra!

But what about the northern Peninsula? Shouldn't there be a St. George & Sutherland Shire Branch?

What about the North Shore? And surely there must be ABC friends in the eastern suburbs?

Go Forth & Multiply!

Contact FABC (NSW) to find out how.
Phone. 9990 0600 and speak slowly or
check our website: www.fabc.org.au/nsw

What is the FABCList?



FABCList is like a community notice board. Anyone can pin-up a notice (e-mail) and everybody in the Friends' community (e-mailers who subscribe) can read the notice (by e-mail).

This is a great forum for late breaking news, information, opinions and debate amongst like minds ie, lovers of the ABC.

To join the List, send an e-mail to:

fabclist@optusnet.com.au

with **SUBSCRIBE** as the only entry in the Subject line and your full name and phone number in the body of the e-mail.

Every Friday FABC issues a Digest of the daily postings on the List. To join the List Digest send an e-mail to: fabclist@optusnet.com.au with **SUBSCRIBE DIGEST** as the only entry in the Subject line and your full name and phone number in the body of the e-mail.

To post a message to FABCList, send an e-mail to: fabclist@optusnet.com.au

Please enter the topic in the Subject line and your name at the end of the message. All messages go via the FABCList Moderator so in some cases there may be a delay before your message is broadcast.

Of course, you can leave the List at any time. Send an e-mail to: fabclist@optusnet.com.au with **UNSUBSCRIBE** as the only entry in the Subject line.

For further information about the FABCList visit the FABC NSW Web site: <http://www.fabc.org.au/nsw>

President's Report

Friends of the ABC, what a great change it has been in the last couple of months to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, instead of lobbying, fighting and criticising!

I was privileged to be invited to the launch of the new transmitter which brings NewsRadio to the Central Coast district of New South Wales which was held on the actual anniversary 1st July 2002. I took a surprise anniversary cake for the staff, listeners and supporters who attended and it was a wonderful occasion.

On 21st July, Central Coast Friends of the ABC held a 70th anniversary of the ABC which was well attended. A cake was produced and a wonderful afternoon of music and song celebrated the ABC again.

The following week there was a celebration by the Blue Mountains Friends of the ABC with special guests *Radio National's* Rachel Kohn and *7.30 Report's* Kerry O'Brien. They both gave very inspiring speeches with Rachel's showing a flare for comedy previously hidden. The attendance was so great that afternoon tea had to be moved to a bigger room.

Parramatta Friends of the ABC held a 70th anniversary celebration 1st September and Illawarra Friends are holding an anniversary dinner at the end of September with special guest, Richard Morecroft.

I would like to congratulate all our regional groups for maintaining their activities during this time. More about our regional conference appears elsewhere in Update.

Penelope Toltz

As Good As His Word



Regional Australia is to be the source of new ABC national programs called, at present, the Regional Debates.

Wagga Wagga will be the host for the first of a series of six public debates, humorous ones, on issues relevant to local audiences.

The programs were announced by ABC managing director, Russell Balding, in Wagga Wagga where he went to mark the ABC's 70th Birthday in July, to emphasise the ABC's commitment to regional radio broadcasting.

They will feature live audiences, a moderator and two teams, each featuring three local personalities.

Mr Balding said the ABC had done this sort of thing before, but only in the coastal capitals.

"This time we're going around country Australia, and we're starting it off here in the Riverina, in Wagga Wagga," Mr Balding told the birthday audience there.

"We hope to uncover fresh Riverina talent and expose new comedy via ABC Local Radio. The debates will be replayed as part of the ABC's new national Saturday/Sunday evening line-up."

Mr Balding said (July) the new programs would commence "in the next two to three months."

"The importance of ensuring that local content is in the program mix cannot be overstated."

"It's our role to be the place where views are exchanged not just between neighbours with common interests, but between the cities and the regions."

"To understand the country, you have to capture the special qualities of Australia that lie beyond the capital cities. Not having and broadcasting their voices and stories would be the nation's loss."

"The ABC's presence in regional Australia has more to do with the nation's history and the necessity of communications than about strength of audience numbers."

"Let us not forget how vast Australia is. That places a critical demand on the public broadcaster...we must ensure that communities isolated by geography are not also isolated from communications."

"We also have an obligation to the future. It's critical that the ABC continues to remain relevant in a forever changing broadcasting and media landscape and continues to grow its audiences by delivering quality, distinctive and comprehensive broadcasting services to all Australians - no matter where they live."

UPDATE: The ABC advised as we went to press that the next two Regional Debates would be recorded in Bunbury, WA and Rockhampton, Qld.



Three generations of ABC fans, and members of the Friends', help celebrate ABC's 70th birthday at the Central Coast. The cake is on the right.



After Rambo, A Team Player

FABC Spokesperson, Darce Cassidy, takes stock of a transition, and finds that the contrast between Jonathan Shier and Russell Balding could hardly be greater. But many problems remain the same.

Shier was impulsive, impatient and interventionist. Balding's style is calm, cautious and collaborative. Shier took the view that the ABC required a massive shakeup. Balding appears to be taking a steady as she goes approach. But - while internal threats to the ABC seem to have diminished, external threats are growing.

As the electronic media move into an era of rapid change, the ABC has been crippled by twenty years of cuts to its budget for basic radio and television services.

With a possible merger of Foxtel and Optus, pay television could grow rapidly; the internet is still growing, and new digital broadcasting channels could dwarf the ABC's output. The ABC could be relegated to the sidelines.



Without additional funds, ABC management faces a difficult choice. There will be pressures, and no doubt temptations, to go down the commercial road. That might provide funds, but it would lead to the loss of the ABC's purpose and identity. There is no point in taking that road.



Without additional funds, the ABC could support its new media (eg Internet and Digital TV) output by stripping resources from its already stretched traditional broadcasting services, but robbing Peter to pay Paul will just lead to a reduction in quality.

Over the next six months the ABC's funding for the next triennium will be decided. Opinion polls clearly show that taxpayers are willing to pay more for the ABC. We need to remind the government of that.

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HERITAGE TOUR OF "YARALLA"

On Sunday, 29 September, The Friends, in conjunction with the Concord Heritage Society, have arranged a series of guided tours of the historic Yaralla Estate (adjoining Concord Hospital).

Tours of the mansion will be of about 40 minutes duration. Each tour will have a maximum of 20 people. We have booked 5 tours, so with a ceiling on numbers of 100, it is important to book early to ensure a place.

Tours will depart at the following intervals:

11.30 am / 11.45 am / 12.15 pm / 12.30 pm / 1.00 pm

Payment in advance is requested

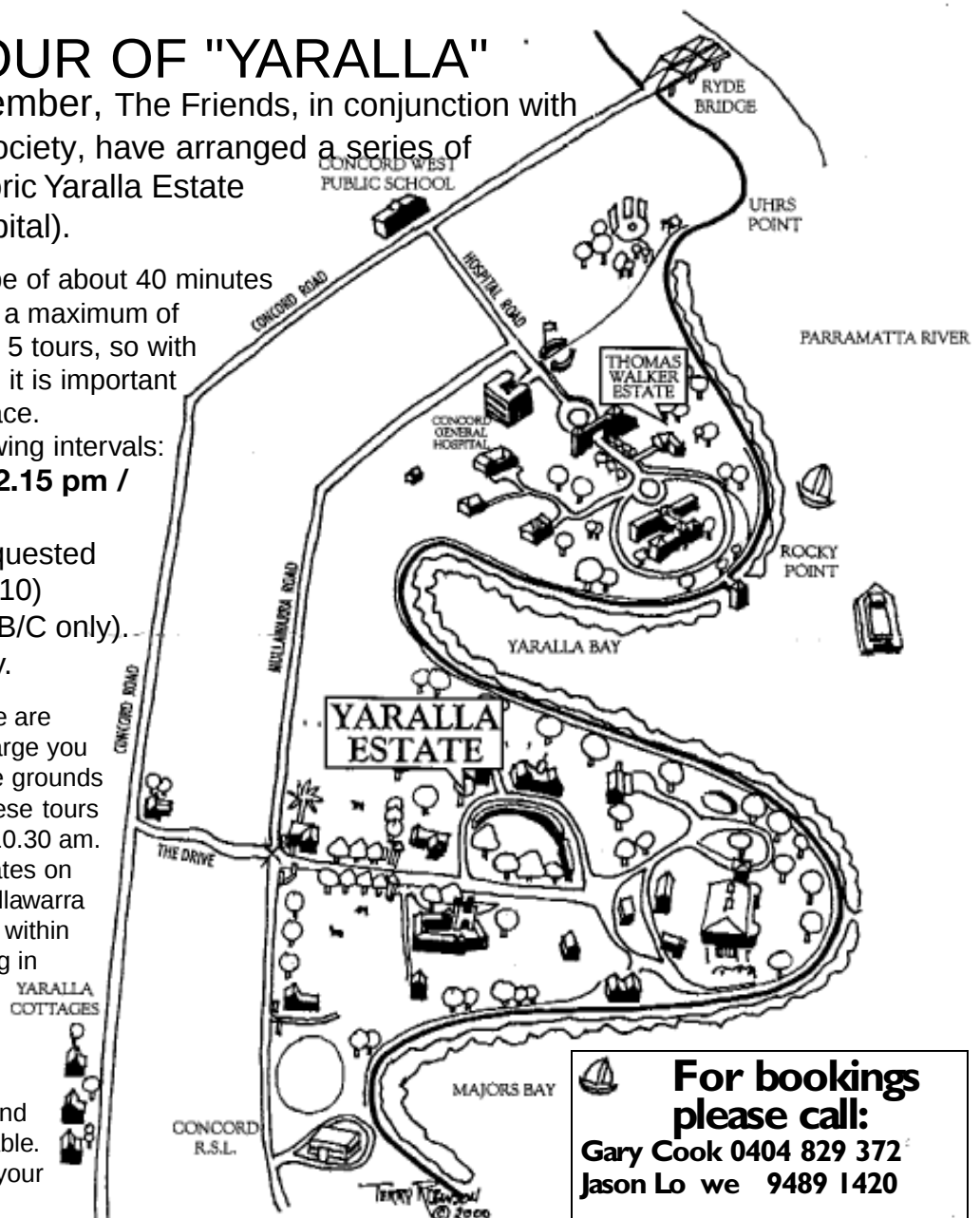
(Adult \$15, Concession \$10)

by credit card (M/C, Visa, B/C only).

Entry will be by ticket only.

The grounds of Yaralla Estate are extensive. For no additional charge you can join a conducted tour of the grounds (starting from the mansion). These tours leave at regular intervals from 10.30 am. Entry to the Estate is via the gates on the corner of The Drive and Nullawarra Rd. Limited parking is available within the grounds. Alternative parking in nearby streets.

Barbecue lunches and soft drinks can be purchased from Concord Rotary Club's Trailer and Devonshire teas are also available. You are also welcome to bring your own food and refreshments.

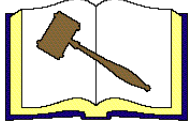


**For bookings
please call:**
Gary Cook 0404 829 372
Jason Lo we 9489 1420

The more things change, the more they - you know what...

Even though the ABC is not in the news every day, as it was during the Shier period, it is still under attack.

For example: so far unreported elsewhere (September), proposed changes to ABC editorial policy now before the board, with nasty implications for freedom of journalists within the ABC, are contained in a report 100 pages long. Even wading through it will be monumental.



A new beaucracy to answer editorial complaints?

One component recommends setting up a whole new bureaucracy, largely independent of program makers, to answer editorial complaints! Who thinks up these proposals? So lengthy is it, it's the sort of document that gets acted on before it is widely understood, particularly outside the ABC. Surely there is a distinct lack of transparency here?

Capacity for in-depth reporting lessened

Another example and another problem: programs like the *7.30 Report* now have half the number of journalists they used to, so the story

turn-around is quicker and the capacity for in-depth reporting, is lessened.

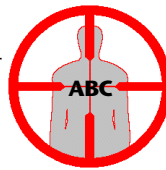
Another worrying feature is the international trade agreements Australia is hoping to sign - treaties in which Australian broadcasting, including cinema, may be regarded as just another negotiable commodity.

What might this do to Australian content and to public service broadcasting? One of our members, Jill Keogh, is researching the detail and we're also in touch with the Public Advocacy Centre.

We will almost certainly need to make a submission to government in the future. Hopefully these events will not come to pass, but some politicians are not as concerned about the ABC as we are.

Members must remain vigilant

So, if the price of freedom is eternal vigilance, members cannot allow theirs to flag during non-election years and quiet periods, mistakenly thinking the ABC is no longer under threat.



Penelope Toltz

An occasional program guide to what's on...

Keeping up to date with ABC New Media, Online and Interactive programming is compulsory only for some, but age-wise it can certainly be 'cool' - here are some tips.

Mixy's New Deal for Junior Viewers

Mixy? Mixy, an ABC media release says, is not only everyone's favourite pink rabbit, but now has a new virtual hutch at ABC Online

"<http://abc.net.au/children/mixy>"

This means children can log on any time to visit Mixy and play on a highly interactive site with the Mixy toy box filled with new and old interactive games and toys, including *Carrot Pie* to help Grandma bake one, *Where's Mixy?* and others - like the *Dress Up Mixy* and *Colour Me* games. Site visitors also see Mixy ditties brought to life with an animated Mixy singing her much-loved poems.

Mixy is the host of ABC Kids Video Lounge which now also features clips of *Bananas in Pyjamas* and clips from *Playschool*, *Sesame Street* and *Our Animals* and others.

Mixy's interactive site also incorporates e-cards, a guest book, a picture gallery of paintings from the audience and print and colour activities. Is Mixy sometimes lonely? Mixy now receives regular access of between 75,000 and 80,000 hits per week.

A Radio First

A new ABC radio station, DiG

It's the ABC's first internet-only radio station, online since July, offering listeners a stream of diverse music and audio features on demand, such as reviews, interviews and interactive content - DiG as in digital, but pronounced as in 'shovel'.

Early days yet, but it's designed to ultimately be the richest experience for people who love music but are into getting the kind they want from other ABC radio services or from the commercial sector.

Listen to DiG Radio for a mix of great sounds - blues, soul, roots, 'world', jazz, rock and all that's in between. Listen to DiG for new releases, concerts and other stuff you may not hear elsewhere. DiG!

No Frontiers for Radio National

Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) were so impressed by a Radio National program they used it for their August appeal. A Radio Eye feature, *Beyond the Cane Fence: Letters from Uganda*, focused on a young Australian doctor, Marnie Fraser, who worked for the organisation in western Uganda.

Through interviews and Marnie's emails the program explores the challenges, fears and complexities of life for an expatriate doctor in a country where disaster lies just beyond the cane fence. Impressed by the warts and all portrayal of the work, Médecins Sans Frontières sought and received ABC permission

to use the feature as part of its appeal mail out to 58,000 doctors. Duplicating so many CDs was costly, but such was the convincing power of the program.



It was produced by Sharon Davis, technical production, Steven Tilley.

from *abcXchange*,
July 22, 2002

Around the Branches

Northern Rivers

The Northern Rivers FABC branch has conducted a poetry competition to celebrate the ABC's 70 years of broadcasting. Entries closed on the last day of August, and winners are to perform their works at the 'Live Poets in Lismore' on Wednesday 18 September.

For winning entries see the branch web site.
www.users.brigpond.com/webformation/freindsabcnr

David Hallett's poem for the ABC's birthday is already on the net. The branch website will refer readers on to it.

The Branch meets regularly in Lismore and has sub-branches at Nimbin and Byron Bay. It is looking at adding another one by establishing a Tweed Valley sub-branch.



John Derum, president of the Blue Mountains Branch, Rachael Kohn of Radio National and Kerry O'Brien enjoying the Blue Mountain's function held to celebrate ABC's 70th birthday.

Parramatta What a swell party!

Parramatta joined in the almost monthly celebrations by Friends' branches to celebrate the ABC's 70th, but they did so with such style and panache they raised the bar and shifted the goal posts. Happy Birthday backed by an 80-piece orchestra!

The afternoon of September 1st was due to begin in Parramatta Town Hall at 2.30 with an orchestral recital by The Occasional Performing Sinfonia, conducted by branch President, Mal Hewitt and highlights from opera, with four soloists from the Australian Opera. The afternoon program included Mozart, Donizetti, The Magic Flute, Samson and Delilah, Romeo and Juliet, Carmen, West Side Story and G&S and a massed rendition of Happy Birthday!

Slated next: jazz and 'nibbles' for all and a forum for the audience to discuss the role of the ABC in western Sydney. The wrap-up at 6pm was a folk singing session.

Blue Mountains

A High Tea - Mountain High Birthday Celebrations
Rachael Kohn, Kerry O'Brien, Guests of Honour



Kerry O'Brien, Penelope Toltz and Rachael Kohn at Blue Mountains celebrating 70th birthday of the ABC

More than 120 people joined Blue Mountains 'Friends' at the Hydro Majestic for a 70th birthday for the ABC, July 27. After High Tea, guests heard from Penelope Toltz, outlining a history of the 'Friends' and stressing that the FABC did not support any political party. Its diverse membership mirrored Australian society's diversity.

The ABC, citizenship and democracy were entwined, she said. Politicians owed us explanations and there must be transparency and freedom of information.

Responding, Kerry said that after heated political interviews, he often received protests from both sides of the political spectrum, each suggesting he had favoured the other. He said he had no political agenda; his only aim was excellence.

He noted that although Jonathan Shier had gone, the board that appointed him was still there, with the same executive team, and he expressed the hope that Russell Balding turned out to be the kind of manager the ABC needed. He also stressed the importance of Friends of the ABC's support, as having helped head off some of the worst possible outcomes of the past.

Kerry said that in a memo leaked last June, Senator Alston had devoted one page to strategy to be followed before the ABC's public support base could be activated. Triennial funding, Kerry added, was as susceptible to overt and covert forms of political pressure as it ever had been.

Rachael Kohn, of Radio National's *'The Spirit of Things'* capped the party with a witty address, full of religious analogies. She said that TV and radio were religiously separated, with radio representing the puritans of the air, the 'people of the books'. She saw programs like hers as a way to help us break out of the 'narrow road we construct for ourselves and to make life more joyful, wondrous and challenging.'

How to spot a dodgy argument

Since Jonathan Shier left last October the ABC has settled down to a period of consolidation and stability under the managing directorship of Russell Balding. Consequently, the ABC has dropped off the front pages of the newspapers.

However, a steady drip of malevolence in the opinion pages has not let up. The tired old themes are trotted out ad nauseam, with no more justification than they ever had.

We need to understand these people and recognise the tricks of sophistry they use. Here are some tips on how to identify false argument and how to strengthen your letters to the editor in rebuttal.

(We are indebted to Margaret O'Connor ACT for the research behind this article.)

Many columnists critical of the ABC use techniques which are actually abuses of argument. They may affect clever, witty and even convincing writing styles, but this covers up their failure to construct valid arguments. The following are examples of fallacious arguments which readers should be aware of when analysing comment about the ABC (or for that matter, any other issues).

1. PERSUADER WORDS

That is words such as: obvious/obviously, plain/plainly, clear/clearly, sure/surely and undoubted/undoubtedly.

'Balding clearly does not have the media experience or tough personality required to run the wide con-federation of personalities that make up the ABC.'

Clearly McDonald is not up to the job and should go.'

MIKE NAHAN, Exec Director
Institute of Public Affairs,
The Australian 30/5/02

The writer is saying that the situation is clear to anybody with any sense. The words clearly and obviously are being used to prevent further thought, and suggest that only fools could not agree with the statements.

2. EMOTIVE LANGUAGE

An attempt to influence people by words which appeal to their feelings,

or which awaken particular associations. It is often abusive.

'The Inmates Are Still Running The Asylum.'

Media Watch is back trashing its competitors in the private media with bile and junk journalism.'

Both: Mike Nahan
The Australian 30/5/02

3. AD HOMINEM attacking the person

A personal attack on an individual, organisation or program which endorses a viewpoint.

Like the use of emotive language, it is an easy and superficially persuasive approach, but not grounded in fact and reason. Think carefully. It's usually non-sense.



"McDonald has come to resemble Sergeant Schultz in the old American sitcom Hogan's Heroes, with his regular utterances of "I know nothing. I see nothing, I hear nothing."

Mike Nahan
The Australian 30/5/02

"The ABC has been the Toorak and Mosman Broadcasting Corporation for a while now. It has sacrificed even the pretence at real quality to being a class - based broadcaster. It is a broadcaster of respectable junk, aimed at a middle class that only feels comfortable watching a soap opera if it's disguised as costume drama or given the alibi of a 'classic' novel."

Tony Moore and McKenzie Wark
The Age 3/7/00

In this last example, Moore and Wark have managed to combine two personal attacks in one paragraph! The first against the ABC and the second against its viewers, implying that if you are an ABC viewer, you are by definition a boring old fuddy duddy.

4. AD POPULUM

Appeal to the people, the masses. It exploits the need to belong, to be accepted, to be like everyone else, and hold the views of the majority.

The Ad Populum technique exploits the assumption that if most

people hold a certain viewpoint, then it must be the right one.

"Tired of being told you're a red-neck racist because you don't believe illegal immigrants should be permitted to break the law and get away with it? Well, take heart, you're in the majority, your views are those of the wider community and you have the sympathy of influential people in Europe and the US."

"This is not, of course, what you will hear when you listen to the ABC or read the broadsheet press, but don't let that alarm you. The views expressed by the ABC's commentators and given prominence in the broadsheets are those of the minority: a minority here and internationally."

PIERS AKERMAN
Daily Telegraph 5 /2/02

5. AD VERECUNDIAM Appeal to Authority

In addition to exploiting the Ad Populum technique, Akerman also uses an appeal to authority when he asserts that his viewpoint is shared by 'influential people in Europe and the US'.

By Margaret O'Connor and Joan Laing
To be concluded in the next issue.

References used are to:

1. *Clear Thinking* (Ingilis & Lewis, Collins Educational Ltd.)
2. www.aniota.com/~jwhite/words.html

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"Update" includes material from the South Australian 'Friends' publication "Background Briefing" compiled and edited by Joan Laing. In "Update" this material is credited as:

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EDITOR



Historic Meeting: Laying out the Background...Setting the Future

NSW President Penelope Toltz sets the scene for delegates in Wollongong for the first State conference of NSW and Regional Friends of the ABC.

When I joined the Friends (1996) state membership was small with branches in Port Macquarie, Armidale, Bega and Eurobodalla. The last three were constituted as separate bodies and Eurobodalla was also incorporated.

Those branches are still not members of the state body; they're not on our database; we don't know their members to contact or the size of their memberships. That's not to complain about our colleagues – that's just the way things are. But at our last committee meeting there was discussion about changes to insurance and the need to belong to NSW to benefit from its umbrella cover. So that puts the matter up for review. (A question of privacy also arises, but I'll come to that.)

From 1977 onward new branches started in Bathurst, Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Great Lakes, Illawarra, Newcastle, Northern Rivers, Orange and Parramatta - all as regional parts of the state body and at the last AGM they were specifically included in the constitution.

Friends Go bush

As for their motivation, in the last six years attacks on the ABC reached a level not seen since 1976 when Malcolm Fraser began using funding cuts to try to keep the ABC in line. It seems it was the constancy and savagery of the attacks of the last six years that caused ABC audiences in regional and rural NSW to become involved as never before.

I realized how important ABC radio and television is to regional, rural and remote Australians. We now have more members in NSW than the Democrats.

With "courting the bush" has become a favourite Federal Government past time, I was delighted to receive phone calls from regional areas asking how to begin branches.

During the last election campaign, Friends in marginal seats lobbied their local MPs and other candidates and local groups also held "Meet the Candidate" evenings for people to ask questions of the candidates - democracy at the grass roots.

But we are not party political. Members cannot and must not advocate a vote for any particular party.



You can belong to any party you like – naturally, but you cannot lobby for that party under the Friends of the ABC's banner. Political lobbying means dealing with politicians from all parties and independents. It does not involve advocating one side or another. FABC membership is as diverse as the Australian population.

Tick that Box

Now we come to the privacy issue. We at state level know that you know your areas better than we do. So, regional groups have only a loose arrangement with the state body, but it makes sense for NSW and NSW groups to know about each other, to share information and access for efficiency and maximum effectiveness.

But contact is blocked by the privacy laws. We and they can't disclose anything about members, not even to each other, without their permission.

So - for the moment sign up people in your area as Friends of the ABC (NSW) Inc. branch. But please note the new Membership Form includes a sentence that says "Give my details to my local FABC."

If you make sure people tick and sign it, (assuming they're agreeable), then our Membership Secretary will email or mail the new local members' names back to you as members also of your branch, so we all know.

They should understand that the exchange of names is only between us and the branch, for mutual benefit - theirs included.

So, new members please tick that box! And current members, when you renew, please tick the appropriate box on your renewal letter.



Groups should run their own race

But let me also stress that the NSW branch has always felt regional and rural groups should run their own race and activities appropriate to their own particular areas.

If there are ideas that worked well for you, share them with the rest of us. We can mention them in Update and if you have your own newsletter, we'd love to receive a copy of that too. As well, we're all connected to the net; so we can help and encourage each other if we stay in touch.

Going National

The National Body is a loose grouping: state presidents or representatives meet at an annual conference to decide policy on a national level, national lobbying and national submissions to parliament during triennial funding discussions and the like.

Rural and regional branches communicate with the state branch and if the problem is national, then the state branches communicate with each other for a national response if that's what's needed.

To avoid being at cross purposes, it's preferable that local branches ask for help if information from another State branch is needed. We can go to that branch. If regional branches contact other state branches, none of us will know what is going on.

So I believe a most important feature of this weekends' regional conference is the cross fertilization of information and ideas. It is easy to feel isolated and alone with a small committee and just a few people doing most of the work.

But learning from each other, we will avoid re-inventing the wheel and we will considerably increase our knowledge banks.

Conference: Delegates' consensus sets tone for AGM

The minutes of the two-day conference require more space than Update can give them. Instead, they are on our website: <http://www.fabc.org.au/nsw>. Here's an extract, including proposed constitutional changes to convert FABC NSW Inc into a Branch, and the setting up of a state executive, but not to overwhelm local branch autonomy.

Conference Outcomes

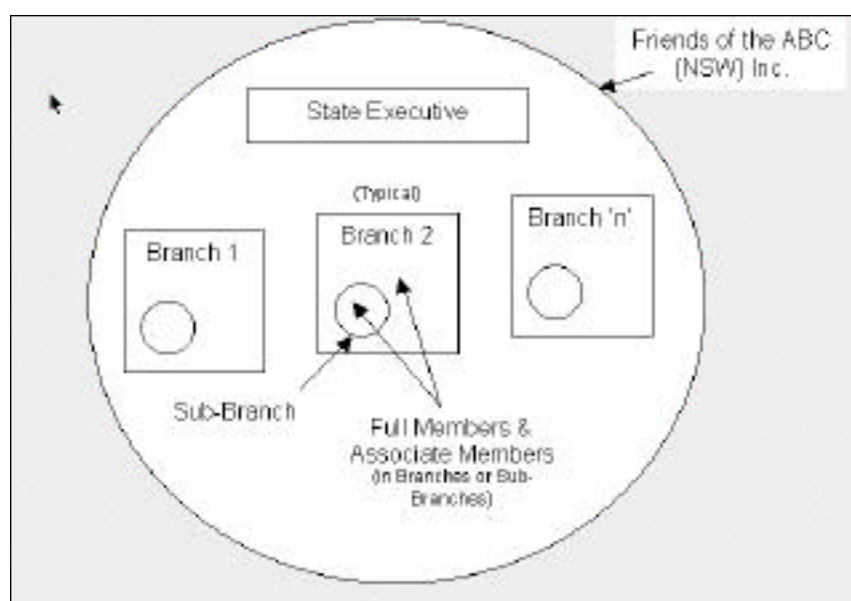
It was agreed to present the conference outcomes as recommendations, under three broad headings:

Constitutional - structure, legal requirements etc.

Policies - focus on approach to specific issues eg, fundraising, membership etc.

Processes - focus on operations, how things are done, how policies are implemented.

The structure of the Friends of the ABC (NSW) Inc. will be restructured as follows:



The FABC (NSW) Inc. shall consist of: • State Executive • Branches • Sub-branches • Members of NSW Branch (full members) • Associate members.

As far as practicable, all areas of NSW will be covered by a Branch to which all members shall nominally belong.

- All Branches shall be affiliated with FABC (NSW) Inc.
- Any non-affiliated Branches shall become affiliated within 12 months of the adoption of these changes.
- That geographical boundaries for Branches be determined as far as practicable on federal electoral boundaries.
- That all Branches be informed by the NSW Executive of FABC members in their catchment areas.
- Branches will adopt the provisions of the FABC (NSW) Inc. Constitution except where it is not practicable to do so (eg, in the case of distance, meeting frequency etc).
- Branches may adopt special local rules which depart from the NSW Constitution due to special needs. Such rules to be submitted to the FABC (NSW) executive.
- Specifically, that Sect. 11(d) & 11 (e) of the NSW Constitution be adopted for the purposes of Branch financial accountability, substituting 'branch' for 'association' where applicable.
- Funds specifically nominated for the FABC (NSW) Inc. will be forwarded to the NSW Executive.
- Branches shall have office bearers elected in accordance with Sect. 11 of the NSW Constitution, whilst sub-branches will have a 'convenor' elected at the Branch AGM.
- Branches shall keep minutes of meetings, records of membership (full & associate) and financial records in accordance with Sect. 11 of the NSW Constitution.

ATTENTION: New Members

It is important that you tick the box in the Membership Form which says: "Give my details to my local FABC". This is so that we can have your closest Friends' Branch contact you. This is necessary due to privacy regulations.

Things they said - warts, aspirations and all



The Regional Conference was a forum for points of view - perceptive and passionate.

Twenty-seven delegates from ACT branch, Armidale, Bega, Bathurst, Central Coast, Great Lakes. Hunter, Illawarra, Northern Rivers and NSW Friends (Inc) attended the two-day conference, beginning with a quick round robin of what delegates' expectations were of the ABC in, say 2010.

Responses ranged from 'a powerhouse of quality local production - drama, light entertainment, opera and ballet' to retaining its role as 'a beacon of excellence and a repository of our cultural history' - *Beth Spratt (Illawarra)*.

What did others have to say, foreshadow or grizzle about? *Hank Willems (Newcastle)* expressed an anxiety "to protect the ABC from governments running it by stealth, or endeavouring to."

Neville Jennings (Northern Rivers) wanted to see the ABC rebuild its production facilities and upgrade its archival processes - "at present it's not possible to do a decent retrospective from them" he said, "as well, a measure of its strength will be its traditional role as a training 'institute' for people in the media."

Jason Lowe (NSW) wanted a return to the peak strengths displayed in the past of general local programming, particularly current affairs. Since the Opera House rally we are seen and treated as a stronger lobbying group.

Norah Taylor (Bathurst) was concerned that post-Shier, people would sit back relaxed that issues were on the ebb - "which is simply not the case." Similarly, *Jennifer Jones (Illawarra)*: "the independence of the ABC seems okay for now, but I don't trust 'them'," she said. Jennifer pressed for more production staff and more funding. (She too was concerned that archival material was "in disarray.")

For *Grahame Burns (Great Lakes)* the issue ten years hence was for sufficient funding for the ABC to continue doing the things commercial radio doesn't. He added that it would be nice if Great Lakes was able to receive NewsRadio. (He also hoped Juanita Phillips would still be reading ABC News in 2010.)

Audrey Semon (Great Lakes) hoped funding never faltered to maintain ABC transcripts online - "an important service which even now needs more money to expand."

Peter Burke (NSW): "The ABC should concentrate and strengthen all the things it does best." *Peter Youll (NSW)*: "Local content to increase - program diversity to expand."

Dev Webber (NSW): an end to the loss over the years of talented people who'd had their foundation in the ABC, "suitable funding to ensure greater retention of talent."

Liliane Leroy (NSW) hoped that by 2010 the Nolan Rules applied to Board appointments with the ABC's editorial independence still a paramount requirement.

Jenny Forster (NSW) between now and 2010 - "more relevance to youth and 'ethnic' Australia - more funding for rural radio - more funding for more training for more young people."

Valerie Sharman (Central Coast) stressed the need to turn around the permanent sense of dread regarding the ABC always "waiting around for something (bad) to happen."

To her colleague *Ann Marshall* calendars and 2010 were irrelevant - the independence of the ABC was a permanent issue and "the ABC is absolutely necessary for a healthy democracy."

For *Penelope Toltz* the Nolan Rules in choosing new ABC boards and more transparency were the issues; so too greater youth involvement, sustaining JJ,J bolstering ABC on the net as a youth forum" and adequate or even over-funding for in-house production to restore local comedy and drama, to its former peaks."

Gary Cook called for an end to "the slash and burn era" at the ABC, "Australia's greatest cultural institute" and seeing "its funding restored to proper levels, with its staff motivated, career paths before them and sufficiently well-paid to be stay - an ABC full of people acutely aware of their capacity and public and administrative support."

The last word on futurology fell to *Chris Cartledge* and his Illawarra colleagues, closing the round robin with a

broad-brush summary and a compelling picture of "the ABC as a beacon of excellence and a repository of our cultural history"...particularly at crucial times - continual awareness - vigilance - pressure applied in marginal electorates - 2010 and a universal coverage and relevance to age, geography and culture - cultural diversity - youth and Triple J - an incubator of talent - a powerhouse of development - a training facility - an ABC with production funding and facilities for local content restored.

And not a voice was raised in dissent.

The Conference Core Resolution

That all groups within NSW be reformed as follows: NSW Friends of the ABC Inc be restructured as the Sydney branch; all members in NSW will belong to a branch operating under the umbrella of NSW

Friends of the ABC, to be managed at State level by an Executive Committee elected at the AGM; it will be the duty of certain executive members to liaise and act as a contact point between the executive and particular branches to exchange information and points of view.

New branches will be formed (particularly in Sydney because of the city's size) and other places to conform with this structure. Proposal to be put to the next NSW Annual General Meeting.

Proposed by Hank Willems (Newcastle), Agreed unanimously by consent.

The Lesson of the Missing Cast or Where Did All the Drama Go?

The Shier era is mercifully behind us. Former ABC drama producer and formidable Staff Association president, John Croyston, however, looks back in anger to a similar time when, he recalls, funding cuts imposed by the first Fraser government and ABC corporate strategies cost the ABC dearly - an historic loss.

The Fraser cuts coincided with a management strategy to bypass in-house production and contract it out - an early manifestation of economic rationalism and globalisation. (The BBC were setting us an example by preparing to retrench field production staff and rehire them as free-lancers, as it did.)

The then ABC TV Program Controller, John Cameron, decided to meet the budget cut targets with the new corporate strategy, emasculating in-house drama production, and renting ABC facilities and technical staff to outside 'producers' - or staff and/or programs would have to be cut,' was the argument. Simultaneously, independent outside producers were campaigning for a reduction in ABC in-house production, to open the ABC up to outside program makers and other providers.

The industrial battle that followed, which the staff lost, played its part in stimulating the emergence of Friends of the ABC. (Out of even the worst of circumstances, some thing good often arises!); but in-house ABC production was dealt a blow from which it has never quite recovered.

How different things might have been had not ABC strategy and Fraser funding cuts coincided.

John Cameron was so enthusiastic about the proposed new system and its advantages to management, as he perceived them, he presumed to win staff over with the extraordinary argument that once permanent producers were terminated the consequent freeing up of studios for hire would fund the purchase of programs from outside the ABC.



The Staff Association was not persuaded, it recognised the ultimate consequence of the proposed scheme and went on strike. Management claimed the strike was over money, as managements do, but the battle for production was lost.

Producers were contracted, in-house production virtually ceased. There is no call any longer for in-house producers, programs are bought or co-produced, with the ABC providing facilities; producers are not required on staff. The ABC exists as a 'venue' for outside programs and program makers, a channel for hire. It continues to exist because of News and Current Affairs on television and because of Country Radio, Radio National and News Radio. If these things were to go the way of Television program production, then the ABC will go - to black.

John Croyston was a director, producer and editor in the Drama Dept of the ABC for more than 25 years; was an official of the NSW Staff Association for more than 10 years, and Federal President of the Association in 1978.



Friends Saddened by Tim Flynn's Death.

The loss of NewsRadio's gravel-voiced sports broadcaster, Tim Flynn, aged 54, came as a shock to listeners as surprising and unexpected, but his colleagues at NewsRadio were well aware of Flynn's battle with cancer and the little amount of time left to him.

Nonetheless the NewsRadio 'community' - a small, close-knit unit - was devastated when he died. Tim had insisted on working almost up until his death.

Friends of the ABC extend their sympathy to his family and friends, the NewsRadio crew and the rest of his ABC colleagues.

That robust voice, full of confident and bold assertions about all things sporting, is sorely missed.

Tim Flynn joined NewsRadio soon after the station started in 1994.

A Victorian, who began his broadcasting career in Hobart, he was on commercial radio in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney as well and handled publicity and special events in Melbourne for the Nine network.

His first love, however, was WA where he first made his mark as an AFL caller and hosted Channel Seven's 'World of Football' Perth, where he died in hospital in June.



Cartoon courtesy of Background Briefing

"Must carry" is a must or the ABC could be disastrously sidetracked

Corporate spokesman, Shane Wells, spells out a corporate concern - and wariness. So should we all be wary. A new law is a must.

The ABC believes it is important that all of the services provided by the publicly-funded national broadcaster are - should be - available on all distribution platforms in Australia.

At present SBS TV, ABC Channel 2 and the digital channels - ABCKids and Fly - can be accessed on Optus cable TV, as can the commercial free-to-air networks. But this is not required by law. What's more as new media delivery 'platforms' become more accessible and popular, the mass audience may move towards them, leaving services delivered by old technology isolated.

Why? Because the new platforms will be delivered through a composite receiver apparatus such as a single set top box serving as a gateway for all kinds of services in addition to television. People will be able to access Online services, banking and other transactions, email, shopping, games and interactive services.

The ABC Marginalised?

Once these activities are well-established and the 'communication box' has become just another household appliance, people will have grown accustomed to using one remote control, to access a range of services, emailing, buying a product, or returning to a television program. If the ABC is not on that platform, people will need another device to access its services.

The need to move to a different piece of hardware may discourage people from turning to the ABC. as well as the cables and receivers that

supply these services are controlled by others, not the ABC.

The ABC has no means of gaining access to them, except by mutual agreement with the carriers - or through government regulation. The high demand and consequent high cost for access to the platforms could make it impossible for the ABC to be delivered on these platforms.

The ABC believes 'must carry' provisions should be included in the Broadcasting Services Act for all ABC national broadcasting and datacasting services, including the main ABC channel, multi-channels, radio stations, and associated interactive and enhanced services as well as future channels or services.

Shane Wells



'Must Carry' Lessons from Abroad.

Who will control the gateway to and from our homes? The householders or the locksmith?

Darce Cassidy takes comfort from Europe and the United States.

Channel 10 supports the ABC's push for 'must carry' legislation. The Ten Network's Executive Chairman, Nick Faloon, said of the proposed merger between Optus and Foxtel - this deal is not about pay TV. It's about buying a monopoly to take control of the gateway into people's homes.

So far, with a relatively low penetration of cable TV - 22% in Australia, compared with 55% in the UK and 80% in the US. this has not been much of an issue in Australia.

However, it has been bitterly fought in the US, where cable companies have demanded the right to lock out public broadcasters. The US government - and most European governments - have 'must carry' legislation, which compels cable companies to carry all free-to-air channels on their cable systems, alongside the pay channels for which viewers pay a premium.

US cable companies have challenged this legislation in the courts, arguing, paradoxically, that by refusing them the right to lock some broadcasters out of the delivery system, the government has infringed their rights to free speech.

The US Supreme Court has refused to buy this argument. In 1996 the Court found that the legislation served three important interests: the preservation of free local television, the promotion of widespread dissemination of information from a multiplicity of sources and the promotion of fair competition in the television market.

More recently, the Supreme Court threw out another attempt to strike out 'must carry' provisions. Commenting on this decision, the Association of Public TV Stations (representing non-profit broadcasters akin to our community broadcasters) said 'today's decision ... provides solid legal precedent for public television's efforts to gain access to other distribution technologies in the future.

While the US and most European countries have 'must carry' legislation, Australia does not.

Without similar legislation in Australia, the ABC and the SBS could find themselves marginalised.



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Multi channeling implications



Stuart Fist asks - who will pay the piper?

Ever since Australian television began in 1954 the audience has been convinced that more channels would automatically lead to more choice and a better range of program viewing. And in an ideal (or is that idealistic) world that would be so.

However the realities of commercial free-to-air television stations are otherwise. Double channels equal, roughly, double costs with advertising revenue remaining relatively static. (And what does that suggest about future program quality?)

It is not difficult to see why the owners of Nine and TEN networks are not, enamoured by the prospect of having multiple digital channels to fill.

Digital television transmission introduced changes to the system which are beyond the abilities of the present licensing structure to absorb without substantial modification. Australian television needs a complete re-think and it is likely that we will see a merger between free-to-air and pay-TV

operations.

But that in turn will modify the cosy relationship between the cable carriers Telstra/Optus and the pay-program providers within Foxtel. Why pay for cable transmission when the broadcasters are able to provide their own scrambled channels at a fraction of the price? The problem they still have is the cost of programs, since the commercial local production emphasis has been on sports and programs with only transient interest.

The ABC, of course, does its sums differently. Instead of revenues and profits, it calculates success in terms of viewer satisfaction. And its film-library must be full of home-made fictional series, documentaries, children's programs and education material, all of which can be transmitted on secondary channels without residuals. Many of the early imported BBC material also came with unlimited rerun rights.

So the ABC should be in a good position to handle multi-channel programming and, in fact, benefit more from these changes than the commercial networks.

MEDIA RELEASE
Continued from Page 1

The issue emerged at the NSW FABC's first state conference in Wollongong early August to identify future threats to the ABC and plan a Friends' response.

Ms Toltz said the ABC was Australia's most important cultural organisation and an essential part in any well-functioning democracy.

"To have it labeled a commodity like food or coal is ludicrous, a danger to freedom of expression and a threat to our ability to see ourselves as we should through our media," she said.

"Since the end of the unfortunate Shier era, 'battle-weary' Friends may not have been as publicly visible as before.

"But it's bit like a finely-tuned car fuelled and ready to go, just idling. As well, the rush to join Friends during the Shier's term was such we needed to look at our structure and organisational arrangements.



Complaints Dept. The ABC in the Hot Seat



Penelope Toltz puts listeners' questions and complaints to Radio National Head, Mark Collier.

Penelope: Mark, every so often, I get irate calls from members about "the amount of advertising on the ABC". Since we have no input on programming and our position, I explain, is to lobby for the ABC and to campaign against editorial intervention by governments of the day, or anyone else, I can only tell them to write to you. Most are Radio National listeners.

Their complaint seems to be that all the breaks in the programs mean that Radio National is catering for shorter attention spans, born of watching TV and that the ABC is encouraging the same thing in radio.

Mark Collier: Average time spent listening, or 'TSL', Penelope, is a measure taken eight times a year by A.C Nielsen on behalf of the ABC and commercial stations in all mainland state capital cities. TSL is one of the two factors (the other is 'reach' or the number of people listening) which determines the percentage share of listeners - the figures bandied about by radio stations each time a survey comes out (resulting in '2GB takes over from 2UE' and 'No-one listens to Radio National' type of newspaper headline.) Radio National's TSL is way below that of most other radio stations! Gasp!

Why is this so? It's the nature of our programming. People consume Radio National in the same way they watch TV, that is, they tune in for a specific program, tune out again, then tune back in again, and so on.

Most other stations enjoy what we call 'flow programming'; that is, listeners who enjoy talk or beautiful music or rock or whatever, know they can enjoy it on the same station pretty well all day and night. But Radio National ranges between current affairs and drama, music and

performance, features and specialist programs - a diversity of programming and a complementation of other media: requirements of the ABC through its charter. Radio National is a keystone in meeting those obligations, even though the programs are very diverse in genre and many appeal to comparatively small audiences.

But back to TSL. At the beginning of last year, the average time spent listening per week to Radio National in the five state capital cities was 6.3 hours. A year later (first quarter 2002) that had grown to 7.3 hours. One hour might not sound like a lot but that is an increase of 16% in the average time each listener tunes in to Radio National each week. There is a range of reasons for this, including, far better forward promotion of our programs so that people know what's coming up. We regard these 'promotional' spots for our programs as information pieces designed to better equip our listeners to help them make more informed decisions about their listening. We are not catering for shorter attention spans, in fact we are catering for 16% longer attention spans than just a year ago.

Penelope: From time to time we hear the plugs on Radio National and on 2BL for ABC shops products, unconnected to what we've just been listening to. You can see how my members can think this is the thin edge of the wedge.

Mark Collier: There is no 'wedge. Section 31 of the ABC Act permits the ABC to broadcast announcements of its activities comprising ABC programs and concerts, other public entertainments and services and ABC Enterprises, products and activities. The Act was changed some years ago enabling the Corporation to extend the life of its content through the production and sale of its merchandise. This led to the establishment of ABC Enterprises allowing the ABC to raise revenue to flow directly back into program making, thereby supplementing its public funding. Announcements about ABC activi-

ties are subject to the Corporation's editorial guidelines regarding content, style and tone applying to other program material. ABC Enterprises Product Guidelines ensure the 'products' are distinctively ABC in style and quality and that public perceptions about the ABC are satisfied.

Penelope: Another thing members complain about from time to time is poor grammar and poor pronunciations. There used to be a committee to handle this at the ABC, but members believe it went the way of many others in the various funding cuts.

Mark Collier: Not so, Penelope. SCOSE (the ABC's Standing Committee on Spoken English) is alive and well. The ABC conducts regular on-air checking and professional development forums to address issues of pronunciation and SCOSE, in addition, monitors grammar and pronunciation on all ABC outlets. It meets monthly and regularly sends out reports to presenters and broadcasters on correct language use and pronunciation.

Nevertheless, we welcome advice from our listeners (and viewers) when errors are made and these are passed on without fail to SCOSE for consideration and, where warranted, with advisory action to prevent repetition.

NOTE: This was not a scripted Dorothy Dix Q and A session, but an edited version of an authentic e-mail conversation between Mark and Penelope that developed from one enquiry.

The ABC's new staff-elected director of the ABC board, Ramona Koval (Books & Writing), currently away, will feature in the next issue of Update.

The ABC's Quiet Corner - but as productive and busy as a beehive

ABC shops and centers are this year celebrating their 21st birthday: one shop opened for business in 1981. They are now a corporate empire of many outlets with annual sales increases other retailers probably envy.

ABC Enterprises is a phenomenal success story: a commercial operation with 36 corporately-owned shops, an Online order and delivery service and 80 sales centres across the nation in existing retail outlets in CBDs and shopping malls. Two new shops will open shortly, one in Melbourne the other at East Gardens in Sydney, bringing the total of ABC shops to 38, with more planned.

It's one corner of the ABC that doesn't attract the wrath of politicians or board members, and rarely if ever a word of criticism from ABC consumers...and for the benefit of Friends of the ABC at any ABC shop or sales centre you can get a 10%

Special Discount for 'Friends'

Friends of the ABC get a 10 per cent discount at ABC shops when they show their membership card.

discount when you show your Friends

membership card.

There are two areas within the Enterprises division, Consumer Products and Retail. The Consumer products area creates and licences more than 600 new products each year and the marketing of these into the Australian and international retail market place. The Retail area manages the 80 centres and the ABC Shop Online order and delivery service.



Majority in country areas

Other retail outlets include department stores, discount department houses, specialist retailers and even direct marketers. The majority are located in country areas that couldn't support a stand alone ABC Shop.

Commercial Know-How

Head of Retail, Grahame Walker, said that during the 2001-2002 financial year ABC the Retail area produced sales in excess of \$60,000,000 which was an increase of 13% on the previous year. Mr. Walker said that 10 cents of every dollar went to the government in the form of the GST, 55 cents to the suppliers of the products that are sold and the remaining 35 cents paid for the operation of the



business and its profitability.

Best selling product during the year included Walking With Beasts Video, Kath & Kim Video, Classic 100 CD Box Set, Triple Hottest 100 CD, Blue Planet Video, Long Way to the Top Video/DVD & CD, Saddle Cub Videos.

Reward yourself with the ABC Shops Reward Program. For every \$200 you spend, receive a \$20 Reward Certificate redeemable at ABC Shops.

ABC Enterprises receives no funding from government and the activities of its Consumer Products and Retail areas provided a cash return to the ABC for the 2001-2002 financial year of \$9,000,000.

Gift vouchers are the perfect way to solve those difficult gift decisions. ABC Shops Online offer a fun and simple way to send gift vouchers -by email!

ABC Shop vouchers are now available to purchase at the Giftvouchers.com website.

For more information - not forgetting your 10% discount - check the Online site at abc.net.au

Red Address Label:

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

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 9960 5542. Fax 9960 5767 web site: www.fabc.org.au/nsw

Opinions in the newsletter, which includes articles from *Background Briefing* published by Friends of the ABC, do not necessarily reflect those of the executive committee of the Friends of the ABC (NSW) Inc. Current and past *Background Briefing* issues can be accessed at www.fabc.org.au. *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 Penelope Toltz, Editor Brian Davies, Layout format & assembly Irwin Kurtz. Unattributed text is by the editor.

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