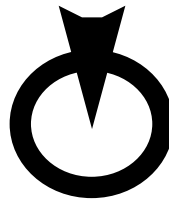


THE THIN EDGE OF THE WEDGE



The recent appointment to the ABC Board of Keith Windschuttle



not only consolidated the *Quadrant clique* on the Board, it revived the push to commercialise the ABC. As mem-

bers are well aware, Friends of the ABC has been a staunch opponent of advertising on the national broadcaster, generally in the face of tenuous arguments in its favour.

Errol Simper, writing in *The Australian*, correctly pointed out that, "The appointment to the ABC Board (of Windschuttle) is the first time, as far as anyone can recall, that a government has appointed to safeguard a public broadcaster someone who advocates destroying its public broadcasting ethos via commercialisation. Windschuttle has said the national broadcaster should be commercialised in order to break its Marxist culture and he declined to withdraw his view".

Robert Manne observed, "The Howard Government is in the pocket of the commercial television networks. They will never agree to advertising on the ABC. It is his (Windschuttle's) program, however, for an ideological purge of the ABC, if he forms an alliance with the other right-wing heavy hitters on the board, that is likely eventually to succeed.

In contrast, the Canadian Senate recently released a report calling for a \$400 million increase to funding for the public broadcaster, CBC, so that it can stop running ads on its television network. Canadian Liberal Senator, Jim Munson, a former journalist with 32 years of experience said, "we feel that CBC, as a public broadcaster, should get back to the basics. Give Canadians Canadian content, Canadian news and so on".

Of more immediate concern, though, is that ABC Enterprises has established a third-party website <Countdown.com.au> which, according to Managing Director, Mark Scott, is a fully-owned ABC site set up to develop new business revenue streams through product and content sales, merchandising, downloading and advertising.

To demonstrate the extent to which the ABC and commercial entities are inextricably entwined, you merely have to go to the website at <<http://www.countdown.com.au>>. There you will see the ABC logo below advertisements for corporations such as NAB Visa, St George Bank MasterCard, Wizard MasterCard, Citibank, Sony, Ford and ING Direct. These ads seem to rotate so you may not always see the same ones.

(Continued on page 4)



REGIONAL CONFERENCE OPPOSES ADVERTISING

Foremost among the topics discussed at last month's FABC Regional Conference at Rooty Hill was how to keep the ABC free of advertising?

Over forty delegates representing twelve branches throughout the state, as well as the NSW Committee, attended the third biennial conference, hosted on this occasion by Parramatta Branch.

Other topics addressed were to develop strategies to raise the awareness of the ABC in the community and to continue to review the operations of FABC (NSW) in order to improve its effectiveness.

The recent establishment by ABC Enterprises of a third-party website to carry advertising met with condemnation by delegates. While it was conceded that, technically, such action was

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Illawarra Friends meet with Shadow Minister



Jan Kent Secretary FABC Illawarra, Hon Sharon Bird MP (Cunningham) and Shadow Minister for Communications and Information Technology Sen Stephen Conroy

by Chris Cartledge

On a visit to Wollongong on 3 Aug 2006, the Shadow Minister for Communications and Information Technology, Senator Stephen Conroy, met with members of the FABC Illawarra Committee. The meeting was facilitated by Sharon Bird MP, a member of the FABC Illawarra.

The Senator reaffirmed Labor's policy to end political interference in the ABC by reforming the ABC Board appointment process. The Minister would appoint Board members from a shortlist developed by an independent panel established at arms length from the Minister. The same process would apply to SBS.

The Senator warned that when Labor was elected to Government any changes to the Board composition would take time as directors were appointed for five years. Also control of the Senate by the Coalition would continue for some years. He promised that a Labor Government would review the ABC Charter and amongst other issues would tighten the definitions around advertising. He was explicitly opposed to advertising on ABC broadcasts but was less adamant on the issue of Internet advertising.

The new ABC *Countdown* website, which stands apart from the ABC prime website, carries commercial advertising. When questioned, Senator Conroy said he was less concerned about advertising on Internet off-shoots such as the *Countdown* site. When it was pointed out that it could be the thin edge of the wedge, **he said that we should all be vigilant to ensure this was not an opening for the new Board.**

The Senator said that the Government had already changed the culture within the ABC to the extent that he had not been invited for an interview on *The 7:30 Report* or *Lateline* despite the frequent coverage the Minister Senator Helen Coonan had had on these programs in recent months. He pointed out that one of the Government's cultural warriors Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells was an Illawarra local and that she had taken over Senator Santo Santoro's ABC complaint files and spies. The Shadow Minister said it was scandalous that even using the Freedom of Information Act he had been unable to obtain a copy of the KPMG Report on the Funding Adequacy and Efficiency of the ABC but committed a Labor Government to the recommended additional funding of \$125 million dollars if elected.

Parramatta

by Mal Hewitt

Quentin Dempster was guest speaker at a public forum held in Parramatta Town Hall on Tuesday 25th July, organized by Parramatta FABC.



Supporters came from as far as the upper Blue Mountains, Eastern Suburbs and North Shore to hear Quentin address such issues as the Government's abolition of the staff-elected director's position, the dangers of creeping commercialization, and the challenges faced by ABC staff in reporting without fear or favour in the national and international context.

A very receptive audience appreciated Quentin's commitment to the ABC, his vast experience as a journalist, and his passion that the ABC should remain an independent and fearless broadcaster. His words prompted many questions and much discussion, and inspired everyone to continue the fight to support the ABC.

Bathurst

by Tracey Carpenter

To draw attention to the plight of Australian drama and the need to support the ABC, Bathurst Friends held a very successful evening at Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre on Thursday June 1. Around 50 Friends gathered at the premiere of Ray Harding's *A Terrible Beauty* performed by students of Charles Sturt University's Theatre Media Course, and directed by Bill Blaikie. The play blends dance, puppetry, music and dramatic performance in a rich examination of the contemporary collision of cultures on the island of Bali. The Friends were challenged by a discussion with playwright and long-standing television scriptwriter Ray Harding, who stressed the difficulties of producing and maintaining meaningful local dramatic content on Australian screens. The play's contemporary themes revealed both the extent of young talent and the importance of reflection upon our identity, culture, region and the conflicts of the modern era.

THE PRESIDENT 'S REPORT



This is my final report to you as President. My decision not to stand again after four years as President was a difficult one, not made easier as, having been prominently involved with the Friends in support of the ABC, it consumes a large part of my life.

But, it's been an interesting ride!

I appreciate the support I have had from members of the NSW Committee, from my interstate colleagues, from our NSW Branches and from you, the members.

I have met with ABC Management, operating under enormous political pressure and struggling for funds. I have met politicians from all political parties - some committed to the ABC, some supportive, some apathetic, some prepared to defend the indefensible and some openly antagonistic.

I have met many ABC staff and, one can't help being in admiration of their dedication and commitment to the ABC.

I have met many people from our branches whose support is vital to the strength of the Friends. At functions, stalls, meetings and other events I have met our loyal members who pay their money every year to support the ABC. It has been an enriching experience.

The biennial NSW Regional Conferences at which we bring delegates from our branches

together have proved great foundations for policy formation and communication. Our state and territory bodies meet, usually every two years, to formulate policy and, particularly, to develop strategies for campaigns. In 2005, NSW hosted the National Conference in Sydney.

Visits to meet branch members on their home soil are always a highlight and I am grateful for the hospitality shown to me by the branches.

We continue to fight the good fight in support of the ABC. Funding is always to the forefront of our campaigning and that is because the ABC is chronically underfunded by any measure. It is near the bottom of the pile when compared to funding of public broadcasters in developed countries. Until a system is adopted whereby the ABC is funded by some formula which is not determined by the government of the day, this battle will continue.

The government continues to make inappropriate appointments to the ABC Board - vocal opponents of the ABC, proponents of advertising on the ABC and political cronies. Again, this process should not be totally in government hands and should be the result of a process similar to Britain's Nolan Rules. All political parties except the Coalition have adopted a policy similar to the

Nolan Rules. To add insult to injury, the government, this year abolished the position of Staff-Elected Director.

Our current major issue is the push for advertising on the ABC. One of the lead stories in this issue sets out our concerns.

The hostility towards the ABC of former minister, Richard Alston and his vendetta over perceived bias was continued unabated by Senator Santo Santoro until he was appointed a minister. This role has been happily accepted by Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells of whom you would have read in our last edition.

Our webpage www.fabcnsw.org.au is a wealth of information and is regularly updated. If you are not a subscriber to the email list, you are missing the opportunity to have your say about the Friends, the ABC, its programmes and its people. All you have to do to join is send an email to: fabclist@fabcnsw.org.au

A strong and independent public broadcaster, free from commercial influences, is one of the pillars of our democracy. Maintain the passion for the ABC and be prepared to fight for its existence.

I wish you all well for the future.

Gary Cook
President, FABC

Central Coast

**Friends of the ABC Central Coast are holding:
An Evening with Kerry O'Brien**

Date: Friday 10 November Time: 6.00pm - 9.00pm

Place: Parkview Room, Central Coast Leagues Club Gosford

Tickets: \$10.00 per head Light supper included

Bar open: Drinks, tea and coffee available for purchase

Enquiries: Tel: **4333 8107** or write to **21 Stephenson Road, Bateau Bay 2261**

A stamped self-addressed envelope for return of tickets should accompany ticket requests and cheques should be made out to Central Coast FABC.

Sorry, No Credit Card facility is available



THE THIN EDGE OF THE WEDGE

Continued from Page 1



ABC stalwart, Quentin Dempster fears that the ABC Board is only one small step away from making a disastrous decision to allow advertising on the mainstream ABC website – one of the most trusted and most used in the country.

The ABC Act (1983), written before the internet was invented states, *The Corporation shall not broadcast advertisements.*

According to Dempster, "<Countdown.com.au> is the thin edge of the wedge for ABC broadband/cybercast advertising. It trades off the one piece of integrity we have – the ABC's perceived non-commercial character. The financial returns will never and can never be realised because the stated desire of government is to lessen the drain of the ABC on the public purse. Hence any profits gained will be matched over time by a lessening of the operational base funding appropriation. It's a zero sum game. A no-brainer. If you have a commercial operation,

it is the commercial imperative which will drive the programming. Public broadcasting should be about innovative ideas rather than bankable ideas, bankable ideas that can have a commercial return".

At the same time, huge 360-degree televisions, in shopping centres across the nation, are screening ABC-created updates in news, business, sport and weather – interspersed with advertising for products. The ABC Director of Enterprises, Robyn Watts says that "certain advertising is permitted but to strict guidelines and the ABC maintains full editorial control of the content that it licenses".

It's not a matter of enforcing guidelines for advertising. Once commercials appear on the ABC, no matter what the product or service, the integrity of the ABC is damaged and its independence is then under a cloud.

Originally, the SBS enforced strict guidelines over commercials on its television network but, over

time, that has been relaxed and the commercials now screened are the same as those on commercial channels. The recent decision by the SBS that commercials would be shown, not only between programmes, but also during programmes caused long-standing and well-respected newsreader, Mary Kostakidis to comment, "I believe in-programme advertising will even further homogenise Australian television when we should be looking to provide a clear alternative. That free-to-air diversity is what viewers are actually looking for and we should be respecting their views".

Is this a forerunner of what is in store for the ABC? Let us make sure it doesn't reach that point! Take every opportunity to tell politicians, the media and the community that the ABC must preserve its independence by remaining commercial-free.

Gary Cook
President

Fran Kelly The toast of breakfast radio



From Amanda Meade
The Australian
17 August 2006

SYDNEY radio presenter Alan Jones likes to boast he has the largest, most influential breakfast talk show in the country. In terms of sheer numbers, he doesn't, and in terms of influence he can be challenged, too. On a national level, the honour of biggest early morning audience must go to Fran Kelly, host of ABC Radio National's flagship show, *Breakfast*. Each

weekday, across the country, 560 000 people tune to Kelly's substantial offering of news and in-depth current affairs on Radio National from 6am to 8.30am, including a break for AM at 7.10am. Jones broadcasts only in Sydney to an audience of 419 000 (or a reach of just more than 11 per cent of the Sydney radio market 10 and older).

Kelly's *Breakfast* is the only breakfast program for many rural and regional communities and is broadcast on 310 transmitters across Australia. But it's not just bums on seats that matter; it's whose bum it is. In terms of influence, *Breakfast* is in a different league to the titans of commercial radio who rule in their own states.

Jones prides himself on how many times the Prime Minister comes on his program, but 2GB is not essential listening for politicians across the country. We know John Howard listens to Kelly on *Breakfast*. He says so often enough. This week he used interviews Kelly conducted with two Labor figures to attack the Opposition in question time.

Another measure of who is listening to serious current affairs over breakfast is the number of Canberra listeners. Canberra's figures are more than double those of any other city, as one would expect in a capital dominated by politicians, policy-makers and national media ...

REGIONAL CONFERENCE OPPOSES ADVERTISING

Continued from Page 1

not in breach of the ABC Act, it was certainly against the spirit and intent. The conference passed a resolution opposing advertising on all ABC media, including internet sites, the exception being ABC promotion of its own programs and products.

Although the next federal election is not expected to be held until late 2007, the conference felt that it was an opportune time to revisit previous election strategies. It was agreed that branches would play an important role in the campaign, particularly in marginal seats. The rise in importance of independent candidates was noted, as was the opportunity to involve youth groups attracted to new ABC technology (podcasting and vodcasting).

A significant list of action items was produced over the two days and their implementation will be the responsibility of all delegates and their respective committees.

A highlight of the conference



was the keynote dinner address given by the Federal Member for Parramatta, Julie Owens. Ms Owens, a member of the House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, focussed on the importance of an independent public broadcaster and her concerns that the government, to the point of obsession, controls the flow of information from the top down.

Ms Owens met general agreement when she pointed out that media ownership in Australia is already concentrated in too few hands, thereby endangering diver-

sity and freedom of expression. The proposed relaxation of cross-media ownership laws would take Australia in the wrong direction.

She was praiseworthy of the ABC's great innovations in digital technology and lamented that the days when the ABC was the great trainer of cadet journalists appeared to be in the past – through lack of funds.

The conference wrapped up with delegates well pleased with the energy, enthusiasm and outcomes from the conference. A special word of thanks to Parramatta Branch for organising the conference and to its President, Mal Hewitt, who facilitated in a most efficient manner.

Gary Cook
President

Jonestown

Allen & Unwin have decided to publish the biography of broadcaster Alan Jones by Chris Masters after the ABC Board refused to publish the book at the last minute, with the book at the typesetting stage.

Phillip Adams in *The Australian* on 4.7.06 referred to Chris Masters as *the Don Quixote of the ABC. Show him a windmill and he'll tilt at it. Trouble is, he often gets tangled in the sails and spends years going up and down, round and round. Through the years, his reports for 'Four Corners' have got him into all sorts of trouble. One day he gets a Walkley, next day it's a summons. One fracas had him in and out of courtrooms for years. Every time I saw Masters he looked glummer than before; truly the knight of the woeful countenance. He'd tell me the game wasn't worth the candle, that the price for doing his job could be five, 10 years of litigation. But he couldn't stop himself. No sooner had he disen-*



tangled himself from one windmill than he was tilting at another. If it wasn't Joh Bjelke-Petersen, it was Alan Jones.

Adams states that he warned Masters the ABC lawyers would not allow it to be published and begged him to go with a commercial publisher. *But Masters remained loyal to the ABC. He couldn't believe the book, so long in the writing, would be pigeonholed.*

When interviewed on *Sunday Profile* in July Chris Masters said that he felt betrayed by the ABC. He also stated that he questioned whether the ABC was willing to pursue quality investigative journalism and any future books he wrote would not be published through the ABC. Masters was not contacted by the Board about the decision but by Robyn Watts, Head of ABC Enterprises. The ABC had spent about \$100 000 during the research phase for the book and in checking legal issues around the publication.

Adams reports that Masters's decision to write the book was a consequence of his story on Jones for *Four Corners* in 2002. *While Sydney's air was thick with rumours and allegations, no-one had the guts to go on the program. Masters told me he'd never had an experience like it: so much running for cover and cowardice. It was a preview of the present situation.*

As Adams says in his article *Don Quixote will win this joust with this wildly flailing windmill. Whatever the sales were destined to be, you can now double them. Would-be censors will never learn.*

Northern Rivers

by Neville Jennings

The Northern Rivers Friends of the ABC Branch held its Annual General Meeting on Sunday 9 July at the Bangalow Bowling Club with 20 members in attendance. At this meeting the existing executive was returned to office:

President:
Neville Jennings,
Vice President:
Doug Myler,
Secretary:
Neville Jennings (with assistance from Jill Keogh),
Treasurer:
Ed Bennett,
Convenor of Byron Bay sub-branch:
Val Phillips
Committee member:
Tony Baron.

Branch members confirmed their commitment to ensuring the independence of the ABC and adequate funding for the ABC.

They expressed concern over moves to allow commercial advertising on the ABC, the stacking of the ABC Board with right-wing ideologues, the lack of funding for Australian drama, despite the relief provided in the recent budget, and attacks on the integrity of the ABC by selected politicians and sections of the media.

Issues of concern for the Northern Rivers Branch were: the need to increase active membership, especially from young people, and the



Following the AGM members took part in a lively debate on the deliberately controversial topic - *Commercial advertising on the ABC would NOT mean the end of civilisation as we know it.* From left Udo Moerig, Steve Kelly, Robert Smith (Moderator), Louise Owen (Adjudicator), Tony Baron, Jenny Coman (partly hidden), Jenny Dowell.

need to make more direct contact with branch members not contactable by email. A regular branch newsletter has been proposed for members in remote locations. It was agreed that the branch would continue to support the establishment of sub-branches.

The Byron Bay Sub-branch has been negotiating with the New Matilda group to host a seminar on the proposed Human Rights Act. A number of branch members attended the Byron Bay Writers Festival in August. The Northern Rivers Branch is a committed supporter of this festival as it features so many ABC identities.

Byron Bay stalwart Graham Ashcroft recently joined the president in attending the conference of regional branches at Rooty Hill. The Branch President (Neville Jennings) has been in contact with Foreign Correspondent Mark Willacy regarding a possible address to branch members in the new

year. Mark has recently returned from a posting in the Middle East. It is hoped that his address may coincide with a visit to the region of the excellent exhibition *Through Australian Eyes* that features the international work of ABC journalists.

Members of the branch recently attended a farewell for ABC North Coast Station Manager Martin Corben who has taken up a position as Online Manager at 702 in Sydney.

Mid North Coast Branch

From President
Drusi Megget

A petition to ABC Enterprises to open a new franchise for ABC books and products in Port Macquarie has had a strong response.

Gary Cook President, NSW FABC, will be guest speaker at a morning tea on Saturday, 23 September at Sea Acres Rainforest Reserve, Port Macquarie.

Members and guests are welcome.

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Members will recall being advised last year of the decision by ABC Enterprises to discontinue the 10% discount previously provided to members in ABC shops. In order to save on costs, we decided, at that time, not to order a reprint of membership cards.

For those members requiring a receipt for the payment of their membership fees, a new form of receipt on the Friends letterhead is now being issued.

We take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant contribution made over recent years by former Membership Secretary, Carolyn Green.

Our membership database has recently been updated and Carolyn's efforts have been much appreciated. She is now able to enjoy her garden more often.

News for parrots

By Darce Cassidy

Good evening. Here is the news for parrots. No parrots were involved in an accident on the M1 today, when a lorry carrying high-octane fuel was in collision with a bollard ... that is a BOLLARD and not a PAR-ROT. A spokesman for parrots said he was glad no parrots were involved. The Minister of Technology today met the three Russian leaders to discuss a £4 million airliner deal ... (cut back to narrator) None of them went in the cage, or swung on the little wooden trapeze, or ate any of the nice millet seed yum, yum. That's the end of the news....

Monty Python's Flying Circus – Episode 20

There's no such thing as society is perhaps the best remembered of Margaret Thatcher's statements. What she said was wishful thinking rather than a statement of fact, but if the attacks on public service broadcasting in both the UK and Australia succeed, Thatcher's wish may indeed become true.

Opponents of public broadcasting are arguing that its an anachronism in the digital age. Hundreds, and potentially thousands, of channels are available through Pay TV. The diversity of subject matter on the Internet is staggering. Virtually anyone can start their own blog. Virtually anyone can become a regular international broadcaster, as my nineteen year old son has been doing for the past year or so, by producing their own weekly podcast in their bedroom.

However there are already signs that this may be leading to a fragmentation of audiences. While audiences appear to be fragmenting, and while the number of different voices on the airwaves, or in cyberspace, are growing, the big players, Microsoft and Murdoch, Bertelsmann and Berlusconi are standing at the gateway. They

don't control that gateway, but they have a great deal of influence over where users choose to travel.

British anthropologist, Professor Georgina Born, the author of



Uncertain Vision: Birt, Dyke and the Reinvention of the BBC, in conversation with Gerald

Tooth on Radio National's *Media Report*, explained the critical role of public service broadcasters in the development of public opinion in the U.K." ...really, until the advent of national radio in the 20s and growing in the 30s, there was no such thing as a national public, and no such thing as a national culture to speak of. There were various sorts of bands of elite, for example, publics, and there was of course a growing labour movement and working class identity. But the creation of this pan-class, truly national kind of body of opinion, depended on broadcasting's arrival." It's a very powerful argument, and I think its intimate links with the growth of mass democracy and universal suffrage are crucial.

In Australia the ABC Charter makes this role explicit. The ABC must both contribute to unity, to a sense of national identity, at the same time that it celebrates diversity and takes account of the multicultural character of the Australian community.

Georgina Born continued: "Now if we come to the present, other kinds of arguments, other kinds of ideas are in the air, most notably that what we lack these days is sufficient responsiveness to new groups in society, to the diversity, the heterogeneity, to multiculturalism, to indigenous peoples' voices and so on. We have this rather flattening, monolithic homogenous thing called the national culture, and it's a very seductive argument, and of course it goes along with the idea that

digital media and niche media, transnational satellite television, local television production and so on, can do nothing but good. Because what they do is provide the means now for these new, smaller micro-products to emerge, to talk to themselves, to talk to the nation, to become more visible, and to represent themselves." These are crucial arguments, they are about the expansion of the democratic space, and they're very important. However, if we go entirely with that argument, it was very strongly put by a number of media academics here in Australia by the way, we can be at risk of losing sight of the other crucial function which is unification, which is the need for, let's call it, a universal public. We need a universal public because it mirrors our political system, the Federal political system.

We need a space in which all those micro publics can talk to the majority, and the majority can be expected to listen. And only mass channels provide that kind of universal space, now that, for example, a newspaper market is more and more segmented as well.

Put simply, while specialist services for subcultures - parrots, stamp collectors or cricket fanatics - are important, so too is a national forum in which we can all take part.

Ken Inglis, in his recently published *Whose ABC? The Australian Broadcasting Corporation 1983-2006* made a similar point: "All in all it is likely that viewers and listeners in the digital age will become even more reliant on public broadcasters for electronic representation of their nation's character, and the human condition

There is plenty of life yet in the adage about the ABC and its equivalents elsewhere, that they address their audiences as citizens, not consumers."

Narrator: And while that's going on, here is the news for gibbons. No gibbons were involved today in an accident on the M1 ...

bb

Great Lakes Friends of the ABC public meeting

The Great Lakes Friends of the ABC held a public meeting on Sunday 27 August at Golden Ponds Retirement Resort to meet the new GLFABC committee, enjoy a wine tasting and talk about *Strategies to Keep the ABC Free from Advertising*. More than 40 people from the Great Lakes region all of whom are Lovers of the ABC indicated their concern over the feared changes to the ABC.

They felt that the Government was undermining the public broadcaster by starving it of funds and appointing members to the Board who were openly in favour of advertising and by eliminating the position of the staff elected representative to the Board, Quentin Dempster.

Many positive and diverse strategies were reported on by group

leaders Bruce Langley, Don Burton and Cr John Weate. These included raising the awareness of the ABC in the community, writing letters to newspapers and politicians, especially to Senator Coonan, Minister for Communications (GPO Box 3513 Sydney 2001) stating that the public wants to have an ABC free from advertising and corporate control, and protesting against any changes that affect the independence of the ABC Charter.

Other suggestions which were made include having affiliations with local libraries, positive picnic days, a Branch webpage, much more publicity, training in how to be more efficient electronically and the appointment of a Patron.

Ros Van Ewyk, the new President and Marie Power, the new Treasurer reported on the Regional

Conference of the NSW FABC which they attended on August 19 and 20 in Sydney. Rebecca Teakle, the new secretary of GLFABC pointed out that ABC advertising had already started on huge 360-degree televisions providing information in shopping centres across Australia where ABC-created updates in news, business, sport and weather were spliced with advertising for products including mobile phones and sports drinks.

Ros thanked the Golden Ponds Committee and Administration for the use of their facilities, Marty Morrison, vice-president of GLFABC who was the facilitator for the morning, Great Lakes Winery and Ros Talbot for presenting the wine tasting. Drinks and snacks were enjoyed by all.

Kerry O'Brien



Amanda Meade reported on Kerry O'Brien's life in journalism in her article ***Milestones for the host we trust the most***

(*The Australian* 15 June 2006)

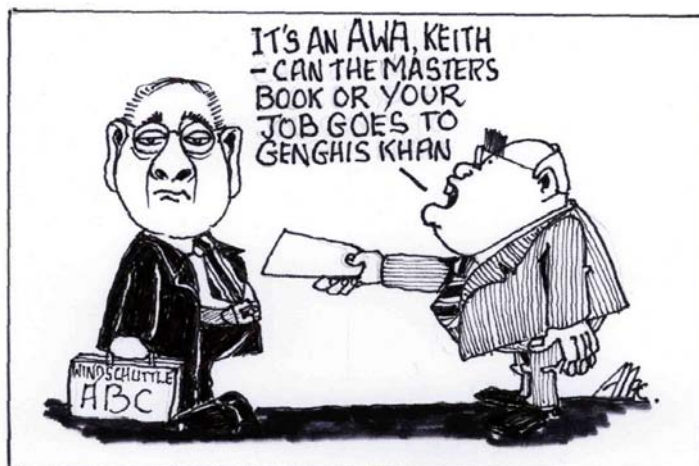
KERRY O'Brien knows how it feels to land a story through chequebook journalism. And it certainly didn't give him the joy the \$2.6million Beaconsfield miners deal gave Nine host Tracy Grimshaw, who says it was the highlight of her career.

'When I worked on the *Sydney Sun* 35 years ago,' O'Brien says, 'I remember having the inside running on a family from Canberra who'd given birth to quintuplets, and at that point it was a record. I think *The Sun* paid for that story, as it was in competition with *The Mirror*. I happened to be the journalist who did that story. I felt no sense of smugness. I took no pride in that; that's a commercial arrangement. I remember feeling

uncomfortable because you're not getting it through any kind of skill, but because somebody is prepared to take out a chequebook and pay for it.'

It was an early lesson in job satisfaction and ethics in the enduring, high-profile career of O'Brien, who recently clocked up a record 10 years as host and editor of the ABC current affairs program *The 7.30 Report*. This year he will also celebrate 17 years of unbroken service as a daily news presenter on ABC television, as he jumped into *The 7.30 Report* straight from six years as the founding host of *Lateline*. ... Now, at 60, he has a raft of achievements behind him including a Logie award in 1991

for *Lateline's* coverage of the coup against Mikhail Gorbachev. He has also won four Walkley Awards: a current affairs Walkley and the Gold Walkley in 1982, when he was working for Seven; another current affairs Walkley in 1991 for the ABC's coverage of the Soviet coup; and in 2000 he won for broadcast interviewing on *The 7.30 Report*. Perhaps best of all, he also won the public's vote as most preferred and most credible journalist in Australia, across all media. An Australian Broadcasting Authority survey in 2001 also found he was admired for his ability to extract answers from politicians and for not sensationalising the news.



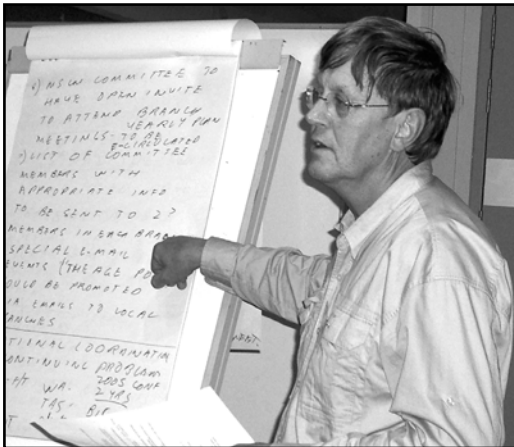
August Biennial Friends Conference



NSW Committee members Christina Harlamb (L) and Avril Ingram (R) discussing current issues raised.



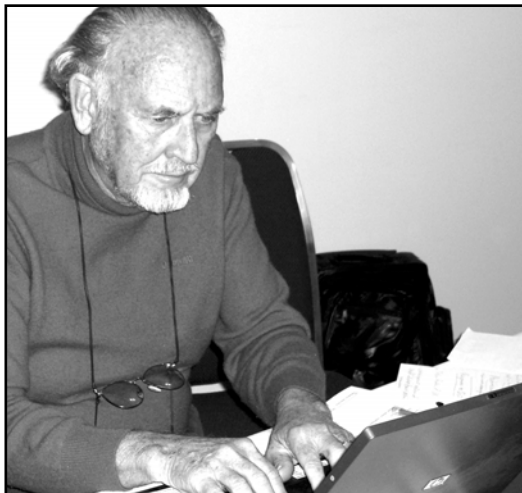
Neville Jennings (Northern Rivers) presenting his Syndicate Group's findings



Bill Johnstone (NSW) making an important point



A Syndicate Group considering various proposals for further development.



Ian Macindoe recording Sydicave Group work on his lap top for futher discussion.



Gary Cook helping clarify an issue at one of the Syndicate Groups.



Members of a Syndicate Group hard at work developing and expanding a range of innovative ideas..



A Syndicate Group discussing issues and strategies.

DIGITAL AUNTY

The ABC has always led the way with innovation in broadcasting and in the digital age it is still out there in front.

Stephen Mayne reported some outstanding stats about digital Aunty at <Crikey.com.au> on 21.8.06.

All those ABC critics who attack the national broadcaster for not attracting large audiences are eating plenty of humble pie over its extraordinary performance when it comes to podcasting. ABC producer Gordon Taylor took an audience of about 60 spin-doctors through the figures a couple of weeks back at the MEAA's (Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance) public affairs convention in Sydney, and it certainly left me gobsmacked. Podcasting only started on the ABC in August 2004 but there are now 1.6 million successful downloads a month, which compares very favourably in per capita terms with the BBC, which is doing 3.5 million a month despite its huge global audience. The ABC has about 20 entries in the *iTunes Australia Top 100* and *The Chaser* vodcast is number one in its category and growing fast. Even more amazing was the statistic that only 17% of the downloads come from within Australia because the US dominates with 69%. This reflects strong interest from academia in programs like *Life Matters*, which is doing 140 000 downloads a week.

Phillip Adams also has a large and growing global following for *Late Night Live* – which includes a regular chat with our own Christian Kerr that is offered as a podcast. If you thought iPods were all about pimply teens, think again. The largest age bracket for ABC downloads is 40-54 and the usage does skew strongly on gender terms with 81% of users being male. Gordon Taylor said it was often hard to predict which programs would take off. For instance, Triple J's nightly current affairs program *Hack* is the youth station's most

popular podcast, easily outpacing alternatives such as *Sunday Night Safran* and *This Sporting Life*. Podcasting is perhaps something that *Crikey* should get into. The weekly spot *I Do* with Tim Cox on ABC Tasmania has been podcast all year, but doubtless rates towards the bottom of the 115 different podcast offerings that Aunty has made available.



Triple J unearthing Australian music talent online

ABC August 9 2006

Triple J has been discovering new Australian music for over 30 years and unearthing acts for more than a decade. Since July 1995, the national youth broadcaster has provided young bands and musicians living in regional and metropolitan areas of Australia an opportunity to be heard on national radio and be professionally recorded. *Triple J* has travelled to over 43 regions around the nation and unearthed over 100 bands. Nearly all these musicians have gone on to release CDs independently and many have secured distribution deals. *Triple J Unearthed* has relaunched and is now online. In the spirit of *Triple J* discovering and supporting young Australian musicians, *Triple J Unearthed* has become the beast that never sleeps. It's 24/7. It's all year round. It's yours. There is a website where unsigned bands can upload their music and profiles and where music lovers can rate the songs and help choose what makes it. Richard Kingsmill, Music Director of *Triple J*, says, "*Unearthed* has been one of the best initiatives the station has come up with over its three decade existence. It's been a terrific vehicle for us to discover fresh talent, but it's also given many the chance of expressing

their music and having that aired across the nation."

Kingsmill continued, "We are also proud that we've seen many *Unearthed* acts get signed up to both major and independent labels. It's shown the record industry movers and shakers that successful acts can exist anywhere in Australia; not just in the ultra-cool pubs they hang out in."

Unearthed is supported by the Music Board of the Australia Council for the Arts. Graeme Koehne, Chair of the Music Board says, "The Australia Council for the Arts is excited to partner the ABC in the *Unearthed* project. One of the Music Board's priorities is providing opportunities and funding to emerging and young artists, including contemporary bands and solo acts...[the website] will encourage the discovery of new independent Australian music, and provide a meeting place for musicians and audiences. We look forward to the success stories, collaborations and promotions that will inevitably appear as the site is launched."

Aunty expands digital services

*Chris Jenkins reported in
The Australian 8 August 2006*

THE ABC is beginning to tap the full potential of its digital television services, cranking up the electronic program guide long touted as one of the advantages of digital broadcasting. The national broadcaster is testing an extension of the electronic program guide for its main *ABC 1* television service in Sydney, providing information on several days of programming. If successful, the service will be extended nationally and expanded to the digital-only *ABC 2* and *ABC High Definition* channels. Industry estimates put the number of free-to-air digital receivers in Australia at about 1.5 million. Until the trial, Australian broadcasters offered information only on the program being broadcast at the time and that following.

Continued on Page 11

ABC launches vodcasting

MEDIA RELEASE July 27 2006

ABC TV and New Media and Digital Services has launched a vodcasting trial of its new jtv programming, and ABC TV's hugely popular, *The Chaser's War on Everything*. A specially-made jtv vodcast will be available from 6pm each Friday and the entire show of *The Chaser's War on Everything* will be vodcast prior to the program's weekly television screening on Friday evening.

The Director of ABC TV, Kim Dalton said, "ABC TV is thrilled to be making its content more accessible to a broader audience, who can access it at times convenient to them. These programs can be downloaded onto mobile viewing devices hours before the program is transmitted on television." Lynley Marshall, Director New Media and Digital Services said, "The ABC's video podcast services will build on our market leading position with audio podcasts in Australia. This initiative continues our commitment to providing audiences with ABC content anywhere and anytime and on every available platform."

Vodcasting for jtv can be accessed through its website <www.jtv.com.au> and for *The Chaser's War on Everything* through <<http://abc.net.au/tv/chaser/war>> and the trial will continue for the run of both programs this year.

Aunty expands digital services

Continued from Page 10

As well as the channel and broadcast time, the electronic program guide includes information such as viewer classification and a brief synopsis of the show.

More critically, it can be used to program hard-disk recorders, which are increasingly replacing the VCR, recording with no drop in quality. Piracy concerns had been one reason the ABC held off extending the program guide, an ABC spokesman said. "All of the networks are worried to a greater or lesser extent, about piracy," he said.

As well as its three digital television channels, the ABC operates two digital radio channels. "All of this data has a space implication in the spectrum," the spokesman said. Although many set-top boxes are equipped for electronic program guides of up to two weeks, the trial would be limited to two to three days of information.

"Spectrum concerns meant it was unlikely that more than a week of data would be offered in the future," the spokesman said. The ABC had been encouraged by a call from digital viewers for a more useful program guide. These calls were made via online forums such as those on the website of industry group Digital Broadcast Australia. Other broadcasters may follow the ABC's lead in extending the program guide. "A number of people are starting to think about it," the spokesman said.

ABC puts vodcasting to the test

On August 22nd in the Sydney Morning Herald Adam Turner reported Aunty's overhaul of multimedia activities.

ABC TELEVISION is allowing viewers to download programs to computers and mobile phones for the first time as part of an online video on demand trial.

The video podcast, or vodcast, trial comes as part of a multimedia overhaul at the ABC, including higher resolution for streaming and downloadable content as well as digital television broadcast. Initial vodcasts include satire series *The Chaser's War on Everything* as well as JTV, a spin-off of the ABC's Triple J youth radio network. The programs are available for download in the Windows Media Video and MPEG4 formats, whereas previous ABC Television online video content has only been available as streaming video, which could not be saved for playback on portable video players.

The ABC's multimedia overhaul is backed by Agility, a compression management system supplied by US-based digital media specialist Anystream - which counts the BBC, CNN, Time Warner, Viacom and News Corp among its clientele. The Agility system sits on the end of the ABC's post-production television facility and automatically optimises content for other uses such as downloading and streaming.

The Agility system can receive input from live, tape or digital video

sources - improving efficiency and image quality by eliminating several manual steps in the conversion process. It runs on standard x86-based workstations, powered by dual-core Pentium processors. The XML-based system also integrates with the ABC's content management system, automatically transferring repurposed files to the ABC's download servers and submitting meta-data about them to the content management system.

"The vodcasting trial is a significant step in the ABC further embracing the Internet as another arm for delivering content to users in a format that suits their needs," says ABC new media and digital services technical production manager Matt Moran.

'I think we're on the verge of a Cambrian explosion in terms of interest from radio and television and getting their content on to these platforms. Podcasting has been very successful with radio content and now television is becoming increasingly interested in video podcasting,' Mr Moran says. 'We were doing some spectacular work with *Four Corners* and the interactive, Flash-based version online. That created a lot of interest and now most of the initiative for vodcasting is coming from the ABC's television producers rather than our department. There's been a lot of pressure for vodcasting from the shows involved. We have been through a painful process over the last few years of trying to educate people of the possibilities of these new audiences but now it's not like we're twisting their arms.'

Stacking the Board

Here's what some people have been saying in The Australian about the appointment of Keith Windschuttle to the ABC Board.

► The controversy over the appointment of Keith Windschuttle to the ABC Board diverts attention from the ABC's central problem: the lack of genuine diversity in news and current affairs. Political bias can be gauged through measuring the systematic distance from the median voter's views. How much are Liberal Party ideas represented on the ABC? Or the Right or Centre of the ALP? These views are those of the vast majority of the community. Yet the ingrained culture of ABC journalists and presenters seems to see diversity as lying solely within the range between soft and hard Left. Yes, they criticise whichever government is in power, but this is because their ideology is way to the left of both major political parties.

(Douglas Kirsner
The Australian 26.6.06)

► Janet Albrechtsen, Ron Brunton (other board conserva-

tives) and now Keith Windschuttle are three of the most rancorous and vituperative cultural warriors in Australia ... best known as polemicists; people of bruising rather than subtle or supple intellect. Yet all three are on the Board. One would be fine, even sensible. Three in a row is simply provocative.

(Margaret Simons on Crikey website
quoted in article by Errol Simper
The Australian 22 June 2006)

► The ranters at *Quadrant*, hereafter known as Quadranters, must be dancing a quadrille as they quadruple their influence in Australia's most important cultural institutions. For they're not just moving and shaking at the ABC. Though eclipsed by the announcement of Keith Windschuttle joining the public broadcaster's already overbalanced Board, the appointment of Imre Salusinszky to head the Australia Council's literature board is another triumph for *Quadrant*, a journal whose influence is inversely proportionate to its circulation.

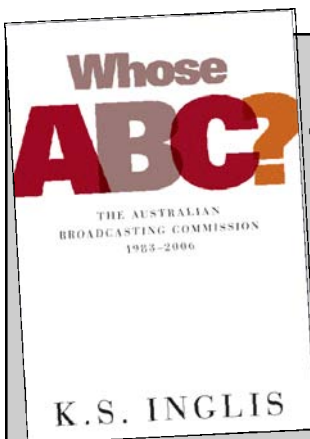
(Phillip Adams
The Australian 20.6.06)

► Appointing Keith Windschuttle to the ABC Board has certainly stirred up the 'hate John Howard' brigade. It is not the Board which puts the ABC programs together, it is the responsibility of the management headed by the managing director. There is no doubt that the ABC news and current affairs departments are biased. For example, never a kind word is said about Howard or his ministers, always the negative view is emphasized ... Windschuttle is not going to change the ABC news and current affairs bias.

(Tom Wilcox Kew, Vic
The Australian 20.6.06)

PASS ME ON

When you have finished with this *UPDATE* Newsletter please pass it on to another family member, friend, neighbour etc. The ABC needs all the Friends it can muster!



"Whose ABC?", The definitive history of the ABC 1983-2006 by Ken Inglis

As controversy continues to swirl around the ABC, *Whose ABC?* provides much needed insight and background to current debates. *Whose ABC?* is independent and eminently readable.

Like its predecessor, *This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Corporation 1932-1983*, Inglis's latest work is the product of many years of careful research. It sheds light on some of the most controversial and difficult years to date, providing an invaluable perspective on the challenges currently facing the ABC.

On sale at good bookshops near you

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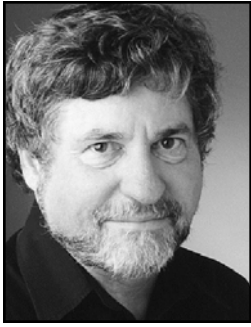
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Fourth Estate?



By Darce Cassidy

one key function is to provide a public forum where the nation can talk to itself.

Another essential role is to hold powerful individuals and institutions up to scrutiny – to shine the disinfectant of sunlight on the activities of governments and oppositions, union officials and business leaders alike.

In the ABC, decisions about stories, which might embarrass powerful people, are usually made by the relevant editorial manager, however when there is the prospect of costly defamation procedures, the matter may be referred to the Board.

How the Board has dealt with two reports by Chris Masters, one of Australia's most respected investigative journalists, is worth recalling.

In 1983 Masters had prepared a Four Corners program, which investigated corruption in Rugby League. In the program a reconstructed scene, based on sources which Masters believed reliable, showed the Chief Magistrate of New South Wales, Murray Farquhar, telling other Magistrates that the Labor Premier, Neville Wran, had instructed that Kevin Humphries, accused of defrauding the Balmain Leagues Club of \$50 000, was not to be committed for trial.

Such an allegation had the potential to bring down the Premier and the Chief Magistrate. If the allegations proved unfounded, it also had the potential to damage the reputation of the ABC, as well as awarding Farquhar

and Wran substantial damages against the ABC. Wran had been invited to appear in the program. He declined, and threatened to sue for defamation. However both the ABC Legal Department and external senior counsel said that the program was defensible.

The then ABC Chairman (her preferred title) was Dame Leonie Kramer and after consulting two other Board members located in Sydney, Kramer agreed that the broadcast should proceed. Both Wran and Farquhar sued. A subsequent Royal Commission found against Farquhar, who was later imprisoned, but exonerated Wran. Wran's defamation action was later settled out of court.

Some twenty-three years later a decision on the publication of a biography of Alan Jones written by Chris Masters was also considered by the Board. Once again the issue of a possible defamation action arose. Once again, both internal and external legal advice was that the publication was defensible.

The nervousness over the Jonestown issue seems to revolve around a possible suggestion in the book that Jones is gay. A number of commentators have doubted that it is any longer defamatory to suggest that someone is gay, and, even if it were, such an accusation hardly compares to suggestions that senior political and judicial figures acted to pervert the course of justice.

What then has happened in the twenty three years since the Farquhar case? One explanation is that the Board has simply

lost its courage, while the other, put forward by ABC management on behalf of the Board is that lower standards apply to the ABC's commercial activities, including its book publishing arm.

Whichever explanation you accept, the ABC Board has let the ABC down.

bb

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

Does the Friends (NSW) have your email address? Have you changed your email address recently? Get the latest news between issues of *Update*. Receive invitations to free FABC events - movies etc. Email your details to <fabcmem@fabcnsw.org.au> Include your FABC Member No. if known
Privacy - your email address will not be disclosed



Courtesy Phil Somerville

How now brown cow?

by Hank Willems
President Hunter District FABC

No! this is not about elocution but rather about the future of the FABC in NSW. Where do we go from here?

The latest Regional Conference yielded a lot of plans for action. All these plans have in common is that they require people to carry them out. Without such people nothing will happen.

Let us have a look at what would constitute a reasonable membership number for the NSW friends. With a population of about 10 million and an average rating for ABC programs on TV and radio in the order of 20% or so, there should be some 2 million clients of the ABC in NSW. Say even if as little as one in ten of these has a real passion for music, the arts or simply for an independent source of news and information, this leaves us with a membership base of some 200 000 at least. Two hundred thousand kindred souls! All these people are out there, let's get them in!

Because political clout depends largely on numbers, it should be obvious that we must recruit these people as our first priority, but how do we go about it?

One issue is the image of the FABC. What can we do to make membership appear more like the privilege it is, rather than some chore? We should sell it as a privilege for instance:

Dear Sir/Madam
You now have the opportunity to join the NSW friends of the ABC, which allows you to add your voice to ours. Our mission is to make sure the ABC remains a bastion of our culture and an unbiased source of information, come aboard.

When it comes to membership drives, with our present lack of manpower the one which requires the least manpower to organise is the one where every present member recruits one additional member. At the conference I suggested at a group session that we run a concerted campaign to get our members to do this.

The AGM is coming up, please let us make an effort to press this mat-

ter. Once our membership increases more labour-intensive membership drives will come within our reach. Even at a success rate of only 50%, such a campaign, if run yearly, will see our membership more than double within four years.

There is another aspect of increasing our membership and that is that membership fee increases can be avoided, funds will become available to enable an increase in the frequency of Regional Conferences. The avoidance of fee increases could well be an incentive for our existing membership to do some recruiting.

It is these sort of thoughts that are fostered at regional conferences. I must congratulate the organisers of this year's conference for getting Mal Hewitt to act as facilitator. I consider that much of the success of the conference was due to this choice.

CONTRIBUTIONS WANTED

WE WELCOME contributions to *Update*.
If you have something to say about the ABC or
Friends of the ABC please email:
<update@fabcnsw.org.au>

Update includes
material from the South
Australia Friends
publication
Background Briefing,
compiled and edited
by Joan Laing.
In *Update*, this
material is credited as:



**To support the ABC,
Friends need more
Friends.**
**Your support is needed to
obtain more members.**
**Talk to your friends and
neighbours.**
**Ask them to join Friends
of the ABC.**
**Use the form on the back
of *Update*.**

Dr John Hirshman AM

We extend our sympathy
to the family of the late
Dr Hirshman, a member
of FABC (NSW).

Dr Hirshman had a long
and distinguished career
in public health including
16 years with the World
Health Organisation. He
was a health consultant to
AusAid, UNICEF and the
Red Cross. He was
named Australian Humanist
of the Year in 1992 and
became a Member of the
Order of Australia in 1993.

Double standards – the Scott Doctrine *by Darce Cassidy*

In line with its Charter obligations to make innovative programs, the ABC has been a leader in digital technology, both in the areas of program production, and more recently in the area of program distribution.

The ABC has made effective use of the Internet to complement its broadcasts through interactive comment and discussion, transcripts, email newsletters and more recently podcasts. The ABC has done this for a fraction of the cost of its commercial counterparts, supplementing and enhancing its broadcasting output, while maintaining the integrity of the output in all forms of media.

Podcasts in particular have allowed Radio National to reach its true potential. Much of the carefully researched and creatively produced material on Radio National reached a relatively small audience, because not all potential listeners were able to listen at the time the programs were broadcast.

In June of this year listeners downloaded more than 1.5 million podcasts, the most popular programs being Radio National's *Life Matters* (135 000+ per week) and *Late Night Live* (100 000 per week).

The ABC's commercial arm, ABC Books, and its retail arm, the ABC Shops have also complemented programs and extended them to a wider audience.

While this has generally worked well there are potential problems.

When the prohibition on advertising on the ABC was written into law, no one foresaw the Internet or podcasting, nor was the rapid growth of the ABC's retail operation anticipated.

In March the Communications Minister, Helen Coonan, hinted that the ABC Board should consider advertising. As Minister, she was aware that advertising was prohibited on radio or television. Clearly the hint was that the ABC should be looking at the Internet.

The problem with such a move is that it is difficult to quarantine the ABC's Internet content from its broadcast content, since often it is substantially the same content, but available on a different platform.

A somewhat similar situation has arisen with a biography of Alan Jones by Four Corners reporter Chris Masters, commissioned by ABC Books. After some four years work, and a cost estimated to be in excess of \$100 000, ABC Books refused to publish the book, on the grounds that there was a risk that Jones might sue the ABC. This was despite advice from the ABC Legal Department, and external advice from senior counsel, that statements in the book were defensible.

This decision was taken by the ABC Board before the new Managing Director, Mark Scott, took up his position. However in speaking to Virginia Trioli on ABC radio Scott repeated the rationale for the Board decision originally

articulated by Acting Managing Director Murray Green.

"My understanding is the decision around the book is a commercial decision. It was a decision made in recognition of the fact there would be a significant cost-risk in proceeding to publish this book. ABC Enterprises and ABC Books operate to make money. And they operate to make money to help reinforce and fund the operations of ABC radio and television and other ABC activities. The advice was there was a significant cost risk involved with publication."

What this seemed to be suggesting is that ABC Books has different, and lower editorial standards than ABC Television or ABC Radio. Since ABC Books was a commercial enterprise whose job was to make money to fund ABC radio and television it could not take the same risks that ABC Television could. Thus, if the content of the Jonestown book had been in the format of a TV program it might have gone to air but, since it was part of an ABC commercial operation, low-risk standards would apply.

The Scott Doctrine, if we can call it that, has two consequences. The first is to damage the overall reputation of the ABC in the public mind, with one part of the organisation officially admitting that they have lower journalistic standards than other parts of the organisation. This is both confusing and bizarre.

bb

UPDATE

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Darce Cassidy
www.friendsoftheabc.org

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Use only if joining or if your membership has expired.

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Last Name

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(Please Print)

Partner First Name

Last Name

Email:

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Suburb

P/Code

Phone (Home)

(Work)

Mob

Age Group

☐

30 or under

☐

31-50

☐

51+

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I would like to join ☐

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I am interested in: Letter Writing ☐

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

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

☐

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1 Yr. 3 Yrs.

\$20 \$55

☐

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☐

Student

\$15 \$40

☐

Pensioner

\$15 \$40

☐

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\$60 -

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