

Suzanne Dredge

the new Head of Indigenous News

Compiled by Dr Diana Wyndham

On 26 November **ABC News** announced the appointment of award-winning journalist **Suzanne Dredge** to the new role of Head, Indigenous News. She will build and lead a stand-alone Indigenous Reporting Team to expand coverage of Indigenous Affairs across the ABC's news teams. Suzanne, a Wiradjuri woman with a deep connection to her Indigenous heritage, says "It is a privilege to lead the ABC's Indigenous Affairs coverage at such an important time for truth-telling in our country. We are about to go into a year of covering the Voice to Parliament, which is a historical moment. The media plays an important role reporting stories that contribute to our views of the world, which is why First Nations people need to be part of the storytelling and decision-making at a senior level. In the ABC's 90-year history there has been no First Nations staff member on the News Executive team. Until now. I am proud to be part of the change."

ABC Indigenous Affairs Editor **Bridget Brennan**, who will be a key member of the new Indigenous Reporting Team, says,



Suzanne Dredge. Photo by Brendan Eposito.

"Suzanne is one of the most gifted journalists and editorial leaders I've ever worked with. She's a fearless investigator and she cares deeply about uncovering systemic injustices here in Australia, and across the globe. She has an innate understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and stories. This is an historic appointment and ABC Indigenous staff are so proud of her."

ABC Director News **Justin Stevens** says creating the role and the new team was a natural next step for the ABC in providing the deepest, best-informed and most multi-faceted coverage of Indigenous Affairs. He says, "The upcoming referendum is a crucial moment for us to get this right and Suzanne Dredge and the Indigenous Reporting Team will be pivotal. It creates a framework for our Indigenous journalists to guide us in how best to give Indigenous people a voice in our journalism. And it helps ensure the ABC's coverage of Indigenous communities

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Update

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From the Editor

ABC Resources – Stretching the Rubber Band

In this issue of Update we include an opinion piece by **Jon Faine**, veteran of 23 years of ABC morning radio in Melbourne, who uses the analogy of continually stretching the rubber band to solve the problems faced by the ABC in trying to maintain services on insufficient funds. He makes these strong points:

- The ABC survives on the unpaid overtime of staff
- Pay rates within the ABC are well under industry rates
- ABC staff are leaving for more highly paid media jobs
- The ABC employs recent graduates on cheap, casual contracts

We must conclude that the ABC receives insufficient funds from the government to fulfil its Charter, that is to provide a service to ALL Australians, and we understand why staff are considering industrial action.

Alice Springs Fiasco

The ABC attracted much adverse publicity over its recent coverage of the challenges faced by the Alice Springs community with youth crime, violence and alcohol, especially the factually inaccurate coverage of a public meeting. There is no doubt that the problems outlined by Jon Faine contributed to this situation, but another factor must be that decisions are made in Ultimo without consultation with local experienced ABC staff. Remote towns like Alice Springs depend on, and highly value, their local ABC staff. I have invited my brother **David Hewitt**, with a lifetime spent in remote communities and a long-time resident of Alice Springs, to write of the importance of the ABC to the Alice Springs community.

A Promise made by Labor in 2018

The Albanese government must be reminded of a promise made on 19 November 2018 by the Shadow Minister for Regional Communications, **Stephen Jones**, that a Labor government would provide the ABC with \$2m to re-establish short-wave services across NT, WA and Queensland. To quote from the press release (reproduced in Update December 2018, p. 20): "We know how important short wave is – that's why we are switching it back on". Approximately 90% of the land mass of Northern Australia is not covered by an AM or FM signal. The range of AM/FM transmitters in Alice Springs, Catherine and Darwin is 50km or less. All areas were covered by the short wave signal, but have been deprived of any service since January 2017. It has been calculated that 55,000 NT residents receive no AM or FM signal. Again, the ABC is failing to fulfil its charter.

Local Support is Vital

ABC State and Regional branches and groups are to be commended for their strong desire and commitment to support

and advocate for the ABC at the local level. In their reports in the later pages of Update we see much evidence of the talent, creativity, enthusiasm and sheer hard work which is put into local activities to remind their communities of the importance of the ABC. In the words of **Anthony Albanese**: "Trust and truth, a lifeline in disaster, comedy and beyond, keeping the nation connected".

Welcome to the Update Team

As Production Manager **Angela Williamson** works on her final edition of Update, it is fitting to again pay tribute to her

years of wonderful service to ABC Friends in various roles. She continues to be deeply involved in her local branch in the Southern Highlands of NSW. As we farewell Angela, we warmly welcome **Raul Arregui** as Production Manager, and **Sue Zeckendorf** as Proofreader. Assistant Editor **Dr Diana Wyndham** and I are deeply grateful to them for agreeing to contribute their outstanding skills and vast experience to Update. My thanks to the wonderful team who prepared this Update: **Diana Wyndham, Angela Williamson** and **Paul Martens**.

Mal Hewitt OAM, ABC Friends

Suzanne Dredge the new Head of Indigenous News

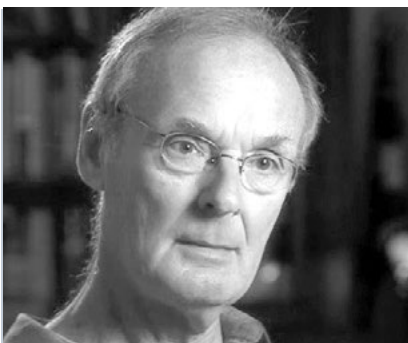
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and issues is constructive, accurate and representative. This team will also provide a touch point for all Indigenous journalists, helping the ABC attract and retain the best talent in Australian media."

ABC Backstory editor **Natasha Johnson** wrote a profile of Suzanne Dredge and her trailblazing achievements on 16 December. This extract lists some of the hardships Suzanne overcame: after leaving school at 16, she had a baby at 18, and by 23 had three children and a violent partner. She found the courage to leave and the determination to seek a better life for herself and her children. With the support of her family, she enrolled at TAFE to study youth work and started to work in marginalised communities and, at the age of 27, enrolled as a mature-aged student in a Bachelor of Communications, majoring in journalism, at Western Sydney University. It was a tough road, studying while working full-time and raising her children as a single mother. Many people said she was too old to become a journalist but in her first year she had a front-page story in the *Macarthur Advertiser* and began work at Koori Radio where she produced the station's current affairs program, *Blackchat*. In her second year, in 2011, she scored an internship at ABC News and her journalism career took

off. She started as a researcher with the National Reporting Team, worked as a producer with ABC Investigations and was supervising producer of nightly current affairs flagship 7.30, which included overseeing the program's Indigenous affairs coverage. She's won three Walkley awards for her work with *Four Corners*, 7.30 and ABC Investigations. Her work has taken her on high-risk assignments in the Middle East, reporting on the end of the Islamic State group and investigating Australians who travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight with Al Qaeda-linked groups. In 2019 she produced the Walkley Award-winning film *Orphans of ISIS*.

ABC Head of Investigative Journalism and Current Affairs **Jo Puccini** said: "Suzanne was everything you want in a journalist and storyteller — determined, intelligent, creative and compassionate. Her background in youth work gave her an understanding of how to deal with people in crisis and how society treats its most vulnerable. I have seen her grow into one of the most accomplished investigative journalists in the country. From business investigations to her multi-year investigative work on extremism, to her recent *Four Corners* program on murdered Indigenous women, Suzanne's journalism has been brave, forensic and compassionate. "Along the way, Suzanne has been an editorial leader and mentor to many, particularly younger Indigenous journalists, and I'm excited to see what she will do with the unit and have no doubt she'll make it a great success."



Vale Jeff Watson

Veteran journalist and presenter **Jeff Watson**, the man who helped pioneer popular science television in Australia with *Towards 2000*, has died aged 80. He helped revolutionise the format of science television in Australia. *Towards 2000* ran for three seasons at the ABC and went out to almost 100 countries. Other programs he worked on include *This Day Tonight*, *Four Corners* and *60 Minutes*. On a number of occasions he moved between the ABC and commercial stations but this quote

makes it clear that his heart belonged to Aunty:

Working for the ABC was like working for a public library in a country town and working for 60 Minutes was like working for a used-car yard on Parramatta Road. I stand by that.

Phillip Adams tweeted "Vale Jeff Watson. A major figure in the history of the ABC."

Extract from "*Towards 2000...*" by David Stuart, *ABC News*, 1 March 2023.

ABC From the Friends National President



Cassandra Parkinson
National President,
ABC Friends

The last few months have been a flurry of activity as ABC Friends campaigned for increased funding for the ABC in the May budget. More than 71,000 people signed our petition calling on all members of Parliament to restore funding and independence to our ABC. That's a phenomenal result – thank you!

Working closely with our colleagues from ABC Alumni we've met federal politicians from all sides of politics to put the case. That included the federal Minister for Communications, **Michelle Rowland**, who gave us a good hearing but, unsurprisingly, was not able to make any promises.

Last year we welcomed the repairs that the government made to the ABC's budget, but these were only temporary fixes:

the situation at the ABC remains dire and without additional funding we'll see more restructures at the ABC over the next five years. That means more cuts to staff, to programs and to quality.

Right now, the ABC's operating budget is some \$86 million less per year than it was in 2013. Last year the government restored \$84 million to the ABC's operating grant over four years but that still left a big shortfall in the ABC's annual operating budget. The government has promised to restore indexation, but the indexation measure that's applied to government enterprises usually falls short of the CPI. Unless a realistic indexation percentage is applied, the ABC will continue to fall behind. Total loss of funding for the ABC over the years of Coalition Government was \$780m, which included specific funding for Australia Network and international broadcasting.

Of course, there are many government services that urgently need additional funding and we don't under-estimate the pressures the federal Treasurer and Finance Minister are working under as they seek to juggle competing demands. But the money we're talking about is small.

We have a choice: we can have a national public broadcaster that's a shadow of its former self, one that limps along, offering more repeats, more imports, and fewer break-through investigations. Or we can guarantee the ABC's future as a strong independent organisation able to reach all Australians with the best Australian drama, documentaries and children's programs. An ABC that leads the way with gripping investigations like last year's Gold Walkley winner "State Control", which exposed dodgy practices by Public Guardian and Trustee agencies.

I know what I want to see – and it will cost less than half of a percent of our new submarines.



**BUDGET INCREASE
SINCE 2022**



**AVERAGED BUDGET
SINCE 2014**

Cartoonist:
Phil Somerville

Bias at the ABC?

Compiled by
Dr Diana Wyndham



ABC's Sarah Ferguson.

When **Senator Richard Alston** accused the ABC of bias in its coverage of the 1998 dispute between Maritime Union of Australia and Patrick Corporation, ABC management commissioned Professor **Philip Bell***, Foundation Chair of the Media and Communications Unit of the University of NSW, to investigate. Bell's independent report found ABC's television coverage of the waterfront dispute was "balanced" (ABC Annual Report 1997-98). In "Measuring bias? It's not as easy ABC" (*SMH*, 26 October 2006), Bell said "The ABC has long been subjected to howls of 'bias' from the pundits and 'think tanks' (so-called because their members think like tanks, perhaps)." The Liberal Party, the Murdoch press and the Institute of Public Affairs have fired most of these attacks on the ABC but in addition, howls have now come from the **Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)**, an Australian government statutory authority formed on 1 July 2005 with the merger of the Australian Broadcasting Authority and the Australian Communications Authority.

On 19 December 2022, ACMA published the results of its year-long investigation into the two-part *Four Corners* program "Fox and the Big Lie", with a scathing press release: "ABC *Four Corners* breaches Code of Practice" and issued a 65-page report of its findings. ACMA's investigation followed cable TV network **Fox News'** complaint about the ABC's coverage of this issue. ACMA reported largely in the ABC's favour but, in three examples identified, said the ABC had breached the accuracy and fair and honest dealing requirements of its own Code of Practice.

On 21 December **Nick Leys**, Head of ABC Communication, responded to the criticism and said that ABC Director, News **Justin Stevens**, expressed deep concerns and "strongly disagrees that the program is not impartial." Leys described "Fox and the Big Lie" as a strong and measured piece of public interest journalism and a world class report by award-winning **Sarah Ferguson** and the team. This was a comprehensive investigation analysing the role **Fox News** played in helping

promulgate the "big lie" – that the 2020 US Presidential election was stolen. It is as relevant now as it was when it was first broadcast. "It is important the public does not lose faith in the democratic process of free and fair elections and journalism like this plays a key part in that. This was an outstanding two-part documentary and we stand by the journalism in the program."

On 22 December **Zoe Samios** reported in the *SMH* that ACMA considered that ABC "could have taken greater care in striking that balance in this program to avoid perceptions of partiality." However, it would have been hard for the ABC to find anything positive to say about Trump's actions which cumulated in the assault on the Capitol, and it was almost impossible to find negative examples in the coverage by Fox News.

On 23 December **Latika Bourke** quoted from **Sarah Ferguson's** interview with the *SMH* and *The Age* in which Sarah blasted the media regulator's "nonsensical" findings over the Fox program. Particularly the regulator's reporting on Fox News and the 2020 US presidential election which focused on the role of media mogul **Rupert Murdoch's** Fox News in the 2020 US presidential election, the outcome of which **Donald Trump** falsely claimed was stolen from him. Trump supporters later attempted to overthrow the election result, with an insurrection on the Capitol on January 6. ACMA claimed that overall, "the program came close to, but did not breach, the high bar set by the impartiality standards in the ABC's Code". "What's that?" an incredulous Ferguson asked during the interview, "It's like a traffic cop who says crossly to a motorist, 'I wanted to book you for speeding but I couldn't because you kept driving at the right speed'. That feels like someone trying to besmirch the programs by saying it doesn't quite do the bad thing but nearly." ACMA agreed with Fox's complaint about Ferguson's "emotive and strident language", for example her description of the January 6 rioters as a "mob". Ferguson commented: "That is just plain silly, that was a mob, we all saw it, everyone calls it a mob. What is it if it isn't a mob?"



ACMA's Chair, Nerida O'Loughlin.

ACMA's verdict should have been impartial but it was biased against the ABC and in favour of Fox News and the rioting mob, one of the points made by **Jonathan Holmes**, Head of **ABC Alumni** in his letter to ACMA's Chair, **Nerida O'Loughlin** on 28 December. This an extract from it:

"ABC Alumni has hitherto respected the role of the ACMA as the final arbiter of complaints against free-to-air broadcasters in Australia. However, it believes that the ACMA's investigation of the complaint against the two *Four Corners*' programs has seriously damaged any claim that it is a body whose opinion as to what is or what is not good journalism is worth anything; and furthermore, has needlessly damaged the reputation of Australia's most important television current affairs program. [ACMA's] media release emphasised that it had found three alleged breaches of the ABC's Code of Practice. You personally, Ms O'Loughlin, were quoted in the release pontificating about the ABC's omissions and journalistic sins. And yet that press release, and the investigation report to which it refers, are in our view 'materially misleading' in far more serious ways than the **Four Corners**' reports, because they either omit or distort the information they convey to the reader." Jonathan Holmes' letter, written on behalf of more than 200 former ABC employees, "will further fuel tension between the media regulator and the ABC". He concluded: "ABC Alumni consider that the ACMA could have taken greater care in striking that balance in this investigation, to avoid perceptions of partiality towards a powerful complainant, or (perhaps) of journalistic cluelessness."

On 4 January *SMH* reporter **Zoe Samios** summarised **Holmes'** letter in "Journalistic cluelessness: ex-Media Watch host roasts regulator". A Fox News spokesperson said the ACMA ruling confirmed the company's view that the central premise of ABC's program was "built on a foundation of patent bias and lack of impartiality". This Fox News comment deserves Mandy Rice-Davies' famous quip, "Well he would say that, wouldn't he". These interchanges are likely to continue for months.

On 16 February **Alan Sunderland** (a journalist, former Editorial Director of the ABC and a member of the Australian Press Council) expressed his opinion in the *SMH*: "To build trust in the news we need a trustworthy watchdog." He found ACMA's reasoning "deeply problematic" and questioned why this government-appointed body should be making decisions

about journalistic ethics. Sunderland commented that the **Press Council's** funding is under pressure, its role is little understood and it "now relies on **News Corp** for as much as 60% of its funding". He suggests listeners' and subscribers' trust should be rebuilt by "building on the existing Press Council and handing it both part of ACMA's role and part of its funding. After all, the Press Council already [has] members drawn from the public. Broadening its membership would reduce some of the challenges caused by a concentration of one or two major media functions. Or you could start all over again with the creation of a new body that all news media sign up to."

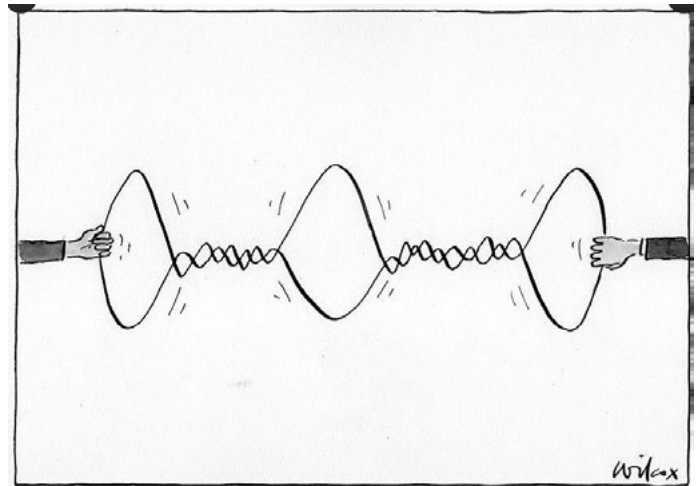


Illustration: Cathy Wilcox

Editor's Notes:

***Philip Bell**, who now runs the Corner Gallery in Stanmore, sent this letter to the *SMH* on 9 December.

The call for publication of the salaries of ABC journalists/presenters only makes sense if the salaries of comparable employees and contractors at other, competing, broadcasting companies are also made public ("A Lib senator wants to know what Leigh Sales earns. Me too", 8 December). This would allow consumers to judge whether the charges of profligacy and waste of "taxpayers' money" are legitimate. If commercial broadcasters pay their "stars" many times the salaries of ABC equivalents, then ABC-bashing by critics of rigorous journalism might be put in perspective. The publicly-funded ABC produces radio, television and digital programming at a fraction of the cost to consumers ("taxpayers") of commercial companies.

Alan Sunderland was the guest speaker at the launch of the ABC Friends Western Suburbs of Sydney (Update, April 2021, p. 18). He discussed the role of the ABC's new Ombudsman and the "need for the ABC to contain and build on its existing reputation as the most trusted news source in Australia" (Update, December 2022, p. 8).

BBC Woes



Sir David Attenborough during filming for *Wild Isles*. Photo: Alex Board/BBC/Silverback Films.

Compiled by Dr Diana Wyndham

Three years ago the message that BBC and the ABC were under attack by hostile forces was spelt out in **Patrick Barwise** and **Peter York's** book, "The War Against the BBC" (Update, April 2022, p.15).

Their warnings were prescient. On 1 January 2022 *the Guardian* published veteran UK broadcaster, author and parliamentarian **Lord Melvyn Bragg's** call for the BBC to be protected from "a creeping deterioration". His comments follow a sustained campaign by UK Government ministers intent on waging a culture war, with the BBC as a key front. He accused ministers of failing to recognise the value of the institution. Bragg, who has spent most of his television career at ITV, has previously spoken out in defence of the BBC, declaring himself "foursquare" behind it. He said the BBC was worth "storming the Bastille" to save and would never be reinvented if it was destroyed.

On 11 March the *Guardian* reported the **BBC's** decision not to broadcast an episode of **Sir David Attenborough's** flagship new series on British wildlife – *Wild Isles* - because of fears its themes of the destruction of nature would risk a backlash from Tory politicians and the right wing press. The decision has angered the program-makers and some insiders at the BBC, who fear the corporation has bowed to pressure from lobbying groups with "dinosaurian ways".

On 14 March the *Guardian* reported the **BBC chair, Richard Sharp**, is under increasing pressure to quit after the corporation apologised over its handling of the impartiality row surrounding **Gary Lineker**, presenter

of the Match of the Day. **Sir Keir Starmer**, Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Labour Party since 2020, called on the government to examine how it could protect a "truly independent and impartial" BBC. Downing Street declined to say whether **Rishi Sunak**, Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party since October 2022, had confidence in the BBC Chair after the corporation announced that Lineker was to return to presenting sport after he was taken off air. Sunak offered a lukewarm defence of [Sharp] who was once his boss at Goldman Sachs and who was later recruited by Sunak as an unpaid government adviser when he was Chancellor during the COVID pandemic. Sharp faced calls for his resignation because when applying for the job of BBC chair, he did not disclose his role in helping Boris Johnson get access to a loan facility, reportedly worth about £800,000.

On 15 March this warning to the ABC was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald's* letters column:

The BBC has been finally captured by the right-wing conservative cancel-culture mob ("From beautiful game to ugly shame", March 13). They have just cancelled the most trusted broadcaster of all, David Attenborough, by refusing to air Attenborough's sixth and final of a new series about the causes of the decline and destruction of British nature for fear of antagonising Tory politicians and right-wing groups. The program has been sidelined to iPlayer, an amazing slight to the giant of the genre, Attenborough, who makes no secret of his respect for the science of climate change. The ABC in this country needs to be on high alert for such interference.

Judy Hungerford, North Curl Curl

The ABC in Alice Springs



The ABC office in Alice Springs.



by
David Hewitt

An ABC radio relay service from Adelaide started in Alice Springs in 1948 with the call-sign 5AL. However, it was not until 1972 that the ABC started transmitting from Alice Springs.

In 1990 the ABC moved to a new \$1 million studio in Gap Road. The opening ceremony on 1 April, broadcast on *Australia All Over*, was attended by ABC Chairman **Bob Somerville** and Managing Director **David Hill**. Gap Road takes its name from Heavitree Gap, named by William Mills, an Overland Telegraph Line surveyor. The Todd River, railway, road and Telegraph line all passed through the gap in the MacDonnell Ranges.

The ABC office is opposite Traeger Park, a sports ground that honours **Alfred Traeger**, inventor of the pedal radio that brought the city and the Outback closer together and helped the establishment of the **Royal Flying Doctor Service**. Twenty-two years before the ABC arrived, the first radio transmission in Central Australia was from Hermannsburg Mission on 25 November 1926. **Pastor FW Albrecht** sent a Morse code message on Traeger's experimental radio, 130 kilometres to Alice Springs. It was received by **Alf Traeger** and the **Rev John Flynn** in the engine room at the Adelaide House nursing home, then telegraphed to Albrecht's wife who had just given birth at Tanunda in the Barossa Valley SA. Flynn, whose idea founded the Royal Flying Doctor Service, is celebrated on \$20 bank notes. A little Western Arrarnta boy, **Edwin Pareroutja**, befriended Traeger on his first visit to

Hermannsburg in 1926. Years later, Edwin became a noted artist in the **Albert Namatjira School of Painters** and his landscape paintings were much in demand.

This is a program guide for ABC radio Alice Springs in 2004, showing local ABC staff

on page 2. Nineteen

years later, **Stewart**

Brash and **Geoff Geoff**

Miers are still around and

Lindsay Wright has just

recently retired. ABC radio

has always been a valuable

source of local news in

Alice Springs, even more

significant since the sad

demise in June 2020 of

our paper, the long running

Centralian Advocate. Staff

who left their mark in Central

Australia have included **Ian**

Jamieson, who had been a

teacher at School of the Air for

14 years, **Chris Marcic**, **Emma**

Haskin, **Meredith Campbell**, with 12 years as a broadcaster,

and **Lindsay Wright**, a very popular contributor to the

Country Hour. **Stewart Brash**, who has been around for

27 years, is still hosting the morning program and **Alex** and

Rohan Barwick, a very well-known couple, are afternoon

and Saturday morning presenters. Alex has filled in for **Ian**

McNamara on *Australia All Over* on several occasions. Brashy,

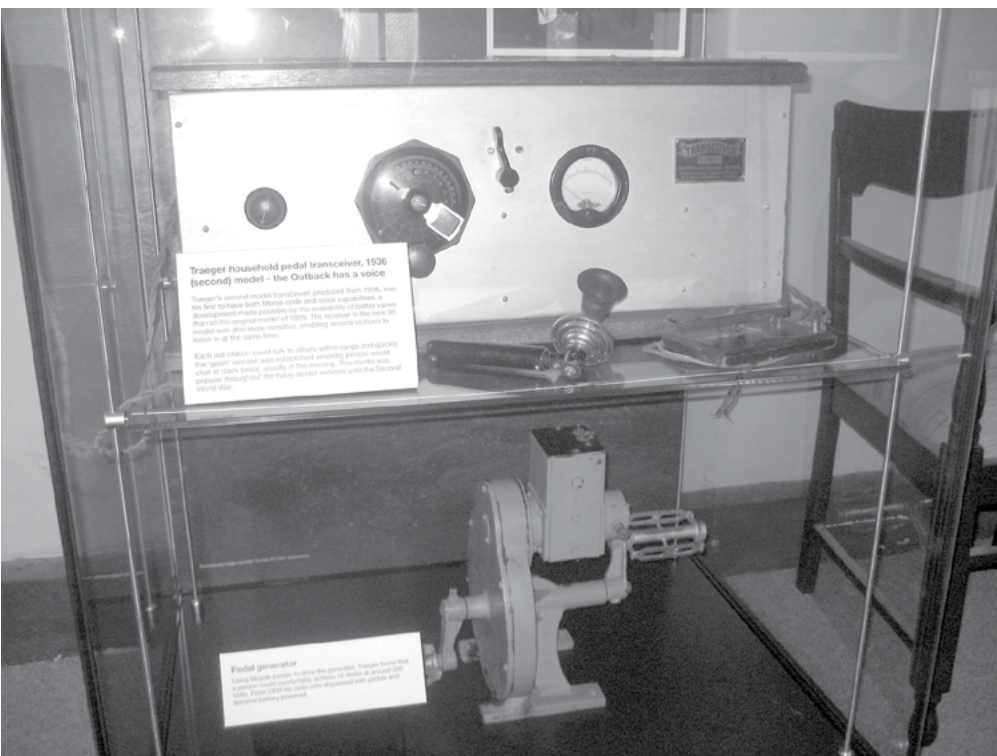
as he is known locally, challenges politicians with his in-depth

and thorough interviewing. It says something that in five years

our previous Chief Minister declined all invitations to appear

on his morning show.





An early Traeger pedal radio, Adelaide House Museum Alice Springs.

Local ABC staff who have become well known in media include **Eric Tlozek**, who started his career in Alice Springs with the *Centralian Advocate*; **Lucy Broad**; **Nikki Gemmell** (1993 NT Radio Journalist of the Year for reporting on the 'Hermannsburg Grog March') and **Allyson Horn**, current Middle East correspondent and winner of several radio awards. Alice Springs Mayor **Leslie Oldfield** was appointed to the ABC National Advisory Council in 1990.

Alice Springs welcomed a new rural reporter last month, **Victoria Ellis**. It is good to see that she comes from a strong rural background - her first 18 years were on a farm in the Riverina of NSW, followed by a degree in journalism. Local people should report on local news and we have the right people, well respected here with experience to do the job. We do not need city reporters as happened with a recent public meeting on vandalism in the town. ABC management issued an apology over the misleading reporting of the meeting. This restored some faith in the ABC.

A great disappointment to bush people was the removal in January 2017 of the NT shortwave radio service. This was a big loss to remote communities, stock camps, grey nomads and indigenous rangers, especially because they can't hear the weather forecasts. Equipment to transmit to the southern region is still at Roe Creek, 20km from Alice Springs. Similar sites are in Tennant Creek and Katherine and the broadcast area extended to the West

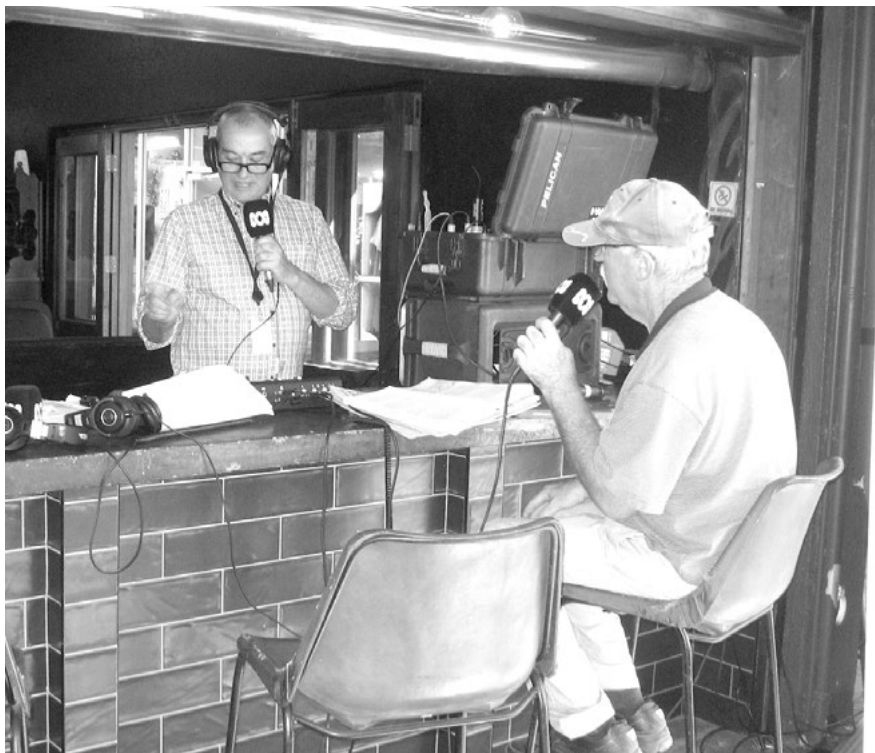
Kimberley in WA. My wife Margaret and I saw the benefits of shortwave when working in Kimberley communities in the 1980s as we anxiously watched the progress of cyclones. Many retired travellers carry radios capable of receiving shortwave. In the football season it was common to see ten or more football followers gathered around a four-wheel-drive vehicle in a rest area listening to an AFL game - what has happened to the ABC Charter to broadcast to all Australians?

The local ABC does well at supporting history and heritage. For three years, **Stewart Brash** and historian and former teacher **Stuart Traynor** have conducted a 10-minute segment *Fragments in Time* on Wednesday mornings, and previous to that a serial program *Where's Mr Stuart* on explorer **John McDouall Stuart**. In March 2021 the ABC and the National Trust sponsored what turned out to be a very well-attended breakfast

at the Telegraph Station to commemorate 150 years since the naming of Heavitree Gap. This included a phone link-up to the village of Heavitree in UK. **Alex Nelson**, born in Alice Springs 59 years ago, is a familiar voice on heritage, environmental and political issues and well known for recalling dates of significant events around town. Alex also contributes to the *NT Country Hour*. **Geoff Miers**, horticulturalist and former town councillor, conducts a weekly Saturday morning garden show. **Dr John Boffa**, Chief Medical Officer of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and spokesperson for People's Alcohol Action Coalition, is a regular contributor on alcohol and public health issues.



Shortwave transmitter site, Roe Creek Alice Springs.



Stewart Brash (standing) and Alex Nelson at the outside broadcast in Todd Mall, Alice Springs.

Outside broadcasting is popular here with presenters and listeners. On 15 March a morning broadcast as part of an Australia-wide OB event was held in the Todd Mall, highlighting the history of the Mall in the CBD of Alice Springs.

Conclusion

With much local input, the ABC in Alice Springs is truly a community radio station. I should acknowledge **Alex Nelson**, a local historian, for a lot of the historical information. I did not realise till we started researching for the story that the ABC and its staff has achieved so much here and elsewhere. We often hear **Allyson Horn** reporting from the Middle East and

we remember her as a young journalist not long out of Newcastle University. **Eric Tlozek** had started with the *Centralian Advocate*, joined the ABC and after Alice he spent time reporting from PNG then the Middle East, before Allyson. Our town mayor in the 1990s was a member of the ABC National Advisory Committee. We have some long-time ABC staff who are very well respected and know the local people and the geography of Central Australia well. They should be reporting on local issues.

On 6 March there was a release of Police crime figures for the past month. **Professor John Boffa** supported their accuracy but an ABC report by **Dana Morse** said experts were challenging the figures. I discovered later that Dana reports from Parliament House Canberra. A much more meaningful story on the police figures could have been written here in Alice Springs.

Editor's note: David Hewitt is a respected veteran Aboriginal community worker and the Vice President/ Chair of Heritage Alice Springs. Mal describes his brother as "a remote community jack of all trades".

See Update which included articles on the importance of Shortwave in April 2017 (pages 2-3, 9, 12); April 2018, page 8, **December 2018 page 20 (including a 19 November Press release 'Labor will restore Shortwave radio')**; April 2019 page 3 and December 2021, pages 14-15.

Australia Calling: The ABC Radio Australia Story

On 17 November the ABC launched this official history of **Radio Australia [RA]**, by long-time ABC **RA** journalist and presenter **Dr Phil Kafcaloudes**. It tells the story of the radio service's evolution and change through the decades as geopolitics and the media landscape shift across the world. The struggle for **RA** and the contributions by ABC's Foreign Correspondents such as **Sean**



Dr Phil Kafcaloudes

Dorney, is outlined in Update, December 2021, pages 14-15, which described the pressures over the years and the political support for **RA** which was steadily eroded in Canberra.

On 3 December the *Broadcasting Services Amendment (Community Radio) Bill 2022* was passed by the Australian House of Representatives and Senate: the Hon **Michelle Rowland** MP, Minister for Communications said "The bill's passage was a glowing one for community broadcasting". Political support and funding is also needed for **RA**.

ABC Managing Director **David Anderson** says, "In the ABC's 90th year, **Australia Calling** is a timely reminder of the historic importance of the ABC's International Services in the Indo-Pacific. In an increasingly challenging international context, it is an opportunity to reflect on the ABC's

National Cultural Policy – *Revive*: a place for every story, a story for every place

Dr Tess Howes

President, ABC Friends, NSW & ACT

The new National Cultural Policy *Revive* positions **First Nations Peoples** at the centre of its five-year plan to revive and renew the national arts, entertainment and cultural sector by recognising and respecting the crucial place of First Nations stories at the centre of Australia's arts.

In the Minister for Arts' Foreword, the **Hon Tony Burke MP**, states that ... "This National Cultural Policy is not a conclusion. It is the next chapter in a story that stretches back to the first sunrise on our continent. The story starts with art, dance, narrative and songlines". There were several positive references to the ABC in *Revive* which suggests a number of opportunities for the ABC to deliver the wide range of arts and cultural initiatives particularly strengthening a Strong Cultural Infrastructure (Pillar 4) and Engaging the Audience (Pillar 5) as Australia's most trusted media organisation and one of the largest digital and streaming services providers.

The report recognises that the ABC has extensive capacity to deliver Australian stories, science, arts, religion and education programs. For example *Revive* states "Australia's national broadcasters – ABC and the SBS – play an important role in shaping Australia's national identity, fostering social inclusion and encouraging myriad forms of cultural expression" (p.87). The ABC was also acknowledged for commissioning six of the seven children's titles, representing vital content obligations in a genre at serious risk (p.86).

We should particularly welcome the following statement in Pillar 5 Engaging the Audience – **Provide security of funding and independence for Australia's national broadcasters, ABC and SBS, by delivering five-year funding terms, and reinstating indexation for ABC funding"** (pp.89, 105). It is however up to us, individually and collectively, to make the most of these opportunities and increasingly position the marvellous ABC as an enabler of the Five Pillars in this policy:

1. **First Nations First**
2. **A Place for Every Story**
3. **Centrality of the Artist**
4. **Strong Cultural Infrastructure**
5. **Engaging the Audience**

National Cultural Policy - *Revive*: a place for every story, a story for every place. Office for the Arts - web link:
<https://www.arts.gov.au/publications/national-cultural-policy-revive-place-every-story-story-every-place>.

Revive demonstrates a new strategic direction in our national arts and cultural policy. However it is not yet time for celebrations as we must make sure these actions are implemented in practice.

Nevertheless, I do hope you are all as excited as I am about the opportunities *Revive* provides for the future success of the ABC. I am also hopeful that *Revive* outlines a path to unity with our First Nations sisters and brothers, leading to a successful referendum on an Indigenous Voice to Parliament and progression towards reconciliation and treaty.

role in supporting a free media, regional democracy, and collaboration with our international neighbours."

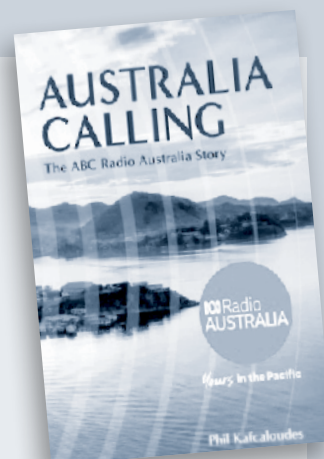
ABC Head International Services **Claire M Gorman** says, "I commissioned Phil to write this book as this is a story worth telling. In documenting ABC Radio Australia's evolution, the book highlights the ABC's longstanding commitment to regional storytelling, peace, and democracy. It helps us understand why the ABC remains a valued and trusted source of news, information, and entertainment for international audiences. The book tells an important part of the ABC's 90-year history and Australia's engagement with its neighbours."

According to **Dr Kafcaloudes**, "Even though I worked at ABC Radio Australia for many years, researching for this book made me realise how much the network has affected so many people. Not to mention having a role in world events like the first landing on the moon, post-war migration, and even

the cold war. No wonder it's always rated so highly with international audiences."

**Australia Calling:
The ABC Radio
Australia Story**
is available online for
\$27.75 from Booktopia.

**There are extensive
historical details and
photos in *ABC Backstory*,
2 December 2022.**



Bravo Craig McMurtrie!



Compiled by
Dr Diana Wyndham



It's time to say thank you and farewell to these two distinguished journalists who are leaving the ABC

First to **Craig McMurtrie** who wrote this story in ABC *Backstory* (24 November) when he retired after more than 30 years with the ABC as a foreign correspondent, political journalist, and news executive and from 2019, ABC's **Editorial Director**. This is an extract of some of his astute comments:

"Being an ABC foreign correspondent can be sleep depriving and occasionally dangerous, but it's also exhilarating and a privilege...I have invariably found myself working alongside dedicated colleagues from all parts of Australia and overseas. [However], I find myself addressing (again) the mantra of the public broadcaster's harshest critics.

The first claim is that it's hopelessly biased and captured by green-left elites. In 2018, an editorial review* examining story selection and unconscious cultural bias found ABC bulletins focused more on national and international issues than commercial media. ABC television news reported more political stories and more social policy issues (euthanasia debate, policies for children with disabilities, pensions, poverty, girls and STEM, mental health) than the commercial networks, which reported more crime stories. On radio the review found little difference between ABC radio news and commercial bulletins. It also found no discernible difference in the reporting of the same-sex-marriage debate running at the time....In June 2022, an external analysis, **... showed the economy was the dominant issue across ABC news and current affairs output, followed by health, foreign affairs, housing and leadership. Often accusations of bias misunderstand that ABC's editorial standards for impartiality require [journalists to be] objective in the method they apply to their work, which means testing information through disciplined, evidence-based, open-minded and fair reporting - balance that follows the weight of evidence: coverage of climate change should reflect the overwhelming consensus within the international science community that climate change is occurring, or reporting of the pandemic should reflect scientific data which shows approved COVID-19 vaccines are safe....

Next is the claim that the ABC is full of inner-city elites.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data demonstrates most Australians live in the major cities ... but ABC staff also live and report in 58 regional communities across the continent, coverage recently strengthened by the recruitment of dozens more regionally based reporters.

What about the perennial claim that the ABC is a conservative-free zone? Even a cursory check of program websites quickly reveals past and present Coalition politicians and other conservative voices featuring on panel shows and discussion programs. For some critics it's more about whether the ABC has any conservative presenters hosting its major current affairs shows — notwithstanding the ABC's statutory obligation under the ABC Act to gather and present news and information that is "accurate and impartial according to the recognised standards of objective journalism". The journalists presenting national ABC shows like 7.30, *Insiders*, *Q&A*, *RN Breakfast* and others have broad media experience. **Sarah Ferguson** has worked for UK newspapers, *SBS* and *Nine*; **David Speers** — commercial radio and *Sky News*; **Stan Grant** — *Seven*, *NITV*, *Sky News* and *CNN*; **Laura Tingle** — *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian* and the *Australian Financial Review*; **Patricia Karvelas** — *SBS*, *The Australian* and *Sky News*; **Sabra Lane** — *Ten* and *Seven*. The weekly *Insiders* program is also sometimes slapped down as "anti-conservative". The panel show is dominated by non-ABC journalists. Last year there were 42 appearances by *Nine Media* journalists, 28 by *News Corporation*, 19 by *Guardian Australia*, 13 from other media and 30 from the ABC. The ABC has also faced a steady barrage from those opposed to public broadcasting and from NewsCorp who seem to [oppose] not only to the ABC, but all other mainstream media. Greater polarisation holds particular dangers for publicly funded media... Some critics use social media to [criticise ABC programs or presenters]. While the overwhelming majority [of ABC employees] follow the rules, on rare occasions someone can go too far. If an employee damages the ABC's reputation, or brings the public broadcaster into disrepute, they can face disciplinary action under the Code of Conduct.

The ABC is also accused of being unaccountable and of “marking its own homework”. The ABC is overseen by a government-selected board, it answers to the federal parliament, its managing director is grilled for hours at Senate Estimates hearings, and its activities and content can be variously examined by the **Commonwealth Ombudsman**, the **Australian National Audit Office**, the **Australian Human Rights Commission**, the **Office of the Australian Information Commissioner**, and the **Australian Communications and Media Authority**. The ABC also has *Media Watch* — its own fiercely independent weekly review program that belts the public broadcaster when it gets things wrong every bit as much as it goes after others; and unlike other Australian media, the ABC also regularly commissions and publishes external reviews of its editorial content. It has a rigorous and transparent in-house editorial complaints handling system, one that a recent board-commissioned independent review found certainly didn't amount to the ABC just marking its own homework. This review recommended appointing an ombudsman, which the ABC has now done — a role that will have the power to review complaint findings.

Looking back over my tenure as **Editorial Director**, 5 June 2019 shook my complacency about independent public interest journalism in my own country. Federal police walked in the front door of the ABC's Ultimo headquarters holding a warrant to access ABC computers. They were hunting for the source of leaked defence documents in the *Afghan Files* stories by investigative journalists **Dan Oakes** and **Sam Clark**, a series that revealed allegations of unlawful killings by Special Forces soldiers. The debate over adequate whistleblower protections, press freedom and secretly issued search warrants targeting Australia's media continues. Through it all, the ABC endures. In its 90th year it reaches nearly 70% of Australians each week and remains Australia's most trusted media organisation. Former ABC chair **James Spigelman** urged the ABC to continue “to treat its audience as citizens, not consumers”. It has two bedrock propositions that do this and set it apart: editorial decisions must not be improperly influenced by political, sectional, commercial or personal interests. And the

ABC can take no editorial position save for its commitment to fundamental democratic principles including the rule of law, freedom of speech and religion, parliamentary democracy and equality of opportunity. As current chair **Ita Buttrose** noted: “People often underestimate the importance of public broadcasting to democracy. It's a fact, confirmed by **European Broadcasting Union** research, that in countries where public service media is well funded and enjoys a high market share there is more political stability.” The ABC has never been perfect, but in these days of polarisation, misinformation and amplified outrage it is irreplaceable.”

**Editorial Review. Diversity of Broadcast News Stories* by Jane Connors and Alan Sunderland, with the assistance of Jannali Jones, Mark Maley & Simon Melkman, Editorial Policies March 2018.

***Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2022 Federal Election Report of the Chairman*, Election Coverage Review Committee 24 June 2022 ABC Board - Election Coverage Review.

Editor's Note: The political journalist and academic **Chris Wallace** considered similar problems in “ABC in the Coalition's crosshairs” in *The Saturday Paper* (3-9 December 2022). She concluded: “The journalistic ecosystem has been smashed. There aren't enough journalists, and too few layers of senior, mid-level and junior journalists to propagate sound editorial judgement. Under the influence of Coalition governments, in power federally for 20 of the past 26 years, ABC news and current affairs ranks are now permeated with journalists whose formative training and experience was in Murdoch-owned media outlets. That has been to the detriment of strong, independent and reflective ABC reporting traditions. It's time for a major reinvestment in ABC news and current affairs. **BBC Woes** listed on page 7. The ABC should heed. This warning.

Brava Linda Mottram!

It's also farewell to a second distinguished ABC veteran, **Linda Mottram** who began her career at the ABC in radio news in Canberra, then worked for a commercial radio station in Sydney, then for the *Daily Telegraph*, then back to the ABC. She has travelled with Australian Prime Ministers, covered peace and war, reported on assassinations and elections, and created radio programs on issues as diverse



as Crusader archaeology, the modern Liberal Party, Afghan women's art and sheep dog trials. She worked in many of the world's hotspots, including the Middle East and the Balkans - in 1999 she won a **Walkley Award** in the **Radio Current Affairs** category for her report “**Kosovo Corpses - The Meja Massacre**” about the Serb killings of thousands of ethnic Albanian Kosovars. Her reporting for **Radio**

Australia covered Asia Pacific diplomatic and strategic issues

continued on page 14.

continued from page13.

and she interpreted Australian political, economic and social life for an Asia Pacific audience and hosted public forums for aid and academic groups on Australia's aid program. During her two foreign postings for the ABC, in the Middle East and Moscow, she contributed her analyses to broadcasters in Europe and Canada. She also took a strong interest in editorial training at the ABC. She appeared on *ABC 702*

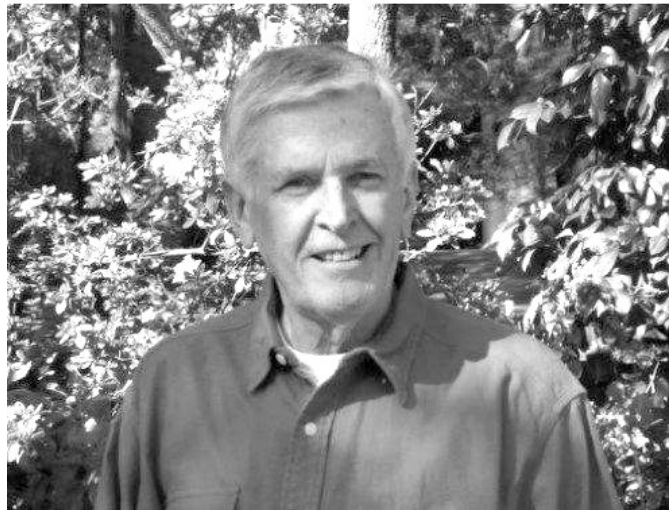
Afternoons and, from 2017 she was the host of *PM*. For over 30 years she reported from across the Middle East, Europe, Asia and the Pacific. She's presented mornings on **ABC Radio Sydney**, she was the Executive Producer of **RN Breakfast**, and she became the inaugural host of the podcast *This Week*. After a period on long service leave, Linda announced that she would retire at the end of 2022.

Behind the Scenes Bravery

Compiled by Dr Diana Wyndham

The first hero is **John Tulloh**, a pioneering ABC foreign correspondent, and the second hero is **Fooley**, the ABC's devoted canine protector. Both stories highlight the dangers which ABC foreign correspondents face.

The ABC recently paid tribute to John Tulloh, a hero whose death, at the age of 82, revived memories of a golden age of news. Over a 40-year television career, John Tulloh witnessed the transition from film to digital file, telex to email, shipment to satellite feed. He started at international TV news agency in London and later became ABC TV's first foreign editor, based in Sydney, before his retirement as Head of International Operations in 2004. He was based at various times in Ho Chi Minh City (then called Saigon), Singapore, Hong Kong and New York, helping to shape how television audiences around the world saw major news events. During his later leadership of the ABC's international newsgathering he directed coverage of stories ranging from the two Gulf Wars and the breakup of the Soviet Union to the Balkan civil wars and the Bali bombing. This comes from *ABC Backstory*, 2 September 2022: "Tulloh knew only too well about the dangers of the job. His friend Neil Davis died in 1985 when hit by shrapnel while filming during a coup in Thailand. Tulloh described Davis as "always calm, unflappable and ever so modest about his experiences". He shared the same personal qualities, which helped to earn him a place among the finest foreign editors in the world. In 2003, ABC contract cameraman **Paul Moran** was killed in northern Iraq by a suicide bomber. Tulloh handled the terrible aftermath with his usual tact and delicacy. **Justin Stevens**, ABC Director News, Analysis and Investigations, paid this tribute: "He was an outstanding correspondent and editorial leader who mentored many of the great correspondents,



Above: John Tulloh.
Left: Fooley on duty at an ABC TV News live cross.
Photo: Joel Ibister.

international staff and camera operators. The reason the ABC is respected around the globe for its coverage of foreign affairs is to a large degree due to brilliant individuals such as John, and we stand on his shoulders today." Former colleague **Craig McMurtrie** wrote: "Calm in a crisis, unfailingly supportive, [he]

seemed to watch, read and listen to everything you filed and didn't duck tough feedback when it was needed. Old school, a gentleman and a wonderful editor."

The second hero is the longest-serving employee at the ABC PNG Bureau– **Fooley**, a 40-kilogram German Shepherd, who died after more than a decade of service as the Bureau's guard dog and emotional support dog. She had a fearsome reputation around Port Moresby after terrorising some guards and tradespeople in her bid to protect the property. Fooley slept beside staff as they worked and accompanied them on jobs around Port Moresby that might be dicey, riding in the back of the Landcruiser. Her mere presence was the best security you could get.

Extract from *ABC Backstory*, 14 August 2022.

The ABC Ombudsman's First Report

Compiled by Dr Diana Wyndham

After an expert review of the ABC's complaints handling system, **Fiona Cameron** was appointed as the first ABC Ombudsman in May last year and this was reported in *Update* (December 2022, p. 8). She has now released her first report in response to 19 complaints about the ABC's Alice Springs radio report of a town hall meeting on 31 January which had been called by thousands of residents who were concerned about drunken violence and property crime in the area. The report by an ABC Indigenous affairs correspondent Carly Williams claimed the meeting, which had been called to discuss issues of violence in the town, had been attended by "hundreds" of people, when in fact it had been attended by thousands. She quoted one attendee who said that it was a "disgusting show of white supremacy".

On 1 February the ABC initially defended the reporting: "One report included interviews with attendees as they left the meeting. Their comments were accurately quoted." On 3 February, following a review of the news item, in a statement on the ABC website the national broadcaster said one report on its radio current affairs program *AM* did not adequately provide listeners with the context of the meeting or a variety of perspectives expressed at it. The ABC said that while the meeting was "accurately reported" and newsworthy, the report had fallen short of some standards. "ABC News apologises to audiences for providing an incomplete picture of the event in this instance," the ABC said. "Over the course of the day, the coverage included information and perspectives that provided a balanced understanding of the event, including additional comments from the meeting and further context regarding allegations of racism. ABC News stands by its journalists covering this story." The ABC's reporting on the Alice Springs meeting became the target of criticism by the **Murdoch** media and the Coalition's opposition leader **Peter Dutton**, who said the ABC stories were "doing a disservice to everybody in that local community". **Matt Paterson**, the mayor of Alice Springs, said the report had misrepresented what took place at the town hall.

On 6 February it was the lead story in *Media Watch*. **Paul Barry** said "Balance was indeed very much missing in the ABC report which aired on AM and News media. There was no attempt to explain what the meeting was about or canvas views of the majority of those who attended." He commented, after he had watched the episode in full and talked to journalists who went

along, "We think the story should never have been put to air." **Warren Mundine** and locals were shocked and said the report had "caused a backlash against the ABC and eroded years of trust and goodwill".

On 13 February **Fiona Cameron** identified two breaches of the ABC's editorial standards – one of impartiality for "unduly favouring one perspective over another" and one of accuracy "by not making reasonable efforts to ensure that material facts were accurately presented in context". Given that the



Image by ABC Alice Springs, Charmayne Allison.

population of Alice Springs is approximately 32,500, the Ombudsman found in its ruling that the underreported figure "represents a materially different proportion of the population than attendance in the hundreds". Cameron found the report's focus on one perspective came at the expense of coverage of the broader views and concerns represented at the meeting. "The report presented one critical perspective on the event, that it was racist, without identifying the range of other concerns and issues expressed by attendees," she found, adding that it "considers that this had the effect of unduly favouring one perspective over all others". ABC News subsequently took prompt and comprehensive actions, commissioning further stories and on 10 February re-edited and reposted the original story. News and Regional divisions have now adequately resolved the valid issues raised by complainants concerning the *AM* story. In its response to the report, the ABC said it acknowledges that "logistical and editorial management breakdowns had contributed to an incomplete report being aired".



The ABC was intimidated over nine years of relentless and strategic Canberra hostility. Senior management's attempts to appease the Coalition amounted to nought, but they have been absurdly slow to realise the boot is no longer on their necks. Coalition politicians and their supporters bombard the ABC with complaints that programs lack balance. Faine's own critical coverage of refugee policy and Robodebt led to him being the most complained about person in all of ABC Radio, but his critique was mild after what we have learnt from the Royal Commission. All of these factors may combine to motivate loyal ABC staff to down tools unless structural concerns about pay and casualisation are addressed.

Board chair **Ita Buttrose** and her fellow directors have been trying to stretch the rubber band as far as possible without breaking it. The task has been impossible.

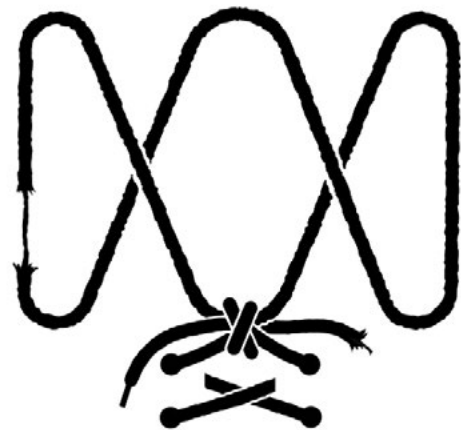
Their most significant decision (see Update "**ABC Move to Parramatta**", December 2022, p. 11) – forced by the hostile former Coalition government – has been to shift resources from ABC Sydney central headquarters in Ultimo to the west – a disaster for everyone except Parramatta's baristas. Faine comments: "Imagine inviting a politician or a visiting actor, musician or author to drop into the studio for a chat when that will involve spending more than an hour in traffic? The fall-back of phone or remote studio interviewing lacks rapport

The ABC's 'rubber band'

Compiled by Dr Diana Wyndham

Jon Faine, who hosted a three-hour program on the ABC's Melbourne morning radio for 23 years, criticised the ABC's shortcomings in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) and *The Age* on 19 March. Three years after leaving the ABC, he has written a critical opinion piece about the ABC and made suggestions about how it might address some of its problems. Faine said the example of the BBC's decision (revoked on 13 March) to stop its highest paid presenter, **Gary Lineker**, hosting *Match of the Day*, "is an outstanding example of management anxiety overriding a commitment to the audience. Such commitment is an essential ingredient in any democracy. Decision-makers must not be risk averse. The best way to secure funding is to make such compelling content that widespread community support makes the organisation untouchable." Faine listed three issues that the ABC should address:

1. The ABC survives on the unpaid overtime of the staff whose commitment to their work is absolute.
2. Just about everyone is paid considerably less than industry rates which causes an endless talent drain. Long-term ABC staff forgo much better pay elsewhere in exchange for the cachet of working for the ABC.
3. New staff are overwhelmingly base-grade recent graduates on cheap casual contracts. This budget-driven hiring inevitably and irretrievably impacts the quality of the output. Many new recruits are sent to remote locations where they get little support or formal training. Sink or swim.



Rubber band approach – Illustration: Matt Davidson.
Published with permission of *The Age*.

and compromises quality". Faine describes an identical "idiotic idea" that was attempted in Melbourne in the 1980s (to move ABC operations to Nunawading). "Thankfully, the then newly-elected staff director **Tom Molomby** managed to stop it at the last minute. Is it too late to stop Parramatta? There are two board vacancies waiting to be filled and an election for a staff director is underway. The complexion of the board is changing. It is unarguable that too much of the output and management has centralised to Ultimo, but a genuinely national broadcaster ought to restore production in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart (cutely called the BAPH states in ABC lingo) rather than to shift them down the road within urban Sydney. Has anyone noticed that most of the top rating ABC TV shows are not made in Ultimo? *Hard Quiz*, **Charlie Pickering** and

Shaun Micallef's shows, *Insiders*, *Offsiders*, *Utopia*, *Fisk*, *Spicks and Specks* and the daily *News Breakfast* are just some of the programs made at Southbank."

On 20 March **Zoe Samios** reported in *SMH* that the ABC's response to its dramatic decline in its radio audiences has been to establish an internal advisory group and to call in outside assistance in efforts to reverse this slide and appeal to younger audiences. ABC Managing Director **David Anderson**, who is restructuring the organisation for the first time since 2017, has announced that **Chris Oliver-Taylor** will become the ABC's chief content officer this month. Oliver-Taylor was previously **Netflix's** local head of production.

This restructuring should heed these two letters in the *SMH*:

First on 22 March: "No doubt there are multiple reasons for the drop in ABC radio ratings. However, I suspect that changes in style are significant. The magical quality of a great announcer is that they talk to *you*. Historically, ABC announcers had that quality. Then things changed. While commuting, I used to enjoy listening to Wendy Harmer on Sydney Radio. Then the ABC decided two announcers are better than one, and Wendy was joined by Robbie. Both wonderful people, and talented, but all too often the conversation was between them. I felt that I was eavesdropping on them and that the listener was barely relevant. That style then spread to ABC Classic (my regular radio for decades). And the ABC has added incessant, badly-produced, shouty promos. ABC radio is now off more than it is on, sadly". **Peter Thompson, Grenfell**.

Second on 23 March: "Further to your correspondent's comment on ABC Radio presenters, ABC Classic now often has two announcers who chat to each other and then read text comments, often inane, from listeners. As a listener, I feel irrelevant and often switch off. In its recent great past, it presented music with information and was a continuous source of learning and pleasure". **David Stewart, Newcastle East**.

All of these trends, and the plans to rectify them, are worrying. Also, the problems don't just relate to the ABC. As former Liberal Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull** and former ACTU President **Sharan Burrow** (the incoming co-chairs of Australians for a Murdoch Royal Commission) argued in an opinion piece (*SMH* and *The Age*, 21 March), the revelations about **Fox News'** on-air talents' indulgence of former President **Donald Trump's** "stolen election" lies justify the rigorous inquiry that only a Royal Commission can bring. In Turnbull's view "It's time for a Fox hunt [because] the Foxification of Australia won't be halted by piecemeal media reforms that can't pass parliament unless they are signed off by Rupert."

Jon Faine is a regular columnist, former broadcaster on Melbourne's ABC radio and a Vice Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Melbourne.

Editor's Note: The **BBC's woes** are discussed on page 7.

Cumulated Index to Update

The National Library of Australia's searching tool *Trove* is the place to explore all things Australian and the index to ABC Friends National newsletter Update is the place to find all those gems of ABC and ABC Friends' history which have been recorded in Update since the magazine went national in 2016. You can keep track of new ABC appointments, retirements, obituaries, ABCF submissions and reports from State and branch reports, cartoons, awards etc. If it was in *Update*, you can find it in the Index which chronologically lists issue dates, titles, authors, subjects and page numbers. The Index has been compiled by Update's Assistant Editor **Dr Diana Wyndham**, who keeps it up to date.



Find the Cumulated Index to Update ABC Friends' webpage by following these links:

- News
- National Newsletter
- Newsletter Archives then press the '[click here](#)' button for the pdf download of the Index

Roundtable discussion of Press Freedom Reform

Compiled by Dr Diana Wyndham

The June 2019 police raids of ABC offices and the home of News Corp journalist **Annika Smethurst** made headline news in Australian and overseas. ABC Friends responded: "Defend Media Freedom". (Update August 2019) Journalism professor **Colleen Murrell** wrote in *The Conversation*: "Media chiefs unite on press freedom but will it result in any action?" Action followed in October 2019 when media from both public and private sectors formed the "**Right to know coalition**" of *Nine*, *News Corp*, the *ABC*, *SBS*, *The Guardian*, and journalists' union the **Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance [MEAA]**. In response the Morrison government gave full or in-principle endorsement to a suite of changes identified by an inquiry into press freedom, but did not enact laws to give them force.

On 18 January 2023 Attorney General **Mark Dreyfus** announced that a roundtable meeting of media organisations in Parliament House, Canberra would be held on 27 February to discuss press freedom issues in Australia and further options for reform. He said: "There is agreement across the Parliament and the community that improved protections for press freedom are needed. **The Albanese Government** intends to progress legislative reform as a priority. Reforms will be informed by the reports on press freedom by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security in August 2020 and the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications in May 2021. The Albanese Government has already commenced a comprehensive review of all Commonwealth secrecy offences, as recommended by the Intelligence and Security Committee, which will specifically consider whether existing secrecy offences adequately protect public interest journalism."

On 24 February MEAA (representing more than 5000 journalists and media workers) announced it would be represented by the Federal President of the union's Media section, **Karen Percy**, who saw the talks as an important first step towards substantive reforms following years of inaction. This is part of her statement: "There is a long shopping list of changes that are needed to protect the critical role of journalism in our democracy and this meeting will be an opportunity to push the **Albanese Government** to begin

taking action. We are concerned about the growing secrecy in government and the inability of journalists to do their jobs without fear of prosecution. MEAA has been encouraged by Attorney-General Dreyfus' public statements of support of press freedom since the Albanese Government was elected. The steady creep of national security laws into so many facets of journalists' work is a dangerous threat to press freedom, as is the lack of transparency around journalist information warrants." Ms Percy intends to draw Dreyfus' attention to the serious threat the ongoing pursuit by the US Government of **Julian Assange**

poses to journalists and to press freedom around the world.

Before the meeting **Richard Ackland** expressed doubts in *The Saturday Paper* about the likely outcome of this secrecy-shrouded "journalists' jamboree". Ackland, a Walkley award-winning journalist and former host of *Media Watch*, summarised the complex issues and concluded: "It's unlikely the limitations under which a 'free press' in this country operates will be wound back in any hurry. At its least, the roundtable may be a wake-up call for the media, which has been far too sleepy about protecting

its patch as all these incursions and legal impediments have built up around it."

On 28 February SMH's technology editor **Nick Bonyhady** reported on this closed-door meeting between **Senator Dreyfus** and major media bosses from **News Corp**, *The Guardian*, the *ABC* and *Nine*, who presented their case to the government over its proposed reforms to privacy law and commitment to enacting recommendations stemming from the 2019 raids. These recommendations were to push for changes to stop police being able to raid journalists "just for doing their jobs", and to fix Australia's beleaguered freedom of information regime. Dreyfus told the meeting that he had been shocked by those raids. "I think that journalists should never face the prospect of being charged just for doing their jobs and there is agreement across the parliament and indeed the community that improved protections are overdue," Dreyfus said in prepared opening remarks. "Media representatives raised topics at the meeting ranging from increasing access to court documents, which are often suppressed, to greater protections for whistle-blowers, and further modifications to Australia's onerous defamation laws."

Oddly for a meeting about press freedom, it will be held under **Chatham House Rules**, which probably explains the ABC's silence. Hopefully, this meeting considered issues which MEAA's **Karen Percy** raised in *The Saturday Paper* (11-17 March). While there has always been tension between the national government and the ABC, the former government heaped hate on the broadcaster, cut funding, staff suffered under "a hostile board" and the business model of ABC management bordered on negligent "with a reliance on short-term contracts which have churned through and burnt out journalists and that has had an impact. There has been self-censorship."



ABC MD David Anderson, journalist Laura Tingle and AG Mark Dreyfus – photo Alex Ellinghausen.

State News

South Australia/Northern Territory

ABC Friends SA/NT Business Plan

The very active executive committee has been working on the above plan for the past three months and it was endorsed at our 14 March meeting. The committee felt that it was very important to identify the role of the State Branch to complement the very comprehensive and exciting plans being established by ABC Friends National. The business plan covers: Governance, Summary of national objectives, Membership, Donations, Role of the state branch, Identifying key issues, Strategy, SA/NT operating structure, Operating plan, Promotional materials, Activities and a Dateline program.

SA/NT Operating Structure

It is critical to ensure that the committee is of sufficient size and skill to achieve measurable outcomes without placing too large a workload on a few willing people. We currently

have a very committed committee of seven, but this needs to be expanded to ten to ensure ongoing succession planning. Roles allocated to committee members include: National Committee representatives, media monitoring, web design and management, communications, social media, membership, State ABC liaison and connection with political and community leaders. The members and supporters will be a very important part of the volunteer workforce. As a consequence, we have applied to join the **Volunteering SA/NT** organisation which aims to identify volunteering trends, leadership programs, networking and recruitment because we want our activities and programs to achieve the highest standards possible.

Political and Community Connection

Committee members have met the following in relation to the above:

The Honourable Peter Malinauskas, Premier of South Australia, who received one of our t-shirts.

Louise Miller-Frost MHR (first Labor Federal member for Boothby since 1949); **Senator Simon Birmingham** (Liberal Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the House for Coalition); **Phoebe Bowden** (Press Secretary for **Penny Wong**, Minister for Foreign Affairs). Phoebe was a foreign affairs reporter for the ABC. All expressed support for the ABC.

Community leaders we have met were: **Wendy Whitely**, Curator of the Brett Whitely Gallery in Sydney; and **Peter FitzSimons**, author. Both support the ABC and both attended Writers' Week in Adelaide in March.

Regional Representatives

The committee wishes to expand our regional representatives and it is very good news to report that **Nick Carroll**, who is a former committee member is our SA West Coast representative. Nick lives in Streaky Bay and reports that transmission difficulties are a major concern in that regional area. The committee would very much like to hear from members interested in being Regional Representatives.

Position Vacant

Mihir Makwana, our Treasurer for the past five years, is vacating this position at our next AGM. Mihir has done a great job as Treasurer and as a consequence, the committee is seeking nominations for the position. Further information can be obtained by contacting **Daryl Regan** on the following email address: darylregan@hotmail.com

Congratulations to our Vice President, **Peter Vandeleur** on his appointment as ABC Friends National Treasurer.

In conclusion, the SA/NT Branch wish to acknowledge the invaluable and inspirational work of the National Committee.

Daryl Regan

President ABC Friends SA/NT



Daryl Regan with Louise Miller- Frost MHR.

State News

Western Australia

In the last issue of Update we were preparing for our Annual Dinner 2022. This event was a success, with ABC Radio Perth's presenter of *Afternoons*, **Christine Layton**, circulating among guests and giving an interesting talk about her career to date. The Herdsman Tavern provided a good dinner in a pleasant venue, and, judging by the level of conversation, people enjoyed themselves. We even made a small profit.

The WA Committee is meeting monthly, mostly at the President's house, but once by ZOOM when three members



WA Committee meeting. Jenny Meyrick was absent.

had recently recovered from COVID. The Committee has suggested we hold a forum to find out what is wanted and needed in all forms of broadcasting in regional WA, and we are in the process of approaching groups active in the regions for input and potential speakers. This is a very big state with a low population outside the capital, and progress is slow. At the time of writing, emergency services are still engaged in two areas of the Kimberley.

We will have a stall at the May Day event in Fremantle on 30 April. We hope to have updated our flyers with the new logo by then. Then we will be looking at community markets, as usual, and hope we have some new merchandise to sell.

Cathy Bardon

President, ABC Friends (WA) Inc



Christine Layton and guests.



ABC Friends NSW & ACT Winter Dinner

Special guest speaker is
The Hon. Michelle Rowland MP,
Minister for Communications.

Thursday 20 July 2023
commencing at 6.00 pm

Beta Restaurant
238 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, 2000
Invitations will be circulated in June.

Email: membership_nswact@abcfriends.net.au for further information.

Price per head approximately \$110.
Further details to follow.

**SAVE
THE
DATE!**



NSW & ACT

NSW & ACT Planning Day, Saturday 18 February 2023

In preparation for our 2023 Planning Day, the ABC Friends NSW & ACT membership base was invited to identify key challenges and opportunities for 2023-2024 to be considered at the Planning Day. A total of 73 responses were received. The feedback was coded, summarised and synthesised to identify the key themes. This data provided valuable insights into the wide range of member concerns that will guide the NSW & ACT agenda for 2023-2024.

The consolidated themes from the data discussed at the Planning Day are as follows:

1. The ABC is a public asset and cornerstone of our democracy. The ABC must have access to secure, reliable public funding to comply with the objects of its constitution (25%)
2. Increase membership numbers and diversity (19%)
3. Develop a broader strategic communication strategy (15%)
4. Provide administrative support to branches – strengthen activism at the local level (15%)
5. Increase and broaden our strategic political engagement strategy (13%)

A total of 35 representatives from the 17 NSW & ACT branches attended the NSW & ACT Planning Day 2023.

Sincere thanks to the ABC Friends who led the themed discussions:

THEME 1: Campaign: the ABC is a public asset and cornerstone of our democracy. The ABC must have access to secure, reliable public funding to comply with the objects of its constitution. Theme leader: **Ed Davis**.

THEME 2: Increase ABC Friends NSW & ACT membership numbers and diversity. Theme leader: **Bruce Stevenson**.

THEME 3: Develop a broader strategic communication strategy. Theme leader: **Gia Metherell**.

THEME 4: Provide administrative support to branches – strengthen activism at the local level. Theme leader: **Jan Febey**.

THEME 5: Increase and broaden ABCF NSW & ACT strategic political engagement strategy. Theme leader: **Cassandra Parkinson**.

Several of the initiatives identified during the planning day discussions reflect current branch initiatives. The NSW & ACT Committee acknowledges that the ground level work conducted by branch



Dr Tess Howes.



The meeting room.

volunteers across NSW & the ACT is our key success factor. Congratulations one and all.

Data collected from the planning day discussions is currently being synthesised into a Strategic Action Agenda to be workshopped by the NSW & ACT Committee in April - May. The final document will be circulated to all ABC Friends in NSW & ACT and published on the website. Watch this space!

Dr Tess Howes

President, ABC Friends NSW & ACT

Tasmania

Upcoming Events

• **27 April 2023** - Princes Theatre, 57 Brisbane Street, Launceston, 6-7:30 pm (gold coin donation). **Belinda King**, presenter of Northern Tasmanian ABC radio, will speak about her long career in the media – and the Encore Theatre Company, a community theatre organisation she co-founded. Belinda's career spans 20 years and she has helped to nurture and inspire local talent. Encore's enormously successful musical productions are now highly anticipated, and they have been regular winners in various categories at the Tasmanian Theatre Awards. *Mamma Mia*, and *Strictly Ballroom* were each sell-out performances and *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* is eagerly awaited.

• **21 May 2023** - UTAS Media School, Level 1, 2 Salamanca Square, Hobart, 2.30-4.00 pm (gold coin donation).

Andrew Bent Commemoration Event. In 1824 **Andrew Bent** published articles in his *Hobart Town Gazette* and *Van Diemen's Land Advertiser* in defiance of Governor Arthur's censorship regime. He is regarded as the father of independent media in Australia. Given the importance of this to a functioning democracy, every year ABC Friends Tasmania commemorates Andrew Bent's act of defiance. (See Update August 2021, pages 11-12). A distinguished panel will discuss the ways in which the ABC might evolve to best meet

State News

the needs of the Tasmanian community. It will be chaired by **Professor Alana Mann**, Head of Media Studies at UTAS. The panel members are:

- **Peter George** – now retired to Tasmania after a career in journalism and broadcasting spanning 40 years, Peter is one of Australia's most experienced and respected journalists. He was the ABC's first Middle East correspondent for *Foreign Correspondent* and an investigative journalist with *Four Corners*.
- **Deborah Fleming** – worked in newspapers in the UK and with the BBC before joining the ABC. Deborah was Executive Producer of the *7:30 Report* in both Brisbane and Sydney and founding Executive Producer of *Australian Story*. She won a Walkley Award in 2005 for her 'outstanding contribution to journalism'.
- **Martin Flanagan** – a Tasmanian journalist and author of 16 books, Martin has written extensively on Australian culture, sport and the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Rowan Wylie

Secretary-Treasurer, ABC Friends Tasmania

Victoria - Local Groups

With a by-election in the seat of Aston and a very short campaign window, the **Eastern Group** and the **Northern Group** joined with some **Aston** electorate locals, to keep the ABC on the agenda of candidates. These groups have been holding large banners beside major roads at peak hour, handing out flyers at railway stations and posting corflutes in front yards. The Eastern Group has also attended local festivals where they spoke about the continued need to fight for a well-funded, independent ABC. At the Glenferrie Festival they signed up new members, collected over \$100 in donations and over 200 signatures for a letter to the Federal Treasurer.

ABC Friends in **Geelong** have been busy again this March actively supporting ABC Radio Melbourne's pop-up studio at Deakin Uni's waterfront campus. Members have set up outside the glassed studio with its glorious view of Corio Bay, listening to programs, greeting presenters and chatting with and leafleting passers-by.

With a population of over 250,000 and growing fast, Geelong is Victoria's largest regional centre. But unlike smaller Victorian cities it doesn't have its own ABC station - Geelong listeners are counted by the ABC as part of the Melbourne audience. Many in Geelong would like to see that change, with a stronger local ABC presence delivering more Geelong news to Geelong people. ABC Friends Geelong are canvassing local interest in that idea. If support is strong enough, they are planning to campaign on the issue later in 2023, kicking off the conversation with a public meeting. Anyone who



Eastern Group at Glenferrie Festival.

wants to stay informed about the campaign should email abcfriendsgeelong@gmail.com to go on the campaign mailing list.

Four members of the **Southern Bayside** group attended the Planning Day in February and all were impressed with the material presented and the conduct of the meeting. As a result, the Group's focus will continue on working to bring the ABC to the younger generations. The Group's aims are to educate the local membership and the public with a public meeting led by an ABC personality to address a public meeting in the seats of Goldstein and/or Isaacs. Twice this year members attended the Mordialloc Theatre Company's productions as a get together and fundraiser. Another will be held in early May. The ABC Friends 1923 Calendar was another financial and publicity success. The funds raised will be donated to the New Gen Campaign and the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. Southern Bayside Group is most grateful once again for all who contributed to this major fundraising effort.



Rosemary and Raf Epstein.



The Western Melbourne group is finalising plans to have a presence at the Williamstown Literary Festival in June. Many of the festival attendees, from across Melbourne and beyond, recognise the critical role that the ABC plays, not only in investigative journalism but also the creative sphere. They are not always as aware of the threats to the ABC, so this is always a great opportunity for education and gathering new members.

The **Ballarat** group held an end of year get-together to reflect upon their very productive year with market stalls, letter writing, debating competitions, banner holding, book launches and 90th celebrations. The letter-writing group is currently focusing on exerting pressure on the government to

ensure ABC Board appointments are transparent and based on merit. The success of last year's debating competition and book launches will see Ballarat pursue similar activities in the coming months.

Bendigo will have a presence at the Bendigo Easter Festival and is working with like-minded organisations to inform and educate their community about the ABC.

The ABC Friends Vic Local Groups subcommittee is currently working with all the groups to articulate our goals and ensure our actions are focused and meaningful.

Gai Mooney

Groups Convenor, ABC Friends, Victoria



Local News

Tweed Valley Weekly: Local Supporting Local

ABC AT 90

PHOTO COMPETITION WINNERS

By Jonathan Howland

SEVERAL LOCAL photographers had recently won awards in a highly competitive photography competition sponsored by ABC Friends – North Shore Times.

Between 1968 and 1998, to mark its thirtieth anniversary, the ABC's TV anniversary is the national broadcast.

Winner of the overall category was Mary Hannah photographer Allen Smith, who took a great photo of the grandmaster in front of his terrace.

Second prize winner in that open category was Paul Canfield of Wand-up Valley and third prize winner was Louise Moore of Ocean Shores.

Four prize winner in the Junior category was Josh Hall.

Other

about to local photo and photographer who composed a beautiful and also digital version of Southern Cross University. His is a resident of the Northumbria Coast, Okla.

But in a USA, again in ocean world who also won some prize money in the recent March 2000 show. Just a primary student in Texas is a child.

Twilight on ABC's Coastline (Hugger)

Twilight on ABC's Coastline (Hugger)

Twilight on ABC's Coastline (Hugger)

Twilight on ABC's Coastline (Hugger)

The winning photographers

ABC at 90 Photo Competition

Adam Suttie won first prize for "Nanna with 90 Years of the ABC" and **Beth Cavallai** won second for "Sparkler 1". Joli Hall won first prize in the junior category for "Happy Anniversary." Here are two more of the winning photos: 3rd Place (Open) - Leonora Marges (below) - Towards an ABC Century and 3rd Place (Junior) Charlise Warren (Age 9) - Stormy (right).



Politics is the hot topic in Western Suburbs of Sydney in local and statewide media and the ABC has led with truthful and balanced news. In the next few weeks, we can get back to normal and resume normal living and positive reporting.

Our ABC is still struggling with negative criticism and internal rattling's of peace and pay while new programs and the return of the best of the rest retains positive viewing, listening and learning.

Congratulations to the ABC NSW & ACT Friends leadership for producing a valuable, positive and productive Planning Day to produce good ideas and positive comment.

WSos Branch is struggling to compete against political negativity towards Our ABC that is making us work harder to increase interest and support in a difficult and frustrating period.

Bev and Barry Redshaw
Co-Convenors, ABC Western Suburbs of Sydney

Each year ABC Friends Northern Tablelands organises an annual public presentation by a prominent former or current journalist. We would like to take this opportunity to thank ABC Alumni, who have been instrumental in suggesting speakers and enabling contact between prospective speakers and us.

Alumni members **Peter Martin**, **Matt Peacock** and **Debbie Spillane** have all graced us with their presence in recent years, along with **Robyn Williams** in 2022. We particularly want to express our appreciation to the Alumni's **Helen Grasswill**, who has been unstinting with her time in supporting this endeavour of ours. We also recommend, to Friends branches that have not so far run these kinds of public presentations in support of public broadcasting, that they consider doing so. We have found it a satisfying way to engage the local community and to encourage membership.

We have also approached *ABC Heywire*, with a view to running Heywire Workshop sessions in secondary schools across the Northern Tablelands. Heywire encourages young regional Australians (16 – 22 years) to develop community projects for their local area, with some projects subsequently receiving Heywire funding. The workshops provide a first step towards this, encouraging individuals to start generating potential projects. We are currently investigating the possibility of a workshop for this year; hopefully to be repeated in subsequent years.

A few issues persist as topics of conversation through our branch. One is how to identify and restrict the influence of mis/disinformation - we had a public forum last year, and maybe more in the future. A second involves identifying the critical features of public broadcasting – which features make a valuable contribution towards the public good. As Friends, we need to have a reasonably clear understanding of what we are trying to protect and how best to do this, given that support for independent and accountable public broadcasting is necessarily an ongoing business.

Brian Byrne, Convenor
ABC Friends, Northern Tablelands

Southern Highlands

President Trevor and Secretary Julianne attended the NSW&ACT Planning Day in mid-February and came away enthused and energised for a new year of action.

As autumn made its entrance, the Southern Highlands Branch held an information stall in March at the popular Exeter Market. Committee members contributed to a handsome raffle, which was a very successful fund-raiser and was drawn at noon at the Market. The winner, David, duly claimed his prize and is shown below 'weighed down' with the prize, surrounded by Friends stall operators.

The following week, a coffee morning at a favourite cafe in the middle of the Southern Highlands drew some enthusiastic members to debate the issues that confront the ABC, particularly the serious lack of funding, hollowed out staffing of 'back room' research positions, especially the axing of

archivists, and concerns about the make-up of the ABC Board. The results of the NSW&ACT Planning Day were shared with those present, providing a structured track to run on.

Angela Williamson
Vice-President, Southern Highlands Branch

Central Coast

On 18 February members of the ABCF NSW committee and delegates from branches across the state attended a planning day. Three members of our Central Coast branch, **Pip Preston**, **Jim Wootten** and I [**Ross McGowen**], participated. We were asked to join in some of the small discussion groups for the first session, then change groups for the second session to share ideas and suggestions. The selection of these themes emerged from feedback from our members who were invited to identify the key challenges and opportunities for 2023-24. The themes for discussion were as follows:

- Campaigning. The ABC is a cornerstone of our democracy, as such it must receive an adequate level of funding.
- Increasing membership numbers and diversity.
- Develop a broader strategic communication strategy.
- Provide administrative support to branches.
- Increase and broaden the level of our political engagement.

From these discussions proposed initiatives will be prioritised and developed into an action plan. The focus of the ABCF NSW & ACT agenda will be supported by a timeline and resource requirements.



David with the prize and ABC Friends at Exeter Markets (left to right) Trevor (showing winning ticket), Meg, Belinda, David and Clive. Photo: Angela Williamson.

I am pleased to say that many of the proposed initiatives have already been implemented by our branch. These include working in conjunction with other community organisations, for example, the Central Coast Environment Network and University of the Third Age. In initiatives to boost interest in our branch we have utilised guest speakers and the ABC Alumni have been a considerable help in this regard. We have also undertaken community initiatives such as visiting the Gosford markets and distributing brochures. The attached flyer gives details of the 15 April meeting which will feature the Federal MP for Robertson, **Dr Gordon Reid** (Labor Party) and we hope to create more opportunities for political engagement with him in future. Prior to the last Federal election, we also initiated phone surveys urging branch members to contact the previous Federal member for Robertson, **Lucy Wicks** (Liberal Party), to advocate for adequate funding for the ABC.

Pop this Date in Your Diary Saturday 15 April

The Central Coast branch of ABC Friends will be hosting an information morning about **The Voice to Parliament**

The presentation will take place from
10.00 am to 11.30 am
in the Function Room at
the Elanora Hotel
41 Victoria Street, East
Gosford (ample parking
at rear)

It will include a Q&A session.

We welcome all guests to join us for lunch afterwards which can be purchased at the Hotel.

IMPORTANT NOTE

This is a pre-booked event with a limit on seating.

To reserve a place, please contact our events organiser, Sue Young on **0409 362 127** or by email at **csmoe@exemail.com.au**



Special Guest Speaker:

Federal MP for Robertson,
Dr Gordon Reid.

ABC Friends
CENTRAL COAST

Lecture to the University of the Third Age (U3A)

On 24 February, I delivered a lecture on the ABC to the Central Coast group of U3A at a meeting room in the Erina Fair shopping centre. In undertaking this I was attempting to fill the impossibly large shoes of Professor **Ed Davis** who had delivered the previous lecture about the ABC to this group, as well as to many other organisations and audiences. I am grateful to Ed for assisting me with suggestions and references to his own material and other sources. Following his advice I used three texts, "Who Needs the ABC?" by **Matthew Ricketson** and **Patrick Mullins**; **Ken Inglis's** "This is the ABC" and **David Anderson's** "Now More Than Ever: Australia's ABC.". I also referred to parliamentary sources, articles by **Alan Sunderland** on the Alumni website and the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the ABC's own material. I focussed on historical landmarks, for example, the launch of the ABC's first television service in 1956, types of media, public, commercial and state, an examination of the ABC's Charter, the obligations of the Federal Government to the ABC, allegations of bias and a response to those allegations, an examination of the ABC's complaints process and a comparison of complaints submitted to and upheld by the ACMA for the ABC and commercial media. Finally, I played **Kerry O'Brien's** magnificent speech to ABC Friends at our rally prior to the last Federal election.

I had discussion points following each theme and found that the audience were very well informed about the ABC and the media in general. The feedback was positive and I have had requests to repeat the lecture later on in the year or during 2024. I've found that these events, where we are approached by or approach other community organisations to discuss the ABC, are a great way to advocate for public broadcasting and enlist support at the local level.

Ross McGowen

Convenor, ABCF Central Coast

Vale Murray Scott

Murray Scott was a good friend of members of ABC Central Coast and attended many of our branch meetings and social occasions. He always helped out when needed. He spent a lot of time with other volunteers promoting the ABC at market stalls, the Gosford Markets and at two Federal Elections.

Murray sent an email to Lucy Wicks, the former Federal Member for Robertson in June 2018. In his usual calm and intelligent manner, he said, "I was utterly shocked to hear the Liberal National Council had voted to privatise the ABC. Do you support this policy or not Please tell us on your Facebook page if you think public broadcasting is worth keeping in public hands." Lucy replied stating that ABC privatisation wasn't government policy. Murray said, "So now we have to trust that Liberal Party policy is not government policy". No reply to this email and nothing on Facebook. He believed in holding governments to account especially regarding the ABC.

He sent this email from Colombia, his wife Esther's birth country. He was there because they couldn't return to



Murray Scott, Ross McGowan and Helen Matthews.

Australia during COVID. He sent several emails from Colombia describing the people he met and places they went. That was Murray, always interested in other people's opinions and willing to listen. I think he liked being with Esther's family in Colombia. They met when Murray was a young backpacker traveling in South America. They returned to Sydney where they raised their children, David and Vanessa. They have one granddaughter. Esther once asked him to take a cooking and salsa classes. She said he was terrible cook, but he learnt to dance the salsa. I asked Esther why Murray was such a nice person, she said, "I think he was born that way". Many of us would agree.

Chris Moe

Secretary ABC Friends, Central Coast

Hunter Branch

Branch Needs Revitalising

The Hunter Branch committee has not met for a formal meeting for over a year now. The Committee members are mostly old and COVID has been a concern with regard to meetings. Some of the Committee members have been on the Committee for over 30 years. The Committee needs revitalising with new blood.

Hunter ABCF members! Please offer to help form a new Committee and get things moving again in the Hunter Branch. The present Committee has been meeting at Souths Leagues Club in Hamilton but if a group of new people wishes to meet at another venue that is fine. If you are interested, please contact Allan Thomas allan.thomas2@bigpond.com mobile: **0407 307 778** who can initially liaise with interested people to bring you together.

Allan Thomas

President, ABC Friends, Hunter

Northern Suburbs of Sydney (NSoS)

Thank you to the NSoS Committee - **John Shaw, Beverley Shaw, Corin Fairburn Bass** and **Jenny Forster** who ran the NSoS Branch while I ran as an Independent candidate in the NSW Election.

A big thank you to **Wayne** and **Gail Richmond** and their musical ensemble 'Loosely Woven' who donated \$700 to ABC Friends from their Christmas fundraising concerts. **Humph Hall** has also generously donated free tickets to Humph Hall concerts at 85 Allambie Road, Allambie Heights. A special thanks to **Wendy Sirianni** who has raised nearly \$400 for ABC Friends by selling raffle tickets.

NSoS has been busy organising social events to the Ensemble Theatre, the Glen Street Theatre and The Wharf Revue. We celebrated World Radio Day at the Fisk Wireless Memorial at Wahroonga, which commemorates the first direct wireless message sent from England to Australia in 1918. **Beverley Shaw** and **James Hobbs** have a special connection to ABC history as their father was a radio technician in the ABC's radio studio in Forbes Street, near Kings Cross.*

NSoS Guest Speaker Program



Margaret Simpson



Helen Grasswill

This program is going well with fascinating talks. **Margaret Simpson** (Retired Curator, Powerhouse Museum) spoke on the history of radio; **Helen Grasswill** (Deputy Chair of ABC Alumni) stressed the importance of supporting ABC staff. The meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month at the **Roseville Club**, 64 Pacific Highway, Roseville (a short walk from Roseville Railway Station). The meeting will begin with a Committee meeting at 11.45-12.15 followed by the talk until 1.00 pm and lunch at the Club's Bistro with other ABC Friends. For details visit NSoS webpage www.abcfriends.net.au/nsw_act_northern_suburbs_of_sydney_branch

Janine Kitson

Convenor, ABC Friends Northern Suburbs of Sydney (NSoS)

*** Editor's Note:** Update (August 2022, page 13) has a photo of the ABC's Outside Broadcasting van parked outside the Kings Cross ABC studio in 1956.

Join the ABC Friends

There is strength in numbers, and every membership counts at this time of unprecedented attacks on 'Our ABC'.

To join go to abcfriends.net.au or phone your local contact below.

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Western Suburbs of Sydney

Bev and Barry Redshaw (Convenors)
0429 492 168
wsos@abcfriends.net.au

Victorian Groups

Like to join a local group or be on their mailing list? To find out more about one in your area: →

Not in these areas?

Contact Gai Mooney
Groups Convenor
0407 050 937
gaimooney@gmail.com as we are setting up new groups.

Ballarat

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