

Friends of the ABC

Blue Mountains Region November 2008

From the President

Our FABC year will go out on a high note with Chris Masters as guest speaker at the AGM at the Grand View at 10am on November 15. There is much to do before then with our FABC stall at the Glenbrook Festival on November 8 and our response to the recent cuts in Radio National programs and a call for submissions to the Government's Discussion Paper on the future of the ABC and SBS.

Included below is a staffing roster for the Glenbrook Festival. Let Joan Macadam know which time-slot suits you – email macadamr@bigpond.net.au or telephone 47541620. Another attachment is a draft press release for "An Investigative Conversation with Chris Masters" that you can use to spread the word.

I like to think ABC management will respond to a groundswell of opposition by rescinding their recently announced decision to cut from Radio National the Religion Report, the Media Report and the Sports Factor. Suggested below under 'Write for the ABC' are ways you can play a part. It is pleasing to note that the Australian Senate is playing a leadership role in objecting to a mystifying decision – hardly conducive to engendering political support for an increase in ABC funding.

If you wonder whether lobbying on an issue is worth the effort, the recent announcement by the Minister of changes in the appointment process for members of the ABC and SBS Boards will be a fillip. The changes are what FABC pressed for and are designed to stymie political appointments – a tendency of governments of all persuasions.

Also included below under 'Write for the ABC' is news of another announcement by the Minister – his call for public submissions to "inform the Australian Government's future policy and funding decisions in relation to the two broadcasters (ABC and SBS)". We decided at our October 18 meeting to make a submission and are seeking your input into this.

An Investigative Conversation with Chris Masters

Chris Masters, arguably Australia's pre-eminent investigative journalist will be the focus of "In Conversation with Chris Masters" at the Grand View Hotel in Wentworth Falls from 10 am on November 15.

Blue Mountains branch of Friends of the ABC, the event organiser, is issuing an open invitation to the community to interact at no cost with an outstanding journalist and broadcaster at its Annual General Meeting.

Chris rejects the 'tough guy' image of the investigative journalist and believes instead that a good one has "to be genuinely curious. I think you need to love story telling". Chris's visit is an opportunity to hear one of the best tell his story.

Chris is Four Corners longest serving reporter, and along the way has collected three Walkley Awards and a Logie Award.

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Next Meeting:

*A Conversation
with
Chris Masters*

**Where: Grand View Hotel
Wentworth Falls**

When: Saturday November 15

Time: 10.00am



**Glenbrook
Festival Roster
November 8**

**8-10 (includes setup); 9–11;
10–12; 11–1; 12–2; 1–3
(includes pack-up)**

FABC Committee

President – Bob Macadam
47541620
macadamr@bigpond.net.au

Vice President / Newsletter Editor
Colin Bull.

Secretary – Carole Goodwin
47512680

Treasurer – Julia McGill

Membership Secretary – Janelle Clark

Publicity Officer –

Pam Fitzpatrick

Merchandise Officer –
Joan Macadam.

Web Officer & Newsletter
Publisher – Bob Foster.

Write for the ABC Radio National program changes for 2009

Our last meeting decided to urge Friends concerned about the recently announced changes to Radio National's 2009 programs (see www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/media) to write to ABC management and outline their concerns. ABC Audience & Consumer Affairs responds positively to audience concerns. It does not follow the common practice of ignoring complaints or supplying a positive 'spin' unrelated to the concerns raised. Furthermore, if writers are not satisfied with the ABC's initial response, complainants can avail themselves of the ABC's extensive, multi-level complaints process (see www.abc.net.au/contact/complaints_process).

Some suggestions for points that can be made about the Radio National program changes include:

- Ask the ABC to explain the reasoning behind the changes.
- Ask how the changes will enhance the ABC's Charter responsibilities such as providing "a balance between broadcasting programs of wide appeal and specialized broadcasting programs;" (Charter 2,a,iii) and "reflect the cultural diversity of, the Australian community; and ... inform" (Charter 1,a,i).
- In the case of the Religion Report, how does the ABC plan to continue providing specialised reporting of the complex, powerful in-

fluence religion has on world affairs? The Australian Senate last week resolved that it:

(i) Notes ABC Radio National's decision to axe the Religion Report, Media Report and the Sports Factor;

(ii) Notes that the Religion Report is one of the most important programs on the ABC with a rapidly growing international audience;

(iii) Notes that this program broke the Peter Hollingworth scandal, has applied critical analysis of the Exclusive Brethren, Anglican, Catholic and Muslim religions amongst others and provided insightful commentary of various religions over many years;

(iv) Calls on ABC management to publicly reveal all formal and informal criticisms made against this program over recent years; and

(v) Calls on ABC management to immediately make public the reasons for this decision".

• Why are "ABC Radio National radio programs (that) attract an audience aged 50+ years or older, (being changed for) online audiences for ABC Radio National (who) are under 50" (Radio National Manager Dr Jane Connors, 15.10.2008). Is this not ageism?

• Why does the ABC not seek audience feedback about proposed program changes before decisions are taken, if only to avoid embarrassing

reversals such as occurred with the Goons and Behind the News?

Communication should be courteous and can be sent electronically at: www.abc.net.au/contact or mailed to:

Australian Broadcasting Corporation
GPO Box 9994
Sydney 2001

Federal Government Submission

Our last meeting also decided to respond to the call for submissions on the Federal Government's Discussion Paper on the future of the ABC and SBS. The Government claims "It is intended that this public submissions process will inform the Australian Government's future policy and funding decisions in relation to the two broadcasters".

The Paper, ABC and SBS: Towards a Digital Future can be viewed and downloaded at www.dbcde.gov.au/media_broadcasting. Printed copies can be obtained by telephoning 1800 025 145 (free call).

The Branch Executive is keen to ensure the submission represents the Blue Mountains Friends' responses to the Discussion Paper. Members are invited to send their views to the Executive by return email or to PO Box 469 Springwood 2777, no later than 14 November. The completed submission has to be sent by Friday 12 December 2008.

An Investigative Conversation with Chris Masters (continued)

His first Four Corners report The Big League in 1983 shook the foundations of NSW politics; his 1987 report on corruption in Queensland helped spark the Fitzgerald Inquiry, and his recently published book Jonestown is a best-seller, reportedly still unread by Alan Jones, its controversial central figure.

Despite his 'big city' success Chris thinks of himself as a country boy, one of seven children who grew up on the northern rivers of NSW.

"I think I was lucky when I joined Four Corners, I didn't know what not to do" he reflects. "I still think of my-

self as a bit naïve, not stupidly so, but I will still look at a story and think, yeah, that should be done, I really should have a go at this, rather than, no, this is going to get me into trouble and it'll be too hard".

The demoralizing aspects of exposing corruption and then having to defend himself in the aftermath is not Chris' only experience of the dark side of journalism. He also worked in Rwanda and Bosnia in the 90s. "When I go to Rwanda and I see dead bodies piled up everywhere I take that memory home and I don't forget it... I don't want to forget it."

friends
of the abc



For enquiries about Chris Masters guest appearance at the Grand View call Bob on 4754 1620