

UPDATE

Friends of the ABC (NSW) Inc.
quarterly newsletter

August 2013
Vol 21, No. 2

incorporating **Background Briefing** friends of the abc

Jonathan Holmes to speak

at our 2013 Annual General Meeting

Jonathan has just retired from the ABC after a 32 year career, much of it as Executive Producer of Four Corners, The 7.30 Report and Foreign Correspondent. It could be said that nobody knows the ABC better than Jonathan – his experience is vast, covering the ABC's flagship programs, but it has been in his most recent role as presenter of Media Watch for the past five and a half years that Jonathan has really made his mark, shining the searchlight into many dark recesses of the media in general and the ABC in particular. Alan Jones, Ray Hadley, or Rupert Murdoch and News Limited are easy targets for such a program, but it must have stretched friendships within the ABC itself when the national broadcaster was taken to task for poor or sloppy journalism, production or presentation. The trademark Holmes inscrutable gaze and ghost of a smile must have instigated some interesting conversations in the ABC cafeteria on Tuesday mornings.

At 1pm at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, Level 1, 280 Pitt St. Sydney on Saturday 21st September, hear Jonathan reflect upon his long career in

broadcasting with the BBC and ABC, his view on standards in the media, as well as sharing some fascinating stories and insights, now that he is no longer constrained by employment.

Born in Britain, Jonathan Holmes began his television career at the current affairs department of the BBC in 1971. He came to the ABC in 1982 as the executive producer of Four Corners, and filled the same role at Foreign Correspondent (1992-93) and The 7.30 Report (2001-02). From 1998 to 2000 he was the ABC's foreign correspondent in Washington D.C. He returned to Four Corners as a reporter in January 2003.

In 1988 he wrote, produced and narrated the documentary film Hoddle Street, about the 1987 Hoddle Street massacre, which won the top prize at the Banff Mountain Film Festival that year. He won a 1998 Logie Award for a Foreign Correspondent TV special report on the Balibo Five. He was finalist in the Walkley Awards four times, and in 2003 received the Silver Award for "sustained excellence over a quarter of a century" by the United Nations Association of Australia. 



Inside Update

From the President	2
Bring back Backchat	4
The ABC under the Coalition	5
Friends proposed policy on the ABC for Political Parties	6
ABC spends budget windfall	7
Media Watch needed to name and shame	8
ABC must show return on investment: Scott	9
Branch News	10
Friends of the ABC loses a great supporter	13
Sell the ABC and voters will make you pay	14
Exec adds to 'fear and loathing' at RN	15

DON'T MISS THIS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO
HEAR JONATHAN HOLMES ON 21st SEPTEMBER!

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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 where there are some menu items under "Be Active" leading to pages of information: *Who can I write to? What can I say?*

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From the President

THE ELECTION

With the announcement of the date of 7th September for the Federal election, the focus is now on whether the outcome will dramatically affect the funding of the ABC. Some local branches have already held their "Meet the Candidates" meetings, and others are planned. Friends of the ABC does have a detailed and precise wish list for the ABC, produced in full in this Update. I am grateful to Glenys Stradijot, Campaign Manager for FABC Victoria, for her work in producing this document, as well as the questionnaire for candidates, which is sent to every candidate, as well as to the political parties. The questionnaire can be found on the Friends of the ABC website. As to the outcome, it is clear that in recent years the ABC has been well supported by the Labor government, receiving increases in base funding as well as specifically targeted funding in such areas as Australian drama, children's programs and news and current affairs.

However, it should not be assumed that, in the event of a Coalition win, the ABC will be immediately privatised, commercialised or downsized, whatever Rupert Murdoch and News Limited might be demanding. Whilst Prime Minister Abbott would be under strong pressure from those on the extreme right to privatise the ABC, there would be equally strong advocates within the Coalition for a publicly funded broadcaster, particularly amongst those who represent rural, regional and remote parts of Australia. Also, the existing commercial networks do not want a privatised ABC competing with them for the diminishing pool of advertising revenue in the increasingly tough commercial marketplace.

As Darce Cassidy writes in this Update, "While possible funding cuts remain a concern, the biggest danger to the ABC is the possible introduction of advertising, probably masquerading as "sponsorship". The fate of Australia's other public broadcaster, SBS, shows how advertising can damage program diversity. Moreover, once the advertising habit is acquired, it can be

hard to give up, both for governments and broadcasters. It would be a tragedy if the ABC were to suffer the same fate as SBS".

THE FEDERAL BUDGET

It was pleasing to note that the Federal government responded positively in the May budget to the ABC's request for additional funding in the areas of News and Current Affairs (an additional \$69.4 million) and digital services (\$30 million over 3 years). FABC Branches have, over many years, played a very important role in reminding their Federal members of the importance of the ABC receiving sufficient funding to ensure that it is able to fulfil all aspects of its charter. You will find more details of funding increases in this Update.

NEVILLE JENNINGS RETIRES FROM NORTHERN RIVERS

It is with much sadness that I report the retirement of Neville Jennings from the position of President, Northern Rivers Branch. In 2001, Neville took on the job of rejuvenating and revitalising the branch, with the support of a fine executive team. Stretching from Grafton/Lismore to Murwillumbah, Byron Bay and up to the Tweed River, this large slice of the North Coast has seen many wonderful events and hosted many ABC personalities.

The pages of Update have always included fascinating examples of the creativity and imagination of the branch, especially in involving the wider community in FABC activities. This Update is no exception, with Neville's report of their recent "Celebration of Country" with its involvement of a community choir, bush poets, folk singer Sara Tindley, Tumbulgun Public School, and a journalism student from Griffith University. Neville and the Northern Rivers Branch have been an inspiration to other branches, especially in providing examples of activities which tap into other community events. Neville's leadership and ideas have been crucial to the success of the branch over the past 13 years. Thank you, Neville – you have earned your

retirement! Our thanks, too, to Ed Bennett, who has filled the position of branch treasurer, also since 2001.

STAFF-ELECTED DIRECTOR

This position, so ably occupied by Quentin Dempster until its abolition by the Howard government, has been filled by Matt Peacock, currently a reporter for 7.30 in Sydney. Matt began his career with the ABC in 1973 with This Day Tonight, before joining Radio National's Science Unit, where he initiated a forty-year long investigation of the deadly asbestos industry, recently dramatized in the TV series Devil's Dust. Following his election, Matt provided the following statement:

"I'm very pleased with the large voter turnout, which demonstrates

the strong support among ABC staff for the position, and I'm very grateful for their strong support. Historically, the ABC staff-elected director has played a crucial role in maintaining the strength and independence of the national public broadcaster and I hope to continue that tradition. As the ABC Managing Director Mark Scott has observed, today's media landscape is in turmoil and changing rapidly in the face of the digital revolution. We are very lucky to have such a strong, talented and independent Board at this time, and I look forward to working with them closely.

It is to be hoped that, should the coalition win the election, they do not again abolish the position of Staff-Elected Director!

FRIENDS OF THE ABC HONOURS TWO ABC VETERANS.

Please mark in your diaries 28th August and 21st September, when the Friends will recognize the journalistic and broadcasting achievements of two of the ABC's finest, Quentin Dempster and Jonathan Holmes. Quentin will be guest and speaker at the FABC Annual Dinner at Cello's Restaurant, whilst Jonathan Holmes, recently retired after 31 years with the ABC, the last five as presenter of MediaWatch, will speak at the NSW FABC Annual General Meeting, held at the Sydney Mechanics' Institute. Full details of each event, including booking arrangements, can be found in this Update.

Mal Hewitt
President, NSW Friends of the ABC.



Come and join Quentin Dempster at our annual dinner



Quentin will speak between courses with sufficient time to answer your questions.

Date: Wednesday 28th August

Time: Doors open 6:30 sit down 7pm

Location: Cello's Restaurant* in the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel 169 Castlereagh Street, Sydney

Cost: \$68 per person including two drinks

Bookings must be made via telephone to Joy 9502 2335 or Jason 9489 1420 or Paul 9888 3797

*Cello's restaurant was opened in 1927 and is now one of the last grand dining rooms in Sydney

Bring back Backchat...

By Tim Bowden

Highly esteemed broadcaster, mainly on radio, but presenter of Backchat on ABC TV, writes from retirement

I miss BackChat – it used to comment on radio matters as well as telly, and I have a beef about both.

First Radio National – yes I know, the sainted RN without which Australia would be a cultural wasteland. I also know that things can't stay the same all the time. (Mind you John Cargher had to die before RN bosses had the courage to drop *Singers of Renown* after three decades and more... not that there was much alternative as it happened.)

Every now and then the powers-that-be can't wait to get their hands on the shiny levers of change, and pull them about. This isn't all bad. The shake up at the beginning of this year did bring back *The Media Report*, which never should have been axed, so past mistakes CAN be remedied. Also God lost Her stranglehold on RN's Sunday mornings to some extent from 7 am, which I thought was a good move. In general the RN network did get a spring clean, which livened the old girl up a bit.

BUT – the scrapping of the half-hour specialist programs on Monday to Friday at 8.30am was a disaster. Now I never hear them at 5.30 pm, unless I think to pod them later.

The reason for this was to give Fran Kelly and the Breakfast team an extra half hour till 9am. Why? Look, Fran runs a great show and I am hooked on it. But it starts at 6am, and after two-and-a-half crackling hours, I for one need a change of pace, and Fran at the team probably need a break. On would come Norman Swan with the *Health Report* on Monday, and the rest of the varied offerings through the week at 8.30am. I am told that the ratings for

most of these dropped sharply, but this is admittedly hearsay.

However when you look at what had to happen to accommodate the shifting of this particular shiny-handled organisational lever, the story gets worse and in my view bizarre. To make room for the specialist programs, the current affairs icon *PM* (OK, declaration of interest, I was it's first Executive Producer back in 1969 when it started) had to be shortened to half an hour! Talk about put the clock back, we only had half an hour back in 1969, but in later years the program was expanded to include 10 minutes of news and 50 minutes of current affairs. This is still the case on the Metropolitan networks.

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I am not anti social media and use it myself. But in this case it is an abomination. Sometimes I hold up my arm to try and mask off the bottom of the screen to avoid seeing those distracting messages.

So what are RN regulars supposed to do if they want their full dose of *PM* in the evening? Wait till 6pm and change to another network? What kind of decision-making is that? Why would you encourage your listeners to go to another network to get a service you were no longer providing? Crazy is too kind a word to describe this change.



Apart from my own historical connection with *PM*, I think this is loopy. I have been writing and emailing (to Mark Scott and the Chairman of the ABC Board Jim Spigelman among others). These emails have been batted back to RN supremo Michael Mason, who countered with unapologetic blandishments – and how about this for a laugh – justifying the change by saying that poor Mark Colvin (after battling through the week doing a truncated *PM* for Radio National and then a full version from 6-7 pm for the Metropolitans) had been given an extended show of his own at 10 pm on Friday nights!!! Until recently he'd been doing all this while on dialysis for his failed kidneys. He'd have been better off with an early night. But willing horse that he is, I bet he never complained. I am complaining though at this weak excuse by Mason to justify slashing *PM* in the first place.

As I said to Mason in earlier correspondence, it's not too late to change this. We don't even have to wait till 2014. Just do it. End RN Breakfast at 8.30am, bring back the specialist programs to their old slot, and restore *PM* to its full time. Mistakes can be made. They can also be reversed. As my old father used to say, I have been 'farting against thunder' with the ABC on this one. I would welcome some input from ABC RN listeners to indicate that I am not just one voice crying from the wilderness.

NOW IT'S TELLY'S TURN

And in particular Q & A hosted by Tony Jones, a great show but marred by the inane Twittering across the bottom of the

screen that is distracting and irrelevant. I know that it is trendy to involve social media but in reality it simply detracts from the debate and cheapens an otherwise admirable program.

This is why. A good proportion of the tweets are just smartarse comments to get on screen. Even when Twitterers get around to commenting on debate itself, it has invariably moved on and the points being made are no longer relevant.

I am not anti social media and use it myself. But in this case it is an abomination. Sometimes I hold up my

arm to try and mask off the bottom of the screen to avoid seeing those distracting messages.

On two occasions I have emailed Tony Jones directly to point out the asinine effect of these pesky Tweets, but he has chosen not to reply. So I am taking this occasion to try again. Get rid of them Tony. They don't work. Be brave. Let the egocentric Twitterers complain all they like about the loss of their little wanks. They will not be missed by your wider audience, free at last to concentrate on what the panellists are actually saying.

It may be possible to market little curtains with Velcro tabs to mask the bottom of the telly screens while Q & A is on to obliterate the inanity. I tell you, I am seriously considering working on a production model, first for me, and then for Q & A viewers.

That's all for the moment. Ah – I feel much better now getting that off my chest. But I will be more gratified if RN gets its act together about returning the specialist half-hours to their former spots, and restoring PM to its full length on its home network. And get rid of those bloody Tweets Tony, they are not worth a spurt of goats piss. ☹️



Darce Cassidy

With a coalition victory likely in the coming federal election the ABC may soon be facing cuts to its budget and some more conservative faces on its board.

The ABC has been through this before and has managed to survive a few years of funding drought and a timid and conservative editorial policy.

While possible funding cuts remain a concern, the biggest danger to the ABC in my view is the possible introduction of advertising, probably masquerading as "sponsorship".

The fate of Australia's other public broadcaster, the SBS, shows how advertising can damage program diversity. Moreover once the advertising habit is acquired it can be hard to give up, both for governments and broadcasters. It would be a tragedy if the ABC were to suffer the same fate as the SBS.

In 1992 then SBS Managing Director Brian Johns moved programs in languages other than English, the core business of SBS television, out of prime time, just as advertising was about to start. The broadcaster turned is back on its key audiences and its priorities upside down.

By December 2003 Abd Malak, Chair of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia was



The ABC under the Coalition

complaining "The only people who like SBS-TV now are the cappuccino crowd – well-educated middle class people, it's sex and soccer I think". The dismissive, not to say insulting, response from then SBS Managing Director Nigel Milan was: "We're not going to cover the clog dancing from the Brisbane Town Hall".

The dreadful damage inflicted on the SBS by advertising caused former Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser to sign a statement which read, in part:

As the SBS Board and management have sought to increase audience share, languages other than English (LOTE) have been pushed out of prime time. Coverage of community events and customs on SBS-TV has declined. Meanwhile big money is going into a locally produced motoring program. The general is overtaking the special. Mainstream is

replacing multicultural. Not only is SBS-TV becoming less special, but it is also losing sight of the original idea of the service. The SBS should focus on the special needs of viewers,

rather than on selling consumers to advertisers.

If the ABC is to avoid the same fate as the SBS perhaps we should be talking to the Shadow Communications Minister. Malcolm Turnbull is said to be closer in his political views to Malcolm Fraser than to Tony Abbot.

In addition to the advertising issue we also need to preserve recent reforms including the new process for appointments to the ABC board and the retention of the staff elected member of the ABC board. ☹️

Friends of the ABC seeks from all political parties and candidates for the 2013 Federal Election:

1. recognition that a well resourced, innovative, *independent* and *comprehensive* national public broadcaster is of fundamental importance to Australian democracy and culture.
2. a commitment to support the ABC to –

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ maintain its independence from government and commercial influence and its integrity in all facets of its services and operations; ◇ inform, educate and entertain all Australians; ◇ contribute to our sense of national identity; ◇ reflect our cultural and regional diversity; ◇ maintain existing ABC services and networks; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ produce in-house high levels of quality Australian programming; ◇ restore specialist program units and services cut as the result of inadequate funds; ◇ provide a balance of specialist programs and programs of wider appeal, as required by the ABC Charter; and ◇ strengthen its international broadcasting.
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3. a commitment to –
 - a) increase the ABC's base triennial funding so that the ABC:
 - (i) is funded in a manner that ensures its independence from government;
 - (ii) can fulfil its charter responsibilities to a high standard and is Australia's pre-eminent broadcaster on all broadcasting and digital platforms;
 - (iii) has a strong presence in each state and territory;
 - (iv) produces in-house high levels of quality programming that reflects state and regional diversity;
 - (v) is adequately funded to deliver its charter responsibility of international broadcasting on all broadcasting and digital platforms free from sponsorship and advertising;
 - b) introduce an indexation system that maintains ABC funding in real terms and a mechanism that will guarantee the ABC will always be well-funded;
 - c) not change The ABC Act, including the ABC Charter, in any way which may diminish or weaken the ABC;
 - d) ensure the independence and integrity of the ABC Board by:
 - (i) maintaining a system of appointments to the board which ensures members are appointed on the basis of merit and their strong commitment to the maintenance of an independent and comprehensive national public broadcaster, and that the board is independent of political parties and the government of the day;
 - (ii) retaining the staff-elected director position on the ABC Board;
 - (iii) legislating for ABC Board transparency with regard to policy matters;
 - e) amend the ABC Act to ensure the Australian community retains full and free access, without individual cost, to ABC services, including its digital services;
 - f) maintain and strengthen the legislative prohibition of advertising and sponsorship on ABC broadcast and digital services, and prohibit commercial activities that risk the ABC's editorial independence;
 - g) ensure the critical mass required for the ABC to produce television programs that are creative and uncompromised editorially is sustained (i.e., the public broadcaster should not be reliant on purchasing programming from the private sector and program selection should not be dependent on commercial viability); and ensure that this critical mass is maintained in all program genres and in all states and territories;
 - h) replace the present systems of government assistance to private producers with one that delivers assistance in a manner that supports private producers without making it cost-ineffective for the ABC to produce programs in any genre in-house;
 - i) review the functions, operation and appointment process of the ABC National Advisory Council to enhance creative and quality community input into ABC programs and services;
 - j) maintain Australia's international television service as an ongoing service of the ABC, fully fund the ABC through the Communications portfolio to deliver international services on all broadcasting and digital platforms, and extend the prohibition of sponsorship and advertising on the ABC to all of its international services;
 - k) ensure the national broadcaster has access to transmission facilities, controls its transmission structure and has the transmission capacity to:
 - (i) fully participate in, and be at the forefront of, the technologically changing media environment;
 - (ii) provide all Australians (including rural and regional) full access to all ABC broadcasting services;
 - (iii) provide extra digital channels, for example an education channel; and
 - (iv) transmit international radio programming to at least Radio Australia's reach and extent prior to the closure of the Cox Peninsula transmission system.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Saturday 21 September 2013

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF FRIENDS OF THE ABC (NSW) INC. will be held this year at Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney (Between Park and Bathurst Streets) on Saturday 21 September 2013, commencing at 1.00 pm.

There will be an address, followed by a short tea break, after which the meeting will commence with presentation of reports, election of office bearers and general business. We expect the meeting to conclude by 4pm.



GUEST SPEAKER: prominent ABC presenter Jonathan Holmes, formerly of Media Watch.

The constitution provides that Committee positions including President, other office bearers and Committee members become automatically vacant and "shall be elected at each annual general meeting". Should you wish to nominate for the committee or for one of the abovementioned positions, please indicate by contacting James Buchanan on

9371 5621 or **jamesbuc@bigpond.net.au**.

We look forward to your attendance at this important meeting.



Nick Leys
The Australian 27 May '13

ABC spends budget windfall

THE ABC has received more than 1000 applications for a raft of journalism positions being filled as part of the \$59.4 million funding boost the broadcaster received at the last budget.

The funding covers news initiatives over the next three years, including the \$10m for news and current affairs announced in February that will fund in part the new fact-checking unit

and \$29.4m that was also granted for current affairs spending.

The backbone of those initiatives will be the hiring of 64 staff: 40 journalists and 24 crew. Of these, Queensland will receive 12 new staff members, NSW 14, Victoria six, Western Australia four, the Northern Territory three, South Australia two and the ACT one. The location of nine positions is yet to be determined while the remaining positions will be made up of part-time workers in different areas.

The new measures include the establishment of three metropolitan news bureaus in Parramatta, Geelong and Ipswich; more journalists and crew based in regional Australia; and a significant investment in new technology to keep up with digital platforms and smartphone technology.

The ABC began overhauling its news and current affairs operation a year ago to keep ahead of the changing habits of its audiences, with a focus on the growing trend for mobile platforms.

ABC News director Kate Torney recently told staff: "All of the rich original content produced by these new teams will feed into our existing news and current affairs services. That means that newsrooms, programs and, most importantly, audiences across the country stand to benefit because every story produced through these new initiatives will provide more opportunity for existing teams to focus on original journalism.

"In addition, the new technical support, equipment, crews, editors and producers will be pooled resources, available to all programs and newsrooms."

Media Watch needed to name and shame



Errol Simper
The Australian
13 May 2013

AT first glance, Media Watch (ABC1, 9.20pm, Mondays) is a breathtakingly ambitious project.

The ABC takes to the air for about 13 minutes a week and pontificates about the failings and journalistic evils of its competitors, whether radio, television or - increasingly nowadays - print. Some would, and many do, say the national broadcaster has a bit of a hide.

What gives the ABC the right, or the credentials, to allocate to itself the right to pass judgment on pretty well all things journalistic?

Who among us ever agreed the ABC should be the arbiter of whether media outpourings are right, honourable, just or proper?

Why do we - commercial television and radio, the News Limited and Fairfax Media newspaper stables and independent suburban and rural outlets - put up with it?

Why doesn't somebody yank the MW cable out of its socket? Why should we be subject to censure from these self-important, nit-picking, idealistic, unworldly, presumptuous pedants?

Well, MW has been in place for 24 years and we've probably put up with it because, over time, it has done immensely valuable work. It has nicked plagiarists galore. It has blown the whistle on corporate connections that have influenced commercial radio and (probably) television news and current affairs content. Seven network reporters have been caught pretending to be in Majorca when they were in Barcelona. MW has highlighted and examined media trends and done instructive interviews with media executives. It has sometimes done

courageous critiques of the ABC's own performance.

There have sometimes been critiques certain MW presenters concede were uncomfortable to do and which, on at least a couple of occasions, damaged internal friendships.

The program has made its share of mistakes, some of them understandable, some of them equally as foolish as the errors it weekly seeks to highlight and damn. Sometimes it graciously apologises for its lapses. Sometimes it seems to apologise rather reluctantly. It has sometimes descended into ongoing bickering and point-scoring over relatively minor matters. It has sometimes appeared to single out specific organisations (not least News Limited) for criticism, some of it wilfully not cognisant of the pressures and exigencies that applied to the perceived miscreant item.

We are, of course, talking at such length about the program because of the recent announcement that a former presenter, Paul Barry, is to replace the presenter for the past 5 1/2 years, Jonathan Holmes.

Such is the tradition and mission of MW that Holmes's imminent departure,

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For the record, Holmes says he's departing for no more sinister reason than that he feels he has been in the chair plenty long enough.

probably in early July, provides a natural window for discussion as to whether the ABC really needs to perpetuate MW's provocative existence.

An adjacent and esteemed colleague, Mark Day, discussed it here last week and concluded MW had become "irrelevant" and should be dumped.

The Australian's editorial (leading article) page also has discussed the matter and decided a media watchdog is vital. But it called on Barry to come up with something less "sanctimonious".

For what it's worth, we'd here suggest MW should remain part of the ABC schedule. Journalists, devils that they are, still try it on. Outrageous beat-ups are still to be found. Plagiarism hasn't entirely disappeared. Overall, and despite its failings, you lean towards the program being a force for moral and journalistic good. It was represented by at least one witness before Ray Finkelstein's much discussed print media inquiry as a particularly effective component in Australia's overarching media regulation mechanism. There's undoubtedly a swathe of opinion to the effect that so long as MW is there to name and shame, then the bulk of media will think twice about going totally over the top.

One exception to this must continue to be Darwin's Northern Territory News, once the proud employer of your correspondent.

The regular sparring between MW and the flamboyant NTN has become an entrenched Australian media tradition and nobody would be killjoy enough to seriously want it to end. An immediate problem, should the killjoys ever win, might be a proliferation in those weeks when MW might not find anything much about which

to become haughtily disapproving.

For the record, Holmes says he's departing for no more sinister reason than that he feels he has been in the chair plenty long enough. He says he has enjoyed his stint and believes MW's continuation is essential.

Encouragingly, he says he has found comparatively few examples of the Australian media being grossly unfair to individuals. Media misdemeanours are, he says, far likelier to involve undue corporate influence over editorial material and plain

old-fashioned mistakes. He backs the claim several presenters have made before him, to the effect that MW is a far more difficult televisual proposition than it looks. And he believes Barry to be a good choice as his replacement.

Holmes, 65, will more fully expand on his accumulated views about the media and media regulation when he delivers the annual Henry Mayer memorial lecture at the University of Queensland on Thursday.

Finally, we note that, since his reappointment, Barry has often been

described as "of the Left". The scribe must be unobservant or naive because Barry's leftist tendencies seem to have passed him by.

Barry's first MW tenure was marked by a courageous willingness to scrutinise ABC programs and the broadcaster's hierarchy, not least its then chairman, Donald McDonald, and managing director Jonathan Shier. It was a willingness that, in November 2000, resulted in Barry's contract not being renewed. Well, it's been renewed now. 

ABC MUST SHOW RETURN ON INVESTMENT: Scott

Nick Leys
The Australian 15 May '13

ABC managing director Mark Scott has warned staff of the need to "demonstrate strong returns to audiences" to secure ongoing additional funds in yesterday's budget for news and digital services beyond 2015-2016, the last year of this triennial funding package.

Scott wrote to staff this morning welcoming the results of this budget, despite looming cuts to its television and radio divisions after the current three-year funding cycle.

The 2013-2014 budget released yesterday sees the ABC receive an additional \$59.4 million over three years to expand the "depth and quality of our news and current affairs in the digital era"; and an extra \$30m to deliver digital media services, such as the provision of the popular iView service.

As in previous budget years at the beginning of the triennial funding cycle, the ABC has three years to convince the incumbent government that additional funding has been well spent and should thereafter be included in the general operations budget.

The reality for the public broadcaster is it will have to negotiate the next

rounds of funding with what is likely to be a coalition government primed to make cuts.

"The additional tied funding for news and digital services is allocated for three years only through this budget allocation," Scott told staff.

"We will need to demonstrate strong returns to audiences for this investment to demonstrate why this funding should be continued beyond the 2015-16 budget. I am confident we will be up to this challenge."

Scott said the ABC had achieved this from the last triennial funding package.

"The money we were given in the previous tri-funding allocation (and continuing in this one), was well spent," he told staff.

"Our audiences have seen great returns for the investment in new Australian drama, the ABC3 children's channel and ABC Open. We have also demonstrated our commitment to audiences by finding internal efficiencies and reinvesting savings in establishing important new services like ABC News 24, iView, digital radio



ODOMETER TEE-SHIRT
(at your nearest ABC shop)

programming and a host of new apps and websites.

"We also argued that in an uncertain media environment, continued strong funding in the ABC is a key to ensuring quality content, the delivery of Australian stories and a commitment to local journalism and broadcasting.

"The federal budget represents a pleasing funding result for the ABC in what has clearly been a difficult budgetary environment." 

Branch News

Mid North Coast

FRIENDS HEAR FROM ROB OAKESHOTT

Retiring independent MP Rob Oakeshott was the guest speaker at a recent FABC Mid North Coast branch function. President Drusi Megget said the group wanted to hear from Mr Oakeshott while he was still the MP for Lyne.

“We’ve been lucky to have had Rob Oakeshott as our MP in such historic circumstances. He understands the vital importance of the ABC as an independent source of information and news, and has always supported us in our efforts to promote the ABC”, Ms Megget said.

“The forum attracted a record number for this type of event (around 80), with people eager to hear Rob talk about the hung parliament, the machinations that made it so challenging and the role he played”, she said.

Questions came thick and fast and included the future of the ABC, attempts to change the media laws, the NBN, and the intense and at times unconscionable pressure Rob came under from conservative elements in politics and the media.

“While we are sad that Rob is not standing again, we acknowledge his tremendous efforts on behalf of us all, and thank him for all he has done”, Ms Megget said.

Ms Megget said that whoever wins the election, the ABC must continue to receive the budget funding it needs to deliver across all platforms. The ABC Board must be left to do its job without political interference.

“We will oppose any attempt to destabilize or politicise the ABC, attack it for ‘political correctness’ or drag it into phoney culture wars”, Ms Megget said.

FABC is inviting new members to join the group – for further information please contact Drusi Megget on 6583 8798, or send an email to fabc.midcoast@gmail.com

Hunter

ADVANCE NOTICE – ROBYN WILLIAMS FOR HUNTER FABC

Hunter FABC, in co-operation with the University of Newcastle, have arranged for Robyn Williams to speak at the University of Newcastle between 11:30 am and 12:00 noon on Wednesday 16th October. His

speech will be part of the Science Faculty’s annual Expo in the Great Hall which will run from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. The Expo provides a convenient forum allowing interested people and prospective students to find out about the courses offered by the Science Faculty.

We had originally planned for Robyn to speak at a stand-alone event at the University for local FABC members and University staff and students. But then the idea of incorporating it with the annual Expo seemed more attractive. It will allow us to advertise the FABC to a much wider audience and hopefully attract new members, including young members. The University have agreed to incorporate FABC into their advertising for the Expo, including our FABC logo. We will operate a table strategically placed in the foyer of the Great Hall with pamphlets and enrolment forms. We will have our FABC banner mounted at the foot of the stage during Robyn’s speech and the Hunter FABC president will introduce Robyn and briefly explain what the FABC does and urge people to visit our table and perhaps join.

We believe this event offers an excellent opportunity to attract new members who otherwise might never have heard of FABC or considered joining. We will be advising local FABC members directly closer to the event but urge them to keep the date free.

Allan Thomas

President Hunter FABC

Northern Rivers

On Wednesday 17 July, the Northern Rivers branch hosted a “Celebration of Country” event at The Regent Cinema, Murwillumbah. The aim of the event was to recognize the ABC’s contribution to the quality of life enjoyed by people in rural and regional Australia. The audience of around 100 people watched excerpts from ABC documentaries on the big screen. The video excerpts came from the “Great Southern Land” series, Paul Lockyer’s poignant report on Lake Eyre, the documentary “After the Deluge” – a report on the Brisbane floods - and a short ABC Open video from the Riverina area on the Women’s Land Army.

In between the videos there were live acts by country folk singer Sara



Harry Creamer, Drusi Megget, Rob Oakeshott, Chris McLoughlin, and members of the FABC Mid North Coast Branch

Tindley, the Chillingham Voices Community choir and recitations by bush poets. Representatives from Tumbulgum Public School accepted an award for their entry in the ABC Open Video Postcards project and a student from Griffith University accepted an award for her entry in the branch's Junior Journalism competition.

The Northern Rivers branch will hold its Annual General Meeting at 1 pm on Sunday 18 August at the Mullumbimby Ex-Services Club in Dalley Street, Mullumbimby. Lunch will be available from 12 noon at the club bistro. Branch members are encouraged to attend this important meeting as two long-standing executive members (Neville Jennings and Ed

Bennett) will be retiring and a new executive will be required to keep the branch active. It is hoped that sub-branch convenors will be appointed in areas such as The Tweed Valley, Byron-Bangalow, Lismore-Ballina and Grafton. Nominations for all positions and RSVPs for attendance at the AGM should be forwarded to the Returning Officer (leonie.jennings@gmail.com).

Central Coast

At its recent "Meet the Candidates" forum, the following issues were raised and questions asked.

What are your and your party's policies on the following issues?

1. RE: poor reception of the ABC on the Central Coast, both TV and Radio. One third of our members have long had reception problems with the ABC which are not experienced by other, commercial broadcasters. We suspect that this is the case with all Central Coast citizens. A Public Broadcaster should have an excellent reception in a region of 310,000 citizens as it will also be relied on in times of natural disasters. We have no guarantee that the change-over from analogue to digital transmission will improve this situation. The problem appears to be that the ABC needs to purchase more spectrum and that the regular, ACMA, is not prepared to provide available



Northern Rivers "Celebration of Country" Event. Above left: Members and Tweed Residents at the Regent Foyer. Above right: Neville Jennings addresses the audience at The Regent. Bottom left: Tumbulgum PS accepts Video Postcards award. Bottom right: Chillingham Voices choir performs.



Branch News

spectrum for this purpose.

2. We have heard about proposals by a Liberal Party unit, such as the Victorian Branch, that they support the privatisation of the ABC, as proposed by the Institute of Public Affairs. The Friends of the ABC strongly oppose such proposals and also have campaigned consistently against advertising on the ABC in any form. Furthermore, The Friends have long advocated that the ABC and the SBS continue to be funded properly from public revenue to ensure that they remain Independent broadcasters able to fulfil their charter obligations. Although the Opposition leader Toby Abbott has indicated that he does not support the privatisation of the ABC, should the Coalition win the forthcoming election, we want to hear from all candidates what their position would be in relation to the ABC and SBS.

3. In recent months the balanced reporting of the ABC, which the Friends and the general public expect from the ABC, has been lacking in some key programs. E.g. the Drum program (TV) has been dominated by supporters of the Coalition and the Institute of Public Affairs; a recent program of Four Corners on Ray Hadley misrepresented contributions made by Mike Carlton, which he

later exposed in the Sydney Morning Herald; the 7.30 Report, with anchor persons Leigh Sales and Chris Uhlman has shifted in favour of the Coalition. A good example of this was the interview on 4th July on the Insulation Batts Program following a Coroners Report on the Program and the four fatalities. We expect the ABC to be reporting on such issues in a balanced fashion.

Klaas Woldring,

Co-convenor FABC - Central Coast.

Blue Mountains

The Blue Mountains Friends of the ABC membership is remaining steady at 102 financial members. With a Federal election in September we are hoping that an increase in awareness from the general public regarding the future of the ABC may translate into increasing membership. Our Branch has planned a Meet the Candidates Forum for Saturday 10th August at 10.30 am at the Grandview Hotel Wentworth Falls. I must say that we had a few nervous moments when a late Leadership change occurred in the ALP and it became clear that the new (again) PM., Kevin Rudd, was going to change the date of the Election from 14th September as announced at the beginning of the year by the former PM Julia Gillard. There was a collective sigh of relief when we realised that we didn't have to change the date of the Forum.

Indications are that we will have a good attendance to hear our speakers; Sen Doug Cameron ALP, Cate Faehrmann Greens, Susan Templemann ALP, Danielle Wheeler Greens. The Coalition MP Louise Markus sent apologies, owing to a previous engagement in the Electorate. However Ms Markus sent a Policy Statement to present to the gathering on Saturday.

The Federal seat of Macquarie is regarded as a marginal seat in this Election, so many eyes are focused on both the Candidates and their Party's Policies in 2013.

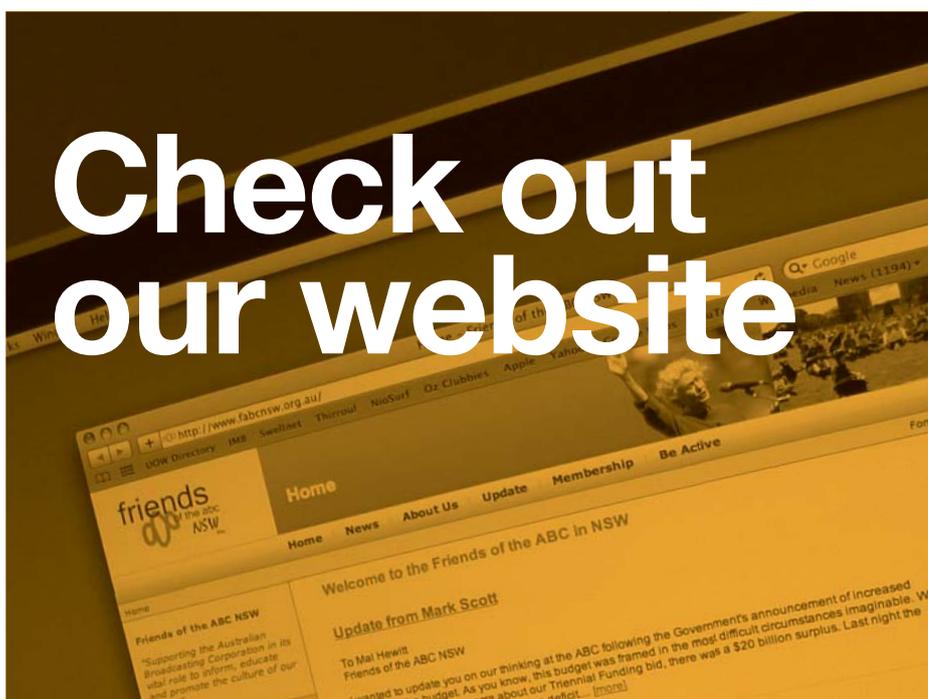
Our Monthly Meetings have been well attended this year, with a busy Committee organising the planned Speakers and Events. We decided to change the format of our meetings this year, and now we spend half the time on the formal business items, and follow that with some type of ABC related activity to stir the brain and produce many chuckles! So far it is been well received.

We feel privileged that the Staff Elected member of the ABC Board of Directors, Matt Peacock, will be the Guest Speaker at our AGM on 16th November 2013. Matt has been a respected journalist at the ABC for many years, and his most recently acclaimed Documentary / TV Series " Devil's Dust ", an expose of the Hardies/Asbestos human tragedy, has received several Awards.

Margaret Foy

Pres. BMFABC

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www.friendsoftheabc.org.au

Friends of the ABC loses a great supporter

LINDA CAPRICE VOGT EVANS, AM, one of the many stalwart members of Friends of the ABC in NSW, died in April 2013, aged 90. Linda Vogt was a powerhouse in the Classical Music world in Sydney.

From when she was appointed as a flautist to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (formerly the ABC Sydney Studio Orchestra) in the middle of WW11 when in her late teens, this remarkable woman commenced a musical career that was as broad as it was deep. Her parents were both accomplished pianists, and named their daughter Linda for the title role in Donizetti's "Linda di Chamounix" and Caprice for the title of an organ composition by Arcadelt.

Her son, Peter, said in his eulogy for his mother: "... the shaping of her early childhood occurred amid an abundance of music - but it also coincided with the Great Depression, to which, I believe, her subsequent frugal and self-disciplined way of living can be attributed."

Linda and Colin Evans (the flautist sitting to her right in the SSO) married in the early fifties and had a son and daughter, Deirdre.

Through the years she developed quite a reputation as a soloist, she performed regularly with Musica Viva and the ABC, following which she enjoyed a stint of Jazz playing, earning herself the nickname "Hot Lips" in the process. A little later Linda Vogt started a monthly meeting for professional flute players, effectively master-classes, and from these developed the Sydney Flute Society. In her efforts to make Classical Music available to everyone, in the mid 70s she created Zephyr Music, the sheet music company, still owned and run by family.

Linda Vogt became a widely respected teacher to many students



“ She lived by these convictions and was never afraid to make them known. ”

over many years, and as Peter said when referring to her teacher: "Barklamb's confidence in Linda's potential was well vindicated over the following years. The pride she felt in that confidence shown by her teacher lasted all her life. And I think that many of her students have, likewise, felt empowered by the confidence she showed in them."

Peter Evans goes on to explain the mastery of her teaching techniques with how he himself learned from his mother: "She got her desired results from students by being able to explain to them what they needed to do in clear, simple, & practical terms. For example, she would say to me "well for one thing Pete, you

can't play the flute properly with your knees locked like that; and rotate your pelvis (grab hips – tuck your bum under – like you are sitting on a bar stool) to better support the diaphragm or else you won't have enough air. Without enough air how are you going to play the flute?"

These postural adjustments initially made me feel self-conscious because I felt I was standing like a chimpanzee but, immediately, my strength and depth of tone and breath-control improved! So, her flute teaching was grounded in a technical, analytical, scientific and anatomical approach, but she also had the rare ability to infuse musical artistry. This is what made her a great teacher."

In 1989, Linda Vogt was awarded an AM for her services to music, a fitting tribute to a lifetime's commitment.

Peter Evans' eulogy covered many more aspects of his mother's life and beliefs, but of particular interest to FABC members: "She saw well-funded, well-functioning public institutions (like public schools, public hospitals and the ABC) as foundational to our democratic, humane society, and divisions based on social status, gender or any other arbitrary distinctions, as corrosive of it. She lived by these convictions and was never afraid to make them known. For this, she should be, and will be remembered as a contributor to tolerance and social cohesion not just in the music community but further afield as well."

Vale Linda Vogt Evans, AM.

A great loss to both the musical community and the wider community – I knew her well (Ed.)

Angela Williamson, with acknowledgement to Janelle Clark from the Blue Mountains Branch. July 2013



Sell the ABC and voters will make you pay



Errol Simper
The Australian
27 May 2013

IT'S disturbingly clear that one of Tony Abbott's principal problems, should he be prime minister after September 14, might be to keep his loony Right in check.

Peter Reith and many others have made it clear, for example, they believe the Opposition Leader's industrial and workplace policies are "too timid" and want a tougher, more employer-friendly regimen. This is despite John Howard's Work Choices (probably costing the Coalition the 2007 election and in the knowledge that Abbott's embrace of Work Choices was reluctant.

Now we read, courtesy of John Ferguson in *The Australian* (May 22), that some in the Victorian Liberal Party have advanced a motion to "review" tax-funded public broadcasting, with some wanting to disband it. The saving grace to this lunatic suggestion was the inclusion in Ferguson's story of this, from an Abbott spokesperson: "It is not Coalition policy to examine privatisation of the ABC." Thank the Deity for that.

The motion was withdrawn on the weekend and deferred until the next State Council. But this outcome has no material effect of this missive because what we do know is that the ABC will almost certainly not be privatised under an Abbott government, and probably not under any government.

Can you imagine big commercial media players - Gina Rinehart, Kerry Stokes, Lachlan Murdoch, James Packer, John Singleton, et al - whooping with joy as they're informed a fraught advertising market is about to collapse under the burden of additional layers of commercial channels?

In truth, privatisation of the ABC is so unlikely that we gave a good deal of thought to the wisdom of granting oxygen here to what is a maniac idea. On the other hand, it seems increasingly likely that in the run-up to September 14 this kind of philistine nonsense is going to be trotted out every time an ABC interviewer or question put to a potential Coalition office-holder seems destined to generate a further asinine tirade about how criminally left-leaning the public broadcasting sector identifiably is. The paranoid loonies are going to spy a complex web of leftist conspiracy on every occasion public broadcasting asks a conservative politician anything much beyond "How are you today?"

It's true some public broadcasting arms don't help themselves in being prissy and so pseudo-progressive you almost collapse with laughter. It's also the case that every perceived gaffe from Tony Abbott seems to generate a kind of adolescent glee inside the ABC, rarely proportionate to the magnitude of Abbott's perceived error. He's regularly implied as a scary figure and some would do well to replay that obsessive blogger, Katharine Murphy, once a political commentator with *The Age* newspaper, now with *The*

Guardian online. Murphy reduced ABC News 24's *The Drum* to startled silence a couple of months back by calmly describing Abbott as a nice bloke. Those who know Abbott, rather than the demonised construct, would be aware Murphy was right.

We're probably getting away from the point. The thing is that those advocating an end to tax-funded public broadcasting are also advocating an end to a sizeable chunk of the country's creative and artistic reference points. To speak glibly of privatisation is to simultaneously say valuable specialist ABC radio outlets such as Radio National and Classic-FM should be left to sink in a ratings-driven commercial environment. It's to say ABC television's more thoughtful items should be discarded in favour of quiz shows and reality television. If the ABC became entirely ratings-driven, it would rapidly and inevitably come to resemble precisely what we already see on commercial free-to-air television via the Ten, Nine and Seven networks. People who want to privatise public broadcasting are effectively saying Australia isn't a nuanced nation. They're saying there's no room for minority audiences. They're saying that, at a time media ownership diversity has been under intense scrutiny, ownership diversity should be diminished.

It gets forgotten that there's but a solitary owner of commercial broadcasting. Just the one: the corporate dollar. Always remember commercial television isn't truly,

fundamentally, there to please you, the consumer. Its primary aim is to please them, the corporates who'll spend advertising dollars. If the corporate world doesn't like a program and won't advertise in it, you won't see it.

Those advocating privatisation, or even part-privatisation, are saying at least three other things, none of which is logical nor even creditable. They're saying they want a potential Abbott government to last just the one term. They're saying regional and rural dwellers, typically reliant on ABC

radio, simply don't matter. And they appear blissfully oblivious of those regular ABC appreciation surveys that so frequently suggest more than 70 per cent of media consumers regard the ABC as money well spent. This latter point plays into why a government that destroyed the ABC would last only until the end of the term in which it passed its destruction legislation. But it's nonetheless worth mentioning.

Finally, we should note that the editorial in last Thursday's The Sydney

Morning Herald seemed to support some kind of part-privatisation. We stress "seemed" because, despite reading it three times, your humble correspondent found the editorial muddled and difficult to comprehend. What's a "Clayton's subscription?" What's "non-core premium content?" Who's to judge what's "premium?" It would be good, with enormous respect, if the SMH could this week find the time to translate its editorial into English. 

Exec adds to 'fear and loathing' at RN

Sally Jackson
The Australian 27 May 2013

THE appointment of a new manager at ABC Radio National has added to a mood of "fear and loathing" among some staff amid fears the station faces further cuts in jobs and programs, a shift to more outsourced content and a change in emphasis to pursue a younger audience.

Louise Evans, a former managing editor and commercial editor of The Australian, started as manager of RN this month, with staff still reeling from the culling of 13 of their colleagues, the axing of the network's drama department and the cancellation of programs including *Airplay* and *The Book Reading* at the end of last year.

One source, speaking on condition of anonymity, described people within RN as "scared".

"They don't believe the cuts are finished yet," the source said. "They believe if they speak out of line they will be targeted."

Another unnamed staff member said: "No one there is opposed to change but the way it is being done is totally appalling. Fear and loathing is the mood there at the moment. Their major concern is people will not be able to do the detailed and complex work that is the hallmark of RN."

Views inside RN are mixed, with others describing changes at the network as "welcome" and even "overdue". However, even some of those who were generally supportive expressed concerns.

"The network has gone through a lot

of changes ... which now need to be bed down and people want to find out what the results will be," one said. "It isn't groundbreaking news to say people on the inside are worried about budgets."

Demonstrating how sensitive ABC management is over the RN overhaul, after Media outlined the issues raised in this report with network representatives and asked for comment, director of radio Kate Dundas sent a lengthy email to staff on Friday warning them about "what may appear in The Australian as a negative article about Radio National".

In the email, Ms Dundas said RN had moved to shore up the 40-54 demographic as "the network was facing an ageing and declining future" and that refreshing its schedule had "reinvigorated and reinforced RN as a place for the cultivation of ideas and creativity". There were "no plans to make any further resource changes" to the network, she said.

Ms Dundas said RN was "totally committed to original specialist programming made in-house but also believe our audience benefits from a curated experience which includes our own programming and a select few programs from elsewhere".

One concern among staff is over the imminent move to consolidate RN's operations, currently spread over two floors at the ABC's Sydney headquarters, into one open-plan space. In a survey of 72 staffers by the Commonwealth Public Sector Union, which represents ABC employees, three-quarters said the

move would damage their efficiency and productivity.

Another concern is the much delayed launch of the Creative Audio Unit, which was announced nine months ago to fill the void in drama programming but has now been put off until some time next year.

"Radio National is a unique and internationally respected radio network. It has built a strong reputation and audience following because it makes well researched, specialist programs," said Sindy Ealy, the CPSU's ABC national organiser. "Under the model ABC management is planning we are not confident this will continue."

The union's concern was echoed by some staff, with one decrying a "major cultural shift ... to change the nature of RN".

"RN has a place in the intellectual and cultural life of Australia that is unique," the source said. "They're slowly dismantling what was something unique."

ABC Radio group program director Michael Mason rejected the concerns, saying RN was being given "the biggest capital injection in 20 years with new, multiplatform, state-of-the-art studios in Sydney and an office upgrade". "We have been through a fairly rigorous process of assessing the network's sustainability and the network is in a strong position for the future because of that review last year," he said.

"We are absolutely committed to the CAU. It is an ongoing project and we have a lot of faith in it."

Ms Evans declined to comment. 

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National Web Portal links to all State Branches.

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