

2015 Broadcasting Excellence Award Marian Arnold – Classic FM



Ed Davis, Marian Arnold and Mal Hewitt on Award Night in Ultimo.

Tribute to Marian: A Living Treasure

Ed Davis
NSW Vice President

It is impossible to think of any other radio presenter who has won so much affection and love. For years, the ABC has been flooded with cards, letters, emails and phone calls to Marian, with listeners expressing their appreciation of her music but above all for her engagement with each on a personal level. Marian built and maintained deeply satisfying relationships with her audience.

Marian is of course a Living Treasure. Born in sea-side Brighton in England, she

migrated to Australia with her family at age 7, and grew up in Orange, New South Wales. She was born with a love for music. Listening and experimenting were threads in her early years. After completing a BA at the University of Sydney, she taught music at Ascham High School for two years before seeking to make music her career. Her engagement with music has included singing, playing the violin and Middle Eastern Dancing.

After singing with the Sydney Philharmonia Choir, then heading off to England for further voice training, she discovered in her late twenties that her voice would not sustain a singing career. Serendipity in the saddle, she saw an ad for a classical

music presenter at the ABC, applied and won the job. There followed a sparkling, 34 year career at the ABC. The first regular presenter of weekday morning music and then on to Listener Requests, which had languished before her magic touch. She built this into a top rating program and a must for music lovers. Marian presented and produced the program, answered the calls and made the tea, and all with seemingly the greatest of ease. She brought perception and warmth to her presentations of live broadcasts and mischief and fun to her contributions to Classic FM Top 100 events.

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Update

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Who to write...

Anyone seeking basic information about writing to persons of influence might find it helpful to go to www.fabcnsw.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 Editor (and NSW President)

Welcome to the first fully national edition of Update, in which you will find content from all states and the ACT. A national Update is only one aspect of an historically unprecedented level of co-operation between the State Branches, as they work together in a national campaign in defence of the ABC in the leadup to the 2016 Federal Election. Following the National Conference of ABC Friends in Adelaide in July, state presidents now engage in a fortnightly telephone hookup; there is a sharing of initiatives, resources and ideas; states are moving towards a national membership fee structure; state branches are supporting the national office in Melbourne; we have a highly respected National Spokesperson in the former Senator Margaret Reynolds from Tasmania, ably backed up by Ranald Macdonald from Victoria, whose press releases and letters to the media are proving a very effective outreach to the Australian community. For administrative and organizational reasons, State Branches will always be essential to the operation of Friends, but we now have a true national voice in supporting our national voice, the ABC.

THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

Half-page ads in The Age and Sydney Morning Herald were the first shots fired in a campaign which will run to the next election – those ads resulted in new members for Friends and substantial donations to the Fighting Fund, which is approaching \$150,000. Ranald Macdonald, Convenor of the Friends Action Committee, reports to us in this Update, but 2016 will see an increase in awareness raising of the importance of the ABC to all Australians, as well as reminding us of what has been lost already as a result of the savage cuts in the first two years of the Abbott government. Our campaign will also aim to counter the relentless stream of misinformation and bias emanating from the Murdoch press as they prosecute their campaign against publicly funded broadcasting. The message to politicians must be clear and unequivocal – 85% of

the Australian population trust the ABC and believe that it is an essential part of our national landscape. Give it the funds so it can do its job!

ANOTHER TRIENNIAL BUDGET

The ABC is currently preparing its submissions and requests to the Government for the next triennium, and the Turnbull government budget, handed down in May 2016, will be critical to the future of the ABC. We have a new minister in Mitch Fifield – it is hoped that Friends representatives will meet with the minister in the very near future, but we must always remember that Prime Minister Turnbull, as minister responsible for the ABC under Tony Abbott, glibly stated that \$200 million in cuts to the ABC could easily be absorbed by "back office efficiencies," without affecting programming. He even repeated it on a Q&A program with a straight face!

FAREWELL WALTER BASS

I was privileged last week to speak at the funeral of Walter Bass – Bassie to all who knew him. If anybody can claim to have founded Friends of the ABC, it was Bassie. Friends was launched at a public meeting at Anzac House, Sydney, in 1978, and Bassie became its first president, a position he held for the next 20 years, and from which he fought tirelessly and with great passion and determination for his beloved ABC. Further tribute is paid in this Update, but we extend to his wife Corin, sons Jeremy, Martin and Christian, and other family members our deepest sympathy in this time of great sadness and celebration of a great life well lived. We remember, too, the life and enormous contribution of another great fighter for the ABC and many, many other causes of social justice, Sister Veronica Brady, who recently passed away in Western Australia.

MEDIA REPORT AXED

In another of those utterly incomprehensible decisions by the management of Radio National, Richard Aedy's revealing, insightful and informative Media Report has been axed. At a time when all media should be under far closer

scrutiny in order to detect and expose commercial and political influence and interference, and all manner of bias, the ABC closes down a program which for many was compulsory listening. No intelligent rationale for the decision has been offered, and we have the usual assurances from management – “the issues will be taken up in other programs.” We can be sure, though, that, as with the closure of other essential programs, they never are!

BBC WORLD SERVICE GETS £289 MILLION

We can only look on in amazement, and some envy, at a Conservative government on the other side of the world that has just given the BBC 289m pounds over 5 years as part of its strategy to strengthen the UK’s “soft power.” The Cameron government is aiming for “a secure and prosperous United Kingdom, with global reach and global influence,” and acknowledges that part of Britain’s soft power is the BBC’s reach into “some of the world’s most remote places, providing a link to the UK for individuals and societies.” BBC Director Tony Hall said “The World Service is one of the UK’s most important cultural exports and one of our best sources of global influence.” No doubt the BBC will be broadcasting enthusiastically into our region, abandoned by the Abbott government when it closed down Australia Network and emasculated Radio Australia. So much for Australia’s “soft diplomacy!”

ABC TV TO LIFT LOCAL CONTENT

Friends who are sick of yet more repeats of British television shows on the ABC

will be relieved that Richard Finlayson, ABC Director of Television, has promised to lift Australian content in prime time to 60%, from an all-time low of 42%. Comparisons are interesting – the BBC has 84% local content, CBC (Canada) 73%, TVNZ 43%. Other parts of the plan include: “a culture of high performance and continuous improvement;” a restructure of commissioning; a return to investing in longer run series and “program brands;” international partnerships with broadcasters and distributors like AMC and Netflix; and working closely with ABC Commercial to better maximise returns on programming. It surely cannot come soon enough!

BROADCASTING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

NSW Friends each year recognizes the contribution of an outstanding broadcaster, and the award is presented at our end-of-year celebration at ABC headquarters in Ultimo. Recipients in 2014 were Sean Dorney and Jim Middleton, both of whom were made redundant as a result of the government’s cuts to ABC funding. Awardees in 2015 were popular Classic FM presenter Marian Arnold, who retired last month after 34 years with the ABC’s classical music network, and veteran 702 Sydney presenter and writer Richard Glover. Marian received her award in Sydney last week (covered in this Update.) Richard’s will be presented early in 2016.

2015 - A TOUGH YEAR FOR THE ABC

We are reminded almost daily across the many networks and platforms of the ABC that 2015 has been the toughest year in

the history of our national broadcaster as it struggles to maintain essential services despite the loss of 400 staff so far, and another 100 still to go. This Update contains news and pictures of the many activities across the country by our members which have been a powerful expression of the community’s outrage at the government’s treatment of the ABC. Thank you to all who have taken to the streets, or made contact with your local member (especially Coalition members) through letter writing and personal visits. Our National Campaign will strive to remind the government that it continues to ignore the voice of the people at its own electoral peril!

We applaud the passion, the commitment and the activism of local and state branches, and the leadership of many hard-working leaders and committee members in mounting community protests. Our National Fighting Fund will provide funding and resources to support the branches and state groups in 2016 as we make the ABC a significant election issue for all political parties. The crisis facing the ABC has brought together ABC Friends across the nation in a way that would have made Walter Bass proud of the fledgling organization that he established in 1978, but it is challenges such as the one that we now face which brings out the best in all of us. In these challenging times for the ABC and for Australia, I hope that you can all find time in the festive season to share some joy and love with others. Thank you for your support.

Mal Hewitt

President, NSW & ACT Friends



Fees to increase for NSW & ACT Members

From 1 July 2016 the ABC Friends NSW & ACT membership fee structure will change to align with other states. It has been so long since membership fees increased in NSW & ACT that no one can remember the last time they changed! If we are to take the fight for the ABC seriously we need the funds for appropriate campaigns and we think it’s important that ABC Friends’ members throughout Australia pay the same membership fees.

The new fee structure from 1 July 2016:

- Single membership for one year \$30 and \$80 for 3 years
- Household/Organisation membership for one year \$50 and only \$100 for 3 years!
- Single Concession/Low Income membership for one year \$20 and \$50 for 3 years.

Members who have already renewed for 1 or 3 years will not be affected by this change until they are due for renewal again.

Tribute to Marian: A Living Treasure

continued from page 1

There is an old expression 'tears before bedtime'. On Sunday, 11th October,

2015 there were tears before lunchtime, as Marian signed off after her last program, in which she had shared some of her most memorable experiences at the ABC with her listeners. ABC switchboards ran hot, email servers collapsed and Australia Post braced itself for heavy lifting. So many

wanted to tell you how much you have meant to them and that they will miss you. Marian, you have opened up music to so many. You have shared the joy you find in music and your warmth has enriched our lives. ABC Friends thanks you and salutes your sparkling career.



2015 Broadcasting Excellence Award

Marian's Response (excerpt)



... my ambition was always to allow my listener to actually experience/live in and share the glorious mystique of that world ...



Let me say first of all, many, many thanks to you for presenting me with this wonderful award. It means a lot to me on several levels.

My father was a radio man, and I was his 8 year old daughter, snuggled under the bedclothes with my magic radio. Radios, oscilloscopes, TVs, gramophones and tape recorders in all states of repair were the backdrop of my childhood. ABC Radio in Orange, where I grew up, was a lifeline of culture for my parents; I became Achilles 31 in The Argonauts' Club; In our household, no Sunday morning was complete without Ralph Collins and 'Sunday Morning Concert'. Because music was the driving passion in our family.

So you could say the die was cast. When I did my very first audition for my job at ABC Classic FM, I felt I'd come home.

Classical Music broadcasting is traditionally the poor relation in the context of the greater ABC, and that is another way in which I'm especially pleased about this award. Journalists of course have extremely important roles, and might expect to receive awards for their difficult and sometimes dangerous work... but I am not a journalist, I have always been purely and simply a music broadcaster.

Some see this role as an opportunity to de-mystify the world of classical music. I have never been of that view... my ambition was always to allow my listener to actually experience/ live in and share the glorious mystique of that world... In my 34 years of music broadcasting I have attempted firstly to understand my listener's world, and then to share it with others. And for myself, the challenge - and it's a challenge that can be met in many different ways- but that challenge is of course to go right out through the microphone and straight into people's lives.

ABC Classic FM's "Listener Requests", or "Your Concert Choice" as it was originally known, was something nobody wanted when I took it on. And weekends at the time rated very poorly. That all changed, because behind the closed door of my office I constructed a very vibrant work

life with our listeners. Taking Requests on, and staying with it for 25 years, has repaid me 1000 fold, and I am now very moved, not just by the quantity of letters and emails I've been receiving on my retirement, but by their huge variety.

In the last dozen years or so it's become a radio cliché that we speak to just one listener... For those of us on air that's something you learn very early, but over the years my thought has been that we must go further and name that listener... Because that one listener is Everyman. Everyman, and Everywoman. In one is all, in all is one. And therein lies the beautiful and challenging paradox of radio.

So my own particular world of radio, made up of me, my listener and the music has been truly wonderful. Arriving at the ABC every day to work on my listeners' letters for all those years was quite something. And of course, I've loved speaking to my listeners in all the contexts in which I've been a broadcaster.

There are a great many pleasures I glean from the honour of this award. I love the great institution of the ABC, and I am passionate about its survival and growth in rather uncertain times. I particularly appreciate that through me, the Friends are recognising and honouring the role of classical music in ABC broadcasting. And I have to say that I derive much personal satisfaction from knowing that this award recognises what I've tried to bring to the realm of music as both presenter and producer for my entire career. I have been invited to retain my links with ABC Classic FM through broadcasting our live-to-air concerts, and I'm very happy about that. I still firmly believe in the magic of radio, and my goal from the very beginning of my career was to be a good and faithful servant of the ABC.

To all of the Friends, may I close by saying how much the ABC appreciates your existence and your work on our behalf? I am truly honoured by this award, and will always treasure it. Thank you very, very much.

The full text of Marian's response may be found on www.fabcnsw.org.au





for an ABC Friends Political Party

Graeme Connelly
President, ABC
Friends Victoria
– an opinion piece



As President of any organisation, it is probably incumbent on the office holder to take a step back at least one time during the course of the year and reflect on where the organisation is headed and whether that is the right direction. In terms of the ABC Friends, this requires us to be unflinchingly honest about our achievements, but also our failings in our quest to be both honest critics but also vigorous defenders of the ABC.

If we pause to consider what the Friends is all about and why we attract such vehement support from our many members over a long period of time, this includes the primary goals of both defending the ABC from crippling funding cuts... critiquing the current policies as promulgated by the ABC senior management, but also attempting to persuade the two major political parties to restore the resources that have been cut over a significant period of time so that our National Broadcaster can fulfil its charter obligations to both the City and the Bush.

My major motivation in this article is to ask the really hard questions, which so often in the day to day planning and activities consist primarily of responding to the latest crisis or announcement - and consequently risk being overlooked.

Namely - how successful have we been with our strategies and rallies and letters to the editor in achieving our ultimate goals and mission?

A long term member recently offered me the following observation regarding ABC Friends' strategy - Einstein's definition of madness, namely: *Repeating the same thing over and over again but expecting to get a different outcome.*

Of course, any realistic and fair evaluation of the success of the Friends in both critiquing and defending the ABC is

beyond the capacities of any one onlooker, and certainly beyond my limited capacities and judgement, and would at the very least require exploration of a notoriously difficult subjunctive-conditional and hypothetical:

How much worse would the current plight of the ABC be if not for the energetic intervention of the Friends over the last twenty or more years?

Having strayed into these somewhat philosophical conjectures let me remove my President's hat for a moment to answer the strictures of a stern hypothetical critic who might demand an answer to the following relevant question:

"How can you envisage a scenario in which the ABC Friends is successful in persuading either of the two major political parties in restoring or increasing funding to the ABC?"

After considerable rumination, I can only answer that question with the following hypothetical proposed solution.....Imagine, if you can, that when consideration of appropriate funding comes before the cabinet or select committee in either Government, the following scenario plays out. The Minister for Communication in whichever party holds power federally... *The Minister is forced to negotiate with a couple of independent senators who either hold the balance of power in their own right, or in an alliance with a small group of fellow independents.*

Crucially, these parliamentarians who punch well above their weight also belong to a single issue party called THE FRIENDS OF THE ABC POLITICAL PARTY, who managed to get elected in the Federal election of September 2016. This is one of the few possible scenarios I can envisage where a positive outcome for the ABC could be realised.

Is my hypothetical scenario beyond the realms of possibility? You are entitled to be sceptical but, then again, is the alternative strategy of persuading either of the two political parties to promise

NO CUTS TO THE ABC or TO RESTORE FUNDING TO THE ABC, but then to keep their promises when elected any more likely?????. POSSIBLY NOT!!!!

I know I am not alone in believing that the best way of ensuring that both parties take the funding of the ABC more seriously is to threaten them with a bigger stick than Rupert Murdoch currently wields, and now blatantly uses, to try to ensure that the ABC gets scant public support or respect in both parliament and the Australian media.

It could be persuasively argued that the only stick of sufficient size and heft that the ABCF could manufacture and use to influence either party to desist from selling the ABC short, instead of weakly pandering to NEWS LTD influence, is in fact the only thing politicians really lose sleep about - either fear of losing the perks of Government office, or the even stronger fear of failing to be elected at all.

It could be argued that the aims of ABC Friends will only be realised if we create a political party that represents our mission statement of reinvigorating the ABC, and allowing it back to its rightful place in Australian culture, and even the threat of such a scenario alone will make them sit up and take notice in a way we don't currently experience.

If any of our members agree with or disagree with the above sentiments, let me hasten to remind them that I expressed them personally and individually, so they don't reflect the supported or official policy of the ABC Friends (Victoria), but I will be happy to continue the conversation, and who knows what might eventuate if a groundswell of support for the idea emerges.

I would welcome your thoughts:
ghpconnelly@gmail.com.



Why so many ABC voices echo similar perspectives

The Australian
12 November 2015

Editor's note – Why an editorial from the Australian? The Murdoch press in Australia presents the greatest threat to the ABC, because of its relentless campaign against the ABC and its propensity for baseless and untrue allegations. As with the BBC in the UK, Murdoch sees the publicly funded broadcasters as the greatest threat to expanding his wealth, power and political influence. So, it is important that we know our enemy, to better enable us to fight him. Please read this, and then the ABC's response from Alan Sunderland.

ABC obsessions are confounding, to say the least. Peter Dutton was surprised yesterday to be pressed, yet again, over claims border officers paid people-smugglers. "Well," the Immigration Minister told Michael Brissenden on AM, "I dealt with this as recently as Sunday with Barrie Cassidy, who's obsessed with the issue as well." Eagerly amplifying any claims damaging to border protection policy — even (we kid you not) criticism from the odious North Korean regime — the national broadcaster reveals itself daily. It is less inclined to relay the success of the policy in stopping deaths at sea, freeing people from detention and opening up our humanitarian quota. Such ABC traits are often dismissed as bias. There was a similar predictability about the ABC's coverage of the trade union royal commission and claims it had been established to pursue Bill Shorten. There is no evidence to support this — in fact the revelations that drew the Opposition Leader into the hearings were unexpected — yet the claim was repeated as accepted wisdom by ABC journalists last weekend. Rather than simple groupthink, a more worrying flaw is fuelling Anty's jaundice. With all the platforms, programs and staff

at its disposal, we might expect the ABC to have prominent expertise over a range of fields. But who is the national broadcaster's expert on the trade union royal commission? Who is its expert on climate policy? Who at the ABC — apart from outside contributor Alan Kohler — is a recognised national expert on economics and commerce? Is there an expert on indigenous policy, foreign affairs or even law enforcement and crime? Anty does have Antony Green, a widely respected psephologist, but he seems to be the exception that proves the rule. The ABC no longer even has leading voices on national politics — the likes of Paul Lyneham, Kerry O'Brien or Maxine McKew of days gone by — but rather a stable of personalities dabbling in the area while, perhaps their wisest analyst, Chris Uhlmann, is underused.

“**Scott's successor must take the editorial role seriously.**”

For \$1.1 billion a year and with clear charter obligations we are entitled to expect better. In an effort to spread itself across the media landscape, from Twitter to 24/7 television news, the national broadcaster has forsaken depth.

Recruiting digital-savvy staff who are cheap and maximise access to content, it has forgotten the obligation to ensure the content has substance. The ABC has lost experienced and wise editorial heads along with the will to impose strong standards of reportage, scepticism and balance in its younger cohort. In a rudderless vessel, with few role models, the inexperienced drift and tend to echo the superficial green-left views of in-house opinion leaders such as Fran Kelly, Paul Barry and Jon Faine. This default positioning becomes entrenched when there is no editorial edict



for reporters to examine spin, test claims and look at issues from a mainstream perspective. Who, for that matter, should the recruits emulate? Would they model themselves on the practised detachment of late greats such as Andrew Olle and Lyneham, or the social media cultivation

of multi-platform personalities such as Annabel Crabb or Mark Colvin?

New board appointments are due and top of their agenda will be choosing Mark Scott's replacement next year as managing director. In his role as editor-in-

chief Scott has not asserted control. To steady the ship and protect the national broadcaster from sustained criticism, Scott's successor must take the editorial role seriously. The key is to impose high professional standards on journalists, editors and producers.



Director ABC Editorial Policies, Alan Sunderland, responds to The Australian

If only the leader writers at The Australian ("Why so many ABC voices echo similar perspectives") could step away from their computers, remove their ideological blinkers and actually listen and watch the ABC more closely. They might be surprised at what they find.

They might, for example, have tuned in to our exclusive and ground breaking reporting of union corruption on 7.30 and elsewhere.

They might have noticed our detailed and regularly updated Fact Check data which sets out all the facts and clearly declares Tony Abbott's vow to stop the boats as a "promise delivered".

They might note that Michael Brissenden's legitimate, important and probing questions to Immigration Minister Peter Dutton about the alleged payment of people smugglers only came after thirteen other questions about a range of other equally important issues. Holding the Government to account on matters of public policy has always been at the heart of the ABC's journalism.

As for our "missing" experts on important issues, they might have come across some of the ground-breaking, Walkley-award winning coverage produced across radio, television and digital platforms by our extensive National Reporting Team, including experienced reporters specialising in the environment, science, technology, rural and regional issues and a host of other dedicated rounds.

Alan Sunderland
Director ABC Editorial
Policies

12 November 2015



They might have noticed that alongside Alan Kohler, our business and finance team also includes decades of experience from a wealth of other reporters, editors, producers and presenters including Ian Verrender, Ticky Fullerton and Peter Ryan.

They might have noticed that, apart from having one of the nation's largest teams of specialist national rounds reporters, we also have Australia's largest team of international correspondents providing in-depth original reporting from around the world, in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Japan, China, Africa, India, the Middle East, the United Kingdom and the United States.

And if that wasn't enough to convince them of the ABC's commitment to depth and quality in both daily and weekly reporting, they might have noticed that we are alone among Australian broadcasters in delivering to audiences a comprehensive range of quality current affairs programs across radio and television. Programs like AM and PM, The World Today, 7.30 and Lateline, Four Corners and Foreign Correspondent, Insiders and Offsiders, Australian Story and The Business.

And if they were really adventurous and explored the ABC's online offering, they might discover that at the same time as we are maintaining our commitment to this traditional and traditionally unique range of quality television and radio journalism, we are also exploring new and important forms of journalism via our dedicated interactive unit, producing long-form journalism in new forms.

And while it is true that a generation of important and influential ABC journalists has moved on – greats like Andrew Olle, Paul Lyneham, Maxine McKew and (this month) Kerry O'Brien – if they lift their eyes to what is actually happening around them instead of taking refuge in tired assumptions they might notice a new generation of ABC greats already delivering some of Australia's best journalism: Sarah Ferguson, Chris Uhlmann, Leigh Sales, Barrie Cassidy, Sally Neighbour, Deb Masters, Phil Williams, Lisa Millar, Caro Meldrum-Hanna, Steve Cannane, Linton Besser, Josie Taylor, Mark Willacy, Matt Brown, Annabel Crabb, Mark Colvin ... We could go on. And on.

They might notice that the ABC is more heavily represented in next month's Walkley Awards, Australia's premier journalism awards, than any other media organisation: 26 finalists across 16 categories in radio, television and multimedia, including for social equity journalism, multimedia storytelling, coverage of community and regional affairs, sports journalism, radio news and current affairs journalism, radio documentary, business journalism, international journalism, daily and weekly current affairs, investigative journalism and more.

They might also notice the Newspoll survey that found 84% of Australians described the ABC as "valuable or highly valuable". And that 70% of Australians aged over 18 watch, listen or log on to the ABC each week.

They might notice all these things.

But first they would have to be willing to take off their blinkers and see.



THE AUSTRALIAN

Letter to Editor

It is important to challenge the way in which Australia's public broadcaster is meeting its Charter obligations

ABC Friends welcomed recent comments by Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss that management interference in regional radio programming was unacceptable and demonstrated just how Sydney centric the ABC has become.

We need to discuss how well the ABC serves regional and rural Australia communities.

We also need to question why ABC Sydney headquarters houses 51% of staff while there are ABC office closures and staff retrenchments that force programming changes without consultation.

But the editorial "Why so many ABC voices echo similar perspectives" (12 November) does not address these or other major issues affecting the future of Australian public broadcasting. It missed an opportunity to invite Australians to get involved in determining the priorities of the ABC to ensure it maintains relevance in a climate of media upheaval.

What kind of new leadership should take the ABC forward?

How can the ABC Board better promote community consultation?

When will the ABC prioritize Australian made television and free up opportunities for our film makers?

There is an exciting debate to be had about preparing the ABC for new opportunities.

We know the ABC is valued and trusted by Australians but we also know that it is at risk of being undermined by those who for ideological or competitive reasons aim to weaken public broadcasting in this country.

That is the where future Australian editorials should focus and ABC Friends look forward to this essential debate as we believe in the need for a strong and competitive ABC.

On behalf of ABC FRIENDS NATIONAL,

Margaret Reynolds

15 Wellington St, Richmond TAS

Ranald Mc Donald

The Moorings, Flinders VIC

Murdoch's Media Tax

John Menadue
Pearls and Irritation
blog

23 November 2015

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Rupert Murdoch complains that he faces unfair competition from a taxpayer funded public broadcaster like the ABC. Yet in effect, he imposes his own consumption taxes on consumers.

As consumers we make a contribution to Rupert Murdoch's empire when we buy goods and services. This is because the producers of those goods or services include the cost of advertising that is spent to help sell the product. The advertising

that Rupert Murdoch receives is loaded into the cost of the goods and services we buy.

Last year, over \$13 b. was spent on advertising of which about \$5 b. was for commercial TV and Radio, and more than \$2.5 b. for newspapers, which is an important part of Rupert Murdoch's media income. In broad terms we pay about \$1,500 per year per household for advertising. That revenue goes to media companies such as Murdoch's. Of the \$1,500 per year per household, about \$500 is for commercial TV and radio and \$300 for newspapers. This excludes the cover price.

So we pay about \$300 per year per household for advertising in newspapers and that amount is loaded into the price

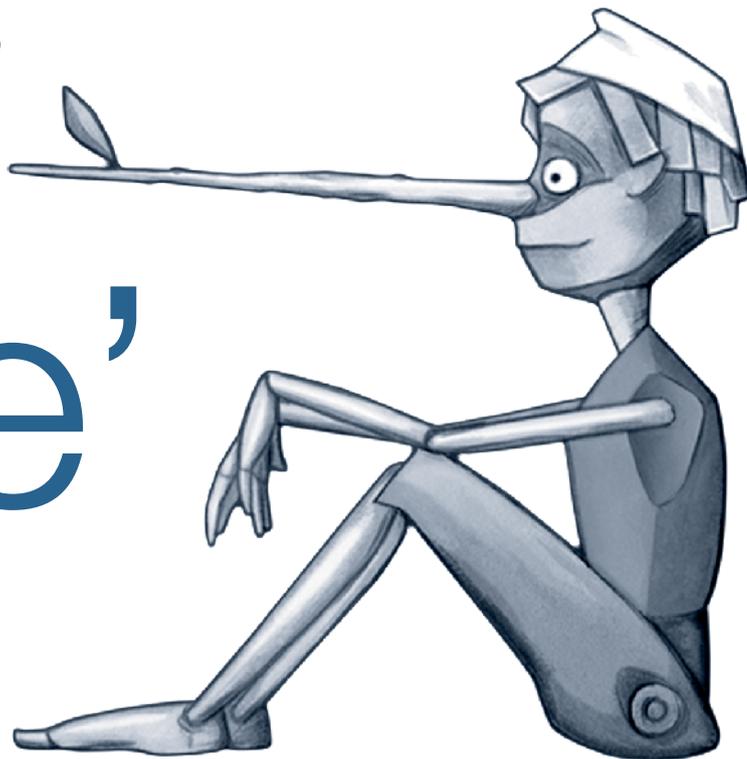
we pay for goods and services that we buy. With Murdoch owning about two thirds of metropolitan newspapers, this means that he gets about \$200 per year advertising revenue from each household. This \$200 is loaded into the price we pay for all goods and services. It is in effect a consumption tax which is a regressive form of tax. So in effect, my household pays about \$200 per year to Rupert Murdoch for newspapers that he produces that I scarcely ever read.

By contrast we pay about \$120 a year per household for the ABC through progressive tax.

In short, Australian households are getting a cheaper and better service compared to what Rupert Murdoch offers.

Q&A host Tony Jones says Zaky Mallah furore and boycott was based on a

'big lie'



Q&A host Tony Jones has spoken out on the scandals that engulfed the program in 2015, declaring that Tony Abbott's government boycott of the show began with a "big lie" surrounding the appearance of former terrorism suspect Zaky Mallah and descended into a "nasty political fight" with Jones and his colleagues uniting behind the scenes amid calls for ABC heads to roll.



In an exclusive interview with Fairfax Media - his first since the midyear controversies - Jones spoke of Mr Abbott's decision to ban ministers from the program after calling it a "lefty lynch mob".

"I'm not going to question [Mr Abbott's] judgment," he said. "It's really up to other people to make the call as to whether that was a breach of freedom of speech or whether it was an appropriate thing to do."

In the incident that sparked the boycott, Mallah told Liberal MP Steve Ciobo that, because of "ministers like him", many Muslims would feel justified "to leave and go to Syria and join ISIL".

Jones said: "It never occurred to me actually that what [Mallah] said - the intent of what he said - would be reversed [by some in the media]."

"Even though he's pretty extreme in many of his views, he is absolutely not a supporter of ISIS. Which, if you look at the front pages and you've got ISIS flags - I'm talking about the News Limited tabloids in particular - you've got ISIS flags with the

ABC logo on as if somehow this guy was backing ISIS terrorism or that he was in fact a member of ISIS or something along those lines ... he wasn't ISIS. So I didn't think anyone would turn around and say that he was.

"In the end, the big lie sometimes wins out in propaganda wars and there was a sense - a kind of general sense from people who hadn't seen the program or had misunderstood it - that we put on a program a guy from ISIS, deliberately. We didn't."

Jones said when it emerged that Mallah had previously made sexually threatening remarks about women journalists on Twitter, it was clear he had "plenty of other things to be ashamed about".

"The following week we made the point that, had we known about that, of course we would not have given him the opportunity to ask the question," Jones said. "In the end lots of issues got muddled in that particular period."

Jones said he knew "we were in a quite nasty political fight" - with two inquiries launched, including a continuing independent investigation.

But, behind the scenes, Jones and his colleagues decided on solidarity in the face of the onslaught.

"We took the view early on that this was a collective decision that we'd made, that if anyone wanted to blame anyone we were all equally to blame and that no single

person on the program could or should be singled out or scapegoated," he said.

"We're all pretty experienced journalists so I can say we understood the urgency of the matter but no one was panicking or arguing with each other behind the scenes.

"It was actually a pretty unified response and with cool heads ... we thought about how we could handle this.

"Obviously the ABC at a broader level was involved at a higher level so we had lots of meetings about it and in the end I think we behaved sensibly.

"The ABC behaved relatively sensibly and the government finally saw that we were taking it seriously."

Of the barrage of criticism from News Corp papers and columnists - specifically the cartoon mock-up of the ABC logo on an Islamic State flag - Jones said: "It was a combination of things. Yes, it was offensive but it was so absurd that it was also laughable."

Editor's note: The transcript of the program shows that Mallah's question was considered and inoffensive - it was Minister Steve Ciobo's response that was aggressive and inflammatory, producing the much-misquoted response from Mallah, but the whole incident shows our ambivalence on the matter of freedom of speech and freedom to discuss opposing points of view. Surely the ABC must always provide a forum where such discussions can take place.

Malcolm Turnbull as our new Prime Minister has promised a “more innovative, open and outward-looking Australia”. Such a country, though, needs a fully independent and properly resourced national broadcaster that can inform, analyse, entertain, and reflect the nation to itself and to the world.

Damage to the ABC during the Abbott Government years (and, of course, while Malcolm Turnbull was Communications Minister) has been extensive. Despite pre-election promises, cuts to the ABC have resulted in some 500 talented employees being lost to us, plus hundreds of millions of dollars taken from operational and programming budgets; yet the ABC must be able to compete in the rapidly changing media world.

The decision to break the ABC’s contract for the Australia Network has muted our Australian voice into Asia and the Pacific, and with it our capacity to understand and engage with these key neighboring countries.

The budget cuts have meant many programs and services have been

Support the rebuilding of your ABC



forced to close, or truncated, productions shelved, planning tentative and provisional, and ideas and people are going elsewhere.

Yet the ABC is required under its Charter to serve the needs of all Australians - through regional and rural coverage, authoritative news and analysis, drama, the arts, children’s programming, entertainment, documentaries, international reporting and sports.

Reduced funding has led to the centralisation of ABC operations in Sydney affecting reporting of issues involving rural, regional and provincial Australia – while lessening the influence of capital city centres.

Help us to restore the ABC’s capacity to inform, educate and entertain our nation and communicate with the world.

Lobby your Federal and State politicians to:

- Return funding to levels existing before the Abbott cuts.
- Ensure independent and transparent processes for appointment of ABC Board Members and the next CEO.
- Restore the ABC’s Australia Network contract so our nation has a credible voice in the Asia Pacific region.

Here’s what you can do to help

Join your local or State ABC Friends group, and work to build an ABC voice respected by all.

We need you, though, to give to the ABC Friends National Fighting Fund

NOW to allow us to defend our National broadcasters against those that continue to try and weaken them.

So, please become an ABC Supporter, or join ABC Friends, and donate either by going to our website:

www.abcfriends.org.au or, call campaign headquarters **(03) 9682 0073**, or mobile **0498 111 261**.

Go to our website or phone us to talk to a ‘Friend’ so you can help the ABC to flourish and provide what is needed –

independent, authoritative, strong and diverse voices.

And with top quality Australian programming for all.

Graeme Connelly

President ABC Friends Vic.
GPO Box 4065, Melbourne, Vic 3001

Mal Hewitt

President ABC Friends NSW & ACT
PO Box 1391, North Sydney NSW, 2059

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Encouraging start for Friends' National Campaign to protect and strengthen the ABC

Ronald Macdonald
Convenor, Friends
Action Committee



Sincere thanks to all who have supported our National Campaign so far, as we increase our membership and build a Fighting Fund so we can become a more effective organisation.

Membership around the country has grown and we are developing a healthy financial base so we can fight the good fight.

The ABC needs its 'Friends' now more than ever before. It is being assailed from all sides - and even from some of those who have been given roles of responsibility in supporting the independence and necessary funding of our National broadcaster.

In a nutshell - the ABC's budget has been cut, 500 jobs lost and of very real concern was the capricious decision of Foreign Minister Julie Bishop to break the 10 year contract of the ABC's Australia Network, which presented Australia to our Northern neighbours while ensuring this country had the best of foreign reporting so we knew what was taking place in Asia and the Pacific.

Our fund raising - to be absolutely honest - has been affected by the best story we had going for us. The broken promises

and continual attacks of former Prime Minister Tony Abbott and his Ministers. He gave us an obvious opponent and easy target.

Now, all are hoping that Malcolm Turnbull will right the wrongs of the past few years and his accession has blunted our fund-raising efforts.

BUT, all should remember that the funding cuts and the pressuring of the ABC Board occurred while Malcolm Turnbull was Communications Minister. And, where was he when the Australia Network was taken away from the ABC with its role now substituted by the Murdoch broadcasting interests?

Advertisements and social media initiatives are being prepared and our campaign will unfold in the New Year prior to the next election.

Further, the triennial funding negotiations start from a lower base and with over half the employees of the ABC in Sydney or nearby.

Under its charter the ABC is required to provide quality programming to serve the interests of all Australians - rural, provincial,

young and old of whatever backgrounds. It is meant to set the gold standard for drama, news and documentaries, children's programming, the arts and international reporting.

How can it do this when funding is reduced while more needs to be spent to embrace new technology and be able to compete in so many fields?

All this happened under Minister Turnbull's watch.

Further, there has been the constant attacks from ideological, political, commercial and other opponents who would benefit from a weakened ABC. These are consistent, bitter and apparent to all.

So - we (the ABC Friends) plan on using the social media to ensure that all generations understand what the ABC means to Australia, to organise our army of friends around the country to educate the politicians of all hues about the importance of an independent, properly funded and dedicated broadcaster - and to fight for a stronger and better ABC serving all Australians.

Advertisements and social media initiatives are being prepared and our campaign will unfold in the New Year prior to the next election.

So, please, if you have not joined the Campaign, given financial support to the extent you can, or told your friends about what we are doing - NOW IS THE TIME.



Badge Up for Your ABC

To order please go to: www.fabcnsw.org.au/fabc/merchandise.php

Amanda Meade
The Guardian
November 3, 2015

The ABC spent close to \$50m on redundancy payments to staff last financial year as a result of the Coalition's \$254m budget cut.

The annual report for 2014-15 reveals the broadcaster paid out \$47.1m in redundancy and separation payments up to June this year compared with just \$3.8m in 2013-2014.

The ABC says the job losses amount to around 300 so far but the Community and Public Sector Union puts the figure at 430, including the 80 people who lost their jobs when the government withdrew funding for the Australia Network.

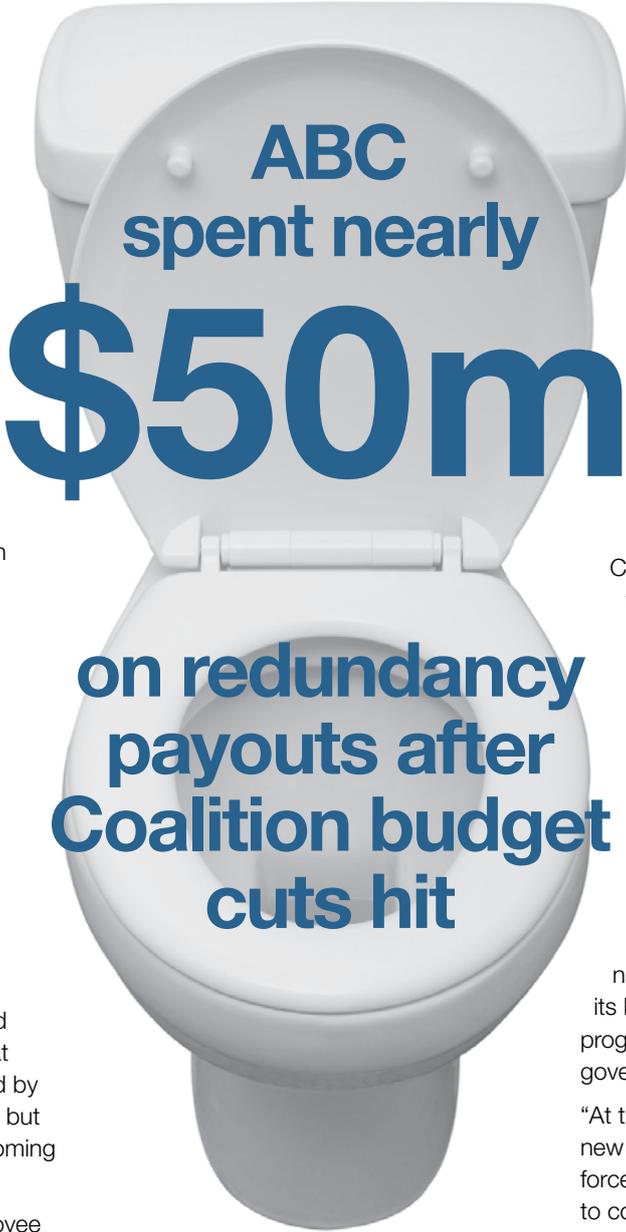
The redundancy bill will be high again next year as there have been more job losses since June, including 41 jobs cut in the technology division and more to come. The report warned that the five-year program of cuts imposed by the Abbott government started gently but would "ratchet sharply upwards" in coming years.

According to the annual report, employee benefits totalled \$530m, including \$366m in wages and the remainder in superannuation and leave.

"With the first impact in 2015-16 of the \$206.8m funding cuts over four years, coming on top of the 1% funding cut and the cessation of the Australia Network contract in the May 2014 Budget, the ABC is in the process of implementing a number of efficiency savings initiatives targeting support functions in order to address the decline in funding from government," the report said.

"Implementing these savings involved significant upfront redundancy and restructure costs, with overall savings to be achieved over a number of years."

The ABC was allocated \$1.11bn in the 2014-15 financial year, which includes around \$200m for analogue and digital transmission costs. This leaves \$868m in general funding for four TV channels



ABC
spent nearly

\$50m

on redundancy
payouts after
Coalition budget
cuts hit

– ABC TV, ABC2, ABC3, ABC News 24 –and five radio networks – ABC online, iView and educational and ABC Open services.

The most popular shows on ABC television were: the 2015 Asian Cup final between Australia and South Korea; New Year's Eve 2014: Midnight Fireworks; local dramas Anzac Girls and The Doctor Blake Mysteries; and New Tricks.

Consistent with the drop in linear television audiences overall, the ABC's ratings were down slightly from the year before but ABC Television's average weekly reach last year was 9.4m people, or 58% of the five-city metropolitan market.

"The digital era is proving a boon for consumers but its disruptive impact on the media landscape is pronounced," the report said.

"It is made doubly difficult for the national broadcaster because of its budgetary situation. The five-year program of cuts announced by the federal government in late 2014 has begun.

"At the very time that it needs to invest in new audience strategies, the ABC is being forced to divert badly-needed funds back to consolidated revenue."

The ABC spent \$4.7m on consultants, the majority going on financial and strategic advice. A payment of \$42,135 was made to Shaun Brown, the former managing director of SBS who is reviewing the operation of ABC TV program Q&A. The other reviewer, broadcaster Ray Martin, has not been paid yet. The broadcaster also shelled out close to \$13,000 to the Australian Federal Police for a security assessment.

Funding for the ABC from the federal government has declined sharply in real terms in 30 years: the total allocation of \$867m for 2015-16 represents a decrease in real funding of \$299m or 25.6% since 1985-86, according to the chart ABC Operational Revenue from Government.

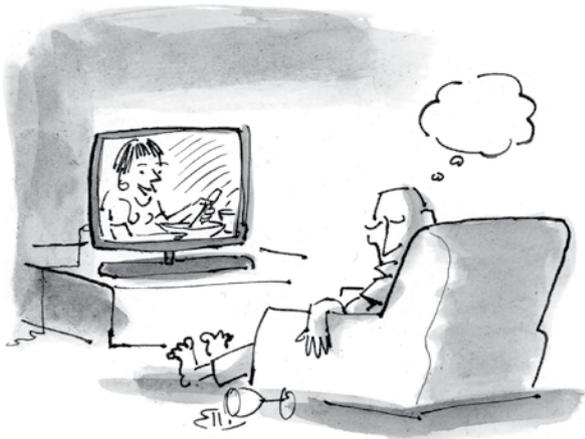
Opinion polls commissioned by the ABC show a large majority of Australians – 84% – believe the ABC performs a valuable role and produces quality content.



At the very time that it needs to invest in new audience strategies, the ABC is being forced to divert badly-needed funds back to consolidated revenue.



What's in, what's out for the ABC in 2015



Attacking Q & A as politically slanted is **OUT**.
Attacking cooking shows and home-building
programmes as appallingly tedious is **IN**.



Production budgeting for long-form
journalism is **OUT**. Producing a weekly
show of 'Best of' Tweeting bloopers is **IN**.

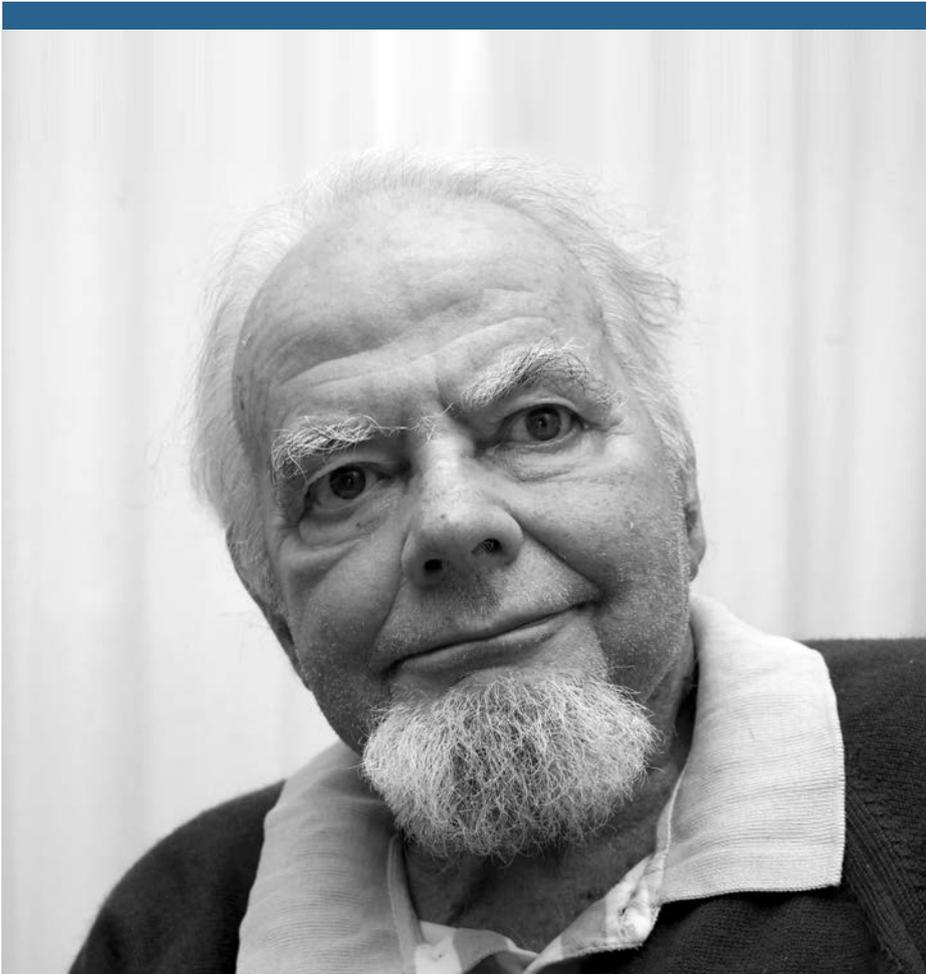


Watching breakfast television is **OUT**.
Watching television at 2am while taking
tablets for gastric reflux is **IN**.



Viewing Outdoors and Nature shows
is **OUT**. Going into the actual outdoors
and Nature is **IN**.

somerville



Maintaining the Rage Vale Walter Bass

Walter Bass (“Bassie”) passed away on 18th November, 2015, age 84. Angela Williamson, NSW Membership Secretary, interviewed Bassie in April, 2013, for Update. Here is that interview:

Founding President of the FABC NSW, Walter Bass, recently told us why he is so committed to the independence of the ABC. When threats to the ABC’s funding became manifest back in the 70s, and worsened through the 80s, he joined the thousands of others at rallies around Australia saying “enough”. “I was sick of what was happening to the ABC.”

“Bassie”, as he is fondly known by all, says he was one of many to instigate the Friends because the ABC was in need of friends, and because, frankly, “all decent countries have a non-commercial

broadcaster”. The groups of Friends gradually spread throughout Australia, and to this day provide confirmation of the deeply held view by the Australian public of the importance of the national broadcaster.

He believes that the independence of the national broadcaster must not be compromised by any form of advertising. The Australian public can be confident that in its relative balance the ABC provides an effective counter-measure to the excesses of the commercial sector. Any commercial broadcaster is automatically to some degree, at the behest of its advertisers.

Our Founding President is now an octogenarian who came to these shores from Vienna as a young lad with his family immediately pre-war. His father had spent a year in a concentration camp and upon release weighed only 38 kg. Wolfgang

Bass was a Civil Engineer for the Main Roads Department. Bassie too worked for MRD as a surveyor, before joining the Sydney Water Board.

Bassie met his wife, Corin, shortly after her arrival from Auckland in the mid 50s to study piano. And Sydney has been home to them and their family ever since. Walter Bass is still active in his local community and is a treasured Life Member of our organisation for which he was President for a total of 20 years. The over-riding impression I had of Bassie, chatting with him that evening, was of his “fire in the belly.” He had every bit of it surging through his veins. His passion for the freedom of the press is undimmed, and for a fully funded ABC.

And from a letter to Update from Bassie in 2013: “Since that first well-attended meeting in Anzac House, Sydney, in 1978, Friends has become a national organization, demonstrating the importance of the ABC to all Australians. It is, in fact, indispensable. The ABC must not be commercialised – it must remain free from political and commercial influence.”

The Australian public can be confident that in its relative balance the ABC provides an effective counter-measure to the excesses of the commercial sector. Any commercial broadcaster is automatically to some degree, at the behest of its advertisers.

Walter Bass had a deep sense of the vital importance of the ABC as an independent, learned and free-thinking media organisation with the essential role of providing unbiased news and commentary to Australia and beyond. He had no illusions where the powerful, private media were concerned – they were consumed by self-interest, and not to be underestimated. The ABC’s role was the more important in this context. Walter dedicated enormous time and energy identifying threats to the ABC – there was no shortage! He committed himself to bringing together like-minded souls so that these attacks could be exposed and seen off. He was an utterly dedicated warrior as President and Life-long Friend of the ABC, and we are all deeply in his debt. 

From the National Spokesperson

2016 will be a significant year in which to speak out in support of our Public Broadcaster.

It will be a year to remind all parliamentarians that we expect them to value the ABC and its independence.

A new Managing Director will be introduced to the complex role of juggling priorities and finances while often under much closer scrutiny than other media.

ABC Friends will be active and constructive in ensuring that Australia retains the very best of public broadcasting.

Margaret Reynolds



Letter to the Editor from ABC Friends

Dear Editor,

The appointment by the ABC Board of the Corporation's next CEO is of major national importance.

The qualities needed would test an Abraham Lincoln.

He or she is required to be a visionary, committed to providing programmes of quality and relevance to all Australians, to be able to battle governments for the money required to fulfil its charter, to build public confidence in public broadcasting and to understand and embrace technological change.

On top of that, the successful applicant needs to have the strength and administrative skills to run a disparate organisation which gives an authentic Australian voice, both internationally and to its stakeholders - the country's taxpayers.

All this is made more difficult by ideological and competitive pressures,

and by the loss of the Australian Network and the penchant for budget cuts from Governments of both persuasions.

As the advertisement for the position stated: "Operating under Government Charter the corporation has a unique role in informing, educating and connecting all Australians."

Further, the new CEO: "Will have responsibility for ensuring ABC's success in augmenting and reinforcing a sense of Australian culture and identity."

May the Board, Chairman Jim Spigelman and (dare we say it) the new Prime Minister, who we suspect will not be far from the action, be guided by what is the best for all of us, rather than backing someone who satisfies personal priorities and beliefs.

On behalf of the ABC Friends,

Margaret Reynolds and
Ranald Macdonald



New ABC Board Members

Kirstin Ferguson and Donny Walford have been appointed non-executive directors of the ABC, in a move hailed by the government as boosting women's representation on the board.

Dr Ferguson is the former CEO of Sentis, a health and safety service provider for the global mining and resources sector and is currently a non-executive director of multiple boards, including the Queensland Theatre Company, Hyne Timber, CIMIC Group, SCA Property Group and formerly the Queensland Reds rugby team. She is a qualified

solicitor who is also an Adjunct Professor at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Business School and holds a PhD in leadership and governance.

South Australian-based Ms Walford is the founder of the Behind Closed Doors executive women's program and of the executive coaching business DW Bottom Line. She is a member of multiple boards, including the Heart Foundation of SA and KeyInvest Lending Services, and in 2003 was the inaugural CEO of the South Australian government's Defence Unit. She was also the chair of Australian Dance Theatre for four years.

Communications Minister Senator Mitch Fifield congratulated Dr Ferguson and Ms Walford on their appointments and said he "looks forward to the expertise they will contribute to the ABC board."

"It is important that the ABC board reflects both gender and geographic diversity and the addition of Dr Ferguson and Ms Walford will achieve these objectives," he added.



Above: Kirstin Ferguson.
Below: Donny Walford.



State News

ACT

ABC Action Kit

White paper carry bag with ABC logo painted on it or a bumper sticker or postcard

Contents

- ABC Friends national website and contact details including Facebook and twitter
- List of contact details for your ABC Friends branch head and committee members
- An on-going list of contact details for Federal and local politicians and Senators across all parties, the ABC Board, national and local media to write and email to
- Copies of any current petition in support of the ABC/SBS
- ABC information pamphlets (many people have little idea of all that our National Broadcaster does)
- I Love ABC postcards (great to also hold up for photos and at rallies)
- Bumper stickers (good on rubbish bins and baby buggies)
- Badges (easy conversation starters, can wear on clothes, hat, bag etc)
- A list of ideas for groups and individuals on ways to effectively use your ABC Action Kit

Groups

Talk to your book club, walking group, golf buddies, volunteer fire fighters particularly any country groups and give them whatever they need from your kit to empower them to make their voices heard.

Example

A mothers group could hold an ABC themed party. The children could dress

up as ABC characters, bring their ABC toys and play pin the badge on Pepper Pig.

Mums could then post photos of their party on their Facebook pages.

This would, most importantly, spread the message, that the ABC/SBS is in serious trouble, to people who may not know and inspire them to think up their own fun event and post it too!



New South Wales News

The NSW AGM on 26th September re-elected the long-serving, highly effective and extremely dedicated team of Ed Davis (Vice-President), James Buchanan (Secretary/Treasurer), Angela Williamson (Membership Secretary), Chris Cartledge (Webmaster), Jason Lowe (Events and Recruitment), Geoff Bran, (Minutes Secretary) and Committee Members Jim Grainda, Ireen Allanson and Ivy Walker-Smith. We welcomed two new members to the committee – Margaret Whealy and Gayle Davies, and farewelled former Vice-President Nance Loney. As NSW President, I am privileged to work with such a wonderful team, who devote countless hours to advancing the cause of ABC Friends in NSW. I must pay special tribute to Chris Cartledge, whose experience and expertise has been of immense value in establishing the National Office and website in Melbourne. I wrote last year that we are not immortal – we look forward to passing on our respective batons to new and younger member in the near future!

Mal Hewitt, NSW President



Pictures from ABC Friends NSW & ACT AGM . Above: That Blue Mountains Banner! Top left: Guest speaker Ranald Macdonald. Top right: Susan Buchanan – caterer par excellence.

Tasmania

PRESIDENTS REPORT 2014-15

Not an easy year for ABC Friends Tasmania as the impact of the 2014 Budget became evident with the loss of State Line, major staff cuts, more television repeats and quite outrageous attacks on the public broadcaster by senior members of the Federal Government.

In Tasmania the Committee has been active in challenging both government and ABC management. While the loss of financial resources is of course a Federal Government responsibility nevertheless neither management nor the ABC Board appeared ready to work with the community to see how best to minimize the impact on ABC audiences across Australia. The Sydney centric dominance of management decision making has resulted in severe cutbacks in state offices and regional Australia

Over the year ABC Friends has written to

- the Prime Minister and Minister for Communications and Treasurer expressing concern about the impact of Budget cuts in 2014
- the ABC Board asking why the Board accepted the decisions of Managing Director in regard to regional office closures and major staff reductions.
- the new Minister for Communications congratulating him on his new portfolio and recommending a fresh approach to valuing the national broadcaster

Our two committees in the North and South have been active in engaging members at meetings and market stalls with the emphasis being on

communicating with the community, providing detail of the way our national broadcaster is being undermined. Everyone have been encouraged to write directly to the Prime Minister and Minister for Communications and to local newspapers. Several excellent letters have been published in both the Mercury and Examiner

The Secretary and I spent two days in Adelaide discussing the ABC crisis with other state ABC Friends members. As a result a National Campaign of Public Awareness and Fundraising was launched in June. Tasmania is very ably represented on the Executive of the National Campaign Committee by Secretary Belinda Wright. I have recently become National Spokesperson with Campaign Manager Ranald Macdonald organizing a national advertising campaign.

In late November I will be meeting a number of regional parliamentarians in Parliament House Canberra to see how we can work with the parliamentary Friends of the ABC group. As National Spokesperson I have also approached Minister Mitch Fifield about meeting members of the National Campaign Committee in Melbourne.

I would like to thank all members of the executive for their efforts during the year and especially our Secretary Belinda Wright who has worked wonders in managing so many secretarial and treasury tasks as well as working on the National Committee. Our website has been updated and members kept regularly informed. We have had a major increase in membership as well as several donations. This gives me much encouragement as we face another challenging year.

Margaret Reynolds

Tasmanian FORUM and AGM

In November Friends ABC Tasmania held a Public Forum- What is the Future of the ABC Beyond Sydney with speakers

- Quentin Dempster
- Emma Bennison, CEO Arts Access Australia
- Lisa Singh, Labor Senator for Tasmania
- Andrew Wilkie, Independent Member for Denison

An excellent discussion was held with speakers agreeing that the ABC must give a renewed commitment to its charter to provide public broadcasting services to ALL Australians and that this commitment



Another venture to the ABC Gardeners Market on Saturday 10th October in Collinswood, South Australia.

relied on the Federal Government recognizing its responsibility to restore confidence and resourcing to guarantee the ABC's future

Concern was expressed that 51% of staff remained in Sydney while staffing cutbacks had impacted disproportionately in Capital city offices other than Sydney and across regional Australia.

In addition speakers focused on the impact of technology in changing priorities and diversity of programming with priority given to Australian made content.

South Australia

President's Report

South Australia is participating in the planning underway for the National Campaign leading up to the next Federal election. The first stage which involving a fundraising and membership drive is underway and strategies are being developed dependent on the amount of money raised. The Committee is starting to work on possible strategies for South Australia to build on this National action.

Discussions are also underway about strengthening the Friends by developing a more cohesive national approach across the states to functions like membership, the website, the newsletter and so on and the new look National website.

The Friends Committee in SA has developed a Facebook page, specifically for Friends of South Australia and has been looking to revitalise the website which will interface with the National website. A key focus for 2015 has also been on reviewing the SA Constitution, which was developed in 1991 and has been in need of updating. This will be ready for endorsement by the SA

membership in 2016 – so stay tuned!

The Gardener's Market, which was held on October 10th, and the end of year function planned for December 6th have also been occupying the Committee and we hope to see you there on December 6th!

As always we are keen for new Committee members. Moving forward, in 2016, meetings will be held on the first Wednesday of the month, with the first meeting taking place on February 3rd beginning at 6.30pm, at the Prince Albert Hotel, 254Wright Street Adelaide.

Jessica Knight, President

ABC Friends SA/NT Gardeners Market

Another venture to the ABC Gardeners Market on Saturday 10th October in Collinswood. A large crowd attended to buy plants for their gardens. Overall the day was successful with many people stopping by for a chat and picking up the ABC Friends promotional material.

Why I joined ABC Friends SA/NT

For many years the ABC has been an important part of my life. ABC television was one of the few stations that was reliable when I lived in Port Pirie in my teens. Being able to immerse myself in a programme without constant interruption to viewing, became something I valued and have done ever since. ABC television programming is diverse; there is much to pick from when viewing. It is often novel, and from where great ideas for new types of programme originate (for example Andrew Denton's "Enough Rope", "The Chaser" and "Utopia"). I really don't think my life would be half as rich if it wasn't for Radio National; my radio is tuned permanently to it. One of the most important things in life, I think, is to be

mentally stimulated and there is always plenty of material to listen to, any time of the day, to achieve that. Programme presenters almost become "digital friends", their voices easily recognisable and programme content is relevant, deep, well considered and thoughtfully presented. ABC television and radio helps me to keep up to date. This is why I joined the ABC Friends. There is too much to be lost if we don't support the ABC to continue in its vital role as Australia's independent, national broadcaster, free of advertising or corporate sponsorship and to be a "free voice" representing all Australians.

Sue Pinnock (Committee Member)

Victoria

The major challenge for the Victorian branch of the ABCF over the latter part of the year has been developing a response to the change of leadership in Canberra.

Whilst Tony Abbott led the Coalition it was clear to virtually everybody whether members supporters or just onlookers that the ABC was not only going to be starved of resources including funding, but also vilified as being not part of Team Australia and cast as being a supporter of Australia's enemies both at home and overseas.

When Abbott departed many within our supporter base which is of course much bigger than our membership base breathed a huge sigh of relief and dared to dream that the threats to the ABC would quickly become a thing of the past.

Our major challenge of the past few months is to convince our members that the threats to the ABC are far from over and that in fact an even bigger challenge confronts us.

State News

The damage to the ABC has been so extensive such that in effect Malcolm Turnbull can afford to sit on his hands without imposing new cuts and allow the decline of the ABC and its failure to meet its charter obligations remain a trend that continues to make the ABC but a pale shadow of its former self.

To communicate this negative message in the face of renewed business optimism and the continuance of a “honeymoon” period for Malcolm Turnbull in the polls is going to require all the energy and communication skills we can muster. Hence the necessity of the advertorial placed in *The Age* and the *SMH* in the last weekend of October which conveyed the message that the ascension of Malcolm and a new Minister of Communication did not guarantee a rosy future for our National Broadcaster

Graeme Connelly, President



ABC Friends from Inner Melbourne South branch listen to guest speaker Randal Macdonald.

Inner Melbourne South Branch

Inaugural Event

The ABC Friends Inner Melbourne South branch held its inaugural information event at Readings Bookshop in Acland Street St

Kilda on 21 September at 6.30pm.

We were delighted to have Randal Macdonald as the guest speaker. Randal is a former managing editor of *The Age* and morning presenter on Melbourne ABC radio and currently the convenor of the ABCF national campaign and fighting fund. Randal shared with us his perspectives on

ABC Friends notes with sadness the recent death of Dr Veronica Brady (or Sister Veronica as she was more widely known), who was a member of Friends of the ABC WA for many years and served as an ABC Board member 1983-86.

Veronica Brady was born and raised in Melbourne, and was educated at a Loreto school there. She attended Melbourne University and taught in Catholic schools for several years. After completing her undergraduate studies, she joined the Loreto sisters, a teaching order, and taught in schools in Victoria and Sydney. Later, she did postgraduate studies in North America, attaining a PhD in Literature in Canada. Her thesis was on the work of Patrick White, whom she held in high regard.

In 1972, Dr Brady joined the staff of the English department at the University of Western Australia, where, she taught literature and promoted Australian Studies, conveying her enthusiasm for the writings of White, Randolph Stow and others. As a teacher, Veronica inspired many students, but also had her critics. In retirement, she continued to be actively engaged in scholarly pursuits as well as in her many extra-curricular interests.



IN MEMORIAM Dr Veronica Brady

Jan 1929 – 20 Aug 2015

Veronica enjoyed travel and helped to promote Australian Studies in universities in Italy, Spain and other European countries, and in North America; she was a visiting lecturer on several occasions and kept in touch with many colleagues overseas, as well as in Australia.

Veronica's passions went beyond her religious and teaching roles. She was a champion of many causes, including the rights of Indigenous Australians, independence for East Timor, the peace and anti-nuclear arms movements, freedom of expression (she was an active

member of PEN), and more. She was often described as ‘outspoken’ and was publicly critical of aspects of her Church, such as its stance on contraception and homosexuality; she remained an avowed John XXIII Catholic.

Veronica Brady was a keen and loyal supporter of the ABC and an active member of Friends of the ABC WA, regularly attending Friends meetings and events over a number of years. Veronica was an inaugural member of the ABC Board, appointed when the Commission became a corporation in 1983.

Around the university neighbourhood, and beyond, she was often seen on her bicycle, which was her primary form of transport until just a few years ago. She participated in many activities on campus and the wider community, and was a convivial guest and host to her many friends.

Although Veronica had dementia in her later years, her interest in poetry, literature, religious texts, current affairs, as well as in her family and friends, persisted. With one friend, who visited her weekly, she read and discussed Dante's *Divine Comedy*, *Don Quixote* and more; this practice continued until days before her death.

Myrna Tonkinson, ABC Friends WA

the ongoing threats to the independence of the ABC and the irretrievable damage that funding cuts have on the effectiveness of the public broadcaster.

Recently returned from overseas, including the UK, he also appraised us of the dire situation for the BBC, where funding has been drastically cut by the UK Cameron government.

MC Jan Cossar led a lively question and answer session following Ranald's talk, in which the attendees (approximately 70 passionate ABC Friends) shared their views, some wonderful memories, and some good ideas for progressing the national campaign to restore and quarantine essential levels of funding for the ABC.

It is anticipated that a program of similar events will be held in 2016 at Readings in St Kilda.

Western Australia

The 2015 ABCF-WA Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday, 18th October in Studio 620 at the ABC Centre in Perth. Studio 620 is the 'fine music'

beginning with several previous terms on the committee under her belt; SECRETARY CATHY BARDON, for her second term and her first as an office-holder; TREASURER TERRI BROWN who was Secretary for her first term on the committee last year; COMMITTEE MEMBER JOHN BOTTOMLEY, also returning for another term after a gap of some years; COMMITTEE MEMBER GLEN MORGAN who joined Friends earlier this year and now takes on an active role.

Thanks to everyone for nominating. We still have room for another person!

I'd like to thank MEG DURSTON and LINDSAY SMITH, who did not re-nominate this time, for their long commitment to their various roles on the committee. They volunteered many hours of their time and much energy.

Guest speaker at the AGM was Manager ABC 720 Perth, SARAH KNIGHT who gave an interesting and enjoyable account of her many years in ABC Radio, answered questions and joined us for refreshments following the meeting.

"ABC Friends are famous!"

Three weeks after the AGM I received an email, with the above heading, from a contact at ABC Perth who provided me with the following excerpt from the ABC's new 'SCOSE' (Standing Committee on Spoken English) equivalent which is available for the use of all ABC staff, particularly aimed at on air staff:-

"At a recent Friends of the ABC meeting in Perth, a Friend expressed concern about how the ABC's command of English is slipping. The example given was 'use of the word amount when the proper English is number.' This distinction is count vs mass nouns. Number is used for count nouns, amount is used for mass nouns.

Consider this incorrect copy, from News online:

In north-west New South Wales the amount of all agribusiness lenders doubled, from 12 to 25.

"Agribusiness lenders" is countable, so the correct word here would be number.

It is strongly recommended that number should be used when referring to countables, and amount be used when referring to mass nouns. Remember: a number of cows produce an amount of methane gas."

I'm sure we are all pleased that a guide to pronunciation and correct language usage is again available to ABC staff. Let's hope all announcers refer to it! Thanks to our member who made the comment to Sarah, and thanks to Sarah for passing the comment on.

Thank you for your support. Please ask your family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances to join us.

Bobbie Mackley, President

If you have not yet renewed your membership, this is a polite reminder!



Left: The ABC Centre in Perth.

Below: The General Meeting audience.

Below right: Guest Speaker Sarah Knight.

recording studio on the ground floor of the 10 year old, custom-built building and is also fitted with lighting for TV production. Sadly, it has rarely been used for production of any kind. Ditto the large TV Studio 62, since the end of in-house ABC TV production. Much talent has departed.

At the AGM I reported on our year, on issues affecting the ABC and on ABC Friends' national campaign. You can read my report here: abcfriendswa.wordpress.com. We elected our committee for 2015/16, as follows:

PRESIDENT BOBBIE MACKLEY for a fourth term; VICE PRESIDENT MYRNA TONKINSON, a member since the



NSW Branch News

Blue Mountains

Blue Mountains Branch members have travelled far and wide in 2015 when any rally, meeting or community event to promote, protest and protect OUR ABC has been held. We attended twelve events in 2015, most in our 'home territory'. However we also visited Sydney often and Canberra on one occasion. The Canberra rally, held on the forecourt of Parliament House, like those in Sydney, protested the drastic cuts which have resulted in the loss of jobs, the cutting back or axing of much loved programs across the ABC spectrum. We've also witnessed the closure of production centres and the announced closure of ABC shops. One of our placards used in demonstrations now resides in the National Library Archives Collection of Public Events.

In other rallies/protests, our members paraded and protested loudly with our boom box broadcasting familiar ABC program theme music catching the attention of the crowds who sang along with us!

More recently we have focused on the 'Save Our ABC Campaign' and the recent launch of our Blue Mountains grass roots campaign: "Stop the CHOP-Your ABC is being Guttled". We have placed our "Stop the Chop" banners in strategic and highly visible public locations. Some members have attended community markets sharing our printed campaign material. These include posters and our fact sheets, which summarise what is happening/has happened to the ABC.

Invitations to more than fifty other Blue Mountains community groups have been sent offering a presentation by one of our members explaining the cuts and their affect on our ABC. Some of these groups included the Blue Mountains Neighbourhood Centres, Men's Sheds, CWA branches, Rotary, and Lion's Clubs. The campaign will ramp up when the 2016 Federal Election is confirmed.

As we all know the fight to Save Our ABC will be challenging and demanding for ABC Friends.

With hard work and a fabulous Committee we were delighted to complete the 2015 year in good shape. Around thirty members attended the AGM where the

Office Bearers and Committee were returned unopposed. We also welcomed a new Minutes Secretary to our team and extended our thanks to our previous Minutes Secretary who managed to fit this job into a very busy life.

The AGM was followed by Guest Speaker, Christine El-Khoury, Senior Audience Producer for Q&A, a program which reaches one million viewers each week. We had met Christine earlier in the year when members and guests were part of the Q&A audience for the Festival of

Dangerous Ideas program held at the Sydney Opera House.

We enjoyed hearing about Christine's job of five years which involves finding hundreds of people each week from diverse political perspectives who may be willing to quiz Australia's politicians, pundits and other opinion makers on the big issues affecting the nation and our communities. Christine also provided an interesting and detailed explanation of what goes on behind the scenes in putting the Q&A program together. This included



Top: AGM with Guest Speaker Christine El-Khoury, Senior Audience Producer Q&A.
Bottom: The banner for the campaign, at Springwood Station.

NSW Branch News

anecdotal incidents dealing with tricky comments, questions and the thousands of tweets as they flood in. Our thanks to Christine for her excellent presentation and giving us an insight into one of ABC's most popular programs.

Our 2015 AGM closed with all feeling satisfied and enthused for the coming year and another Federal Election. Some members stayed to hear more from Christine over lunch.

Overall our 2015 year has been informing, demanding and interesting and we believe we have given our community inclusive, informed insight into the plight of Our ABC. We have endeavoured to convey the sometimes hidden effects occurring behind the scenes as well as the ongoing difficulties confronting Our ABC both now and into the future.

With the Festive Season almost upon us, I extend my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and safe New Year. A new year that promises challenges for both ABC Friends and Our ABC.

Barry Redshaw
President, ABC Friends Blue Mountains Branch.

Hunter

We were pleased to welcome a good number of our local members who attended the AGM at the Adamstown Uniting Church Memorial Hall on Saturday, 17th October, 2015.

Carol Duncan, well-known former broadcaster of the local version of the "Afternoons" program on 1233 ABC Newcastle, gave an interesting and very informative talk about "A 21st Century ABC". Sadly, Carol and her popular program which had incorporated content of particular interest to the Hunter's listeners, was one of the victims of the Federal Government's funding cuts to the ABC late last year and she has been sorely missed ever since. During her talk, Carol provided a lively insight into the preparations that occur before a broadcast including decision-making about content and interviewees and she later responded to the many questions and comments from her audience. We thank Carol for giving up her Saturday afternoon to come and provide us with an insider's experience

working for our national broadcaster.

Following Carol's presentation, president Allan Thomas delivered his annual report about the busy year that has just ended. Allan outlined our activities which included: together with others presenting a petition to Hon. Bob Baldwin, the Liberal Member for Paterson protesting the funding cuts, arranging a meeting with the 1233 staff about the forthcoming cutbacks to the local ABC station, attending a protest rally in Newcastle against the funding cuts, presenting a petition to the then Minister for Communications, Malcolm Turnbull and the ABC's Managing Director, Mark Scott about the funding reductions, manning a stall at the Newcastle Farmers' Markets, operating an ABC Friends' information stall at the Seniors' Expo at Toronto Workers' Club and attending a talk and guided tour of the 1233 ABC Newcastle station conducted by the former Local Content Manager, Phil Ashley-Brown.

The 2014-15 year has been a worrying one for all ABC and SBS supporters and this coming year is shaping up to be just as challenging. Local members were thanked for their ongoing support and our president encouraged them to urge their fellow ABC viewers and listeners to join ABC Friends to support our national public broadcaster.

Hunter Branch Committee Members for 2015-16

We are pleased to announce that the following members were elected to the committee for 2015-16.

President: Allan Thomas, Vice President: Stuart Carter, Treasurer: Greg Struck, Secretary: Lynda Forbes, Publicity Officer: Margaret Conners and Committee Members: Colin Lawrence, Anne Kirsten, Margaret Christiansen, Hank Willems, Allan Baker and Bob Conners.



Carol Duncan addresses members at the AGM of the Hunter Branch of ABC Friends.

Allan Thomas welcomed our new committee members, Colin, Anne and Hank and thanked retiring secretary Lisa Thomas and committee member Rupert Mazlin for their contributions to the work of the committee.

Margaret Conners
Publicity Officer, ABC Friends Hunter Branch

Armidale

An evening with ABC's sensitive and skilled interviewer, Jane Hutcheon, was a real highlight for the Armidale group of ABC Friends in November.

Around 150 people enjoyed a most stimulating account of Jane's professional background, her views and experience of the art of interviewing, and some stories of her discussions with well-known people. Jane, as ABC Friends will know, is the presenter of News 24's One plus One.

She has had twenty years' experience as a TV journalist for the ABC. She served as foreign correspondent in Beijing and the Middle East, presented the national midday news bulletin the World at Noon, and reported on many Australian events. In her first published book (From rice to riches, 2003) she wrote about her experiences in China, where her command of both the Mandarin and Cantonese languages proved invaluable. All of these roles, she said, prepared her for the current challenges of conducting intimate conversations in One plus One.

In Armidale Jane was herself interviewed – by local author, journalist and academic, Dr Janene Carey. Janene, as Jane herself always does, conducted a lot of background research into her subject. The result was a warm, far-reaching and insightful portrait of Jane's work, and of successful interviewing in general. In the equally informative 'q and a' segment which followed discussion Jane introduced many of her responses with "that is a good question", and she answered accordingly.

In short, the evening proved to be a most stimulating and enjoyable one for both the audience and the two delightful 'performers'. One couple expressed their pleasure in two ways: by saying that they wished the interview "could have continued for hours" and by joining as new members of ABC Friends.

During the last year the Armidale branch also engaged in other ways of gaining support for the ABC. Members



Dr. Janene Carey with Jane Hutcheon

participated in a phone blitz to Federal politicians protesting against the tough financial cuts, and in a Get-up initiated campaign to protect the ABC. They set up information tables at monthly markets, kept members informed with newsletters and

emails, started a Facebook page for the branch, and sent an initial \$1000 donation to the Friends' National Campaign. Finally, at its recent AGM, it appointed some "new blood" to its committee, whilst retaining most of its "old hands".



Check out
the new
National
website

www.abcfriends.org.au

- Want information on the latest campaign?
- Join the ABC Friends in your State
- Donate to ABC Friends

 [www.facebook.com/
FriendsOfTheAbc](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTheAbc)

 [twitter.com/
FriendsoftheABC](https://twitter.com/FriendsoftheABC)

Logo courtesy of Illawarra Mercury



Letter to the Editor

Illawarra Mercury

IT'S YOUR ABC

I was the ABC's Illawarra Regional Manager from 1987 to 1992, during which time we moved from AM to FM and opened a branch office in Nowra.

When I took over from Guy Crittenden 2WN, as it was then, broadcast live from the Wollongong studios from 5am to 6pm weekdays and 5am to midday on Saturdays.

The station had a complement of five full-time and 3-4 part-time broadcast/admin staff, with three full-time and one part-time journalists plus a full-time assistant.

By the time I left in 1992 local live broadcasting was down to 5am to 11am weekdays and 5am to 10am on Saturday despite vociferous protests, including industrial action.

Now it seems there are to be further cuts to live local broadcasting and reductions in local news bulletins, but ABC management claims there will be no reduction in local content. How can that possibly be true?

Don't let local radio wither away, tell the Sydnocentric ABC bureaucrats you're mad as hell and you won't take it any more.

Allen Clark, Mt Kembla



Join the ABC Friends

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

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

ABC Friends NEW SOUTH WALES & ACT

Friends of the ABC QUEENSLAND

ABC Friends SOUTH AUSTRALIA

ABC Friends TASMANIA

ABC Friends VICTORIA

ABC Friends WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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President ROSS MCDOWELL

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