



# ON AIR

*Newsletter of Friends of the ABC (ACT & Region) Inc*

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## PRESIDENTS REPORT

## HOT TOPICS

Extracts from the Chairman of the ABC, Donald McDonald address to the National Press Club -

1 June 2005

You can take the pulse of the nation through the ABC and the breadth of its involvement in daily life helps keep that pulse rate healthy.

Now there are those who feel you can always have a conversation about funding for the ABC secure in the knowledge that nothing new will ever be said.-

I have yet to encounter anyone who wants less from the ABC.

One of the great things about the ABC being so central to Australian life is that as its Chairman, just about everyone is willing give you advice on how you could do better.

The ABC provides a news service that is sometimes irritatingly independent. But independence is not a choice for the ABC; it is required under

### YOUR ABC...NEEDS YOU!!!!!!

What does the ABC mean to you? Is it its local flavour? High quality arts programming? Locally produced drama? Specialist programmes - about science, health, literature, the environment, rural affairs, international affairs, religion? Or comedy, criticism, conversations?

Media Watch is right up there, for me, among the reasons I watch ABC TV. Just when I'm feeling comfortable, trusting and reassured Media Watch reminds me to keep the critical faculties sharpened. It provides background to the particular slant, the omitted information, the sources - of stories which create news and shape public opinion. Just how successful Media Watch is can be seen in the response by the Australian.

Or that's one way of putting it. The other is to be stunned at the massive and sustained attack conducted by the Australian.

For those of you who don't read the Australian, it has been conducting a concerted campaign over about the last four weeks against the ABC in general and Media Watch in particular. The very fact that each of its lengthy articles has been headed 'Part One, Part Two, Part Three etc. etc.' (on latest count the number is up to Six) shows that this is not just a skirmish, not even a battle, it's a campaign.

Each article nit-picks its way through particular programmes or presenters - it's left David Marr and is on to Liz Jackson now - like a team of novice debaters who latch on to the slightest factual error in the opposition's case and fail to tackle the main argument.

The whole point about Media Watch is that it is keeping an eye on the means - that is after all the translation of 'media' - by which we the public know what's going on. All the soapbox speakers, the public speeches, the doorstops, the parliamentary debate, come to us via television, radio, newspapers, internet.

In other words via someone else. (Or as Donald McDonald said more elegantly, "There can be few issues of greater import for the democratic process than the structure of the media, since it is the point at which the political process and the electorate intersect.")

*cont..... page 2*

And who is 'someone else' accountable to? No-one much. Or no-one with a full set of teeth. Except the ABC.

The attacks by the Australian are truly frightening in their intensity. (If you go to the Australian's website the whole series of articles, available under the media banner, prints out at 13 pages, at latest count).

The squeals and the screeching, like the cries of migrant yellow-crested black cockatoos, are loud, high-pitched and far-reaching. Not only do they intrude on to the front lawns of Australian readers but into the corridors of power.

And most alarmingly into the top floor suites of the ABC Ultimo Offices. ABC management would have to be deaf not to hear the cacophony.

What will be the reaction? Many of us are afraid that the ABC has caved in to the

climate of fear created by this Government. In the December issue of Background Briefing readers were reminded of "theory of the pre-emptive buckle", formulated in the 1970s to explain the behaviour of some ABC managers. One of our members rang me in frustration at the dumbing down of a favourite environment programme on Saturday mornings, (see have your say page 6) others are disappointed at the arts content these days, while the proud boasts about ABC TV ratings are as much a worry about mediocrity as a source of congratulation about excellence.

I don't want to see a pale version of Media Watch. You don't want to watch or listen to any reduction in the quality of the programmes which make the ABC your ABC.

So we must counter-attack. I can't see much point in reacting to Mr. Murdoch's

paper by writing to it. But I do see some point in writing to the ABC in support – of Media Watch and all it stands for, and of all the programmes which distinguish the ABC from the commercial sector.

I'd like to see the ABC between a rock and a hard place – the hard place of anti-ABC attacks and the rock of our pressure for a truly independent, fearless, creative and comprehensive broadcaster. So we must all write to the ABC, not complaining but calling for more of what has made the ABC outstanding.

Isn't that what Friends are for?

Jill Greenwell  
President  
Friends of the ABC (ACT& Region)

## Parliamentary Lobby Group Reporting.....

Since reporting in On Air in March, the Lobby Group has met Stephen Conroy (ALP Communications Shadow Minister), Senator John Cherry (the Democrats Communications Spokesperson until July), and Bob Brown (Greens). (In case you're wondering, we have been trying to see Helen Coonan again, and indeed in April were promised a meeting of greater length than previously – two meetings of about 15 minutes each. However, promises are one thing, reality another. We're persisting).

The focus of our recent lobbying has been the Coalition's pre-election promises:

1. To review the ABC's budget, and
2. To 'strengthen' the ABC's complaints review procedure.

Our idea has been to brief politicians on these two issues – make sure they know what is in the offing, give them some background, and let them know what Friends of the ABC want, and do not want, to see.

In the course of making sure that we know what we're talking about I visited Murray

Green, Acting Head, Corporate Affairs Division, in Sydney. Gary Cook, President of NSW FABC, came with me. Mr. Green was not able to tell us anything about item 1, but he gave us a full briefing on the ABC's complaints procedure, without giving anything away about changes which were in fact publicly announced later.

You can read in Background Briefing about the effect of the changes the ABC has made to its Independent Complaints Review Panel – I think they're an improvement.

The review of the ABC's budget, however, is an enigma wrapped in a mystery. How long is it since the election? Eight months? Despite the fact (stated at Senate Estimates in May) that the ABC and the Department of Communications etc. etc. have been working since last year on terms of reference for this review, the Minister said that she doesn't know who'll be conducting it but that she hopes the terms of reference will be approved (by her?) within the next couple of weeks! Let's hope she's quicker approving terms of reference than in making appointments to see FABC.

One immediate worry about the review of the budget is how – or if – it will affect the ABC's submission for funding for the next triennium (2006 – 09).

The ABC has said that this review is something which it, the ABC, sought, hoping that a full review would convince the Government of the need for more funding and thereby help the ABC's case for an increase for the next three years.

At this rate it will be too late, a point made by Margaret Simons in her excellent article "Fear and Loathing at the ABC" in the first issue of the Monthly. (See Background Briefing for an excerpt).

However your intrepid lobbyists press on. Funding is going to be THE issue over the next few months.

Jill Greenwell  
President  
Friends of the ABC (ACT& Region)

## THE FABC NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2005

The NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2005 of the FABC was held on Saturday and Sunday, April 16/17 at the Balmain Leagues Club SYDNEY

There were delegates from each state. Jill Greenwell and Margaret O'Connor represented the Australian Capital Territory Errol Simper, columnist for The Australian newspaper, gave the Opening Address. The thrust of Mr. Simper's address was that the ABC seems more interested in higher ratings rather than producing groundbreaking drama, children's programs and documentaries. With the exception of such programs as Four Corners, Media Watch, the News, Lateline and some hard questions from Kerry O'Brien, the ABC has drifted off track A paper later in the conference again raised this issue. This topic has also been raised by one of our members.

Trish Bolton, lecturer in Media Studies at Swinburne University, Melbourne gave the Keynote Address on 'Cross Media Ownership' Altogether 14 motions were discussed in a very busy 2 days. Jill Greenwell presented the ACT & Region motions about board appointments funding and the complaints review mechanism.

A motion carried unanimously reaffirmed Friends of the ABC approach to a transparent and merit-based procedure for **ABC Board appointments**.

The motion on the **Complaints Review Mechanism** reaffirmed the FABC position of wanting the present complaints review mechanism simplified to reduce the number of times a complaint can be heard, allowing natural justice and making reasons for decisions public.

Although a scheduled meeting between some delegates and Minister Coonan had to be cancelled a short meeting was possible. The minister states that she wants the Complaints process to be as streamlined as possible.

"**Fourteen cents a day**" was the slogan adopted for the campaign to improve funding which should be maintained in real terms on a triennial basis and not tied to particular programs or periods.

**Election Strategy** was reviewed All the information gathered at the conference could be helpful in formulating strategies for the next election. Jill and Margaret presented our experience.

Roger Raven from WA presented a discussion paper about FABC Relations with the ABC. There had been some difficulties with this in WA. It was decided that the Conference Chairman, Gary Cook, advise the Managing Director of FABC's desire for a period of constructive dialogue with the ABC.

Consistent with the call for open-ness in government dealings with the ABC Gary will write to Minister Coonan requesting that the terms of Reference for the "The Review of the Adequacy and Efficiency of the ABC's use of its funding "be publicly released and at the conclusion of the review the findings will be made public."

Dealing with the concern that **ratings** have become the prime measure of programming success Glenys Stradijot (Vic) presented her paper "How can FABC stop the ABC Undermining Itself?" highlighting various points e.g. that programming is being 'dumbed down', that commercial activities are expanding and that the ABC is no longer as fearless in scrutinizing the government.

The motion, proposed by Margaret O'Connor, was carried "That Friends of the ABC oppose an emphasis on ratings at the expense of the ABC's broader Charter"

Time constraints prevented discussion of an ACT motion about Radio Australia/ABC TV Asia Pacific but the motion was circulated and branch votes were to be registered by email.

Future Strategies for FABCs including co-ordination between State/Territory bodies were discussed and it was decided that **letters to newspaper editors** should be sent only to media within the FABCs own State, except with the informed consent of the FABC in a target State, or to a national paper, and that FABC has the right to veto the out of State letter.

Considering future strategies The ACT reported on the activities of its Lobby Group Jill Greenwell asked to be kept informed of anything that needs to be put to the polities. She was concerned that the Lobby Group be a means of communication, not a policy-maker.

With two new board appointments due later this year there was support for action now to raise public consciousness for the ABC with stickers, postcards, posters, cross media, etc; canvassing over 50's clubs or bowling clubs;

Motion 14 carried unanimously was "That the FABC continues to support there being at least one staff-elected Director position on the ABC Board."

And so ended a very hectic two days for Jill and Margaret

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the ABC ACT Branch will be held on 15th September 2005 at 7.30 pm at Room I The Griffin Centre, 19 Bunda Street Canberra City.

All members are encouraged to attend.

The meeting will be followed by an address and supper .

## Drama, Digital, Documentaries....\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

The ABC covers a staggering range of activity which Chairman Donald McDonald said recently "is worth far more than it costs". In his recent address to the National Press Club Mr. McDonald made a powerful analysis of the distinctive contribution of the ABC to all Australians, its local presence (66 radio stations), its news and current affairs coverage, independent of government and of commerce, its fostering national identity, and importantly of the way the ABC has constantly kept abreast of change, to be innovative.

He made the interesting comment that while some of us are discussing the ABC's programme last night, ABC managers are working on the ABC's programming ability ten years hence. In looking to changes in the quite near future, Mr. McDonald referred among other things to new media in which the ABC has been to the fore over the last 5 years. It's worth remembering that radio was once a new media, and then television, so in that context a move into technology that a lot of us are awkward with is not futuristic at all.

But, whether it's drama, digital or documentaries, all this needs dollars. It is this year when the ABC is preparing its submission to the Government for funding for the 2006-09 triennium. This will be the sixth time that a triennial funding submission has been made. All five previous submissions for additional funding have been denied, in full or in part. Before the last submission in 2002 the ABC commissioned the Macquarie Bank to analyse the ABC's funds. (It's that report which Friends of the ABC have drawn on when we have pointed out that among public broadcasters the ABC ranks as the second most poorly funded in eighteen developed countries).

As a persuasive measure in this year's submission the ABC sought a Funding Adequacy Review. This is the review which the Coalition announced before the election it would conduct. This is the review about which, at the recent Senate Estimates, Minister Helen Coonan said she

hoped to be releasing the terms of reference soon. This is the review which Russell Balding said at Senate Estimates had been sought by the ABC because it hoped to convince the Government of the need for additional funding. (See Parliamentary Lobby Group Reporting).

In the context of this pitching for ABC funding 2006-09, Russell Balding's interview with Amanda Meade from the Australian is particularly interesting. Mr. Balding is reported as saying that the ABC will stop producing Australian drama altogether if it doesn't get an increase in funding for the next triennium.

What was telling about his statement was that he actually released figures about the amount of drama production: 102 hours in 2001 to an estimated 20 hours for 2005 (another series of MDA and a new production, The Silence, starring Richard Roxburgh).

This is the sort of thing which makes the rather unsexy call for funds suddenly take on a seductive lure. An ABC with no – yes NO – Australian drama production? This is the Year of the Dollar, the Fight for Funds, the .....well come on everyone, you think of a slogan while we think up a campaign.

The ABC has started Rounds 1 – requesting the Funding Review – and 2 – the public statements by the Chairman and the Managing Director.

Friends of the ABC should put of the gloves too. Boxing gloves.

Jill Greenwell  
President  
Friends of the ABC (ACT & Region)



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## Why the ABC? Why the Friends?

Each of us holds in our hands a butterfly, which works to change the future each and every moment. It is a human burden this—we carry around with us the power to change the world and shape the future. This is a burden that both governed and governors need to discharge well.

If we care not, then our future will be shaped for us. Ron Suskind, a journalist working for the New York Times, had the future, and the way of the future, told to him by a senior aide working for President Bush: "The aide said that guys like me [that is, reporters and commentators] were "in what we call the reality-based community," which he defined as people who "believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernable reality."

'I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and

empiricism. He cut me off. "'That's not the way the world really works anymore," he continued. "We're an empire now, and when we act we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors...and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.'"

More than I can say, I want this anonymous, powerful man (I am betting that this is a man) to be wrong, wrong, wrong. But wanting it so has never been a curb on powerful men. In a democracy, governments and powerful men are reined in by the vigilance of citizens and the free voice of an independent press.

This is why Friends of the ABC serves such an important role. It serves to protect an organisation, the ABC, which, for all its flaws, continues to analyse and

criticise the actions of the powerful. It magnifies the important business of our own Australian affairs and provides a window onto the rest of the world. At a time when 'Big Brother' represents nothing more than a television program and 'Some are more equal than others' is merely a statement of the policies of governments, the ABC, and the FABC, serves this noble, eccentric purpose.

FABC reminds us that foremost we are citizens of this country and of this planet Earth. It embodies the belief that we should not allow ourselves—we thinking, breathing individuals—to be made into dull consumers or dumb viewers or dazed bystanders or slaves in chains.

Supporting the FABC is one important way to make sure that the predictions of that nameless, faceless aide never come to pass.

Chas Savage  
Previous president

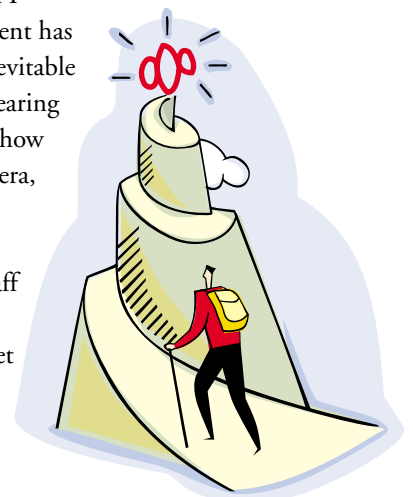
## Tour of the ABC Premisers

The ABC in Northbourne Ave has a program of monthly visits where groups of twenty are shown over the studio complex. The group first meets Liz McGrath the ABC director in the ACT and then an explanatory video beautifully put together by Rosa is shown. The group is then taken to the 666 radio studio and into the TV studio from which the 7.00pm ABC news is presented by Virginia Haussegger, 7.30pm Friday night. Stateline by Kathleen Hyland and the Weather Report each evening by John Ringwood.

FABACT committee arranged for 36 friends of the ABC to take up the offer for the April and May tours. Those of us who joined these tours were fascinated each by their own area of interest, technology, the cameras, putting together a program etc. I have always admired the elegant dress and appearance of presenters. We learned that it takes about an hour to have a presenter ready to go before the cameras and they do get assistance with their elegant clothes.

Our group kept firing questions at our patient guides from the highly technical to the frivolous like "Does Mr. Howard need to be made up too". I am afraid we kept Carolyn long over the allotted hour. It is probable more tours could be arranged if members would be keen to form a group. The groups are kept small so every one has a chance to be involved.

Peter Freer was one of those who joined the May tour and gives his impressions. "About a sixteen Friends recently enjoyed an excellent tour of the ABC Studios in Dickson. After a context briefing from Liz McGrath, we were handed over to a series of ABC guides as we inspected the radio studios (complete with David Kilby in full voice) and the TV studio. The main impressions I gathered were that it's a lot of hard work to get all the bits together and roll out a professional program to air; that the ABC has some nice facilities but is always faced with the imperative of spending more on equipment to keep up with changing technology; and that to be a producer for a program is to be the epitome of multi-skilling (although I imagine that the on-air talent has to cover the occasional, inevitable gap). We really enjoyed hearing how it all happens, seeing how the autocue works on camera, and trying to imagine ourselves in the hot seat. Thank you to the ABC staff who made it happen; and for the opportunity to meet up with some fellow Friends.



## HAVE YOUR SAY!!!

Christopher Watson of Latham has written with his concern about dumbing down of ABC programs and failure to tackle a major issue, something we rely on the ABC to do. Although the FABC do not interfere with ABC programming we are rightly concerned if constraints of funding or fear of political control prevent maintenance of quality and diversity of programming. This concern was expressed at the National Conference and similar concerns are expressed in Letters to the Editor,

What do others think?

Editor - Ann Hosking



### LACK OF....

Dear Editor,

#### **Loss of weekly 'Earthbeat' slot on RN**

*This program, which has been running for at least 10-15 years, (Saturdays 8.30-9.00am) has recently been subsumed in Geraldine Doogue's generalist 'Saturday Breakfast' session. Although there are still environmental pieces for much of the 8.30-9.00 period, it has lost its ecologically, well-informed compere, Alexander De Blas.*

*For example, Geraldine conducted a recent interview with one speaker, who was arguing against the creation of more national parks; the searching questions were not asked, nor was there included a second person of environmental/scientific credentials.*

*'Earthbeat' needs to be reinstated (and repeated, as hitherto, during the following week) as a serious program in its own right, with its own specialist compere, if a slot on early Saturday morning is not deemed to be suitable, it must be given another time similar to that given to the Health Report, Media Report, etc.*

*There is a strong case to have a well publicised hourly program per week on the host of grave ecological issues that beset us, both in Australia and planet wide: take, for example, the range of points raised in Professor Jared Diamond's latest well publicised and acclaimed book, "Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive" (there is even a chapter entitled Mining Australia!)*

#### **Lack of Weekly, Analytical Environmental/Sustainability Program on ABC TV**

*Of course, we do get features from time to time on "Four Corners", "7.30 Report" etc. but that is no substitute for a given time slot to feature and discuss the issues in proper depth. At least a half hour weekly program is needed.*

*Do I have any support for the above so that the Committee of the "friends of the abc" can give these matters due consideration and then lobby accordingly?*

*Sincerely  
Christopher Watson*

### YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE ABC, FEEDBACK

*Following the letter from Mark Notaras in the last issue of On Air Jill Greenwell and your editor meet up with Mark to seek more support for the ABC and FABC amongst the younger age group. We decided under 35 was younger! Mark brought with him a very energetic and vivacious young media studies student. Mark and Claire would like to have a speaker from the ABC address a student group at University of Canberra*

*At such a lecture Claire can bring up the importance of the work that FABC does in supporting and defending the ABC.*

*Last issue of On Air Micheal Sassella expressed concern that there is no longer a public On Air Feedback mechanism such as when backchat was presented previously.*

*Your editor tried to take this up with ABC management but so far has not had a response. There are certainly plenty of opportunities for listeners and viewers to contact the ABC direct on line and one can always write however this method of interaction is not the same and does not replace the public interaction we previously enjoyed.*

*If these issues concern you let your committee know.*

*Jill has very importantly emphasized the necessity of letting the ABC know how much you appreciate the many things they do so well.*

*Let your local member and Helen Coonan know how much you we appreciate the ABC and that it cannot be modified*

*and reduced without an outcry.*



[www.fabcact.org](http://www.fabcact.org)

Our web master, Howard Silcock, is doing a wonderful job with keeping our web page up to date with all the latest news about the ABC, the activities of your committee and coming events. Check it out frequently between the newsletters.

CHECK IT  
OUT

## FABC FUNCTIONS

30th July Meet Philip Williams  
2pm Woden Southern Cross Club

15th September AGM 7.30  
Griffin Centre Room 1

## NOTICE OF MOTION

### NOTICE OF MOTION TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION

Members are hereby notified, in accordance with the requirements of sections 33 and 70 of the Associations Incorporation Act 1991, that at our Association's Annual General Meeting on 15 September 2005 the following Special Resolution to amend the rules under the Association's Constitution will be proposed by motion:

"That this Annual General Meeting of Friends of the ABC (ACT and Region) resolves to amend clause 37 of the Constitution as follows:

Omit the words: 'at least fourteen days has been given in accordance with clauses 12 and 14'.

Substitute the words: 'at least twenty one days notice has been given and the requirements of clauses 12 and 14 have otherwise been met.'"

#### Explanatory note

The proposed constitutional amendment is needed to accord with the current requirements of section 70 of the Associations Incorporation Act 1991 (the Act). These requirements are that:

- for an amendment to an association's rules to be made there must be a special resolution passed at a general meeting of the association;
- 21 days notice of the meeting, accompanied by notice of the intention to propose the resolution as a special resolution, must be given to members of the association.

Under the terms of section 70 of the Act and rule 37 of the Constitution such a special resolution must be passed by three quarters of the votes of our members who, being entitled to vote, do so in person at the meeting.

## FREQUENCY CHANGE

### Frequency Change for **Radio Australia**

The frequency for Radio Australia's "Asia Pacific" program available to mainland listeners on News Radio is soon to be altered from AM 1400 MHz to FM 103.9MHz.

The broadcast times of 9-9.30pm Monday to Friday will remain the same. It is not available when the Federal Parliament is in session

The same program will continue to broadcast Tuesday -Saturday mornings on Radio National at am and 5am

**JUNE 2005**

## AN EXHIBITION OF ABC FOREIGN REPORTING

At Old Parliament House. 4 May - February 2006

**Through Australian Eyes** is an exhibition of photographs and audio-visual material covering the history of the ABC's foreign correspondents and camera crew: a retrospective of seven decades of ABC foreign reporting from the 1930s to the present day.

The first ABC news bureaux overseas was opened in London in the 1930s. By 2004 the ABC had news bureaux and correspondents in 13 countries.

The ABC's enduring commitment to foreign reporting is supported by the most extensive network of foreign correspondents and foreign news bureaux of any Australian media organisation.

This marvellous exhibition *is an absolute must* for all Friends and don't forget that you have the opportunity to hear and meet with Philip Williams at The Friends Winter Sunday

Afternoon Event at the Woden Southern Cross Club on the 30th July 2pm.

### 'ABC FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT PHILIP WILLIAMS TO ADDRESS FRIENDS GATHERING'

ABC Foreign Correspondent Philip Williams will talk to Friends members at 2.00pm on Saturday 30 July 2005 at the Woden Southern Cross Club about the trials and tribulations of being at the front line of reporting and journalism. Until recently Philip reported from London for the ABC. Old Parliament House is currently featuring an exhibition of the work of ABC Foreign Correspondents, and at its opening, Philip spoke movingly of the difficulties of reporting some of the traumatic subject matter of journalism.

We hope to see many of you at the Woden Southern Cross Club (the Australis Room) at 92-96 Corrinna Street for this free event organised by your committee. There will be time for questions, and we would love to chat with you over coffee at Cafe Babar's over the road in Bradley Street afterwards. Take this opportunity not only to meet one of our wonderful foreign correspondents but to get to know your hard working committee members as well!!!!

*Friends will have a great opportunity to hear and meet Liz McGrath at a seminar soon.*

## THE RETURN OF WINTER TALES

Once again this winter, the ACT Group of the Australian Women's Archives Project is holding a series of seminars on Sunday afternoon.

Speakers this year are:

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Sunday 19 June</b>   | Camilla Blunden, Actor and Director<br>Women's adventures on stage             |
| <b>Sunday 31 July</b>   | Liz McGrath, ACT Director of the ABC<br>25 years with the ABC – an inside view |
| <b>Sunday 21 August</b> | Helen Maxwell, Art Gallery Owner<br>Artists I have known                       |

Sundays 2pm-4pm. Entry \$15, includes afternoon tea (delicious home made cakes).  
Fourth Floor Conference Room, National Library of Australia

For bookings please contact: Margaret Pender 62313383 or mcpender@bigpond.com or Patti Kendall 62478102.

## LETTER WRITERS

Those of you who know that the pen is mightier than the sword will find many reasons to take up your pens in support of the ABC in this issue. You can make a difference, just remember every drop of water wears away the stone and can finally form a river of public opinion that becomes the flood. Who would have thought three years ago that public opinion could stir the back bench to speak out against mandatory detention?

What do you think about the next board appointment? Should it be another supporter of the commercial media.

Do you think the public would spend 14c a day each to ensure Aunty can make more innovative programs where the consideration is quality not constrained by short term ratings.

Maybe the ABC programs have been dumbed down but staff must feel sure that independence is respected and won't lead to a biased inquiry.

Tell management we like and want their independent quality reviews of current and important topics. More please!

Those of you on the internet go to your wiki web site. You will find the development of Howard's letter interesting and helpful. Those of you without internet can talk with Monica Pllaum.

Phone number 62821141 and she will be glad to help with ideas.



### STAFF REPRESENTATION

*Dear Senator Coonan*

*A recent news report mentioned that you are "considering whether the public broadcaster's board should keep its staff representative" (The Australian, 21 April). Although it later qualified this, saying you were only reviewing the position, I'm still concerned that you even feel any review is necessary or would contemplate abolishing a staff position on the ABC Board.*

*I appreciate that you represent the electorate on issues of relating to communications, but I can't see who this particular proposal would benefit or how it represents actual electors' concerns. You may recall that, soon after the Coalition was first elected in 1996, it attempted to put its stamp on the workings of the ABC by introducing the Mansfield Review. The massive response showed very clearly that the public did not want the kind of meddling with the ABC that the Government then proposed.*

*Similarly, there's now little evidence of public support for a Government review of the Board, let alone for abolishing the staff representative.*

*Indeed there's a growing call, from almost everyone except the Government, for an independent process for appointing the Board. So why do you now raise this matter?*

*The Staff Nominee brings to the Board a unique perspective—that of someone who works for the Corporation but not at top management level. The Staff Nominee has valuable insights into the role of a public broadcaster and first-hand experience in the presentation of the programmes which distinguish the ABC from other broadcasters.*

*Beyond this, the position of Staff Nominee is very important for the morale of all ABC staff. ABC staff are obviously committed to the spirit as well as to the letter of the ABC Act - "to provide innovative and comprehensive broadcasting services of a high standard".*

*Dedication such as theirs should have a voice on the governing body, the ABC Board. I believe strongly that it's vital for us to have a national broadcaster that is truly independent of both Government and commercial pressures.*

*Government-initiated changes of the type you're now canvassing merely serve to weaken this independence.*

*Yours sincerely  
Dr Howard L. Silcock*

### Hopscotch Film Promotion

Hopscotch films is a promotional group which has provided discounted movie tickets to N.S.W FABC. They approached Barbara Godfrey as Secretary of FABCACT with the offer of 2 for 1 vouchers for popular films.

They have now made the offer of two for one vouchers for **A Good Woman** due to start later in June at Electric Shadows and Greater Union Manuka. Those members who receive their newsletter by email will be advised how to obtain a voucher.

If you live in the ACT and receive your copy of On Air in the mail you will have received a voucher with this issue.

The voucher can be redeemed at either Electric Shadows in Civic or Greater Union, Manuka.



# RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

All members are due to renew their subscriptions for the next twelve months by the 30th June. Thank you very much to all those members who have already renewed early.

Perhaps you are asking why should I renew my membership? What good does my membership do me or the community or the even ABC itself. Chas Savage gives you his answer on page 4.

You love to watch and listen to the ABC and you trust the ABC to report accurately and independently. Imagine life in Australia if you knew that the ABC was controlled by either the Government of the day or by media barons. Public opinion can be so subtly and easily controlled and we must be alert for signs of attempts at this control.

When you fill out your application form don't forget to indicate if you want your copy of On Air via post or via email. Email saves costs and paper but you may like to have the hard copy floating around so that you can dip into it.

On your membership renewal you will see that box 5 asks for your assistance with our activities. Although you may have filled this out previously please do so again so that the data base can be updated.

- **Help with news letter.** There are two different areas where assistance is needed.
  - (a) **Articles and Letters to the Editor** are needed and welcome so that the interests and views of members are shared.
  - (b) **John Keen needs volunteers to prepare copies** of Background Briefing and On Air for the quarterly posting. This is carried out at his home and he rings people giving a few days notice.
- **Help with Fund Raising:** This can occur intermittently and takes various forms.
- **Work on Stalls:** We have about three stalls a year including Contact Canberra. Promotional material

for FABCACT and material in defense of the ABC is handed out or sold. About 12 people can be needed to cover a day. Fun and friendly.

- **Rallies:** Almost all members should tick this box. A rally is only called occasionally when our beloved ABC is threatened by those who would seek to control its independence by overt or covert means. Then we need to lead a strong public protest.
- **Letter box drops:** A two street drop from 400 members covers a lot of Canberra. This is only called for if a special flyer is sent out perhaps once in two years.
- **Writing Letters:** This is a major activity of the FABCACT and a way in which politicians and government are most directly influenced. Assistance and encouragement with letter writing is given through the wiki web site and interaction with other members. Our president gives an active lead in the important issues affecting the maintenance of a well funded independent ABC Committee Member: The committee meets once a month. Members keep abreast of the important political, financial and commercial constraints facing the ABC in fulfilling its charter and plans action accordingly.
- **Telephone Tree:** Agreeing to ring five or ten other members rapidly spreads an important message.. This is only needed about once a year.
- **Lobby group:** FABCACT is peculiarly placed to interact personally with politicians in support of the ABC. We have members with the necessary skills. If you are one of these please join the lobby group. This is one of our most important activities

This year as a result of Mark Notoras letter last news letter we are asking members to indicate their age group (voluntarily of course)



**Friends of the ABC (ACT & Region) Inc**  
**GPO Box 2625**  
**CANBERRA ACT 2601**

## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OR RENEWAL

Please complete all fields and return form to: Friends of the ABC (ACT and Region) Inc, GPO Box 2625, Canberra ACT

### 1. Membership

I wish to become:-

- Become a member       Renew my membership   
 Enclosed is \$25.00       or \$15.00 concession

### 2. Personal Details

Mr/Ms/Miss/Mrs       First Name   
 Surname

### 3. Contact Details

Street Number       Street Name   
 Suburb       Postcode   
 Home Telephone       Work Telephone   
 Mobile Telephone       Email

Your Age (optional)

- Under 35 years       35 to 55 years       over 55 years

### 4. Delivery

If you have email would you like to receive our quarterly newsletter via e-mail or would you prefer the newsletter posted to you!

- Via Post       Via Email

Email Address

### 5. Activities

I can assist with the following activities:-

Help with Newsletter:-

- (a) Reports/articles   
 (b) Preparation for Posting

- Help with Fundraising       Letter Writing   
 Help with Stalls       Committee member   
 Rallies       Telephone Tree   
 Letterbox Drop       Lobby Group   
 Fundraising

Can you offer any special skills eg: useful contacts, writing

### 6. Further Information

For further information, please contact 6236 9294 or visit our website at [www.fabc.org](http://www.fabc.org)

Office use only    Member No:..... Valid to:.....