

# ABC Friends Illawarra Chairperson's Annual Report 2014/15

In November 2014 the ABC's future was finally spelt out when Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced ABC funding is to be cut by \$254 million over five years with a \$20m cut in 2015-16, rising to \$61m in 2016-17, \$55m in 2017-18 and \$68m in 2018-19. This followed the initial 'down payment' on 'future efficiencies' in the May 2014-15 budget. As a result, over 400 staff will be pushed out of the ABC throughout Australia.

These savage cuts have spurred the national campaign "DON'T LET THEM WRECK YOUR ABC". It's a 'National Call to Action' for more *Friends* and a 'Fighting Fund' to combat the 'forces of evil'. I personally have been heavily involved in this campaign providing assistance and support in many ways, and it's ongoing.

In the past year ABC Friends Illawarra have accepted 10 new associate members (24 in 2013/14) including 3 couples and financial membership of the Friends Illawarra today is 121 (141 last year). Currently we have 33 members who were financial in 2014 and have not renewed this year. Currently there are 108 members of ABC Friends NSW & ACT residing in our catchment, some are members of both organisations.

The Illawarra Committee has met four times in the 2014/15 financial year including a 'special' meeting in October 2014 due to Emma Ayres being unavailable as a guest speaker. In March this year we reached a milestone - our 100<sup>th</sup> Committee Meeting!

At our first meeting for the year we changed our name to *ABC Friends Illawarra* to adopt a shorter more direct description of the organisation and fall in line with other Friends organisations following a national conference decision in February 2014.

On Sunday 16th November 2014 we held our first function for the year when our special guest was Sean O'Brien, ABC Open producer from the Illawarra. Fifty members enjoyed a very informative live on-line demonstration of this innovative ABC service. And thanks to our regular core of volunteers the afternoon tea was excellent!

Five days later many of our members attended a rally at Wollongong Town Hall organised by the CPSU in support of the ABC following the drastic cuts to ABC funding mentioned above. The event received good coverage in the Mercury which reported an attendance of 200 members. I was interviewed by ABC radio at the rally and spoke of the immediate impact the cuts are having on staff numbers.

On the following day many of our members attended a public rally at the Sydney Town Hall where thousands turned up to show their support for our ABC. At these two events Julie Telenta and I raised over \$300 selling "Save Our ABC!" badges. This money went on to be part of the \$2,000 donated by ABC Friends Illawarra to the National Fighting Fund.

On 9th December I spoke at a Public Forum in Nowra organised by Arthur Rorris from the South Coast Labour Council to protest the closing of the ABC 97.3FM Nowra studio - another result of the savage cuts to ABC funding. The other guest speaker was Ann Sudmalis MP member for Gilmore who did not get a great reception when she tried to talk down the percentage of the cuts. The forum was reported in the Mercury on 10th December.

Our final event for the year on Wednesday 24 June 15 was a conducted tour of the ABC Ultimo Centre. Eleven of our members enjoyed a most informative insight into the workings of ABC's centre of TV and radio production. Thanks to Jan Kent for stepping in whilst I was attending the ABC Friends National Conference in Adelaide.

Once again, I congratulate and thank the Committee for their good work and support during the past 12 months. ABC stalwart Quentin Dempster often ends his talks with these words - "***we must never give up!***" I agree.



Chris. Cartledge  
Chairperson - ABC Friends Illawarra  
10 August 2015