

Friends of the ABC

Blue Mountains Region October 2008

Recent representation to the Government on behalf of the Blue Mountains Friends of the ABC.

Dear Mr Debus,

We would like to thank you for listening attentively and responding positively to the concerns expressed by us on behalf of our branch regarding the Federal Government's approach to the ABC last Monday, 8th September. As discussed, these are:

1. The provision of sufficient funding in the next triennial allocation to the ABC to allow the broadcaster to fulfil its function as the only national broadcaster with the ability to produce quality Australian programs and able to take up the challenges that the new technology allows. This funding would be free of conditions dictating either content or the area in which it is to be spent.

2. The closure of the loophole in an Act drafted before the advent of the Internet which allows advertising on ABC internet sites because it is not covered by existing requirements which prevent commercial advertising on ABC broadcasts.

3. The implementation, as foreshadowed by the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Stephen Conroy, of the establishment of a fair, merit-based appointment system to the ABC Board, similar to that introduced in Britain under the government led by John Major.

We are grateful that you have agreed to represent us and present our concerns to the Federal Parliament and look forward to hearing of any progress made.

Yours sincerely,
Carole Goodwin
Secretary

For the delegation consisting of Bob Macadam, Margaret Foy and Carole Goodwin, on behalf of the Blue Mountains Branch

Subsequent response from Bob Debus' office

Hi Carole

Bob has asked that I email you the following message following the meeting on Monday 8 September 2008:

"Since our meeting, I've talked with Senator Conroy and he mentioned firstly that he expects legislation to establish a staff-elected Commissioner to be introduced later this year and secondly, that the websites which have been carrying advertisements are not strictly ABC owned but are rather partnership arrangements. In any event, the Minister has made it very clear to the Board that there is to be no advertising on any ABC program in any media.

Best wishes,

Bob
Mark Andrews

Next Meeting:

**Where: Grand View Hotel
Wentworth Falls**

When: Saturday October 18

Time: 10.00am



FABC Committee

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Merchandise Officer –
Joan Macadam.

Web Officer & Newsletter
Publisher – Bob Foster.

Friends of the ABC NSW
<http://www.fabcnsw.org.au>

Check out our Branch Website...

Go to:

Friends of the ABC NSW

<http://www.fabcnsw.org.au/>

***Go to Local Branches and click
on 'Blue Mountains'***

BMFABC Reply Seeking Further Clarification and Assurance

Dear Mr Debus,

Thank you for your email sent through Mark Andrews, your Office Manager, detailing the discussion you had with Senator Stephen Conroy where you raised the concerns we expressed at our meeting with you on 8 September. We are pleased to read that legislation to establish a staff-elected Commissioner will be introduced later this year.

Regarding advertising on the ABC, the Branch would be pleased if you could clarify the relationship between the ABC and the web sites the ABC uses to carry commercial advertising. You explain that "websites which have been carrying advertisements are not strictly ABC owned". However a Media Watch report of 8 September describing new plans by ABC management to introduce further online advertising appears to convey a different impression. It was reported that "Media Watch has seen what appear to be "final" lay-outs for mobile accessible sites which include advertising and also include the ABC logo". In response to questions from Media Watch the ABC's Director of Innovation, Ian Carroll said:

1. Proposed web sites that include the ABC logo above (commercial) advertising content "will be owned by ABC Commercial".
2. The public will be able to access these sites by clicking on a link on an abc.net.au site.
3. The ABC will get direct financial benefit from revenue generated by the advertising that appears on mobile sites containing ABC material and logos.

Ian Carroll's responses appear to indicate that the ownership arrangement to which you referred is simply an attempt to circumvent the Act's ban on commercial advertising on the ABC. Furthermore, could it not be concluded that the ABC management is being forced to introduce commercial advertising to make up for the short fall in Government funding over many years?

As you know, the BM FABC is keen to see the Government close the loophole in the Act and increase ABC funding in order to ensure a complete absence of commercial advertising on the ABC. The Branch membership would be pleased if you would represent our position to the Minister.

Thank you,

Yours sincerely,

Carole Goodwin, Secretary, Blue Mountains Friends of the ABC.

The ABC Shareholders' Charter—From FoABC - WA

During the past few years concern increased about the ABC's future. The following document was the result:

ABC Shareholders' Charter

We, the audience and owners of the ABC hereby declare our full-bodied support for the re-establishment of the ABC as a fresh and vibrant national broadcaster free from political and commercial interference.

Our national broadcaster must:

- Be innovative and comprehensive
- Contribute to our sense of national identity and reflect our cultural diversity;

- Continue to inform, entertain and educate all Australians;

- Restore quality programming and Australian content;

- End the creeping commercialization by banning backdoor sponsorship and advertising on the ABC including in new media;

- Maintain the integrity and independence of its programming by re-building specialist units such as the TV Science Unit;

- Provide a balance of specialist programs and programs of a wider appeal as provided for by the ABC Act and Charter;

Act Now

Contact Govt MPs about ABC Funding. Don't delay in expressing your support for the ABC.

While ABC funding for the next triennium will not be announced until the May 2009 Federal Budget, it could be all but signed-off before the end of November '08.

Write or phone yourself, and encourage others to contact their Labor Member of Parliament. Let them know: The ABC must be rebuilt and its creative production core restored. The national broadcaster must be funded to be at the forefront of technological change, and funded in a manner that will uphold its independence from government and commercial influence.

Let them know you want them to support legislation for a new transparent and merit-based appointment process for the ABC Board and to reinstate the staff-elected director; and ask what they will do.

This is an opportunity for all politicians to express bipartisan support for the national public broadcaster.

Some Coalition politicians may view the introduction of an independent appointment process more favourably now that they are in opposition and have lost to a Labor government the power to make public appointments.

(From the FOABC—Victoria)



- Restore the role of Radio Australia to broadcast to the wider region.

To achieve these Charter objectives, adequate funding must be provided by Federal Parliament.

Funding must be restored to no less than the 1996 level of funding in real terms and supplementary funds be provided for digital and multimedia services.

The ABC Board's independence from the government of the day must be guaranteed.

The ABC Act must be amended to end the stacking of the Board by the government of the day.