

Farewell Penelope Toltz



A Tribute to Past President Penelope Toltz. New FABC President, Gary Cook, who put the motion that Penelope should be made a life member - carried unanimously - paid her this tribute.

The 2002 Annual General Meeting of the Friends in NSW saw the end of an era when

Penelope Toltz, President for the past six years, stepped down. At that meeting Penelope Toltz was unanimously elected a Life Member of FABC (NSW) Inc., an honour which I know she will cherish.

When I joined the Committee in 1999, the 'Friends' was Penelope Toltz. She was the driving force in election campaigns. She was the public face of the Friends in NSW, constantly being a flea in the ear of politicians and bureaucrats alike. Her energies also involved organising events, such as the Christmas Party and other fund raising ventures so important to the 'Friends'.

Thankfully, in the past four years we have, through forming Sub-Committees, freed Penelope from time consuming tasks enabling her to do what she has done so effectively – political lobbying.

During her Presidency the number of Branches in NSW grew from 4 to 14. Membership of the 'Friends' has increased markedly, particularly during the Shier era when ABC supporters became outraged at what was happening to their ABC.

I have been in admiration of

Penelope's commitment to fighting for the ABC, her energy in being available to support meetings and events throughout NSW and her considerable knowledge of Public Broadcasting (here and in other countries).

The highlight of Penelope's Presidency must surely have been the highly successful Extraordinary Shareholders' Meeting at the Sydney Opera House in April, 2001 when 15,000 "Shareholders" of the ABC sent a very strong message to the Government and the ABC Board.

Always supporting Penelope has been her husband, Laurence, a passionate 'Friend' in his own right.

I take great comfort in knowing that Penelope's experience and knowledge will not be lost to the Friends and she will remain just as committed to the cause as she has been for the past seven years.

Gary Cook

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World Trade Negotiations: Trading Away Our Culture?

Public Interest Advocate Dr Patricia Randal, pursues a depressing proposition - What if our government signed an international agreement which meant we could no longer have minimum levels of Australian content in film and television, and no more preferential funding for Australian film, art and culture?

And what if such an agreement meant funds for a public broadcaster like the ABC had to be shared with commercial providers? Impossible? Unfortunately not.

The Australian government is taking part in negotiations in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on a WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) which could have these results. But the negotiations take place over the next two years...and there is still a chance to stop these proposals.

So what is GATS?

The Australian government and other member governments of the WTO signed the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in 1994. It potentially applies to all services, from banking to transport and telecommunications, to health, education and prisons. GATS aims to promote international trade in services, and to remove barriers to such trade.

Although some GATS rules apply to all services, many only apply to those services which each government agrees to list in the agreement.

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Every Three Years



As the ABC prepares its triennial submission for funding, ABC MD describes it as an argument about "what we do, what it costs, and why it is necessary"

Each plank of that funding submission, Mr Balding says, is an opportunity expressly linked to an outcome for audiences. "While economic arguments will dominate the debate, we will also support the case for our cultural objectives."

The submission evidence includes:

- Good governance, as indicated by the recent ANAO performance audit.
- Substantial efficiency and productivity gains over the past 5 to 6 years and current efficiency drawing on the current Output Pricing Review.
- Comparative ABC funding levels, drawing on a Macquarie Bank analysis of a number of international, national and historical benchmarks.

"We've been through a Business Services Review and an Output Pricing Review, the ANAO has scoured the organisation, we've reformed our complaints handling processes, Corporate Governance practices, and various performance measurements," Balding said.

"We now have numerous comparative industry benchmarks as a result of our international public broadcaster benchmarking exercise.

"Yet, the international public broadcaster you most often hear the ABC compared with is the BBC."

- BBC funding is 8 to 9 times ours, but the UK population is just three times ours.
 - Cutting back just one layer of BBC bureaucracy, produced about \$A800 million to put back into programming.
 - The BBC's local radio network of 45 stations would fit into Australia 32 times.
 - The BBC costs an equivalent of 87 cents a day whereas the ABC costs at the moment 9.4 cents a day.
 - The BBC was built, grew and secured its position as a monopoly; the ABC was in a mixed economy from the word go. Mr Balding said that since 1996 the ABC had been reduced, reformed, refocused and restructured to the limit. Funding had declined in real terms since the 80's,
- "Years of doing more with less have taken their toll; we are at the limit of our comprehensiveness. There are no more rabbits left in the hat," Balding said.



A Lively Meeting – An Emotional Farewell.

The Friends AGM at which Penelope Toltz retired and Gary Cook was elected President also saw Dev Webber pass the Membership Secretary's role on to Carolyn Green who can be contacted on 02- 9144 1351 or 0417 650 443 or

greenaa@ozemail.com.au. Secretary, Lilianne Leroy, was elected Vice President.

Although in favour of a proposed restructure, members were unable to agree on the constitutional changes involved and sent them back to the committee to

review and to consider an appropriate forum, with branches involved, to redraft the amendments. There was a lively debate but speakers stressed the Friends' overriding consideration was to protect and promote the ABC.

The meeting rose to a standing ovation to farewell Penelope and she in turn saluted her fellow-friends as people of strong ideals and commitment, as very special men and women whom she might not have met, except for their common concerns about the ABC.



'Friends' Christmas Party

Friday 6 Dec.

6 pm - 8 pm

Dot Strong Terrace

ABC Ultimo

700 Harris St

\$15 per person.

Bring a 'Friend'

Please RSVP by 2 Dec.

Pay by Cheque, VISA,

MasterCard or Bankcard to

Peter Burke

2 Ayers Rd,

St Ives 2075



Great Lakes FABC
invites members to a
CHRISTMAS
Sunset

Supper By The Sea
Sunday 15th December,
6.00 – 9.00 pm

Meet with ABC
Friends and enjoy the
views over Forster's
Main Beach
Guests to bring a plate,
bottle, and/or
a donation.

RSVP and further
details from
Marty 6555 2442
Audrey 6554 8507

And when the party's over we can get down again to Great Lakes' priorities - concentrating on increasing funding for the ABC and lessening political influence and campaigning on other recommended issues, particularly the implications of GATS.

Audrey Semon

It's Not Good Bye...Simply *Au Revoir*

This will be my final report for the Friends of the ABC (NSW) Inc Update Magazine. In the last five and a half years I have had an absolute ball. I have gained so much from my time as president of this wonderful organisation. I have met terrific people - people whose paths would never have crossed mine in other circumstances. I have answered thousands of phone calls, hundreds of emails, hundreds of faxes and many snail mail letters. I have met super ABC Staff and presenters who have generously given their time to speak and appear at Friends' events of all types.

I have spoken to Rotary, University of the Third Age, and many other groups, including the Voice of the Listener and Viewer in London and the Australian Historical Society. I have had the pleasure of opening up new Friends of the ABC groups all over New South Wales and have enjoyed meeting so many people in our regional and rural areas.

As I look back, I cannot believe the number of activities in which the Friends of the ABC (NSW) Inc have participated over the last five and a half years. Beginning with the first rally in the Sydney Domain in 1996 where we held a very successful stall, to stalls at the ABC Open day at the Cricket Ground, stalls at Newtown Fair, and Gardening Australia, Live speeches at a conference at University of Technology in 2000 to university students, Toastmasters, Rotary and of course big rallies at the St Andrews' Square in Sydney, and the huge first Shareholders' meeting in April 2001



at the Sydney Opera House where I was so delighted to see banners from our groups all over New South Wales.

We now have an Events Sub-com-

mittee under the expert leadership of Gary Cook which has co-ordinated stalls and other events including the Christmas Party for the last three years.

Since 1996 the Friends of the ABC has grown and prospered and increased its membership by hundreds of percent. Even now I am not sure of the membership when I came on board. The computer system was one that was impenetrable to most people. In more recent times we have installed computer programs which make keeping our records much easier and enable us to extract specific information quickly.



We had a banner made for the first stall at the Domain Rally and a very generous benefactor gave us 1000 tee shirts to sell. This took the Friends of the ABC into the black at the bank and began our fighting fund. Over the last few years we have had designed more complex and interesting tee shirts, including my personal favourite with a fish skeleton and caption "Don't Gut the ABC" together with caps, and pens. This, apart from our subscriptions and raffles at our events, is our only source of revenue.

I must mention two important people who were on the first committee when I came on board "just for a few

months and only to help with the campaign". Kate Smorty, my treasurer at the time, came with me to stalls, which we often ran, alone, she encouraged me when I got down and even today, helps me get my filing system into some sort of order.

Hugh Sykes was the secretary when I joined. It was due to him that I became president. I had never done anything like this before. Our president had resigned and Hugh asked me to stand. I didn't know what presidents did, I told him. "Oh for heaven's sake he replied, you've been doing it for months, just keep doing what you are doing now." And so I did.

In the first couple of years we struggled, but gradually more and more people came on board. We got our first web master, Sherman Young, who designed our first web page. We had a design group revamp the magazine, letterhead and "rebrand" us for free for which I am eternally grateful.

I still remember the ABC's anniversary in 1997 when the Friends of the ABC held a sausage sizzle on the footpath in Harris Street, serving breakfast and birthday cake to members of staff under seige. I got emails

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'Thumbnail' Sketch of FABC's New President: Gary Cook

Gary Cook steps up to the President's chair after three years as Vice-President, FABC (NSW) Inc. He has been on the committee since 1999, for all four years as Chair of the Recruitment and Events Sub-Committee, which organises fund raising ventures with stalls at large fairs in and around Sydney, development and sale of FABC merchandise, and Friends' social events, such as the Christmas Party,

Recently retired, Gary's professional background includes the past four years as a property consultant for Woolworths. Prior to that he spent thirteen years with Carlton & United Breweries and, earlier, 26 years with its predecessor, Toothy Breweries.

On the sporting front, Gary was a Rugby League Grand Final referee (1976 and 1977) and then a television and radio commentator for the ABC (1981-1987). He still regularly plays tennis and squash.

He is passionate about the ABC and committed to working for a restoration of adequate funding plus sufficient funds for the resumption of quality in-house production, non-political appointments to the ABC Board and renewed nurturing and development of staff.

Needed More Than Ever: Everyone's ABC

ABC MD, Russell Balding, chose Melbourne to make his first address to the Australian media because, he said, Melbourne was not only Richard Alston's city, but it also happened to be that of the Treasurer. Here's an extract from what was a triumphant message.

On my appointment as Acting MD in November last year, I was intent initially on rebuilding morale and focus within the ABC and rebuilding the relationship with our audiences and the Corporation's other constituencies.

In relation to our audiences: ABC Television audiences are currently their highest ever, with overall growth of 7.5% this year compared to 2001. ABC Radio's reach is also the highest ever.

Comparing the first six months of this year to the same period in 2001, growth was significant in all areas.

Television

- Overall growth of 7.5%
- In people aged 40 - 54, growth of 8.7%;
- In the 55-64 age group growth of 9.7%; and
- The aged 65+ growth of 10%.

ABC Local Radio

- Overall growth of 5%.
- In people aged 25-39, growth of 8%; and
- In people aged 40-54, growth of 9%.

ABC Online

- Overall growth of 25%
- Accesses to *The Backyard* at ABC Online have grown by 53%.

On television we launched *Business Breakfast* five days a week starting on 3rd June. On 4th August we launched *Inside Business*, *Seven Days* and *Asia Pacific Focus* and extended *Insiders* to deliver a two-hour block on Sunday mornings of quality and distinctive programs on society, culture, politics and money.

On radio we extended *NewsRadio* to the Gold Coast in February, to Gosford in July, launched our seventh radio network - the new digital internet

radio service *Dig* - and *Radio National* introduced a suite of new programs including - *Nightclub*, *All in the Mind*, *The Makers*, *Street Stories*, and *The Quiz*.

Funding a real challenge

Delivering more Australian content for television is never easy. Sourcing the funds beyond the appropriations provided to the ABC by Parliament is a real challenge.

But the ABC recently secured two significant funding arrangements, the Western Australian Government agreeing to provide \$3.2m for television dramas and documentaries to be made in WA, co-produced with the ABC; and an ABC partnership with the Australian Film Commission that dedicates \$2.1m to broadband content.



This quiet period of refocusing of the ABC on the main game of programs and reclaiming some of our traditional turf has, I think, been essential. If that means we are no longer conducting our daily business in the headlines, so be it. The correct role for the ABC is not to be the news, but to report the news.

A Community Appreciation Survey was conducted by Newspoll last June to measure perceptions about the ABC's quality, balance, and fulfilment of its Charter.

In 2002, 9 out of 10 Australians (91%) believe the ABC provides "a valuable service to the community" a rise of 5% since 1999.

Now what other media organisation, what other private company, what other public body enjoys that level of community support?

Balanced, not biased

Newspoll also sought community views on whether the ABC was balanced and even-handed.

I can assure you their view is not held by the wider Australian community. The Newspoll survey found that 79% of Australians believe the ABC is "balanced and even-handed" in news and current affairs.

95% of those surveyed who had viewed ABC 7pm *Television News* believed it did a good job of being "balanced and even-handed". With audiences of *The 7.30 Report*, *AM/PM* and *The World Today* 89%, 89% and 86% respectively believed these programs did a good job of being "balanced and even-handed".



"Only 2%"

Of our audience contacts only 2% were complaints about bias. Over half were perceptions of bias against or for one football team over another and perceived bias against men, against women, against atheists and Christians. Let's not forget that a perception of bias is not a proof of bias.

What else is planned? We are reintroducing weekend local news services to the Northern Territory and the ACT. It is difficult for me to get up here today and argue that the ABC is truly a national broadcaster when the ACT and Northern Territory do not have an ABC weekend television news service.

People in the Territories, just like people in our States, want and need a good local news service - seven days a week. These new services will be launched on the Australia Day weekend next year.

Issues for the future

You will all appreciate that the broadcasting and media industries are continually confronted by either real change or the threat of change. You only have to look at the number of policy and regulatory issues on the table at present.

Change will not only come through new technologies but through the various Government policy initiatives currently under review, like the Broadcasting Services Amendment Bill and proposed changes to media ownership regulation...like the ACCC's examination of the Foxtel/Optus merger.

We have previously outlined to Government that the ABC believes all its channels and services should be

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Needed More than Ever: Everyone's ABC

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carried on all pay platforms and any common free-to-air/payTV platform so that they are accessible to all Australians.

This would be most effectively achieved through a 'must carry' provision for all ABC services in the Broadcasting Services Act. Professor Fels accepts the advice we provided to the ACCC, and is now speaking of the necessity of legislation, rather than undertakings, to ensure carriage on the platform.

You can have all the retransmission agreements in the world, but they can quite easily be undone further down the track. Legislation can only be undone by Parliament.

Common set top box

The ABC supports a common free-to-air/pay TV set top box

and platform to ensure that all metropolitan, regional and remote viewers can watch locally relevant free-to-air content and pay TV services and can navigate seamlessly between the two. (See Stewart

Fist's article on Page 1.

Media diversity

However, regardless of the outcome of the proposed legislation, I would like to stress the importance of media diversity and media independence in any democratic society.

The ABC is already essential for all those one newspaper towns across the country. During the possible reformation ahead, it will be needed more than ever - particularly for news and current affairs which remains free from commercial and political influence.

Any definition of media diversity which does not include the ABC is meaningless.

The AFC and ABC Combine in Groundbreaking Doco Productions

Program-making partners, ABC New Media and the Australian Film Commission, are launching another highly original online documentary - dealing with homelessness.

Produced by Trevor Graham, Rose Hesp and Rob Wellington, *Homeless* explores the lives of six people in six cities with one thing in common - they are all homeless. The program offers a compassionate insight into their different experiences.

We spend a cold night in Tokyo, beg in Jakarta, drink on the streets of Sydney, experience the extreme poverty of New Delhi, spend a night in a women's refuge in New York and suffer a sleepless night with a new baby in London. Each person's experience of homelessness, what got them there and the future they face, is unique and engaging.

Homeless received additional financial support from the Australian Centre for the Moving Image and the Uniting Church.

Visit *Homeless*, and other ABC Online documentaries, at <http://abc.net.au/documentary-online> Homeless is one of four programs the partnership has launched.



Ramona Koval ABC's Staff Elected Director

The ABC's Staff Elected Director, Ramona Koval, is one of Australia's eminent literary figures. She presents and produces Australia's foremost literary radio program, Books and Writing, and occasionally co-presents *Australia Talks Books*, the biggest book club in the country, on ABC Radio National.

Her programs are broadcast nationally on Radio National, internationally through Radio Australia, and on the Internet. Ms Koval writes features and columns on issues of the day for The Age and The Weekend Australian, among other newspapers, and makes documentary features for radio. Ms Koval has been a guest interviewer at literary festivals in Edinburgh, Berlin and all over Australia.

She is the author of a novel 'Samovar' (Minerva) and three books of non-fiction, including a Jewish Cook Book. She has worked as an academic at RMIT University and the University of Melbourne and before that as a microbiologist and geneticist. In 2001 she held a Goethe Institute Fellowship in Berlin and was 'writer in residence' at The Australia Centre, Berlin.

Ms Koval was guest speaker at the Friends AGM. As the ABC's Staff Elected Director - a unique role, she said: she wasn't a manager, a lawyer or an accountant. She was the only broadcaster on the Board.

Her job was to convince her fellow directors they were not running Lucas Heights.

"We are a broadcasting organisation, good at telling people things," Ms Koval said. "But as program makers it's getting harder and harder. Budgets for RN programs have been cut and travel funds slashed."

"I was invited to the last Edinburgh Festival to conduct literary interviews for the festival, and eventually for *Radio National*, but I had to pay my own way and the Festival put me up. The ABC didn't have the money."

"A 30 per cent loss in core funding over 15 years means fewer dramas, a lack of documentaries and an accelerated risk of declining Australian content. The ABC can't tighten any further. There's no excess and no fat."

Footnote: Ramona Koval can be contacted at Books and Writing ABC Radio National and at website

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/booksw.htm>



"Traces of Shierisms remain, but I note that Mr Balding has returned to the RAAF the \$300,000 it paid for a documentary portrait of itself to be made.

I hope he continues such reversals restating the ABC's proper role."

ABC Staff-elected Director, Ramona Koval.

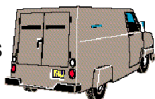
Commercial Journalism Or Serious Journalism - No Contest!



The 2002 Andrew Olle Lecture was delivered by the Chairman of News Limited, Lachlan Murdoch, under the heading "The Pulse of Humanity". A lot of people were amazed at the choice of speaker. Perhaps even more were taken aback at some of the sentiments he expressed. News Limited's Chair was particularly harsh on what he called the 'media elite', by inference particularly the ABC. Here is an extract.

I know that reality may be anathema to many of you here tonight. But I don't expect I should be here to tell you what you want to hear. Good speeches are those that come from the heart, that ring true. And tonight I want to challenge what I regard as the orthodoxy of the media elite.

The industry is littered with self-styled purists who believe the business of media - the requirement to make a profit - somehow corrupts the craft. The self-anointed media elite among us believe, somewhat self-servingly, that not only the act, or process of making a profit is positively sinister, but also that the very desire to do so is.



Two years ago this forum was told that Australian journalists worked in two distinct camps - "commercial journalism or serious journalism". In that speech we were told, and I quote:

"The horse has bolted. The idea that owners of media organisations regard the practice of journalism as a public service is as outdated as the idea that businesses operate in the interests of a better world." The speaker went on to say that commercial journalism encompassed "popular magazines, tabloid newspapers and news and current affairs on commercial TV and radio", while serious journalism was restricted to metropolitan broadsheets and the ABC because, absurdly, serious journalism was more akin to charity

than to business. Well, this bloke couldn't have been more wrong.

Elite defined

You can see here that the Australian media elite define their club through standards designed only to exclude. Entry requires that you either rely on tax payers' money to draw your pay cheque, or that your newspaper folds twice over, and God forbid, don't ever even think about a profit.

I noted a letter to *The Australian* this Thursday on this very issue. It quoted the Canadian writer, John Ralston Saul who said: "Highly sophisticated elites are the easiest and least original thing a society can produce."

I agree. I happen to think that serious journalism is about informing the community, reflecting their interests and championing their causes. The size of a newspaper is irrelevant.



The Times of London may be one of our finest journalistic institutions; but in Australia so too is the *Herald Sun*, a tabloid and a great commercial success. I am equally proud of *The Australian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Courier Mail* and the *Tizer*, and the way they each strive to serve their readers.

I believe narrow-mindedness - disguised as high-mindedness - risks making its media irrelevant, instead of being as diverse and valuable to as many people as possible.

It seems that those who criticise the larger media companies for their reach and diversity are those who have time and again been unsuccessful in their efforts to mimic them.

Culture without highs and lows

Their criticisms, ironically, identify the factors for our success and their failure.

I think a point of pride for companies like our own is our ability to cater (for) all members of society; (for) all demographics and everyone who



demands and deserves their own quality media.

Our lack of loftiness is a point of distinction. We don't patronise our readers and audiences. We believe there's no "high culture" or "low culture".

No media is more worthy than any other because of the age, income or status of its target audience.

We, at News, find no disparity in publishing a Nobel Prize winning book, as we did this year, at the same time making profitable movies such as "*Titanic*", or even, "*Dude, Where's My Car*".



Not to be open minded in providing a full range of quality media would be a failure to serve the breadth and depth of the communities we live in. But in order to serve these diverse communities, we must be profitable.

The profit motive is not only fundamental to our ability to reward shareholders and pay employees; it's fundamental to excellent journalism. Far from corrupting the craft, profits enhance it. Expansion drives diversity and diversity protects and strengthens our craft.



"A large corporation can always find a way to bend the rules and ignore the public good"

Andrzej Lubowski
Senior Vice President at
Visa, USA in San Francisco
Winner of a John S. Knight
professional journalism fellowship at Stanford University
World Press Review
October 2002

The Media Ownership Debate and the ABC

Guest speaker at the Friends Regional Conference in Wollongong last August, Dr. Derek Wilding, Director, Communications Law Centre, UNSW, assessed media ownership implications for the ABC...and the public.

While much of the current debate on media ownership has been heard before, it's worth re-stating one of the fundamental principles for why the media is socially significant and why we regulate. This attempt to explain the role of the media was made at a CLC conference in 1997:

'The media is a crucial watchdog; it is a fundamental pillar of democracy. It strongly influences how we as Australians understand and interpret the world around us, how we define ourselves. It shapes opinions, builds a unifying sense of culture and influences financial climates. It is the barometer of the national psyche.'

The surprising point about this quote is that it was made by Senator Alston, the architect of the new bill that dismantles our media ownership scheme. I don't suppose this audience would be surprised at the apparent contradiction in the Government's thinking, given its 'solemn promise' in 1996 not to cut funding to the ABC.

The new angle - editorial separation

This year's Media Ownership Bill proposes that the foreign ownership rules would be repealed outright and that the cross-media rules would effectively be repealed by providing for an exemption system. The major condition attached to this system is a mechanism to ensure there would be 'editorial independence' between these co-owned media organisations. This grand statement, however, has some serious flaws.

First, the Bill itself expressly states that 'sharing of resources or other forms of co-operation' are acceptable. The Explanatory Memorandum states that 'co-operation should be encouraged as owners seek to realise the efficiencies from co-owned organisations'.

Second, this attention to editorial

separation only ever purports to address direct editorial interference. It does nothing to address the problem of a commercially-sensitive news culture and a pattern of self censorship on commercial matters affecting the organisation.



The Flint view

Third, the test is to be administered by the Australian Broadcasting Authority. On media ownership, the ABA head David Flint has made what we consider to be inappropriate comments, given the proposed role of the ABA in independently and objectively applying the conditions for exemption certificates. The Flint view is that companies such as News Ltd and PBL are operating 'with their hands tied behind their backs' and should be allowed to expand. In this view of the world the public interest is located well and truly behind commercial interests.

Fourth, the Bill has received widespread condemnation from industry as well as public interest advocates. Many commentators, including the Australian Press Council, say that it is too complex, it adds a further layer of regulation, and it invites the broadcasting regulator to intrude into matters of editorial policy in the print media.

Implications for the ABC

Aside from the infamous case of Kerry Packer personally cancelling Doug Mulray's Australia's Naughtiest Home Videos in 1992, there aren't many instances of direct editorial interference on the part of proprietors. It's more about the culture in which news is produced. It's a big ask for a commercial news organisation to report openly and uncritically on matters which directly affect its own commercial interests. And in some ways, this doesn't matter. We're not going to rely solely on 2UE to report on Cash for Comments. Instead, we rely on there being alternatives.



The obvious alternative is the ABC. Importantly, it is only the ABC where the interest in media ownership extends to anything other than merg-

ers and acquisitions and a market perspective. *ABC News, the 7.30 Report* and *Lateline*, as well as a host of RN programs and local ABC stations offer a perspective that we simply don't find anywhere else in the broadcast media. This is the public interest perspective, in contrast to that of the business analyst or politician.



But does this mean that a well-funded national broadcaster would serve as an adequate alternative for the independent commercial media sources that would be swallowed up in a consolidated market?

The ABC's dilemma

The dilemma for the ABC is that all political parties applaud the ABC and SBS for being widely accessible and promoting diversity, but it's still very difficult to gain the kind of support that will extend News Radio beyond its current markets or allow regulatory scope and sufficient funds to build a news channel as part of a multi-channel television environment.

The temptation to secure additional funding in exchange for whole-heartedly adopting the idea of the ABC as the alternative broadcaster must be great.

What concerns me is that the national broadcasters might assist in the call for abolition of the cross-media rules in return for short-term gains. The repeal of the cross-media rules will be no blessing for the ABC. Specific projects might be approved, but the funding short-fall is unlikely to be fixed for the long-term. And let's remember that the ABC's competitors in a consolidated market could be broadcasters with cross-media holdings in TV, radio, newspapers, pay TV, magazines, film exhibition and distribution companies, online ventures, casinos, and of course, telecommunications companies. The competing broadcaster may well be a very slick operator with the additional market power of the Murdoch or Fairfax press.

This is not a good result for the ABC and it's not a good result for media diversity in Australia.

Northern Rivers Branch Pinpointing the Issues

At its last meeting, members of the branch identified the following issues as ones of high priority:

- Opposition to Senator Alston's suggestion that an external body be appointed to investigate claims of political bias in ABC programs.
- Action to guard against the perceived "dumbing down" of ABC programs in the face of political intimidation.
- Support for the provisions of adequate funding of the ABC in the next triennium.
- Renewed pressure to ensure bipartisan appointments to the ABC board.
- Concerns about the implications of GATS for the ABC.
- Calls for NSW Friends Inc to organize an event to highlight the significance of the ABC, to be supported on the same day by branch action across the state.

Northern Rivers Members were holding their final meeting for the year at the Lismore Workers' Club (7.30 pm) on Wednesday 4 December, to plan a series of events for 2003.

The results of the Northern Rivers Branch's recent Poetry Competition can be found on the branch web site at:
<http://www.users.bigpond.com/webformation/friendsabcnr>

There is also a link on that site to David Hallett's 70th Anniversary poem.

Neville Jennings

Bathurst 'Friends' Celebrate



Penelope Toltz with Guest Speaker, Stephen Crittenden of Radio National's Religion Report, and many Bathurst Friends celebrating Auntie's 70th birthday in the city's Regional Art Gallery – surrounded by the splendours of the current exhibition, the work of potter Greg Daly

Core Funding a Priority Issue

A 70-strong annual general meeting of Bathurst Friends of the ABC also cut a celebratory cake for the birthday; but, down to business, both Stephen Crittenden and Penelope Toltz stressed the importance

Illawarra Friends Celebrate 70th



Illawarra Friends of the ABC presented a cake to local ABC staff to celebrate Auntie's Birthday: Front: Mary Wharton, Peter Riley (ABC Illawarra Manager), Lily (Mary's granddaughter. Back: Jan Kent, Nick McLaren (ABC Reporter), Chris Cartledge, Tony Arthur (ABC Presenter), Noel Manuel and Jean Clarke.

The Illawarra Friends celebrated the 70th year of the ABC with a well attended dinner in Kiama. With Richard Morecroft as guest speaker there was never any doubt the evening would be a sell-out. Around ninety people filled the Harbourside Restaurant at Kiama in late September.

The celebrations commenced with all present singing the song written by ABC's Humour Australia for Radio 702's celebrations held in Ultimo earlier this year. Sung to Advance Australia Fair, it starts with "Australians all let us rejoice for we've an ABC...". It was a great mood setter for the evening.

Richard spoke about his fond memories of the three decades he spent as ABC TV newsreader, relating many humorous incidents during that period. He also spoke about current and future projects he is undertaking. It was an entertaining and informative talk.

Richard donated three of his books as raffle prizes and signed copies of his books that fans had brought along. All in all it was a great way to celebrate 70 years of first class public broadcasting.

Chris Cartledge

of rolling the temporary extra funding of ABC Regional Radio into the ABC's core funding.

"The fifty-five people employed under the Government's 2001 tied funding grant will lose their jobs when funding runs out in 2004," Ms Toltz said, expressing the essence of regional listener concerns.

The meeting elected a new committee with Warwick Franks as the new Bathurst Friends President, Jim Blackwood Vice-President and Tracey Carpenter, Secretary and Julie Priddle, Treasurer.

Norah Taylor



'Friends' stall at the Granny Smith Festival, Eastwood, held on 19 October. T-Shirts were a very popular item and helped in raising funds.

Blue Mountains Branch AGM

On Saturday October 19th, despite bushfires burning 5 kilometres north of the Woodford Academy, members of the Blue Mountains Branch of 'Friends' met there for their AGM, surrounded by beautiful arrangements of Australian wildflowers - the historic academy was also staging an open day.

After the formal meeting, which saw John Derum re-elected unopposed as President, friends and guests were entertained by two local Celtic harpists, Jan Couchman and Annette Benson over afternoon tea. The resident Academy ghost must have felt right at home.

Guest of Honour, ABC Television News Chief of Staff, Ron Fuller, then thanked the 'Friends' for their support and mentioned how much it was appreciated by ABC staff. He countered criticism that the ABC had low ratings, pointing out that with the new method of gathering information, ABC News came in second after Channel 9, and always wins the 7 pm time slot.

Visit to WDR - Germany's publicly funded broadcaster

Ron was recently in Germany to observe the federal elections and visit WDR, the publicly-funded broadcaster. Like the BBC, it is funded by licence fees and cannot be touched by the Government, something we in Australia envy greatly.

He was very impressed with the amount of radio drama WDR produced - fifty-four hours a week. He said school children hurried home to be in time for their favourite radio serial, another issue for envy! He said the ABC archivists would weep at the number of researchers involved in checking facts in WDR's library.

Listing problems facing Australian news team including Single Person Crews, Ron gave as a graphic example: a reporter, one eye to the camera lens, the other shut to help with focussing, walking backwards down a flight of steps while attempting to keep the subject in the picture. This issue is subject to industrial action at the moment, though the Current Affairs team are not taking part. Is this something that the 'Friends' can delve into further?

A short question time ended an engaging afternoon.

Carole Goodwin

Why is the ABC Needed Now?

"Needed Now...Needed Tomorrow," so Russell Balding concluded his Melbourne address.

- Each week more than 12 million Australians watch ABC Television, more than 6 million listen to ABC Radio.
- There are more than 950,000 unique visitors to ABC Online each month.
- Clearly, despite the diversity of competition, Australians continue to come to the ABC.
- People have differing expectations of the ABC to those they have of the commercial sector. It is up to the ABC to meet those distinctive expectations. As a broadcaster the ABC does not and cannot function in isolation.
- The ABC is enjoying high public regard with growing audiences.
- The ABC is a key component of media diversity in Australia.
- The ABC is balanced and even-handed in its reporting, as measured by the Australian National Audit Office and Newspoll.
- The ABC is constantly creating new, authentic Australian content.

And, finally, because of the critical role the national broadcaster will have to play in the changing media environment in the future, the ABC is truly needed more than ever.



Seven Little Australians, TV drama 1973. Capt Woolcot (Leonard Teale); Judy (Jennifer Cluff); Esther (Elizabeth Alexander); the General (Christian Robinson); Meg (Barbara Llewellyn); Pip (Mark Clark); Nell (Anne Hruby); Baby (Tania Falla); Bunty (Mark Shields-Brown).

Through
70 years
with the
ABC...
More
Pictures
from the
archives.



The Inventors: Final. Panelists Vic Nicholson, Diana Fisher and Leo Port, select the Inventor of the Year. 1977.



Countdown:
Studio production shot,
'Hoodoo Gurus'.
Sun 8 Sept 1985.



China: Paul Raffaele in Tien An Men Square, Beijing, 1974



On Ash Wednesday, 16 February 1983, ABC News reporter Allan Russell keeps broadcasting as the bushfire rages round him at Airey's Inlet, Vic. From 16mm film shot by cameraman Steve Levitt.



Over There: ABC TV World War II drama: ABC crew filming beach sequences with John Meillon and Jack Thompson (1972 or 1973)

World Trade Negotiations: Trading Away Our Culture

Continued from Page 1

So far, most governments have not included either private cultural and audio visual services, or public services like health, education, water and public broadcasting.

However, GATS commits governments to increase over time the range of services included in the agreement, without any review of its impacts.

Like other WTO Agreements, GATS rules are legally binding on governments, and can be enforced through the WTO dispute system.

Governments can complain about the laws of other governments to a panel of trade law experts which meets behind closed doors and the winner can ban or tax the exports of the loser.

What changes are proposed to GATS?

GATS does have some rules which recognise the right of government to regulate services and to provide and fund public services. The rules are there because governments recognise that many services need to be regulated or provided by government to ensure equitable access to them, or to support national culture.

On the other hand, governments are being asked to agree to increase the range of services to be covered in the Agreement and to make changes to the rules of GATS which could reduce their right to regulate services, and to provide and fund public services.

The US government has asked Australia and other countries to include audio-visual services in the GATS. This would mean that US and other transnational audio-visual service providers would have to be treated as if they were Australian providers, and we could no longer have minimum Australian content rules or preferential funding for Australian cultural services.

There is also a proposal to apply "national treatment" and "equal access" rules to all government funding of services. This would define the funding of public services like the ABC as unfair "subsidies" to public services. Transnational corporations could then argue for equal access

to these funds through compulsory competitive tendering, leading to privatisation.

The Australian government's position

The Australian government has said that it has no intention to include audio-visual services in the GATS. However, it concedes that the issue of defining public funding as subsidies could be on the agenda, but claims there has been little discussion of it so far.

The GATS negotiations are taking place behind closed doors at the same time as negotiations on agriculture, goods and other areas. The danger is that governments could trade off areas like audio visual services or public services for concessions in other areas like agriculture.



In the next stage of negotiations, governments will respond to detailed requests from other governments by March 30, 2003.

What can we do about it?

We need to maximise pressure on our government before March 30 next year when responses are due to other governments requests. How?

AFTINET- the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network, a national network of over 50 community organisations and many individuals - supports fair regulation of trade consistent with human rights, labour rights and protecting the environment.

I urge people to respond by joining AFTINET to help with the campaign and to get regular bulletins which monitor the issues.

See www.aftinet.org for subscription forms and sample letters to national, state and local government and more detailed information about the effects of GATS in specific areas.

There is also a useful ABC Radio National Background Briefing Transcript on GATS (June 23, 2002) at

www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/bbing/stories/s586637.htm

AFTINET urges people to campaign and demand the following:

1. the government should make all GATS negotiating requests and responses public and ensure that they are publicly debated before it makes commitments

2. no reductions in the ability of governments to regulate services, or to provide and fund public services

3. clear exclusion of public services, cultural services and water services from the GATS agreement

4. GATS and other trade agreements to be debated and ratified by parliament, not by Cabinet

Dr Patricia Ranald is Principal Policy Officer, Public Interest Advocacy Centre and Convenor, Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network

Canada Commits to GATS Transparency Policy

Canada has been a leader in ensuring more openness and transparency in trade negotiations.

Specifically, Canada will make public the conditional offers it will be putting on the table during the GATS negotiations. These offers are essentially the proposed guarantees of market access that we are ready to offer to other countries in exchange for greater access to their markets.

While the details of Canada's initial offer will be worked out in the coming months, we can be clear on one point right away: Canada's health, public education and social services systems, and culture will not be on the table.



*Canadian Minister for International Trade,
Pierre Pettigrew, June 11, 2002*



Special Discount for 'Friends'

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

The WTO, the UK and the BBC

Regarding the UK's negotiations with the World Trade Organisation, "Other WTO demands include the removal of distinctions between postal and courier services and calls for Britain to end subsidies to broadcasting organisations. This could have massive implications for the BBC" - according to a document from the UK government itself..."under GATS, commitments are irrevocable. Countries will be locked in, which is incompatible with democracy."

Nick Mathiason
The Observer 13 Oct 2002

Contributed by Tony Troughton-Smith of Glen Forrest, WA who says not only public broadcasting but also public health, state education, Australia Post, libraries - the very idea of "Public" anything - are at real risk.

What is GATS?

The Australian Government and other member governments of the WTO signed the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in 1994. It potentially applies to all services, from banking to transport and telecommunications, to health, education and prisons. GATS aims to promote international trade in services, and to remove barriers to such trade.

Although some GATS rules apply to all services, many only apply to those services which each government lists in the agreement. However, GATS commits governments to increase over time the range of services included in the agreement, without any

review of its impacts.

The GATS Agreement was signed with little public debate in Australia. Signing of trade agreements is a Cabinet decision. WTO agreements are briefly tabled in parliament and examined by a parliamentary committee, which can only make recommendations to Cabinet.

This is in contrast to UN agreements on human rights and the environment, most of which require domestic legislation for their implementation.

Like other WTO Agreements, GATS rules are legally binding on governments enforced through the WTO dispute system.

WTO and its rules of trade

Established in 1995, the WTO is the most potent international organisation setting global rules of trade. The agreements contain three basic principles. First, members are not allowed to discriminate between trading partners who are also members of the WTO. Second, members must treat foreign firms in an identical way to firms in their own country. Third, members are bound to eradicate uncompetitive practices such as export subsidies, that give countries a advantage not due to the efficiency of their industry.

In October, 2000, Andrew Stoler--director of the WTO's Trade-In-Services Division--described as "false or mistaken" claims that services supplied by governments were under threat by the WTO, and the European Community's trade commissioner, Pascal Lamy, has complained that he was tired of rebutting the charge.

But behind the scenes, the WTO continues to develop an agenda aimed at opening all public services to trade and foreign investment.

The WTO intends (to) make it more difficult for member states to keep rules that protect public services from foreign investors and markets. The ultimate aim is to increase pressure on member states to open their public-sector services to foreign investment through privatisation and deregulation.

Prof Allyson M Pollock, Health Policy and Health Services Research Unit, School of Public Policy, University College London



Cartoon courtesy of Phil Somerville

At the Crossroads...Will Pay TV Tyrannise Free TV?



Stewart Felt looks at the Pay TV mish-mash – a conflict of competing ambitions... a loss-making mess. Do the players want the government to bail them out?

The term “common-carrier” was borrowed by IT from road transport. It applied to trucking companies which offered their services for hire, equally to everyone.

Early US phone companies had begun doing special deals giving favoured local merchants phone connections, denying service to competitors. In the interests of open and fair competition, the US Congress regulated to ensure provision of services on an equal-for-all basis.

When cable television was developing, the first “community antenna” systems were also common-carriers; they distributed all available channels equally. But later, they added their own local advertising channels with syndicated programming, and common-carrier status, again, had to be enforced by regulation.

Subscription pay-TV was eventually added by scrambling the signal and supplying decoding set-top boxes, but these were not in the common-carrier tradition, so the US regulators devised a “must-carry” rule to ensure that free-to-air (FTA) broadcasters had equal access to cable customers.

Then when American telephone companies tried to get into the pay-TV business in the 1990s using switched feeds of a single channel (ADSL), they wanted to profit from both the programming and the connection. However, they were regulated as common-carriers.

So the 1995 Telecommunications Act tried to solve these problems by allowing them to enter the pay business only after they open their monopoly phone operations to competition. Simultaneously, the cable companies were forced to open their pay-TV markets.

World's Best Practice – a ‘disaster’

In the wash-up, cable channel numbers doubled and profitability crashed, and the phone companies decided that they'd rather keep the profitable telephone monopolies than compete in pay-TV. So despite all the hoop-la about establishing a free-market, the Act achieved nothing, and is universally seen now as a disaster.



Yet this is the model successive Australian governments have held up as world's best practice in telecommunications deregulation and cable television introduction. Clearly, the politicians who oversee these services don't comprehend (or ignore) the importance of the separation of carriage and content.

Telstra's vertical integration is the exact opposite of free-market requirements. Telstra's financial interests

should lie in transmitting the maximum possible number of television channels for their customers' benefit, not in restricting them to those jointly owned as a provider through Foxtel.

Since governments have conspicuously failed to enshrine these essential free-market structural elements in legislation, it's been left to the ACCC to try and accomplish a similar regulatory separation using the Trade Practices Act in the Optus/Foxtel content-sharing and cable digitisation negotiations.

Enter Professor Fels

This is why the free-to-air broadcasters and the pay-TV companies have been locked in negotiations with the ACCC for most of this year over the possible merger.

Now, for the first time, we are seeing negotiated outcomes which could lead to Telstra playing a strictly common-carrier role once again (many years hence), because this is the only sustainable model that works without constant and draconian regulatory action.

As part of these negotiations, the FTA broadcasters and the ABC also want the ACCC to impose a must-carry rule so that their channels can be decoded by the same digital set-top box. Those who hope to enter the pay business, also want access to a back-channel and to the subscriber management service -- or a standardised set-top box *not controlled by Foxtel*.



The ACCC is insisting that Telstra provide digital channels to anyone with saleable programming content. And, since the politicians won't legislate to restore common-carrier sanity, the ACCC has shown it will use its existing competition powers to create an open market: Foxtel and Telstra have countered by threatening not to digitise the cable. But they now seem close to agreement.

Loss making

This fiasco began with the satellite-delivered pay-TV license bidding war in 1993 when Telstra joined forces with News Corp and the Packer group to form the PMT consortium. PMT lost the bid, but in the process Telstra jumped from being a common-carrier to part-owner of a program provider.

Then, when Optus and Telstra both rolled out parallel HFC cable networks in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, it wasn't felt necessary to enforce the common-carrier rules on Telstra at all. Foxtel (PMT in disguise) was given exclusive rights to the public-funded cable as compensation for taking a risk on pay-TV.

Since then, pay-TV in Australia has been a loss-making mess. Austar, which inherited the satellite delivery services, has dumped quite a few hundred million dollars in a few years.

Continued on Page 15

Optus has lost even more cash through its cable, and is threatening to dump its service entirely. And Foxtel, which theoretically emerged as the winner, is still bleeding heavily.

Now the government wants these pay-TV companies to spend a few hundred million more converting their system to digital. You can understand their reluctance without a complete restructure of the industry and some changes to the rules. After all, these problems arose from politicians trying to juggle political-media interests, rather than serving the public good.

Conflict and competing ambitions

Telstra is gradually being pressured by the ACCC to revert to common-carrier status, but it still has government-supported ambitions to be a media giant. The executives want full privatisation and ownership of both newspapers and FreeToAir/Pay-TV -- controlling both the content and the conduit.

News Corp, which dominates the global pay-TV business, also owns newspapers but doesn't have strong links with Australian television. But it's a supplier of premium content from its US networks and production houses, and so holds a strong position in whatever structure finally emerges.



Packer's PBL, of course, owns the Nine Network, and so has a foot on both sides of the FTA/pay fence. Unfortunately for PBL, any increase in channel availability through cable or broadcast digitisation will certainly dilute its profitability, which is why the company is currently focussing on sports and casinos.

So the long-term interests of the three PMT partners in Foxtel are very different and often conflicting. It is difficult to see how such a consortium can survive in the long-run.

Which proposal represents the fundamental interests of the greatest numbers of Australians?

Senator Alston's Rush of Blood to the Head



Enjoying the heady delights of London and British broadcasting, Senator Richard Alston fell victim to that strange syndrome that often afflicts Australian politicians overseas, loss of memory and speaking in tongues. It must be something in the air.

By gosh, he thundered to the British media, what the ABC needed was a new and effective system of dealing with viewer/listener complaints, like the BBC's - entirely forgetting that back home only a month or so before he'd applauded the ABC for its new system of dealing with complaints.

As ABC MD, Russell Balding, said in his Melbourne media address of September 18 "You may have read recently of the ways in which we have reformed and improved complaints handling within the ABC. We are confident about these reforms. They are good policy...so that we are not only fair, but can be seen to be fair" - the very arrangements at which Senator Alston had nodded approval.

Darce Cassidy wrote to *The Age* and *The Australian*: "The ABC has an internal complaints procedure, headed by respected ABC executive Murray Green. There is an Independent Complaints Review Panel, appointed by the ABC Board, in turn appointed by Senator Alston and his cabinet colleagues." The members of this Panel

are independent of the ABC. People not happy with responses to complaints to the ABC, or the Independent Complaints Review Panel, may complain to the Australian Broadcasting Authority." The ABA can also investigate on its own initiative.

What on earth was Senator Alston on about? His further gem was to foreshadow the ABC's most prolific and 'obsessive' complainer, Lynton Crosby, as Michael Kroger's successor on the board.

Commenting, Shadow media spokesperson, Lindsay Tanner, said "In an outrage that should chill the spines of all ABC supporters, Senator Alston has failed to rule out appointing the Liberal Party director and obsessive ABC critic, Lynton Crosby, to the ABC Board. If Senator Alston goes ahead and appoints another political stooge like Lynton Crosby to the ABC Board this will be a disaster for the ABC. It would be an emphatic confirmation of the Howard Government's aim of crippling the ABC."



He made a further point. "If Senator Alston thinks the BBC's independent procedures are so good then maybe he could also follow their board appointment processes." The BBC follows the 'Nolan Rule' whereby BBC Board positions are fully advertised and candidates are scrutinised and then short listed through an independent process.

"The world economy and terrorism spell belt-tightening, but the ABC can't be tightened any further.

It's not the time to put the ABC under pressure; it's time for the national broadcaster to expand its coverages, not reduce them."

ABC Staff-elected Director, Ramona Koval.

Your All-Purpose Guide To Identifying Unreasonable And Unsubstantiated Criticism Of The ABC Part Two

Have you ever read an article in a daily newspaper lambasting the ABC but leaving you with a vague feeling that the writer's approach was not grounded in fact or reason? Update continues its guide to the dishonest tricks and dodgy arguments employed by the likes of Piers Akerman and the rest of the anti-ABC stable, their tactics exposed by Margaret O'Connor.

The 'tricks of the trade' dealt with last issue covered propagandist 'persuader words', emotive language, *Ad Hominem* or attacks on the person, *Ad Populum*, an appeal to the masses exploiting the assumption that if enough people seem to hold a point of view then it must be right; and *Ad Verecundiam*, *Appeal to Authority* – it sounds good: like, "influential people in Europe and the US say so" but actually who are they and why hasn't the writer identified or quoted them?

1. APPEAL TO COST

The cost of something is often given as a reason for not doing it. It is one thing to cost something objectively and then decide it's too expensive. It is quite another to use the question of cost as a way of avoiding all analysis or argument.

'Shier is our last hope this decade of reclaiming the ABC. If he goes, the collective stays and will continue to use \$700 million of taxpayers' funds to crowd out the views and concerns of many Australians' (Mike Nahan, The Australian, 19 October 2001)

Taxpayers in 2000-2001 did not pay \$700 million for the ABC in the 2000-2001 financial year. Total ABC income for the year was \$812,102,000 of which \$143 million came from independent sources such as the sale of programs, ABC books, videos and other merchandise with government funding at \$668 million, less than half of 1% of federal government budgetary outlays. But the figure includes \$180 million spent on transmitters and in loans and special grants. The correct figure is \$584 million. This figure only has real meaning when com-

pared with like expenditure. The ABC cost the taxpayer under ten cents per capita a day. CBC (Canada) cost 14.4¢ per day and the BBC 33.4¢ per day. Certainly, nearly everyone helps fund the ABC, but nearly everyone purchases advertised goods and services, and thus pays for the advertisements on radio and television as commercial broadcasters main source of funding.

2. FACTUAL INACCURACY

When we see an article in a newspaper presenting certain arguments to prove a proposition the space accorded to an article does not necessarily mean it is accurate.

3. STATISTICS AND STUDIES

It is very important to look at their source and the way they are being used.

After the waterfront dispute in 1998, the ABC commissioned Professor Philip Bell of the University of New South Wales to conduct a study into whether the ABC had showed bias in its coverage of this issue. The result was negative.

However, one of the ABC's biggest critics - the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) - disagreed and decided to conduct its own study into ABC bias towards the waterfront dispute. Not surprisingly, it found in the affirmative. Tim Malseed had this to say about the IPA's findings in The Age, 13 October 1999.

"....in my opinion the IPA will not win this debate for two reasons. First, it should have declared that it is an interested party. The IPA is partly financed by the ABC's main Australian rival, Rupert Murdoch. The IPA should have declared that fact, because of the public perception that 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'".

Second, the institute got personal. Although its ABC analysis was arguably as good as the Bell Report, the IPA's conclusions were clouded by unsubstantiated attacks on the ABC. The institute used language such as 'post-1960s humanities

graduates' and members of the 'age of Aquarius' to describe ABC employees. All competent researchers know that disciplined analysis loses credibility when personal opinion is combined with hard factual data... The IPA should declare the financial interests of its donors and keep its research factually based.'

Writers or organisations such as the IPA should openly declare their own affiliations, ideology and sources of funding. Then let the reader make a judgement about their objectivity.

4. REDUCING EVERY VIEWPOINT TO AN IDEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Some writers try to reduce every argument into an ideological pigeon-hole, either 'right' or 'left'. This is inappropriate for any serious analysis of an issue. As Scott Burchill, wrote in The Australian, last January, *'The persistent use of terms such as Left and Right to characterise media opinion in Australia grossly exaggerates the diversity of views on offer ... Ideas and arguments that do not fall neatly within the Labour-Liberal policy parameters are almost by definition beyond the bounds of expressible opinion.'*

CONCLUSION

The wider community has the right to expect quality analysis of issues in daily newspapers, with well-argued views, to assist us in making informed choices about what we believe and how we vote.



Writers and columnists in daily newspapers, who present themselves as serious thinkers who add meaningful contributions to debates on current issues, are in most cases paid for their offerings. They can wield a substantial effect on public opinion.

The same writers and columnists, however, need to be challenged by the wider community if they present pieces filled with fallacious arguments.

Continued on Page 17

Your All-Purpose Guide To Identifying Unreasonable And Unsubstantiated Criticism Of The ABC Part Two

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Write to the Editors when you spot a 'dodgy argument' in relation to the ABC (or other issues). Let them know your opinion of their writers, of sometimes undisclosed affiliations, who do not prove their assertions and use personal attacks, generalisations, and inherent bias to make their point.

Rank and file members of Friends of the ABC should be active in critically examining, analysing and, where appropriate, challenging attacks on the ABC and any unsubstantiated criticisms of our national broadcaster.

Margaret O'Connor
(Howard Silcock, Monica Pflaum,
Joan Laing and Darce Cassidy assisted in preparing the document).

The Rewards of Celebrity Radio

Australian radio's two giant 'shock-jocks' Alan Jones and John Laws are back in front of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, prodded on their way by the ABC's *Media Watch* and the UNSW's Communications Law Centre, the duo that got the cash-for-comment enquiry going in 1999.

At issue this time, Jones and the Broadcasting Services Act and Lawsie and a sponsorship deal with NRMA (but which one).



David Marr raised both episodes on *Media Watch* and the Communications Law Centre Director, Dr. Derek Wilding, in a detailed letter of complaint, dropped this statement off to the ABA:

"It is the Centre's view that the statements of both Alan Jones and John Laws demonstrate a continuing problem within the commercial radio industry in relation to providing fair comment on public issues."

ABA Chair, David Flint, unaware that anything could have been amiss, bustled into action.

A probe was a matter of priority, he said. (Gosh!)

How To Respond To Inaccurate Media Stories

If you want to respond to any media which you feel is not reporting a story accurately or with bias be sure to follow the Cardinal Rules of Media Activism:

- 1) Be Concise.** Keep the complaint brief and to the point, and focused on one specific and quantifiable error, rather than vague generalities that are easily dismissible.
- 2) Be Factual.** Be sure your complaint is backed up by facts. Be sure to cite the source for your information.
- 3) Be Polite.** State your complaint respectfully, without name-calling or accusations.
- 4) Be Diligent.** If you don't get satisfaction the first time, write to complain again, restating your complaint and again requesting a reply.

This is the way to get the best results when monitoring local media.

(Adapted from HonestReporting media monitoring service)



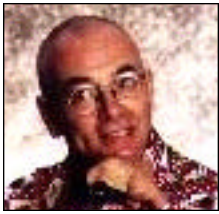
Cartoon courtesy of Phil Somerville

FABC (NSW) Inc. Executive Committee

President - Gary Cook
Phone: 9960 5542 Fax 9960 5767
VP & Secretary- Lilliane Leroy
Phone 9969 5159
Treasurer - Peter Burke
Phone 9144 2668
email peter@triode.net.au
Membership Secretary - Carolyn Green
Phone 9144 1351 or 0417 650 443
greenaa@ozemail.com.au.

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.



Dr Karl Wins an Ig Nobel Prize

Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, the ABC's popular science communicator, has been awarded a prestigious 2002 Ig Nobel Prize, accepting the award at a gala ceremony at Harvard University

The Ig Nobel Prizes are presented annually by the Harvard-based science-humour magazine "The Annals of Improbable Research" (AIR) to honour people whose scientific research "cannot or should not be reproduced". They are intended to "celebrate the unusual, honour the imaginative and spur people's interest in science, medicine and technology".

Dr Karl, scientist, radio personality, newspaper columnist and author of 22 popular science books, received his award before a crowd of 1200 people, including three Nobel Laureates and a 2001 winner, Peter Barss of McGill University, who submitted a staggering medical report "Injuries Due to Falling Coconuts"

Dr Karl's Ig Nobel-worthy research, was an international survey of Belly Button Lint (aka 'belly button fluff'). This ground-breaking project sought to uncover answers to two important questions posed by listeners to Dr Karl's science radio show: What exactly is it? Why is it almost always blue?

The Many Roles of the ABC ... as Diverse as its 'Clients'

The third World Congress of Rural Women took place in Madrid, Spain, over three days in early October, with 1500 women from five continents taking part, including 150 Australian women.

ABC Rural Online ensured that the Australian presence was considerably greater, setting up a live forum to raise and debate issues or watch the speakers on video streaming.

The Rural Online site was a comprehensive, multimedia experience enabling people from around Australia to be virtual participants in the event, while Paula Doran and Rosemary Grant fed first hand

reports from Madrid to Radio National programs and ABC Local radio.

The online site also featured stories on Australian rural women, a guest book for audience comments, conference papers from delegates and background information on the conference, including a history and objectives

The Congress dealt with many subjects including sustainable development, food safety, social and economic issues for rural women, and their access to technological innovation, public policy and more.



Roy and H.G. Online and Outrageous

'This Sporting Life' is also online with a new interactive website launched by ABC New Media and triple j. If the three hours of sporting facts and mayhem on triple j by 'Life hosts' Roy Slaven and H.G. Nelson fail to satisfy, they now dish it out online at <http://triplej.abc.net.au/thissportinglife>

The site brings not only the Sunday afternoon antics of the dynamic duo online and interactive for the first time, but also offers interac-

tive games and contests for sports lovers, the trivia conscious and the artistically talented (challenged?) alike.

The ABC's media release put it this way: "If art is more your style, the 'Funnel Web 2002 Life Art Challenge' welcomes visual ideas for 'This Sporting Life' products. Roy and H.G. will post ideas for 'The Royal Australian Trouser Club Travel Brochure' adult only adventurer weekends for those who are excited by the thought of waking up in a tent with a wild pig and a sharp stick. Or perhaps design the sleeve jacket for the chilling, seat of your pants epic thriller written by Glen McGrath, 'Who Moved the Cheese?' email Rampaging Roy and the Immortal H.G. at: <http://triplej.abc.net.au/thissportinglife>

update

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FABC Update

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

It's Not Good Bye but simply *Au Revoir*

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that day and letters later saying "it's the first time I've smiled in 12 months".

This year has been the ABC's 70th Anniversary and it has been wonderful to be attending birthday celebrations instead of protest rallies. ABC Friends Groups in Gosford, Blue Mountains Parramatta, Wollongong, Bathurst and finally in December, in Merimbula have celebrated the anniversary of our wonderful public broadcaster. Many cakes have been consumed and many fine speeches made.

We now have 14 rural and regional groups and in August this year held our first state conference to codify rules and regulations of the groups to Friends of the ABC NSW Inc. It was superbly run with a terrific facilitator Judy Stubbs who helped us achieve what we planned in the two days of the conference

We now have a phone tree with which to contact members in Sydney and much of New South Wales. We have an email chat room, the FABC List, which can be used to notify members and ABC fans about crises, events and celebrations. Last year in the election period, groups of our members contacted and visited many local members and candidates in marginal seats. These groups ran public meetings during the elections to "meet the candidate".



As well, over the last five years, we have gone to Canberra a number of times to lobby politicians from all par-

ties. Our latest foray has been to talk to the newly elected independent Members and Senators all of whom are supportive of the ABC.

During the Shier period, the phone ran hot, sometimes with 80 phone calls a day. This means there was no time to do anything else except answer the phone all day every day. Luckily that settled down this year!



However, just because things are a little quieter, this does not mean we can quit. The ABC's Triennial funding comes up in 2003. This is a dangerous time for the ABC - It's core funding MUST be enlarged. It's no good politicians raving on about funding being needed elsewhere. Australians MUST be informed -- especially during such difficult times.

Radio Australia received a little money on a temporary basis - But this extra money now needs to be put into core funding. During the terrible events of 11th September 2001 and 12th October 2002, ABC journalists have worked tirelessly on the spot to bring pertinent, balanced, sane reporting and careful analysis, to help us back home try to make sense of the senseless.

The \$17 million that was given to regional areas for radio is welcome. But it is only temporary. It MUST be put into core funding. Fifty-five people have been employed to help bring local programs to regional and rural areas. After four years that funding ceases and so do the jobs and the service. Then there is digital broadcasting and the new channels *Fly* and *Kids TV*. They are being funded out of the pot - the ABC is not only wrung out, its bones are wrung out. In

times of crisis in the world, funding must be increased so that Australians can continue to see and hear the reporting and measured analysis which helps them make sense of the world.

They also need to see Australian content in drama and comedy. Open up your television guide and see the wall-to-wall BBC programs. Sure there is SOME Australian content, eg *MDA* and *Back Berner*, but think back to the 1980's when there was 100 hours of Australian drama alone a year! We're lucky to be getting a tenth of that now. It's not good enough!

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance. I would add to that. The price of democracy is a well-informed populace. And the price of a well informed populace is a well funded, public broadcaster free from government interference. Remember "A government which does not inform its voters does not trust them" Eric Bogle. The ABC is NOT a cost, it provides an essential service to ALL Australians. It is a benefit and an essential one for us all.

Bless all of you who have worked with me. More power to the elbows of those who will carry on. I have great faith in Gary Cook and his team. Gary is different to me and his presidency will be different. But that's how it should be in a living, growing and thriving organisation. Keep up your memberships. And prevail upon your friends and relatives to join. It's important!

Thank you all for your support and friendship.

Penelope



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. 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 speak slowly or go to our website:

www.fabc.org.au/nsw

State and regional branches of Friends of the ABC

New South Wales

Penelope Toltz
PO Box 1391
North Sydney 2059
Ph: 9960 5542
Fax: 9960 5767
fabcnsw@optusnet.com.au

Albury

ABC Support Group
Jim Saleeba
c/- 621 Lindsay Ave
Albury NSW 2640
Ph: 6021 5690
Fax: 6021 0616
saleeba@albury.net.au

Armidale

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

Bathurst

Norah Taylor
254 Keppel St
Bathurst 2795
Ph: 6331 1273
djtaylor@tpg.com.au

Bega

Eleanor Beasley
2 Main Street
Merimbula 2548
Ph: 6495 1392
Fax: 6495 3202

Blue Mountains

John Derum
P.O. Box 469
Springwood 2777
Ph: 4758 6979
johnnderum@bigpond.com

Central Coast

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

Eurobodalla

Michael Taylor
12 Hawkins Rd
Tuross Head, NSW
Ph: 4473 8261 (W)
Ph: 4473 8561 (H)
taylora@acr.net.au

Great Lakes

Audrey Semon (Secretary)
4 Bundacree Place
Forster 2428
Ph: 6554 8507
asemon@tsn.cc

Illawarra

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

Newcastle

Hank Willems
c/ PO Box 265
Merewether 2291
gstruck@optusnet.com.au

Northern Rivers

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

Orange

Alan Sisley
52 Casey Street
Orange 2800
Ph: 63623775
alans@ix.net.au

Parramatta

Mal Hewitt
31 Queen St, Granville 2142
Ph: 9637 2900
macian@pentire.com

Port Macquarie/

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

Victoria

Friends of the ABC (Vic)
GPO Box 4065MM
Melbourne VIC 3001
Ph: 03 9682 0073
Fax: 03 9682 0074
fabcvic@vicnet.net.au

Queensland

Elisabeth McClement
P.O. Box 1658
Toowong QLD 4066
Ph/Fax: (07) 3378 7930
demc@picknowl.com.au

Gold Coast

Frances E. Rolls
PO Box 342
Nerang QLD 4211
Ph: (07) 5596 3835

ACT

Margaret O'Connor
GPO Box 2625
Canberra ACT 2601
Ph: 6251 1880
Fax: 6244 6690 (W)
margoforte@hotmail.com

South Australia

Joan Laing
P.O. Box 1758
Hutt St,
Adelaide SA 5000
Ph/Fax 08 8271 0751
jliang@senet.com.au

Western Australia

Roger Raven
PO Box 179
Darlington
WA 6070
Ph/Fax: (08) 9370 1785
rogerrr@eftel.com

Tasmania

Austra Maddox
5 Albuera Street
Battery Point,
Tasmania 7004
Ph: (03) 6223 2981 (H)
(03) 6211 9314 (W)
austramaddox@ozemail.com.au

Northern Territory

Brian Holm
PO Box 210
Howard Springs NT 0835
Ph: (08) 8983 1251
Fax: (08) 8941 3350
Mob: 0409 831 251
abcfriends_nt@we-wont-byte.com

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

The Treasurer, Friends of the ABC (NSW) Inc.

PO Box 1391, North Sydney NSW 2059.

Name		Email:	
Please Print			
Address		Suburb	P/Code
Phone (Home)		(Work)	Mob
Federal Electorate		Give my details to my local FABC Branch ☐	
Age Group ☐ 30 or under ☐ 31-50 ☐ 51+		Membership No. _____	
I would like to join ☐ I would like to renew ☐ I am interested in helping ☐ I would like to join the phone/fax/email network ☐		(and help pass on information to members)	
I/We apply for membership of FABC (NSW) Inc. and accept it's objectives and rules. Signature. _____			
☐ Individual	\$20	I am paying by ☐ cheque in favour of FABC (NSW) Inc. ☐ money order ☐ bankcard ☐ mastercard ☐ visacard Card number _____ Name on credit card _____ Expiry date _____	
☐ Family/Household	\$25		
☐ Student	\$15		
☐ Pensioner	\$15		
☐ Corporate (covers 3 members)	\$60		
☐ I would like to make a donation \$ _____			
Cardholders signature		Amount \$	