

# UPDATE

Friends of the ABC (NSW) Inc.  
quarterly newsletter

December 2013

Vol 21, No. 3

incorporating **Background Briefing** friends of the abc

## The Fight for the ABC

# IS ON!



**Mike Carlton**  
SMH  
30 November 2013

"Soon, my friends, we will have to gather in defence of the ABC. With the Tories in power, the assault on the national broadcaster grows more vicious by the day. Unsurprisingly, the campaign is spearheaded by the Murdoch press. Rupert himself loathes publicly funded broadcasting because it attracts an audience which he believes is rightly his to make money from. The platoons of toadies on his payroll troop obediently into line, along with the rest of the right-wing commentariat."

**On Wednesday 4th December, community activist group GetUp sent out the following message:**

THE ATTACK IS ON AGAIN. Today, members of the government, including Cory Bernardi, Bronwyn Bishop and Ian Macdonald, agitated to defund Australia's public broadcaster. Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi called our ABC a "taxpayer-funded behemoth," and suggested that we could "perhaps cut the ABC budget and allow the commercial media operators to compete.

This is the Coalition throwing out a test balloon, so they can see how the public responds to their long-held desire to slash the ABC. Pulled straight from the Christmas wishlist of Rupert Murdoch and the right-wing think-tank the IPA, defunding or commercialising the ABC would ruin a rare, educational and uniquely Australian public resource."

*continued page 3.*

## Inside Update

From the President	2
Caroline Jones' Extraordinary Career	4
Please stop attacking a national icon!	5
Cory Bernardi: ABC 'cannibalising' commercial online news	6
Somerville	7
How The ABC Should Serve The National Interest	8
Concerned about the ABC?	9
Rupert v Aunty - the real News Corp agenda	10
The Murdoch dynasty's 70 years war on the ABC	11
Branch News	12
Mark Scott defends publishing spy story	15
The Uncertain Future of Public Broadcasting	16
Spying on Indonesia - Here is the news	18
Canberra's Century Celebrated in Literary Style	19

## Update Publication Information

Update is published three times a year by Friends of the ABC (NSW) Inc. (FABC), PO Box 1391 NORTH SYDNEY 2059.

Printpost approved PP245059/00002

To become a member phone (02) 9990 0600 or email to [fabcmem@fabcnsw.org.au](mailto:fabcmem@fabcnsw.org.au) or access our website [www.fabcnsw.org.au](http://www.fabcnsw.org.au).

Extracts from newspapers and other publications appearing in Update do not necessarily reflect the views of the members of FABC.

Update is distributed to all members of FABC, as part of the membership fee. Update is also supplied to journalists, politicians and libraries across Australia. It is edited and produced in Sydney but contributions are welcome from NSW country and interstate branches.

Material may be quoted or reproduced from Update provided the source is acknowledged and reproduction is sent to the President FABC.

### Would you like to receive Update magazine electronically?

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

Each quarter, when Update is published, you will receive an email with a link to the latest issue (each magazine is around 0.5MB).

You can try this now by going to our website at [www.fabcnsw.org.au](http://www.fabcnsw.org.au) and clicking on Update.

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

### Who to write...

Anyone seeking basic information about writing to persons of influence might find it helpful to go to the FABC NSW website [www.fabc.org.au](http://www.fabc.org.au) where there are some menu items under "Be Active" leading to pages of information: *Who can I write to? What can I say?*

### FABC (NSW) Executive Committee Office Bearers

**President - Mal Hewitt**  
Phone: 02 9637 2900  
Email: [malandal@optusnet.com.au](mailto:malandal@optusnet.com.au)

**Secretary & Treasurer - James Buchanan**  
Phone: 02 9371 5621  
Email: [jamesbuc@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jamesbuc@bigpond.net.au)

**Membership Secretary - Angela Williamson**  
Phone: 02 4883 4048  
Email: [fabcmem@fabcnsw.org.au](mailto:fabcmem@fabcnsw.org.au)

**Update Editor - Mal Hewitt**  
PO Box 1391 N. Sydney NSW 2059  
Email: [malandal@optusnet.com.au](mailto:malandal@optusnet.com.au)

**Cartoonist - Phil Somerville**  
Editorial Cartoonist for The Sun Herald (Sydney)  
[phil.somerville@somervillecartoons.com](mailto:phil.somerville@somervillecartoons.com)

**Layout Artist - Paul Martens**  
[paul@martens.name](mailto:paul@martens.name)

**Membership Line: 02 9990 0600**



## From the President

### Caroline Jones Recognised in Walkleys

Caroline Jones' career in the ABC spans 50 years, and she has broken new ground for women in broadcasting for much of that career. Her leadership and professionalism has been recognized in the 2013 Walkley Award for Outstanding contribution to Journalism. We applaud an extraordinary broadcaster. Other ABC Walkley winners are Trevor Bormann and Vivien Altman (Foreign Correspondent), Suzanne Smith (Lateline), Caro Meldrum-Hanna (7.30), Sarah Dingle (Radio Current Affairs), and Martin Butler and Bentley Dean (Contact Films). We congratulate all Walkley recipients on their important contribution to quality journalism. Further details of these Walkley winners can be found in this Update.

### FABC Salutes Three Great Broadcasters

#### Quentin Dempster

The Annual Dinner of Friends of the ABC on Wednesday 28th August was a wonderful occasion in an historic venue (Cello's Restaurant in Castlereagh St), and provided the opportunity to thank ABC veteran Quentin Dempster for his support of Friends of the ABC over many years. Quentin has willingly attended countless Friends functions throughout NSW and interstate, where his honesty and directness have always been appreciated, including his criticism of the ABC when appropriate. In 1996 the Howard government abolished the position to which Quentin had just been elected – Staff-elected Director, but Quentin continued as a courageous spokesperson for ABC staff during some very difficult years for the ABC. He was presented with a plaque inscribed as follows: Excellence in Broadcasting Award, 2013, to Quentin Dempster, in recognition of and gratitude for your tireless support of Friends of the ABC, and your years of service as "Staff-

Elected Director in Exile."

Much of the content of Quentin's address is included in his article in this Update. (The uncertain Future of Public Broadcasting) We were delighted that Quentin's wife Beth was able to attend the Annual Dinner with him.

#### Jonathan Holmes

Our End of Year Presentation was held on Friday 29th November on the Dot Strong Terrace, Ultimo, where the guest of honour was Jonathan Holmes, recently retired presenter of Media Watch, and veteran of 32 years with the ABC in a number of roles. Jonathan had also spoken at the NSW FABC Annual General Meeting on 21st September. On both occasions Jonathan spoke of the rapidly changing media landscape in Australia, in which the ABC will come under increasing pressure from its competitors, from hostile commercial interests and political parties philosophically opposed to publicly funded broadcasters. The events of recent weeks are certainly bearing out much of what Jonathan spoke about. He was presented with a plaque inscribed as follows: Excellence in Broadcasting Award, 2013, to Jonathan Holmes, in recognition of your long and distinguished career with the ABC as Producer, Presenter and Journalist. Jonathan writes for FABC in this Update. (Here is the News – a good story gets told, not held)

#### Alan Saunders

29th November was also an occasion to honour the career of Alan Saunders, who died in 2012 whilst working for Radio National. A plaque, which will be placed in the Ultimo ABC headquarters, read as follows: Excellence in Broadcasting Award, 2013, in memory of Alan Saunders, Philosopher, Food Writer and Consummate Broadcaster. Winner of the Pascal Prize for Critical Writing and Broadcasting (1992), awarded the Special Media prize from the Australian Association of Philosophy (1997), PhD from Australian National University.

In recognition of a distinguished career in broadcasting with the ABC. Once again our thanks to Jason Lowe and his hard-working Events Committee who ensure that FABC gatherings such as the Annual Dinner and Presentation Night are so successful.

## We Salute Our Branches

The back page of Update gives the contact details for our regional branches, and it is our branches which are the grassroots strength of Friends of the ABC throughout NSW, with their local advocacy, support, activities, publicity and lobbying, and their direct contact with local political representatives. The recent Federal election saw most of our branches involved in "Meet the Candidate" forums, with the opportunity to engage with all candidates on their policies and attitudes regarding the ABC – a unique example of democracy in action. We thank those who take on leadership of the branches and their committees, who work so hard for "our ABC."

Thank You, NSW Committee  
I have the privilege of leading a team of people whose commitment of time, expertise and energy is extraordinary. I thank on behalf of all of our members the committee who drive Friends of the ABC in NSW, especially our highly efficient Secretary/Treasurer James Buchanan, phenomenal Webmaster Chris Cartledge, indefatigable Membership Secretary Angela Williamson (whose enthusiasm for maintaining personal contact with all of you is amazing), Jason Lowe and his mighty team on the Events Committee, always accurate Minutes Secretary Geoff Brann, meticulous Update proofreader (and caterer) Susan Buchanan, and Facebook Co-Ordinator Margaret O'Connor. I wish all members a very happy Christmas – gather your strength and resources together for the battles which are to come in defence of our ABC.

**Mal Hewitt**

President, NSW Friends of the ABC. 

FROM PAGE 1

# The Fight for the ABC IS ON!

We like our ABC free of ads, free for all, free to remain fair and balanced. Will you make sure Tony Abbott knows to keep it that way?

The petition attached to this statement had, at the time of Update going to print and over 5 days, attracted over 200,000 signatures from ordinary Australians determined to defend their ABC – an extraordinary response.

Senator Bernardi's comments are covered fully in this edition of Update, including the rather surprising assertion that the commercial media need to be protected from the inroads made, very successfully, by the ABC into digital platforms.

### Mike Carlton continues:

"Two events have whipped up a heightened frenzy: the ABC's reporting of the Indonesia crisis, and the disclosure of the salaries of some top broadcasters and executives. The Australian has been in one of its fits of hysterics about this for a fortnight. Cries of treason ring out, with demands for the arrest and imprisonment of ABC managing director, Mark Scott. The corporation and its leftist conspirators must be brought to heel.

How bizarre. In a London courtroom, the stinking underbelly of the Murdoch empire is being eviscerated in the phone hacking trial. Here, the empire strikes back with even more shrill editorials about journalistic ethics and practice. The mind reels.

Murdoch power and money combined with the ideological objections to a publicly funded broadcaster from the far right of his party (unless that broadcaster is simply a mouthpiece for the government) will be very difficult for Prime Minister Abbott to resist.

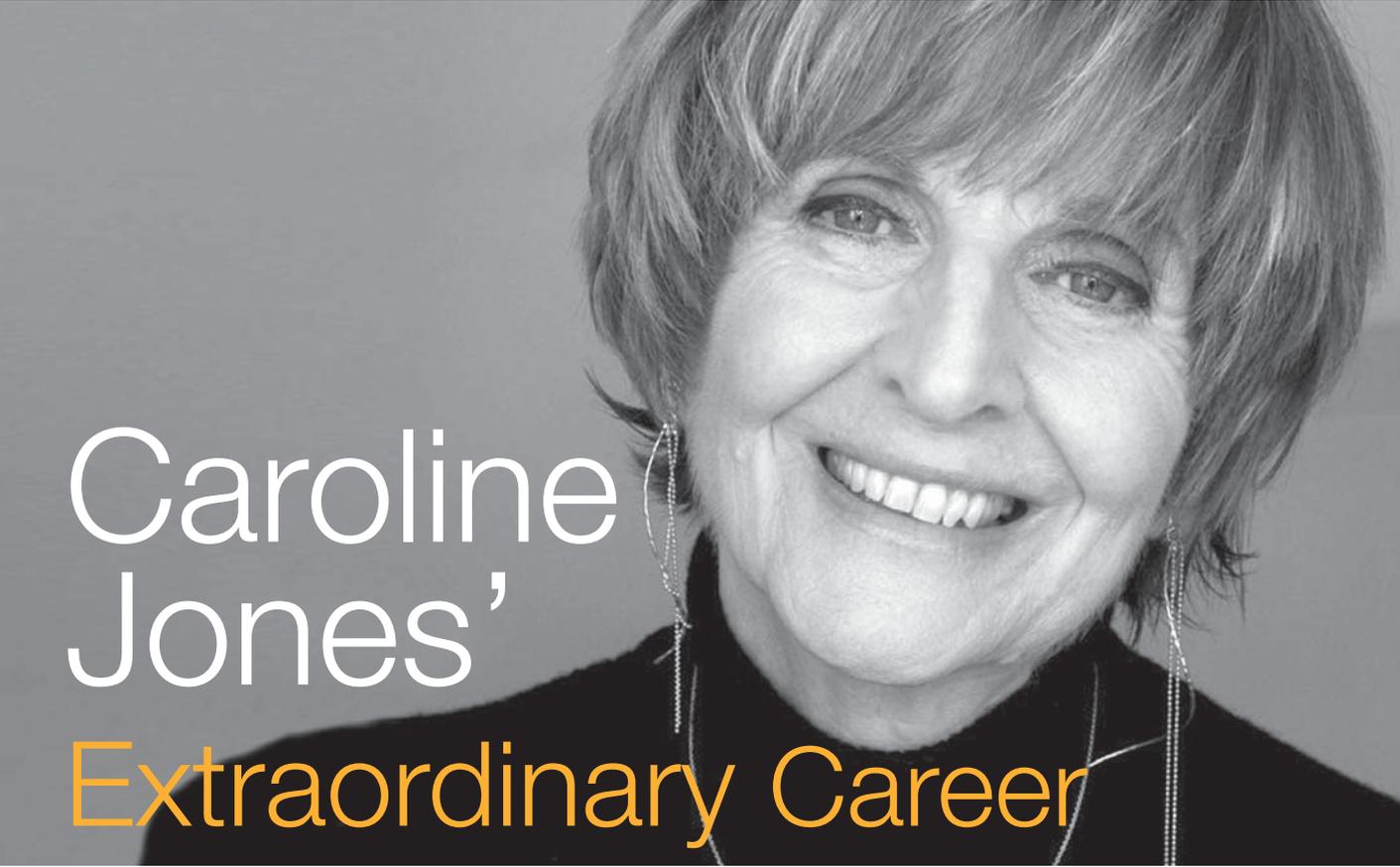
But make no mistake. The fight for the ABC is on."

ABC Managing Director Mark Scott responded to both the Indonesian security matter and the issue of ABC salaries in an interview to ABC News 24, covered in this Update. However, for commentators on the Murdoch payroll, rational argument and presentation of facts matters little. As Mike Carlton has pointed out, the Murdoch agenda is to maximise the potential

profit to be made across all of the media, and a highly respected public broadcaster like the ABC is getting in the way. In Murdochland there is little interest in quality journalism, balance or the truth, as we saw so clearly demonstrated in the News Ltd. coverage of the recent Federal election, where the Murdoch press was little more than a cheer squad for the Coalition.

Murdoch power and money combined with the ideological objections to a publicly funded broadcaster from the far right of his party (unless that broadcaster is simply a mouthpiece for the government) will be very difficult for Prime Minister Abbott to resist. And following the number of "about faces" on the Gonski education reforms, it is fanciful to imagine that his pre-election reassurances on the future of the ABC are worth anything at all.

As Mike Carlton says, the fight for the ABC is on. 



# Caroline Jones'

## Extraordinary Career

Recognised  
in the Walkley  
Award for  
Outstanding  
Contribution to  
Journalism.

Since the 1960s, Caroline Jones has been at the forefront of change in Australian media. She joined the ABC in 1963 and became the first woman to report on This Day Tonight and the first woman to host Four Corners. She also presented ABC 702's morning radio and The Search for Meaning on Radio National.

What has been apparent is her special ability to tell stories, largely because she is such a great listener. Over the decades,

she has secured the most "hard to get" and revealing interviews because of the warmth, trust and dignity she brings to her job. Since Australian Story's inception in 1996, Caroline Jones has been both the presenter and specialist contributor to the ABC's multi-award-winning program. Her humanity, compassion and desire to tell the stories of both ordinary and extraordinary people have shone through.

### Other ABC Walkley Winners in 2013



**Trevor Bormann and Vivien Altman** from Foreign Correspondent **Best TV Weekly Current Affairs and Best Investigative Journalism**

for "Prisoner X – The Australian Connection" and "Prisoner X – The Secret," their investigation of the life and death of Ben Zygier, the Australian who died in suspicious circumstances in an Israeli prison.



**Suzanne Smith** from Lateline **Best TV Daily Current Affairs**

for their interview with Detective Peter Fox and their reports on institutionalised child sexual abuse.



**Caro Meldrum - Hanna** from 7.30

**Best Sports Journalism** for her coverage of the drugs in sport scandal – "The Essendon Files," "Demons in Damage Control" and "The Cronulla Files."



**Sarah Dingle** from Radio Current Affairs

**Best Radio Documentary** for her work with Radio National's Background Briefing on "The Family Trap" and "Some Home Truths about Child Abuse."

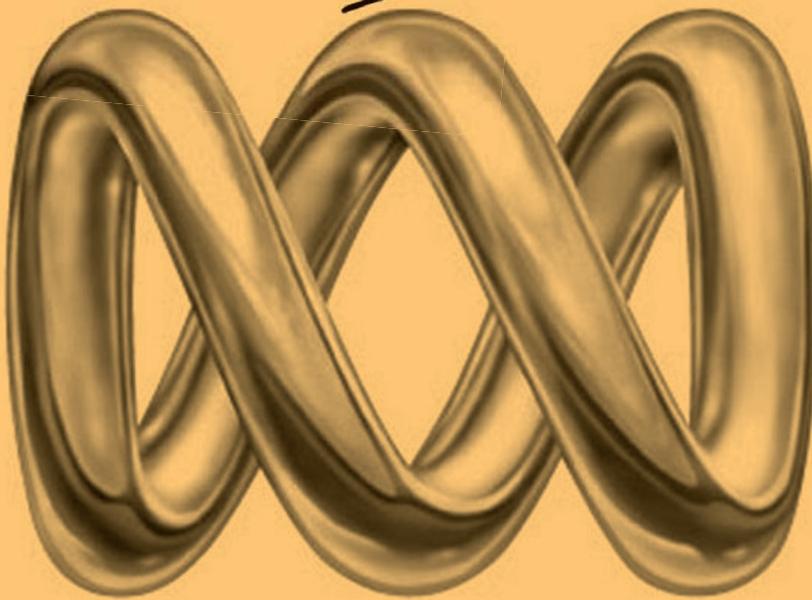


**Martin Butler and Bentley Dean** from Contact Films

**Best TV Documentary** for the landmark television series "First Footprints" 



# PLEASE STOP ATTACKING A NATIONAL ICON!



Alarmed by recent attacks on the ABC, Mid North Coast branch member **Harry Creamer** has written to government members and senators.

Here is the full text of his letter:

I am writing to express my dismay at attacks on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) coming from your government. I am shocked by recent statements by some government Senators and MPs calling for ABC funding to be cut, the Australia Network to be handed to News Corp, the ABC to be restructured, and for the Corporation to be down-sized to make way for commercial media.

(As if commercial media could provide the same range of programs or be capable of the same coverage, quality or sensitivity as the ABC. As if commercial media is actually interested in doing this).

A good example is the current (as I write) coverage of the death of Nelson Mandela. The ABC is running documentaries, tributes and even music from his native South Africa on some programs, some stations, over several days, amounting to an

amazing tribute to this wonderful man. I cannot imagine any other broadcaster doing this.

**The breadth and quality of ABC programs is without equal in any other country. The ABC is synonymous with excellence and balance.**

It is something to be proud of, not denigrated. It is often claimed by some Coalition members and the media who support you that the ABC has a left-leaning bias. What does this mean? These critics confuse a high standard of journalism, factual and in-depth reporting, and the range of topics and ideas tackled with compassion by the ABC, with a leftist ideology. **No, it isn't; it's a thirst for the facts and a celebration of our nation and the world we live in.** I frequently see and hear Coalition MPs and Senators on the ABC putting your point of view. Amanda Vanstone runs a program called 'Counterpoint' (I know of no other ex-politician who has their own ABC program).

You have been annoyed by ABC reporting the Snowden leaks on international espionage, specifically the story that Australian agencies (under the Labor government) were spying on Indonesian targets, including the President and his wife. The ABC simply did what good journalism demands – **report**

**the news.** Seriously, would you have the ABC cover up news that is there to be told, to avoid embarrassing the government of the day? That is surely a step towards a dictatorship which controls the media. Where would you propose to draw the line? Remember, no lives are at stake here. I ask you to respect the ABC for its excellence in journalism across all radio networks and most TV networks (not much journalism on ABC 3, the dedicated children's TV channel).

The accusation that the ABC is spreading itself too wide by developing its successful internet platforms is, with respect, nonsense. **This is the age of the internet.** The internet is where many Australians seek news and information. Of course the ABC needs to be active in the on-line media and information space. The proposition that commercial media would benefit by taking over an internet platform vacated by the ABC, and achieve the fair, creative, balanced and comprehensive outcome the ABC now achieves, is also nonsense. The commercial media already has its own internet sites which are doing fine.

I live in regional NSW where the ABC has a special role to play in local news and community-based programs, and during emergencies. This is a vital part of the ABC that would be affected by budget cuts or by restructuring the organisation through amending its charter. Radio National, that **broadcasting gem without parallel in the rest of the world**, would also be affected by cuts and/or restructuring. (Do you listen to Radio National? My guess is that many of you do. If not, you're missing something very special).

Requiring the ABC to run adverts would drag it down to the lowest common media denominator. We are increasingly drowning in advertising and corporate PR, in the media and everywhere else. Let me ask you, do you enjoy watching / listening to adverts every five minutes for five minutes, as I had to the other night when watching a film on commercial TV? (I got sick of it and went to bed – a very disappointing media experience). There is already too much competition for the advertising dollar – don't expect the free-to-air TV stations to welcome another entrant.

And please do not appoint people to the ABC board who have no interest in making a positive contribution, as happened with the previous Coalition government. Appointing constant critics of the ABC who see no good in what the ABC does is very counter-productive.

Finally, spare a thought for the **staff of the ABC** in having to endure another round of 'ABC bashing'. These are fine people, award-winning journalists, producers, presenters and technicians - staff working in Australia's best interests, often in demanding conditions for average pay. They will suffer if these attacks continue.

**The ABC reflects and reinforces what is good about Australia. It lifts us and informs us.** It inspires us and educates us. And apart from this noisy minority of critics, it unites us. Destroy the ABC and you will destroy much of the good that is Australia. Please use your good offices to **defend the ABC** – speak up for the ABC and you will be rewarded with respect for defending a national icon. 

# CORY BERNARDI: ABC 'CANNIBALISING' COMMERCIAL ONLINE NEWS

## RN Breakfast - 4 December 2013

**Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi has told RN Breakfast that it's time to consider cutting the ABC's budget for online news. As James Bourne writes, Senator Bernardi says the taxpayer funded broadcaster is 'crowding out' commercial media in Australia and threatening the commercial viability of competing online news sources.**



The decision to expose Australia's spying operations in Indonesia has sparked renewed criticism of the ABC from within the Abbott Government.

Tuesday's Coalition party room meeting was dominated by a discussion about the ABC, with many MPs agreeing with the prime minister's assessment that the

broadcaster had exercised "very very poor judgement" in breaking the phone tapping story in cooperation with The Guardian Australia.

Senator Cory Bernardi said the ABC, which he called a 'taxpayer funded behemoth', was threatening the commercial viability of competing online news sources.

'I think the ABC has grown exponentially over the years,' Senator Bernardi told RN Breakfast.

'Now it's encroaching into the newspapers of the 21st century, which is the online space.'

'I think it's crowding out the commercial operators in that space. It's making it increasingly difficult for them to compete.'

The South Australian Senator said he believed the ABC has outgrown its original brief as radio broadcaster and television station—despite the ABC's Charter outlining that the broadcaster has 'to provide, within Australia, innovative and comprehensive broadcasting services'—which would suggest a progression into the online market.

'I support a diversity of media views,' Senator Bernardi said.

'I think we need a healthy media sector, and I actually support the ABC. I think it... provides a very important service, particularly to regional and rural communities where they may not have a full suite of commercial operations to choose from.'

'I do think taxpayers are right to question the nearly \$1.2 billion which is, and I use these terms, cannibalising the commercial media market.'

He argued that the ABC shouldn't have an online news presence unless it is subscription based or maintained by advertising revenue, necessitating a structural separation between taxpayer-funded broadcasting and advertising-driven online news.

'If it's going to compete in the online media space, [the ABC] should do so on a commercial basis, or it should be structurally separated,' Senator Bernardi said.

'There is a move from print to online. The ABC has never been in the print media apart from its commercial operations for its books and its shops.'

'It's now getting into that space and I don't think that it's in the national interest for us to have a weakened commercial media sector and a rapidly growing state broadcaster.'

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has said that he has no plans to change the way the ABC operates, and while Bernardi said he wasn't disappointed by his leader's decision, he said it was still the right time to start a debate on the topic.

'The ABC's broadcast capacity, in radio and on television, [is] accessible to the taxpayer right across this country and in many other countries around the world. I think that's a healthy broadcast reach for them,' he said.

'If you want to go online and get your news, you can do that.'

'I don't want to see the demise of Fairfax. I don't want to see the demise of News Corp. I don't want to see a state run media effectively dominating this landscape.'

Senator Bernardi backed down from reported comments yesterday that the ABC had too many interests in the television market, and supported the continued existence of iView and podcasting services. 



*"Mark, you wouldn't believe the lengths Cory Bernadi is going to for getting intel on us."*

---

# How The ABC Should Serve The National Interest

By  
**Ben Eltham**  
writing in New Matilda

Engaging in soft diplomacy in Asia is not in the ABC's remit, as Mark Scott thinks. They should stick to newsgathering - which includes publishing uncomfortable leaks, writes Ben Eltham.

The ABC wars have broken out again. The current round of this seemingly endless conflict was sparked by the ABC's coverage of the Edward Snowden revelations: specifically, that the Australian government's spy agency, the Defence Signals Directorate, had been spying on Indonesia

Coalition politicians are not happy. They see the reporting as an attack on Australia's interests. Prime Minister Tony Abbott has told journalists that the ABC was "guilty of poor judgment in broadcasting that material which was obviously difficult for Australia's national security and long-term best interests".

Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull apparently gave ABC boss Mark Scott a dressing down. This week, Senator Cory Bernardi launched a grandiloquent attack in the Coalition party room, fulminating against the national broadcaster's bias.

"It's a taxpayer-funded behemoth that is cannibalising commercial

media while spreading a message that ignores the majority views of Australians," Bernardi reportedly told his colleagues. One can only imagine the chorus of hurrumphs that must have followed.

All too predictably, many of News Limited's finest have joined in, issuing a volley of anti-ABC opinion pieces in *The Australian*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *Network Ten's Bolt Report*, and so on. Greg Sheridan called the ABC "morally compromised and journalistically discredited". Janet Albrechtsen called for Mark Scott's resignation. There's plenty more where that came from: the cries of "their ABC" have bounced around the right-wing echo chamber with their usual hollow clang.

Mark Scott has defended the ABC's reporting of Australian espionage. In an interview on ABC24 he argued it was in the public interest. "We're an independent media organisation," he said. "Sometimes we publish stories that politicians won't be happy about but we are an independent media organisation, that is the role we need to play."

We've heard it all before. Accusations of ABC bias are nearly as old as the broadcaster itself. During the previous government's dreadful run of bad polls, there were many on the left getting stuck into the ABC, claiming it was obsessed by opinion polls and singing from News Limited's song sheet. Now that the Coalition holds power, the ABC's natural role exerting scrutiny on the government of the day is enraging conservatives.

The ABC is a perennial political football for good reason. As a billion-dollar-a-year public broadcaster, the ABC dominates Australia's mediascape in a way comparable only to the BBC in Britain. As the onslaught of free news on the internet has eroded the business models of competing organisations, the ABC looms all the larger.

It doesn't help that the ABC is running rings around its commercial cousins in terms of technology. The slow death of the printed newspaper only heightens the contrast with a muscular and surprisingly nimble ABC. While Fairfax and News Limited have struggled to come to terms with the digital universe, the ABC has proved itself adept at the new environment, rolling out important new services online.



The result has been a sustained level of public approval that puts other media organisations to shame. The ABC consistently rates as the most trusted news source in the country. Voters love it, whatever their political affiliation.

Nonetheless, we should care about what the ABC's critics think. A strong public broadcaster is an essential pillar of Australian democracy. The ABC plays a critical role in holding governments of all political persuasions to account; in breaking news; and in essential public broadcasting roles, such as emergency broadcasting during natural disasters.

The spying revelations prove the point. Here we have a very significant disclosure about the actions of our intelligence agencies, about which citizens were previously uninformed. Whatever the views of the government and the spooks, in a democracy voters need to know about critical issues of national security, so they can make their own minds up about Australia's national interests.

Of course, merely stating that argument won't make the current controversies go away. The ABC is an inherently political organisation, and Mark Scott himself a rather canny political player.



If commercial media companies are struggling to compete with the ABC, it may be because their standards are not as high.

In recent times, the ABC has not been above playing the national interest card itself – most notably in its pursuit of the tender for the Australia Network, where the ABC has repeatedly argued that the ABC has a role to play in “soft diplomacy” in the region.

In 2009, for instance, Scott gave a lecture in which he explicitly positioned the ABC as a tool of soft power for Australian interests abroad.

The Australia Network, Scott claimed, “should project images and perceptions of Australia in an independent, impartial manner; foster public understanding of Australia, its people and its strategic and economic interests; and raise awareness of our economic and trade capabilities ... This is a contemporary statement of the value of public diplomacy.”

As Gerard Henderson has pointed out, Scott's various manoeuvres on this issue are at odds with his current stance on the importance of the ABC as an independent news organisation.

Henderson is worried that reporting on Snowden's cache of NSA documents is against Australia's diplomatic interests; he hurls some typical insults about the ABC's “greens-left agenda”. But the bigger concern for those concerned with the integrity of the national broadcaster is the potential for the Australia Network to erode the credibility of the ABC's independence.

The ABC should neither be a tool for Australia diplomacy, nor a shield for Australian business interests. It should remain a public broadcaster focused on informing and entertaining ordinary Australians, particularly in the provision of basic newsgathering, a service which commercial rivals are increasingly unable to provide.

All in all, the ABC Charter has it about right.

“The functions of the Corporation”, it says, “are to provide ... innovative and comprehensive broadcasting services of a high standard.” If commercial media companies are struggling to compete with the ABC, it may be because their standards are not as high. 

# Concerned about the ABC?

## Who can I write to?

### **The Hon Tony Abbott MP Prime Minister**

PO Box 6022, Parliament House,  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Fax: 02 6273 4100

### **The Hon Joe Hockey MP Treasurer**

PO Box 6022, Parliament House,  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Fax: 02 6277 8401

### **The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP Minister for Communications**

PO Box 6022, Parliament House,  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Fax: 02 6277 8445

### **Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann Minister for Finance**

PO Box 6100, Senate, Parliament  
House, Canberra ACT 2600  
Fax: 02 6277 5928

If you have internet access you can contact your local Federal member or senator via this website: [http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators\\_and\\_Members](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members)

## How to contact the ABC Board

### **Mr Mark Scott AO Managing Director of the ABC**

GPO Box 9994 Sydney NSW 2001  
[mark.scott@abc.net.au](mailto:mark.scott@abc.net.au)

### **Mr James Spigelman AC QC Chairman of the ABC Board**

c/o ABC Secretariat  
GPO Box 9994 Sydney NSW 2001

Other ABC Board members can be contacted as follows:

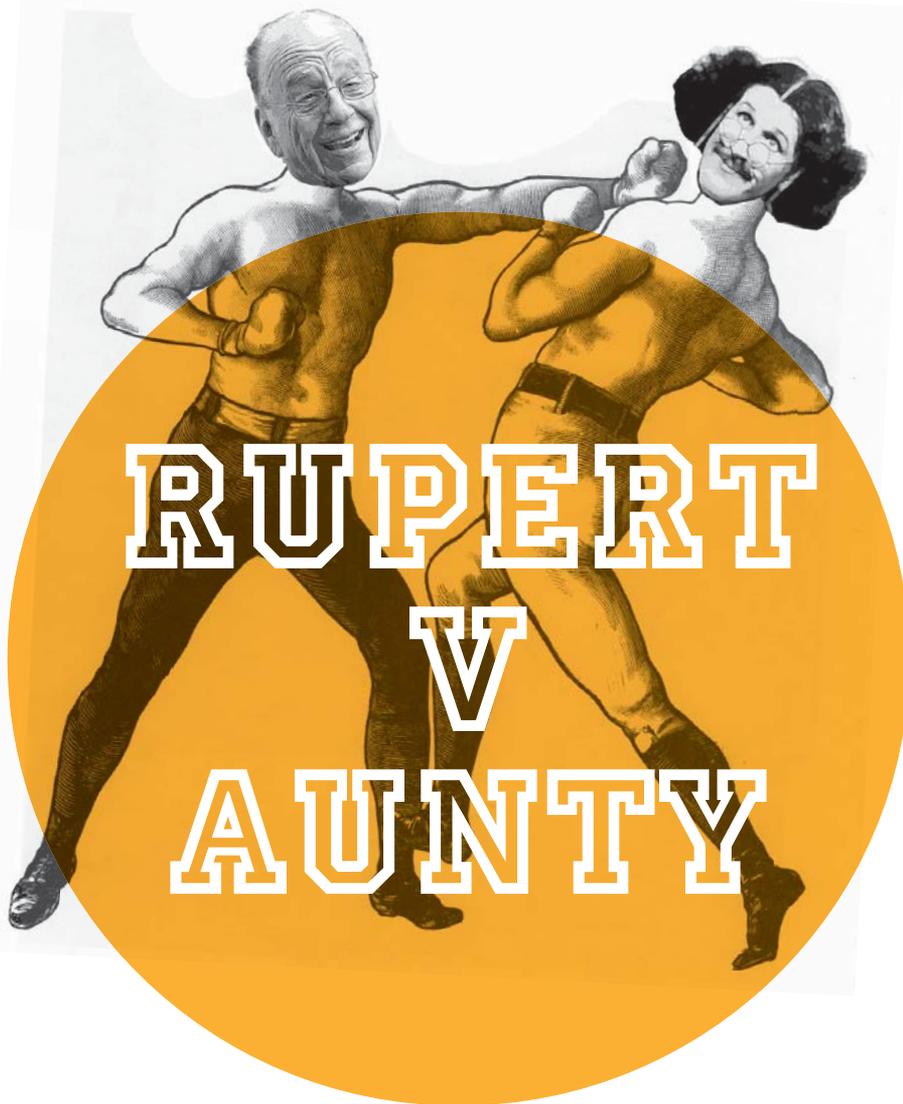
**c/o ABC Secretariat**  
14th flr 700 Harris St, Ultimo NSW 2007  
e-mail: [board@your.abc.net.au](mailto:board@your.abc.net.au)

**Ms Cheryl Bart AO**  
**Professor Fiona Stanley AC FA FASSA**

**Dr Julianne Schultz AM FAHA**  
**Mr Steven Skala AO**  
**Ms Jane Bennett**  
**Mr Simon Mordant**  
**Mr Mat Peacock**

## Want to contact your branch of the Friends of the ABC?

Go to the back page of Update where you will find contact details of State and Regional Branches. 



## the real News Corp agenda

David Salter  
Crikey, 2 Dec 2013

Mike Carlton, in Saturday's *Sydney Morning Herald*, was bang on the money:

"With the Tories in power, the assault on the national broadcaster grows more vicious by the day. Unsurprisingly, the campaign is spearheaded by the Murdoch press."

And as if to confirm Carlton's credentials as a soothsayer, *The Weekend Australian*, on the same day, gave huge space to three lengthy anti-ABC commentary pieces. Long-serving Murdoch toady Greg Sheridan led the charge. Still pretending outrage over the ABC/*Guardian* scoop on our spying on Indonesia, he parroted the familiar

News Corp company line: "It is unclear why Australian taxpayers need to pay \$1.1 billion of their money to support these activities ..."

"It is plain socialism for the government to run a business in competition with existing private businesses."

On the op-ed page Grace Collier (who, she?) reached straight for her beheading axe. She urged the Coalition to liquidate any unsympathetic ABC board members:

"The type of relationship between the ABC board and the government has the potential to have a serious impact on us all ..."

"The new administration must, to govern properly and carry out the agenda it was elected to implement, neutralise the enemies in its midst and place people it trusts into key positions

of influence."

Madame Collier-Defarge has apparently yet to grasp the principle of independent stewardship that guides our autonomous national government organisations. Fortunately, help was close at hand. The very next day, in the *Sunday Telegraph*, that kindly old uncle of the Murdoch commentariat, Piers Akerman explained exactly how their master would like to tackle the ABC problem:

"It should be stripped back to its charter or broken up and sold, if possible to commercial interests."

"In a world of expanding media, a taxpayer-funded national broadcaster is anachronistic."

"Those who want to keep 'our' ABC, should fund it. Those who don't should not have to pay for it."

Of course, none of this is new. Over the past few weeks, just about every News Corp hack with a by-line (with the honourable exception of Errol Simper) has queued up to take their dutiful swings at the national broadcaster. The difference now is that, come July, with the Coalition likely to have a workable majority on most issues in the Senate, those in the government who take their cues from Murdoch on media policy will be emboldened to start implementing his agenda.

How will it be done? What's at stake? The clues are already there in the seemingly endless procession of pompous anti-Aunty editorials in *The Australian*.

The trigger, after the next little brouhaha in ABC news or current affairs, will be hyped-up outrage in the *Oz* followed by calls for an urgent "independent government inquiry" into the national broadcaster. The same newspaper that thundered so self-righteously against recent inquiries into media practice is already urging a "root-and-branch" review of all ABC activities and practices.

But the terms of reference for this inquiry will be skewed to deliver Murdoch the two big prizes he was always going to extract in return for his support for the Coalition over the past three years: a re-opening of the tender process for the Australia Television service so Sky News gets the contract; and a major winding-back of the ABC's online presence, particularly

in any content areas that compete with existing News Corp output.

That's what this is all about. Business.

Murdoch well knows that no Australian government would have the courage to break up the ABC or sell it off, so while the new inquiry might go through the motions of appearing to consider those proposals, they are little more than diversionary ambit claims. The real object of the exercise will be to ensure that some innocuous-looking recommendations appear in the inquiry's final report that will

then provide the government with the justification for delivering Murdoch his pounds of flesh.

As Carlton warns: "Make no mistake. The fight for the ABC is on."

Meanwhile, it will be interesting to see whether the Minister actually responsible for the ABC, Malcolm Turnbull, can resist this pressure and hold the small "L" liberal line. Unlike his Coalition predecessor in the Communications portfolio, Richard Alston, Turnbull isn't naturally inclined to wreak vengeance on the ABC.

He dislikes Abbott and his bully-boy style and wouldn't force any major cuts or changes to the ABC's operations off his own bat.

But that doesn't mean he might not stand mute and let someone else start the pogrom. If he were smart, ABC chairman Jim Spiegelman would invite Turnbull to attend the next board meeting and suggest he expound for a few minutes on what he sees as the ABC's future.

In other word, call the Minister's bluff. What's to lose? ☺

## The Murdoch dynasty's 70 years war on the ABC



Darce Cassidy

It began in the nineteen forties with Sir Keith Murdoch (Rupert Murdoch's father) using his powerful newspaper empire (based on the Melbourne Herald and Weekly Times) to push for the reduction of the ABC's budget. He eventually succeeded when the then Menzies government reduced total ABC funding from 800,000 pounds to just over 700,000 pounds.

Not satisfied with a crippling blow to the ABC's income, Murdoch used his wartime position as Director General of Information to move production of the ABC's 7.00pm news bulletin from the ABC in Sydney to his own Department of Information in Melbourne.

The decision did not last long. Murdoch had used newspaper journalists to produce the radio news bulletins. Listeners complained at the falling standards of the news bulletins under the direct control of the Department of Information. This was so unpopular with listeners that, within a month,

responsibility for the 7.30 radio news was returned to the ABC and production moved back to Sydney a little later. The Murdoch dynasty's efforts to marginalise the ABC have continued ever since.

The ABC has a long history in international broadcasting. Starting in 1939 Radio Australia now broadcasts in Mandarin Chinese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Khmer, French, Burmese, Tok Pisin and English. The Australia Network is the television equivalent of Radio Australia, which, at present, is also run by the ABC.

Sir Keith Murdoch's son Rupert is now involved in an effort to emulate his father by taking the Australia Network away from the ABC. As I write this I am checking mentions of the ABC in The Weekend Australian 30 November- 1 December 2013 and on the Australian's website.

All of the 6 articles below were published on the same weekend. All are highly critical of the ABC, which is in competition with the Murdoch media as a source of information and debate. I could see not a word in defense of the ABC. I could see no mention of the numerous opinion polls, which have consistently shown that the ABC, despite its faults, to be the most trusted media organisation in Australia.

### SPY STORY SHOWS ABC AT ITS WORST

Enquirer Page 13. By Greg Sheridan. Criticizes ABC coverage of Australian spying on Indonesia

### WHEN AUNTIE TURNED A BLIND EYE

Enquirer Page 14 Michael Smith. Attacks ABC coverage of the "Gillard AWU " affair.

### WHY MARK SCOTT SHOULD RESIGN

An opinion piece by Janet Albrechtsen published on the Australian's website

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/why-mark-scott-should-resign/story-e6frg7bo-1226768174546>

### WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE PM MUST SHOW NO MERCY

Inquirer page 20 by Grace Collier. Suggests sacking ABC Board.

### ABC ADVERTISED RIVALS SPY STORY- TONY ABBOTT

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/media/abc-advertised-guardians-spy-story-tony-abbott/story-e6frg996-1226772306626>

### ABC TOP SALARIES DOUBLE INFLATION RATE

The Nation page 7. By Sarah Martin. Suggests that top ABC broadcasters are overpaid. ☺

# Branch News

## Armidale

FABC (Armidale) took the chance offered by the Federal election to lobby New England electoral candidates on the importance of the ABC to our national life and to rural people in particular. The committee approached the New England House of Representative hopefuls with a short questionnaire on their policies and aspirations for the national broadcaster. Clearly this was not an issue which greatly exercised their minds, as none replied. This contrasted with the attitude of the retiring MHR, the independent Mr Tony Windsor. He had been an active and vocal advocate for the ABC and had attended local FABC functions. The committee thanks him for his energetic service to the New England region over many years.

The new MHR is Mr Barnaby Joyce, of the National Party. The FABC committee intends to “work on” him. As the Minister for Agriculture he should be aware of the key role of the ABC (especially its local radio networks) in the rural economy and fire, flood and other emergencies. A notable predecessor, the former Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Ian Sinclair, valued the ABC and contributed to its Advisory Council.

Over the years FABC Armidale has developed a tradition of fundraising that enables members to come together while keeping FABC active and visible with the district. Recent efforts have allowed it to continue contributing to the community by offering a prize to a UNE student for excellence in studies associated with the role of the ABC. Next year’s plans include a talk in April by former ABC luminary, Tim Bowden.

*Priscilla Connor*

## Blue Mountains

Prior to the Federal Election the BMFABC held a “Meet the Candidates Forum” at the Grandview Hotel, Wentworth Falls on Saturday 10th August.

A capacity crowd attended and the “vibe” was electric. Our Speakers were the Senate Candidates, Cate Faihmann, Greens, and Sen. Doug Cameron, ALP, (both were elected). For the House of Reps., Danielle Wheeler, Greens, and Susan Templeman, ALP, both unsuccessful. They were all excellent Speakers and were passionately in favour of retaining a strong, well-funded, independent, and progressive ABC. Unfortunately we were very disappointed the Coalition MP for Macquarie, Louise Markus did not attend the Forum. We learned that



Top: AGM Guest Speaker, Matt Peacock  
Middle: Forum Audience.  
Bottom: Senator D. Cameron, Susan Templeman, ALP, Margaret Foy, Pres, Danielle Wheeler, Cate Faihmann, Greens.

she did not attend any similar function in the Upper Mountains. In lieu of attending Louise did send a letter which was read in full to the large audience. The letter assured the public that the Coalition had no plans to threaten or disband the ABC. However all Government expenditure would be scrutinised for any “wastage”.

We were not totally reassured by this. Does the ABC have any wastage?? With the large number of TV Studios all over the Country, and even larger numbers of radio stations, plus all the incredible “on-line” services the ABC provides, I would think the ABC should be given high praise for managing so well on a very restricted budget.

As for staff payments, they are small compared with the commercial enterprises, but why in heaven’s name are the women paid so much LESS than the men??

The Forum generated a lot of interest and attracted a very welcome increase in our Membership.

Our monthly meetings continue, and also the new format that was introduced this year. It consists of dividing the meeting into 2 parts. The first half is the formal meeting discussions, and the remainder is more entertaining with a mixture of fun and education centred around the life of an imaginary ABC employee.

So far it has been well accepted. The format needs some adjustment and tweaking, but it has made the meetings far more interesting.

The AGM was held on Saturday Nov. 16th. Our advertised Guest Speaker, the talented and senior ABC journalist Matt Peacock, attracted another large audience. Matt was an entertaining speaker, but on a more serious side, he gave us a vivid insight into his long, long investigation of the Asbestos atrocity by Hardie Industries.

Thank goodness for the ABC. No other broadcaster would sanction such appalling revelations. These revelations provoked a large public outcry. Together with some of the victims of asbestos dust becoming very visible and outspoken, a Court verdict resulted in some acknowledgement and Compensation for the thousands (Matt assured us), of asbestos victims past, present, and future.

The TV mini-series Devil’s Dust was produced from Matt’s book - “Killer

company: *James Hardie Exposed*" (Harper Collins 2009).

A very happy festive season from everyone in the STILL beautiful Blue Mountains. And thank goodness for the ABC. She is worth fighting for.

*Margaret Foy*

*Pres. BMFABC*

## Central Coast

In the second half of the year the Central Coast Branch of the FABC had two guest speakers: Chris Masters and Linda Mottram. Both functions were well attended. It was Masters' third engagement for the branch in a decade. Mottram was the after-dinner speaker at the NSW FABC Regional Conference in Gosford, August 2012.

Masters has recently produced the ABC TV series "The years that made us". He talked about the making of this series and ABC documentary making in general. Recently he also became involved in curating the new Australian War Memorial Afghanistan exhibit. His two-part series of documentaries on Afghanistan were broadcast in 2010 and another one on Network 10 in 2011. He commenced working on ABC television's flagship public affairs program Four Corners in 1983 and has since become the program's longest serving reporter. His first program was the landmark "Big League", a 1983 investigation of judicial corruption, which helped bring about the Street Royal Commission.

In 2004, he was appointed Adjunct Professor in Journalism with the School of Applied Communication at RMIT University and in 2006, RMIT awarded Masters an honorary doctorate in Communications.

Chris Masters has written four books to date among them a biography titled *Jonestown: The Power and the Myth of Alan Jones*, his third book. In 2012 he published *Uncommon Soldier*, based on his Afghanistan visits.

Linda Mottram worked in many of the world's hotspots for the ABC, including the Middle East and the Balkans, striving to explain stories through the eyes of those least able to influence their fate; is a Walkley Award winner, taking out the Radio Current Affairs category award in 1999 for her coverage of the Meja massacre during the conflict in Kosovo.



Top: John Lund, June Ashton, Klaas Woldring, Linda Mottram, Pippa Preston, Margaret Lund and Gwen Biggs.

Bottom: Margaret Lund, Chris Masters, Pippa Preston, Klaas Woldring, June Ashton and John Lund.

Her career includes Federal political reporting and stints with Radio Australia covering Asia Pacific diplomatic and strategic issues and interpreting Australian political, economic and social life for an Asia Pacific audience

Originally from Perth, Linda began as a graduate cadet at West Australian Newspapers. She studied at Murdoch University and UWA to get an arts degree. Then quickly followed her heart to the ABC and radio news, soon on to Canberra for a Sydney commercial radio station then for the Daily Telegraph, then back to the ABC. She has also been involved in Editorial Quality Training for many years and book reviews on Tuesday mornings.

Membership of the Central Coast branch hovered around the 140 mark during the year and is growing. The branch also has a healthy bank balance.

The branch has endeavoured to tackle the recurring poor reception reports of ABC transmission on the Central Coast. Excellent cooperation was experienced from the then two regional ALP MPs Deborah O'Neill and Craig Thompson. A joint survey was put together but the local media failed to give it much publicity and the early election interfered with achieving satisfactory remedies from the Federal

Government and ACMA. Inadequate spectrum capacity appears to be the principal problem.

Election activity by the branch was pursued jointly with the Uniting Church which had organised a well attended candidates' meeting in Gosford. Four women candidates turned up: MP Deb O'Neill (ALP), Lucy Wicks (LP), Kate Da Costa (Greens, Robertson) and Sue Wynn (Greens, Dobell) who all performed strongly although the Liberal Candidate did not seem to be familiar with the Coalition policy on the ABC. The Dobell electorate major party candidates did not participate in this forum. Surprisingly Deb O'Neill lost the seat but she was later selected as NSW Senator to take the vacancy created by Senator Bob Car's resignation.

The traditional Branch Christmas Lunch will take place at the Gosford Hotel on Saturday 7th December, 12.15 pm. Bookings please phone 4341 5170.

For next year two guest speakers have been provisionally engaged: Margaret Pomeranz (mid-March) and Andrew Fowler, early May.

*Klaas Woldring,*  
*Convenor.*

## Hunter

On Wednesday 16th October, the University of Newcastle Science Faculty held their Science Expo in the Great Hall of the University. Robyn Williams, presenter of the ABC Science Show on Radio National, had kindly agreed to be the keynote speaker at the event on behalf of the Hunter Friends of the ABC. The University included the FABC logo in their promotional advertising for the event and the Hunter Friends had a prominent stall in the foyer of the Great Hall.

The Hunter Friends who manned the stall had a great day and felt it gave good exposure for the Friends amongst a receptive audience. A number of local members made themselves known to us and had a friendly chat.

Robyn's speech was enthusiastically received by an audience of about 100 students and staff. Many more students passed through the various University stalls during the day and some discussed the ABC with us manning the Friend's stall. Quite a few students expressed support for the ABC

# Branch News



Hunter FABC President Allan Thomas with Robyn in front of our stall.

but we were a little disappointed that not many joined the Friends, partly because students are generally poor and every dollar counts. Although we only got a few new members we believe the day provided wide exposure of the Friends to a potentially receptive audience who might rally to the cause should the ABC come under serious threat in the future.

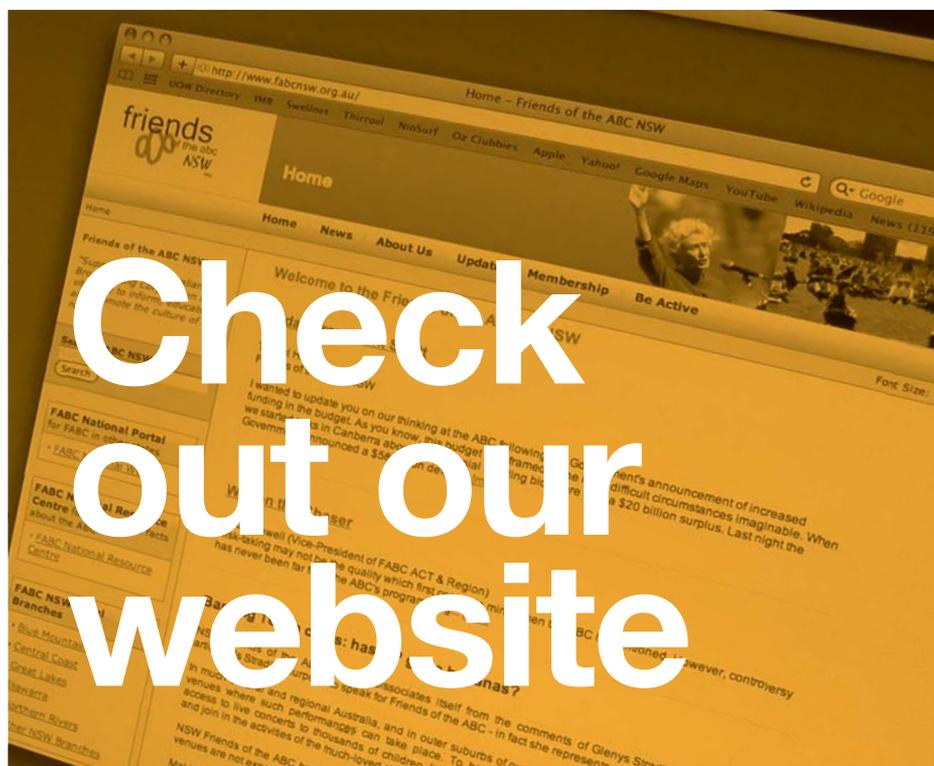
Allan Thomas. 



FABC Northern Rivers Branch  
Annual General Meeting

**11am Saturday  
14th December**

**Bangalow  
Sports and  
Bowls Club**



- Want information on the latest issues?
- Need a printable membership application?
- Current and past issues of Update?
- Who to write to?

Go to:

[www.fabcnsw.org.au](http://www.fabcnsw.org.au)

Or check out the National Portal (links to all states):

[www.friendsoftheabc.org.au](http://www.friendsoftheabc.org.au)

# Mark Scott defends publishing spy story and hits back at News Corporation.



ABC Managing Director Mark Scott has defended publishing the Indonesian spy story after Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull called the move an “error of judgement”

Speaking to ABC News 24, Mr Scott also hit out at News Corporation for launching a “concentrated attack” on the ABC, accusing some sections of the media of being “obsessed” by the national broadcaster.

The spying scandal erupted last month when the ABC and the Guardian revealed that Australia had tapped the phones of Indonesian president Yudhoyono and members of his inner circle. The revelations sparked a diplomatic crisis between Indonesia and Australia, with the issue still not completely resolved. Mr Scott says that the spying claims are an important story and worthy of publication. “Around the world, the story of this big leak of NSA material has been covered in newspapers and on television – nearly 20 major media outlets have done it,” he said. “Yes, it has caused short-term difficulty, but we feel it was in the public interest.”

“The Guardian came to us on that original story. We independently checked it out and went to our own sources around it. We’re an independent media organization. Sometimes we publish stories that our politicians won’t be happy about, but as an

independent media organization, that is the role we need to play.”

Mr Scott told ABC News 24 that the ABC has come under “concentrated attack” from News Corporation – “They seem to be obsessed by us – there seems to be a never-ending number of stories they want to run about the ABC, and there are some people in News Corporation who have a deep ideological opposition to public broadcasting and the ABC.”

Last month, The Australian published a report detailing the salaries of senior ABC executives and reporters. Mr Scott said that the information came from a breach at the ABC. “That was embarrassing for us and disconcerting for staff,” he said. “Many critics of the ABC are motivated by money and are threatened by today’s tough media

landscape. In a sense there is some ideology behind some of those critics. I also think that there are some who think that they would make more money if in fact the ABC wasn’t the ABC of today. They are talking in terms of their shareholders.”

“I am interested in our shareholders – the Australian people. I think the Australian people overwhelmingly feel that the ABC is doing a great job and want us to keep doing what we are doing, which is being a fair and independent public broadcaster.”

I think the  
Australian people  
overwhelmingly  
feel that the ABC  
is doing a great  
job...

# The Uncertain Future of Public Broadcasting



By  
Quentin  
Dempster

**Anton Enus:** What about the public broadcasters Mr Abbott ... another soft target ... are the ABC and SBS in the firing line?

**Tony Abbott:** I trust everyone actually listened to what Joe Hockey said last week and again this week ... no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS.

**SBS News 'live cross' interview Friday, 6th September 2013.**

He said it. In the final hours of the federal election campaign the incoming prime minister, Tony Abbott, at last verbalised a Coalition commitment.

It remains to be seen if the commitment will stand.

Public broadcasters are entitled to be paranoid. In 1996 the incoming Howard government immediately dishonoured a pre-election commitment to maintain

funding to the ABC and SBS in real terms. Within a year the ABC Board ordered the industrial 'execution' of 1000 staff as a 'commission of audit' recommended cuts across the public sector to staunch what the new government said was 'Beazley's black hole'. Instead of apologising that a funding reduction was necessary to confront the budget deficit and that funding would be restored as the budget improved, the government started an ideological campaign against the ABC accompanied by intimidation and vilification of public broadcasters from a self-righteous Murdoch Press. In the ABC's case \$11million was removed from funding immediately with \$55million defunded from the 1997 annual appropriation onwards. The ABC entered into what it called a 'reshaping', another of those euphemisms to mask reality – a rapid reduction in original Australian output, the vandalising of Radio Australia, an over-reliance on other broadcasters' shelf programs making ABC TV a second-hand version of UK TV. So much for enhancing a 'sense of national identity' as the ABC Charter required.

Right through the Howard years the ABC and its surviving 'creatives' endured what was called the 'culture wars'. The ABC Board was stacked with political partisans leading, in 2000, to the appointment of one

Jonathan Shier as managing director. Through Shier's short reign a Senate inquiry report 'Above Board' carried recommendations for the first time that an end had to be put to political interference in the ABC. The concept of what were called 'the Nolan rules' first emerged to stop board stacking through an arms length publicly-advertised merit selection process. Amendments to the ABC Act to enshrine merit selection of ABC directors were finally adopted by the Australian Parliament in 2012.

“

A \$50 million cut now would be a hammer blow to the ABC.

In the event that the Abbott Government's latest 'commission of audit' recommends arbitrary funding cuts to staunch 'Chris Bowen's black hole' the current Board of the ABC will be in a much better position to apply

its statutory independence to stand up for public broadcasting in Australia.

The ABC is accountable. If an objective assessment is made it should be able to mount a convincing case of its cost effectiveness. The ABC's operational base funding has been reduced 23 percent in real terms, and its full time equivalent staff from 7000 to 4600 since 1986. The record shows that the Hawke and Keating governments screwed the ABC into the ground from 1986 to the change of government in 1996. The Howard government, soiled on by the Murdoch Press, followed suit.

What was galling through all this was to see the testicular hold the then 'gatekeepers' of media policy – Rupert Murdoch and Kerry Packer – had on our prime ministers who accommodated their demands in the hope of political support.

There was Paul Keating 'cross media' rule in 1987 through which Rupert swallowed the Herald and Weekly Times newspaper group, rendering competition policy in print a sick joke. Kerry P enjoyed years of political protection as subscription (pay) television was kept out of Australia until it had to be allowed into media regulation from 1994. The Howard government constrained digital multi-channelling from its introduction in 2001 which protected free-to-air broadcasters, particularly Channel 9, giving James Packer time to bail out to private equity investors by 2006.

Good luck to them, you might say, in the push/shove spirit of Australian free enterprise.

But the attacks on the ABC were unfair and unwarranted. Whatever their faults and deficiencies (there are undoubtedly many) the ABC since 1932 and SBS since 1979 have made a significant contribution over time to Australia's success as a robust and informed polyglot democracy.

Through some modest funding enhancements in the latter part of the Howard years and then through the Rudd 1 and Gillard governments, the ABC has turned itself into a digital revolutionary. With its smaller staff it has ridden the digital multi-channel and broadband wave with ABC1, ABC2, ABC 3 (children's) and ABC News 24, digital radio, the innovative iView

re-play technology and downloadable content via iPod, iPad and mobile devices. Needless to say there is a debate raging internally and externally about the quality and distinctiveness of the content. But its audience support and interactions so far have made the ABC highly accessible and relevant to the lives of its audiences, the taxpayers who pay for it. This represents great hope for a sustainable future for an Australian public broadcasting/cybercasting system.

A \$50million cut now would be a hammer blow to the ABC.

“

**Murdoch commentators suggested that only Sky News (a consortium of commercial and Pay TV broadcasters) could be relied upon to make editorial judgements on contentious coverage to deliver the softer diplomacy the service required.**

In November Rupert Murdoch's The Australian started a campaign of vilification of the ABC through its coverage of leaked above-award pay rates for on air presenters and executives. (Although the salaries were not excessive by media industry standards, the leak exposed disparities: gender, radio to TV and regional to city. The leak destabilised the ABC's management and staff).

The Murdoch Press hypocritically attacked the ABC and demanded it be stripped of its international broadcasting contract with DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs and

Trade) over the ABC's exposure of Defence Signals Directorate's 2009 tapping of the mobile telephones of Indonesia's president, his wife and the most senior Indonesian government officials. Murdoch commentators suggested that only Sky News (a consortium of commercial and Pay TV broadcasters) could be relied upon to make editorial judgements on contentious coverage to deliver the softer diplomacy the service required.

The Murdoch Press' post-election attacks can be seen as a repeat performance after the last change of government. The not so secret agenda? Try to discredit the ABC so that under cover of the commission of audit its funding can be substantially cut. Have a Canberra-imposed pay wall erected around ABC online content on a 'level playing field' argument. Change policy to put the taxpayer-funded international broadcasting service out to public tender.

To strike such a blow at the behest of Australian private sector operators, News Corp and Fairfax Media, as they try to build pay walls around their own digital content would indicate malice aforethought. News Corp's The Australian has demanded that the ABC be funded through the begging bowl: pledge-plea telethons like the niche PBS in the US. Fairfax more recently through an SMH editorial has demanded that the ABC be broken up into 'core and non-core' funded functions and perhaps made to charge for its online content. While public broadcasters want Fairfax to survive, particularly because of its own contribution to quality journalism, this is a bit rich coming after incompetent Fairfax boards failed to protect their rivers-of-gold revenues from internet raiders in jobs, cars and real estate.

While we wait to see what happens with PM Tony Abbott now in power, those who support independent, mainstream, non-commercial and publicly-funded public broadcasting/cybercasting will have to prepare to fight hard for it if necessary.

We must never get tired.

\*Quentin Dempster is a journalist and ABC broadcaster. His book *Death Struggle: How political malice and boardroom power plays are killing the ABC* (Allen and Unwin) was published in 2000. 

# Spying on Indonesia - Here is the news: a good story gets told, not held



Jonathan Holmes  
SMH  
November 23, 2013

There's been a lot of huffing and puffing about ABC salaries this week - mine included (although I don't earn one any longer).

Naturally, the ABC didn't want its payroll details broadcast to the world, and naturally I didn't want my former salary in the national daily. But of course, once the figures were leaked to The Australian's Sarah Martin, the paper ran them on its front page.

Good luck to it. That's what news organisations do. Unless there's a very good reason not to, they publish what other people want to keep secret. And the embarrassment of the ABC's management and stars is certainly not a good enough reason to bury a cracking yarn.

But, according to a lot of people who should know better, that's what the ABC, and/or The Guardian, did with a much bigger yarn - buried it until the time was ripe, hoarded it until it could be dug up and tossed out, stinking, to embarrass the Abbott government.

On Wednesday, Alexander Downer said it was "passing strange" the Indonesian spy story was not run before the September 7 election.

Downer was echoing News Corporation columnist Miranda Devine.

That morning she'd claimed that The Guardian had "sat on its bombshell allegations ... for five months". And she knew why:

"This is the end game for the bleeding heart Left and its media enablers: to prevent the Abbott government from fulfilling its election promise to 'stop the boats'."

Her fellow News stirrer Andrew Bolt agreed: "Hatred of Abbott and his signature boats policy is driving much of this hysterical media coverage and damn the national interest."

And so did Fairfax's Paul Sheehan: "The Guardian had possession of the security leak for months," he wrote on Thursday. "Nothing happened while Labor was in power." Mark Scott's decision to run with the story "was consistent with, on his watch, the ABC's institutional hostility to Coalition policies on asylum-seekers ... The ABC has got what it wanted."

What addle-pated nonsense.

“

Unless you're Bolt, or Devine, or Sheehan. It's for them, not the ABC, that the politics matter more than the story.

Picture the scene: it's some time in July 2013. Alan Rusbridger, editor of The Guardian, is in a bunker deep beneath his paper's new offices in London's King's Cross, chatting on a super-secure, triple-encrypted video link to his good mate Mark Scott in Sydney.

"Mark, we've got a corker for you from this Snowden stuff. Your DSD tapping President Yudhoyono's phone. Spying on SBY."

"Hmm, sounds good, Alan, but you know we've got an election coming up down here. Everyone reckons that horrid Tony Abbott will get in and implement his nasty, cruel policy on the poor boat people. My heart bleeds for them. Let's hold off till he's trying to get his 'tow back the boats' policy past the Indons. That'll be the time to break your story."

"Good thinking. I'll tell the lads to put in on the backburner and rediscover it in November. Meanwhile, mum's the word."

Well, some of Bolt's more rabid followers might believe it. But to anyone who has worked in a serious news organisation, no matter what their political stripe, the scenario is utterly ludicrous.

What's a thousand times more likely is that for staff in The Guardian's undermanned New York office, wading through the hundreds of thousands of documents on Edward Snowden's thumb drives, a four-year-old power point presentation by Australia's Defence Signals Directorate (now the Australian Signals Directorate) didn't rise straight to the top of the pile. When they eventually took a closer look, they alerted head office, who alerted The Guardian Australia in Sydney, who decided the story would have more impact if they got the ABC on board.

If they had known about the document before or during the election campaign, it would have been an even bigger story, because the prime minister then, Kevin Rudd, had been the prime minister in August 2009 when the phone-tapping allegedly took place.

Of course, there's a legitimate argument about whether or not the national broadcaster should have co-operated in breaking a story that was bound to be damaging to the Australian-Indonesian relationship.

But the story was going to break anyway. "Mark Scott", wrote Paul Sheehan, "had a clear choice". So he did. He could have told his senior editors to turn down the scoop, wait until The Guardian had broken the story, and then follow it up as best they could. Or he could let them take the offered documents and run first.

To any real journalist, that's no choice at all. If it's legal, and it's verifiable, and it's not endangering lives, and it's not invading privacy or intruding on grief, and it's a huge story, you publish, and let the chips fall where they may.

Unless you're Bolt, or Devine, or Sheehan. It's for them, not the ABC, that the politics matter more than the story.

*Jonathan Holmes is the former host of Media Watch on the ABC.*



Joyce van Leeuwen (left) and FABC member Dorothy Collings

# Canberra's Century Celebrated in Literary Style

Canberran, Dorothy Collings is one of our wonderful members. This nonagenarian together with her near neighbour, Joyce van Leeuwen of not dissimilar vintage, were inspired by Robyn Archer's speech when she was appointed as the national capital's Creative Director for its Centenary in 2013.

These damsels live in Ingamells Street. Why is this special? Dorothy and Joyce already knew but nevertheless did further research. Ingamells Street is named for Australian poet Rex Ingamells born near Adelaide in 1913. So this year marks the Centenary of his birth as well as Canberra's. Ingamells Street runs off Gilmore Crescent a happy confluence as it was Dame Mary Gilmore who in her turn inspired Rex Ingamells to form the Jindyworobak Movement in the 1930s, an association of writers and poets (Ian Mudie, Nancy Cato, W. Flexmore Hudson, Gina Ballantyne, etc.) who wanted Australian culture and landscapes to be emphasised in the national dialogue. No more 'green and shaded lanes'.

Dorothy and Joyce letter-box-dropped their street suggesting a Street Party on 19th January 2013, the

centenary of Rex Ingamell's birth. They followed up with a door-knock, asking people to read one of his poems, or find a quote to share.

The day, conveniently a Saturday, dawned delightfully for the gathering of over 40 residents who heard our FABC member Dorothy speak of Rex Ingamell's life, while Joyce told of Eileen Spensley, his wife. Other residents recited Ingamells' poetry. Now the residents know one another, and share in each others' joys and sorrows; twins were born to a couple across the road barely a week later.

Joyce and Dorothy tracked down one of the Ingamells' sons, Graeme, who wrote back a charming letter in exquisite calligraphic script most appreciative of their interest. Throughout their research, Dorothy and Joyce discovered that all of Canberra suburbs' street names are themed: Garran's theme being Australian Literature. Charles Harpur is remembered in Harpur Place.

The official Canberra Cake chef, Janet Jeffs, kindly made her recipe available for the Centenary Cake, and Joyce made the cake for the gathering, and the day's celebrations incorporated two toasts, one to Rex Ingamells, and the other, naturally, to Canberra.

Since that day, the Garran girls have been published in the Canberra Times and local papers, and interviewed on ABC's Canberra station 666, by Alex Sloan on her Afternoon Show.

A small portion of Rex Ingamell's poetic justification for Australian-ness that was shared on that sunny Saturday last January below:

Did ever people raise to  
lofty places  
strangers with northern  
sunlark in their faces?  
Set alien professors to  
propound  
them ways of education  
so unsound  
that children growing up  
reached no discretion,  
but furthered still the  
alien obsession?



# State and Regional Branches

## National Web Portal links to all State Branches.

Go to:  
[www.friendsoftheabc.org.au](http://www.friendsoftheabc.org.au)

### New South Wales

Mal Hewitt (President) FABC NSW  
 PO Box 1391 North Sydney 2059  
 Phone: 9637 2900  
[malandal@optusnet.com.au](mailto:malandal@optusnet.com.au)

### ACT and Region

Margaret O'Connor  
 Phone: 0422 975 848  
[margoforte@hotmail.com](mailto:margoforte@hotmail.com)

### Armidale

Priscilla Connor (Secretary)  
 41 Judith Street  
 Armidale NSW 2350  
 Phone: 6772 2217  
[priscilla.connor@inet.net.au](mailto:priscilla.connor@inet.net.au)

### Blue Mountains

Margaret Foy  
 10 / 19-21 Fitzroy Street  
 Leura NSW 2780  
 Phone: 4784 1139  
 Mobile: 0425 233 450  
[Margaret.foy@bigpond.com](mailto:Margaret.foy@bigpond.com)

### Central Coast

Co-convenors:  
 Klaas Woldring  
 Phone: 4341 5170  
[woldring@zipworld.com.au](mailto:woldring@zipworld.com.au)

Paula Murray

Phone: 4385 3783  
 Mobile: 0428 578 535  
[paula.murray1@bigpond.com](mailto:paula.murray1@bigpond.com)

### Cowper

Joyce Gardner  
 7 Royal Tar Crescent  
 Nambucca Heads NSW 2448  
 Phone: 6568 7532  
[fabccowper@gmail.com](mailto:fabccowper@gmail.com)

### Eastern Suburbs

Nizza Siano (Secretary)  
 16 Holland Rd  
 Bellevue Hill NSW 2023  
 Phone/Fax: 9327 3423  
[nizzamax@gmail.com](mailto:nizzamax@gmail.com)

### Great Lakes and Manning Valley

Margaret Gardner  
 49 Carmona Drive  
 Forster NSW 2428  
 Ph: 6554 9181 (H)  
 6591 3704 (W)  
[margaret.gardner@tafensw.edu.au](mailto:margaret.gardner@tafensw.edu.au)

### Hunter

Allan Thomas  
 c/o PO Box 265  
 Merewether NSW 2291  
 Phone: 4930 7309  
[allan.thomas2@bigpond.com](mailto:allan.thomas2@bigpond.com)

### Illawarra

Jan Kent (Secretary)  
 PO Box 336, Unanderra 2526  
 Phone/Fax: 4271 3531  
[jankent@hotmail.net.au](mailto:jankent@hotmail.net.au)

### Mid North Coast

Drusi Megget  
 24 Arncliffe Ave  
 Port Macquarie NSW 2444  
 Phone: 6583 8798  
[fabc.midcoast@gmail.com](mailto:fabc.midcoast@gmail.com)

Harry Creamer

PO Box 1888  
 Port Macquarie 2444  
 Phone: 02 6582 6187  
 Mobile: 0431 158 252

### Northern Rivers

Dr Richard Gates  
 PO Box 64  
 Evans Head NSW 2473  
 Phone 02 6682 5161  
[ragates@netspace.net.au](mailto:ragates@netspace.net.au)

### Victoria – FABC

Glenys Stradijot -  
 Campaign Manager  
 GPO Box 4065  
 Melbourne VIC 3001  
 Phone: (03) 9682 0073  
[fabcvic@vicnet.net.au](mailto:fabcvic@vicnet.net.au)

### Queensland – FABC

Ann McGrath  
 PO Box 1658  
 Toowong QLD 4066  
 Phone: 07 3870 7718  
[annmcgra@gmail.com](mailto:annmcgra@gmail.com)

### South Australia – FABC

Jessica Knight  
 PO Box 7158 Hutt St  
 Adelaide SA 5000  
 Phone: 0412 139 485  
[jessicajill6@gmail.com](mailto:jessicajill6@gmail.com)

### Western Australia – FABC

Ms Bobbie Mackley  
 PO Box 534  
 Subiaco WA 6904  
[fabcwa1@hotmail.com](mailto:fabcwa1@hotmail.com)

### Tasmania – FABC

Anne O'Byrne (Secretary)  
 PO Box 301  
 North Hobart TAS 7002  
 Phone: 03 6331 1108  
[anne@obyrne.name](mailto:anne@obyrne.name)



## Membership Form

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

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

**NOT for membership renewal  
 – use only if joining.**

Existing members please await reminder notice in mail on subscription due date.

Mr, Mrs, Ms, or Title	First Name	Last Name
(PLEASE PRINT)		
Partner Mr, Mrs, Ms, or Title	First Name	Last Name
Email	Partner Email	
Address	Suburb	P/Code
Phone (Home)	(Work)	Mob

Age  to 30  31-50  51+  I would like to receive my copy of Update Magazine electronically

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

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	1yr.	3yrs.
<input type="checkbox"/> Family/Household	\$20	\$55
<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$25	\$70
<input type="checkbox"/> Pensioner (or Pensioner couple)	\$15	\$40
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate (covers 3 people)	\$15	\$40
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate (covers 3 people)	\$60	-
<input type="checkbox"/> I would like to make a donation	\$	
<b>Total \$</b>		

I am paying by  cheque in favour of FABC (NSW) Inc.

visa  mastercard  money order

Card Number

Name on credit card

Expiry date

Cardholder Signature

Date