

Aunty moves to smother nature

Amanda Meade

The Australian 16/08/07

IN November, Media reported a speech by the ABC's director of television Kim Dalton to the Screen Producers' Association of Australia in which he outlined a cultural shift.

He told the conference that as the ABC marked 50 years of broadcasting "some may get teary and nostalgic remembering the past glories of a self-sufficient ABC", but the future was an equal partnership with the independent production industry.

Diary has discovered Dalton's plan has quietly come to fruition with the dismantling of the ABC's natural history unit in Melbourne and the resignation of its head Dione Gilmour. Gilmour, who has enjoyed a 31-year career at the national broadcaster, will continue her work as a consultant to the ABC and her small staff have been deployed to other areas.

But the future of the Unit's resident Emmy-award winning filmmakers David Parer and Elizabeth Parer-Cook remains uncertain. They are making *Australia: Land of Parrots*, which is set to be the ABC's last natural history documentary. The unit was formed in 1973 and has an impressive list of beautiful films and awards to its name.

But Dalton has argued that it is too expensive to maintain with the films costing some \$700,000 an hour to produce. The tragedy

is that the enormous wealth of knowledge and experience is being lost to the ABC with the unit's disappearance.

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Shadow Minister for Communication, Stephen Conroy, visited Central Coast Branch FABC on 30 Aug.

at the invitation of Belinda Neal, Labor candidate for Dobell. News of an anticipated major announcement by the Opposition, before the election, relating ABC funding to the KPMG findings was welcomed by the audience.

Senator Conroy reinforced the Opposition's support for an independently selected Board based on the Nolan Report principles with the position of staff elected representative restored.

He hopes that the ABC will be the champion of digital transmission and envisages the ABC as "the repository of the Australian voice through drama, content and product."

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LABOR, DEMOCRATS and GREENS ALL SING FROM THE SAME ABC SONG SHEET

On Wednesday 12th September, NSW Acting President Mal Hewitt and ACT President Jill Greenwell were involved in meetings with Senator Stephen Conroy (Shadow Minister for Communications, ALP), Senator Lyn Allison (Leader, Democrats) and Senator Kerry Nettle (NSW Greens) to discuss the respective policies of each party on advertising on the ABC, the method of appointing the ABC board, the position of staff-elected director, and the issue of funding for the ABC. There was pleasing unanimity from all three parties on each of these issues, but we would remind all voters of the importance of the Senate vote in the forthcoming election. Regardless of who controls the House of Representatives, capacity to implement or change policy will depend upon who controls the Senate.

ADVERTISING ON THE ABC

The policy of all three parties is that there will be no advertising on ABC radio and television, nor on ABC branded websites.

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Blue Mountains Branch Friends of the ABC

MEET THE CANDIDATES SEMINAR

Bob Debus - ALP ♦ Kerry Bartlett - Liberal
Carmel McCillum - Greens ♦ Tim Williams - Independent

John Haydon - Representing The Democrats

Members of the community are invited to attend and question the candidates about how they plan to support the ABC, if elected.

Candidates will be speaking on their policies, including their views on depoliticising appointments to the ABC Board

✓ Supporting editorial independence

✓ Adequate funding for the ABC

✓ Ensuring a commercial advertising ban on the ABC

The Grand View Hotel → Wentworth Falls

Saturday September 22 10 AM - 12 Noon - No Charge

For more information: Bob Macadam 4754 1620 or Carole Goodwin 4751 2680

FABC in the Blue Mountains is

powering on. The Branch held a highly successful 'Speakers Forum' at the Carrington Hotel in Katoomba on July 28, and will conduct a 'Meet the Candidates Seminar' on September 22. Hugh Mackay will be guest speaker at its AGM on November 17.

What a buzz. We hoped for an audience of 100, were chuffed by ticket pre-sales of 140 and stunned by a packed house of around 170. *The Speakers Forum* was a success on any criteria – attendance; atmosphere; level and quality of participation, discourse and outcomes; and enhanced status of FABC in the Blue Mountains.

Feedback since is universally positive, including that of our guest speakers:

"We enjoyed the occasion, the hotel, the Katoomba ambience and the passion of so many people for the ABC and its independence (what a turn-out!). I must say it made me think that

occasions like that should be recorded and turned into something so its on the record"...
Peter Manning

"You're certainly correct with the observation that I probably enjoyed interacting with the people at The Carrington last Saturday. Thank you very much for a stimulating Saturday" ... John Highfield

"As you well know, I enjoy very few things more than good company and critical discourse: and that event provided both." ... Richard Bawden

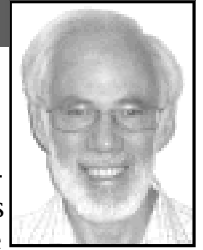
"Good on you for getting such a large crowd together on Saturday...and what an enthusiastic and interested lot! Highfield and Manning certainly related some frightening stories, didn't they? Anyway I hope the day was satisfactory for your branch...I reckon it ought to be very pleased with itself" ... Neil Inall

President Bob Macadam



Blue Mountains FABC 'Speakers Forum' Panel: Neil Inall, Richard Bawdon, Peter Manning and John Highfield

THE ACTING PRESIDENT'S REPORT



The June edition of *UPDATE* reported on the closure of ABC Audio, which produced a range of audio resources, including talking books for the sight-impaired, on the grounds that it was 'no longer profitable'. We report in this issue on the sudden closure of ABC TV's *Natural History Unit*. Since its formation in 1973, the unit has produced many outstanding natural history documentaries and received numerous awards for its programs. Its closure seems as inexplicable as the demise of ABC Audio, but symptomatic of the 'death of a thousand cuts' inflicted on our national broadcaster as it is forced to make more and more reductions in ABC-produced pro-



gram material. *Four Corners*, ABC TV's current affairs flagship, with an incomparable record over almost 50 years of outstanding investigative journalism, is in danger of becoming 'Cut Corners' as 'bought-in' programs, mainly from US and UK, outnumber locally produced ones.

It all comes down to dollars – there are clearly not enough in the budget for the ABC to maintain the quality Australian content of the past, nor to maintain its position in the new digital broadcasting world. The government maintains that it is maintaining the ABC's base funding in real terms – the reality is quite different. In 2006, the accountancy firm KPMG reviewed the ABC's funding, recommending an additional \$125 million over 3 years just 'to maintain existing services'. The increase was refused. In 2005, ABC2 was launched (a digital-only free-to-air channel), but without the funds to create digital-only content. In 2006, the ABC was refused the funds for 200 hours of digital-only content. In 2007, the ABC was refused funds for a

dedicated digital children's channel to enable it to maintain its wonderful record of quality children's programs in the new technology. Additional funds the ABC has received (\$88.2 million over 3 years) and 'National Interest Initiative' funding (\$73 million over 3 years) has been tied to specific projects nominated by the government and cannot be used for general programming needs. As we approach a federal election, all political parties must be challenged over their level of commitment to an adequately funded national broadcaster.

Should any politicians have any doubt about the unique place the ABC still holds in the lives of all Australians, the extraordinary turnout of ABC supporters at recent 75th Birthday celebrations across the country should have removed those doubts! The clear message was: 'We love and value our ABC, but it must remain free of commercial influence and political interference'. However, the birthday celebrations did highlight a curious attitude to FABC on the part of ABC management:

FABC NSW was not invited to take part in the Sydney celebrations; security guards at the Melbourne function ordered the dismantling of the FABC Victoria stall until Mark Scott (Managing Director) intervened to avoid some rather embarrassing publicity; other state FABC branches were refused permission to set up stalls anywhere near ABC birthday celebrations!

Many will remember highly successful events of the past



(Sydney Opera House forecourt, Sydney Domain) where ABC personalities joined forces with Friends of the ABC and many thousands of supporters of all ages to draw attention of politicians and public to the needs of our public broadcaster.

We were somewhat surprised to hear Sue Howard, Director of ABC Radio, being less than complimentary about Friends of the ABC on Radio National's *The Media Report* of 26th July, claiming that FABC has 'a particular agenda', without revealing what that agenda might be, and suggesting a 'conflict of interest' in the presenter of *The Media Report* interviewing Professor Alan Knight, national FABC spokesperson, but failing to explain the conflict. Professor Knight's response to Mark Scott, Managing Director is printed in full elsewhere in *Update*, but I quote briefly: "Friends of the ABC does not have any untoward agenda. It does have an agenda, which is public and clear. Put simply, FABC's interest is in the maintenance and advancement of the ABC as a well-funded comprehensive public broadcaster, which remains independent from political and commercial influence. Furthermore, FABC is the major organization representing the public's interest in its national public broadcaster'.

Unique to NSW FABC is the strength and energy of its branches - other states do not have a branch structure similar to NSW. This edition of *UPDATE* contains reports of branch activity, which are indicative of the commitment of local branch members and office bearers to raising awareness
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Central Coast Branch Friends of the ABC

Senator Conroy - (Continued from Page 1)

The present Board of course must serve out their contract. He was quite adamant that the independence of the ABC must remain. The Labor Party National Conference had moved that the ABC would remain advertisement free and the Senator said that there would be no merging of SBS with the ABC under a Labor Government.

Outsourcing brings mixed messages from the ABC Board and disappointment was expressed from the audience at the latest Media Release confirming the axing of the ABC's *Natural History Unit* as well as the earlier "Talking Books" decision. Senator Conroy advised the audience to keep up the pressure, write letters and reject this creeping dismantling of ABC productions to the private sector.

Senator Conroy was open in his address and frank and concise in his answers to the many questions put to him. We were pleased to have been able to discuss a variety of issues with him.

Mal Hewitt, Acting President FABCNSW also attended and this Branch thanks him for his attendance as well as his input into the discussion.

An invitation to speak to FABC members has now been extended to Jim Lloyd, Member for Dobell, and through him, Senator Helen Coonan, Minister for Communications.

Quentin Dempster at the Central Coast Leagues Club

As mentioned in our last *Update* report the Central Coast Friends had an afternoon with Staff elected Board Director in Exile, Quentin Dempster on 26th May, at the Central Coast Leagues Club. The main theme of Quentin's address was the need for the ABC to retain its credibility.

Even before the Howard Government there were attempts to undermine the ABC's credibility. David Hill tried to unite the ABC with the Fairfax organisation but the staff elected Director (then not in exile but actually on the Board) successfully opposed this move.

Today the Howard Government has taken away from the Board of Directors all people with knowledge of running the ABC. We have seen this Government turn SBS into the 4th commercial network even though it has had no mandate to do this. This must be a warning to the ABC

and its audiences to be alert and active to ensure that it does not happen to the ABC.

Therefore funding of the ABC is a vital issue. All aspects of the ABC must be properly funded by the Government (which now claims it has over \$17 billion surplus to expenditure from the last Budget). We cannot allow commercial funding to get a grip on any part of the ABC's work –including in areas that did not exist when the ABC Act was passed, such as *ABC On-Line* or ABC digital services. The danger is that if commercials on *ABC On-Line* succeed then the Government will cut back on tax

payer funding of the rest of the ABC. The present Board is not really defending the ABC against attacks on it. Its attitude towards the attack of bias demonstrates this lack of support from the Board.

In the 2007 Budget there was very little new money for the ABC and most of what money there was is tied to specific projects which shows that the Government does not really trust the Board to spend the money in the ways it best feels will benefit the ABC.

Quentin's visit and address has made us anticipate the forthcoming visit by

Monica Attard of **Media Watch**

fame with excitement.

This should be on **Friday 30th November.**

Desmond Moore



Desmond Moore, Gwen and Arthur Biggs at Quentin Dempster talk



Part of audience listening to Quentin Dempster



Quentin Dempster

THE ACTING PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Continued from Page 3)

locally of the importance of the ABC to all Australians, particularly outside the capital cities.

I was recently interviewed in the ABC studios in Mt Isa, where I was reminded by staff that for many in remote areas, the ABC is still their only source of daily news and information, education and entertainment, and a vital link with the outside world. I recently joined Blue Mountains Branch for their forum, *'Media, Democracy and the Role of the ABC'* well-organised, well-attended, with an outstanding panel, and I attended a meeting with Stephen Conroy, Shadow Minister for Communications, organized by Central Coast Branch where, after an address by Stephen Conroy, some very thoughtful and perceptive ques-

tions came from the audience. With a federal election looming, branches will be hard at work drawing the attention of voters to the importance of a well-funded, independent and commercial-free ABC and organizing 'meet-the-candidate' rallies. I encourage all FABC members to support your local branch activities. At the recent FABC dinner held in Sydney where the fascinating and entertaining guest speaker was Media-Watch presenter and distinguished ABC journalist Monica Attard, I was introduced to a rare (possibly endangered) species – a YOUNG member of Friends of the ABC. Her name is Jessica Harwood. She is very bright, very articulate, very passionate about the ABC, and very young. Being well aware that most of us involved in Friends of

the ABC are rather closer to the grave than the cradle, I have invited Jess to write a regular feature for *UPDATE* to bring the voice of youth to the issues of public broadcasting – you may be aware that for many under 30, the internet has almost completely replaced conventional radio and television as a source of both information and entertainment. Jess represents that generation, and I welcome her warmly to the pages of *UPDATE*.

Mal Hewitt Acting President
FABC (NSW)



NSW Friends of the ABC Annual General Meeting

The 2007 Annual General Meeting will be held on

Saturday 6th October, 1pm to 3.30pm

In the Auditorium

At the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts,
280 Pitt St. Sydney (between Park St & Bathurst St)



Guest Speaker will be the distinguished journalist John Highfield, whose long career with the ABC included service as a reporter, interviewer, presenter of *AM* and *PM*, foreign correspondent and program producer. John former presenter of *The World Today* has had one of the longest high-profile on-air reporting careers in ABC history. Recently retired, he's been managing journalists' training. John has a fascinating story to tell of his life with our national broadcaster.



Shown at **Central Coast Friends of the ABC**
meeting on 30th August:

Belinda Neal (Labor candidate for Dobell)

John Hale, President, Central Coast Friends of the ABC
Senator Stephen Conroy

New South Wales Branch Friends of the ABC

Sydney Successful Winter Events

Friends recently enjoyed two events in Sydney. The first was an excursion to Cockatoo Island on Saturday 14 July. Sixty people spent a wonderful few hours exploring this most historic island, with informative and insightful commentary provided by the Sydney Harbour Trust guides. A byo picnic at the water's edge completed the excursion. This

event was over-subscribed, so may lend itself to another excursion in summer or autumn.

The second event was our FABC dinner with Monica Attard on Friday 17 August at the beautiful Cello's restaurant in the Castlereagh Hotel, Sydney. One hundred and thirty *Friends* attended this memorable evening, with Monica speaking for an hour about her experiences in Russia as the ABC's foreign correspondent

and her work at *Media Watch*. She was an entertaining speaker and provided the audience with many insights into the rewards of working at the national broadcaster, both overseas and at home. Many *Friends* commented afterwards on the wonderful location, the excellent menu and our pleasure in hearing Monica speak. This was the 2nd in our ABC dinners – after last year's Eric Campbell dinner – and is set to become a popular event.

Frouke

Northern Rivers Branch Friends of the ABC

The Northern Rivers Branch has two important events coming up:

On Sunday 23 September at "The Rails", Byron Bay starting at 2.30 pm there will be a 'Meet the Candidates' event with candidates from the Richmond electorate. MC for that event will be Russell Eldridge, editor of the Northern Star,

On Friday 5 October there will be a 'Meet the Candidates' session at the "Lismore Workers Club" starting at 7.30 pm.

This will be for candidates in the Page electorate. MC will be Councillor Ros Irwin.

Neville Jennings, President, Northern Rivers Branch Mobile 0405244903

Part of the audience at a Breakfast Meeting that Northern Rivers Branch had with Mark Bowling when he attended the Byron Bay Writers Festival on 28 July.



Mark spoke about his book "*Running Amok*" which is based on his experiences as a foreign correspondent in Indonesia. It was supposed to be his dream job. Mark Bowling, a foreign correspondent with the respected Australian Broadcasting Corporation, was assigned to cover Indonesia. His arrival in Jakarta coincided with the downfall of President Suharto after more than three decades. So began a four-year roller-coaster ride for a journalist covering a nation's dangerous descent into turmoil.



Mark Bowling



Photos taken at the aptly-named Succulent Cafe. The members seen talking to Mark Bowling are Phil Cullen senior and junior.

Advertising on the ABC - coming soon?

News Release

9 Aug 07

Quentin Dempster

ABC SED(IE) - ABC staff-elected director (in exile).

I welcome ABC managing director Mark Scott's public declaration that the ABC will not be taking advertisements on ABC websites.

Mr Scott declared in a speech in Melbourne yesterday that "if current funding conditions remain we are not looking to fund these activities by placing advertising on radio or television or our abc.net.au websites".

Current off-site websites operated by ABC Commercial which take advertising, like *Countdown.com*, remain problematic. The revenue earned would be 'pin' money. The damage is that they send the wrong signal to our audiences. Mr Scott and the ABC Board should scrap them.

Public broadcasters view their audiences as citizens in a democracy to be informed, engaged and challenged through innovative, high-quality and comprehensive programming, not as consumers to be delivered up to advertisers.

That is fundamental to the relationship with audiences which has established the ABC as one of the most trusted institutions in Australia.

Mark Scott seems to be recognising that relationship. I call on him to clear up outstanding problems and alleged breaches of ABC Editorial Policies exposed on Monday's *Media Watch*: 'product placement' through extended use of bank and finance house logos in business reports, and ABC Radio's use of commercially produced traffic reports. The integrity of the ABC's editorial policies appears to be at stake here.

There's more to do to steer the ABC back to a non-commercial

future but Mark Scott now seems to be moving in the right direction.

The commercialisation of the ABC has been a major concern for the public and ABC broadcasters concerned about a hidden agenda initiated by the federal government through the ABC Board.

The Zampatti Board at SBS is destroying support for that public broadcaster by trying to turn SBS television into Australia's fourth commercial TV channel. Its decision to break into programming with advertising has gone down like a lead balloon. "Stiff and stiffer", those erectile dysfunction ads confronting viewers by breaking into serious SBS documentaries every 15 minutes reveal the contempt with which the Zampatti board now holds the SBS audience and their charter purpose.

There needs to be a serious reassessment of the future of SBS. The taxpayers of Australia, who have invested tens of millions of dollars each year in SBS, should be consulted.

GOING AWAY???

A reminder for members

going overseas or interstate for a spell, or taking a long holiday?

Please remember to renew your membership subscription before you go.



**WHEN YOU VOTE
REMEMBER THE ABC**

Why it is so important to be a member of the Friends of the ABC.

- To help defend the independence of the ABC,
- To keep good programs on the air with funds to support them.
- Attend social activities with like minded people
- Receive special invitations to functions, interesting tours, etc
- To find out ways to make your opinion felt.
- Receive regular issues of **Update** which give "Friends" the real story. **Update** collates and presents important items from various sources. These include articles from Australia and the rest of the world.

What if there were not strong 'Friends' in Australia? What would life be like in Australia without the ABC, even as it is today? And a starting point to that is the determination and energy of its "Friends" to fight to preserve and protect it from government and commercial interference or any decisions to its detriment.

***How to get a friend to become a "Friend".
It's simple!***

Just have them **fill out the Membership form on the back of this Update** and send it in to the address on the form. And don't forget to tick the 'give my details' box so your name can be sent onto your local Friends' Branch.

Or phone **9990 0600** or visit our web site at:

www.fabcns.org.au/
and fill out the on-line membership form.

Mid-North Coast Branch Friends of the ABC

Presents Margo Kingston **"Winning from the ground up"** **Sea Acres Rainforest Centre, Port Macquarie** **in lecture Theatrette downstairs** **Saturday 22 September 5pm**

Gold coin donation Light supper will be served Bookings essential – ring 6583 8798

Margo Kingston has worked as a journalist for Brisbane's Courier-Mail, The Times on Sunday, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Canberra Times and The Melbourne Age. She was chief of staff at The Sydney Morning Herald's Canberra bureau for two years, and at the time of writing the 2004 edition of 'Not Happy, John!' was the political commentator for The Herald online, the editor of its Webdiary, and a political columnist for the Sun Herald. She took Webdiary independent in 2005, and is its editor. Margo was born in Maryborough, Queensland, grew up in the northern sugar city of Mackay and graduated with an Arts Law

degree from the University of Queensland. She practised as a solicitor and lectured in business law prior to joining The Courier-Mail (before Murdoch took it over). She was Jana Wendt's political researcher for Channel Nine's A Current Affair, and Phillip Adams's 'Canberra Babylon' commentator on ABC Radio's Late Night Live for five years. Her 1999 work 'Off the Rails: The Pauline Hanson Trip' won the 2000 Dobbie Award for best first book by a female writer. At present she is involved in the campaigns of two friends who are standing as Greens candidates in the 2007 federal election.

Armidale Branch Friends of the ABC

A party to celebrate the ABC's 75 years of broadcasting was held in Armidale towards the end of July. The party rooms, which were decorated with the ABC's blue and white colours and its famous logo, were filled with FABC members and friends. Amongst these were



Richard Torbay and his wife, Rosemary. They had chosen our function over many

others to which they had been invited that week. As the Tablelands independent member and now speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly, Richard declared himself appreciative of the work of the ABC and FABC's support thereof. In his brief speech he contrasted his interviews with Quentin Dempster for Stateline – courteous and searching – with ones less memorable commercial media ones. During the evening congratulatory cards to the ABC Board and staff in Sydney and Tamworth were signed, a large rich chocolate birthday was consumed, a door prize won. Conversation

and conviviality abounded, leaving carefully prepared ABC-based party games unused. In short, the evening was declared successful, not least in attracting some new members and gaining prominent coverage in a local newspaper.

Ten days later nearly one hundred people listened attentively and



appreciatively to Geraldine Doogue's talk on modern journalists. She chose as her topic SWOT analysis of the modern-day

journalists". Some of her points are outlined below.

Most obvious to Geraldine of the strengths of modern Australian journalism is the enthusiasm and intelligence of many current young practitioners. In 1994 the ABC re-established its cadetship program which had been lost after the slashing of funding in the late 80s. The Corporation is now enjoying the excellent contributions of many of the graduates of this program.

A regrettable weakness in the present media climate concerns the desire to get news out quickly. This has led to a lessening of concern for accuracy. There are well-known examples of journalists for whom checking the facts is almost obsessive, such as Michelle Grattan, but they appear to be in the minority. The need to be vigilant in ascertaining the truth is particularly important in the age of the Internet where much material is unvetted and/or personal opinion.

Further, the need to research and to think creatively about issues, so that audience and readers may achieve greater understanding of them, is often overlooked. Too often the same territory is covered, and by a number of sister programs, with similar contributors and similar perspectives.

Personally Geraldine finds that detecting a 'fresh angle' on an issue/situation is critical, and once achieved, means that much of her team's subsequent work becomes relatively easy and brief.

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Armidale Branch Friends of the ABC

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The opportunities and threats are linked. They may be summarised in one word, 'blogs'. Journalists can simply be overwhelmed - and distracted - by the number and diversity of sites and the information and opinions they contain. Geraldine confessed that she generally lacks the

time, inclination or energy to spend on them. She is, however, optimistic that their utility will be increased in future as editing and vetting agents/agencies emerge.

Priscilla Connor
President, FABC Armidale



A party to celebrate the ABC's 75 years of broadcasting was held by the Armidale Branch.

LABOR, DEMOCRATS and GREENS ALL SING FROM THE SAME ABC SONG SHEET

(Continued from Page 1)

METHOD of APPOINTING the ABC BOARD

All parties favour an open and transparent selection process based on merit. The Greens favour Britain's 'Nolan Rules' (see Page 17).

Labor - 'candidates will be considered by a panel established at arm's length from the minister, who will appoint members from a shortlist prepared by the panel'.

STAFF-ELECTED DIRECTOR

All parties will restore the position of staff-elected director. The Greens favour two staff representatives, elected by proportional voting.

FUNDING

All three parties oppose the present government policy of tied or 'one-off' funding for specific projects, and agree that ABC funding must be recurrent, so that there can be careful and considered planning for the future by ABC management and program-makers. There is unanimity that the KPMG Review figure of \$125 million over 3 years to maintain existing services is a good starting point.

Stephen Conroy (ALP): 'There must be major investment in the ABC over time to ensure that Australian voices and stories can continue to be heard in the new globalised media environment'.

Lyn Allison (Democrats): 'Funding must be adequate to ensure that there is universality of access to all ABC services, and all ABC funding must be recurrent'.

Kerry Nettle (Greens): 'The Greens support an increase of at least 30% to restore cuts made since 1996 and to bring operational funding back to the levels of the 1980s'.



The gentleman at the bottom right corner in the photo, attending the Armidale Branch party, is Richard Torbay Independent MP for the Northern Tablelands and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

Illawarra Branch Friends of the ABC

Lunch with Noeline Brown

On Sunday, August 26, the Illawarra Branch of Friends of the ABC held a very successful function at Fitzroy Falls in the Southern Highlands. We met for lunch at the Restaurant in the Fitzroy Falls National Park and were most fortunate in the weather. A beautiful sunny day showed the park to great advantage and several people took the opportunity to go for a stroll before lunch.

Those who didn't could look out at the greenery through the restaurant windows and some of us could see a lyre bird foraging amongst the undergrowth just outside.

We were welcomed by Pat Hall, South Coast Region Manager of the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service who gave a lively and entertaining talk about the park's history and how the restaurant

where we were sitting came to be established.

'After a pleasant and satisfying meal we were addressed by the guest of honour, actress Noeline Brown. Most of the highly appreciative audience were already familiar with her work on stage and television where she starred in a number of very popular programs such as



Mavis Bramston (a character she was responsible for creating), *The Naked Vicar* and *Kingswood Country*. Noeline gave us a witty and very humorous account of her professional career from when

she began working at the Marrickville Municipal Library at age fifteen until the present when she is about to star in the play *Glorious* at the Ensemble Theatre in Sydney. One of the many highlights in her career was touring Peta Murray's play *Wallflowering* a couple of years ago in over sixty venues all around Australia with fellow actor Doug Scroope.

Noeline has had an active interest in politics. For two years she was a member of the NSW Premier's Council for Women and has also been a member of the Australian Republican Movement and of Emily's List. Best of all, however, from our point of view, she is a friend of the ABC and we all appreciate the enthusiasm she showed for our national broadcaster.

Chris. Cartledge



Illawarra Branch of Friends of the ABC held a very successful function at Fitzroy Falls in the Southern Highlands. We met for lunch at the Restaurant in the Fitzroy Falls National Park.

New Committee Members – Your ABC needs you!

MORE MEMBERS TO SERVE ON THE NSW COMMITTEE OF FRIENDS OF THE ABC WOULD BE MOST WELCOME, AS NUMBERS ARE DOWN AT PRESENT. THIS IMPORTANT COMMITTEE IS JOINTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF THE AFFAIRS OF FABC NSW.

WE MEET ON THE 3RD MONDAY OF MOST MONTHS FEBRUARY THROUGH NOVEMBER, AT 6.30 PM IN PITT STREET SYDNEY.

You must have email, and the main requirement is an ability to attend regularly.

If you can help, or want more information, please contact James Buchanan (Hon Treasurer)

E-mail "jamesbuc@bigpond.net.au" or phone 9371 5621 111 Dover Road Rose Bay NSW 2029

A bias for independence

David Salter

The Australian 30/08/2007

WHEN their talk turns to bias, most commentators, media professionals and interested members of the Australian public will find themselves reflexively thinking the subject is actually ABC bias.

That is the mindset that more than a decade of relentless allegations by the Coalition Government has created. It is a spectacularly successful demonstration of where-there's-smoke-there-must-be-fire political technique. Between them, previous communications minister Richard Alston and Tony O'Leary of the Prime Minister's media office have repeatedly encouraged the media to report their complaints of ABC bias. By sheer force of repetition those allegations eventually become accepted as fact.

The true practical dimensions of this issue are more revealing. Just 0.7 per cent of all complaints made to the ABC about its output allege party political bias. In other words, fewer than one in a hundred of all Australian citizens who've felt sufficiently outraged by some perceived transgression of the national broadcaster to have their objection noted are concerned that Auntie may be favouring one political ideology over another. That's the reality. It's the commentariat and the politicians who froth about left-wing bias at the national broadcaster, not its audience. If politicians understood that simple truth they might not waste so much of their energy (and the taxpayers' money) trying to revenge themselves on the ABC and its staff.

For years the ABC's political critics have argued that the corporation is held captive by its staff. Quite how the mysterious mechanisms of this capture operate is never explained. Instead, we are treated to the standard ad hominem smear that the staff of the national

broadcaster is a collective, a subversive conspiracy drawn from the basket-weaving, mung bean-munching, Chomsky-reading, chardonnay-drinking ranks of the inner-city chattering classes.

This is anachronistic piffle. The people who truly shape the corporation's output, its administrative managers and senior program executives, are predominantly upper-middle-class, suburban, politically inactive and family-oriented, very much like the audiences they strive to serve. They have mortgages to pay and children to get through school. Kerry O'Brien does not advocate armed insurrection; *Spicks and Specks* is not a Trotskyist plot; *Radio National* has not been training squads of suicide bombers in the Ultimo car park.

But beyond the hyperbole, the two issues most frequently raised by the ABC staff capture camp do need to be confronted: the allegations of a biased political standpoint and unfair catering to minority audiences. These charges have been most stridently and repeatedly articulated by the leader writers and opinion columnists of one national newspaper, *The Australian*.

A *Weekend Australian* editorial in January 2006 laid out the case for the prosecution in plain language: "When it comes to entertaining and analysing, the ABC is run by some staff for themselves and their mates. This is a very small group and they are utterly unconnected to the vast mass of Australians... Many metropolitan radio stations are in the hands of 40-something announcers obsessed with their inner-city leftie lifestyles."

The same themes returned in another editorial later that year, prompted by the minister's announcement that the staff-elected director position was to be removed. ABC staff were berated for "never having to say you're

sorry for claiming to be the nation's broadcaster while offering services that consistently pander to a tiny minority". Worse, they were not "producing and airing content that appeals beyond a few inner-city postcodes". Coming from print journalists, this vilification of anyone who lives within a short train or tram ride of their CBD is curious indeed.

The proposition that taxpayer funding automatically requires the ABC to concentrate on programming of broad popular appeal is plainly fallacious. Neither its act nor charter oblige the corporation to fashion its output in ways that would maximise audiences. Those documents are, rightly, more concerned with the requirements to educate, entertain and inform.

The appropriate performance yardsticks are quality and community service, not ratings. Surely even its most virulent critics would not seriously propose that the ABC should prove its populist credentials by giving the nation more *Big Brother* and *Family Feud* or more talkback shock jocks on local radio? Yet when the ABC, perhaps bending in part-appeasement to these pressures, does produce material in a more popular style, these same editorialists swing their bludgeon in the opposite direction. "There are quizzes and contests. They are followed by chat shows where inner-city comedians sneer at everybody." (*The Australian*).

Again, the hypocrisy of using inner-city as a smear. Similarly, while denouncing the sin of pandering to minorities, the editorialist failed to note that the ABC's national radio and television audience greatly outnumbers the readership of *The Australian*. Pots and kettles spring to mind.

(Continued on Page 12)

A bias for independence

(Continued from Page 11)

But allegations of endemic political bias within the ABC are much more difficult to refute. Once again, it is *The Australian* that has employed the loudest editorial megaphone to press that case. Its talent for preaching from self-made molehills of outrage is extraordinary. The newspaper's opinion editor, Tom Switzer, used the news of former ABC staffer Maxine McKew's appointment to a strategy role at the ALP as an excuse to publish his own accusations. Switzer asserted that it was "self-evident that...a certain bias shapes news and current affairs coverage at the ABC". This was because "so many ABC workers are creatures of a culture that is divorced from the thoughts and attitudes of mainstream Australia". (There it is again: the stock smear by disassociation argument of News-owned newspapers that any creature who dares not share the presumed majority view must therefore be wrong.) Loyal to that theme, Switzer argued that on the ABC "at the very least, there should also be a place for the silent majority". All that silence might make for some rather quiet programming.

Where the ABC's critics have a point is in their allegation that the national broadcaster tends towards monoculture, that its factual programming is too often produced from a predictably common stance of assumed progressivism. It would be remarkable if it were otherwise.

The corporation is largely staffed by the children of politically aware people who sent their families to university and, quite naturally, passed on many of their opinions on social and political issues. Those children, once they'd gained their qualifications, were understandably keen to seek employment within media institutions whose output they largely admired: ABC TV and radio, and the Fairfax press. It's notable within this context that the most savage ABC critics usually find their voice in News Limited publications.

The long march of young liberal-humanist progressives through the ABC's many portals is as much a self-perpetuating cycle as the daughters of doctors choosing a medical career or the sons of great football players striving to match the sporting deeds of their fathers. No realist would expect an equal number of double-degreed humanities graduates to aspire to working on the form guide at the *Herald-Sun* or to become the police reporter for *Ten News*. The real issue is the extent to which they are able to set aside personal politics and social preconceptions while producing programming for the ABC.

On the question of bias the ABC is, to some extent, a victim of its own success. No other media organisation provides such dependable breadth and speed of national affairs coverage. The majority of Aunty's declared enemies rely on ABC news, current affairs and commentary programs as their primary sources of information.

Politicians of all stripes tend to start their day with AM and end it

with *Lateline*. In between they keep an ear on *The World Today* and an eye on *The 7.30 Report*. They must, because the ABC is the only broadcasting service to present anything approaching such comprehensive coverage.

But a primary duty of independent news analysis is also to ask the difficult questions that others may ignore or deliberately bypass. That entails questioning the government, its representatives, servants and friends. Any apparent challenge to their policies or political interests is likely, at least to them, to appear biased.

David Salter, a former executive producer of the ABC's Media Watch, is author of The Media We Deserve (Melbourne University Press),



Courtesy Phil Sommerville

With Friends like these ...

The Age: August 6, 2007 (front page) Matthew Ricketson

TO paraphrase the late great English comedian Peter Cook, sometimes the ABC can be its own worst enemy.

The national broadcaster celebrated its 75th birthday in Melbourne yesterday with unashamed self-promotion on radio station 774, highlighting great moments of independence and revelatory journalism. (There was an odd moment, too, when broadcaster Helen Razer told listeners that managing director Mark Scott had once seen her bending over, revealing her "arse-crack".)

At Federation Square, the broadcaster showcased its stars — Kerry O'Brien, Andrew Denton, Jon Faine, and Myf Warhurst, to name a few. Thousands turned up to meet them.

Yet somehow the good vibes didn't extend to the Friends of the ABC, a group of supporters which has increasingly been not just critical of government underfunding but — occasionally — of the ABC itself. 774? Dumbing down, according to the Friends of the ABC. The ABC going just a little bit commercial? Absolutely, snipe the Friends.

The group, which has no official status within the ABC, set up a stall, but say they were asked to leave by security guards. Spokeswoman Glenys Stradijot said: "We were told not to hand out our leaflets and then we were told to leave." She said guards said they had been instructed by the ABC to ask the group to go.

"I said, 'This is a public space. You cannot make us leave'. They threatened to get the police. I said 'You will have to, because we are not leaving otherwise'.

"I think this is outrageous — a public broadcaster trying to silence free speech."

What was so offensive, apparently, was the handing out of postcards that questioned whether the ABC was an endangered species and suggesting that people send the postcard to Prime Minister John Howard.

It urged the Government to increase ABC funding and for it to remain free of commercial influences.

Mark Scott, who was also attending, appeared to be unaware of any problems until informed by The Age. "I don't know anything about this," he said. "What I do know is that the thousands and thousands of people who have turned up here today have great passion for the ABC."

He hurried over to speak to the Friends and, according to Ms Stradijot, assured her that they could stay.

The ABC 'Under Attack'

Professor Alan Knight

National Spokesperson for Friends of the ABC

Alan Knight describes the national broadcaster as being "under attack" and wants to tell the public, "This is an important institution, it's important for democracy, it's important for your culture and maybe if your kids want to live in a stable and well-governed society, you're going to need something like the ABC as a check." He adds, "I think it's in our national interest... that the board of the ABC should be appointed on merit and it should be a transparent process".

Aunty moves to smother nature

(Continued from Page 1)

Dalton's blueprint appears to be Britain's Channel 4, in which the broadcaster commissions but does not create any content.

The ABC has been moving towards this model by stealth, first with drama and now with documentary. The only programs made in-house now are magazine-style shows such as Catalyst. The fear is that children's is the next to go. Children's television production head Claire Henderson has been forced out and Dalton is creating a new super-department to run all aspects of children's TV.

The secretary of the ABC section of the Community and Public Sector Union, Graeme Thomson, says Dalton's plan has destroyed ABC in-house production and with it the ABC's distinctiveness.

He argues it has turned the ABC into a broadcast transmission tower for other people's programs. Dalton is clear about his plan for the ABC: "In the longer term, outside of its weekly magazine or program strands, ABC-TV will move out of internal factual and documentary production. Going into the future, one-off or short-run series documentary or factual production will only be made in partnership with the independent sector."

Who to Write...



Anyone seeking basic information about writing to persons of influence might find it helpful to go to the FABC NSW website <www.fabcnsw.org.au> where there are some menu items leading to pages of information:

Who can I write to? What can I say?

ABC

GPO Box 994

Sydney 2001

Dear Mr Scott

Re: ABC and Friends of the ABC

I write to you regarding serious concerns Friends of the ABC has that arise from comments of Sue Howard, Director of ABC Radio, on Radio National's The Media Report program 26th July. Ms Howard's comments were made in response to The Media Report's program of the previous week, in which I was interviewed in my capacity as a Professor of the Journalism and Media Studies at the Queensland University of Technology.

Ms Howard claimed FABC has a 'particular agenda'. The tone, choice of words, and failure to reveal what she believes that agenda is, denied listeners the information needed to make their own judgment and implied FABC has some untoward agenda. She also declared there was a conflict of interest in the presenter having interviewed someone who is a member of Friends of the ABC, yet failed to explain what she believes that conflict of interest to be.

The comments reflected negatively and unfairly on the integrity of Friends of the ABC, the program-makers and myself. Some listeners may even have gained the impression Ms Howard believed it inappropriate for anyone connected with, or speaking on behalf of, Friends of the ABC to have been interviewed on that program, or perhaps any program in which the ABC is the topic. Friends of the ABC does not have any untoward agenda. It does have an objective which is public and clear. Put simply, FABC's interest is in the maintenance and advancement of the ABC as a well-funded comprehensive public broadcaster which remains independent from political and commercial influence. (FABC's brief objective is outlined in full at the end of this letter.)

Furthermore, FABC is the major organisation representing the public's interest in its national public broadcaster. Not only is it appropriate for any media outlet to seek FABC's comment when covering matters to do with the ABC, it is sound journalism. It was entirely appropriate for the Media Report to seek my comment on ABC activities which are damaging to the broadcaster's integrity and public trust in its independence - in my capacity as a professor of journalism and/or as FABC's national spokesperson. Any conflict of interest that exists in my commenting on ABC matters would be no greater or less if I held the role only of a senior journalism academic. FABC's support for Australia maintaining an independent and comprehensive national public broadcaster, which translates into support which is not uncritical of the ABC, fits harmoniously with my role as a professor of journalism committed to maintain strong journalistic standards.

FABC agrees that associations of any interviewee which are relevant to a topic should be disclosed to the audience. Our concerns which arise from Ms Howard's comments are directed at two different levels of the ABC - its program-making and its governance and executive management. Firstly, FABC believes the public is entitled to expect better from a director of a quality news and information organisation. We wish to know why Ms Howard believes it was a conflict of interest for The Media Report to carry comment from someone connected with Friends of the ABC. Does the ABC believe it is inappropriate for ABC program-makers to interview, seek and or report comments of FABC or someone connected with FABC on matters to do with the ABC?

Secondly, FABC had hoped that the ABC executive and board shared the same broad objectives for the ABC as FABC, though we may not always agree with the manner of their implementation. We are concerned to know what it is about FABC's objectives that Ms Howard appears hostile to. Is the ABC executive or board in disagreement with any terms of FABC's broad objective, as contained in this letter? Friends of the ABC looks forward to receiving your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Alan Knight - National Spokesperson - Friends of the ABC

UPDATE

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Acting Editor: Mal Hewitt. Layout, format and assembly: Irwin Kurtz.

Greetings from the other side of 1980!

From the generation that grew up alongside the World Wide



Jessica Harwood

Web, the advent of reality television and, sadly, increasing political pressure on our public broadcaster. We young people are

pretty flexible, we took all this in our stride (consequently many young people are cyber geeks or Big Brother freaks) and yet the importance of the ABC has not changed one jot in this new media landscape. If anything, it is more important than ever.

As far as quality current affairs journalism goes, the ABC is **It**. It is an interesting exercise to watch *Today Tonight* or *National Nine News* and compare it with the 7pm News on the ABC. What passes as “news” on commercial networks is quite stunning at times and, if it wasn’t for the fact that so many people watch these programmes, it could be viewed with much hilarity; unfortunately I can only manage a couple of dark chuckles.

The ABC in comparison knows that sensation is not education. ABC journalists fulfil the intended purpose of the news bulletin; that is to inform in an accurate, in-depth and independent manner. The ABC’s yearly Walkley Awards serve as a tribute to the ABC’s excellent journalistic credentials.

This is the reason that the ABC is so vital to Australian democracy. With the Federal election coming up soon, many young people like myself are voting for the first time in a national election and I’m beginning to appreciate that

anyone can make a choice, but not everyone can make an informed choice. The difference is significant- many polities would love certain exploits to remain buried (are you detecting a youthful distrust of politicians?) And ultimately we know what we know because the media has told us so. So the need for the ABC to inform us through its excellent scrutiny and accurate coverage of events is crucial.

The benefit to young people is immeasurable; however anecdotal evidence (gathered while I was at school) seems to support my theory that kids brought up on the ABC are worldlier. A better understanding of current affairs allows their analytical ability to develop, equipping them to peel the layers off each issue and gauge ‘more than the headlines.’ In short, ABC journalism is a fertilizer for young minds.

Not only is the ABC vital for our knowledge of what’s going on in Australia and the world, but it is necessary as a cultural institution too. Sometimes we may wonder which country we are in when watching commercial television or listening to commercial radio. Being alert and alarmed by the 2003 incident involving Richard Alston I’d first like to make it clear to avoid future retributions that I’m not anti-American. However when you grow up with kids who think it’s cooler to talk in an American accent than an Australian one, mainly because they spent the previous evening watching a line-up of American sit-coms on Channel 9, then you realise there is a need for more home-grown content in the media.

Although the ABC’s funding has been decreasing quite dramatically the ABC has still produced or

outsourced some gems which embody a grass-roots ‘Australianism’; many have been extremely successful with young people.

The Chaser is not merely hosted by five young guys. It exudes a sort of rebellious and irreverent spirit, a kind of politically-satirical-larrikinism which young people appreciate. *Kath and Kim*, *Spicks and Specks*, *We Can Be Heroes* and *Summer Heights High* are well watched by teens, and ABC kids programmes by the younger demographic.

ABC’s *Triple J* too is immensely popular, lending a helping hand to emerging Aussie bands by showcasing their music. It’s funky, youthful and much loved. There are lots of big and small ABC kids around! I have to confess that I am one. I do not enjoy programmes cut by advertisements trying to sell me toothpaste. I do not believe that the race for ratings improves the efficiency of the broadcaster or quality of the programmes shown. I do believe that the ABC is a unique and invaluable institution for young and old.

As a young person, I dread to think of an Australia without a fully funded, non-commercialised ABC.

Apart from defecting to Finland, Iceland, Ireland or the Netherlands, which ranked No. 1 on the Press Freedom Index by *Reporters Without Borders* last year (Australia was ranked 35th), in order to get some decent news coverage the other option is to fight to preserve and increase funding for what we already have!

Aunty moves with a younger crowd

Michael Bodey
14 June 2007

ABC television is enjoying strong audience growth this ratings year

THE CHASER'S WAR ON EVERYTHING

on the back of a time-slot change for *The Chaser's War on Everything*.

And the growth isn't in audience demographics with which Aunty is familiar. It has recorded growth of 51 per cent in the 16 to 39-year-old demographic in weeks seven to 23 of the official ratings year, albeit off a small base for younger viewers.

Overall, the ABC's network ratings share has increased from 14.8 per cent to 16.1 per cent in the year to date, its 1.3 per cent point rise outstripping the overall growth of Seven (from 28.7 per cent to 29.3 per cent) and SBS (5.1 per cent to 5.6 per cent).

Both Nine and Ten have fallen in overall share terms, Ten from 23 per cent to 21.7 per cent. Ostensibly, the ABC's growth in younger audiences has underpinned its overall success and much of that stems from its Wednesday night line-up featuring the ratings powerhouses *The Chaser*, which was moved from its previous late-night slot on Friday,

Spicks and Specks

and music panel show *Spicks and Specks*.

While Wednesday night's 16 to 39-year-old audience has grown 91 per cent this year, it doesn't account for the ABC's younger skew across the week and other unexpected results.

Indeed, on Monday, the ABC had an overall evening victory over Ten.

"We're pleased that our programming this year has found such a strong response from the audience, but we're pleased with the breadth of our programming," ABC Managing Director Mark Scott said.

Eight of the 10 top-rating programs for the ABC thus far this year are Australian and others, including waterfront drama

BASTARD BOYS

Bastard Boys, have done much to ignite public debate.

"What we are finding is a strong thirst for Australian content, a breadth of Australian faces and Australian stories and drama, documentaries, factual programming and the light entertainment," Mr Scott said.

The Chaser's success has overwhelmed almost all and dragged *Spicks and Specks* and *The New Inventors* to higher ratings.

The Chaser's War on Everything has doubled its series average from last year (618,000) to 1.33 million and is the highest rating program for the ABC in the 16-39 demographic this year.

But other programs have also surprised, including the *Constructing Australia* documentary series.

The first episode, *The Bridge*, pulled 1.245 million viewers in the competitive Sunday evening schedule.

Historical drama *Curtin* drew another strong Sunday night result of 1.189 million, while adventure drama *Robin Hood* proved resilient, particularly among younger viewers, in the Sunday 7.30pm slot, averaging more than 1.1 million viewers.

"We aren't getting overexcited about it, we're not crowing about it, but we're pleased we seem to be connecting well with our audiences," Mr Scott said.

Brenda Lendrum – fondly and gratefully remembered.

It is with great sadness that we record the recent death of Brenda Lendrum, on 4th September 2007.

Brenda was our very hard-working, consistent and generally unsung Membership Distribution person who has printed, stuffed and posted many thousands of FABC letters to our members for membership renewal.

A retired academic and former nurse, Brenda kept busy despite poor health for some years, until she was very recently diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia.

Brenda was one of those valued human beings who worked quietly without fanfare, and she will be greatly missed.

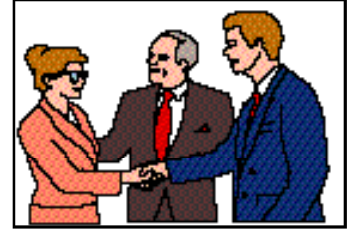
Our thoughts go out to her partner Rob Harrop, and other family members.



"Committed to maintaining an independent
and comprehensive national broadcaster ..."

The Nolan rules explained

The issue of The Nolan Rules keeps on being raised so we thought it might be useful to include them in this issue of *Update*.



The appointment of the BBC's chairman takes place under the Nolan rules.

These rules were established by a Committee on Standards in Public Life, chaired by Lord Nolan, a distinguished judge.

Then U.K. prime minister, John Major, appointed the Committee in 1994 in the wake of the cash-for-questions scandal.

The idea was to address "sleaze" in public life by establishing a code whereby public figures could measure their behaviour and that of their peers.

The Committee specifically looked at the practices of those who serve the public including MPs, civil servants and appointees to non-departmental public bodies such as the BBC.

Arising from the Nolan Committee's report, the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA) developed a Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies.

The Code sets out seven principles which relate to procedures in the public appointments process. Commonly referred to as the Nolan Rules, they are: ministerial responsibility, merit, independent scrutiny, equal opportunities, probity, openness and transparency, and proportionality. The Code sets out the regulatory framework for the public appointments process – planning, preparation and selection. It provides government departments with steps they must follow and monitors them to ensure they have in place systems which are fair, open and transparent, which produce quality outcomes, and where all appointments to the boards of public bodies are made on merit and can command public confidence.

The principles that should underpin the appointment of a chairman for the BBC are those of fairness and transparency.

These principles have already been put into action.

The post was advertised publicly as the Nolan rules recommend that organisations should use as many methods as possible to find suitable candidates.

The shortlist is compiled or overseen by Committees with **independent** members.

At the next stage of the process, candidates should normally be interviewed either by the advisory panel or by ministers or senior officials.

All final appointments should then be announced through press notices.

From its outset the Nolan Committee established seven general principles that should govern public life.

Those principles are:

- selflessness,
- integrity,
- objectivity,
- accountability,
- openness,
- honesty and
- leadership.

The Nolan system establishes an independent selection process which fosters transparency and the assessment and shortlisting of candidates on the basis of merit.

It extinguished a system of political patronage, replacing it with one of good governance. The system continues today.

The Committee has no powers to investigate individual allegations of misconduct.

The ABC a "precious jewel in our democracy"



Dear Friends,

We were very interested to read of Penelope Tolz's experience with Television and News in the USA. We could have written a similar article after our recent stay in the Eastern States. One evening we had the choice of 81 television stations and yet could find nothing to our liking. The program on Public Television was a repeat and we had seen it the previous night. Every program seems to be "infotainment". Even the 24 hour Weather Report was presented as sensational and exciting, whatever the weather. We listened to Public Radio during our stay but depended on the excellent print media, such as The New York Times for our real news.

We too found that most people thought that we were English. When they found that we came from Australia, the immediate reaction was usually "How awesome!" We began to think that Australia equated with Mars in their minds.

We also found that each State was very much an identity in its own right; people seemed to have little real knowledge of other states. We decided that our ABC is very much a unifying force within our country. In fire or flood every-

one listens in to the ABC and many of the programs are national, so that we feel that we are one country. When we travel within this country we always know that we can hear Margaret Throsby or AM and PM.

Not only is the ABC a "precious jewel in our democracy"; it is essential, we believe, to our democracy. The range of programs means that usually you can find at least something to your taste. It informs and enlightens us and is above all else an educational tool for the country.

We introduced friends and relatives in America to podcasts from our ABC. They are delighted with the results. "I have found that I can get an Australian Classic music station on my Laptop, the music is great, and news bulletins are given, very much like Public Radio here." This was in a recent e-mail.

Surely we should all be very proud of our ABC and maintain it as an independent body with integrity, which is not beholden to any advertiser.

Sincerely
Margaret Lund

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!

Would you like to receive Update magazine electronically?

Save the planet's trees and The Friends printing and postage costs and read *Update* magazine on your computer.

Each quarter, when *Update* is published, you will receive an email with a link to the latest issue (each magazine is around 3MB).

You can try this now by going to our website at www.fabcnsw.org.au and clicking on *Update Magazine*.

If you prefer this delivery option for future *Updates* please send an email to the Membership Secretary



Remember, when casting your vote, support the candidate who genuinely supports the ABC.

FABC (NSW) Executive Committee Office Bearers

Acting President - Mal Hewitt

Phone: 9637 2900

<malandal@optusnet.com.au>

Secretary & Treasurer -

James Buchanan

Phone: 9371 5621

<jamesbuc@bigpond.net.au>

Membership Secretary -

Chris Cartledge

Phone: 4226 2323 or 0408 655 882

<fabcmem@fabcnsw.org.au>

Membership Line: 9990 0600

Acting Update Editor

Mal Hewitt - Vice President

PO Box 1391 N. Sydney NSW 2059

Email:

<malandal@optusnet.com.au>

How the Government makes appointments to the ABC board

Senator The Hon Helen Coonan
Office of the Minister for Communications, Information Technology
and the Arts
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate
2 Jul 2007

Dear Mrs Ferguson

ABC board appointments

Thank you for your email dated 20 April 2007 to the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts concerning appointments to the ABC board. The Minister has asked me to respond on her behalf.

Under Section 12 of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983, appointments to the ABC board are made by the Governor-General on the recommendation of the Government of the day. This method of appointment reflects standard practice for Commonwealth statutory authorities.

Under the Act, a person shall not be appointed as a non-executive director of the board unless the person appears to the Governor-General to be suitable for appointment because of having had experience in connection with the provision of broadcasting services or in communications or management; having expertise in financial or technical matters; or having cultural or other interests relevant to the oversight of a public organisation engaged in the provision of broadcasting and television services.

The Government's primary commitment has always been to ensure that there is a mix of skills appropriate to the running of a modern corporation with a budget of more than three-quarters of a billion dollars.

The Government does not believe that the 'Nolan Rules' process of board appointments, as employed by the BBC Trust, provides any greater independence than the current arrangements.

The Government will continue to recommend to the Governor-General the appointment of people it believes will carry out their responsibilities in line with the requirements of the Act.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to the Minister's attention. I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

SARAH McNAMARA
Adviser

**WHEN YOU VOTE
REMEMBER THE ABC**

STATE AND REGIONAL BRANCHES

National Web Portal links to all State Branches.

Go to:
www.friendsoftheabc.org.au

New South Wales

Mal Hewitt (Acting President)
FABC NSW P.O. Box 1391
North Sydney 2059
Phone: 9637 2000
malandal@optusnet.com.au

Albury

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

Armidale

Priscilla Connor
41 Judith Street
Armidale NSW 2350
Ph: 6772 3454 or 6772 2217
priscilla.connor@exemail.com.au

Bathurst

Tracey Carpenter
76 Havannah St
Bathurst 2795
Ph: 6331 8305
tracey.carpenter@bathurst.nsw.gov.au

Blue Mountains

Bob Macadam
34 Lee Road
Winmalee 2777
Ph: 4754 1620
macadamr@bigpond.net.au

Central Coast

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

Cowper

Joyce Gardner (Secretary)
FABC Cowper PO Box 1169
Coffs Harbour NSW 2450
Ph: 6568 7532
fabccowper@gmail.com

Eastern Suburbs

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

Eurobodalla

Keith Simmons
1/29 Mathew Pde.
Batehaven 2536
Ph: 4472 9898
keithbateh@tadaust.org.au

Great Lakes

Marty Morrison (VP)
PO Box 871
Forster 2428
Ph: 6555 2442
glfabc@gmail.com

Hunter

Lisa Thomas
c/o PO Box 265
Merewether 2291
Ph 49307309
allan.thomas2@bigpond.com

Illawarra

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

Northern Rivers

Neville Jennings
PO Box 1484 Kingscliff, 2487
Ph/Fax: 6674 3830 (H)
njennings@scu.edu.au

Orange

Bev Holland
26 Sunny South Crescent
Orange NSW 2800
Ph: 6362 4744
bevholland@westnet.com.au

Parramatta

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

Port Macquarie/ Mid North Coast

Drusi Megget
PO Box 1752
Port Macquarie NSW 2444
Ph: (02) 6583 8798
drusi@tsn.cc

Victoria - FABC

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

Queensland - FABC

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

ACT - FABC

Jill Greenwell
GPO Box 2625
Canberra ACT 2601
Ph: 6253 3531
president@fabcact.org

South Australia - FABC

Joan Laing
PO Box 7158
Hutt St,
Adelaide SA 5000
Ph/Fax 08 8271 0751
jlaing@internode.on.net

Western Australia - FABC

John Smith
PO Box 179
Darlington, WA 6070
Phone: 0427 989 485
famsmith2@hotmail.com
web: www.abcfriendswa.net

Tasmania - FABC

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

FABC RESOURCE CENTRE

Darce Cassidy
www.friendsoftheabc.org

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

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

Use only if joining or if your membership has expired.

First Name		Last Name		Email:	
(Please Print)					
Partner First Name		Last Name		Email:	
Address		Suburb		P/Code	
Phone (Home)		(Work)		Mob	
I would like to join ☐ I would like to renew ☐ Membership No. _____ Age Group ☐ 30 or under ☐ 31-50 ☐ 51+ I am interested in: Letter Writing ☐ Stalls ☐ Helping in the Office ☐ Political campaigning ☐ Computer work ☐					
My details will be passed on to my local FABC branch. (Strike out if you disagree) I/We apply for membership of FABC (NSW) Inc. and accept its objectives and rules.					
☐ Individual ☐ Family/Household ☐ Student ☐ Pensioner ☐ Corporate (covers 3 members) ☐ I would like to make a donation		1 Yr. 3 Yrs. \$20 \$55 \$25 \$70 \$15 \$40 \$15 \$40 \$60 - \$ _____			
I am paying by ☐ cheque in favour of FABC (NSW) Inc. ☐ money order ☐ mastercard ☐ visa Card number _____ Name on credit card _____ Expiry date _____					
Cardholders Signature		Amount \$		Date	