

VICNEWS

Issue 12
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Friends of the ABC
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Vic News is FABC Victoria's local supplement which accompanies FABC's national newsletter, *Background Briefing*.

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Freezing the ABC out of the Future

After the May Federal Budget, Terry Laidler, FABC Vic President, wrote to the daily print media:

"Governments can privatize a public service outright. Alternatively, they can restructure and erode it over time. Then, one day, when the service is no longer meeting its aim, the public and government will be as one in believing there is no point to the service continuing.

It becomes increasingly difficult to believe this is not the Federal Government's plan for the ABC. With insufficient funds in the May Budget the broadcaster will be forced to close its two digital television channels - aimed at groups not well catered for with quality broadcasting, youth and children, and planned to be more widely accessible when all television is required to convert to digital. And there will be further cuts.

ABC Online is a good example of why the national broadcaster must be resourced to participate in the emerging broadcast environment. Scepticism at the ABC's use of scarce funds outside traditional broadcasting services changed to applause as ABC Online developed to be a jewel of quality independent information in the midst of commercial websites of dubious worth and surrounded by advertising. Importantly, many young people use it.

While production costs have increased and technological change is expanding the nature of broadcasting, triennial funding - on which the ABC depends to plan and maintain its arms-length operation from government - has not been restored since the Coalition Government cut it by \$66m (12%) per annum. Without sufficient funds, Australia's most important information and cultural institution is slipping behind and being frozen out of the future."

Friends of the ABC Raffle 2003 - The Winners

With thanks to all who supported the Raffle or made a donation. We raised

1st prize: European holiday (value \$4,500)
Comprises 1 week in a self-catering cottage in Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Ireland or UK (value \$1500) & airfares (total value \$3000).
Accommodation Cottages and Castles Kew.
www.cottagesandcastles.com.au Ph 9853 1142.
E Robinson

2nd: Asian holiday for 2 adults with Intrepid Travel (accommodation, land travel, some meals to value of \$1290 per person). Choice of destination. www.intrepidtravel.com Ph 1300 360 667 J Dempsey

3rd: Clothing voucher from Fletcher Jones (value \$1000) Ph 9614 3781 G Walters

4th: 12-month Corporate Membership to the exclusive Adelphi Hotel, Melbourne (city).
Comprises use of gym, pool & sauna, club bar and lounges (value \$850) Ph 9650 7555 R Shennan

5th: Re-Creation Health Club Armadale 3-month membership (value \$460) Ph 9509 7622 I Breuer

6th: Your portrait in oil on canvas or choice of artwork (value \$400) G Smith

7th: 1 dozen bottles premium red wine (value \$350) D Hamilton

8th: 2 nights accommodation & continental breakfast at the Old Woolstore Hotel 1 Macquarie St Hobart (value \$300) www.oldwoolstore.com.au Ph 62355355 L Anderson

9th: 1 week at Adobe Mudbrick Flats Mallacoota, bridal suite (value \$270) Ph 5158 0329 A Hehir

10th: 2 nights accommodation & continental breakfast at Ocean Grove Motor Inn (value \$255) Ph 5256 2555 J Lovatt

11th: 2 A-Reserve tickets to Opera Australia performance of 'Cinderella' (value \$250) D & P Lord

12th: 2 dozen bottles mixed wine (value \$250) A Leonard

13th: Premium double pass plus program, parking and interval drinks to a Melbourne Theatre Company production (value \$210) M Brickhill

14th: Watch Jon Faine's 'Conversation Hour' on 774 & books by folklorist Dr June Factor (value \$120) A McGovern

15th: Dinner for 10 at Flemington Racecourse Tabaret (value of \$200) Ph 93717 1232 D Hammond

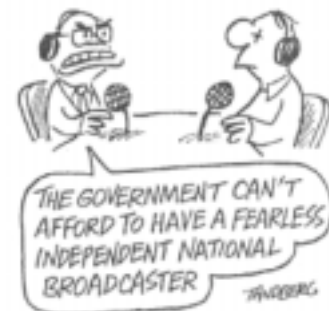
16th: Double pass to a Melbourne Festival production (value \$150) J Troy

17th: Spa & massage for 2 at Hepburn St.Kilda Sea Baths (value \$90) Ph 9525 3011. Meal for 2 at Soulmama (value \$50) Ph 9525 3338 T Willis

18th: 1 night for 2 at Woodbury Cottage Woodend (value \$135) Ph 5427 1876 H Cook

19th: 1 night B & B for 2 at Lark Rise House, Foster Vic (value \$130) Ph 5682 2953 J Snowdon

20th: 1 night B & B for 2 at Melba Gully Cottage Flower Farm, Lavers Hill Vic. (value \$100) Ph 5237 3208 J Yeaman



New FABC Stall



Rosie Spear and Shirley Parkes (above) at FABC information stall in the Bourke Street Mall Friday 20 June. FABC's new stand is versatile - signs can be hung and merchandise displayed. It folds up, is lightweight, and fits in a standard car. Borondara local group members Ruth Boschen, Jill Newton, Gwen Lee and Marge White helped on the stall.

If anyone is interested in helping with stalls, or in borrowing the stall, contact Rosie on 9387 7884 or Shirley on 9537 1819.

Be Better Informed about the ABC . . .and Tell Others

FABC's workshops - held throughout April and May for FABC members wanting to learn more about the ABC - were a great success. FABC's Campaign Manager, Glenys Stradijot, provided information on the ABC and why it is important. Members with an interest in public speaking then went on to a workshop conducted by Ben Richards, Director of the communications consultancy Aticus Pty Ltd to gain tips on effective preparation and presentation techniques.

Whether those who attended workshops plan to speak publicly or simply chat to others, most felt they gained important and interesting information and feel better equipped and more confident to talk with others about the ABC.

Further workshops will be held if there is sufficient interest. Please contact FABC office to register your interest.

CARTOON CLIPPERS

With thanks to our cartoon clippers Janet King and Henry Zimmerman for their continued vigilance!

Operation Cork Update



FABC is collecting corks, to be recycled, to raise funds. The following people have agreed to assist in the collection of corks in their area. Please contact them if you can help.

Bendigo	Sue Prain	5447 8433
Castlemaine	Jean Cunningham	5472 4478
McKinnon	Brett Hedger	9578 9055
Moonee Ponds	Robyn Prent	9370 6964
Mt Waverley	Georgette Courtenay	gcourtenay@netspace.net.au
North Fitzroy	Janet Hall	9481 8549

Corks can be dropped at FABC's office in South Melbourne, but please phone first.

FABC needs Volunteers

FABC volunteers perform a range of activities. Some members are regular volunteers, helping to staff and perform tasks in the office. Others provide occasional assistance on street stalls or help to mail out FABC's newsletter. Still others assist in areas of their expertise or in carrying out good ideas they have developed.

FABC needs volunteers. We depend on their wonderful support. If you are willing, we welcome chatting with you about how you might help. Please contact FABC office.

Be involved - Join a local group

Local groups are one way in which FABC members can be involved and better informed about what is happening to the ABC. FABC local groups perform valuable work - raising public awareness and funds, and lobbying in support of the ABC in their local area. Contact FABC office for details of a local group in your area.

Southern Bayside Local Group



Overseas Flower Show

Sixty ABC supporters keen on gardening listened to a lively and humorous address given by ABC garden show presenter Jane Edmanson at the Chelsea Plant Nursery, reminding us of the variety of interests the ABC reflects.

Organized by FABC Southern Bayside local group, Jane's talk and an afternoon tea, provided by Southern Bayside, took place in perfect Melbourne autumn weather on March 27.

FABC is appreciative of the generosity of Ismini and Spyros for hosting the event at their nursery and for the prizes they generously donated. An enjoyable afternoon was had by all and \$507 raised.

Budget Fails the ABC

In the May Federal Budget, which set the ABC's funding for the next three years, the Government failed in its responsibility to ensure the country's independent national broadcaster will thrive.

May's Budget delivered a surplus. Concessions have been promised to multinationals and high income earners. Precious public funds are to be returned to ordinary Australians in tax cuts so tiny they are meaningless. Yet the Government failed to properly fund the country's most significant provider of information and culture.

The Budget failed to restore the 12% per annum the Government previously cut from the ABC's triennial funding. Despite specific warnings from the ABC's managing director that the broadcaster would have no option but to cut services and programs if the ABC is forced to continue with insufficient funding, the Government refused to grant even a moderate increase.

This year's Budget also highlighted the danger of governments providing one-off targeted grants in lieu of adequate triennial funding. Shortly before the 2001 election, not a normal year for ABC funding, the Government targeted one-off funding to regional audiences for political advantage. At the time of announcing the *National Interest Initiative* (NIN), Senator Alston said: "This additional \$71.2 million should enable the ABC to increase local production and programming in regional Australia significantly. This will generate jobs and stimulate the growth of new media in regional areas."

NIN is due to expire in the funding period covered by the current Budget, but the Budget has failed to commit the funds required for the ABC to continue its increased regional production and programming.

The Government is holding an axe over the ABC's head. Starved of adequate ongoing funds, it would be impossible for the ABC not to be concerned about whether or not the Government will feel favourably disposed to it when the funds for regional services expire. If ongoing funds are not granted, will the ABC abandon its increased services for regional audiences, or will another area of the ABC be cut, as funds are transferred to cover the loss?

Useful Contact Details

Politicians

- . Ask FABC for your local MP
- . The Hon J Howard, MP, Prime Minister
Parliament House, Canberra 2600

The ABC - phone 9626 1600
GPO Box 9994, Melbourne 3001

- . Mr Donald McDonald, Chairman, ABC Board
GPO Box 9994, Sydney 2001
- . Mr Russell Balding, Managing Director
ABC, GPO Box 9994, Sydney 2001

Phone 9626 1600 and ask to leave a message on the General Comments Line or email comments@your.abc.net.au

Media - Letters to the Editor

- . **The Age**
phone 9670 1601 fax 9601 2414
250 Spencer Street, Melbourne 3000
letters@theage.fairfax.com.au

- . **The Age Greenguide**
PO Box 257C, Melbourne 8001
greenguide@theage.com.au

- . **The Australian**
fax 02 9288 3077
GPO Box 4162, Sydney 2001
letters@theaustralian.com.au

- . **The Herald-Sun**
phone 9292 3666 fax 9292 2944
PO Box 14631, Melbourne City 8001

The sounds of silencing

Does the media tell us the truth?



It is hard for journalists in commercial media to uphold the principles of quality journalism in the face of the commercial and political interests of private media owners. There are huge pressures on the ABC, Australia's independent national public broadcaster.

And it could get worse. Free trade negotiations with the US and ceaseless efforts of major media owners to weaken media laws threaten Australian culture, ownership of its media and the limited diversity and localism which remains.

Public Meeting

Tuesday 9th September

7.30 – 9.00 pm

Maroondah Secondary College, Ringwood
Melway map 50 E3

Chair **Terry Laidler**

President, FABC Vic and former ABC presenter

Speakers

Morag Fraser

Adjunct Professor at La Trobe University and former editor of *Eureka Street*

Ben Knight

ABC Radio current affairs reporter

Claire Miller

Senior Age journalist and National Vice-President of Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance



Maroondah local group
Phone 9729 3125

Would people able to give a lift, and any FABC member needing a ride, please contact FABC office 9682 0073

Free to be Australian

Along with others interested in media, the arts and entertainment, at Federation Square on June 1 Friends of the ABC heard from a star-studded cast of entertainers and journalists of integrity how free trade risks endangering Australian culture and, indeed, our very democracy.

The occasion was the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) *Free to be Australian* campaign launch. Kicked off in the midst of far-reaching free trade negotiations between the US and Australian governments, the campaign aims to protect Australia's right to support and maintain its own culture by calling on the Australian Government to exclude media, entertainment and the arts from free trade agreements.

Free trade with the US would have significant implications for Australian media, art and culture, including the ABC. The industries which are the engine rooms of our culture are at risk of being squashed by bigger and more powerful players able to produce more cheaply for the larger US population with little interest in culture outside its own. Australian culture and our identity, the freedom to tell *our* stories, is at stake.



left to right:

Prof Joy Murphy-Wandin - Wurundjeri elder
Ron Tandberg - cartoonist
Corinne Grant - comedian
Alan Fletcher - actor
Virginia Haussegger - ABC journalist
Claire Miller - Age journalist
Chris Warren - Federal Secretary, MEAA
Simon Whipp - Assistant Secretary MEAA
Gary Sweet - actor

Edited extracts from the address of senior Age journalist, Claire Miller, speaking in her capacity as National Vice-President of MEAA:

Flawed process

In its very inception, a free trade agreement stifles a free and independent press from being able to tell the community what is really going on and holding powerbrokers accountable. The secrecy with which these agreements are negotiated is contrary to the principles of open, accountable government. It means the media will be unable to scrutinise the negotiations in order to keep the Australian people informed about the deals and trade-offs their elected representatives are prepared to make.

Free trade acts against freedom of speech

Free trade is a misnomer. It has nothing to do with freedom in the context of communications and the media. It acts against freedom of speech and open, accountable governance. Free trade is about giving transnational corporations the freedom to invest and make profits, and the legal right to sue elected governments of the day if those governments act to curb corporate freedom on occasions it is against the interests of ordinary Australians. It means governments cannot govern in the interests of those

who elect them but must govern in the interests of faceless corporations with no loyalties to anyone but themselves.

And since free trade would allow those faceless transnational corporations to own the media as well, then who will be left to speak up for and represent the voices of the people of Australia in all their lively diversity. We in the private media are already finding it tough enough to uphold the principles of quality, serious journalism in the face of corporate managers interested not in democracy and free speech but in keeping faceless institutional shareholders happy. A free trade agreement will make it even harder for us to do our jobs as journalists.

. . . and on the ABC

The ABC is the last bastion of brave, fearless journalism, in an organisation more open to public scrutiny than the activities of its Government funders. Under a free trade agreement the ABC could be gutted of its funding on the basis it represents an unfair trade advantage against

Even if the ABC was exempted from a fair trade agreement, it would struggle to exist in an industry dominated by huge transnational corporations. Though the most significant contributor to Australian art, culture and media, the ABC's resources are insufficient on its own to maintain the level of skill and creativity from which the ABC itself needs to draw. And no doubt the public broadcaster would be readily marginalized by media players so powerful they will dictate terms to elected governments.

In conclusion

Virginia Haussegger, ABC news and current affair journalist: It's *our* culture, about *our* people, telling *our* stories as we see fit and relevant. We don't want our news collected here and filtered back to us through a city in the US.

Claire Miller: We want fair trade, not free trade. And we want an Australian-owned, diverse media that can freely speak up, scrutinise and stand up to corporate interests and governments who would like nothing better than to trade away the fair go for all

Further information: FABC ACT free trade submission on behalf of FABC can be accessed on the FABC ACT website, through FABC Vic's website Δ MEAA www.free2baustralian.org.au Δ Australian Writers' Guild www.awg.com.au