

Friends of the ABC

Blue Mountains Region April 2008

ABC Management Has Lost The Plot

Charging for ABC Services —

“ABC management has lost the plot,” said Friends of the ABC National Spokesperson, Professor Alan Knight, when commenting on ‘ABC Shop Downloads’, the new service for which the public will have to pay to access online ABC content.

“ABC heads clearly no longer regard the public as citizens to whom the ABC has a responsibility to provide quality information and entertainment. Instead they are treating the broadcaster’s audiences as consumers to be exploited to make a buck.

“The ABC is not meant to be a money-making operation. New technology should be embraced to promote the community’s access to the national broadcaster, not used to exploit them.

“The ABC’s decision to introduce a service in which the public will pay to download ABC programming undermines the right which all in the community must have to access their national public broadcaster.

“Charging for this service also raises serious questions about the ABC’s use of public monies. The community has already paid through their taxes for ABC content to be produced. They should not be required to pay for it again,” said Professor Knight.

Branch Reply to ABC Management

Ms K McLiesh
Head, Audience & Consumer Affairs
Australian Broadcasting Corporation



Dear Ms McLiesh

Thank you for your letter of 5 December 2007. Members have expressed disappointment at not receiving an individual acknowledgement of their submission. They have asked me to raise the following queries and would appreciate your further clarification.

Do the commercial logos prominent in many ABC TV interviews amount to “product placement” and therefore contravene Section 16.2.2 of the ABC’s Editorial Principles as outlined in your letter? If the ABC cannot arrange these interviews to be conducted on an ABC set, can the logos be removed technically, and perhaps be replaced by an ABC logo?

Our members are heartened by your assurance that the ABC is committed to its “role as Australia’s independent, national, commercial-free broadcaster” and the 702 advertising on 24 July 2007 was “an isolated lapse in standards”. However, the members note that on 5 February ABC Local Radio, including 702, was involved in promoting ADHD medication on behalf of the Janssen-Cilag company (Media Watch 18 February). We appreciate that commercial influence is insidious, however could the ABC reduce these “isolated lapses” by drawing their information from academic, government, professional and community sources rather than commercial organisations?

Members are concerned that the Countdown website was developed to “generate revenue”. Consequently, the Branch is planning to enlist public support to request the Rudd Government to provide funding to replace the revenue generated by commercial advertising on Countdown. Extra funding should eliminate any need for the ABC to broadcast commercial advertising.

Yours sincerely,
Bob Macadam President

Letter Distributed To The Public At Springwood Foundation Day

Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy
Minister for Broadband, Communications, and the Digital Economy
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Conroy

I am very concerned that the ABC finds it necessary to place commercial advertising on its Countdown website to generate revenue. Surely you agree that any commercial advertising on the ABC compromises its role as Australia's independent, national commercial-free broadcaster. This independence can only be maintained by the total exclusion of commercial interests.

Will you please assure me that the Rudd Government will provide the ABC with additional funding to replace the revenue generated by commercial advertising on the ABC's Countdown web site and so make the ABC truly commercial free?

Yours sincerely,

Signature:

Name:

Address:

Date:

ABC Board Vacancies To Stay Vacant For The Time Being!

From FABC (NSW) Website: www.fabcnsw.org.au

The Australian government would not fill two soon-to-be vacant positions on the ABC Board, until it could establish a fair, merit based appointment process, according to the Communications Minister, Stephen Conroy.

ABC Board Deputy chair John Gallagher QC completes his term on February 23 while Dr Ron Brunton concludes on April 30, 2008. The FABC is highly critical of the composition of the current ABC Board which it believes was stacked by the previous government.

Senator Conroy was speaking in Canberra to a Friends of the ABC (FABC) delegation; Professor Alan Knight, Jill Greenwell and Malcolm Hewitt.

The Minister said the government was investigating legislating to ensure transparency and accountability of ABC Boards. He added the government was absolutely committed to Labor policy to allow for an ABC staff elected Board member.

Professor Knight said that when the Minister was asked about how the ABC would fare in this year's budget, Senator Conroy replied that any new funding initiatives in the 2008 budget were expected to be explicitly restricted to projects promised during the election.

Professor Knight noted that this would appear to exclude the ABC television children's channel, which had been discussed but not promised by Labor during the campaign.

Senator Conroy said he supported adequate government funding for the ABC and noted that that degrees of commercialisation should be governed by a properly appointed, independent, ABC Board.



Next Meeting:

**Where: Grand View Hotel
Wentworth Falls**

When: Saturday April 19

Time: 10.00am

FABC Committee

President – Bob Macadam
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Vice President / Newsletter Editor
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Secretary – Carole Goodwin
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Treasurer – Julia McGill

Membership Secretary – Janelle
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Publicity Officer –

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Merchandise Officer –
Joan Macadam.

Web Officer & Newsletter
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