

“YOU NEED TO BE PREPARED TO MAKE ENEMIES”



CARO MELDRUM-HANNA,
who has just won the 2016 Graham Perkin Journalist of the Year Award.

Amanda Meade
the Guardian



Caro Meldrum- Hanna has just been announced as the 2016 Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year. Her outstanding investigative journalism produced some of Four Corners’ finest programs in 2016, including her exposure of the treatment of inmates in the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre,

resulting in the current Royal Commission. However, such courageous journalism is not without its cost, as Amanda Meade reveals in this article

Nine’s 60 Minutes might have hogged the headlines with its kidnapping antics in Beirut this year but in Australian TV current affairs it was the ABC’s Four Corners that made its presence felt.

The program’s shocking images from inside the Don Dale detention centre forced a royal commission into youth detention in the Northern Territory the day

after Australia’s Shame was broadcast.

Four Corners’ investigation of the 2011 death of a young mother on Ten Mile Beach in northern New South Wales was one of the stories that prompted an independent review that led to charges being laid against two men. Both have pleaded not guilty. The sharp focus of Four Corners’ cameras on Lynette Daley’s brutal end in Callous Disregard has finally given her grieving family another chance to seek justice.

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Update

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From the Editor (and NSW President)

The first three months of 2017 have not been good for the ABC.

Whilst the ABC remains one of our most trusted and valued institutions in the estimation of the Australian public, it has been severely damaged by a series of highly contentious and unpopular decisions by ABC Management. The result of these decisions has been further loss of talented, experienced and dedicated program makers and presenters, and the many technical staff who supported them. Morale within ABC staff is at an all-time low.

Recently departed Board Member Professor Fiona Stanley summed it up thus: "The people who know most about content and the audience they serve are not being sufficiently consulted. The ABC has a fabulous, passionate, intelligent, wonderful staff with deep knowledge in their fields. Engage more with them!"

Catalyst may return in another form (in fact we believe it will later in 2017), but probably not the almost 20 specialist science broadcasters who have been lost. The 'Save RN Music' campaign has been passionate and sustained, with over 25,000 signatures on a petition to restore music programs to Radio National, but the specialists who produced those programs are long gone.

200 More Jobs Gone

Loss of funding under the Abbott and Turnbull governments has already seen 500 ABC jobs disappear. The much anticipated Guthrie "restructure" will see another 200 staff out the door. Whilst the early suggestions from Ms Guthrie were that most of these jobs would be "middle management" and "back office" jobs, it is now known that up to 70 production staff on programs like 7.30 and Foreign Correspondent – camera operators, vision mixers, lighting producers – will go. One stated aim of these cuts is to provide up to 80 content roles in Regional Australia over the next 18 months, and Friends would support strongly the rebuilding of resources and staff in regional locations, but we have seen no details of such a

proposal. Further detail on the cuts can be found in this Update.

Short Wave Transmission

The announcement on December 6, 2016, that the ABC would cease shortwave broadcasts on January 31, 2017, has proved to be a public relations disaster for Michelle Guthrie and ABC Management, which seems to have moved into the "Post Truth" era in a rather desperate attempt to justify its decision by providing a series of "alternative facts." Regarded by many Australians and our Pacific neighbours as an essential service, the closure has resulted in three separate Federal Government processes of scrutiny:

- 1 - Senate Estimates Inquiry (ongoing)
- 2 - ABC Amendment (Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015 (Public hearings already held)
- 3 - ABC Amendment (Restoring Shortwave Radio) Bill 2017 (Receiving submissions.)

The final bill above has been introduced by South Australian Senator Xenophon, and proposes that Federal funding be guaranteed to maintain the short wave service. Ms Guthrie had rather a tough time in Senate Estimates under very informed questioning by Senators McCarthy (Labor, NT) and McKenzie (Nat. Victoria), especially on the question of consultation with those affected prior to the decision. She claimed that there was, but could not say with whom. Friends' investigations have satisfied us that there was none, not even with long-serving ABC staff in NT, and no member of ABC Management visited NT to discuss the implications of closure with staff or users of short wave. The annual cost of this essential service to Australians in Northern Australia - \$1.2m. (The cost of one hour's TV drama!) Much more on short wave in this Update.

70 YEARS of ABC in the NORTHERN TERRITORY

Another milestone in the story of ABC services to all Australians across our vast continent has just been passed – 70 years of ABC staff, studios and facilities in the Northern Territory, concentrated in Alice

Springs, Katherine and Darwin. Go to the Friends' website to find stories from ABC reporters, with their vivid recollections of their time as Territorians, including Tony Eastley and the trials of Lindy Chamberlain; Clare Martin (later NT Chief Minister) and Land Rights; Charlie King and the achievements of NT sportsmen and women; Matt Peacock and the Stolen Generations or the Ozone Hole. Their stories reflect NT as our "last frontier," and yes, Territorians are different from the rest of us!

How incomprehensible, then, that current ABC management should deny thousands of Territorians access to their ABC in 2017 by turning off short wave.

FAREWELL JIM, WELCOME JUSTIN

ABC Friends expresses its appreciation to departing chairman James Spigelman for having a steady hand on the ABC tiller throughout the past 5

tumultuous years in the life of the ABC, years which have seen unprecedented cuts in funding from the Abbott and Turnbull governments, sustained attacks from politicians of the right with their accusations of bias, and the relentless campaign waged by the Murdoch press and its lackeys against the very existence of a publicly funded broadcaster. The fact that Spigelman was willing to serve another 5 year term, but the Turnbull government preferred that he didn't, suggests that he was doing a very good job! The same government which has ignored its own selection processes and given a position on the board to its own chosen candidate – Vanessa Guthrie.

We welcome Justin Milne – thousands of words in the press have been expended on his background, and in this Update, Ranald Macdonald has posed some questions for him. We welcome him to one of the most important public offices in the country, and look forward to a positive dialogue with him.

WELL-DESERVED RECOGNITION for ABC JOURNALISTS

December Update featured Four Corners, recipient of Friends' National Award for Broadcasting Excellence, in recognition of an extraordinary 55 years of courageous investigative journalism. Our front page this issue features Caro Meldrum-Hanna, just announced as the Graham Perkin Journalist of the Year for "Australia's Shame," her devastating Four Corners program on the Don Dale Juvenile Detention Centre in NT. We congratulate Caro, and the 8 other ABC journalists who have won awards, listed in this Update. You are the reason why we must fight to the last breath to keep the ABC strong, independent, and free of political and commercial influence, so that you can continue to report with honesty and courage the often dark truths in our nation.

Mal Hewitt

President, NSW and ACT Friends.



The ABC Friends NSW & ACT Committee is expanding!

Are you an ABC Friend?

Are you recently retired, working part-time or at home, and have some hours to spare?

Do you live within easy travel distance from Sydney CBD?

Do you have skills/experience and interests in any of the following:

- Office Administration including use of Word, Excel, Access
- Web and social media skills
- Development of policies and procedures for NSW/ACT participation, with other states, in ABC Friends National
- Meeting procedure
- Member services and support for branches around NSW

- Hospitality / events management

If any of the above sounds like you, and you are interested in participating on the ABC Friends NSW & ACT Committee, we would love to hear from you.

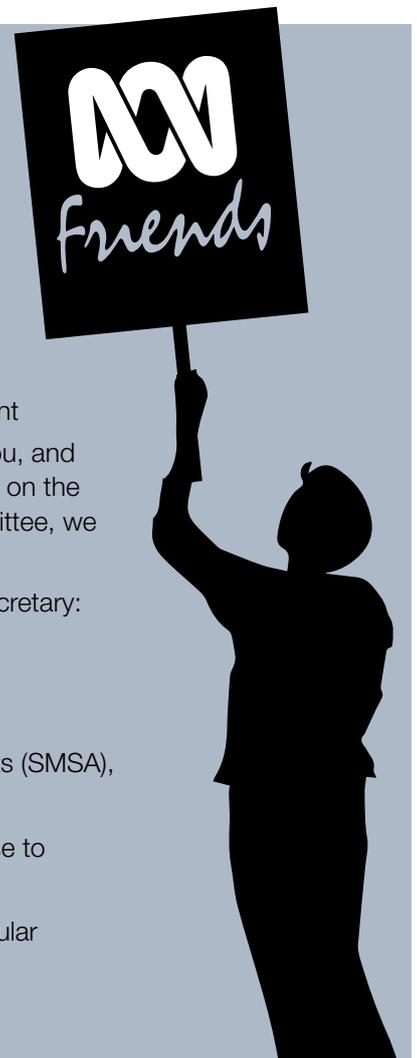
Please email the Membership Secretary: membership@fabcnsw.org.au

The Committee meets every two months at the:

Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts (SMSA), 280 Pitt Street, Sydney, 2000

(5 mins walk from Town Hall, close to St James and Museum stations).

Between meetings, we are in regular contact by email.



“YOU NEED TO BE PREPARED TO MAKE ENEMIES”

continued from page 1.

The reporter behind both these stories is Caro Meldrum-Hanna, 35, who has won five Walkley awards since she joined the ABC in 2000 including the Gold Walkley in 2015 for another scoop, *Making a Killing*, which revealed the extent of live baiting in greyhound racing. That led to an inquiry in New South Wales and Mike Baird, the NSW premier went on to announce a ban, which he later reversed.

Meldrum-Hanna spent 2016 churning out more stories that grabbed national attention, not all of it welcome. She's been attacked by everyone from News Corp columnist Andrew Bolt to Northern Territory politicians to the Australian, which published a letter she had written requesting an interview for Australia's Shame.

It's not only Meldrum-Hanna who has dug up the compelling yarns. Colleagues Linton Besser, Deb Whitmont, Marian Wilkinson, Quentin McDermott and Geoff Thompson, led by executive producer Sally Neighbour, have produced one of the strongest years in the program's 54-year history. At a time when the ABC is trimming its specialist, highly-resourced programming such as Radio National and the magazine-style *Catalyst*, *Four Corners* remains as a bastion of powerful journalism where it takes nine weeks to produce a single 45-minute program.

Neighbour says the nips and tucks may be continual across the ABC but *Four Corners* as an institution is safe. “The ABC has been doing a lot of soul searching recently about its purpose and its function and the role of news division in the digital era,” Neighbour told *Guardian Australia*. “And in all that soul searching it has always identified unique, original and investigative journalism as the central element of what the ABC delivers. In all the internal discussions *Four Corners* is held up as the exemplar of the type of journalism we should be doing.

“Recently ABC news lost a tranche of funding that had been delivered under a previous government and it does get tougher and tougher but we are fortunate that we are well resourced to do proper investigative journalism.

Neighbour, who has been has been working on and off *Four Corners* for 20 years, nominates Besser's *State of Fear* as one of the standout programs this year, along with *The Forgotten Children* about refugees kids on Nauru, Australia's *Shame* and *Callous Disregard*.

Producing *Four Corners* is a costly and time-consuming business but when a program hits the mark the impact is immense. In the month after the July broadcast of Australia's *Shame*, a total of 23,173 news reports discussed the treatment of the children at Don Dale. The day after the broadcast alone, there were 5,453 reports.

Australia's *Shame* also of course prompted the federal government to launch a royal commission into youth detention in the NT, Gillian Triggs to call for an independent inquiry into the treatment of the detained children and the UN high commissioner for human rights, Prince Zeid bin Ra'ad, to say the footage aired by the ABC



“If there is someone without a voice, if there is someone who is vulnerable, then it is up to us to shine a light into a dark place.”

could be evidence of a violation of the convention on the rights of the child and the convention against torture.

But the program also unleashed a torrent of criticism against *Four Corners* and Meldrum-Hanna herself, forcing the ABC into weeks of defending itself.

So rough was that patch, Meldrum-Hanna

warns potential investigative reporters “to prepare for the blowback”: that the nine week cycle of three weeks research, three weeks shooting and three weeks post-production and editing is only the start of the assignment.

“If you're going to rattle a cage you need to be prepared to make enemies,” Meldrum-Hanna told *Guardian Australia*.

“There was a point in the year where my phone was running hot almost 24 hours a day – when the greyhound ban was reversed around the time of the NT story. I would pick up the phone, it would be a private number and it would be just a tirade of abuse, ‘you are going to get what's coming to you. You C.U.N.T. You bitch’. I think that was expected but you can't take it on. *Four Corners* didn't get the sport banned. The sport got itself banned. At the same time too we were getting criticism for the children in detention story. You know the pictures don't lie. The videos don't lie. The NT government's election was coming and it was desperate measures.”

Meldrum-Hanna is not a typical *Four Corners* reporter, who generally come to the program as a seasoned foreign correspondent with decades of reporting behind her. She started as a researcher at the ABC straight out of a media law degree at the University of Technology, Sydney and moved through the ranks in record time, moving between reporting and researching in ABC news always with her eye on investigative journalism.

“I've always been a person to come in a different way,” she says. “I did have superiors early on telling me I had to be a foreign correspondent first, that I couldn't just go back to 4C and I would say I don't want to do that. I am very much an investigative reporter and a domestic reporter. There are so many great stories at home. There's so much to uncover here.”

So how does an outsider like Meldrum-Hanna uncover stories many reporters covering a beat miss?

“Because of my background in researching I know how to infiltrate a new beat; how to go in cold. Journalists would say it's a disadvantage if you're not known in a round but I think that disadvantage is your greatest strength. If you don't have these relationships you have loyalty to no one. You can report without fear or favour. That is how I can do the job that I do. Because I am not in bed, I don't show favouritism and I don't prejudge stories.

"I've had sports reporters say to me they come across these stories but they don't break them because they'll get nudged on the shoulder and contacts will say, 'you can't do that to me'. They'll burn bridges they can never rebuild."

Meldrum-Hanna says the most rewarding story of 2016 for her is Callous Disregard because it goes to the heart of what good journalism should

do: "If there is someone without a voice, if there is someone who is vulnerable, then it is up to us to shine a light into a dark place."

The story of Lynette Daley sprang out of the page for Meldrum-Hanna when she read in a newspaper that her family was suffering terribly from the trauma and the lack of justice.

"I thought 'what's this all about?' so I went to the coroner's court and I saw Lynette Daley's face and her photo was so arresting. The documents were just sitting there in the coroner's court and all it took was someone to get them and ask the family for permission. I don't know how it wasn't picked up earlier.

"The most rewarding thing is that Lynette's parents, Gordon and Thelma, stay in touch with me and Gordon asked me to escort Thelma to the arraignment.

"Often people say Indigenous stories don't rate but we don't say that at Four Corners. It's not about ratings, which is the wonderful thing about Four Corners. It's what I was meant to do and I give everything to it."

Meldrum-Hanna was nominated for a Walkley for Callous Disregard, Australia's Shame and Jackson and Lawler, the extraordinary program that took viewers inside Kathy Jackson and Michael Lawler's home and picked up the former Fair Work Commission official doing a "bizarre yoga move" with his phone and uttering the very un-ABC word "cunt-struck". Meldrum-

Hanna: "It was an exhausting shoot and a highly stressful pressure-cooker environment."

Meldrum-Hanna won a Walkley this year for Jackson and Lawler – in the category of best broadcast interviewer. Surprisingly, however, Australia's Shame was ignored by the Walkley judges, leaving Neighbour gob-smacked on the night and still angry weeks later.

"It was a very bizarre outcome," she told Guardian Australia.

"The Walkleys are

a strange and unpredictable beast and I love them – except when we don't get them. It was a glaring omission that that story did not win an award. It was the biggest story of the year.

"I did bail up a couple of judges on the night. The Walkleys make no sense when the biggest stories, the most important stories, miss out.

"Australia's Shame was an extraordinary story and we had talked for a long time about Indigenous incarceration and a compelling way to tell that story that would make people care. That story was about more than its footage and the impact of that story speaks for itself. Never, ever, has a royal commission been called immediately after a Four Corners story."

But there was some comfort because the story that won in the best long-form category was another from the Four Corners stable: Besser's Malaysia story. "That was absolutely fantastic and incredibly impactful and it absolutely deserved to win," Neighbour said.

Meldrum-Hanna is looking forward to 2017 and says she has some good projects on the boil already. "My strike rate is very good because I am so selective at the very beginning," she says with characteristic bulletproof confidence. "I won't proceed unless I am pretty confident or very confident I am going to get my hands on some amazing material or that killer interview – whether it be a psychological interview or an emotional interview – I won't proceed without it."

“Never, ever, has a royal commission been called immediately after a Four Corners story.”



Andy Burns and Louise Milligan accepting their awards on the night.

ABC TAKES TOP AWARDS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE ABC WINNERS

20 March, 2017

On behalf of the entire ABC Friends organisation, I would like to congratulate the three women journalists who have been awarded two of the most coveted journalism prizes in Australia.

Caro Meldrum-Hanna has been named the 2016 Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year for her reporting on Don Dale Youth Detention Centre for Four Corners.

Also acknowledged for their extraordinary work are Louise Milligan and Andy Burns, of ABC 7.30, who were awarded the Gold Quill for their reporting on George Pell and sexual abuse in the Catholic Church.

Both awards are illustrations of how important an independent and financially robust ABC is to Australia. Also recognized were:

Bridget Judd (ABC Warrnambool) – Young Journalist of the Year

Adele Ferguson, Klaus Toft and Mario Christodoulou (Four Corners) – Comminsure Scandal

Nick McKenzie, Gus Goswell (ABC 7.30) Foreign Bribery Allegations Exposed

Which other organisation can we turn to for such fearless journalism?

Which other is guaranteed to be free of commercial or political influence?

Congratulations again to all winners.

Our tens of thousands of members and supporters are proud of you.

Margaret Reynolds

President, ABC Friends National

Travails with My Aunt



Assoc. Professor
Dr. Richard Gates
former President,
Northern Rivers ABCFriends

It's coming up a year in May since Michelle Guthrie was appointed Managing Director of 'Our' ABC, although for how much longer the word "Our" will relate to ABC remains to be seen.

The further \$50 million cut to budget, continuing chopping of staff and programs, complete loss of the Short Wave facility for both the Northern Territory and the Pacific with little warning to users, and content 'shrinkage' of programs such as Classic FM inevitably fertilise speculation about Auntie's future as 'Our' public broadcaster, and the role for the ABC assigned to the MD by the ABC Board.

In the absence of the MD's contract it's not possible to know what she has been asked to do. No doubt the Minister or the new Chairman of the ABC are not about to insist that her contract be made public although for the life of me I cannot see why it shouldn't be public, after all, she's on the public purse.

That we should have concern about what Guthrie's been asked to do is highlighted by the fact that she did not go to bat for more funding from her political masters at Senate Estimates.

Under sustained questioning from Senator Chisolm [27 February 2017] "Do you see it as your role to seek more funding if budget cuts risk servicing the Charter" she said *inter alia* "My view is that we operate within the funding envelope that we are provided and we will make decisions based on that as an independent broadcaster".

When pressed : "So you are not seeking any additional funding from the government at the moment in terms of special projects?" She replied: "None....."



we operate within the funding envelope that we have been provided." Good old broken record!

Very recent indications are that seeking extra funding may now be on her agenda, particularly for international coverage and broadcasting. Why the change of heart is not clear but the public beating the ABC Board and management and government have received over recent uninformed cuts may have forced a political sop to shut down criticism and divert attention from the real game.

I've heard it said we should ease up on criticism of the MD as, after all, she's been at the helm for less than a year and it takes time to get your head around a job before you can assert yourself and put in place a robust defence of the ABC.

We shouldn't accept that kind of limp excuse. The MD is very well paid and with her background and experience she should hit the ground running and be out

there touting for the ABC with full vigor.

It's not a good look to be delivering the message to the public that you will not be asking for more porridge for an increasingly anorexic ABC and that you are just going to accept your 3 year financial lot and do the best you can with the darned needle and programming britches with the backside out of them. A 'rollover' strategy to keep out of trouble with the boss saps public confidence.

We've known for a long time now that the current government is out to control and eventually sell off the ABC a bit at a time, the death-by-a-thousand-cuts approach to killing Auntie.

The four person Nomination Panel for appointments to the ABC Board has such ABC stalwarts as Neil Brown QC, former Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, who has publicly stated that the ABC should be sold, and the now retired Janet Albrechsten whose acid views about the ABC are known to almost everyone. Surely their perspectives wouldn't colour decision-making about who gets onto the Board of the ABC!

By the way the Nomination Panel is appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Panel is initiated to action by the Minister for Propaganda, sorry, Communication who provides secretarial support for the Panel and its processes. Then when they've made up a list of recommendations the Minister for Prop....Communication then takes the list to the Cabinet for approval.

Interestingly there are some who are not recommended, and we are not sure if they have even been considered by the Nomination Panel, who make it to the ABC Board. How so? Isn't there a process through the Nomination Panel to be followed? Well it would seem it's not always so. The Minister can put up his own nominees. So much for process! There are at least two.

Board Member Donny Walford was appointed by the government and was not on the recommendation list of the Panel as far as we can tell. And then there's Dr Vanessa Guthrie, no relation to the MD. She was not recommended by the Nomination Panel. We are not

sure if she was not recommended or was not on the list at all. The Minister for 1984, err...Communication, admitted at Senate Estimates in February it was his idea to appoint her. Dr Guthrie is a WA mining and energy industry executive and chair of the WA Minerals Council. She's also involved in WA Cricket and the Murlpirmurra Connection. The Minister was very keen that there was someone from WA on the Board, a clear criterion for selection.

A careful look across the current Board of the ABC including the new Chairman [the old one wanted another term but it didn't happen] shows, among other things, a highly qualified group of individuals from law, mining, farming, management advice, commercial broadcasting, corporate governance, finance and global investment and banking, corporate boards and corporate safety, sport, the stock



“
**We learned
from that
mistake
didn't we!**
”

exchange, and digital 'know how', a great cluster of skills and connections to help Auntie decide which nursing home she's going to go to to comfort all the older ABC 'customers', and to assist in selling off all her better accumulated assets to the private sector before she's dead.

Apparently the Minister for 1984 holds the *Enduring Power of Attorney* [used to be called the ABC Charter] for her affairs and his 'big brother', Malcolm Trumble,

the *Advanced Management Directive*, but we can't see these important documents as they are 'Cabinet-in-Confidence' so we'll never know what they have in mind and we certainly shouldn't entertain the John-Howard-stripping-of-public-assets-for-private-ownership-agenda! Nope. Not on. We learned from that mistake didn't we! Besides it's not in Auntie's Charter.

Oh, and was mention made of the fact that most of the Board Members have very little by way of public broadcasting experience?

So, is the one year old MD of the ABC part of the carve-up of the ABC or not? Hard to tell but the nature of the new Board, obedience to the government's budgetary strictures and interference in appointment process by the minister does not augur well for poor old Auntie. Perhaps the new digital medium and not the ABC Charter is the message even if it is devoid of content!



Michelle Guthrie, the ABC and the turning of a once-shining jewel into mainstream sludge

Richard Ackland
The Guardian



All public broadcasters are engaged in a constant process of chopping, slicing and reinventing, and every boss spreads his or her own brand of unhappiness.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation is going through one of its periodic meltdowns, brought about because a new managing director has come down from the moon and set about doing things her way.

Michelle Guthrie has arrived at the public broadcaster via Google and the House of Murdoch, with a mission to trim the budget and to keep pace with technology and its impact on viewing patterns.

This is not a new mission, because squeezing services into ever tighter financial constraints and adapting to new realities has been going on ever since public broadcasting got under way.

In the case of Australia that was in 1932, in Britain 1927, Canada 1936 and New Zealand 1975.

All the major public broadcasters are engaged in a constant process of creating, squeezing, chopping, slicing and reinventing. Nor is the tireless criticism from commercial interests and governments – and from within – anything new.

Having said that, each managing director spreads his or her own brand of unhappiness in his or her own way. Guthrie's appearance at the end-of-year Four Corners postmortem is a case in point. According to Guardian Australia's Amanda Meade she told the ace

reporters, researchers and producers who put together Australia's premier investigative current affairs TV show that she would like to see in the lineup more stories about successful business people.

When it came to the program about children on Nauru speaking about their dire existence as captives of Australia's offshore refugee policy, the managing director thought Four Corners should have found some happy children to interview.

In one breath she showed us she hadn't a clue about journalism – yet journalism is a large chunk of the ABC's core business. At least previous notable managing directors have had to varying degrees a foot in the journalist camp – Mark Scott, David Hill, Brian Johns – and consequently they had a grasp on how and what the news apparatus should be doing.

There are other dispiriting signs including the dismemberment of Catalyst, an appalling decision to strip from the schedule a weekly science program, and the ritualistic plunder of Radio National.

RN has been under assault for so long that it is constantly on a war footing. With an annual budget of \$23m, the network costs peanuts while audience surveys show that its specialist programs are one of the factors that generate audience loyalty for the ABC. Radio National is where you find much of the creative brains of the ABC, so to tinker and mess with the formula shows management is not without skill when it comes to shooting itself in the neck.

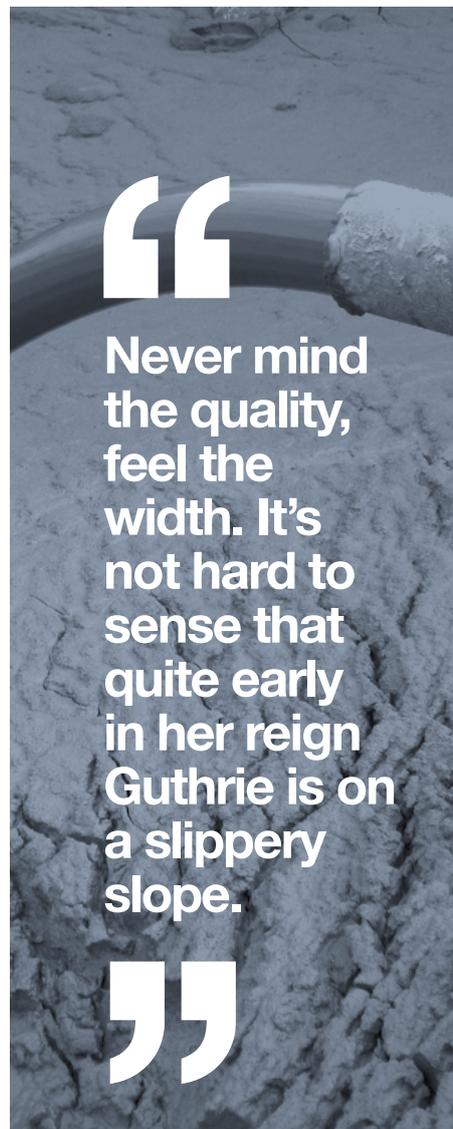
Guthrie goes into defensive mode when pressed about the RN cuts, asking staff at a meeting in Perth, with raised voice, how they “justify their massive budget when their reach is so low”.

Along with much of her management, it's evident she doesn't “get” Radio National, where the mission is for more light and fluffy “flow” programming, while resources for documentaries, features and specialist broadcasts are diluted. At this rate what was once a bright shining jewel in an ocean of mediocrity will look and sound more and more like the mainstream sludge available on much of the ABC's metropolitan radio stations, not to mention the drivel on the commercials.

Never mind the quality, feel the width.

It's not hard to sense that quite early in her reign Guthrie is on a slippery slope. Heartwarming support from Emma Alberici and Patricia Karvelas doesn't amount to a hill of beans if a sizeable proportion of staff are offside. We've seen it before with the Jonathan Shier experiment.

There are dark mutterings that ultimately, and quite soon, the RN network will transmogrify into a bunch of podcasts



available online and on mobile devices. A website that ate a radio station.

If Guthrie's Google genes get the better of her she might entirely ditch the broadcasting frequencies and airwaves and turn the ABC holos-bolus into a website where customers can click away merrily for their radio or TV entertainment, sprinkled with advertisements for cars and credit cards.

The BBC saved £30m by moving BBC3 online, so imagine the savings if all the public broadcasting system was streamed, courtesy of one great thumping iView.

The one thing Guthrie has not mentioned as part of her reform agenda is ABC “news”, and here criticism by the former PM Paul Keating is spot on, with his complaint about stories that go nowhere.

“In the case of the ABC news, if you want to watch a good news service, watch SBS news, which tells you what's happening in Iraq, what's happening in the US election, what's happening with Donald Trump.

“What you get on the ABC is: ‘A truck has just overturned on the Pacific Highway.’ It's like in the 1970s. The ABC is letting Australia down in terms of news presentation.”

It's baffling why an organisation stuffed to the brim with journalists should have such a dimwitted view of news. Maybe it's the fault of managers many of who, in my former experience as an ABC presenter (Late Night Live, Radio National Breakfast and Media Watch), only have a slender grasp of what they are doing.

These serried ranks of bureaucrats on fat salaries with undistinguished achievements have floated into positions where they could tirelessly tinker and interfere with talented people trying to make programs.

This is not a universal complaint, but there are enough managers who would be better suited as footpath spruikers outside strip clubs than running important parts of a public broadcaster.

None of this is unique to Australia. The BBC and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation have been pressured by funding cuts and accusations by conservatives of liberal bias, while the NZBC is a shell of what it is supposed to be.

In the end Guthrie and her agents may have made an unfortunate contribution to the dumbing down process but the structural changes are being driven by forces outside their control.

While the noble mission for the great old public broadcasters was to provide a service that commercial operators didn't or couldn't, today they are expected to be sufficiently “popular” to justify their taxpayer funding.

Technology is making the future case for stand alone public broadcasters more difficult, but when you consider what else is on offer and the quality of the people making the complaints, then it's clear we'd be a lot poorer without this crucial Australian institution, even with its repeats of the repeats.



An Open Letter to ABC MD Michelle Guthrie

Dear Ms Guthrie,

ABC FRIENDS NATIONAL expresses its grave concern about some of the misinformation presented at the Senate Estimates Hearing on Tuesday, 28th. February.

Many of our members urge you to consider the following as a FACT CHECK which suggests that your advisers need to be much more rigorous in their research.

- 1.** The ABC is an emergency broadcaster and is constantly promoted as such by ABC Radio. Over many years ABC staff throughout the country have worked beyond their schedules to maintain the broadcast of vital information during cyclones, floods and bush fires.
- 2.** It is the ABC's responsibility to provide services to all Australians. The Shortwave Service was set up at the time when transmission was moving towards satellite-delivered services. There was an argument that it would be surpassed by satellite, but this argument was proven to be false the Shortwave Service was still essential to the provision of communication services to communities that did not qualify for satellite reception facilities, and ESPECIALLY to those who were transient, be they peripatetic Indigenous communities, truckies, fishers, grey nomads and others. These communities have a RIGHT to demand a service from the national public broadcaster, especially in times of trauma, but also for entertainment and information local, national and international, and to feel a part of a broader Australia.
- 3.** You stated at the Senate hearing that only 15 people raised concerns with the ABC about the withdrawal of the Shortwave service, when in fact 20 of the 52 submissions received by the Parliamentary Inquiry into the ABC Amendment (Rural & Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015 focussed on the Shortwave Service. Furthermore, NT parliamentarians who have indicated their concern are representative of a large constituency. According to professional audience research, these figures are actually quite revealing in that responses from the NT would typically be fewer than from other areas due to the very fact of their remoteness. Clearly this is further evidence that ABC Head Office is unable to translate remote experience from within their own urban framework. Furthermore, we note the release of the decision to end the Shortwave Service was made in December and scheduled for the end of the January holiday period. Despite obvious community concern, there was no preparedness to delay or seek assistance from government.

- 4.** A former Manager, Remote Area Broadcasting, responsible for the ABC's input to the development of Indigenous broadcasting, has reported to us that: "Over a period of eight years I was in constant contact through personal visits to many remote Indigenous communities in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Northern Territory, Torres Strait. It was clear that these communities would NEVER raise a complaint about threats such as the loss of the HF Shower. In the first place they would not understand that it would be possible to raise a complaint and then, given that English is their second, third or even fourth language, they would not know how to go about it. The need to consult with these communities should be obvious and the manner of consultation is complex".

ABC Friends believes that the decision to end the Shortwave Service has seriously undermined the ABC's credibility in terms of its commitment to reach out to all Australians. Therefore we urge you to reconsider your itinerary next week to include attendance at the Senate Committee Hearing in Darwin where evidence will be received about the impact of the ending of the Shortwave Service and how effective the ABC's suggested alternatives really are. Your personal attendance would send a strong message that the ABC is, in fact, an organisation prepared to communicate directly with all Australians.

ABC Friends wants to work with you to ensure Australia maintains its high standard of public broadcasting. We understand the challenges of a rapidly changing media climate and the significant financial cuts to the ABC's Budget. We are advocates for more funding, better sharing of transmission costs and independence in programming decisions.

But as ABC shareholders we also expect to see an ABC that is transparent and in touch with its communities in all regions of the country. We also expect that, in your role as Managing Director, you will match our advocacy and not be constrained by government priorities.

You may recall that in a letter to you in November we requested details of your Vision for the ABC in this, its 85th Year, and how you plan to increase the ABC's community engagement around Australia. We look forward to receiving this so that we can better inform our members about your plans for their independent national public broadcaster into the future.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Reynolds
President ABC Friends National Inc





Gayle Davies

Membership Secretary,
ABC Friends NSW
and ACT



The other Guthrie...

Is the ABC becoming the first coal-fired, nuclear powered broadcaster in the world, with the appointment to the Board of Vanessa Guthrie, former Managing Director of Toro Uranium, and current CEO of the Australian Minerals Council, a lobby group for the mining (mainly coal and uranium) industries?

On the ABC web-site, Dr Guthrie is described as:

... a Western Australia based mining and energy industry executive who is currently Chair of the Minerals Council of Australia. She is Deputy Chair of the Western Australia Cricket Association and an independent director of the Murrumbidgee Connection.

The criteria for selection as a non-Executive Director of the ABC Board are listed under s. 12 of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983:

- (c) having had experience in connection with the provision of broadcasting services or in communications or management;**
- or**
- (d) having expertise in financial or technical matters; or**
- (e) having cultural or other interests relevant to the oversight of a public organisation engaged in the provision of broadcasting services.**

In view of Dr Guthrie's lack of broadcasting, media or cultural interests and experience, there are questions around the circumstances of her appointment, especially at a time of tension over Australia's energy security, and in view of the Federal Government's manifest lack of confidence in renewable energy resources to keep the nation's screens alight.

Appointments of non-Executive Directors

are usually based on the recommendations of an independent Nomination Panel (see Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983, Part 111A, Merit-based Appointments of Non-Executive Directors) to the Minister for Communications. The Minister may also appoint someone not recommended by the Nomination Panel. Dr Guthrie although a candidate, was not recommended by the panel. Nevertheless, she was appointed by the Minister. According to s. 24X (4) of the ABC Act, in the case of an appointment such as this, the Minister must table in both Houses of Parliament, a statement giving reasons for the appointment, no later than 15 sitting days of each House, after the appointment is made. The appointment was announced on 27th February. According to the Parliamentary calendar, the last day for the Minister's statement in the House of Representatives is 22nd May, and in the Senate, the 19th June.

In the meantime, the Minister, Senator Fifield, questioned at the Senate Estimates Committee on 28th February, by Senators Dastyari (ALP, NSW), and Ludlam (Greens, WA), gave only the reasons that Ms Guthrie is from WA, she is female, and is president of the Western Australian Cricket Association. (are there no Western Australian women with a combination of corporate expertise, media or arts administration experience or cultural interests?)

Perhaps a clue can be found in the fulsome praise for the mining industry lavished by the Prime Minister in his address to the Australian Minerals Industry Parliamentary Dinner, hosted by Dr Guthrie on 12th October, 2016; or In an interview with the Australian Financial Review: "Lunch with Vanessa Guthrie: Coal, tweeting and post-truth activism" on 18th November

2016, in which Dr Guthrie spoke of the Minerals Council's plans to use Twitter to counter the online campaigns of anti-mining "avocado-smashing activists" with the "facts". ("avocado-smashing" is a phrase taken from a fatuous article in *The Australian*, which suggested that if young people spent less time in inner-city Sydney cafes consuming smashed avocado on toast at \$22 a pop, they might be able to save up for a deposit on a house to apply such a description to anti-mining activists is ludicrous).

It will be interesting to see what "facts" can be expressed in 150 characters that will counter the massive body of evidence that burning fossil fuels, (coal and oil) has led to global warming and climate change: a threat of such magnitude to national and global security that the ABC has a responsibility to report on it (as it did on Four Corners on Monday 20th March).

Dr Guthrie's offsideer at the Australian Minerals Council, Brendan Pearson, is no fan of the ABC. On March 13 in the *Australian Financial Review*, "Wind and solar can only win on a tilted playing field" (a complaint about the outrageously high government subsidies enjoyed by the renewable energy sector – as distinct from the \$1 billion subsidized loan the Government is offering to the Indian company Adani to dig the proposed Carmichael coal mine in Queensland) , he commented "The ABC has entered anti-coal campaign mode, while the Greens and the skivvies at *The Guardian* have at times seemed frightfully close to spontaneous combustion".....As if to prove his point, the ABC broadcast the news the same day, that up to \$3 billion of Adani's profits from the proposed mine may be shifted to a shell company in the Cayman Islands. Yet another reason for Australian taxpayers and investors to thank the ABC for its investigative journalism.

In addition to its responsibilities with regard to editorial policy, the ABC's statement of corporate responsibility identifies the environment and, as a high energy user, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, as a top priority.

Installing a Minerals Council mole on the Board of the ABC, while possibly a back-handed compliment to the imagined power of the ABC to brainwash its audiences, at the same time insults those audiences, and demeans the ABC.

We await with interest the Minister's explanation to Parliament of the reasons for Dr Guthrie's appointment.



Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Advocacy)



Senate Committee Public Hearing Darwin, 9th March 2017

A Report by David Hewitt

This Senate Committee has held public meetings in Melbourne and Darwin to hear submissions from Government Representatives and members of the public on the ABC's Rural and Regional services. ABC Friends was represented in Melbourne by National Media Adviser Ranald Macdonald and South Australia Friends President Sue Pinnock. Friends representatives at the Darwin hearing were Philip Brennan and David Hewitt, where the focus was on the ABC's shutting down of the short wave service to Northern Australia and the Pacific on 1st February. Below is a report from David Hewitt on the Darwin hearing.

The Senate committee Hearing certainly provided a lot of valuable information that the ABC management needs to take note of. It was a travesty that nobody from management bothered to attend. There were many comments they would not have wanted to hear and also they would have faced some quite embarrassing questions.

There were seven people speaking in person and another seven by teleconference. The three members on the panel, Senators McDonald (chairperson) Urquhart and McCarthy had obviously done a lot of research and asked

questions that were very much to the point. They received a clear message from all the participants that everyone really valued shortwave.

The NT Government representatives appeared first, and in answer to a question they said the government was not consulted either before or after the announcement of the closure. Other speakers were asked the same question and all gave the same answer, contrary to Michelle Guthrie's claim in Senate Estimates. Kathlene Robinson and Doug Cooke from NT Department of Corporate and Information Services estimated that there are 55 000 residents of NT who cannot receive either AM or FM radio and who would be potential listeners to shortwave radio. Then there are the truckies, grey nomads and other travellers passing through the Territory.

Tracey Hayes, CEO of the Cattlemen's Association and president Tom Stockwell gave an excellent presentation. Tom was speaking by phone from his station near Daly Waters. They referred to the emotional value of keeping in touch with the outside world. (I had said the same in my written submission.) The new patrol minister for Frontier Services of the Uniting Church who visits cattle stations and remote communities in Central Australia also referred to this and quoted the owner

of Amaroo Station, north of Alice.

There was a satphone call from the skipper of a fishing boat in the Gulf of Carpentaria, who claimed that hundreds of fishermen listened to shortwave, and said he was "tired of the lies, lies, lies from the ABC", something that I think a lot of us felt but were not prepared to say. He said that when in Cairns he could tune in to shortwave to get weather reports for sailing back to the NT - so much for the ABC's claim that it was only good for up to 200km!

Phil Brennan provided some excellent technical information and had produced a map that he showed the committee with the areas covered by AM and FM stations, which left about 85% of the Territory with no coverage except for shortwave.

Another witness phoned in from a station near Borroloola, Senator Malarndirri McCarthy's home town, who told us that when Cyclone Blanche was off the coast 2 weeks ago, warnings were given in English and Kriol (a language spoken in Arnhem Land) for the benefit of small communities along the coast, and pointed out that without shortwave most of these people would not have heard the warnings. When I was working at La Grange on the Kimberley coast, two cyclones passed close by the community. We were reassured that someone was thinking of us by the warnings that were given every three hours by ABC Country Hour staff, manning the radio from Perth 24 hours a day till the cyclone threat was over.



Phil Brennan and David Hewitt at the hearing.

A submission was made by a representative from 4 wheel drive clubs in NT and one of their members member phoned in, both saying how they depended on shortwave when travelling out bush. Gary Williams, a truckie who was featured in a story in the Australian with Nick Xenophon on 30th January said the company he worked for in Adelaide had shortwave radios in all their vehicles. He was leaving on a trip to Darwin next week and would miss not being able to listen to the radio as he headed up the Stuart Highway in his truck.

I showed a small Sangean shortwave radio that we used with a 20 metre wire just thrown over a tree when we were stationary in a community (we have the Codan transceiver in the Land Rover). I also had a photo of the emergency radio 783AM sign south of Alice reminding drivers that the ABC IS the emergency broadcaster (Michelle Guthrie please note) and the email from Col Blobel, pointing out that the Bureau of Meteorology forecasts only apply to offshore waters, not the mainland. The ABC is promoting B of M as an alternative source of weather information.

The ABC has been heavily promoting the VAST satellite as an alternative to

shortwave. Apart from the fact that it requires a dish and computer in a fixed location, several witnesses indicated that it is ineffective when there is heavy cloud (such as when a cyclone is approaching.) Benjamin Quilliam from Frontier Services, who formerly worked for Codan Radios in Adelaide, indicated that it was unlikely to work in smoke haze either. With such a good season there are likely to be big grass fires later in the year. Shortwave radio will work whatever the weather conditions, despite the ABC's claim that it is "outdated technology, with a range of only 200k." I have had no problem receiving a clear short wave signal from Alice Springs in Wagga Wagga, NSW.

Territory residents and users of short wave radio are grateful to the Senate Committee for the opportunity to make submissions, and appreciated the sympathetic hearing from the Senators who travelled to Darwin. Had ABC management been present, they would have realized that there are thousands of Territorians and travellers who depend on short wave rather than the 500 that they quote. Michelle Guthrie claims the ABC must be accessible to ALL Australians. If that claim means anything at all, the short wave service must be restored.



SENATOR NICK XENOPHON FIGHTING TO SAVE SHORT WAVE TRANSMISSION

South Australian Senator Xenophon is in the process of submitting the following Bill. It is almost certain to pass the Senate. Please contact your local Federal Member, and request that it be supported in the House of Representatives.

In summary the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Restoring Shortwave Radio) Bill 2017 amends the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983 to require the ABC to maintain three domestic shortwave transmission services for the Northern Territory that were operating up until 31 January 2017 and maintain an international shortwave radio transmission service for Papua New Guinea and parts of the Pacific.

The particular amendments that Nick

Xenophon is suggesting are: After Section 27 of the Act insert 27(a)

1. The Corporation must maintain 3 domestic shortwave radio transmission services for the Northern Territory which:
 - a. cover the same areas of the Northern Territory as the Corporation's shortwave radio transmission services covered on 30 January 2017; and
 - b. broadcast the proximate local radio service.
2. The Corporation must maintain an international shortwave radio transmission service for Papua New Guinea and parts of the Pacific which:
 - a. uses at least 3 transmitters; and

- b. broadcasts the Corporation's international service; and
- c. broadcasts programs in languages appropriate for the countries to which they are broadcast.

The Bill was introduced and read a first time on 13 Feb 2017. A second reading was moved on 13 Feb. On 16 February 2017, the Senate referred the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Restoring Shortwave Radio) Bill 2017 to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 10 May 2017.

Currently the Senate Environment and Communications Committee is receiving submissions re the bill.

ABC Friends National is in total support of the Bill and has made a submission.



ABC to cut 200 jobs as Michelle Guthrie restructure revealed

Matthew Knott

SMH - 7 March 2017

One in five ABC managers – totalling up to 200 staff – will lose their jobs under a sweeping restructure announced by ABC managing director Michelle Guthrie.

Ms Guthrie acknowledged the “painful” cuts would be a blow for staff who lose their jobs, but said “swift and decisive action” was needed for the ABC to remain relevant to audiences.

Managing director Michelle Guthrie announces up to 200 jobs will go in a corporate restructure. Vision courtesy: ABC News 24.

As revealed by Fairfax Media last month, the savings generated by the job cuts will free up \$50 million a year to invest in TV, radio and online content.

Up to 80 new content roles will also be created in regional Australia over the next 18 months.

Although Ms Guthrie focused on the cuts to middle management, up to 70 production staff on television shows such as 7.30 and Foreign Correspondent will lose their jobs.

Staff members likely to be made redundant were called in for private meetings with managers on Tuesday afternoon.

There will be 30 redundancies from TV operations and 42 from news operations – including camera operators, vision mixers and lighting producers.

The restructure, revealed to staff in a televised briefing on Tuesday, is Ms Guthrie's most significant move since replacing Mark Scott last May.

The overhaul will see the number of ABC divisions slashed from 14 to eight.

The existing Television, Radio, News



and Regional divisions will remain while other departments will be rolled into new divisions for Finance, Technology, Engagement and Audiences.

ABC International will be abolished as a separate division and have its functions integrated into the broader ABC.

The aim of the restructure is to reduce management levels by 20 per cent across the ABC, with support services to take the biggest hit.

Between 150 to 200 employees will leave the broadcaster by June this year.

“These initiatives recognise that incremental reform isn’t the answer and that transformational change over the next year is essential if the ABC is to realise its full potential,” Ms Guthrie said.

“These changes are essential to the long-term health of the corporation, but I acknowledge that this is little comfort to those whose roles are impacted.”

Ms Guthrie has made it clear since she arrived at the broadcaster that she believes the broadcaster's management levels were bloated and that more of the ABC's budget should be devoted to programming.

In her presentation to ABC staff Ms Guthrie said the ABC was at risk of becoming irrelevant to many Australians without change.

“We lack the flexibility to quickly adjust to the fast-changing audience trends,” she said.

“Our reach on television and radio is declining and digital is struggling to bridge the divide.

“We have significant audience gaps: socially, culturally and geographically.

“This means we’re falling short of properly and effectively representing, in our employees, content and audience impact, the modern Australia in which we live.”

Ms Guthrie said the new content fund – which will start at \$20 million and build to \$50 million a year – will be open to all employees who have ideas for innovative programming.

She said she expected a “fierce” competition for funds.

“We need big ideas, fresh thinking and a willingness to take risks,” she said.

“We need to expand digital storytelling in News and take a fresh look at bolstering key genres like the arts, science, business and sport.”

ABC section secretary for the Community and Public Sector Union Sindy Ealy said: “These cuts will affect people directly involved in program making.

“This is not just about management.”

The Turnbull government welcomed the news that up to \$15 million a year will be invested in the regions, including hiring more journalists and producers.

“I applaud the ABC's initial move and look forward to more like it,” Regional Communications Minister Fiona Nash said.

Ms Guthrie also announced that David Anderson, currently Director of Corporate Strategy and Planning, will be the new Director of ABC Television, replacing Richard Finlayson.



FRIENDS RALLY in ULTIMO

while the

BOARD BUNKERS DOWN



On Thursday 23rd February, with the Board meeting inside to sign off on another 200 job cuts, several hundred Friends gathered with SAVE RN MUSIC and CPSU representatives outside ABC HQ in Ultimo, protesting against the loss of Catalyst, the Religious Department, Music on RN and Short Wave, and in support of ABC staff inside the building.

Mal Hewitt
Editor and
NSW President



Here is the text of my address to the rally on short wave:

I have been asked by several Friends for more detail on the impact of the cuts to short wave broadcasts. I am very happy to do so, as I think it is an appalling decision which will impact many thousands of voiceless people, especially in remote aboriginal communities and on hundreds of islands throughout the Pacific.

Here is a list, by no means exclusive, of people spread across the northern half of Australia who depend on short wave, and for whom there is really no workable alternative: Tour operators and passengers: Aboriginal sea rangers (from Cape York to the Kimberley): Fishermen, both commercial and indigenous: Stock camps, generally moving from place to place: Cattle stations, many with very poor internet service: Truckies, especially road train drivers on the run from Adelaide to Darwin, and all across the Top End: Grey nomads through Qld., NT and WA: Road construction workers: Miners and

prospectors: Workers on oil rigs off the NW Coast: Tradesmen on the road, usually between remote communities: Thousands of aboriginal families in 150 remote communities numbering from 20 to 200 people, who get their beloved AFL footy and Country Music on short wave, and their emergency information: Countless thousands in villages across PNG, Solomons, Vanuatu, Fiji Islands, for whom Radio Australia on short wave is their link with the world, and their source of cyclone warnings and weather information.



All of these people can receive a strong short wave signal on a radio which fits in the hand, costing between \$80 and \$140. ABC Management claimed that short wave had a range of 200k - one of their many lies! Short wave is a reliable signal in all weathers, with a range of up to 2,000 km. Management claim that short wave is "old technology." That may be, but it still works better than anything else, even whilst the cyclone rages.

ABC Management directs people to their existing AM and FM transmitters in Alice, Katherine and Darwin - AM range from the transmitter is about 80k, FM about 20k. Around 90% of the land mass of Northern Australia is not covered by an AM or FM signal. Management directed people to the Royal Flying Doctor radio service for weather and emergency information - that service was turned off 10 years ago.

ABC Management promotes its alternatives - the VAST (Viewer Access

Satellite TV) and Sky Muster satellite systems, for which you need a satellite dish, a computer and sound equipment, at a cost of up to \$4,000! Just ideal for most of the people on my list above!

The decision was made in the comfort of Ultimo offices, without any consultation - nobody from management or the board went to NT to talk to users. ABC staff in Alice and Darwin were not consulted. Since the announcement on 6th December, ABC management and Michelle Guthrie were advised of the adverse impact, of the misinformation coming from the ABC, and requested to defer the closure, but these requests were ignored, and not even responded to.

All for a saving of \$1.2m in the ABC's annual budget. Less than the cost of one hour of drama on TV. Also a strange interpretation of the ABC's Charter, requiring the ABC to provide a service to ALL Australians, and Michelle Guthrie's stated aim that the ABC reach 100% of Australians.



Media union cries foul over ABC's 'back office' cuts

Amanda Meade
the Guardian
10 March 2017



ABC staff, many of them seasoned journalists trained in deciphering messages, were blindsided by the revelation that dozens of the job losses outlined by Michelle Guthrie on Tuesday were not middle management at all. Guthrie talked a lot about reducing red tape and eliminating over-management, about bottlenecks and about "reducing the number of management roles across the ABC" in order to create a \$50m content fund and 80 new jobs in regional and rural content.

But not long after the MD gave the impression that the ranks of the so-called carpet strollers were to be thinned to make way for spending on content, television staff were being

tapped for redundancy. In her staff address Guthrie said by the end of June between 150 and 200 positions would be eliminated and management would be reduced by 20%. If it's at the lower end of 150, more than half of those positions come from the people who make television programs such as 7.30, Landline, Gardening Australia and Foreign Correspondent. While they're not journalist roles, most of these 85 roles are for skilled craftsmen and women and production co-ordinators who organise the crews as well as camera-people. They are not management roles or so called "back office staff".

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance's media director, Katelin McNerney, said: "These cuts to cameras, editing and other production support areas fly in the face of assurances made to staff that the redundancies would be concentrated in back office management. While management say no editorial positions will be affected, these cuts to production and operations staff cannot

avoid having an impact on the delivery of quality news and current affairs to the Australian public."

In her only interview on the restructure, Guthrie told RN Drive's Patricia Karvelas that all programs are up for review just like Catalyst, including the flagship 7pm news bulletin. She also addressed wild accusations she was brought in by Rupert Murdoch to destroy the ABC, a rumour Karvelas says is regularly put to her by listeners.

"I left News Corporation in 2007 so, if I was a Murdoch stooge, then I'm far removed from that. I left the organisation a long time ago," Guthrie said. "The important thing in terms of my role at the ABC is to really try to take all of my experience from the past, whether it's from Google or my TV and pay TV experience from across the world, and figure out ways in which we can be more adaptable and deliver for audiences as their behaviour changes very substantially."



Questions for the new Chairman of the ABC Board



Ranald Macdonald

ABC Friends National
Media Adviser



The Sydney Morning Herald listed editorially 9 “key” questions it posed for the new Chairman of the ABC, Justin Milne.

With the greatest respect, I found them crass and mostly lacking relevance.

In fact, it seems the SMH sees the ABC as simply a purveyor of news and comment.

Obviously everyone who has a real interest in the need for informed public debate in this country which prides itself on being a robust democracy, recognises the screaming need for a strong, independent and informed source of news and information to compete with the other “news” on offer.

I won’t comment on what I see as the often unethical presentation of opinion and selected information by our National newspaper, The Australian, or the often irrelevant contribution of the shock jocks, the IPA and others whose only role they seek to play is to force their views on the public - however unfair, biased or self-interested.

This is why ABC Friends is so committed to the fight for a healthy, properly funded and politically independent ABC.

I, however, think the simple questions for the new Chairman are :

- 1. What** is his philosophy over the range of programming options to be provided by ABC through its various platforms?
- 2. How** to ensure diversity of programming to satisfy the wants of current and potential ABC consumers - and of providing high quality broadcasting i.e. satisfying current listeners and viewers while attracting others.
- 3. With** the current reduced financial resources available to the ABC, how best to ensure value and “bang for the buck” in its range of radio and television offerings.

4. How efficiently and most cost effectively to transmit the range of programs around Australia and in using new media options such as podcasts, apps, iView etc.

5. How to ensure the ABC Charter is properly satisfied, with one area in particular where the ABC has real difficulty following the capricious breaking of the Australia Network contract - its commitment to international reporting and broadcasting.

With all this goes the need for the Chairman and his Board to make a strong public commitment to ensuring the political independence for the ABC, to be open and transparent about its plans and to press governments for the required financial resources.



National President and Media Adviser visit Canberra

The Australia Institute
Research that matters.



Ranald Macdonald, Margaret Reynolds and Quentin Dempster at the event.

Margaret Reynolds and Ranald Macdonald in Canberra, 21 - 23 March.

The ABC has strong political support in Canberra and also the continuing backing of many from the local community.

This is the conclusion reached by our ABC Friends National President Margaret Reynolds following a three day visit to our National Capital.

Over 50 Parliamentary Friends of the ABC (thought to be a new high) held their first meeting of the new Parliament and listened to Managing Director Michelle Guthrie outline her plans for our public broadcaster. The cross party group is led by Co Convenors Craig Laundry, Dr Mike Frelander, Senator Scott Ludlam and Andrew Willkie

It is well known the Managing Director wants the ABC to be more international in both its capacity to cover the news and its ability for its voice to be heard to our north. Clearly ABC Friends need to continue their campaign for better funding for the ABC to enable it to fulfil its national responsibilities under the Charter.

Politics in the Pub

At an event hosted by the Australia Institute "What is the Future of The ABC?" more than 300 supporters hear from panellists Quentin Dempster, Ranald Macdonald and Margaret Reynolds, who outlined the threats to Australian public broadcasting under a government which includes critics prepared to privatise this most trusted institution.

Well known broadcaster Quentin

Dempster detailed the challenges to the ABC in the new media environment.

ABC Friends National President Margaret Reynolds reminded the audience that it is up to all Australians as "shareholders" in the ABC to chart its future direction.

ABC Friends National Media Adviser Ranald discussed the impact of budget cuts and loss of the Australia Network on the ability of the ABC to meet its Charter obligations.

During the two day Canberra visit Margaret and Ranald met with a number of parliamentarians and advisers to reinforce the importance of Australian public broadcasting and to focus on the need for greater ABC transparency and community engagement.



State News

Victoria

ABC Friends Victoria is proud of our contribution to the increasingly National ABC Friends activities and policies and our role in running the Office in South Melbourne. This includes managing our Victorian and the National accounting and reporting.

At our January Planning Day for 2017, we agreed on the following main objectives:

1. Focus on creating action Groups in marginal seat areas, commencing with Geelong/Corangamite and Eastern Suburbs, and backed up with a market stall presence.
2. Build our membership and supporter base, currently standing at well over 4500, and communicate regularly with our supporters about Victorian and national issues.
3. Improve our volunteer involvement and provide briefings with volunteers.
4. Enhance the efficiency of the Office operation, including review the relevance of our promotional material.
5. Organise events to involve our membership and provide exposure for those with ideas for the future of the ABC.

We are very pleased with the results of the 2017 ABC Friends Calendar, a project initiated by the Southern Bayside Group which resulted in the profitable sale of 800 calendars nationwide.

We are engaged with the national plans to instigate a special ABC defenders project on our national website. This will involve well-known Australians promoting the value of our National Broadcaster as a major component of our Democracy, our heritage and our values.

Further, we will be seeking to tap into ideas from supporters of the ABC Australia-wide to assess what they – what you – particularly value and want more of from the ABC under its new leadership.

And we will continue to seek improved funding to allow the ABC to meet its Charter commitments.

Victoria expresses thanks to retiring ABC Board Chair, James Spigelman, but regrets that he was not more public in support of the National Broadcaster during some of

the “dark hours” of the 2014 Budget Cuts, the Q&A Abbott-inspired furore, and in explicitly articulating a vision for the ABC. We would welcome an articulated vision from the new ABC Chair, Justin Milne.

Peter Monie
President, ABC Friends Victoria

Tasmania

Gearing up Down South

Anyone who has the slightest familiarity with the island State knows of the rivalry between North and South. The division of Van Diemens Land into two jurisdictions ended in 1813, with the colony then united under one governor. But that didn't stop us!

For far too long, the Northern Friends Group has put the Southern Group in the shade. They have a consistent public presence in the North and are active letter-writers and networkers. Enough!

Recently, a few Southern Friends got together and nipped out a plan. We agreed that the greatest barrier to getting out there and being active was that so many of us didn't know each other. It is always a bit daunting to turn up to help out with something if you don't know anyone else who might be there.

In late March we kicked off with a coffee morning in North Hobart and we are now poised to launch. We have a keen group of members who have signed up to help out with market stalls and a public forum over coming months.



A resurgent group of Southern Tasmanian Friends.

And we are all looking forward to seeing familiar faces when we get there.

Watch out Northern Group! Here we come!

Kate Durkin
Secretary

South Australia / Northern Territory

Life Memberships

In November last year at our annual End of Year Luncheon at Jane's Kitchen we acknowledged the outstanding service of members Diane Hart and Sharon Perry by awarding them Life Memberships.

Sharon Perry joined the ABC in the early 90's and worked as an administration officer for Classic FM at Collinswood. Part of her job involved rostering the Classic FM SA workforce of broadcasters and audio engineers and being responsible for studio bookings making sure that a studio was the “best fit” for the program being made. In effect, Sharon was what is known in the industry as a production manager. She also held a position in the national union group and worked hard on behalf of union members who looked to her for industrial advice. Sharon joined the Friends whilst working for the ABC, taking a big role in the late 90's organizing pre-election rallies as a member of the Friends Action Committee. When Sharon retired from the ABC in 2012 the Executive committee was delighted to have her on board; she had great insight into the day to day operation of the ABC and the issues that concerned staff. Her heart has always been with the ABC and she was always at the forefront of actions in support of the broadcaster.



Above left: Aussie Kanck and Sue Pinnock with Senator Hanson-Young. Above right: Diane Hart receiving her Life Membership. Left: Aussie Kanck and Sue Pinnock with Senator Griff of the Xenophon team.

Even before retiring in 2010 from a long career working in the telecommunications area, and throwing herself into volunteering, Diane Hart was a passionate supporter of the ABC. Around 1997 the Friends Executive wanted to set up subgroups in the suburbs to raise awareness about funding cuts to the ABC and increase membership (things haven't changed much!). Di became a very active member of the subcommittee covering Blackwood, Aberfoyle Park and Coromandel Valley. When the subgroups folded, Di was invited on to the Executive in recognition of her skills, chairing meetings and taking minutes. Three years ago, at a particularly vulnerable time when the Friends Executive looked like it might collapse, Di Hart was one of a small team who managed to keep the ship afloat and rejuvenate the Executive.

At the luncheon, members were delighted to meet Sophie Thomson from Gardening Australia. She spoke about the importance of gardens and gardening in peoples' lives locally and internationally. Bobbie Mackley, President of ABC WA and long-time friend of Sharon Perry also attended. It was good to have SA Senator Don Farrell, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, with us as an invited guest. He too loves the ABC!

ABC Friends National and the N.T. Shortwave Service

Our National Association "kicked off" this

year. Aussie Kanck and Sue Pinnock are SA representatives on the committee of 12. Margaret Reynolds (Tas) is President, Mal Hewitt (NSW) Vice President and Peter Monie (Vic) is Treasurer. Already taking a national approach is paying dividends as evidenced by our response to the NT shortwave issue over the last 3 months.

On 6 Dec last year the ABC announced it would end its NT shortwave radio service on 31 January 2017. Shortwave transmissions from Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine were turned off. These transmissions have been referred to as the "HF Shower" because they bounce off the ionosphere and shower back to Earth covering a huge area. The "HF shower" was received from the mid 1980's throughout the Kimberley, in northern SA as well as throughout the Territory and into western Queensland.

Many people living and working in mobile, remote situations have been affected by the closure of the "HF Shower". They no longer get, via ABC radio: news, weather information, emergency warnings or content for entertainment from a radio that could fit in the hand, costing between \$80 and \$140. These people (as per the Charter) have a right to demand a service from the national public broadcaster, especially in times of trauma, but also for pure entertainment and communication. The South Pacific shortwave (HF) service too was closed down. It was broadcast from Shepparton in Victoria and it was a significant lifeline to Pacific nations. The ABC is not meeting its charter obligations on both accounts by closure of these services.

Friends of the ABC (SA/NT) brought

the shortwave closure to the attention of ABC Friends National in December when contacted by a concerned NT resident who is a shortwave enthusiast; he has travelled widely seeing firsthand the benefits of shortwave radio as a cost effective means of communication for rural and remote people. ABCF NSW also had a contact who is an informed and experienced user of shortwave and he added significantly to the discussion of this issue.

Working in concert with the national committee Friends SA/NT facilitated information exchange and contributed to submission writing to the ABC Amendment (Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015. In her Bill, Senator McKenzie (National Party's only Victorian Senator) has called for quite specific changes to both the Act and Charter re ABC responsibilities to rural and regional communities. On 6 March in Melbourne, Randal Macdonald (ABCF National Media Adviser) and Sue Pinnock spoke to submissions (including shortwave) from ABC F National at the Senate Inquiry Committee meeting considering this Bill.

In January, Aussie Kanck and Sue Pinnock visited the offices of Senators Hanson-Young and Xenophon to tell them about the closure of the shortwave radio service and seek their help. In response, Senator Xenophon introduced the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Restoring Shortwave Radio) Bill 2017. ABC F National has written a submission in support of the bill. A national association has facilitated action that is fast, informed and coordinated across the states.

State News

Plans for 2017.

In its 85th year, these are unsure times with the ABC undergoing considerable change under the control of Managing Director Michelle Guthrie and a Board readjusting after several new appointments, including that of the Chair. It is clear that our State bodies have a huge part to play representing all Australians to the ABC and yet advocating on behalf of the ABC to ensure that it is funded appropriately by the Federal Government so it can meet its charter obligations. To this end we are expecting more than ever this year to engage with both our State and Federal politicians. Members have appreciated the regular communication we have put in place over the last 9 months and we are thankful of offers of help by members.

We are also conscious that times to socialise are important. We are holding a Café Quiz on Saturday 22 April and the Gardeners' Market in the ABC car park is on Saturday 8 April. Look out for us there and say hello!

*Sue Pinnock
Friends of the ABC (SA/NT).*

Western Australia

Greetings to all WA members and readers of Update.

You can read about our new, national Friends organisation on other pages; its establishment has involved much time, effort and decision making over the past few months which have kept me and WA Secretary Cathy Bardon, as the WA representatives, very busy. Together with the WA state election, in which some of us were actively involved (while wearing 'other hats'), there has been little time to devote to planning Friends' activities in WA apart from the Perth Writers' Festival (see below – and my thanks to those who helped).

We are planning visits to our federal members of Parliament in their electorate offices. We would love to hear from anyone willing to make such a visit themselves on behalf of ABC Friends, especially in places outside Perth. If you can help, please email fabcwa1@hotmail.com. We would be happy to provide you with materials and background.

Bobbie Mackley, President WA



May Day

On Sunday 7th May we will have a stall at the May Day Festival on Fremantle Esplanade as in previous years. The event runs from 10am to 2pm, there's a band and children's rides and activities, food stalls and of course the march around the streets of Fremantle at 12noon. Speeches are kept to a minimum. I do hope you will come, and if you can help us in the stall, even for a short time, that would also be great.

Perth Writers' Festival

A number of members (thanks Marie and Meg!) of ABC Friends (WA) volunteered to hand out leaflets publicising ABC Friends, and urging action to support the ABC, at the Perth Writers' Festival, held largely at the University of Western Australia over three days, 24-26 February. The ABC records some of the sessions for Radio National's Books and Arts program. Many of those attending are ABC viewers and listeners, and the response to the leaflets and consequent discussions was very positive. One of our leaflets detailed cuts to the ABC, in dollar and staff terms, and the other mentioned two ABC management decisions that ABC Friends have criticised – the cuts to Radio National and the axing of the shortwave radio service. This is the third year that volunteers from Friends have had a presence leafletting at the Festival; all in all, it was felt to be a worthwhile exercise despite the extreme heat on the Saturday.

Cathy Bardon, Secretary WA

Left: Sharon Perry and Bobbie Mackley.

Below: Cathy Bardon and friend at the Writers' Festival, UWA.



Vale Lyla Elliott (1934-2017)

Lyla Elliott passed away on 18th February. Lyla was the MLC for the North-East Metropolitan Province from 1971 to 1986 and was only the second woman elected to the Legislative Council and the fifth woman to serve in the WA Parliament. She was particularly concerned about indigenous disadvantage; her first speech to Parliament, in July 1971, included a most moving and perceptive outline of aboriginal history before and after white settlement.

Another of her concerns was domestic violence. Both issues have no easy solution and both, sadly, remain topical today. Lyla recognised the importance of the ABC and was a long-time member of ABC Friends WA, serving a term on the committee in 2006-7. ABC Friends WA sends condolences to Lyla's husband Jack and her family and friends.



Lyla Elliott

NSW Branch News

Hunter

The ABC's Shortwave Service in the Northern Territory – a Personal Experience

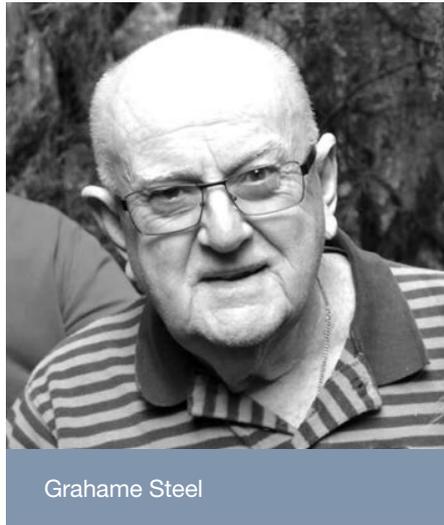
Newcastle resident Grahame Steel is a member of the Hunter branch and probably more than any other member in the ABC Friends organisation understands the serious implications of the ABC's recent closure of the shortwave service in the Northern Territory.

After commencing his professional life as a high school language teacher in the Newcastle district, Grahame followed his love of classical music by joining the ABC and spent the next twenty-five years working as a talks journalist and then manager of regional stations from as far afield as Townsville in Queensland to Launceston and Hobart in Tasmania, with a number of challenging appointments in between. He fought hard during his tenure to ensure that the ABC always provided the same high quality programs for its regional listeners as it did for its city listeners.

In the 1980's Grahame was appointed as Manager, Remote Area Broadcasting, and as part of this role he was responsible for the ABC's input into the development of Indigenous broadcasting in the Northern Territory, the Kimberley, Pilbara, Torres Strait, North Queensland and South Australia.

In preparation for this role he undertook a study tour of Canada to observe the Canadian experience in broadcasting to the Inuit people in the remote areas of that country. The other part of his role was the management of programming for the HF Shower (short wave) system, which was then in its infancy. Over a period of eight years he was in constant contact through personal visits to many communities, including Indigenous communities in the remote parts of the country.

In some bureaucratic circles it was believed that the HF Shower would be superseded by satellite transmission, but this was quickly proven to be untrue. Radio programs delivered by satellite need to be received by a fairly expensive earth station and then retransmitted, usually on the FM band. Each retransmission station might cover an area as little as 10 or 20



Grahame Steel

kilometres from the centre. Given the vast distances in outback Australia, this leaves most of the country with no service. On the other hand, the HF Shower is easy to receive through the use of a small, portable radio receiver which costs no more than \$80. They are readily available in Alice Springs.

In essence, the HF Shower covers a radius of 500-800 kms from the transmitter, not a mere 200 kms as the ABC likes to claim. The transmitters in the Northern Territory are situated in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. They can be heard well into the Kimberley and Pilbara in Western Australia and well into Queensland. Furthermore, the ABC claims the HF Shower is old technology. That may or may not be so, but it is the only technology we have available to fulfil such a vital role. In any case, the technology is no older than the medium wave transmission the Corporation uses to service cities like Sydney and Melbourne. Would the ABC use such an argument to close down services to the major cities in Australia?

The HF Shower enables valuable safety information to be received by remote communities that do not qualify for satellite retransmission. It can also be received by transient groups such as peripatetic Indigenous people, truck drivers, grey nomads and itinerant workers, all of whom need the service for their own safety. Satellite reception facilities are not portable and in any case are relatively expensive, whereas an \$80 radio receiver is within reach for most people and it provides access to

vital weather and emergency information. Since the closure of the shortwave service, people cannot obtain emergency warnings once they are outside the towns serviced by satellite transmission.

Like all ABC Friends, Grahame maintains that every community has a right to demand a service from the national public broadcaster for information and entertainment but especially in times of danger. Contrary to the Managing Director's assertion in the recent Senate Estimates hearing that the ABC is not the official emergency broadcaster in the Northern Territory, Grahame considers it should fulfil this role, as it is the only broadcaster that has (or rather had) the capacity to cover the whole of the Territory. He is ashamed that the ABC has abrogated its responsibility in this respect.

We are grateful for Grahame's advocacy for regional Australians in the past and for expressing his concern and dismay now about the loss of the ABC's shortwave service in the Northern Territory because, as he told us, "I spent too much time trying to achieve a fair deal for people in the bush, where services are so few, to remain silent."

Margaret Conners with our sincere gratitude to our member Grahame Steel.

*Publicity Officer
Hunter Branch ABC Friends*

Armidale

The ABC Friends Armidale started this year with one of our regular committee meetings. Issues discussed included attempts to attract a speaker for our annual ABC Friends speaking event, normally held in November of each year. We approached a number of current and ex-ABC journalists and comperes, but to date have had no success in recruiting a speaker for Armidale. Given our success in the past at attracting speakers, it is not clear why this lack of success should be the case now.

We are mindful of the need to attract younger members to ABC Friends, and in this pursuit some of the invitations referred to above were to comperes at Triple J. We hope to get a positive response. A more successful venture addressing the issue of younger members follows.

NSW Branch News

A stall was held at a student orientation day (University of New England). Over a 3 hour period we spoke to a range of students enrolling at UNE, with 58 students joining our group under a special (Armidale) membership which gave them the first year for free. These students will be contacted via email as activities occur throughout the year.

The first year of our ABC Friends (Armidale) media prize, \$1000 to the strongest applicant in their final year of UNE's Bachelor of Media and Communications, was 2016. No eligible applicants applied in this first year (two were not in the final year of their studies), but with better advertising of this new prize we are hopeful of eligible applicants in 2017.

The Armidale group attends the Armidale markets 4 to 5 times a year. At the February market we included a petition which is intended for the federal parliament. This petition consists of three points; (i) respect for journalists, (ii) the parliament request ABC management to reconsider the removal of five highly regarded music programs on Radio National, and (iii) and a request for ABC management to reconsider the removal of shortwave broadcasting (at this moment we are noting cyclones in Northern Queensland). So far this petition has attracted 206 signatures, and is to be submitted at the end of March.

We also participated in March Armidale (part of the national March in March movement), with our president providing a speech to those gathered in Armidale's Central Park on the importance of public broadcasting for democratic societies, and a stall providing ABC Friends information.

We have a number of ideas concerning further activities for the rest of the year. One of these is a quiz night on the topic of public broadcasting. At this point we would like to ask if any of Update's readers have quiz-type questions of relevance to public broadcasting in general, or the ABC and SBS in particular. If so, or know of a cache of such questions out there somewhere (ABC archives?), would you be able to forward those or relevant information on to bstevens@une.edu.au. Thankyou in advance.

All the best from Armidale.

Northern Rivers

Our Branch held its AGM for 2016 in January this year. The following members were elected to the Executive Committee:

President: Peter Dickson

Vice President: Therese Crollick

Secretary: Jennie Hicks

Treasurer: Tony Betts

Committee members to convene Sub Branch meetings

Tweed Valley: Sandy Copley & Neville Jennings

Byron/Brunswick: Jill Keogh & Jenny Coman

Lismore /Alstonville: Therese Crollick & Felicity Holmes

Prior to our AGM, at a general meeting, speaker Russell Eldridge addressed members on the topic of Using the Media to Advantage. Russell is a former newspaper reporter & editor, a published author and media trainer. Russell's advice was comprehensive and included how to develop a media strategy, effective letter and media release writing for both conventional and electronic media. He has also provided us with his "tips" for dealing with the media, a most useful guide for our ongoing work. Utilising his advice, a letter has been sent to the Federal Member for Page, again seeking a meeting with him to discuss his commitment to the independence and funding of the ABC and the reforms proposed by Michelle Guthrie.

Peter Dickson,

President, ABC Friends Northern Rivers

Central Coast

National ABC Friends Campaign Manager Jeff Waters will be our guest speaker on Wednesday 12th April at the Central Coast Leagues Club, Gosford. Jeff became the National Campaign Manager for the ABC Friends early in 2016. The 2016 campaign was the start of a major national campaign that set the tone for the next three years if the Turnbull Government continues with its death by thousands cuts philosophy.

Jeff was the first Australian video journalist to work in Europe, providing footage for all Australian television networks. He has worked in remote regions of Australia for the ABC's Landline and 7:30 programs. From 2006 to 2014, he was a senior journalist with ABC News, based in Melbourne. He is the author of two books: *Gone for a Song: A Death in Custody on Palm Island*; and *Every Beat of my Heart: An ABC Journalist's Journey from Death*.

The branch has also been able to book Ms. Emma McBride as a guest speaker in early June. She is ALP MP for Dobell one of the federal seats on the Central Coast. Emma recently drew national attention to the often poor reception of ABC programs on the Central Coast, a complaint that has been made many times by this branch to the appropriate authorities. While there have been some improvements in recent years new problems have been reported and Ms Mc Bride has drawn attention to them at the highest possible level, the Federal Parliament. Given her function as an ALP MP we intend to also invite Ms Lucy Wicks, Liberal MP for Robertson to explain the Turnbull Government policies in respect of the ABC. Very likely Geraldine Doogue will be our fourth speaker later in the year, tbc.

Our branch was represented by four



Media talk by Russell Eldridge to ABC Friends Bangalow Jan 2017.



Pippa Preston, Klaas Woldring, Margaret and John Lund at the rally.

committee members at the recent Friends demonstration at ABC Ultimo where particularly the severe cuts to music programs and ABC Short Wave services were discussed at length.

We reflect on the foreshadowed appointment as ABC Chair of Mr. Justin Milne, who seems to think that the ABC will soon be the typical province of the Lumpen Proletariat. In a recent article in the Sydney Morning Herald he argued that public broadcasters would be “cash poor and time rich people”. That’s quite a difference from his friend the Prime Minister who has earlier referred to the ABC supporters and viewers as “the elite”. One must question both views really. Yes, the new pay media are becoming the province of the “cash rich and time poor” but what they get for their money may at times well be far below the ABC’s standards that Milne is expected to defend. As to the viewers and listeners of the ABC, there are many with good

incomes, but above all people, rich and poor, who seek quality programs. As an Independent public broadcaster they’ll value programs questioning appalling government policies, top class investigative programs, classical music, resumption of the overseas network and short wave radio. All for 10 cents a day per citizen!

Blue Mountains

The Blue Mountains Branch is busy as usual.

We began our year with a new President who, due to other commitments, unfortunately had to resign. We wish him good luck in his many worthwhile ventures.

February 23 saw a healthy representation from our branch travel down the mountain for the rally outside the ABC Ultimo Studios which was held while the ABC Board met. This was organised by members of the CPSU together with ABC Friends and Hands off RN Music. The Protest concentrated on the deletion of the Australian musical component from RN, abolishing Short Wave Radio and more funding cuts which will mean more job losses and further diminished programming.

This year, we introduced a new email format for our newsletter. Previously attached to an email as a PDF, now the

newsletter appears directly in the email with short summaries of the stories and image thumbnails, users can click on links to read further if interested. This format will also provide some general statistics to measure reader interest. A printed newsletter in a simpler format will still be posted to those members without internet access.

We have been trialling ‘Snippets’, an occasional news update of current issues relevant to the ABC and emailed in a similar format to the newsletter.

We are continually looking at ways to better inform our members and Blue Mountains residents of matters relating to our ABC and how to express concerns to ABC management.

Several members will be attending the upcoming ABC Friends presentation in Sydney on the use of social media in the Campaign with ideas to put forward.

Later in the year, we plan to participate in Community Festivals and hope to hold a Political Forum on ABC issues.

This year we are working with a diminished Executive and would like to correct that ASAP. We are looking for a President and Secretary if anyone would like to put up their hand. We have good a Committee, so soldier on we will – for the time being.

Margaret Foy
Vice President



Blue Mountains members attending the rally at Ultimo on 23rd February.

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 & NT

ABC Friends TASMANIA

ABC Friends VICTORIA

ABC Friends WESTERN AUSTRALIA

President MAL HEWITT

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President BOBBIE MACKLEY



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